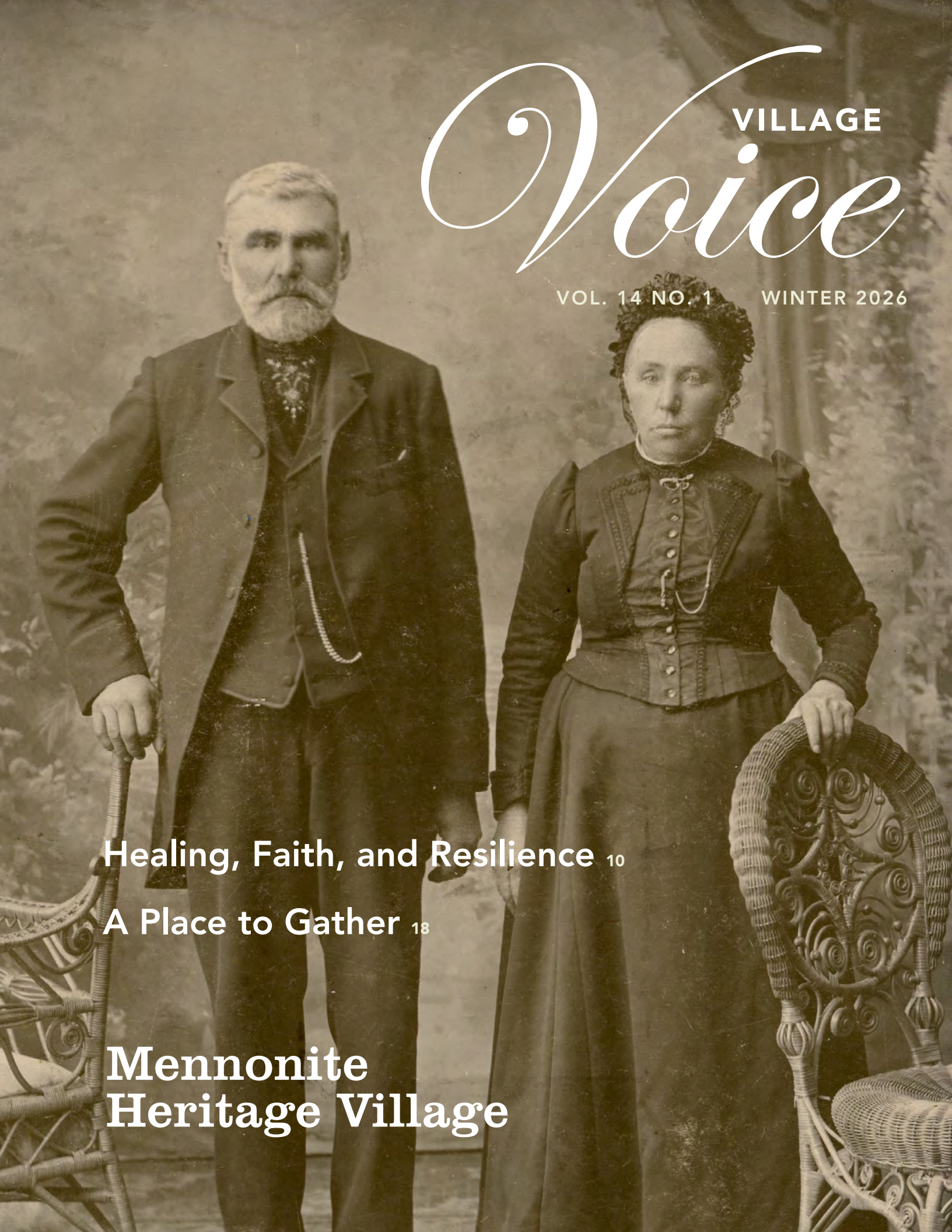


Village Voice

VOL. 14 NO. 1 WINTER 2026

Healing, Faith, and Resilience 10

A Place to Gather 18

Mennonite Heritage Village

Cover Photo
Katharina Born Thiessen and her husband Abraham in about 1892.

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Note from the Editor

It feels like an oxymoron to say that a museum, tasked with preserving and sharing history, is always changing. From the outside, the artefacts are still old, the Windmill continues to spin, and the floor in the General Store still creaks in that one spot.

But those who volunteer and work at Mennonite Heritage Village know that isn't true. In fact, change is vital to the survival of our organization. Sometimes they are noticeable, like building the Village Centre or adding a new event to the schedule. Sometimes they are hidden, like a software update or new nails to hold up an old wooden board.

We can't change history, but we regularly update our presentation. This version of The Village Voice is an example of this.

There is the obvious change; we are returning to the original magazine format that hosted previous generations of this publication, like Village Review and Preserving Our Heritage. This format gives us more freedom for creativity in how we tell our story, and we're hoping has more staying power on your coffee table.

Most important, though, is our Voice. You'll notice a focus on stories, rather than reports. Those who visit Mennonite Heritage Village know that you may not remember how much the rollkuchen cost, but you will remember how it tasted. You may not remember that the windmill stands six stories tall, but you'll remember the feeling of standing on the deck watching the sails fly past. Stories are the heart of every great museum, and we want to embrace that with our semi-annual publication.

We hope you enjoy this edition of The Village Voice and want to encourage you to tell us your stories! Whether it's a story that connects you or your family to MHV, your own Mennonite history, or how your own past has connected to ours, we want to hear them. Email judsonr@mhv.ca with your stories and lets share them together!

JUDSON REMPEL, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR







Old Stories Shared, New Stories Appreciated

ROBERT GOERTZEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When our guests visit the museum and we have opportunities to speak with them, whether at the admission desk, at the restaurant, on the grounds or in the gift shop, it is always fascinating to hear their stories and their perspectives. Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) aspires to be the premier interpretive centre for the Russian Mennonite story and this vision for the museum helps us to create a setting which finds ways to connect all visitors in a variety of ways.

Many museum guests have a direct family link to the stories of the 1870's Mennonites who emigrated from Ukraine to establish their new communities in southern Manitoba. They explore the early pioneer houses at MHV and recall stories from grandparents and great grandparents depicting the struggles of family life and community life in a new country. They compare stories with relatives and appreciate the efforts taken by previous generations, to provide for present and future descendants.

Mennonites and descendants of Mennonites from many traditions frequently visit MHV. They are interested in learning about their 'brothers and sisters in the faith' who decided to migrate to Manitoba in the 1870's. There is a commonality of Anabaptist faith that encourages conversations of comparison to the various Mennonite traditions. The hope is that understanding the different perspectives on how to live out the Mennonite religious faith, also increases the acceptance of other points of view. MHV encourages guests to put themselves 'into someone else's shoes', rather than judging those who have chosen different ways to express their faith.

For newcomers to southern Manitoba, the museum provides opportunities to share stories of migration, family and community life, and establishing a home in a new land. Newcomers are interested in how early Mennonite communities established themselves, how they grew, and how they became the foundation for our present-day neighbourhoods, towns, and cities. When we share the 1870's stories, we are also inviting newcomers to share and compare their experiences with starting over in a new country. We become more understanding and more empathetic as we listen to each other.

Many travelers, who visit Mennonite Heritage Village from around the province, or from around the world, are interested in the human experiences of the past in all contexts and our museum is one of many places where they can learn about what people value in family life, in community life, and in their religious life. In our case, the museum depicts life as a Mennonite in Manitoba, 152 years ago. Inevitably, our conversations lead to comparisons with other people groups in other parts of the world and often the similarities are surprising, and occasionally, the differences are acute. However, we are fascinated as both we as hosts, and they as guests, grow in knowledge and understanding, as history is shared.

No matter what the reason is for visiting Mennonite Heritage Village, the conversations that happen are important. They are borne from walking into the Semlin, imagining a newcomer family and their cow living in an earthen structure, from hearing the windmill gears turning wind power into ground up wheat flour, and from entering the General Store to purchase a memento of their museum visit. Experiences are recalled, perspectives are shared, acceptance and understanding are encouraged and at the end of a visit, we are all better people because of our interactions with each other. Mennonite Heritage Village has stories to tell, and we make space for other stories to be shared. Let the storytelling continue!



Global Connections

NITA WIEBE, STOREKEEPER/RECEPTION

I have seen it happen too many times to count. It doesn't really surprise me anymore, but I am always delighted when it does. I'm talking about the connections that happen at MHV.

The first kind of connection happens fairly regularly, is preplanned and is a function of family & friends living their lives. Siblings and parents make their way to the Livery Barn Restaurant for a Sunday Brunch and linger at the tables to catch up. Grandparents bring their Grandchildren for skating and tobogganing during Winter-in-the-Village, finishing with hot-dogs and marshmallows over the bonfire. Connections are deepened and memories are made.

The second type of connection is the one that I find amazing. It's the unexpected, sometimes Global connections that I love. After our busy summer, traffic numbers slow down in fall. One such slower day, I had 2 groups of guests show up at the same time. I always ask where our visitors are from and that day the first group had 1 local and 3 from Loma Plata, Paraguay. After orienting the group, the second group made their way to be processed. Again, I asked where in the world they were visiting from. One local and 2 from Loma Plata. A gentleman from the 1st group turned around upon hearing 'Loma Plata' and said, "Oh my goodness, what are you doing here?!" Not only were they from the same town, but they were related to each other. Neither knew of the other's travel plans. Yet here they were, half a continent away, on the same day, at the same time. At MHV. They spent a good portion of the day together.

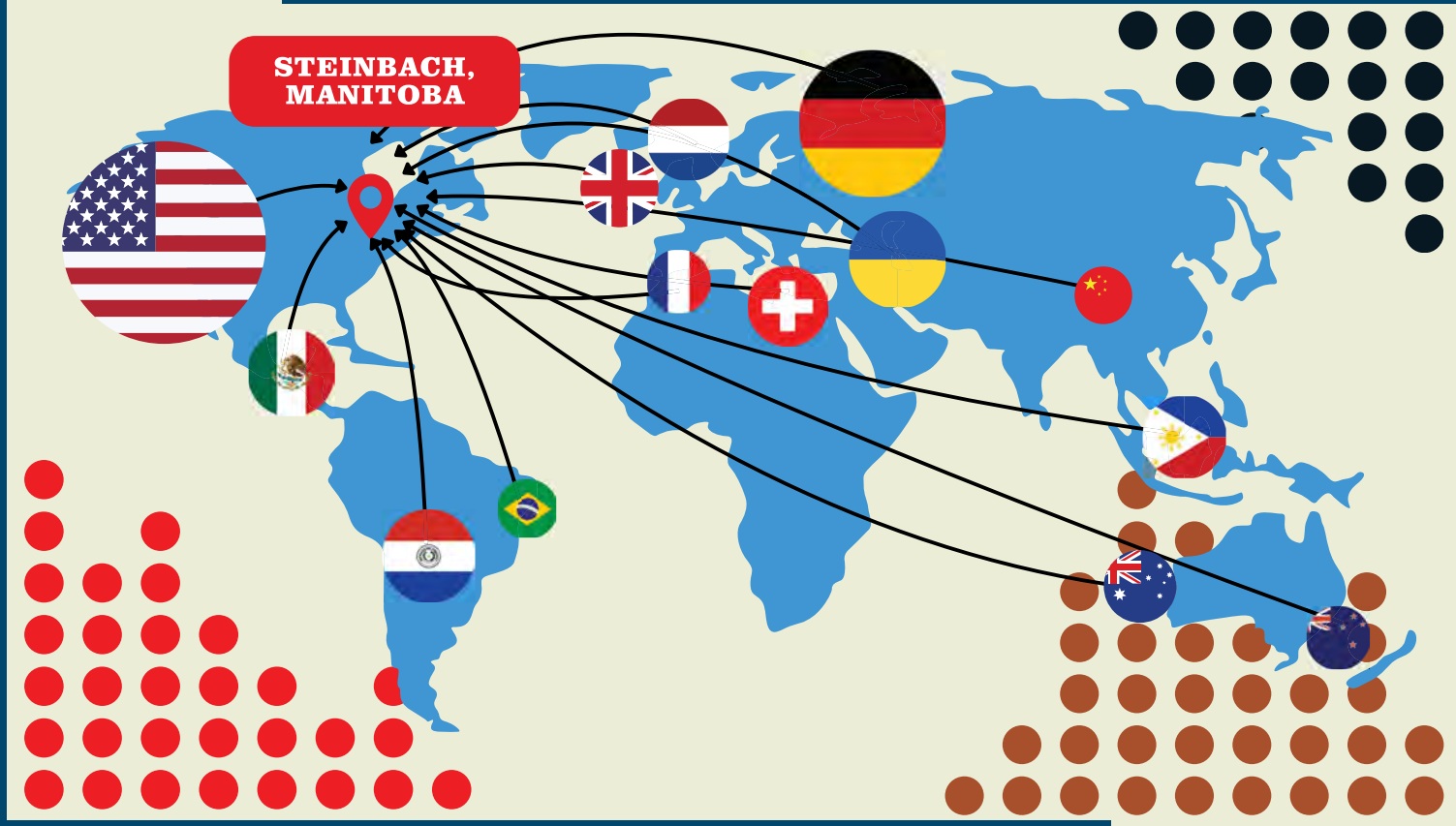
The final connection I observe is one related to our artifacts. This summer, the Peters/Unrau family gathered members from across North & South America at MHV. Some had never met, others reconnected after years apart. They were all drawn to see their Matriarch's wedding dress and to hear some family stories about it. Our Curators pulled it from storage and prepared a presentation for the 60-some people who had travelled so far to see it.

A few weeks earlier, another family gathered to view a brick from their family's building in Ukraine, a site long destroyed. Gathered around an artifact that offered connection to the past and to the current generation. Seeds of curiosity planted in the minds of the young.

MHV is all about connections. Connections to our families, to our neighbors, global and next door. Connections to our pasts, Mennonite or not. We really are all connected.

A WORLDWIDE STORY

Mennonite Heritage Village welcomes visitors from across the world.



We see thousands of global visitors every year, sharing the Russian Mennonite story across the world.









It Takes a Village to Make the Village: The Importance of Volunteering for MHV

VICTORIA KLIPPENSTEIN, PROGRAMS ASSISTANT

> "Volunteering gives me a chance to demonstrate my appreciation for all the blessings I have been given in life by sharing my skills and time to bring beauty to our corner of the world and to help to make our community a caring place to live" - ELSIE KATHLER, VOLUNTEER

If you have ever visited MHV on an event day, come for a field trip, or enjoyed the well-kept grounds on your way to the Livery Barn Restaurant, you can thank a volunteer. As a non-profit organization, MHV relies heavily on the generosity of our volunteers, from tour guides and educational interpreters to maintenance staff, our community steps up to bring our institution to life.

Here at the museum, we value immersive education and the ability to provide hands-on experiences, and in this modern age, it is important to keep art and culture from disappearing. Our volunteers play a large part in protecting the past by actively participating in historic activities or by sharing stories and knowledge. Their involvement also invites new perspectives into our museum to continue strengthening our community. These contributions do not go unnoticed and frankly our museum could not run without them. Not only are they our friends, family, and community members but they are the reason we can host our beloved events like Canada Day, Pioneer Days, Education programs, and the reason you can enjoy a waffle hot off the iron at Summer in the City.

So, why volunteer with us? When Volunteer Tour Guide, Tina Peters was asked this question, she responded, "I love to volunteer at MHV, personally it gives me purpose to share my own heritage as a Mennonite, to share it with the world (and) whoever comes (to visit). MHV gives me a feeling of coming home to my roots. There is a feeling of belonging and camaraderie with the staff and other volunteers." Our lead Printer, Jared Penner echoed this sentiment stating that "…belonging is the greatest feeling in the world. I want people to put in the effort to help me feel like I belong, but I can't expect anyone to do that for me if I'm not willing to do that for them." Elsie Kathler who volunteers through the Steinbach and Area Garden Club, highlights the relationships she's made through her time at MHV, noting "The opportunity to create lasting bonds of friendship with fellow volunteers as we work side by side has enriched my life in so many ways. Then there is the opportunity to expand my horizons by chatting with visitors from around the world… 15 Years later… I am still enjoying my volunteer time at MHV."

Besides becoming a valuable member of a community and receiving a $10 voucher to enjoy a traditional Mennonite meal at our Livery Barn Restaurant with each shift, volunteering with us also offers the chance to learn unique skills and share your knowledge. Penner went on to share that he donates his time to the museum because he enjoys the Printshop work, saying,

"It's a break from the noisy world and allows me to connect with something that feels more real. I want to have something that I can do for fun and have access to equipment and facilities that I have no chance to being able to interact with otherwise. My family dates back to this area for over 5 generations so there is something about connecting to my past that is great. When I meet someone who has a genuine interest in what I am doing, either the history in the area, or of the process itself. My favorite times are when people ask questions and really want to know the answer and learn. I love teaching about the things I love and sharing the knowledge with someone who is genuinely curious."

We understand how valuable your time and energy are, and that it can be difficult to put effort into something without financial gain, but there is value in showing up for your community and providing a safe space for individuals and families to learn about the history of their community. Whether you are looking for a new hobby, a chance to gain volunteer hours, or a way to contribute to the community, please consider donating your time to the Mennonite Heritage Village.

We would like to thank all our current volunteers for their generosity and encourage anyone who is interested in volunteering with us in the future to please reach out to **programassistant@mhv.ca** or call us at 204-326-9661 to learn more about available opportunities.



Wood Carving

ACC. NO. 2026.6.1

This wood carving of a squirrel was part of a "Reverse Care Package" sent by family in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s that also included a samovar and several other Russian folk carvings. The package was named as such because it mirrored care packages sent by Canadian Russlaender to relatives who remained in the Soviet Union.

This parcel was sent to Canada to the families of George Jacob Krahn and his brother Isaak Krahn by their cousin Katharina Krahn Sawatzki and her husband Franz Sawatzki. The Sawatzkis sent the gift in appreciation for the care they received from the Krahn family.

Edward G. Krahn donated this quaint sculpture in the spring of 2026.



1938 McLaughlin Buick

ACC. NO. 2026.9.1

In 1938, Peter P. Thiessen and Maria Peters Thiessen purchased this 1938 McLaughlin Buick from the GMC/Buick dealership in Altona. The elegant vehicle was used for more than just special outings. It took the family to church and to visit friends and family, it was used to teach the children to drive, and it was even put to work pulling a trailer when hauling pigs to market.

Years later, in 2003, after the car had sat in the family farmyard, Peter Thiessen's grandsons, Don and Elmer made the decision to restore it. Elmer fondly recalls taking his mother, Agathe, for a ride in the vehicle that she learnt to drive in.

In the summer of 2026, Elmer donated the beautifully preserved vehicle to MHV so it could be seen and appreciated by the many visitors to the museum.



Jakob Hoeppner's Wallet

ACC. NO. 2021.31.1

Jakob Hoeppner (1748-1826) was a delegate chosen by Prussian Mennonites to investigate lands in Imperial Russia offered by Empress Catherine II. Along with Johann Bartsch, Hoeppner inspected various sites in 1786 and negotiated an agreement for the Mennonites if they were to emigrate to Imperial Russia. Hoeppner led seven families there in March 1788, but upon their arrival to Kremenchug, Hoeppner was informed that the Mennonites would not be able to settle on the agreed land due to hostilities occurring between Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Instead, the families settled near the Chortitza River, on land that was not as desirable as they had hoped, which led to tensions between Hoeppner and those he led there. As a result, Hoeppner was expelled from his congregation, accused of misappropriation of funds, and imprisoned. He was later pardoned and released back to Kronsweide where he lived until his death in 1826.

This wallet belonged to Hoeppner and was most likely acquired after his settlement in Chortitza, as it is stamped with the year 1790, two years after the families left Prussia.

2026 marks the 200th anniversary of Jakob Hoeppner's death. Although a somewhat controversial figure, his contributions ensured a place for the Mennonites in Imperial Russia. His wallet represents his journey and the hopeful intentions of the immigration experience.

To learn more about Jakob Hoeppner, you can also view his Bible in MHV's permanent gallery as well as his memorial located near the Old Colony Worship House on MHV's grounds.

The wallet was donated to MHV by Jacob Höppner, a descendant of its original owner.

2026

We told so many lasting stories together.

WE WELCOMED

50,000

VISITORS

to our museum, sharing our Russian-Mennonite history. These visitors came from more than 20 countries around the world.

WE BAKED OVER

3,000

HERITAGE WAFFLES

that were enjoyed with white sauce and rhubarb.

6,000

STUDENTS

took the tour and learned about their community's history.

3,600

CUSTOMERS

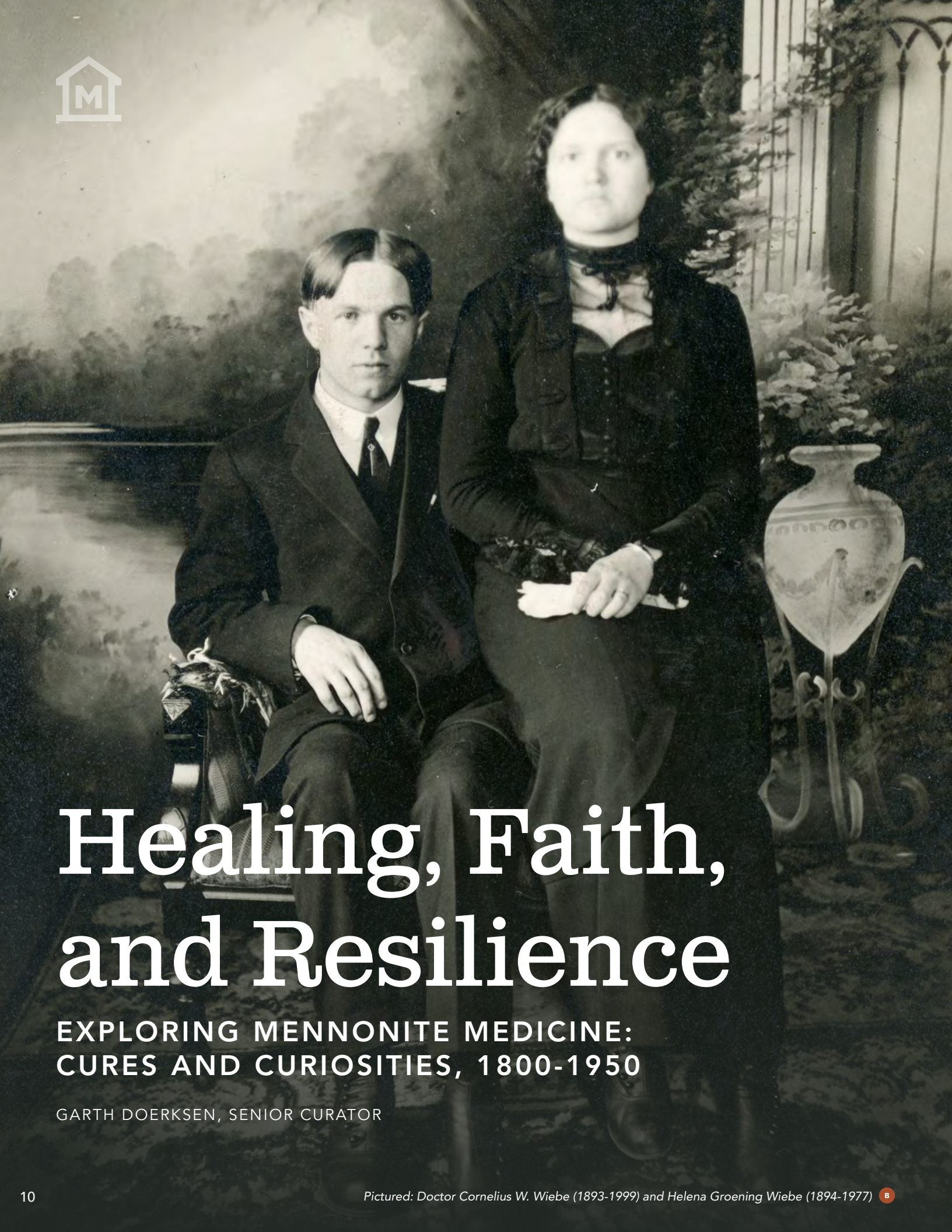
shopped at Village Books & Gifts.

WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE!

300

VOLUNTEERS

worked for THOUSANDS of hours to make every single visit to MHV a memorable one. From customer service to maintenance to our popular demonstrations.



Healing, Faith, and Resilience

EXPLORING MENNONITE MEDICINE: CURES AND CURIOSITIES, 1800-1950

GARTH DOERKSEN, SENIOR CURATOR

Pictured: Doctor Cornelius W. Wiebe (1893-1999) and Helena Groening Wiebe (1894-1977) B

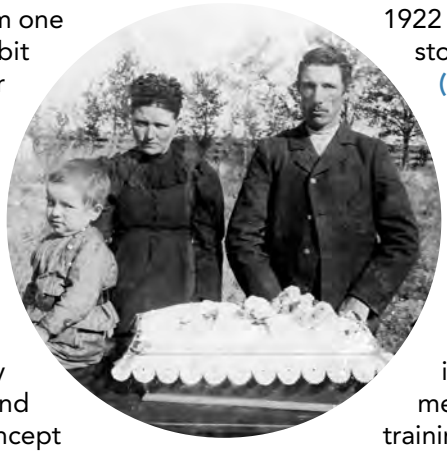
The newest exhibit in the Gerhard Ens Gallery, **Mennonite Medicine: Cure and Curiosities, 1800–1950**, explores how communities cared for the sick before the arrival of modern hospitals, antibiotics, and professional medical systems. Spanning more than 150 years and two continents, the exhibit traces the evolution of Mennonite health care from folk remedies and traditional healers in Imperial Russia to hospitals, trained nurses, and physicians in Manitoba.



Ohrloff Hospital in Russia

At its heart, the exhibit tells a story of adaptation. Mennonite communities faced injuries and accidents, epidemics, the constant looming risks of pregnancy and childbirth, and chronic illness with limited medical resources. Yet through a combination of faith, practical knowledge, community support, and eventually scientific medicine, they developed remarkable systems of care.

One section examines the healing traditions that Mennonites brought with them from Imperial Russia. In the early nineteenth century, formal physicians were scarce, and families relied heavily on midwives, bonesetters, herbal healers, ministers, and teachers. Medical knowledge was often passed from one generation to the next. Visitors to the exhibit encounter a world where herbs and other plants such as chamomile, mint, yarrow, comfrey, linden blossoms, and elderflowers were commonly transformed into teas, salves, poultices, and compresses to treat everything from fevers and stomach ailments to wounds and respiratory illnesses.

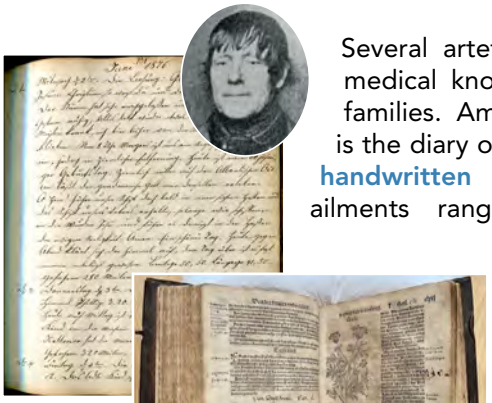


Underlying these practices was a deeply spiritual understanding of health and suffering. The exhibit explores the concept of gelassenheit, a spiritual attitude of humility, acceptance, and surrender to God's will. While Mennonites actively sought treatment for illness, they also viewed sickness within a larger framework of faith, shaping how they responded to suffering, recovery, and death.

The exhibit explores several medical practices that today seem unusual. Bloodletting, A once widely accepted throughout Europe, was a common treatment in Mennonite households. Using lancets, cups, and scarificators, families attempted to restore balance to the body's humours, the four bodily fluids once believed to regulate health. These objects remind visitors that medical knowledge has continually evolved and that treatments once considered essential can later be abandoned.



(L-R) Bloodletting scarificator, lebenswecker, and spring lancet.



Kreuter Buch, 1546 by Hieronymus Bock

Several artefacts reveal the practical medical knowledge preserved within families. Among the most intriguing is the diary of **Jakob Wiens,** whose handwritten remedies addressed ailments ranging from cholera and meningitis to coughs, sore throats, and eye conditions. Such records illustrate how ordinary people became custodians of valuable health knowledge in places where professional care was unavailable.

The exhibit also confronts the realities of illness and mortality. Childbirth and infancy were especially perilous. Nearly one-third of children born in the Chortitza Colony between 1880 and 1922 died before reaching adulthood. Personal stories, such as **Helena Bergen Krahn's (1875-1954)** unsuccessful attempt to save premature triplets by placing them in warmed bread pans near the hearth, reflect both parental ingenuity and the limits of medical resources at the time.

As visitors move through the gallery, they witness the gradual arrival of scientific medicine. Mennonite settlements in Imperial Russia established hospitals, mental health institutions, and medical training programs. The exhibit highlights pioneers such as Dr. Robert Zander (1824-1856), the first formally trained physician hired by the Molotschna Colony; **Bernhard Paul Schellenberg (1840-1888)**, Chortitza's first recognized medical practitioner; and Dr. Jacob Esau (1856-1927), one of the first Mennonite physicians in the Russian colonies.



Their work marked the beginning of a transition from traditional healing to professional medicine.

The exhibit's Manitoba sections reveal how this transformation continued after immigration. Stories of difficult journeys to Canada, medical inspections, and family separations remind visitors that migration itself was often a health crisis. Particularly moving is the account of Heinrich Engbrecht (1909-1928), who died in medical detention in England after becoming separated from his family during their immigration journey.



Epidemic memorial from the Hochfeld Cemetery (East Reserve)

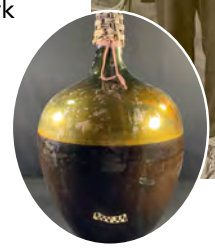
Community responses to epidemics form another important theme. Mennonites embraced smallpox vaccination early and generally supported public-health measures during outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and influenza. During the Spanish Flu epidemic, nurse **Aganetha Fast (1883-1977)** transformed a Steinbach school into a temporary hospital, earning a reputation as the community's "Florence Nightingale."



Traditional healers receive significant attention as well. Visitors to the exhibit meet the colorful bonesetters known as trajcht'moakes, a Low German word meaning "those who set things right", including **Gertrude Klassen (1892-1986), Susanna Hiebert (1885-1949), Anna Giesbrecht Friesen (1885-1981)**, and the legendary **John Peters (1850-1927)**, the self-taught "Wizard of Grunthal."

Midwives also take center stage through the stories of **Katharina Born Thiessen (1842-1915)**, a German-trained healer who established a respected medical practice near Winkler, and Katherina Hiebert (1855-1916) of Schanzenburg, a dedicated midwife known for her medical learning, determination, and advocacy for women and families. Their work highlights the essential role midwives played in providing skilled care long before hospitals and physicians were widely available in rural Mennonite communities.







The exhibit examines the emergence of hospitals, trained nurses, medical missionaries, and licensed physicians throughout the twentieth century. Institutions such as Winnipeg's Concordia Hospital and Steinbach's Bethesda Hospital emerged from Mennonite commitments to compassionate care, while figures such as **Dr. Gerhard Hiebert (1868-1934)** and **Dr. Cornelius Wiebe (1893-1999)** helped establish modern medical services across Manitoba.



Vogt maternity hospital in Steinbach

The exhibit also explores how Mennonite communities cared for people living with life-altering injuries, disabilities, and chronic illnesses. Before specialized hospitals and support services existed, care was largely provided by family, neighbours, and church communities. Remarkable stories such as Abram J. Wiebe's (1898-1967) partial recovery of sight after years of blindness and **Peter P. Dyck's (1911-1970)** use of a road-worthy, motorized bed after a disabling accident highlight the resilience, ingenuity, and strong networks of care that supported individuals facing physical challenges.



Rich with artefacts, photographs, and personal stories, **Mennonite Medicine: Cure and Curiosities, 1800–1950** offers more than a history of medicine. It reveals how communities confronted suffering, cared for one another, and adapted to changing knowledge and circumstances. Ultimately, the exhibit is a story of resilience, faith, compassion, and the enduring human desire to heal.





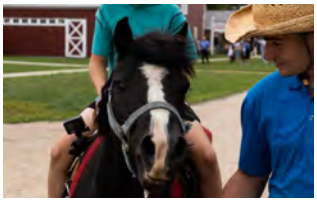









2026 Memories
Mennonite
Heritage Village





















Connecting Generations at the Mennonite Heritage Village

CALLIE ANDRES, EDUCATION ASSISTANT

At the Mennonite Heritage Village, history comes to life through the people who share it. One of the special parts of the village is the opportunity for different generations to come together and learn from one another. From young children exploring the village for the first time, to seniors and volunteers sharing stories, skills, and memories, every generation has something valuable to contribute to the MHV community.

Older generations often bring knowledge and past experiences to life through their stories. Volunteers may share memories or learned stories about traditional ways of life, including farming, cooking, and community traditions. These stories help visitors connect with the Mennonite history in a personal way. Instead of simply reading about Mennonite life in the past, visitors can hear from people who have learned, practiced, or carried forward many of these traditions themselves.

Younger generations bring in a unique perspective to the museum as well. Their curiosity leads them to ask questions that encourage others to think about history in new ways. Their excitement when discovering a heritage building, trying their hand at a traditional activity or learning about how things were taught in the past, can make the experience more significant and enjoyable for everyone.

The village provides a place where these generations can meet. When a child learns a traditional skill from a senior volunteer, that moment becomes more than a learning experience, it becomes a connection between



generations. Stories, skills, and traditions are shared, while younger visitors bring their own curiosity and ideas into the moment.

When generations come together, everyone has something to offer and something to learn at MHV. The knowledge of the past and the curiosity of the present work together to create meaningful experiences. Through these connections, important stories and traditions can continue to be shared for years to come.

Brand
Print
Signage
Digital

onPoint

Volunteer Story

ELENORE THIESSEN

Crafting has been enjoyable and therapeutic for me. I enjoy learning new skills and MHV has been a great place for me to showcase and sell my crafts. I have been a part of the artisan group for over 20 years. I have met and shared space with numerous artisans, worked with helpful staff and met people from various parts of the world.

Students were an important part of the visitor group. They were made aware of the many unique items that were essential in past generations. The colourful jars of candy would usually light up their eyes.

I want to thank the staff at MHV for the great experience you provided for me.





Elenore Thiessen, a very talented local gal, ran a successful souvenir store in downtown Steinbach for many years. Elenore decided to slow down the pace a little and became a vendor in the MHV General Store. She has an incredible whimsical talent mastering the flower press, as well as Christmas decor eggery, embroidered cards, pine come wreaths, decoupage paintings and so much more. Elenore loves the museum, meeting people from around the world and having the opportunity to share her heritage with others. Drop by next season and say hello.



Pajama Set

ACC. NO. 2021.34.4 A,B

Talitha (Taleta) Tiessen was the youngest of four, born in 1930 in Leamington, Ontario, to Anna and Cornelius Tiessen. After coming from Tavistock, Ontario where they shared a two-bedroom farmhouse with other families, the Tiessens played a significant role in founding a Mennonite Church in Leamington.

This pajama set was handmade by Anna Tiessen in 1940 for her youngest daughter Taleta, who kept it as a memory of her mother after her mother passed away in 1942 at the age of 43.

This artefact was donated by Taleta's son, Trevor Shamas, in December 2021 on behalf of the Cornelius Tiessen family.

> "I have always felt that the Lord wanted me to volunteer, and I love people. I enjoy filling needs."
>
> – JOHN HIEBERT, VOLUNTEER OF 5 YEARS

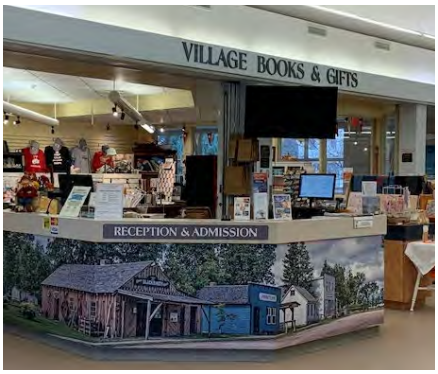
Reflections from Visitor Experience

JO-ANN FRIESEN, VISITOR EXPERIENCE & OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

It has been a very busy year in Memberships, Tourist Information, Admissions, Reception, Gift Shop, Online Retail, the General Store, and Retail Events (Markets, Writers Workshops, Author Reading Event, Books, Borscht & Blues music event) and Health & Safety.

The role of Visitor Experience is responsible for maintaining a positive, welcoming and environment, accessible for all to explore the power of storied places while engaging in hands-on experiences. This role is to ensure that MHV reviews and enhances all aspects of MHV's safety protocols, in the Village Center as well as the outdoor village.

When arriving at the museum, you are met with very friendly and knowledgeable Reception team. MHV's



Reception team is the first point of contact. The staff and volunteers delightfully share the highlights of the buildings and grounds before you head out on your visit. They act as concierge, helping you to fully understand the museum's mission or guide you to your next destination. Our team is quite knowledgeable and assists visitors to get to where they need to go at the museum or within the broader landscape. As the "hub" so to say, Reception is one of the key elements to a successful shopping experience, visit, meeting, or an event. We endeavor to foster a safe environment for all. All staff deliberately strive to convey a world-class visitor experience by engaging fully with all our guests and telling the stories of our collection and exhibitions. I am confident that our remarkable team offers a warm welcome to all visitors, including but not limited to group tours, school program and visiting scholars.

Throughout this past year, I have had so many conversations with travelers who continue to say how much they appreciate the incredible condition of the galleries, buildings, grounds, Gift Shop and the General Store. Many purchased memberships for themselves as well as for family members, they want MHV to be a regular stop in their circle of life. One such conversation was with a newcomer to Winnipeg (Canada), who told me her homeland is being destroyed by war, and her heart is broken. She had tears in her eyes when she told me that this museum felt like home, she has visited many places over the past two years and this museum is the closest thing to her homeland she has ever experienced. She thanked us for the efforts we are making at keeping history alive! I highly value being a part of a unique, extremely talented, and fun team who share a love of history and share historical stories with our local and global community. It is humbling to be reminded of the great blessing we have in this country.

When it comes to our volunteers, all I can say is amazing!! Their endeavors help MHV present our stories as well as preserve the past.

Memberships are great for gift giving and a way to support your local heritage, not just at Christmas, but any time of the year. Some of the many perks of our membership: the ability to get discounts at six other Signature Museums across Manitoba, 10% off purchases in our Gift Shop, as well as in-store member features throughout the year, 10% in our Livery Barn Restaurant, 10% off facility rentals (excluding weddings) and more. This is a great way to support MHV.

Village Books and Gifts (VBG) hosted a Writer's Workshop in February, with Andrew Unger, Erin Koop-Unger, and MaryLou Driedger. This engaging and interactive workshop gave local pen handlers more tools to critique their work when writing their story for social media and beyond. VBG is a nonprofit giftshop, so when you shop here, you support MHV's efforts to keep our living history thriving. If you stop by today to pick up that hard-to-find unique item for that special someone on your list, or just for yourself , our amazing Storekeeper, is a tremendously talented employee who can sleuth that certain item you might be looking for, if she can find, you will get it, whether they are out-of-print books, vintage items, and everything in between. The



MaryLou Driedger

gift shop is Steinbach's local go to for Mennonite merchandise. Our shelves burst with Menno-ware, vintage petit point, German texts, historically relevant books, genealogy, memoirs, biographies, Historical Atlas of the East Reserve, cookbooks, puzzles, Crow Wing Trail map, children's books, cards, postcards, toys, artwork, clothing, souvenirs galore and so much more.

The General Store is open seven days a week May 1 to September 30. As you enter the building you will immediately experience that back in time mercantile feeling. The atmosphere signals the brain, while embracing the heart as the invitation to explore escorts you to storied places of long ago. For so many folks, the General Store triggers a plethora of childhood memories. You will see a wide array of artefacts on display (some still in use around the world today) MHV souvenirs, and a unique selection of handmade merchandise from local artisans. To the delight of visitors, the variety of old fashioned candy literally induce smiles and tickle the sweet zone. The General Store is one of the most popular stops in the Outdoor Village. The Storekeepers are knowledgeable, and very welcoming. Shopping at the General Store is an amazing experience. Please note: The General Store has a couple of openings for vendors of homemade merchandise looking to sell their products for the 2027 season. If you are interested, please contact the museum.





General Store

Books, Borscht & Blues Music first annual musical event featured a book sale in Village Books & Gifts, a variety of Mennonite loved soups and breads in a Borscht Buffet, finishing off with a Blues Café with award winning musicians, Big Dave McLean, Ollee Owens and Dan Thiessen. The event was a great success and attendees expressed how they were impressed with the meal, the artists and the Peter Barkman Pavilion. We are looking forward to more events like this in the future.



Dan Thiessen and Big Dave McLean

MHV Christmas Market is an annual event held for the past 11+ years. 30 vendors fill the building with the sights and sounds of Christmas. Horse-drawn wagon rides are available for attendees, as well as a hot waffle and white sauce lunch provided by our very own MHV Auxiliary. The museum galleries and grounds are open for visitors to walk about as well. The Gift Shop shelves are bursting with Mennoware, and a plethora of items of historical significance, a great selection of books, gifts, housewares, toys and souvenirs. The Christmas Market is always well attended and a great place to find that unique gift item. Admission to the museum on the day goes directly to our local food bank, Southeast Helping Hands.



Christmas Market in the auditorium



Horse-drawn wagon rides



> *"I continue to volunteer because I enjoy teaching and interacting with youth and adults, learning and touching the lives of others in a positive way. It provides a good sense of purpose. I enjoy being part of the community. It is a relaxing, friendly environment. Learning more allows me to understand more about the people in this community."*
>
> **– LAURIE, VOLUNTEER**

A Place to Gather, A Place to Remember

ELISE PLESSIS, PRIVATE EVENTS COORDINATOR

Some of our most meaningful memories begin with a gathering—a wedding, a family celebration, or an evening spent reconnecting with friends and colleagues. At Mennonite Heritage Village, these occasions bring new stories into a place dedicated to preserving those of the past.

Through my work coordinating weddings and private events at MHV, I get to see the museum from a different perspective. Tables are arranged, decorations go up, and familiar spaces take on the personality of the people gathering there. This past year has offered some memorable examples.

Taste of Steinbach was one of those highlights, bringing food and community together in our heritage setting. Working with the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce on an occasion like this demonstrates the value of community partnerships and the possibilities our venue offers. It was so much fun to see our Main Street converted into a 700-person dining experience.

Another highlight was The Crucible, adding theatre to the year's gatherings. Having a dramatic production in partnership with the Steinbach Arts Council and Real Live Entertainment at MHV offered another way for people to experience the Village and illustrated how our spaces can accommodate creative uses. With 4 sold out shows this collaboration was a grand accomplishment.

We have also seen an increase in micro weddings. These smaller celebrations offer couples the opportunity to focus on meaningful details and time with their closest family and friends. Helping bring these intimate occasions together has been a rewarding part of the year. A small guest list can still make room for plenty of personality, thoughtful touches, and wonderful memories.

Together, these highlights reflect the variety of gatherings that find a home at MHV. Each comes with its own needs, and that variety is one of the things I enjoy most about my work.

Behind every event is a great deal of preparation. From answering inquiries and coordinating arrangements to setting up and cleaning afterward, many small tasks contribute to a welcoming experience. I appreciate the private events staff whose efforts make these occasions possible, often quietly behind the scenes.

These gatherings also introduce people to MHV in a personal way. Some guests visit for the first time, while others return with memories of school trips, family outings, or previous celebrations. Each occasion gives them another reason to connect with the museum.

If you are planning a wedding, family celebration, or business gathering, we would be happy to discuss your ideas and explore how MHV could be part of your occasion.

It is a privilege to help people celebrate here. Alongside the history we preserve, there are still many memories waiting to be made.





Gilbert Admiral Calendar Clock

ACC. NO. 2026.15.1 A-C

This clock originally hung in a Canadian Pacific Railway station in Saskatchewan, telling its visitors both the time and date. When the station was decommissioned, it was removed by William Meisner from Regina, Saskatchewan who was responsible for cleaning up the old station buildings.

As a clock maker and restorer, Meisner repaired the clock and gifted it to his sister, Esther Meisner. Esther displayed it until she passed it on to her son, Doug Rempel, who later donated it to MHV at the end of summer 2026.

Why Kids Enjoy Coming to MHV!

ELIZA VILLANUEVA, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Why do kids love coming Mennonite Heritage Village? It is more than just learning about Mennonite history, but they can experience it! With hands-on activities, fun events, animals and a chance to explore, there is always exciting things happening at MHV.

A huge highlight for kids is Pioneer Day Camp. Each day we have a different theme planned for them such as Life in the Village, Life at Home, Career Day, Transportation Day and Fun day! Each day of the week brings something new which keeps everything fun and new for the kids. The campers get to participate in activities that relate to the past in an engaging and fun way. Not only are they learning by doing hands-on activities, but they also have the chance to learn with friends at the camp as well!

We offer school field trips which is another reason kids love visiting



Potting a plant for Mother's Day

MHV. Our program is filled with interactive and hands-on activities that let students experience how life was in the past. Some of the activities the kids get to try is butter churning, make nail rings at the Blacksmith, wool carding and they even get to make Schnetje biscuits. Having these interactive and hands-on activities make the history the kids learn feel real and memorable!

There's plenty of exciting things to see and do around the Village. We have farm animals that kids love visiting such as; goats, chickens, ponies and sheep. During special events and day camps, we have barrel train and wagon rides for the kids to enjoy, which are both always favourites.

At MHV, we love that the kids can learn in a hands-on exciting and adventurous way. Whether they are making things with their own hands, meeting animals, going on wagon rides or learning about Mennonite history, they can leave with more than just knowledge, but they leave with an experience they remember.





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Upcoming exhibit

Love & Relationships

Coming June 2027

At the age of 23, David Krahn of Gnadenthal, Manitoba served as a conscientious objector in Riding Mountain National Park. He kept a picture of his fiance Maria Enns from Reinland, Manitoba in a frame he had built from a bracket fungus cut from a tree in the park. The couple married in February 1944.

Mennonite Heritage Village