



Spring 2009 Vol.7, No.1

## THIS ISSUE

This issue features a memoir of life in the village, as well as a sample letter written to "The Post" by Mrs. Abram Friesen.

## Come & visit

Tours of *Neubergthal, A Mennonite Street Village*, are available upon request.

**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: NHFI@mts.net**

## Neubergthal Heritage Foundation

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Norma Giesbrecht  
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# Neubergthal Notes



*Berhard and Helena[Klippenstein]Hamm*

## The best place on earth

*By Norma Giesbrecht*

This memoir is to compliment the accompanying letter (see page 2) written to "The Post". My mother, Mrs. Abram Friesen, wrote regularly to "The Post". She developed a good rapport with Frau Kliewer, the editor of this newspaper. Once or twice she came from Steinbach to Neubergthal to visit mother. A very special time for both of them.

Mother loved reading and writing all her life. She faithfully kept a diary from 1932-1988. Her last entry was on July 22, 1988 just 12 days before her passing. It was still written in her precise lovely handwriting. She penned many letters to various people over the years, thus keeping in touch with many, both young and old.

Her father [my grandfather] Bernhard Hamm was born in Russia and was one of those five Hamm brothers. He came to Canada by ship in 1874 when he was 10 years old.

Later he married Helena Klippenstein, two of her sisters had married two of Bernhard's brothers. Bernhard built the house in Neubergthal now known as the Friesen housebarn. Bernhard and Helena raised six children

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here, five girls and one boy. My mother was a middle child in this family.

My mother, Margareta, married Abram Friesen on Dec. 2, 1915. My grandfather, Bernhard Hamm, lived in this house with his children till his passing at age 84, in April 1948.

My parents had taken over the farming operation and also raised a family of five in this house, three boys and two girls. John [Nick] died at age six in Jan. 1978, Henry died at age 67 in May 1987, Abe died at age 59 Aug. 22, 1988, and Helen, my only sister, mentor, and best friend died at age 78 on Dec. 18, 2003.

My father went to his reward at age 60 on Oct. 23, 1952. For 36 years my mother was a widow, she passed away at age 94 on Aug. 5, 1988.

Here I am in 2009, Norma, born on Feb. 24, 1940. I was an after thought. My father said I was a bonus, my mother, at age 45, wasn't sure about that.

Living in Neubergthal as a child, the baby of the family, I was pampered and loved. I look back and see it all as the best place on earth. My actual growing up happened

later going through many dips and valleys that God in His grace saw me through.

I enjoyed school, learned readily, had great teachers, read every book in our limited library several times over. I loved Friday afternoon baseball games in June when we would play ball against neighbouring schools, even

though I didn't rate big raves in playing baseball. I was not too bad in the cheering section. The annual school picnic winding up the school year was always a highlight. My ratings as an athlete were on the low side but I'm sure I did well on the five cent ice cream cones. My mother would walk over to the picnic sight for "faspa" after her nap sporting a big black umbrella rain or shine. She was ready for any conditions, embar-

rassing me no end. To this day I still have an issue with black umbrellas.

December was, of course, very special, when practicing for the Christmas concert took top priority. Walking to our little church and back was no hardship. The program on December 24 was the best. I had a new dress, new shoes, bags of goodies, gifts, what was there not to love? *N*



*The housebarn the Klippensteins built, as it stands today. Newly renovated by the NHF, it is known today as The Friesen Housebarn Interpretive Centre.*

## A letter written by Mrs. Abram Friesen [Margaret Hamm] to "The Post"

Dec. 28, 1973  
Altona MB

A greeting to all readers and friends of "The Post." A special greeting to the editor. It is always good to read the short articles that she writes.

I wanted to write a letter this year and now on December 28th I must do it. My news isn't exactly the latest, that you can hear on radio, TV, and other news papers. So many extra ordinary things are happening one cannot remember them all. One is always ready to hear and see new things. That is the way it is for me.

By now the Christmas celebration is a over. The weeks were busy preparing, listening to Christmas carols and music. The many school children presenting Christmas programs in schools and churches. The same story about Jesus birth are repeatedly told in story and song. Even if it is a bit different than in our day. I have been to only one Christmas program in the Bergthaler Church in Altona where some of my grandchildren were involved. Most of it was in English but the story is so familiar that we can understand it. There were a few German songs and recitations so every one was happy.

In our little town of Altona December was a busy month. It was the grand opening of the Altona Mall. People came from far and near. It was no easy task to get around. Respectable people had their shopping carts overloaded. I only shopped a little and once I got to the COOP store I felt relieved. Seriously it wasn't that bad.

A regular writer to "The Post" is Mr A.D. Friesen. He is presently in BC to visit family and friends. They will be gone for an undetermined time. He would be better at presenting news from Altona. The A.D. Friesens still have their home in an apartment in Altona.

My sister Helen Driedger (86) lives in the same apartment block. She is healthy and happy and enjoys good neighbours on both sides of her apartment. Mr John J. Sawatzky is one of them, he is doing well inspite of using crutches to get around. There are so many old people in our day and more places are being built for them. The government takes good care of them and they don't have to worry about living expenses. But the hardships of getting older are still there, it is good to see people happy there. Maybe it won't always be that way.

I am happy and thankful that I can still be in my old

home that my parents built. In winter I try to keep the house warm and comfortable, heating with oil, wood and coal. An electric heater is also available. My son Abe and I have ample room in this house. On December 9th I took big steps toward the end, I turned 80. What will happen now I don't know but I've done well so far and if it is to be I'll continue doing well. Everything gets a little more complicated as one gets older.

Other older people know that too, many get to be 90 years and more. At present I am the oldest person in the village.

I don't have much to report from the village. There is a beautiful white snow cover outside and it is a joy to look out the window. The roads have been good, during the Christmas holidays the weather was mild. Prior to that we cold weather and icy conditions. Those that were walking had a hard time, many were surprized to find themselves unexpectedly on the ground with pains to accompany their fall.

Our neighbour Sara Hamm who lives with John P. and Helena Klippenstein is getting good care from her sister. She has been confined to her wheel chair for many years and is presently doing well but is not getting any better. She is of clear mind and is very patient and enjoys com-

pany. At Christmas she prepared gifts for others.

The dairy farming has gone down a lot in the village. There are only four farmers still delivering milk. A few have cows only for their own use and some have gone to raising chickens. We have only three animals and they are cats. Abe farms our acreage in summer.

Helena, Mrs Jacob Friesen is somewhat better. She can do her own housework now with the help of her husband.

On December 23rd we had a wedding, the groom was Henry Kehler, who lives just north of the village, his bride was Mrs Helen Braun from Hochstadt. The wedding was in the Altona Bergthaler church. May their marriage be blessed with joy. I was fortunate to be able to be there.

These are the last days of this year and that brings to mind memories of the "Bromtopp." We'd hear bells by the window and then were asked permission to come in. Yes, yes please do was the

answer.

In closing I would wish all the readers of "The Post" a peaceful "New Year."

Mrs Abram Friesen *N*



*Mrs. Abram Friesen reads "The Post."*

## NHF Update

### *Eddie Schmidt Education & Resource Centre*

The Neuberghthal Heritage Foundation and the Eddie Schmidt Housebarn Committee are pleased to announce that the Eddie Schmidt Housebarn, which was willed to the NHF in 2006, will become the Eddie Schmidt Education and Resource Centre. Neuberghthal is presently included in the grade 4-6 Department of Education curriculum, U of M Architecture Department and Uof W Geography Department field studies. As a result of the role Neuberghthal plays in this provinces education, it was decided that the centre will have a strong focus on education in agriculture, horticulture, and architecture, with the space designed for lectures and cultural activities such as drama and musical events. Plans also include a demonstration garden



that will educate those interested in learning gardening from planting to preservation. The planning team includes Mike Hiebert Environmental Design (Martin and Anne Klippenstein's grandson), Tim Krahn, Engineer (Paul Krahn's brother, currently working on a PHD in Engineering/Architecture), Adam Braun, Engineer (son of Brad and Karen Braun), Nathan Kehler, Engineer (son of Carey and Eileen Kehler), and the

University of Manitoba Architecture Department. For more information on the project, or if you are interested in volunteering physical labour, please contact Brad Braun (Eddie Schmidt Housebarn Project Chair) at 324-6126. To make donations contact Margruite Krahn at 324-1612 or Peter Klippenstein at 324-1506.

# Comings & Goings

## Neubergthal Annual General Meeting - Tuesday, March 10th at 7:30

On February 14th **Ken Hamm** and **Karen (K.C) Carlsen** of Morris were married at the Neubergthal Community Centre

On July 26th,2008 **Micah John** was born to **Courtney and Butch Friesen**.

## What else is there to do when it rains in February?



*Left: Looking South, from the North end of the Village  
Below: Looking East Southeast at road level, from the intersection of the 421.*

*Lower left: Looking North toward the old school yard.  
Bottom: Looking into John Isaak's brain after the corn is off, and before the house is finished.*

