



The Heritage

www.goesselmuseum.com

Spring 2019

For 45 years, our museum has told the immigration story.

By Fern Bartel

The museum commemorates the Russian immigrant families and their new beginnings in Marion County. Heinrich B. Friesen was born in 1837 in Chortiza Colony, So. Russia. After his marriage to Helena Duerksen in 1859, they lived in Alexanderthal, Molotschna Colony, So. Russia. Excerpts from the *H.B. Friesen 1837-1927* autobiography provide a window into his family's long journey from Russia to Kansas in 1879, five years after the Alexanderwohl immigration:

"Everything was ready now. All arrangements had been made for the trip on the railroad and the ship. . . . We counted the days and finally it came when we had to part from the place . . . where we had experienced so much love; never to see it again. Almost all neighbors from the village came to say goodbye. It hurts to part. This we experienced as the last handshake and kiss were given."

"We were a big family and had made the following arrangement. David was three weeks old when we started. I had had a light cradle of tin made for him. This I carried and went first into the railroad car and set it on the first bench, indicating that this would be our place. Then followed Cornelius [age 19] with Justina who was two years old but could not walk yet, so had to be carried. Then followed Bernhard [age 17] with a basket of cups and utensils which we would need for eating on the journey. Then followed Helena [age 11] and Heinrich [age 9] who each had to carry something. David and Gerhard [H. B.'s wife's mentally handicapped brothers] had to carry a trunk made of tin filled with things to eat, holding on to each end of the trunk, with Anna [age 6] leading them. Mother [H.B.'s wife Helena] was at the end of the row."

"The Russian railroad cars were not very comfortable. They had seats with backs to them but the cars were so full that there was no room for sleeping. The small children were put under the benches for sleeping. The rest of us had to get along

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H.B. Friesen and wife Helena (Duerksen) Friesen circa 1917.

Upcoming Events:

Museum Hours

See pg 4 for our Spring hours

Heritage Fundraiser Dinner

Friday, March 15, 6:30 pm

Our featured speaker will be
KWCH Anchor,
Melissa Scheffler
See pg 3 for more details

3rd Annual Art Show

April

Car Show & Sidewalk Sale

June 15

Country Threshing Days

August 2 - 4

Second Monday Family History & Genealogy Group

7 pm, Goessel City Building

March - Bob Schroeder,
Orphan Train

April - Don and Eleanor
Stutzman,
Catlin Cemetery

May - J. Harvey Koehn,
Trip to Poland

June - Sea-Going Cowboys

July - Ilona Abrahams,
The Goessel Alumni
Association

Fern's favorite Plautdietsch tongue twister:

"Feftijch Fata Fruess Frate Freestikj"

English translation: Fifty fat women devour breakfast. (Ask Fern to say it!)

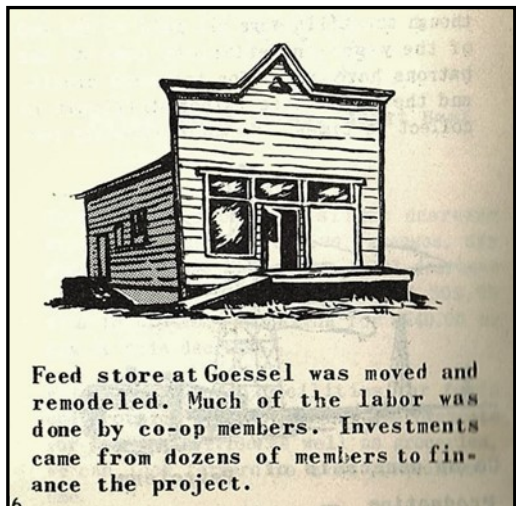
Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum Board Members:

Steve Banman, President; John Janzen, Vice President; Anna Beth Birky, Secretary; Aileen Esau*, Treasurer; Fern Bartel*, Museum Director; Roger Bartel, Howard Birky, Myron Goertzen, Anne Harvey, Ladene Herrick, Nelson Voth, Connie Wiens, and James Wiens. *Non-voting members

Ditt unt Daut (this and that) from Fern Bartel, Museum Director

In 1974, the museum's founders created spaces for families to save some items their ancestors brought from Russia. Of the thirty-some showcases, more than half have artifacts that are specifically identified as such. When you leave the only home you know, what do you take and what do you leave behind? On the Kansas prairie back then, there was no Walmart. You had to make do with what you brought or what you could borrow from neighbors. Immigrating as a large group was very advantageous.

I was thinking of a fun activity for visitors and my thoughts turned to the items brought over in the emigration from Russia, so I created a Russian Passport Scavenger Hunt. The hunt will be available throughout 2019 and is free for museum members; nonmembers \$4 for each passport plus regular admission. Families or small groups can work together to complete the challenge! Optional souvenir passports will be available for purchase. I must make it clear that, while this scavenger hunt is based on real artifacts, stories, and photos from the Goessel Mennonite community, it was assembled as historical fiction.



Above: Re-purposed Goessel State Bank Building. From the 1952 Crossroads Co-op Association Annual Report

On another topic, I have been working along with Mayleen Thiesen Vinson (who manages our Facebook page), looking at past Goessel businesses and where they were located.

Ilona Abrahams and Jerry Toews have also expressed interest in this topic. I have begun making a timeline using old Goessel telephone books; the earliest is from 1913. The sad thing is, since everybody knew where the businesses were, no addresses were given for them! Please bring in photos you have to share or information about past businesses in Goessel. The search is ongoing!

The museum's annual meeting was held on January 20, 2019. About 80 people enjoyed hearing Brian Stucky's program on the Cherokee Trail. Volunteers were recognized. New museum board members are Roger Bartel and Myron Goertzen, and Ladene Herrick has been appointed to fill an open position. Both Jim and Connie Wiens were reelected to the board. Faspa was enjoyed after the program.



This recently-donated clock, dated 1822, made the journey from Russia to Kansas. How many Russian clocks will you find at the museum?

What is a Russian Mennonite Wall Clock?

A Russian Mennonite Wall Clock is a "large, long pendulum wall clock driven by weights, all metal and without any housing. They were intended for the farm household of the 19th Century. (*Mennonite Mirror*, Jan. 1984, pg 5)

These clocks were sought after in the Mennonite villages in the Ukraine. They were essential in every Mennonite home to maintain the order of daily living. They had a reputation for being well made and were considered a status symbol.

If a father wanted to send the message to his daughter's suitor that it was time to go home, he wound the clock.

Traditionally when a couple got married, the groom received a clock from his parents. The young couple's initials and the year were painted on the face of the clock.



In 1890, a common laborer had to work approximately two months to earn the price of one clock. Those who could not afford a clock were looked down upon as poor and "not properly established".

The clock with its bulky pendulum and heavy brass weights was packed up and taken along on the immigration journey.

Some were packed into trunks or baskets and some were wrapped in a blanket and hand carried on the long trip across the ocean to their new homes on the prairie.

For more information about Russian Mennonite wall clocks, see the book, *Mennonite Furniture* by Janzen and Janzen.

- Mayleen Thiesen Vinson

Immigration Story, continued from pg 1

with sleeping as well as we could even in a sitting position. The most difficult part of the journey was when



we had to change trains at night when everyone was sleeping. The journey was more difficult than we had imagined but with the Lord's help we overcame all difficulties."

They reached the city of Antwerp, the capital of Belgium. The ship they were scheduled to board had to leave before the group arrived, causing a delay of five days. He wrote about passing the

time by watching a carnival in the street, with young and old wearing their wooden shoes that made a big clattering noise on the paved street. There were many women there, too, and they danced and shouted in a big empty space. *"We were satisfied to stay a ways off."* They went to a museum in the morning and then another in the afternoon, where they saw prehistoric animals that lived before the flood. His story continues at the ship.

"Monday we got onto the ship named Switzerland and Tuesday when we woke we were on the way between Holland and Belgium. . . . We then entered the English

Channel and here the ship began to rock back and forth. Soon passengers went to the side of the ship, 'to pay tribute to the ocean.' . . . The sea often was as quiet as if covered by ice. As a result, our family did not suffer from sea sickness although some close to us were bothered with it throughout the trip. Often we could see large numbers of fish following and swimming around the ship."

"We were 16 days on the ship. . . . We arrived at the Delaware River. . . . It felt good to have solid ground under the feet again." [June 24, 1879].

"In America, the trains go at such a furious pace that a person going along the aisle of the car has to hold on to the seats along the way to keep from falling from one side to the other. . . . We went through a number of towns and about sundown came to our last station, Peabody."

"Before the train stopped we already saw our brothers, sisters, and friends who had come to welcome us and to take us to their homes. The welcome, after five years of absence, was from the heart, with love. What we felt, I cannot adequately describe. Only those who have experienced it can know."

- H.B. Friesen was an uncle to the museum director's maternal grandmother.

What was in an Immigrant Trunk?


"A number of steamship companies ... in 1874 allowed each adult ticket holder to bring up to 27 cubic feet of baggage and freight on board. About three hundred pounds of cloth, clothes, dishes, bedding, furniture, books, seeds, herbs or tools could be packed in boxes or trunks up to the maximum size." - from *The John Frantz People*, by Raymond F. Wiebe.

The average family may have packed in the trunk: "... garments of coarse wool, feather pillows and a feather quilt, sheets, linens, knitted scarfs, hand embroidered satin shawls, a large woolen shawl, a few china and glass heirlooms, a few school day mementos, a pen-written songbook, a Russian pendulum clock, some hand picked seed, a few gold pieces in a secret drawer, and always the Family Bible with the Family Records." - from *They Seek a Country*, by Raymond F. Wiebe.


The two items most often brought with them were the Russian wall clock and the dowry chest.

The more affluent immigrants were able to ship more freight. One such family, who immigrated in 1875, shipped a Russian wagon, a plow, harnesses, anvils, corn knife, wood plane, hoes, hammers, nails, and an additional clothes chest plus a small chest of books.

- Mayleen Thiesen Vinson



2019 Heritage Dinner
Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church
Friday, March 15, at 6:30 p.m.



KWCH12
expect more

SPECIAL PRESENTER:
Melissa Scheffler, KWCH 12 Anchor
"Behind the Scenes"
Melissa will take us "behind the scenes" of the TV news business with stories and videos.

Ticket price: \$50 per person
Will you be attending the Heritage Dinner for the first time?
Only \$25 per person (Ages 12 and under: \$5)
Please call the museum at **620-367-8200** by Monday, March 11 to reserve your tickets.

This event is a fundraiser for the Mennonite Heritage & Agricultural Museum.



Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum
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Goessel, KS 67053

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

(620) 367- 8200
goesselmuseum@gmail.com
www.goesselmuseum.com



Museum Hours:
March, April, October,
& November:
Tues - Sat: 12 pm - 4 pm
Closed Sundays & Mondays
Open by appointment only
in January & February
May - September:
Tues - Sat: 10 am - 5 pm

The Heritage

Written by:
Fern Bartel, Director
Editorial Staff:
Museum Board Members
Mayleen Thiesen Vinson

Renew Your Annual Museum Membership or Become a New Member!

It's easy to become a member. Choose a membership level below, fill out the form, and return it with your check payable to MHAM to: Mennonite Heritage & Agricultural Museum, P.O. Box 231, Goessel, KS 67053.

Individual \$15 Couple \$30 Family \$40 (Includes children and grandchildren age 18 and younger)

Annual memberships run from Jan. 1 - Dec. 31.

Benefits of annual membership

- Unlimited free visits to the museum
- 10% discount on museum store purchases
- One guest pass (two guest passes for couple and family memberships. Not valid for Country Threshing Days)

Life memberships \$500 / person

- Membership fee is added to museum endowment fund
- Unlimited free visits to museum
- 15% discount on museum store purchases
- Five guest passes per year (Not valid for Country Threshing Days)
- No annual membership renewal

I would like an annual membership ____ Individual \$15 ____ Couple \$30 ____ Family \$40

I would like a life membership ____ \$500 / person Telephone: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Please send future newsletters to my email address: _____