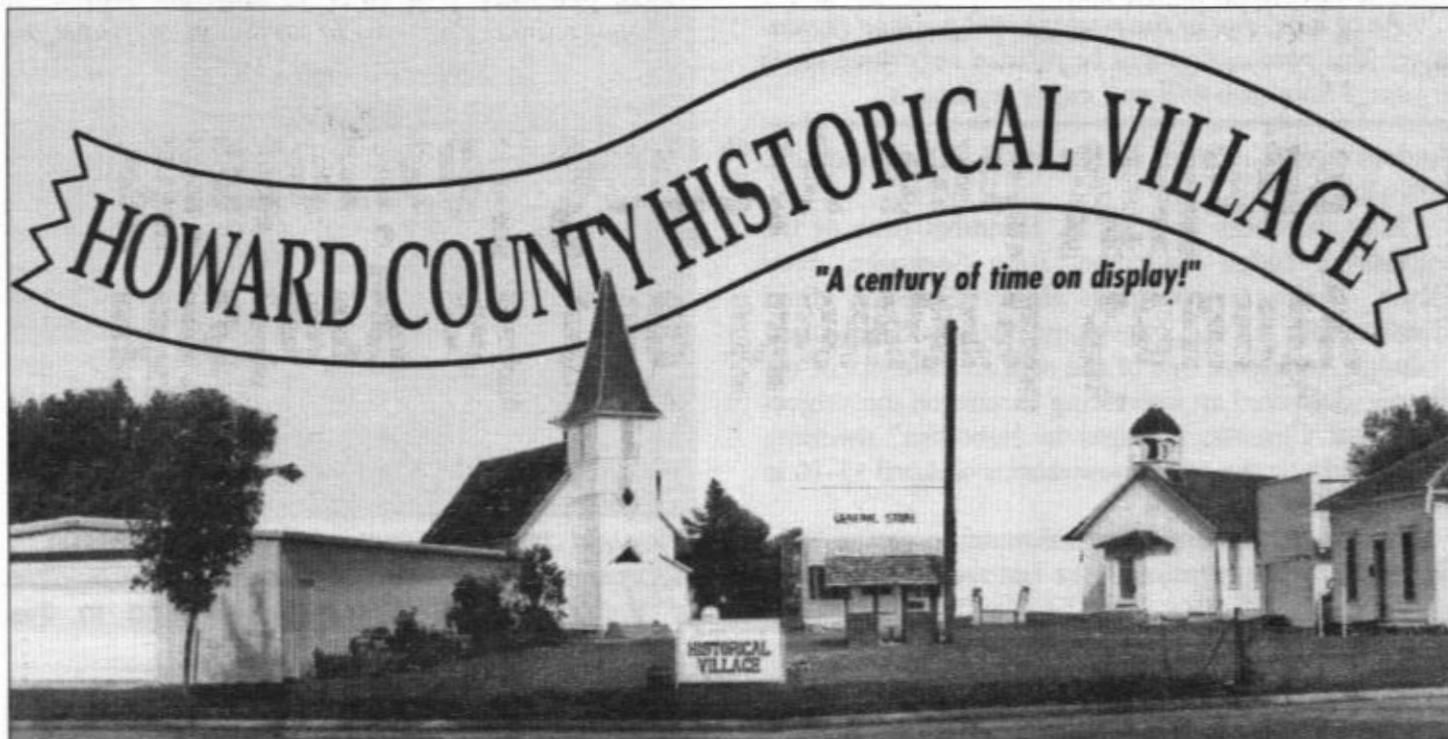


# Historically Speaking

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This postcard is of the Howard County Historical Village as it appeared from 1976 to 1991. At that time it was located north of the REA Building and east of the City Park. It was moved to its present location in 1991.

## History of the Howard County Historical Society and Village

By Linda Peterson,

*Great-Granddaughter of Howard County Pioneers*

In June and July of 1870 N. J. Paul and Robert Harvey founded St. Paul with a claim of 80 acres. They had been explorers for several years in Hall and Howard counties with several other explorers.

In 1901 an "Old Setter's Society" started with N. J. Paul as president and Robert Harvey as secretary. This group met annually for speeches and reminiscences. What stories they must have had to tell being the first in a new land!

● On April 18, 1907, the "Old Setter's" called them-

selves the "Howard County Historical Society" and had 73 members. They had their seventh annual meeting at the court house (that would be the old wooden structure—the new one was built in 1913). This was a special meeting for them as it was the thirty-fourth anniversary of the memorable snowstorm of 1873. The secretary (Robert Harvey was secretary in 1901 through the 1920's) reported accessions of 160 volumes of state and miscellaneous reports. Memorial addresses were read on the lives of deceased members—Frod Olsen, Henry Hansen, Louis Guggenmos and Patrick Minoughan. ● Officers were J. N. Paul, Paul

## A Message From the President *Jessie Kiser*

*As of now, due to the postage and postage regulations, this publication will be printed only three times a year. I hope you will still enjoy reading it.*

Anderson, H. C. Parker, R. Harvey N. J. Paul and Z. T. Lelwich.

Other members were P. M. Hannibal (one of the explorers), Judge Anderson, John Seehusen, Fred Olsen, Louis Guggenmos, Henry Hansen, Chris Diercks, Mrs. G. C. Lothrop and Patrick Minoughan.

Judge Anderson, one of the earliest pioneers of the county, delivered an interesting lecture on the subject of "Great Climatic Changes in Nebraska" dwelling particularly on the great snow storms of April 13-16 in 1873 and January 1888.

I could not find any more information on the "Old Society", except mention of the last secretary in about



*The first building in the Historical Village was School District 41, which was located south of St. Libory. The above picture of District 43 was taken in 1943.*



*Thorvald Jacobsen, one of the first members to incorporate the society, served as vice president of the incorporated society.—Printed in the Grand Island Independent in 1969*

the 1940's. His name was C. V. Svoboda and he was quite a historical figure. He was a very prominent and successful pioneer from Howard County. In 1875 his family bought 240 acres two miles north of Farwell. Times were very hard and they started with very little. Young Charles Vincent helped his family over many hardships and obstacles. He became one of the leading farmers in Howard County. (He spoke several languages.) He oversaw the building of the new county roads and organized School District 52. He was in partnership with Frank Gruber in making bricks in St. Paul and they built the St. Wenceslaus Church at Warsaw. The old Post Office on Main Street in St. Paul (the Swinarski Building) has "CV Svoboda 1929" written on the front of it. He was precinct assessor and County Clerk for three terms. In 1922 he served two terms in the Nebraska Legislature. In 1908 he helped organize the Farmers Grain & Supply Company, plus many more achievements. He did a lot of historical writings for different periodicals and Who's Who in Nebraska. In 1921 he wrote a very extensive "Historical Sketches of Howard County" for the Howard County Agricultural Society's annual Fair Book. In 1939 these articles were reprinted in four issues of the *Phonograph*. He also did a lot of writings about the Czech people in the Farwell area



*The general store at the Historical Village was located next to east (right) of City Hall in this 1911 photo and moved to the village in 1969-70.*

Jerry and Bill Svoboda are two of his children. He died in 1953 at the age of 93 and is buried at the cemetery at Warsaw.

In 1965, because of the inspiration they got from the historical writings of C. V. Svoboda, several citizens of the county decided they should start a historical society again. This article appeared in the newspaper: "A meeting has been called for Wednesday at the City Hall to reorganize the Howard County Historical Society. The need for an active organization has long been felt. The late C. V. Svoboda, who was an inspir-

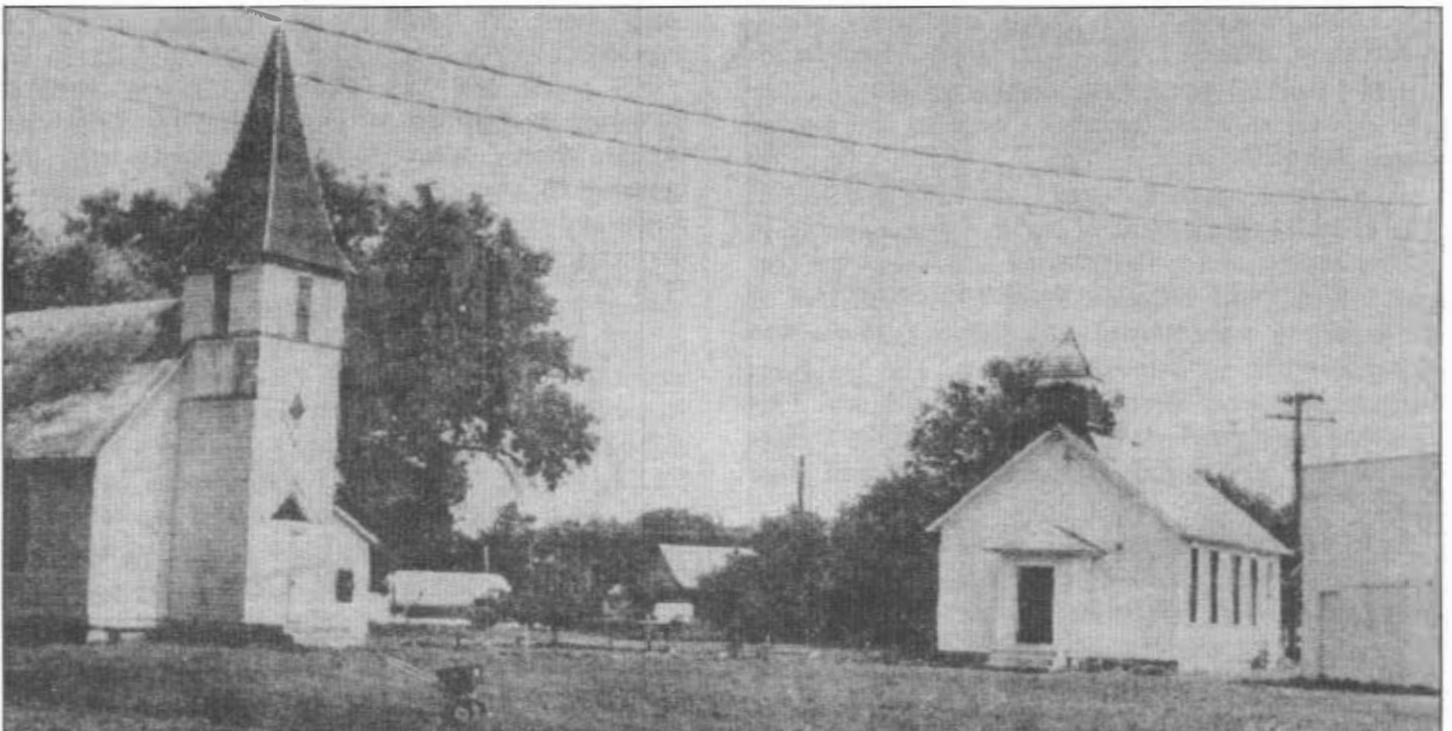
ing figure in the Society, served as the last secretary. The value of articles and history of the past is realized. The re-creating of the Society will help preserve it."

In 1965 the City bought the old District 41 school house from St. Libory. It sat just south of St. Libory on Highway 281 and it was moved to the quarter block just east of the City Park. Various historical items had been donated by old settlers over the years and stored upstairs at the Cushman Building and they were displayed in the old school building.

In 1966 the "Howard County Historical Society" was incorporated by N.J. Paul, Henry Jorgensen, LaVerne Jacobsen and Vance Lind. AND SO IT BEGAN!!!

In 1965 the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Farwell closed its doors and Henry Rasmussen purchased it and donated it to the Historical Village. In 1967 it was moved to the site where the school was east of the park and north of the REA building. The pews in the church are from the Danish Church north of St. Paul. A basement was put under the church for historical displays.

The general store was added to the village in 1969-70. It was an old building between the old fire hall and Zlomke's Furniture. It was donated by George Zlomke. In the accompanying photo taken in 1911, it was a John Deere dealership, but over the years it wore many faces. In the 1950's it was a tavern run by



*The museum in 1969 was located north of the REA building and east of the City Park, where it stayed until 1991.—Printed in the Grand Island Independent in 1969*

Emery and Maud Petersen. Later it was a shoe repair store and a feed store. Now, at the Historical Village, it wears the sign of Bartle's Store and Drygoods.

At about the same time an old two-car garage was moved from Cushing and added to the village. It sat next to the school house. A false front was added and it was changed into a blacksmith shop with a working forge and tools.

On August 13, 1969, the Historical Society had a big dedication ceremony at the museum site in the City Park. C. J. Suchanek served as M.C. The St. Paul High School Band, directed by Robert Owen, played a concert for one hour. Mr. Suchanek reviewed the history of the Howard County Historical Society, which was revived by the late C. V. Svoboda and others about 25 years ago.

People active in the Society named were: Leonard Bahensky, Thorvald Jacobsen, CZBJ Lodge, Maggie Christensen, Mrs. C. J. Suchanek and Henry Jorgensen.

Recognition was paid to the couple with the longest continued residence in Howard County, Mr. and Mrs. Anton Blaha; the longest residence of a lady, Mrs. Selma Leth, 78 years, and the longest residence of a man, 93-years for Andrew Hald of Dannebrog.

At this time, Lars Jacobsen of Dannebrog was president of the society.

In 1976 the old Kulwicki house was moved from Cushing Road. In the 1950's it was the home of Jim and Laura Petersen. It was moved next to the blacksmith shop. Also in 1976, a nice 30'x80' steel building was built for storage and display of farm machinery. All six of these buildings were in the quarter block east of the park.

The village sat at this site from 1976 until 1991. The church had a basement under it and it started to fill with water and in the 80's the buildings were getting infested with termites. So in 1991-1992 four of the buildings were moved. The Kulwicki house was beyond repair, so it was torn down. The buildings were moved to 6th Street, east of the courthouse. This land had been purchased by the city from the DeVry family, who at one time had an ice house and pond there.

In 1992 the society bought the old Frank Gruber house. It was built in 1908 by F. Gruber, who was one of the first settlers and he had a brick factory north of town. The home was restored in 1995 and was opened as a period home, military museum and exhibit of St. Paul author Jean Potts. It is on 6th Street, north of the courthouse.

In 1997 the Coufal family donated the newly closed



*The longest continuous residents of the county who were on hand for the dedication of the Howard County Historical Village on August 13, 1969, were, left, Mrs. Selma Leth, who lived in Howard County for 68 years, and Mr. and Mrs. Anton Blaha, who were the couple with the longest continuous residency in the county.— Printed in the Phonograph in 1969.*

Cotesfield Post Office to the museum and it was moved in next to the blacksmith shop. In 1998 the society got a grant and took out a loan and bought a depot from Shelton. They moved it to the north end of the village, facing south. It was originally the old Gibbon depot. It is a close twin to St. Paul's old Union Pacific Depot. A court yard with a clock and lamps was added in 2000. It was donated by Gary and Bonnie (Schenck) Clayton. Cement benches were also added in the court yard, as were additional street lamps along the pathway. The lamps are reproductions of early 1900's lights. The lamps and benches were donated by the Schenck, Sidel and Wissing families and one lamp is in memory of C. V. Svoboda. Sometime in the early 2000's Halis and Marian Odabasi donated the original coal shed from the



*The old Kulwicki house was moved from Cushing Road to the Historical Village on September 29, 1976. At that time the museum was located in the half block just north of the REA building.—Printed in the Phonograph in 1969.*

Union Pacific railroad station on the east side of town. It is setting just south of the village depot.

In 2006 the steel building, which housed agricultural displays, was still sitting north of the REA building. The REA owned this lot and they were wanting the building moved. The Historical Society obtained a small portion of land on the backside of the Village and started the BIG project of moving the building. It took a couple of years, a lot of back breaking work and a lot of man power to move all its contents and breakdown a printing press. Later a cement apron was added on two sides and in 2012 a lean-to was added to the west side of the building.

For one hundred twelve years the Howard County Historical Society has been active in keeping the history of our county alive. We have a great group of restored buildings and even a greater treasure of historical items displayed inside. It's great to go back in time and remember our past. Hope you can come by and see us sometime.

**Due to restrictions of Bulk Mailings, we now have to send our newsletters First Class.**

**Because of the added expense, we will have only three issues sent of the "Historically Speaking" newsletter per year.**

**Only paid members will receive a copy—dues for 2013 are past due now!**



*This photo was donated to the Howard County Historical Society by Elsie Tucker Leschinsky. Cotesfield's post office and employees in the 1940's were, left, Stanley Tucker, Anna Sautter (postmaster), Herb Rasmussen and Paul Mortensen. The Post Office was donated to the museum by the Coufal family and moved to the Historical Village in 1997.*

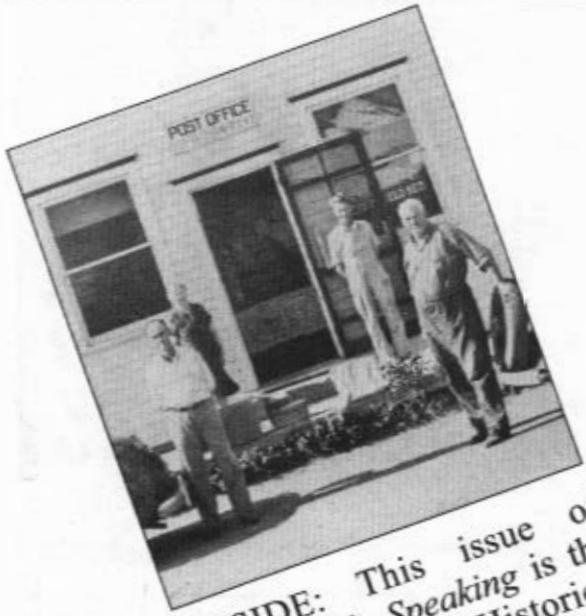
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HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1  
SAINT PAUL, NEBRASKA 68873

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**INSIDE:** This issue of *Historically Speaking* is the history of the Historical Society and Village, which was researched and written by Linda Peterson.

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