



# Neubergthal Notes

Fall 2023

Volume 21 #3

## Village at Play

For the summer of 2023 a tribute to the history of sports in Neubergthal was showcased in the village schoolhouse. The components for the exhibit were sourced through players, family members, or village sports enthusiasts. This included uniforms, sports equipment, pictures & other memorabilia. The official opening took place on June 3 and was accompanied by a picnic for the public at the Commons, served out of the historic Hamm House picnic shelter. Some responses in the guest book:

"There is clearly so much thought and love that went into achieving such a project"

"Excellent preservation"

"Really great information, lots of stories"

"A great exhibition."

"Loved it! Beyond informative and very welcoming." *NN*



## Darp Days in Neubergthal

The Neubergthal Heritage Foundation once again held its annual Culture Days this fall. Promoted as "Darp Days," the two-day event aims to represent village and West Reserve history, and local culture in general.

On Friday, Sept. 22, the NHF brought back the public soup-and-pie-supper tradition, which had been on hold

afternoon: a flat-deck with bales to sit on and pulled by a tractor trundled along the single street. Its passengers were treated to an in-depth, often tongue-in-cheek history of the various village properties, their stories narrated by two senior one-time residents, Jolanda Schwartz Friesen and Joyce Kehler Friesen.



since the aging village community hall was sold off to a private owner several years ago. Turnout at the Commons barn was beyond expectations, with around 150 people showing up for sloppy joes, cabbage borscht, noodle soup, and fresh bread that had been baked in the Friesen Housebarn bake-oven. Following this repast, a popular local band, the Quonset Brothers, entertained the crowd with a wide range of country music.

Saturday, Sept. 23, was anchored by two "trailer tours" of the village, one in the morning and one in the

The Plautdietsch component of Darp Days was fulfilled by Al Schritt of Winkler delivering Low German stories written by Reuben Epp and Jack Thiessen, as well as his own writing and general commentary about the language. Following a build-your-own-sandwich lunch, attendees were invited to a slide-show presentation by Dr. Aileen Friesen that summarized the 2023 "Russländer 100" train tour, where she had participated as both an organizer and a lecturer.

To fill in gaps during Saturday's events, guests could take in the historical village sports exhibit that had been

created by the NHF Curatorial Committee and had been open to the public all summer, in the restored Bergthal schoolhouse. In the Hamm House picnic shelter, events coordinator Kimberly Sawatzky had set up carnival-style games, and Edward Vincent Arcenal of Altona provided a photo booth with masks and costumes. The afternoon also included a watermelon-and-rollkuchen fasha.

A final bit of theatre closed Darp Days 2023 late in the afternoon.

Immediately following Dr. Friesen's presentation, chanting and a loud, low bromm-ing could be heard emanating from the back room of the Commons



barn. A troupe of cleverly and creatively disguised and costumed actors slowly emerged onto the stage, two of them "playing" the resident Brommtopp instrument and the remaining six singing the traditional New Year's song. Troupes of young unmarried men carrying out this pageantry was a common occurrence in West Reserve villages up to the mid-1950s. Though not without its controversial aspects now and then, the Brommtopp was a colourful and rather uncharacteristic element of West Reserve life at one time. (More details can be found by Googling Brommtopp.) NN



## Report from the NHF Summer Student

My name is Isabel Mierau, and I have lived in the street village of Neubergthal since 2012. Living in a working housebarn with my family while raising plants and animals led me to feel a sense of home in the walls of century-old buildings. My parents became involved in NHF through their passion and interest in keeping village spirit, as did I when I applied for the summer student job. My childhood of exploring heritage buildings and the convenience of



living a 3-minute walk from my workplace made me a perfect candidate for the summer student job. I wanted to learn more about Mennonite history, and I feel more conscious of it now than ever walking through my housebarn of creaky stairs and painted floors.

My previous knowledge of Mennonite and Neubergthal's history allowed me to dive deeper into topics through the summer, providing me with a broader knowledge base to work with when having conversations with visitors. The job included guiding people through a village tour while providing interesting information to guide them visually. I had never given proper tours before, and this job put me out of my comfort zone.

Engaging in historical conversation with the intelligent folks who stopped by was nerve-wracking, but as time went on, I got acclimated to conversations with people who had their memories to share. The people I engaged with made my summer incredible, and taught me about history in one of the most meaningful ways: by observing personal experiences.

The job did not include working alongside someone all day, and while I did occasionally work alongside other NHF employees, the majority of the work was unsupervised. This meant I worked at my own pace, which could be productive or ineffective. In my case, I believe it made me productive, and I could focus on what needed to get done. When working with historical artifacts, it is important to view every object as having a story to tell. Each item, from an old bottle to a wooden trunk, has value and should be recorded as important to the retelling of Mennonite history. My organizational strengths helped keep stories accurate and artifacts alive while cataloging and moving pieces. Something I hadn't expected to put lots of time into was managing

NHF's social media. This required me to take pictures and write about schedules, events, and interesting aspects of our exhibits for the public to view and hopefully invite viewers to come visit.

I had been encouraged to set up a kid's event to promote some community among the younger people of the village. The volunteers and I ended up hosting a games and movie day where we played with water balloons, explored the Friesen Housebarn through a scavenger hunt, ate snacks, and watched a movie in the Commons Barn.

This fall, I began studying at Carleton University in the Bachelor of Global and International Studies program. Living and studying in Ottawa is giving me an opportunity to continue growing my management, leadership, and social skills through workload management, class leadership, and making new friends. I am thoroughly enjoying Ottawa, but I also can't wait to return home to see my friends and family and share the stories and lessons I've learned. *NN*

## More from the village

*A Note from Hizee Friesen-Pankratz*

This past summer I had the opportunity to help maintain the NHF's Eddie Schmidt property. This included setting up for events like weddings and Darp Day. The highlight of my summer with the NHF was the community picnic held in June. The event was a great way for kids from Neuberghthal and visitors to have fun playing games and exploring the buildings.



*Hizee on her horse Bemba in front of the schoolhouse.*



*This 2023 Ford F150 Lightning is charging its batteries at the FLO charger at The Commons in Neuberghthal.*



*Flowers outside the Bergthal Schoolhouse*



*Gretna School visit*



*April 22, 2023: Tina Fehr Kehler and Angela Klassen perform Kehler's whimsical one-act play, "Mitsch and Süß," at NHF's annual Low German program, Tietfedrief.*



*At Tietfedrief, two past residents of Neuberghthal, Joyce Kehler Friesen and Jolanda Schwartz Friesen, engage in a light-hearted dialogue about village culture.*

Activities, sports,  
and games for  
the kids at the  
Village Picnic in  
June.



NHF staff created a kiosk for the Sunflower Festival at the end of July; it included the scale model Larry Hamm built from 1987-1988 of his grandparents' Neuberghtham housebarn.

## Upcoming events

November 23 at 7:30 pm

### Writers' Coffeehouse

On this Thursday Maxine Penner and friends will host a coffeehouse in the Bergtham Coffeehouse (on The Commons yard, south of the Klippenstein housebarn) focussing on writing and sharing poetry!

November 25 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

### Village Market

This craft and baked goods market will be hosted in The Commons Barn.

December - Date & Time TBA

### Christmas for the Village

This mix and mingle event will be for those of us living in Neuberghtham to get together and celebrate the season.

## T-SHIRTS!

Hot off the silk-screener we are offering merch! A t-shirt featuring an original Neuberghthaler, Helena Funk Hamm baking bread. They're \$25 and can be purchased at The Commons barn. Email Kimberly Sawatzky if you'd like one!



## NHF contact information

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[facebook.com/NeuberghthalCommons](https://www.facebook.com/NeuberghthalCommons)

## Announcements

We apologize to those of you who tried to reach us by email before or during Darp Days. Our administrator was tending to an unforeseen personal matter and we neglected to designate someone to take over responding to messages. Please continue to communicate with us by email.

Also, the NHF has accepted the resignation of administrator Katie Saunders, effective the end of September 2023. The NHF has also accepted Susie Fisher's resignation from the NHF Board, and is pleased to announce her hiring as NHF Administrator. Additionally, the NHF is pleased to announce that Kimberly Sawatzky's role as NHF Events Coordinator has been expanded to include Site Management.

## IMPORTANT re Neuberghtham Notes

\*\*\*\* THIS WILL BE THE LAST PRINT ISSUE OF NEUBERGTHAL NOTES TO BE MAILED OUT. \*\*\*\*

For those of you who have been receiving it in hard copy, please register your email address with our Administrator ([administrator@neuberghthal.ca](mailto:administrator@neuberghthal.ca)), so we can continue providing you with our twice-yearly issues. *Neuberghtham Notes* can also be found posted on our website ([neuberghthalheritagefoundation.com](http://neuberghthalheritagefoundation.com)).