



Neubergthal Notes

Kohmt trijj nohm Darp

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Stop in say hello!

For information about these events or the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation contact Ray Hamm - 204-324-4115 or rmhamm@icloud.com

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Where were your great-grandparents and what were they doing in the 1870's?

It was an eye opener. There is so much more to see in the picture of our places. On April 1 in the Neubergthal Community Centre, Charlie Nelson, Peter Atkinson, Renald Parent and Rose Hildebrand told stories of their families and their people as part of an event sponsored by the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation. These stories are all part of this place.

Charlie Nelson and Peter Atkinson are elders, teachers, and healers in Roseau River First Nation. Renald Parent was a farmer and businessman in St. Joseph and they are living in Winnipeg now. Rose Hildebrand grew up in Neubergthal and is the great-granddaughter of Bernhard and Helena (Hamm) Klippenstein who founded one of the yards in the village.

For the Mennonite and the French peoples, the 1870's were a time for new land and new expansions, new possibilities. For the Anishinabe people, the 1870's began a time of retreat and downsizing. Canada was a new country (1867); Manitoba was a very new province (1870). The Queen's representative and the Anishinabe people signed Treaty One in 1871. Before that, the Hudson's Bay Company had some rights and the fur traders were guests in the territory of the First Nations peoples. Treaty One was signed after lengthy consultations, and there was to be further consultation. Then in 1876, the Indian Act was imposed on all these relationships and territories and peoples; there had been no further consultations. Almost everything changed for the First Nations.

In the mid-1870's, Mennonites came to western Canada (fearful of changes coming in Russia/Ukraine and in response to the Canadian government inviting immigrants) looking for land, freedom of conscience (freedom from military service) and the right to determine their own education. A cluster of Klippenstein families were at the core of starting Neubergthal and Altbergthal. It feels like we have been here in western Canada forever, but it is only 140 years.

The Parent family came to New France in the 1600's and lived just outside of Quebec City for over a century. At least one of their houses is still standing there.

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An old barn and Canada 150

Why would anyone move a barn from near Steinbach to Neuberghal in the 1870's?

Suppose that you had been living on the East Reserve and had begun to create your home, your yard and your farm. But the soil was not very good. You heard about better land on the other side of the Red River, about 100 kilometres away. You come to the West Reserve and there is lush prairie grass as far as the eye can see. Not a tree in sight. No water anywhere, except maybe in some low spots in the land. But the soil is fantastic! Yes, we will move here, and we'll just have to bring the barn with us. All this was just a few years after Confederation and after the province of Manitoba was formed.

In the 1870's European individuals and business interests were guests in the homelands of the First Nation peoples. About 50 years before this, there were some agreements between Lord Selkirk and some First Nation groups to allow some of the 'Selkirk settlers' to live along portions of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The British Crown had somehow assumed

the authority to give business and trading rights for Rupert's Land to the Hudson Bay Company in 1670 and this was stretched over into the North Western Territory as well. The fur traders and explorers were guests and tourists in these lands.

Eastern Canada was shaped by Confederation in 1867. The first part of Manitoba was created in 1870. The civil war in the United States had ended a few years earlier (1865) and more U.S. settlers were moving west. Manitoba and Canada needed settlers on the prairies, especially along the border (as if the indigenous people were invisible or did not count) to declare sovereignty and ownership. There was some concern about whether the wide open prairies were suitable for permanent habitation and settlement. In Russia, there were many landless Mennonite families (due to family size and laws restricting how farms could be passed on in a family, and the government, caught in wars and conflicts, was talking of changing the freedom, the exemption, from military service for Mennonites). In 1873 delegates from several Mennonite groups and colonies came to North America. At the same time, Canada had an active immigration policy and arrangements were made to invite Mennonite groups to come to Canada. Mennonites had a reputation for farming, even in isolated places. The

first group of Mennonite families from Russia came to western Canada in 1874.

In 1871, Treaty One (the first treaty covering western lands) was signed after significant discussion among First Nations and between First Nations and the representatives of the British Crown. There was to be more and ongoing consultation. Treaty One covered southeastern Manitoba; First Nations would share their land with new settlers.

I wonder if my great grandparents or others ever asked about other people living here. I wonder what they were told by government and land agents.

In 1876, the Indian Act was passed, and suddenly the First Nation peoples were guests in their own homeland. The chilling effects of this Act became more apparent over the years and decades that followed.

The Canadian government made certain promises to the Mennonite immigrants. They could have homesteads and as a special condition for the Mennonites, they could live in villages, they did not have to live on their homestead land. The Mennonites were granted freedom from military service (this request was based on their understandings of the Gospels and the Bible).

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Guess the English Translation / Page 4

1. Woltj
2. Schwalzm
3. Pappelboom
4. Sonnelijcht
5. Kruetijch

Kohmt trigj nohm Darp – Come back to the Village

The Storied Barn – we need your vote!

The Neubergthal Heritage Foundation has been selected to compete for votes and prize money in the National Trust for *Canada's This Place Matters* competition. During the competition the group will be working to raise \$50,000 to go towards the restoration and rehabilitation of the Klippenstein Housebarn.

Go to ThisPlaceMatters.ca find and click on **The Storied Barn** on page 3. Click on vote (You will need to register, create an account the first time you vote). **The closing date is July 17.**

You can vote once every 24 hours. Vote often and consider making a donation for the project (every dollar raised counts as a vote). All funds raised will go to Neubergthal Heritage Foundation (NHF).

Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued by the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation.

The Neubergthal Heritage Foundation's goal is to develop the Klippenstein Housebarn into an education and resource centre focusing on Mennonite culture and history, as well as sustainable development.

NHF is one of a group of six organizations in Western Canada competing for prizes of \$30-60,000. This competition is organized by The National Trust - nationaltrust.ca

For more information contact:

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Pictures submitted by Anne & Sheila

Klippenstein Housebarn (Eddie Schmidt barn)

Left: chore time in March of 1955; Edwin Klippenstein and Eddie Schmidt on a new tractor.

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Some went to the eastern U.S., and in the 1870's some of those people came to Manitoba as a result of efforts by the Catholic Church to establish French communities.

A French community (completely gone now) on the Red River between Letellier and St. Jean had a large commercial flour mill. Years

ago some of the milk from Neubergthal was taken to a cheese factory in St Joseph.

The people here, the First Nations, helped some of the immigrants, the new settlers. One of their words for the new settlers meant 'people with no shoes.' Some of the Roseau First Nation families tried farming but somehow there were restrictions on use of machinery and on marketing. It

did not work out. Often the Indian Act got in the way and settlers kept wanting more land. Charlie and Peter both remember coming to the Altona area, begging, asking for charity and hand outs and they also remember working in sugar beet fields. Being a good neighbour can be complicated; we must move forward and build more bridges.

Written by Ray Hamm

Kohmt trigj nohm Darp – Come back to the Village

OLD BARN from page 2

And they were given the right, the freedom, to determine their own education. This difference and subsequent provincial government actions led many Mennonites to pursue educational freedom in Mexico in the 1920's.)

Oral history in the village says that the Klippenstein/Schmidt barn was reconstructed here in 1876, by the Peter Klippenstein family. Also apparently in that same year, the barn on the yard of Ray and Marilyn Hamm was built by Peter's brother, Bernhard Klippenstein (he had married a widow Hamm with five boys.) Helena Hamm (nee Kehler, wife of Jacob, one of those five boys) had said the timbers in this barn came from the Pembina River just inside

North Dakota. These old barns look the same on outside; on the insides there are similarities and also differences in construction style and materials.

1876 may be a bit early for those barns, but that has been the village story. In any case, it was in those years. Neuberghthal is not the first Mennonite settlement on the West Reserve. Some of the Mennonite families (mostly from Fuerstanland, Chortitza) who came to Canada in 1875 immediately went west from Fort Dufferin (Emerson). Blumenort, Reinland, Osterwick were some of the villages started by that group of immigrants.

In the 1980's after an extensive survey of settlements on the prairies,

Parks Canada said Neuberghthal was the most authentic surviving model of early settlement on the wide open prairie.

In their official statement, Parks Canada said there are significant historic and architectural resources in Neuberghthal. These old barns hold many memories and tell many stories. These barns are significant and authentic monuments.

The barns and the village patterns help us remember something of Canada and of Mennonites.

Whatever we think of Mennonite faith and history, for many of us it is part of how we got here today.

Written by Ray Hamm

Culture Day

Saturday, Sept 9

*Join us in Neuberghthal
for a fun filled day!*

Translation / from page 2

1. Cloud
2. Swallow
3. Poplar
4. Sunlight
5. Weedy



The first project for this summer is a 4-season washroom for the Bergthal School (left), HF Hamm picnic shelter (right behind the tree) and playground. Thank you to the Thomas Sill Foundation whose early commitments made it possible for NHF to get started on this project. The Thomas Sill Foundation pledge was also a significant part of the application for matching funds from Parks Canada for the Klippenstein Housebarn project.