

historically speaking

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 304 / St. Paul, Nebraska / 68873

Winter Issue 1997

*Glory Days:
A look at the
St. Paul
championship
teams from
1928 and 1929
and the coach
who made them
a success.*

By Ron W. Sack
(With information supplied from
Clinton Bahensky)

This coming March marks the 70th anniversary of the beginning of a feat in Nebraska basketball history which has never been duplicated: St. Paul is the smallest high school ever to win back-to-back titles in Class A.

The story begins in 1926. Calvin Coolidge was President. The economy was in good health and St. Paul's Board of Education had secured the services of a young man, just one year out of college, to coach the athletic teams and teach at St. Paul High School. Not much attention was paid to him on his arrival in St. Paul,



Below: Pat Panek's graduation photo from Nebraska State Teachers College at Kearney.

football field digging sandburs.

Football. When school started, he had a squad of unseasoned material to work with, as football had only started in 1924. Pat's first football team won four and lost five, scoring 155 points to the opponents' 127. Panek's 1927 football team was undefeated (9-0) with 148 points to the opponents' 31. They were ranked #1 in Class B by some of the sports editors. Player of the Year in Class B was Keith Davis and Coach of the Year in Class B was Pat Panek. All-State (large schools) found Keith Davis listed at fullback Panek's 1928 football team again was undefeated with 273 points to the opponents' 29. Their final record was 7-0-1, good

Continued on next page.

Pat Panek, athlete of the year, Nebraska State Teachers College at Kearney. Photos courtesy of Ron W. Sack.

as Grover Cleveland Alexander was stealing the headlines as an ace pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals.

The new coach was A.H. "Pat" Panek, who came to St. Paul a few days before school started and could be found on the

A Look at Pat Panek's Career

Born in Kearney, Nebraska
College: Graduated in 1925 from Nebraska State Teachers College in Kearney, Nebraska
Coaching experience: Fullerton (1925-26), St. Paul (1926-29), and Norfolk (1929-38), Nebraska and Denver, Colorado (1938-44) (retirement), 31 All-time winning Colorado football coach, career record 328-117-29

Honors:

- National High School Coaches Hall of Fame
- Kusak's Coach of the Year
- Colorado Sports Hall of Fame
- Coached champions in: football, track, basketball, and baseball
- Athlete of the Year, Nebraska State Teachers College



The story of the little church in the vale.



Guess whose homes are part of this year's tour.



Howard County gets its second capital.

(Baseball Capital joins Danish Capital)

Pat Panek, cont.



The inscription on the back of the photo read:

"The team that beat all the best teams around. 1928 Class A Champions. These were all real players."

The 1928 Nebraska Class A Basketball Champions from St. Paul at the Railroad Station in Grand Island heading for the National Tournament in Chicago.

From left to right: Coach Pat Panek, Steden Augustine, Everett Davis, Clinton Bahensky, Art Lynch, Dale Oleson, Abraham Swallow, Wayne Kimber, Keith Davis, and Franklin Alexander.

Photo courtesy of the Howard County Historical Society.

enough for some of the sports editors to rank them #3 in Class B. Player of the Year was Keith Davis and he was also named All-State All Class. (It is noted that the NSAA did not have football playoffs until the 1970s.)

Track. 1927 was the first year St. Paul competed with the other schools. Medals and ribbons were won by the boys. 1928 and 1929 were different. Both years the St. Paul teams were the Loup Valley Champs. Everett Davis also set a state record in the javelin.

Basketball. The next three years are what eventually put St. Paul on the map. This great coach led his 1927 team to an outstanding season, losing to Fremont at the first round in the Class A State Tournament. Their final record was 16-2, good enough for some pollsters to rank them 7th in Class A. But this was only the beginning.

The 1928 team was undefeated for most of the season, and lost only to Kearney in the finals of the Kearney Tournament. Two weeks later, St. Paul walked home with the State Championship for Class A in Lincoln

(defeating Norfolk 17-12, Kearney 25-4, Crete 18-14, and Grand Island 18-11.) Panek's team did have two losses at the National Tournament in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1929, Panek's team was undefeated in season play, winning the Class A State Championship (defeating Geneva 35-27, Crete 22-7, York 25-20 and Hastings 25-22 in OT.) St. Paul was the envy of all other schools in the state of Nebraska. No school in the history of the tournament had ever won back to back titles in Class A with such a small student enrollment.

Although St. Paul has produced some fine teams since the 1929 season - 1934, 1936, 1941, 1955, 1958, 1965, 1977, 1981, and 1994 are just some that come to mind - they didn't qualify for State again until 1995. Somehow, I think Pat would be very proud of the success of the St. Paul boys basketball programs of recent years. Much of what was seen in Pat can be found in Coach Rick Peters.

Records, rankings, and All-State information supplied from the book, *Nebraska High School Sports*, by Jerry Mathers. Other resources were: Nebraska School Activities Association, Howard County Historical Society, Clinton Bahensky and Rick Peters.

A tribute from those who knew Pat...

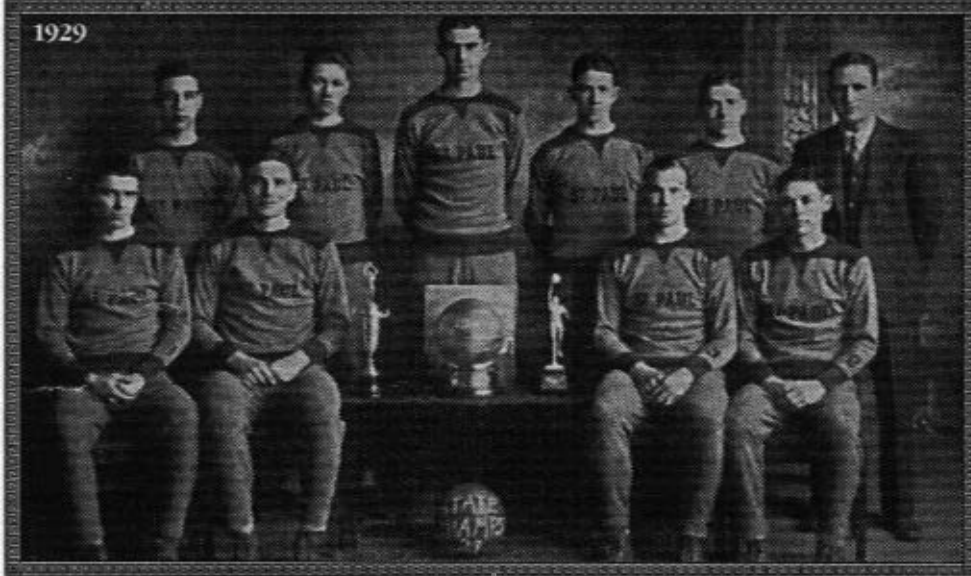
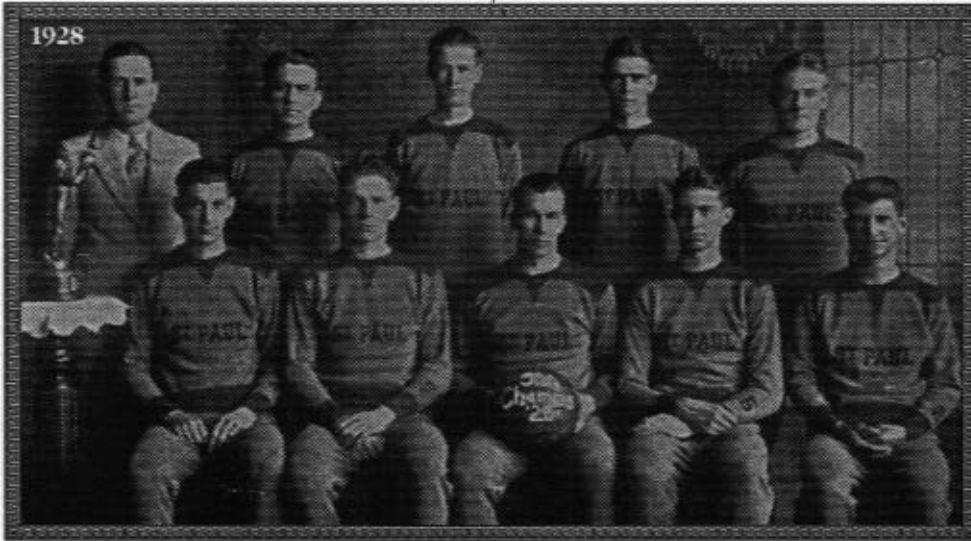
"And so now, cheers for you Pat Panek! We students, athletes, acquaintances, faculty members and friends have watched your accomplishments and success. We believe you were the region's greatest and most successful coach, because you produced champions in football, basketball, track and baseball. We want to honor you at this time for your fine character, your ambition, your knowledge of the game, and for your ability to evaluate your boys and their careers.

You not only coached, but you put knowledge into our heads in the classroom. You were tops at teaching the rules of the game and the rules of life!"

(Speech written to honor Pat Panek several years ago.)



Photo at left: Clinton Bahensky, a former player of Pat's and a member of the 1928 championship team. Clinton supplied some of the information in the text of this article. He described Pat as "a great coach." Bahensky is retired and lives in Arizona.



Paul's first championship team in 1928. Back row, left to right: Coach Pat Parnik, Steven Augustine, Franklin Alexander, Arthur Swanson, Duke Olson. Front row: Wayne Kimber, Everett Davis, Keith Davis, Art Lynch, and Clinton Bohersky. The team finished the Nebraska basketball season at 20-1. Art Lynch was named Player of the Year and made the All-State team while Pat Parnik was Coach of the Year. St. Paul was also named scoring champion in Class A with its 30.0 average. Lynch was individual scoring champ with his average of 11.0 points per game. Photos courtesy HCHS.

Paul's second championship team in 1929. Back row, left to right: Glen Shirley, John Dobry, Art Lynch, John Dullartide, John Mellors, and Coach Pat Parnik. Front row: Arthur Swanson, Everett Davis, Keith Davis, and Jimmy Martin. The team finished the Nebraska season at 22-0. Art Lynch was again Player of the Year, Parnik was Coach of the Year, Keith Davis, Everett Davis, and Lynch made the All-State team. Jimmy Martin was named honorable mention. St. Paul's scoring average was 35 points per game. With this average, they were named scoring champs for the state of Nebraska.

St. Paul basketball...by the numbers.

Compiled by Rick Peters

- 3 Number of state runner-up titles. (1926, 1996, 1997)
- 5 Number of state championship titles. (1925, 1925, 1928, 1929, 1995)
- 5 Number of Low-Plate Conference tournament championship titles in the last eight years. (1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997)
- 10 Number of consecutive appearances at the state tournament. (1920-1929)
- 13 Number of appearances at the state tournament.
- 16 Undeclared streak (and counting) in Holiday Tournament play.
- 22-0 Undeclared season in 1929.
- 24 Most victories in a single season. (1995, 1996)
- 29-8 Overall record at the state tournament.
- 49 Most points scored by one player in a single game (Cerald Schrick vs. Shelton, 1964)
- 73 Largest margin of victory for the Wildcats, 79-26 over Albion in the 1994-95 season.
- 100 Most points scored by a St. Paul team (100-60 vs. Shelton, 1966) (100-62 vs. Shelton, 1969) (100-51 vs. Cornua, 1980)

Interesting facts:

The Wildcats have never lost in overtime in the last eight years, which includes 200 games and 20 overtime periods.

In the last three years, the St. Paul Wildcats have won both the Low-Plate Conference tournament and regular season titles.

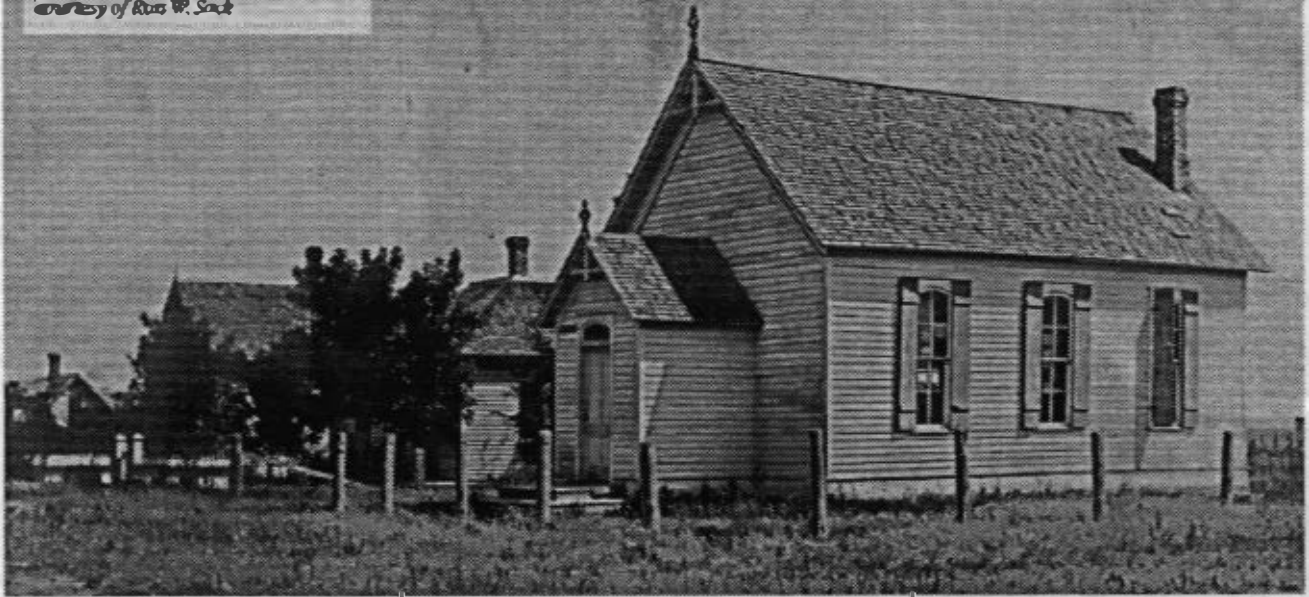
The Calendar - A few highlights from the 1929 Championship season - Taken from the SPHS annual

Sept. 27 - "Wildcat" officially chosen as title for St. Paul teams. (1928 team used the former mascot - the Apostles.)
 Jan. 3 - Wildcats walk on Lexington in basketball opener.
 Jan. 11 - Omaha sends Greggton Prep to St. Paul for a defeat at the hands of Pat's Boys.
 Jan. 25 - Scoda joins the list of wins.
 Feb. 1 - Card defeated for the second time this year.
 Feb. 2 - (High school) moves en masse to Grand Island to see the Wildcats down those ancient enemies.
 Feb. 8 - Dannebrog's name added to Pat's belt.

Feb. 12 - Revenna joins the growing list. **BASKETBALL - NO ONE CAN THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE.**
 Feb. 16 - Another invasion of foreign lands. Wildcats down Lincoln in hectic game. Extra period required.
 Feb. 22-23 - District tournament in Kearney - A nice piece of silverware added to the trophy case. Beaver City and Kearney put on the skids.
 Feb. 28 - The Redshire invade the Wildcat den but lost again.
 March 7 - State tournament starts. Tall boys come from behind and defeat Geneva.

March 9 - **THE TOWN MOVES TO LINCOLN.** Nerve-racking game wins state championship. Three Wildcats make All-State. (Team is 22-0 at this time.)
 April 2 - Off to National Tournament in Chicago. Great gloom. Naugamark, Connecticut takes the Wildcats for their first defeat.
 April 3 - Much animation. Pat's boys defeat Miles City, Montana.
 April 4 - The gloom returns. Cicero, Illinois eliminates St. Paul.
 (Jeffrey Marber's book doesn't include the win/two losses at the National Tourney on St. Paul's (previous) record.)

A rare find! The Turkey Creek and Farwell Presbyterian Church. This photo was found in Illinois and is quite rare - its date is 1910. Photo courtesy of Russ W. Sack



Turkey Creek and Farwell Presbyterian Church had short life.

On January 12, 1881, the Rev. A.L. Loder met with several people of the community south of the present town of Farwell. They organized the Turkey Creek Presbyterian Church with 16 members.

Location of the church was south of the Turkey Creek Scottish Cemetery, located in section 17. In 1898, the Turkey Creek Church was moved and became the Farwell Presbyterian Church, located on lot 7, block 9 of Farwell. Albin and Helen Strelceda now own the property and have built a house there. The church, which faced west, boasted a hitching post in the front. The Rev. George Longstaff served this church from April 1903 until April 17, 1910. This is the last recorded

session of the church board. Apparently Farwell was not disbanded, but just faded away. Minutes of the St. Paul Presbyterian Church dated March 31, 1918, stated that members of the Farwell church were being received into their congregation.

Records show that 89 people became members of the Turkey Creek/Farwell Church during the thirty years of its activity. Included among them were the Calvins, Harveys, Irvines, Hills, Boaters, McNees, Gows, Larus, Charles, and Fairbairns.

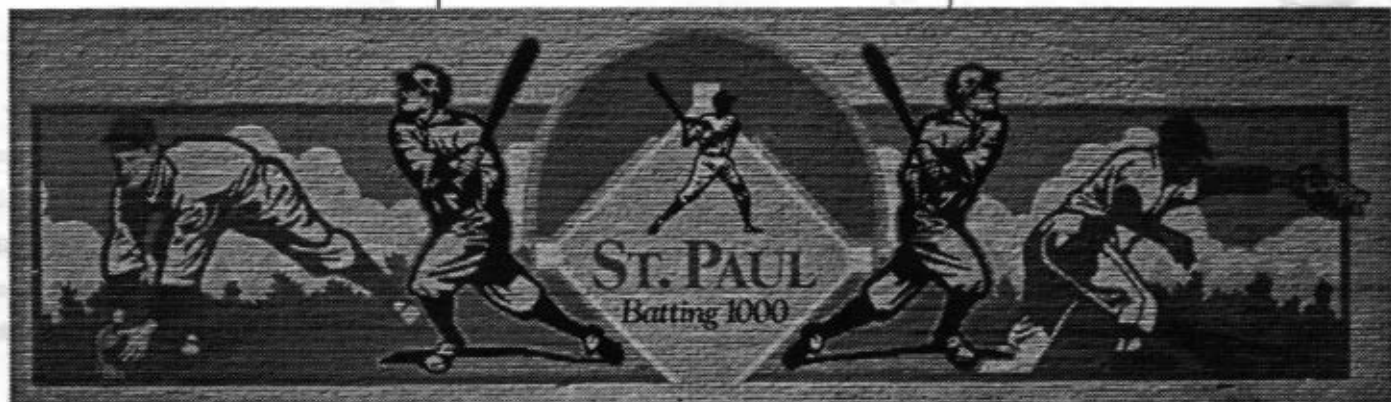
The deed of the Presbyterian Church of Farwell shows that on April 30, 1921, trustees Ed Calvin and I. G. Armstrong, came before Judge William Spikes with a petition to sell the lots of the church to Ed and Pauline Larkowski for the sum of \$350. As to what became of the building itself, nothing certain is known. One story is that it burnt down. Another is that it partially burnt and was either sold or given to Frank Hurt to be dismantled. The lumber may have been used in the construction of a barn or chicken coop

that stands on the farm today. As far as can be found, the first marriage of the Presbyterian faith was between Anne Irvine and Irvine Armstrong. It took place in St. Paul. The interesting part is that they were residents of the postal route known as Tynerville, whose postal building was located about five miles east and two miles north of Farwell.

Source material provided from the book, *Farwell Centennial: Village on the Hill*. Information compiled by Glen L. Hansen.

Congratulations Boelus and St. Paul Methodist Churches.

The Historical Society would like to wish "Happy Birthday" to the congregations from Boelus Grace United Methodist Church (100 years old) and St. Paul United Methodist Church (125 years old). What milestones!



Howard County gets another capital.

By Marion Bahensky

On October 9, 1997 Governor Ben Nelson proclaimed St. Paul as a "Baseball Capital of Nebraska." St. Paul thus joins Dannebrog, with its long held status of "Danish Capital of Nebraska." Factors contributing to this proclamation were the result of many community and volunteer projects listed below.

Described as "outstanding" by the Nebraska Arts Council, a baseball mural is located on the east side of the historic Cushman Building (facing the park) and was completed in July. The mural includes all five of the Nebraskans in the National Hall of Fame, the same five on whom we have professionally-prepared exhibits in the Baseball

Museum in the basement of the historic Gruber House.



Grover Cleveland Alexander, of Elba and St. Paul, is the centerpiece of both the mural and the museum. His image highlights St. Paul's new slogan, "Batting 1000."

The baseball theme is also carried out in a beautiful new promotional brochure on St. Paul, Chamber of Commerce letterhead, the 1997 edition of a St. Paul/Howard County Christmas ornament, and street banners. We will try to have baseball banners hung along Hwy. 281/92 where it goes through town. A postcard of the baseball mural is being planned, too. A proposal to paint the water tower to look like a baseball net with \$250,000 worth of disappointment.

This new emphasis reinforces the past excellence of baseball in St. Paul. Starting with Grover Cleveland Alexander, some of whose records have never been surpassed, and continuing with state-of-the-art baseball fields and batting cages,



Photos from left to right: Baseball Museum display on Grover Cleveland Alexander sponsored by the GCA committee; the historic Gruber House, owned by the Howard County Historical Society; houses the Baseball Museum; the American Legion baseball field; Grover Cleveland Alexander; St. Paul Chamber letterhead; and a proposed promotional postcard. Photos courtesy of Marion Bahensky and Ron Sack.

St. Paul's newest attraction: "Batting 1000" mural.

St. Paul has a proud record to maintain. The American Legion has sponsored baseball programs, hood district and state tournaments, and maintained our ballfields in tip-top shape for many years. St. Paul teams have brought home four state Legion titles in the process.

The *Grand Island Independent*, in an October editorial, praised St. Paul for "proudly touting its baseball history" and choosing such a healthy, positive image. St. Paul and Howard County continue to "bat 1000." The Howard County Historical Society can join them — our "historically speaking" newsletter seems to be "batting 1000" with all the renewed, newly joining members and their generous donations. Your support for your hometown/country means a great deal to us.



The third annual Holiday Tour of Homes will be held Sunday, December 7th, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. It is sponsored by the Howard County Historical Society. This award-winning fundraiser will feature five beautiful homes as well as the historic Gruber House.

Homes featured this year will include Gene and Cookie Bahensky, Marion Bahensky, Alice Bartle, Dennis and Shirley Brandt, and Mike and Peg Sullivan. May God bless and keep all of our host and hostesses for their generosity in opening their beautiful homes to the public as a gesture of support for the Howard County Historical Society. Without their generosity, this popular fundraiser

THE 1997 ANNUAL

Holiday Tour Of Homes

By Elizabeth King

are in charge of the sales at Parkside Plaza.

Maps will be provided for those who are from out of town. Featured again this year will be the grand prize drawing for ticket-holders: an overnight stay at the Kirschke Bed and Breakfast Cottage House, donated by Innkeeper, Lois Hank. This is valued at over \$145.

Recognition goes out to the committee for their efforts:

Marion Bahensky, Mena Sprague, Terry King, Dave Sprague, and Ron Sack. This is my third year as chairperson and I couldn't do it without the help of those who give their time. I am proud to be associated with people who contribute so much back to this community. See you December 7th!

would not be possible.

Tickets are \$6.00 each and include refreshments served after the tour at Parkside Plaza. Tickets go on sale Friday, November 28, at local St. Paul merchants and will be available starting at 5:00 p.m. the day of the event at Parkside Plaza. Dave Sprague and Terry King

Gene and Cookie Bahensky
312 Nelson Street



Marion Bahensky, 1021 Sixth Street



Mike and Peg Sullivan, 1119 Grand Street



Our Thanks
To These
Wonderful People.

Gruber
House
1005 Sixth
Street



Dennis and Shirley Brandt
1003 Howard Avenue



Alice
Bartle
1005
Farnum
Street

Photos courtesy of Elizabeth King.

Our membership.

By Mena Sprague

Every day I walk to my mailbox with anticipation about which people will renew their membership or become new members. Thanks to all of you who make my "walks" so worthwhile.

If a reminder card is included with this newsletter, your dues for 1998 are not paid. Dues are \$5.00 per person and can be sent to me at 844 20th Ave., St. Paul, NE 68873-3518

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members: Sulist Museum, Citizens Bank and Trust, Vivian Berggren, Bessy Bahensky Bell, Henry Mueller, Jean Mueller, Marilyn Nelson, Constance May, Gerald Larkowski, Ken Leth, St. Paul Library, John Shoemaker, Dan Moravec, Darold Jorgensen, Dorothy Jorgensen, Jan Christensen, Alice Bartle, Bill and Bobbie Gordon, Dr. Lyle Rasmussen, Iowen Clausen, Pat Kigge, Donna Pierce, Marian Rotts, Mike Shaughnessy, Colene Shaughnessy, Francie Ostermier, Ken Ostermier, Hazel Paul, Sr. Ann Francis Sidel, Marie Kyhn, Lucile Ritz, Joyce Strong, Roderick Burkhardt, Marian Bowers, and Heloise Bresley. (As of 11/3/97)

From our mailboxes.

"This is to tell you how excited and pleased I was to have received the spring/summer issue of 'historically speaking.' As I quickly thumbed through it, the excitement level was on the rise. Then I came across the story with the picture of the Farwell Danish Lutheran Church on the back page. I was elated to learn that this bit of our heritage is being so effectively preserved.

I have seen the church several times since it was moved to St. Paul. Now, several very



unselfish folks, including you, are coming to the forefront and giving it the tender loving care it deserves. How wonderful! I noted with great interest that Dave Sprague is doing some blacksmithing in the shop. Please mention that I offer my thanks for his contributions to the Society and the art of blacksmithing. Thank you again for your efforts. We will be looking forward to more issues of your fantastic paper and hopefully we will have an opportunity to meet and thank you and some of the other great people in person." Sincerely, LeRoy "Bud" and Marie K Kyhn, Arwater, CA

"Received the historical newsletter yesterday. Thank you so much for it! It's very nice. I'm sure everyone will enjoy it..." Sincerely, Lorraine Wissing, St. Libory, NE

"Thank you dear ones for your special 'historical paper' news and brochure on Jean Potts. It will be so helpful to me for my display - here at the library. You are all to be commended for your hard work and dedication to our country!" Sincerely, Gladys Vinick, Library Director, St. Paul, NE

"Thank you so much for the very interesting story on Olga and Irene's Chicago World's Fair experience. It was very well written and a person felt like they were indeed going to the World's Fair..." Sincerely, Jim and Betty Horkey, St. Paul, NE

"Thanks so much for the copies of 'historically speaking.' I have really enjoyed them... You are all doing a great job and I sincerely commend you on your efforts. We learn from our past to make better the present and to lead to an even better future for all. Looking forward to attending as many of the events as I can." Sincerely, Vivian Berggren, St. Paul, NE

"Mr. and Mrs. Richard Haggart shared their spring/summer 1997 issue of 'historically speaking' with us and we found it so interesting.

We are writing to ask what the membership cost for your society is. Does the newsletter come quarterly?" Sincerely, Dan and Marion Moravec, Lincoln, NE

Our thanks to you.

We at the Howard County Historical Society are grateful for your support and letters from the past two months (Sorry we couldn't publish all of them.) It is hoped that we can live up to your expectations from the support you have given us. "historically speaking" is pleased to be a part of the preservation of Howard County history.

Thanks also to Lucile Fox of Dannebrog who offered to help in any way possible with information on Dannebrog's fine history. The Howard County Historical Society is for ALL of Howard County, your input is important to us. You can reach us at the following address: P. O. Box 304 St. Paul, NE, 68873.

A curious and wonderful thing has been happening over the last twenty or thirty years: we Americans have quietly, effectively, begun to respect our heritage in thousands of places and in dozens of ways. It wasn't long ago that an old building was an endangered building, no matter what its pedigree or its accomplishments. George Washington's Mount Vernon home was once a candidate for demolition. It was saved, but tens of thousands of other structures have been torn down in the name of progress.

But that kind of progress stopped long ago, and we have progressively campaigned to save all sorts of remaining buildings, including America's railroad depots. This is a quiet success story, the gradual campaign to ensure the preservation of significant buildings, public and private, all across the American landscape. The preservation movement is a public-private partnership that preserves, protects, and defends all kinds of buildings in all sorts of places.

In many American communities the railroad depot was the most important building in town. More than the court house, the school, the hospital, or the mansion on the hill, the depot touched the lives of everyone in the community. It took whatever you had to sell off to market, it brought back whatever you wanted to buy. Everything that was important to a community - people, information, products, travel, dreams - came and went through America's railroad depots.

One authoritative source noted that approximately 140,000 railroad depots have been built in America, most of them in a span of about eighty years, from 1850 to 1930. Today sources estimate that number is down to 17,000.

Railroad depot preservation has especially escalated over the last two decades. This is due to a fundamental shift in public attitude. The demolition of the Pennsylvania Station (in New York City) in 1963 had a profound effect on many citizens. The federal National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the creation of many local and state historical preservation ordinances were a direct result of that dark day in 1963.



So there is a different attitude about preservation these days. Another part is largely due to an awareness of environmental issues. Each time a building is torn down, more than likely a new one is put up. Bit by bit, when another building is put up, part of our environment - our trees, our minerals, our air - goes with it.

The preservation and restoration of a depot, or any public building for that matter, is a fairly new phenomenon. Over the years a few public monuments have been saved, mostly due to the extraordinary efforts of a few private individuals. Yes, one person can change the world. It is hard to believe that Mount Vernon was once slated for a subdivision. And the creation of the wonderful National Historic Site at Promontory, Utah was due to the efforts of a single individual, Bernice Gibbs Anderson. She lobbied for nearly forty years to set aside the site at Promontory in order to properly celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Golden Spike ceremony in 1969.

What are we celebrating by wanting to preserve the Boelus depot? This depot is symbolic of all the depots that once existed in Howard County. It represents dreams. My family's history. Your family's history. A little passion. A lot of romance. Two months ago my father and I removed our family's immigrant trunk from the upper portion of the barn. Its destination was "Amerika." It passed through this country on the train and entered Howard County...through the depot. The award-winning mystery writer, Jean Potts, left St. Paul for New York City...through a depot. Anna Anderson started her missionary work on the island of St. Lawrence (just off Alaska.) Anna left St. Paul...through the depot. When Dr. Ole Grothan left for the Spanish-American War, the St. Paul High School Band of 1899 was so proud of him that they escorted him, marching and playing musical tunes in the rain...to the depot.

No, a President never came to a Howard County depot. Does that diminish its historical value to Howard County? Certainly not. Only we can diminish our history...by not preserving it.