Message from the LCHS president

Rosie Brashier

ANNUAL MEETING ~ SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2015
SMITH-ZIMMERMANN MUSEUM, 2:00 P.M.

Special history-related events coming soon!

The first event is the annual meeting of Lake County Historical Society on Sunday, October 18 at 2:00 at the Smith-Zimmermann Historical Museum. It will be a chance to see the many exhibit changes at the museum and to get an annual report on the progress of the Lake County Historical Society and museum.

There will be a business meeting, program, door prizes, refreshments, and lots of socializing! Robert Kolbe will present “Stereo Photography in Dakota”. This program discusses the history of stereo photos and their use in Dakota Territory. He will bring an actual stereo camera to demonstrate. Three Krueger Awards will be given to people or groups that volunteer or help the museum in some way.

The second event begins on November 9, 2015, at the Madison Public Library. “Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry” is an exhibit of the history, geography and histories of Dust Bowl survivors. There will also be a series of free public programs that will include the film, “The Dust Bowl” by Ken Burns. For more details on this exhibit see the article in this issue of the Heritage Herald.

Add Sunday, October 18 to your calendar and plan to join us at the Smith-Zimmermann Museum!

Enjoy your world! Enjoy your museum! Enjoy Autumn!

Membership . . . Pay It Forward Challenge:

When reading the Lake County Historical Society Newsletter, do you ever think of a family member or friend that would enjoy the many interesting articles about Lake County history? Maybe this person lives in Lake County or maybe they grew up in the area and have moved away. The Board of Directors would like to challenge members to “Pay It Forward.” It works just like buying someone’s meal or coffee in a drive-thru except you would need to complete the enclosed membership form for that person, pay the dues, and let them enjoy the newsletter as much as you do. It would make a great Christmas gift, too. It is up to the individual if they want to be anonymous or let themselves be known. Please help strengthen the membership of the Lake County Historical Society and help support the Smith-Zimmermann Museum.

Attention Snow Birds:
As you make plans to move to a warmer climate for the winter months, be sure to let us know what you want us to do with your newsletter. Do you want us to hold it until you get back or send it on to you? Unfortunately, the Post Office does not forward our newsletters, and we don’t want you to miss receiving a copy.
Bells of Lake County

Dale Nighbert

Before frontier settlements had bells, the surest way to spread the news of an out-of-control fire or some other type of danger was the firing of a six-shooter. As communities grew, bells of all shapes, sizes, and styles were bought and shipped from foundries back east. Once they arrived, they were suspended from the buildings’ rafters and waited to be rung.

Bells were hung in the tall steeples of churches. Their gentle and sometimes somber tolling announced the call to Sunday worship or the funeral of a loved one. They were hung in the schools’ belfries and informed the children of the beginning or end of the school day. The clanging of the bells hanging in the cupolas of community halls and fire stations would summon the needed volunteers during times of fires or other emergencies. Bells were also rung to inform residents that it was time to wake, to work, or to eat. The ringing of bells even informed citizens of historic events, such as the signing of the Treaty of Versailles which ended World War I.

Unfortunately, many of Lake County’s early bells no longer exist, but some have survived the passage of time. One of these is located in front of the Madison fire station located on Southeast 3rd Street.

The Madison Fire Department was established in 1884, a few years after the city was organized. Two years later, an "Engine House" that stored the fire equipment was built west of Egan Avenue on Center Street. At the top of this building was a beautiful cupola, minus a bell.

In January 1887, the City Council, on the recommendation of the local fire chief, approved a motion to “procure an alarm bell suitable for ringing.” A few months later a brass bell weighing 1525 pounds and costing $266.75 was ordered and delivered from the Henry McShane & Co. foundry in Baltimore, MD. Records indicate that John Buckley, a local resident, was paid $32.43 for hanging the bell.

The bell served the fire department and the community as an early warning device for emergencies for the next 23 years. But, in 1910, as technology improved and electrical apparatuses were invented, a “gong” was placed on an electric light pole near the fire station. This gong replaced the need of the bell, and later a siren replaced the gong.

In 1930, the old Engine House was razed and the present City Hall with the fire station attached was built at the same location. The bell that was no longer used was moved onto the roof of the new building, more to the back and out of sight from public viewing. And there it stayed quiet for the next 79 years.

In 2009, the bell was removed from the roof and moved to the new fire station built in 1985. The Madison Daily Leader described its appearance as a “homely-looking artifact” covered with dirt, grime, and a green patina. With the help of former Fire Chief Jerry Johnson, Craig Vanhove, and others, the bell was refinished and hung, showing the beautiful, shiny brass underneath.

Times have changed, and so has the need for bells. School bells no longer ring, and fire bells have been replaced with sirens. Thankfully, church bells continue their weekly chime. There’s something about the ringing of a bell that always seem to grab our attention or perhaps touch our sentiments – just as they did with the early pioneers.
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Nunda's fire bell was preserved when the old fire hall and jail was torn down some years back. Plans were to junk the bell, but Galen Crosby purchased it and moved it to his Lake Herman home. His home was once the Lommen Country School that was located in the Nunda area. Galen displayed it as a lawn ornament for many years. The bell was recently moved back to Nunda and placed in front of the present fire hall. Plans are to move it to the roof of the building. Pictured with the bell is Galen Crosby.

Winfred’s original fire bell, made in Ohio, was once located near the jail and the old fire hall building. In 1984, the present fire station was built and the bell was moved in front of the building.

Many of the area churches still have their century old bells hanging in their steeples. However, over the years some Lake County churches have disbanded or joined other churches. One of these was the Lake Park Church built in 1892 south of Rutland where the Lake Park Cemetery is today. The church closed in the mid-1940s, was moved to Rutland, and now houses Black’s Photography Studios. A tall, metal frame structure, built by Leonard Kirkeby and Galen Crosby houses the bell in the cemetery where the church was located originally.

There’s another church bell located on Territorial Road at Lake Herman. The late Andy Wood took possession of the bell that once hung in the rafters of the old Lutheran Church in Oldham. He moved it to his property where he displayed it as a lawn ornament. Chuck and Carol Pulford now reside at the location.

(right) A small bell hangs outside the home of Scott and Melanie McIntyre who farm southwest of Junius. Scott says the bell has been part of his home since he moved in several years ago. It is believed that the bell was part of the Olson country school located a mile north of his property.

(below) Rutland’s first school was a two-story wooden structure built in 1907. A large bell that hung in its cupula announced the beginning and end of each school day. In 1921, increasing enrollment brought about the building of a new school – a two-story brick structure. There the bell hung atop of the building for many years until it was removed in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Today, the bell is proudly displayed in front of Rutland’s school building.

(below) Wentworth’s school was built in 1908 and its last graduating class was 1949. The school continued to house grades K-8 until it closed in 1966. It was later moved and the property sold. The school bell was rescued by Celeste Harrington and placed in a tower at Wentworth’s city park. In 2000, the school bell and tower were moved back to the original school site. Jerome Goebring, who had purchased the land after closure, donated a piece of the property where the memorial now stands.

Note: If you are aware of any bells in Lake County, let us know of their location, or take a picture and send it to us. We’d like to hear from you.
The First Tuesday Discussion Group continues to serve as a source of memories of local history. In July, the group concentrated on the history of the Lake County Poor Farm which was located on the southwest side of Lake Madison. The August and September topics were memories of country schools in Lake County.

In July, the group welcomed guest Paul Christiansen who shared much information about the Lake County Poor farm that later became Lakeview Nursing Home. The first Poor Farm manager that Paul remembered was Dave Rollins, who was there from the late 1920’s to the mid 1930’s. Other managers were George Doering and Roy DeBoer.

The Poor Farm was funded by Lake County and came about to fill a need for taking care of people who were experiencing difficult times. This was in the time period before Social Security was implemented. The number of people living there varied. Paul recalled that up to twenty people were there at some points in time. Most folks were housed in the large house and there were at least four smaller houses for families. In 1933 and 1934, approximately thirty children who lived at the Poor Farm attended District 25 country school called Woodrow Wilson School. This school was located one mile south of the Poor Farm. It was later moved to Prairie Village in 1975.

In August, the group began a discussion about country schools in Lake County. It was decided that it would be best to take one township at a time and talk about the schools located there. According to South Dakota law, school lands were located in sections 18 and 36 of each township. The profit made from the farming of these lands went to help fund schools. Country schools were located according to the needs of the township residents. Schools were placed so that students could easily walk back and forth from their homes.

The atlas that the discussion group used for reference was printed in 1930. By that time, some of the country schools were no longer in existence. The Lake County History Book was also used as a reference. If you have information, memories or pictures of rural schools in Lake County, please contact the museum.

Schools in Herman Township were discussed first. Boyd School, started in 1882, was located in section 16 west of where Camp Lakodia is today. Hart School, located in section 28 was built in 1911. Coffey School was located on the south side of the township. McGillivray School, started in 1889, was in section 30. The Westaby School, located in section 25, was also started in 1889. It was later moved to Gracevale Colony and used as a house.

Donald Erickson was supposed to go to Boyd School, but didn’t attend there because the road from his home to the school was not good. Instead he went to the Olson School which was two miles west of his home. Don and his cousin rode their bikes to school. They took their lunches along in syrup buckets. Don’s sister and brother rode a horse to school. Don remembers that the teacher did the janitorial work at the school. The school had no electricity. When school programs were held at night, A.D. McKracken brought a 32-volt battery charger to the school and powered lights for the programs.

Betty Ann Hammer Tufty and Dick Leighton were contacted for information about the Hammer School which was located on the south side of section 8 in Herman Township. Before the church in Junius was built, the school was used for worship. After the Junius School was built, the Hammer School closed. The Hammer School building was purchased by the Boyd family and moved to their farm. It was later moved to the farm where Scott Leighton now lives, about one mile west of its original location. The building

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was eventually torn down. The bell from the Junius School has survived and is mounted on a pole in Brian Leighton's yard which is about 3 miles west of the school's original site.

The September meeting concentrated on the country schools located in Winfred and Farmington Townships. The atlas we were using only had two schools that were marked in Winfred Township. The group felt that this was because the hilly land was used more for livestock than farming which caused fewer families to settle there. Also, some country schools would have been closed when the school was built in Winfred. The McLeod School was located in section 32 and the Olson School was in section 23. Both of these schools were located over four miles southeast from Winfred and in areas where roads did not exist at every section line.

Since there were few schools in Winfred Township, the group decided to proceed to Farmington Township. What Winfred lacked in schools, Farmington more than made up for since it was a more populated area. Genevieve Paul wrote about the schools in Farmington Township for the Lake County History Book. Much of her information was used by the discussion group. Several of the Farmington Township Schools were moved to different locations and had name changes. Both the moves and names changes were influenced by the needs of the farm families served by the school.

The Kramer School was in section 4. The school was replaced with a larger building. The old building was purchased by Jim Lawless and moved to his farm and used as a granary. The Kramer School closed in 1946 because of small enrollment. The building was purchased by Nick Fischer, moved to Ramona and used as an addition to his house.

The Feneran School was located one and a half miles south of Ramona. The Rand School was located in section 12 and through the years went by many names: Rand, Witt, Lawless, Bergheim, and Morrill. A new building was built in 1928. The old one was bought by John Lawless and moved to his farm. This school was closed in 1963. The building was moved to the west side of Madison to be used as a house.

The Zuelke School was located in section 23. Many years later a new school was built. This was called the Backhaus School. This school was closed in 1948 and the building was purchased by Herman Abraham and used as a shop and garage. The Zuelke School building was sold to Oscar Mueller and was skidded to his farmstead. The Schrepel School was located in section 34. It was moved to a new location in section 34 and was then called the Kimmel School. It was closed a few years later. The Stier School was built in 1928 in the northeast corner of section 33.

The Richter School was located in section 32 east of the John Richter farm. It was later moved to section 31 near the Herman Richter farm. It kept the Richter name until it closed in 1954. The building was sold to H. A. Casler and moved to his farm to be used as a granary. The Oliver School was in the northeast corner of section 30. This school was moved to the northeast corner of section 29 and called the Black School. After two years, it was moved back to its original location, and it was again called the Oliver School. It was later moved to the southeast corner of section 18 and called the Witt School. When the building was no longer used for a school it was sold to Perle Pitts and moved to his farm.

Until a few years ago, the Center School was still standing in its original location in the southeast corner of section 16. The school was built in 1919, closed in 1937 because of low enrollment, and reopened again in 1950. It was closed permanently in 1963 when the schools in Lake County reorganized. Center School was a landmark for Jerry and me when we took 229th Street as a shortcut home. It sat at the corner where we would turn onto 451 Avenue. One day we almost missed our corner. The school was gone – just gone – no trace of it was left. I still find myself missing the school on that corner. It was moved just a couple of miles to section 27 when it was purchased by Dan Friedrich.

The First Tuesday Group will continue discussion of other Lake County Township Schools at future meetings. Come join us! Visitors are welcomed.
News from the Museum

Cynthia Mallery

This summer, like every summer, was way too short. However, it was nice and cool with only a few hot days. This October when everyone comes for the Annual Meeting, they will see some changes in the museum.

Last fall the military cases were moved to a new location with some new items added and some put away to give them a rest. When redoing the military cases, the guns that related to each war were added to that case. The remaining guns will be displayed according to year and use such as pioneer guns, other war guns, and so on.

The business displays have been moved to a different part of the museum. There are two new displays – one featuring business advertising items and a camera display.

One project this summer has been reorganizing the huge picture collection that is at the museum. This has now been completed with the help of our faithful volunteers.

I am hoping to have a new display together before our Annual Meeting or at least by Veterans’ Day. It does look like things at the museum will be neat as a pin by the Annual meeting.

Hope to see everyone there!

The Annual Meeting of the
Lake County Historical Society is
Sunday, October 18th at 2:00.
Robert Kolbe of Sioux Falls
will present a program titled
“Stereo Photography in Dakota”.
We hope to see you there!

Smith-Zimmermann’s Wish List

1. Lake County History Books
2. Five extra deep boxes to hold Winfred School Trophies (average cost $28.00 each)
3. Pictures and memories from country schools in Lake County
4. Items for the flea market fundraiser

LCHS Dues Increase for 2016

The Lake County Historical Society dues have been $15.00 a year for many years. In August the board decided to raise the dues to $20.00 a year starting in 2016. This was done so that the newsletter and services that the museum provides can continue without cutbacks. LCHS expenses have suffered from inflation such as increased postage cost for the newsletter. Several members have paid ahead on their dues at the rate of $15.00. These memberships will be honored by LCHS.

Wishes Granted

- One Lake County History book
- World War II uniform
- Vietnam Military Uniform
- Many wonderful items for the museum collection

Thank you to the people who gave many items for the ongoing fund raiser at the flea market. This has become a very important fundraiser for the museum. The funds are used for purchasing many needed items for collection preservation.
Wentworth School
by Don Seedorf

Editor’s note: The Lake County Historical Society enjoys receiving mail from our readers. This past year, Don Seedorf, a 90-year-old retired farmer from Wentworth, wrote down his memories of the old days and sent a copy to Smith-Zimmermann Museum. Don recalled the Wentworth Corn Days, the downtown businesses, and recollections of his school days. The following segment describes his memories of what life was like going to school in Wentworth in the 1930s and early 1940s. He says...

People have worshiped in Wentworth’s First Presbyterian and St. Peters Lutheran Churches through several generations. At one time, the Lutheran Church had a parochial school taught by the Pastor and then several lay teachers, the last of who was a Mr. Schramm. The school dissolved in the late 1930s and then the students began attending the “Little Red Schoolhouse on the Hill” which incidentally was the old school song. I still know both the words and melody, and if I’m paid enough, I will promise not to sing it.

Now some useless trivia about that school. It was built in 1908. There were three graduates in the first class, one of which was Vernon Zimmerman whose granddaughter, Lisa Whealey, lives in Madison. I attended there for all 12 years and was given a diploma in 1943. I hesitate to say graduated not being sure if that was the case, or if the administration believed it was less disruption if I was departed, or if the school board thought it was too expensive to buy bigger desks to accommodate me.

Were there bullies in the school in those days? My, yes! But the school board continued to hire them back. There was the “little school house” south of the main structure which held the first three grades. My teacher those three years was Angeline Tweet. That’s Miss Tweet! No, not a bully, but a disciplinarian. As I look back to the patience it took – and does – to not only try to instill some knowledge into 20 or more “dum kopfs” – teaching them cursive writing (required at the time of 1st Graders), “phonics” with flash cards, and why 2+2 was always 4, and plus trying to civilize that many little monsters, it makes old Job appear as anything but.

I can recall one ritual that took place at the close of many days – the admonition “Do not loiter on the way home!” It did not apply to me because I lived 2 ½ miles from town and didn’t have a clue what it meant, but it sounded like a very severe infraction and the results would be very ominous.

One of the minor events, many years and many teachers later, was when one of the little boys named Phillip scared the “be jabbers” out of Miss Walder, one of our high school teachers. She looked out of the south window and saw him walking across the roof of the little school. After being brought to with smelling salts, she went across the school yard and told his teacher who brought him down. Ho-Hum, we upperclassmen had seen him do that often.

The school had two softball fields – then called kitten ball fields. The one on the north side of the school was the 4th, 5th, 6th grade playground. It had a level field with many windows on the first base side and some trees in the outfield. The 7th and 8th grade field had a vicious barb wire fence right by first base and woven wire in the outfield.

There were two classrooms on the first floor – Grades 4, 5, 6 on the north and 7th and 8th Grades on the south. Upstairs had an assembly hall on the south side, a small typing room in the northeast, and another classroom on the north. Another classroom was in the basement. There was a large tubular fire escape that extended to the outside of the assembly hall. If you had the misfortune of being in the north room, you were not forgotten. There was a large pipe fastened near a window with a rope at intervals tied to it. The window could then be used as an exit.

In the mid-1930s, with the aid of surplus commodities and other government funds, some hot lunches were served at noon. There was often one hot dish, Spanish rice, soup, scalloped potatoes, and at times apples or grapefruit. Students still needed to bring their own sandwiches, etc. from home. When I was in school, the cooks were Mrs. Warren, Jennie Powers (Grandmother of Gene Hexom), Alice Costlow (Grandmother of Ada Hueners), and Mrs. Herbert Lessman.

With the changing of the times, the decrease in small farms, and better roads, Wentworth has met the fate of most small towns – very few businesses remain. That was also the fate of the school. There was a fire in the 1940s that damaged the structure. That was one deed of mischief I could not be accused of because I was overseas at the time. Come to think of it, no one accused me of setting any fires scholastically, either. First the high school was discontinued in 1950 after the damaged school was restored and students went to surrounding high schools. Then with consolidation, the district joined Chester. After a number of years, the building became a hazard and was destroyed.

Note: Readers – if you have memories that you’d like to share, please write them down and send them to us. We’d enjoy hearing from you.
Looking Back . . .

Fallout Shelters

by Dale Nighbert

There are certain events that have occurred in America's history that are hard to forget. For many baby-boomers and others, the Cold War and the threat of a nuclear war is one of them.

In mid-October 1962, as the Madison Daily Leader announced the news of the openings of the new community hospital and a new grocery store called Spies Super Value, a United States spy plane confirmed something alarming. The nearby island nation of Cuba, led by Fidel Castro, was preparing sites to accept and store nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union.

President Kennedy considered this an act of aggression and ordered all construction to cease and all missiles be removed. This 13-day stand-off, an event that became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, is often cited as one of the tensest moments in modern history. There was a fear that America could be bombed with a nuclear weapon at any moment.

I was a pre-teen then with a lot of questions about the threatening events that were happening. Could the dark, dungeon like basement of our old two-story home keep out the deadly radiation? Would we have enough food and water to last us during the recommended two-week confinement? What would life be like for those who survived? The daily reports from the newspapers and our black-and-white television sets were ominous. Even the cloudy, dreary like weather added to a sense of gloom.

After two weeks of a tense standoff, an agreement was reached, and all nuclear weapons were removed from Cuba. Within days, life began to return to normal, including in Lake County. However, the fear and consequences of a possible nuclear war still lingered. The following year, communist China began testing for their first nuclear bomb.

"Preparedness" was on the minds of many Americans for several years. At the start of the Cold War in the late 1940s, Americans were made aware of the need to protect themselves in the event of a nuclear war. But, the unfolding of the Cuban Missile Crisis reaffirmed the importance of identifying civil defense leaders, the building and identification of safe fallout shelters, and stocking them with the necessary supplies. Shelters were designed not so much as to protect residents from the bomb blasts but from the fallout of the deadly radiation.

A month after the crisis ended, the Madison Daily Leader reported that six buildings had been designated as fallout shelters – the county courthouse, post office, city armory, City Hall, Casey Drug, and the powerhouse at General Beadle College (Dakota State University). The college had already made plans to construct a series of tunnels leading from the physical plant to the other campus buildings. These six-foot by six-foot tunnels were meant to carry the heat, water, and electrical lines, but they were also designated as fallout shelters. A November 30, 1962, picture in the local newspaper showed an employee from the Army Corps of Engineers out of Omaha hanging a civil defense sign marking the City Hall as one of the shelters.

Milo Natwick was a civil defense director in Madison in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His daughter, Rebecca Edison, recalls that he helped to "identify, supply, and inspect the sites where supplies were stored in air raid shelters." She said that their living room had boxes of rations, etc., organized to go to the shelters. Each box had the civil defense symbol on them. She also remembers that her dad drove an "OD (olive-drab) green" civil defense car with a siren.

Each shelter in Madison was stocked with a two-week supply of crackers, candy, medicines, chemical toilets, and empty water drums. The water drums would be filled once the emergency began so that there would be fresh water.

Different teams were organized, each with different responsibilities. One such team was the "radiological monitors." Their job was to operate the instruments that would determine when it was safe to leave the fallout shelters. It was reported that Lake County needed 55 qualified people in addition to the five that were already trained. Those already certified were Maurice Nold, Loren Schultsy, Louis Bogue, Ronald Adamson, and Cletus Kachel.

By 1967, Lake County had a firm policy set in place identifying the expectancies in the event of a "national emergency." The chain-of-command was led by the chairman of the county commission; the other commissioners came next, followed by the mayor, county auditor, and the city auditor. In an April 27, 1967, interview with the Madison Daily Leader, Madison’s Fire Chief Joe Graves reported that emergency power plants had been set up at the courthouse and hospital. To avoid over loading
the telephone lines, the telephone company was instructed to block out all but about 20 phones to designated people.

Graves said the “siren’s alert signal would be a three-to-five minute steady tone. A three-minute warbling blast means “take cover – go to the shelters.” Robert Schaaf, a local amateur ham radio operator, was slated to become the official radio contact in case the state radio system failed. His daughter, Jan Larson, remembers the tall radio tower that was built in their backyard and the food and other supplies stocked in their basement.

Graves also said that shelter life would be very “regimented” with every hour scheduled for wash-up, housekeeping, classes, religious activities, recreation, and exercise. Half of the population would sleep while the other half engaged in the scheduled activities. “There would be six meals a day – each meal consisting of one dry cracker, hard candy and a cup of water.” Local residents were also encouraged to construct their own private underground concrete shelters, or stock their basements with the necessary food, water, and other supplies.

Schools held drills that prepared students in the event of an attack. “Duck and cover” was one of them. In the event of an unexpected attack, they were told that immediately after they saw a flash of light they were to lie face down on the floor under a table, desk, etc. and cover their heads with their hands. Some former Washington Grade School students recall that the school’s shelter was the old coal stage area under a concrete ceiling that was on the north side of the building. Lola Downs remembers the crowded conditions in the shelter and the fear of a bomb going off. Deb Lingback says that she was “afraid, not so much of the basement, but the thought of a bomb that would wipe us all out.”

For over a generation, the “war scare period,” as some people called it, was on the minds of many. Slowly, the fear of war diminished, and finally, by 1990, after several arms talks, treaties, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War era came to a close.

The need for fallout shelters has since changed, the Civil Defense signs have been removed, and the crackers, candy, and other supplies are now long gone. Pat Keating, retired director of DSU’s Physical Plant, remembers finding a Civil Defense candy container in one of the tunnels some years back. Its contents had all melted together.

The fallout shelters at the Public Safety Building and City Hall now serve as storm shelters. The name Lake County Civil Defense has been replaced with the name Lake County Emergency Management. Its job is to prepare for and respond to all emergencies and disasters – whether they are man-made or natural.
Junius, June 21.
(Special to Madison Leader).

Reflecting upon 54 years of energetic and useful work in this village and its community, Solomon “Solly” Ayres celebrated his 78th birthday yesterday. But 78 years has not dimmed the good-natured interest of this man who was Winfred Township’s first homesteader, a representative at the third term of the state legislature, and an important figure in the development of local industry and enterprise.

The tale of Mr. Ayres’ South Dakota experiences began in 1878 when, as a youth of 24, he drove here with horses from near Adrian, Minn., in search of homestead land. Desiring two quarter sections lying adjacent, he pushed west of the already settled part of Lake County to file on a tree claim and homestead. He became the first landowner of Winfred Township. There followed days of hard work and nights spent sleeping under the stars until over 20 acres of virgin prairie were broken. Not until the fall did Mr. Ayres find time to drive back to his old home for a load of lumber for a shelter.

Grove Provides Lumber

Like many of the early settlers, Mr. Ayres made a trip to the Missouri River for trees. Between Springfield and Yankton, he pulled a great load of cottonwood and elm seedlings which were planted on the tree claim. In recent years, this venture has repaid itself for over 75,000 feet of lumber has been cut for the building of a large hog house and two other structures on the Ayres farm. More than 150,000 feet of material remains in the grove to be cut with the small saw mill on the farm whenever the need arises.

Marking the real beginning of industrial activity in this community was the building of a creamery in the early 90’s at the railroad crossing a half mile east of the present site of this village. Mr. Ayres acted as president during the six years of its operation. Later, the building was cut in two and moved – one half now being used as a machine shop here.

The first business institution to go up in this village was the co-operative elevator of which Mr. Ayres was a member of the board of directors. Built in the middle 90’s, the elevator is still doing an active business.

Recounting difficulties that the early settlers had in becoming established on their lands, Mr. Ayres told how his father, who came here in 1879, had a carload of lumber shipped from Wisconsin. The shipment came as far as Sioux Falls, then the end of the railroad line, and “Solly” was sent there to unload and pile it three miles north of the city until fall when there would be time to haul it here with teams and wagons.

Doesn’t Worry About Times

Mr. Ayres is cheerful about the Depression and says he easily expects to live through the present one. “Don’t worry too much about these hard times, young fellow,” he said to this correspondent. “We’ve had them before.”

Recalling the period following the financial crack-up of 1893, Mr. Ayres said he sold butter and eggs for six cents a pound and a dozen respectively. “I was milking eight or nine cows at that time, and as the market called for unsalted butter, I rigged up a large churn in my cellar that I connected with a shaft to a horsepower on the outside.” Mr. Ayres explained the contrivance proved very successful in wearing out the Depression.

“Grain was very low in price then, too. I remember I thought I was lucky to get 12 ½ cents a bushel for 1,500 bushels of oats I had stored while barley was as low as 10 cents,” said the pioneer.

Mr. Ayres lives here at the home of his son. He says he enjoys most of all taking an occasional trip to the homestead, about two miles west of here which is occupied by another of his sons.

“Solly” died a few months after this interview and is buried at Graceland Cemetery. His descendants continue to live in the Junius area.
“Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry” - Madison Public Library

Madison Public Library is pleased to announce the upcoming arrival of a new exhibition, “Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry”. The library is one of 25 sites nationwide to host and audiences will learn through history, geography and the fascinating histories of Dust Bowl survivors like Caroline A. Henderson who was a 1901 Mount Holyoke graduate, lived in the western panhandle of Oklahoma, and corresponded about the struggles of the time.

The exhibition recalls a tragic period in our history — the drought and dust storms that wreaked havoc on the Great Plains in the 1930s — and explores its environmental and cultural consequences. It raises several thought-provoking questions:

- What caused fertile farms to turn to dust?
- How did people survive?
- What lessons can we learn?

This exhibition will include a series of free and open to the public programs to explore the nature of the connection between humans and nature; the many ways human beings respond to adversity; and how people came to understand and to describe their experiences living through the Dust Bowl.

Schedule of Events

The Writing Life
Tues., Oct. 27th - 7:00 pm
Mitchell author, Jean Patrick, imparts her advice and encouragement on memoir writing and its historical impact on future generations.
Sponsored in part by:

Exhibition Opening
Mon., Nov. 9th - 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Meet the scholars; Dr. John Nelson and Dr. Kurt Kemper who have graciously put time into bringing “Dust, Drought, and Dreams Gone Dry” to our community.
Refreshments provided by:

Film Screening
Part 1: Sat., Nov. 14th - 1:30-4:30 pm
Part 2: Sat., Nov. 21st - 1:30-4:30 pm
The Dust Bowl A Film by Ken Burns “chronicles the worst man-made ecological disaster in American history, when a frenzied wheat boom on the southern Plains, followed by decade-long drought during the 1930s, nearly swept away the breadbasket of the nation.”
Discussion led by: Dr. Kurt Kemper, Professor History, DSU

Book Discussion
Thurs., Nov. 19th - 7:00 pm
“Dust Bowl Diary” by Ann Marie Low
“A moving and informative account of a decade (1927-37) of drought and depression in North Dakota.”
Discussion led by Dr. John S. Nelson, Professor of English, DSU

Life and Writing of Caroline A. Henderson
Tues., Dec. 8th - 7:00 pm (Snow Date: Tues., Dec. 15th)
What do they teach us about agriculture, economy, ecology, and our future?
“Caroline A. Henderson farmed a land claim in the Oklahoma Panhandle from 1907 until 1966. Throughout the years, she chronicled their troubles (drought, dust storms, blizzards) through letters and articles published in Practical Farmer and the Atlantic Monthly – these included the trials of the Dust Bowl.” – Adapted from The Caroline A. Henderson Digital Collection Mount Holyoke College Library
Discussion led by: Dr. Kurt Kemper, Professor History, DSU

Dust, Drought and Dreams Gone Dry was developed by the American Library Association Public Programs Office in collaboration with the libraries of Oklahoma State University and Mount Holyoke College. The exhibition and tour were made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor.
LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LCHS Heritage Herald

The Heritage Herald is published quarterly by members & friends of the Lake County Historical Society and the DSU Production Center. The Society has been established to collect, document, preserve, secure, research, exhibit, and interpret objects of cultural, developmental, and historical value of the Lake County area from the mid-1800s to the present.

If you have questions or comments, please contact our Museum. The LCHS’s Board of Directors meets at 5:15 the first Tuesday of each month at the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum, located on the campus of Dakota State University. Welcome Visitors!!

2015 Board of Directors:
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NEW
Museum Hours
Tuesday-Friday 12:00-4:00

The Smith-Zimmermann Museum
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