

We hope you will become involved in this heritage project. If you would like to continue receiving this quarterly newsletter, please fill in the following and mail to: *Neubergthal Notes*, Box 2429, Altona, Manitoba R0G 0B0

Yes, I would like to receive *Neubergthal Notes*!

- 1 year @ \$5.00
 - 2 years @ \$10.00
 - 5 years @ \$20.00
- (Cheques or money orders welcome.)

Name: _____

Affiliation (if any): _____

Mailing address: _____

e-mail (optional): _____

I am interested in the work and the goals of the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation and would like to make a donation towards the development of Neubergthal Heritage Village.

*(All financial gifts above \$10 are receipted for income tax purposes. Please make cheques payable to **Neubergthal Heritage Foundation** and mail to the address above.)*

THANK YOU!

Purpose and goals of the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation (NHF):

- 1) Maintain and preserve the historic aspects of Neubergthal
- 2) Make appropriate presentation of these aspects to the public



June/July 2003 Coming events

July 16, 2003 — About 50 people from the Red River Watershed project are scheduled to visit Neubergthal for a tour and a meal.

July 26&27 - *Mennonite Journey Drama* performed at 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm at the EMM Church in Altona. Tickets available at Information Booths in Altona. Cost: \$10/person
\$25/family



Come & visit

Tours of *Neubergthal* - a Mennonite street village - are available upon request:

- * 1 to 10 people @ \$5 per person, includes coffee
- * 11-25 people @ \$4 per person, includes coffee.

Call ahead to make arrangements

We also take special requests for other types of tours and events. Please call or e-mail us for details on how we can accommodate your group.

**Ph. (204) 324 1567 or 324 1612
email: krahn@borderland.ca**

Neubergthal Heritage
John Giesbrecht **Committee**
Rose Hildebrand
Terry Klassen
Frieda Klippenstein
Wendy Friesen (secretary)
Teresa Hamm (treasurer)
Karen Martens (vice chair)
Margrute Krahn (chair)

Neubergthal

Notes



A “land-loving” people

Rose Hildebrand

There has been a love affair going on between our people and the land for centuries. Mennonite people migrated to the Danzig region (in present day Poland) to flee persecution and found that they were not welcome in the cities, so they settled on the farms. Many of them had other vocations, but they became prosperous and knowledgeable in the art of reclaiming land from the sea. This is where a love for the land and the Low German language became a way of life.

(cont'd "Because..." on page 2)

“New” Neubergthal Notes

Welcome to our first attempt at a “new” issue of *Neubergthal Notes*! With this Newsletter we hope to keep you informed of the development of the Neubergthal Heritage Village project. Besides newsy items, we hope to feature short articles on various relevant historical topics. It may be an aspect of village history like architecture, the annual seasonal round, gardening or the prairie diet. It may be a family or genealogical feature, or stories from our village “old timers,” the experts on Neubergthal legend. You may find Low German quotes of wisdom and humour here, your great aunt’s choke cherry jam recipe, or a poem about what constitutes home — any expression that helps to recall the variety of events, personalities and qualities that have defined and distinguished the village. In this issue we feature photos and an article on some of the past practices of living and farming in Neubergthal and the local area. Farming practice represents an interesting example of both the degree of change and the continuity we have experienced in the past 125 years.

We’re a new group of people working on this project, and we thank Ray Hamm for providing a good model to follow. We will share the tasks of writing, editing, news-gathering, layout and design. We invite you to get involved by contributing articles, photographs and news items. We’ll try to keep you informed and interested.

- Rose Hildebrand, Frieda Klippenstein, Paul Krahn



Neubergthal threshing crew - from P.G. Hamm glass negative collection

for the animals, while the chaff was used for the chickens, which found all the missed kernels by scratching through it. Some of the straw was also used for heating. In later years the threshing machine

sheaves didn't have to be tied by hand any more, and the threshing machines became bigger and better. Then the combines came into use, and the binder was replaced by the swather. The combines,

What more could they ask for?

was a huge improvement, saving considerable time and energy. By then, the cutting was done with a binder, which also bound the sheaves. All that was left to do

A beauty known only on the prairies

which later could thresh the grain and spread the straw all in one operation, also replaced the threshing machines. Now those big combines do most of the



Anne Krueger, Anne Sawatzky, & Helen Schmidt on the Friesen yard



Norma Giesbrecht's (Friesen) grandmother



Yard inventory - from the Jake Hamm glass negative collection

Because they were known to be good farmers, they were invited by Catherine the Great to help her settle some of the land in the Ukraine. They were tempted by the land she promised as well as religious freedom and exemption from the military. What more could they ask for? Privileges like that had never been granted before.

Mennonites migrated from Prussia to Russia in 1788. They formed colonies and villages and, as their populations grew, they formed more colonies. They prospered and built up the economy, not only by excelling in agriculture, but also by founding industries and educational institutions. In the 1870s however, the Russian government began to threaten that the young men would have to go into military service. Once again they began looking for a new "Homeland."

Overseas in Canada, the new province of Manitoba was inviting settlers. From 1874 - 80 Mennonites arrived by

the thousands, settling in villages similar to the ones they had left behind in Russia. In the first few years they settled on the East Reserve, but they soon realized that the land on the West Reserve had better soil, and fewer stones. At this time the Hamms and Klippensteins settled in Neubergthal. Their dream was to convert this tall-grass prairie into the kind of wheat fields they had left on the steppes of Russia. They were successful, with a lot of sweat and toil. They encountered many obstacles — prairie fires, grasshoppers, drought, etc. But they did not give up. As there were no trees, they had to build semlins of sod for their first winter. Much of the lumber for their houses and barns was oak, cut and transported to the village from the Pembina River at Neche. They needed fuel too, and, being an industrious people, they made a manure press to form sods from a mixture of cattle manure and straw. When dried, these sods were valuable fuel for the long winters.

In the early days everything was done manually. At first much of the fieldwork was done by oxen, and later by horses. The first seed was scattered by hand, and the crop was cut and tied into sheaves by hand. It was stooked on the field to dry, and later transported by hayracks to the yard and stacked in large stacks, usually at the end of the barn. Here it remained until winter, when the grain was threshed in the 'sheen'. After the wheat was cleaned and bagged, it was carried upstairs for storage till it could be taken to the mill or to market. Because the oats and the barley were used mostly for feed, they were stored in the barn or lean-to. The straw was used for bedding

was to put the sheaves into stookes. What a beautiful sight were those rows of stookes drying in the summer sun.

Gardens played a significant role in the survival of those early settlers on the prairies. The women brought seeds from the "old world" and saved seeds every year. They planted rhubarb, gooseberries, and red currants, along with the local wild plum trees and choke cherries. Hop was an important vine used to make yeast for baking bread. The vegetable gardens contained potatoes, beans, carrots, onions, cabbage, parsnips, cucumbers, watermelon and muskmelons. Of course parsley, summer savoury, sorrel and dill were a must for cooking those delicious soups. The root cellars were well-stocked with jams made of rhubarb, choke cherry, wild plum, gooseberry and red currants. My grandmother told me that wild strawberries were abundant enough some years to be picked by the tub-full and cooked into good quantities of jam. Along with the preserved fruit, potatoes, carrots, onions, parsnips, cabbage were carefully stored in the root cellar for winter use. Watermelons and cucumbers were pickled in barrels or large crocks. Dill, parsley and summer savoury was cut, tied in bunches and dried before it was put in the cellar. It was a good feeling to know that the root cellar was well-stocked when the snow started flying and winter set in!

Many changes have come over the years. The binder simplified things, as the

harvesting in one operation by straight combining, so that the swather is also no longer needed. Though so much has changed, we still grow wheat and enjoy seeing a ripe field of wheat with a breeze rippling over it at sunset. It is a beauty known only on the prairies.

RH



Village news

Housebarn restoration update

Herb Heinrichs and crew are again working on the Friesen housebarn. The root cellar is complete with wood flooring and walls; windows are presently being rebuilt and installed and work has begun on replacing the floors on the main level. The house is also hooked up to hydro with new wiring and outlets throughout.

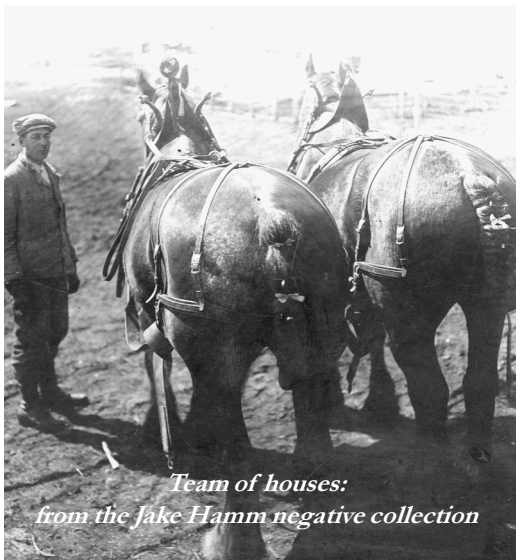
In 2003 we have received another grant from Manitoba Culture, Heritage, Tourism for \$11940. We have also received \$5000 from the RM of Rhineland, an anonymous donation of \$1000, and \$250 from the Town of Altona.



Wendy Friesen, Anne Friesen, and Elizabeth Friesen clean up after the WAG Volunteer Committee tour

Events

On May 13, 2003 the Winnipeg Art Gallery Volunteer Committee came to Neubergthal Heritage Village for lunch and a tour. Forty-two people attended the *Through the artist's eye* exhibit in Altona, and then enjoyed the hospitality of Neubergthal. Rita Bienvenue, chair of the Committee, writes: "It is not everyday we have the opportunity to hear or see an aspect of Manitoba history and to experience it so vividly. Many of us learned a great deal about Mennonite settlements and early living conditions."



Team of houses: from the Jake Hamm negative collection

