

historically speaking

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Special Summer Issue 1998

Dream comes true: Board approves plan to move forward.

By Marion Bahensky

Eight of the 1998 Board of Directors, in asking for your vote, proposed specific goals. Most of them are already achieved, as described in this newsletter. All of our proposals were to continue the newsletter, events, accessioning, and programs, create new exhibits, beautify the Village, raise money, and most importantly: continue historic preservation of our little old pioneer buildings, with a period depot as the focal point and final building in the Historical Village.

When we had to move the Historical Village in the late 1960s, the earlier Boards of Directors had no site-planning experience and could not guess future Society needs. Luckily the vague plan of a pioneer "Main Street" has worked, and will come to fruition with the addition of the



Top photo: St. Paul's Union Pacific Depot in 1916. It was demolished in 1975. Bottom photo: Gibbon's Union Pacific Depot at Shelton, a close twin to the St. Paul Depot. Nearly all of the exterior is in original condition, including the tin roof, corridors, windows, siding, and lights. The interior has most of the original features as well.

Gibbon/Shelton depot as the final building.

We tried to get the Boelus depot, but we're glad they now want to save it. We also looked at the other Howard County depots and buildings, but they either had major termite damage, had been gutted out, or lacked the necessary beauty to complete the Village. We are choosing to buy the Gibbon/Shelton depot because (1) it is

available, and (2) it is remarkably like the Union Pacific depot formerly in St. Paul, which was demolished in 1975. Local preservationists tried hard to save it then. Now we have to go further afield, but we will save a very beautiful and appropriate building for our little Main Street. This depot is also larger and more attractive than others considered.

This size, (24 x 78), age and appearance of the Gibbon/Shelton depot will blend with the other buildings and will not overwhelm the surrounding neighborhood. It enhances the "Main Street" theme. Every other possibility was considered, but a depot continued to meet all of the requirements,

including cost effectiveness. All in all, we are delighted to have found the right building. It has great potential for being climate controlled, too. Now we can finally get on with the design for the rest of the site.

We are taking on a big project for such a small group of under-financed volunteers. We will have to borrow money to move it, but we borrowed to buy the Gruber House in 1992. We repaid that money promptly. With your help, we'll do that again. I look inside this newsletter if you need more proof.



Youth help to preserve history.



Claytons continue to 'light up our life.'



First woman to be honored with an exhibit.



Photo at left: Roderick Burkhardt and Adam Christensen provide the final touches to their masterpiece. Photo below: the top piece of the old St. Peter and Paul's Catholic Church in St. Paul was salvaged by Sack. It will now be the top feature of the new entrance colonnade designed by the team of Burkhardt/Sack/Sprague.



Board member Burkhardt puts his plan into action.

By Marion Bahensky

Last summer a new friend, 17-year-old Roderick Burkhardt, offered to do a web page for us. He did that – and so much more for the Society.

For years we talked of a sidewalk in front of the historic buildings. And talked. And talked. And talked. When Indian Street was paved, we agreed to ask for those bricks, but more years passed without anything happening. Enter our hero, Roderick. He learned to do surveying and researched sidewalk-building. He laid it out, while getting and keeping the approval of skeptical adults. He recruited the help of the City, FFA, and almost everybody else in the area who has machinery useful in this project. Beyond this, he put in hundreds of hours himself, while also enlisting others to work

early and late, including his family. The bricks had to be winnowed individually out of a huge pile of earth and then stacked and moved to town. Roderick coordinated all this and learned to lay the heavy bricks in very attractive patterns. He has made the Village site very picturesque. He continues to search for ways to improve our appearance and exhibits professionalism.

Roderick has many other interests which he is putting to use in our service. He loves railroads so he's eager to help with the new depot. He puts his intelligence to work on many of our maintenance and construction problems, coming up with solutions that have evaded us before.

The whole project has been a revelation for me. I am impressed with the generosity of the adults who lent their equipment. I am overwhelmed with the abilities and hard work of the FFA boys who created this beauty. I have new faith in Nebraska's youth. If only my NYC schoolkids could have parents like these boys. They teach their sons valuable skills and trust the kids to use them right.

Hats off to these people who gave a gift that will last a lifetime.

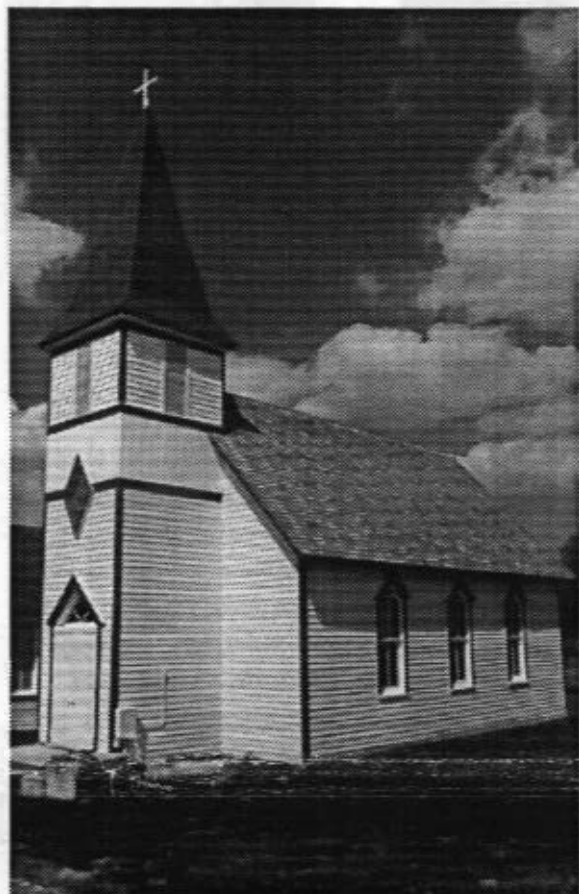
Roderick Burkhardt, Adam Christensen, Colt Burkhardt, Jolene Killinger, Kirby and Max Killinger, Andy Nesiba, Randy Mcintosh and father, Jeremy Fanta, Ben Hancock, Bobby Schleicher, Dan Koperski, Marshall Adams, Jon and Jordan Meyer, Brad and Matt Thomson, Justin Muller, Joe Schmidt, Mike, Tim, and Diana Markvich, Doug Voigt, Loren Wroblewski, Fred Meyer, City of St. Paul, Chuck Schmid, Tom Piquen, TJ's Market, Jack and Jill, S.E. Smith and Sons, Gene Bahensky, Darryl Platek, Scott Harrington, Vincent Christensen, Jim Christensen, and Jerry Killinger.

(We apologize if any names were omitted.)

Photo collection soon to have new home.

The majority of our historic photo collection on Howard County has now been moved to climate controlled conditions in the Gruber House. Board member Bahensky is identifying and accessioning all photos and Sack will assist in storage and display.

Church restoration nears completion.



A once neglected looking church is now in great shape for its 100th birthday for a fitting and outstanding tribute to the Danes who settled the prairie. Our thanks to the following people who donated time or money to make the church restoration possible

Painting of the entire church:
Helping Hands Painting
Patty Sok and Nicholas Sok

Belfry repair:
Memorial from the Dan and Irene Schenck family

Paint:
Aid Association for Lutherans

Interior cleaning:
A.A.L. members Jackie Scheer, Frieda Oakesen, Pat Paulsen, Mayme Leth and Mena Sprague

Donation:
Bud and Marie Kyhn

New sidewalks constructed on the same principles as those from the Nysted Danish Folk School.

By Ron W. Sack

In the 1890s, the Danes constructed sidewalks going to and fro at the Nysted Danish Folk School. The original sidewalk at Nysted and our recently finished ones at the Historical Village had these following characteristics: simple, well designed patterns, and a bump here and there. Howard County Danes from the 1890s would be happy to note that Adam Christensen, a Danish descendant from the 1990s, played a key role in the sidewalk development. **WELL DONE!**



Photos above: Nysted Danish Folk School and sidewalk in 1911; Adam Christensen helping construct the new sidewalk at the Howard County Historical Village.

historically speaking

PUBLISHER:

Howard County Historical Society
including the areas and scale maps of
Bohler, Corfield, Cushing, Denmark,
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St. Libory, St. Paul and Warsaw.

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Ron W. Sack

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Your support is important to us.

The HOIS is a not-for-profit organization.

Family to help with school restoration.

Descendants of Charles and Emma Schwenk (St. Libory) will volunteer time and money to help restore the cloak room in the old St. Libory schoolhouse. A grey and cream color scheme will enhance the restored room. We extend our thanks to the family! This restoration is long overdue.



August, 1997. The Cotesfield Post Office as it looked in Cotesfield.



November, 1997. The post office's front restoration is completed.



Dec., 1997. A warm December day, and two new coats of paint.



May, 1998. Post office, flag pole, and WPA outhouse given new life.

One of Nebraska's smallest post offices is preserved.

By Ron W. Sack

Ever since I was a child, I would wait with anticipation for our rural mail carrier, Dale Johnson, to arrive. He was punctual — 10:30 a.m. on the dot — unless roads were bad, or he stopped to help out one of our neighbors. I admired Mr. Johnson on the quiet prairie of Nebraska, he brought the world into our lives by delivering the mail.

It was a long walk down our lane; over 1/4 of a mile. To a child, it seemed like it would take forever to get to the end and open up the mailbox. But having a longer lane provided time to dream and anticipate what would be found inside our mailbox marked "Wm. F. Sack, R.R. 2 Box 71"

Then came my car, and my dream time was suddenly taken away. My usual twenty minute jaunt to get the mail now only took a speedy minute. I wouldn't get excited



May 26, 1998. Joe and Maxine Coufal take a moment to reflect on the past. Photos provided by the Coufals enabled the Society to preserve the building close to how it looked in 1920. The front portion was restored with guidelines from the Nebraska State Historical Society and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

about the mail for another 16 years. Not until I read in the *St. Paul Phonograph-Herald* that the post office in Cotesfield was closing.

This time, I was an adult. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to save this building. I wanted to tell the story of Maxine Coufal, of John and Steve Swank and the countless others who so faithfully over the years gave us something to hope for in our mailboxes.

This building and these stories, as simple as they are, are worth preserving. And you, our members and the caring public, helped save them.

America has had its share of great men and women. But the history of the American democracy is itself a democratic history. It's been made — more than in any other society — by ordinary people: the immigrant, the preacher, the school teacher, the farmer, the store owner, the blacksmith, the depot agent, and the postmaster. These people were ordinary, like us. And they're nearer to us than we think.

Old people and old buildings — declining in numbers as we reach the end of the century — are a special resource, a resource that, for

our own sakes, we should not waste. For they carry within them the sources for our identity and our history. They are witness to a time that will never come again. They are living chronicles, the elders of the American experience. And we would do well to listen, to remember, and to preserve.

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Grand Opening:

Saturday, July 11th

G.C.A. Days weekend

Ceremonies begin at 12:00 p.m. with a special flag hanging ceremony by Maxine Coufal.

Refreshments will be served.

Everyone welcome.

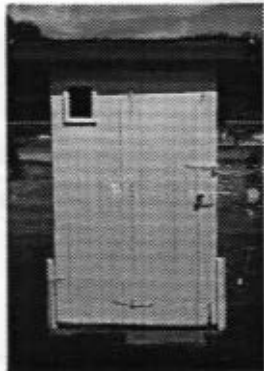
This post office is dedicated to all of the postal employees who brought the world into our lives by delivering the mail.

The Howard County Historical Society extends its sincere thanks to Joe and Maxine Coufal for their vision and respect towards preservation.

Thanks Judy!

Our sincere thanks are also extended to Judy Porter and the United States Postal Department on the donation of several items from the Elba Post Office.

W.P.A. outhouse is saved.



In the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt put people to work during the Great Depression with the Works Progress

Administration. This Administration gave unemployed people a chance for work, which put food on the tables for hungry families. Women and men began to build shelter belts, dance halls, and outhouses. Artists were given a chance to paint murals and photograph a depressed nation. This outhouse was built through this program. This outhouse symbolizes the spirit of the W.P.A.

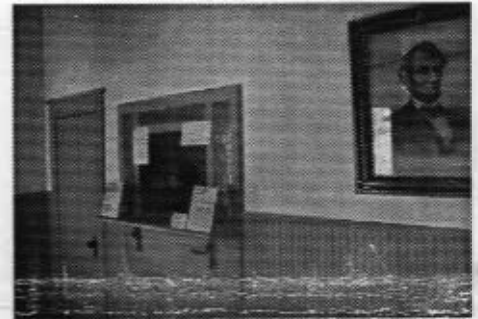
Besides the outhouse, the original concrete foundation, base and step were also saved.

Our sincere thanks to Joe and Maxine Coufal on the donation of this historic building and to Garland and Joe Coufal, Mike Markvick and Bill Sack for moving it to the Village site.

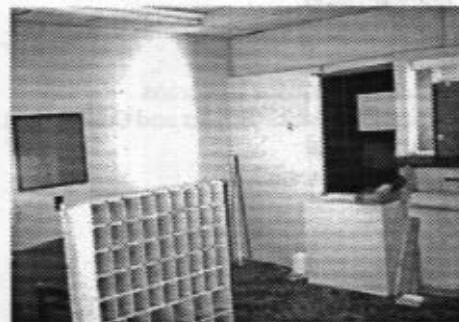
A look at over 1000 hours of volunteer service.



Removed suspended ceiling, particle board, paneling, formica counter, linoleum, door, and trim board.



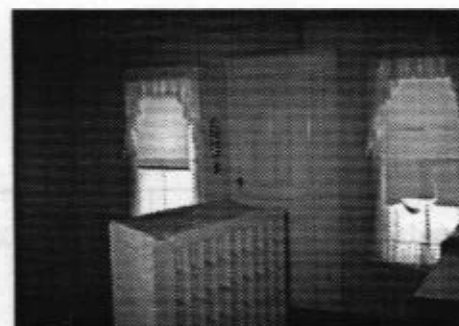
Added wainscoting, door, and trim board; painted interior; sanded, stained and varnished floors.



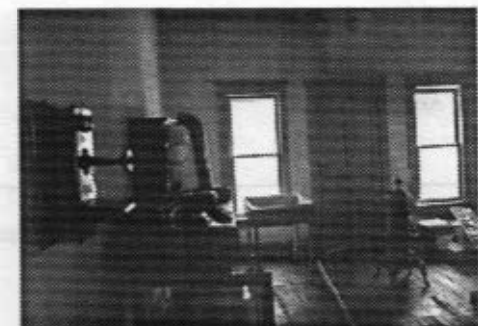
Removed suspended ceiling, press board, formica counter, carpet, fluorescent lights.



Added door and wainscoting; painted interior; sanded, stained, and varnished floors; displayed "Elba Post Office Collection" and many items previously in storage.



Removed suspended ceiling, carpet, and fluorescent lights; patched and repaired chimney.



Painted interior; sanded, stained, and varnished floors; displayed "Elba Post Office Collection" and many items previously in storage.

It takes a Village.

Businesses, organizations, and people who contributed nearly \$8,000 through donations of money and services to make the Cotesfield Post Office Preservation Project a reality (only \$800 was needed from the HCIS treasury):

Dr. Lyle and Carol Rasmussen
Robert and Barbara Banle
Alice Banle
Senator Dennis Rasmussen
Citizens Bank and Trust
Joe and Maxine Coufal
First Federal Lincoln
S.E. Smith & Sons, Bill and Bobbe Gordon
Dr. Maurice and Maedean Mathews
Daniel Sevcik
Doris Rasmussen
Kris and Joel Jakubowski
Russ Sack
Jeff Sack
Peggy and Jerry Jensen
Julia Stevens
Marion Bahensky
St. Paul Bank
Lisa and Ted Bahensky
Martha Havlik

Elizabeth and Terry King
Pat and Terry Schmitt
Elaine Mostek
Bill and Jan Sack
Ron W. Sack
Kelly Shaughnessy
Patrick and Pamela Shaughnessy
Roger and Deb Wells
Sr. Ann Francis Sidel
Hazel R. Paul
Donna Pierce
Ray Nowak
Heloise and Dean Bresley
Roya Lindsay
Edna and Ed Zuehlke
Sherry Anderson
Donald and Esther Niefeld
Ed and Dyke Lorraine Sevcik
Betty Roemmich
Gary and Bob Rasmussen

Russ and Grace Coufal
Ruthie and Jim Jacobson
Cy and Louise Shaughnessy
Dave and Mena Sprague
Agnes Roepker
Verna Nabity
Kay Yax
Kim Mickelsen Shippen
St. Paul Insurance Agency, Gerald Solko
Alben and Clara Schwenk
Betty and Bob Dvorak
Anne Alt
Lillian Barnes
Allen Keep
Frank and Eleanor Moravec
Robert and Donna Ervin
Don Rojewski
Mayne Barrett
A.A.I.
Lutheran Brotherhood

Businesses, organizations, and people who contributed time to make the Cotesfield Post Office MOVE a reality:

Mike Markvicka
Bill Sack
Joe Coufal
Maxine Coufal
Garland Coufal
Joey Coufal
Russ Coufal
Marion Bahensky
Terry King
Mena Sprague
Grace Coufal

Dave Sprague
Elizabeth King
Ron W. Sack
Aid Association for Lutherans
(Elda Miller, Jackie Scheer and Curtis Iehn)
City of St. Paul
Village of Cotesfield
Village of Elba
County Yards
S.E. Smith and Sons
TCL Cable

Howard Greeley R.P.P.D.
Mark Nielsen
Andy Mostek
Frank D. Tuma
Cheryl Coufal
Jason Coufal
Ryan Coufal
Frankie Moravec
Martin Kiment
Jerry Jensen
Cody Jensen

Organizations, and people who contributed time to restore the EXTERIOR of the Cotesfield Post Office:

Bill and Jan Sack
Mike Markvicka
Andy Mostek

Lutheran Brotherhood
John Heinrich, Dennis Kamprath,
Jerry Kuhlmann, Clarence Wegenast)
Terry King

Marion Bahensky
Roderick Burkhardt
Ron W. Sack

People who contributed time to restore the INTERIOR of the Cotesfield Post Office:

Diana Markvicka
Jeff and Russ Sack
Andy Mostek

Roderick Burkhardt
Roy Shiadek

Ron W. Sack
Bill and Jan Sack

Transitions.

Preservation is happening right under our noses. We are pleased to report all of these efforts have met with positive results. Here's a look at some great moments:



IN THE WORKS:
Union Pacific depot Boelus Village of Boelus is planning to return the depot to its original location and restore it. The HCHS extends our applause. Good luck.

SAVED:
City Hall
Boelus Village board reversed its decision to demolish City Hall. Beliefs, letters, posters, community support and caring people gave it extended life.



RESCUED:
Gibbon's Union Pacific depot at St. Paul (To be preserved in St. Paul)
Advertisers used this historic

structure to be moved or torn down. Depot is a close twin to the St. Paul depot which was demolished in 1975. HCHS purchased the depot and plans to bring it to the Historical Village in the Fall of 1998.

RESTORED:
Bank Building
Boelus Roy and Shirley Johnson gave Boelus's main street new life and hope when they restored the corner bank building and made it into "Coca-Cola Corner" Well done!



Photos courtesy of Ron W. Sack

Attend conference.

By Mera Sprague

Board members Mation Bahensky, Ron Sack, Galen Trimbath and I attended the Nebraska State Historical Society's informational meeting on "Effective Board Management" at St. Paul. One interesting note was another organization's President and Board Member joined our organization. The main reason for them joining us is so they can receive our newsletter. They publically congratulated us on the great work our Board is doing with this organization.

Claytons to the rescue: funding secured on all eight street lamps.

By Ron W. Sack

Mention that you need help to Bonnie and Gary Clayton and help is on the way. Bonnie and Gary have been instrumental in finding authentic, as opposed to re-created, street lamps. Eight street lamps will now grace the area. Six are being donated by an anonymous donor. Two street lamps will bear the names of Fred H. and Nora J. Sonderup. Donations received from memorials given by the Dan and Irene Schenck family, Pete Graus family and friends, and Bill Gilliland family and friends will help cover costs for sand-

blasting and electricity. Bonnie also raised a considerable amount of money from her St. Paul High School class of 1957. The memorials and the class of 1957 will be remembered on these lamps as well.

These eight lamps will be placed at the Historical Village and will add much needed beauty and security. Look for three to go up at the Village this summer and the remaining five to go up after the depot is moved in. One will be placed near the depot and four will be placed in the courtyard area. We extend our thanks to Bonnie and Gary for making this happen. WELL DONE!

Dr. Betty Levitov visits Historical Village; impressed with interest in Jean Potts.

On May 3, 1998, Dr. Betty Levitov gave a presentation on St. Paul's internationally acclaimed mystery writer, Jean Potts. A group of about 30 came to listen and provide input on Jean's life. Afterwards, Dr. Levitov was taken on a tour of the display on Jean Potts now being designed on the lower level of the Gruber house. "This is incredible, and well deserved," stated Levitov.

Dr. Levitov mentioned the possibility of writing a book about Potts. If this becomes a reality, the Howard County Historical Society will be standing by to lend assistance.



Phase two of the Jean Potts exhibit has just been completed. The third and final phase will be completed late this summer. Anyone wishing to view the exhibit in progress may contact the Historical Society. Shown in the photo above: display entrance and to where each Jean's writing desk, chair and exhibit space appear in the background.

*"Here is your country. Do not let anyone take it
or its glory away from you. Do not let selfish men
or greedy interests skin your country of its
beauty, its history, its architecture, or its romance.
The world, the future, and your children
shall judge you accordingly as you deal
with this sacred trust."*

*President Theodore Roosevelt
on the Antiquities Act of 1906*

Membership record.

By Mena and Dave Sprague

The membership for the Howard County Historical Society is at an all-time high of 241. Our newest member is from Omaha. She was complimenting Roderick on the new brick walkway he is putting in for the Village. She is impressed with Roderick and the Society and she gave us a donation which included a membership. If you haven't seen the new walkway, it's worth the trip.

Society memberships are good through January 31 and renewals are due February 1. Our newsletters are interesting and informative.

Renewals and new memberships can be mailed to Mena Sprague, 844 20th Ave., St. Paul, NE 68873-3518. One-year memberships are presently \$5.00 per person.



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 304
ST. PAUL, NEBRASKA 68873



*We will forever
be remembered by the
footprints
we leave behind.*

- Native American saying

Help preserve history.

We are at great moment now at the Howard County Historical Society. Our membership is up, interest in preservation is up, and most importantly, we have a group of dedicated members and directors who are achieving things which were never even attempted in the past. Non-members are helping out to improve our Village, as is the City of St. Paul. We continue to offer assistance to the Grover Cleveland Alexander Days committee/Basball exhibits and helped Oxnabrog preserve their history by creating posters and attending rallies to save city hall. All of this enthusiasm has led to the expansion and completion of the Historical Village site with the addition of a Union Pacific depot which is almost identical to the one we lost in St. Paul in 1975.

This plan works with the space. It doesn't overcrowd the other little



wooden buildings and works with the dignity of the neighboring courthouse. Parkside Plaza, the residential neighborhood and the City park were also considered in planning out what was suitable for the site.

An architect from Omaha estimated a new building like this would cost nearly \$300,000 to build. With that type of building we should have a full-time curator to keep it open more hours than our present 50 hours a year. Our rough estimates to complete this are only \$80,000. It will help us with additional exhibit space, meeting space and storage space. This is good for St. Paul, and good for our county.

We restored the Cotesfield Post Office in 10 months. Built a walkway in two months. Found volunteers to restore our Farwell Danish

Lutheran Church in one month. We will need a bit longer than that to complete this project, but as you have seen in the past two years, we are committed to progress, committed to preservation, and committed to you. Will you please commit to us? Thank you.

Cut along dotted line and send in.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMPLETION OF THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL VILLAGE BY HELPING PRESERVE THE UNION PACIFIC DEPOT.

I want to help fund this much needed and final project which will house new exhibits, meeting space and storage space. I wish to donate:

☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$2,000 ☐ \$5,000 ☐ \$10,000 ☐ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

All donations over \$100 will be remembered on the Donor Board which will be prominently displayed in the restored depot. Donations of \$2,000 or more will receive special recognition.

Name you wished to have inscribed: _____

Your donation, made out to the Howard County Historical Society, is tax-deductible. (Be sure to indicate the "Depot Campaign" on your check memo area.)

Send in your tax-deductible donation to us at: P.O. Box 304, St. Paul, NE 68873

Questions? Call: Marion Rabensky (608) 754-4454 or any of the other board members. If you would like to be on the fund raising committee, please let us know. **Thank you!**

It's YOUR MEMORY. It's OUR HISTORY. It's WORTH SAYING.