



# historically speaking

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1 / Saint Paul, Nebraska / 68873

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Fall Issue 2004

## Sending postcards FROM DANNEBROG



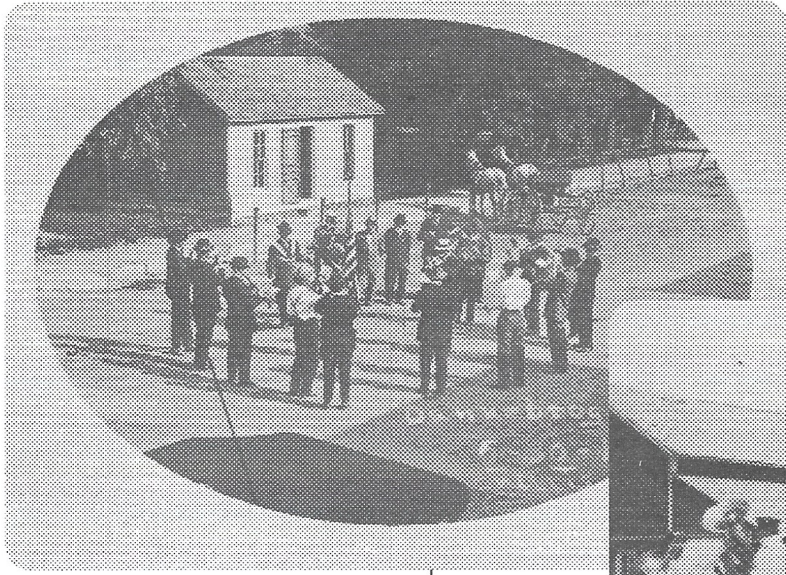
By  
Ron W. Sack



**P**ostcards—these miniature snapshots of life—transported a person from town to town. A photographer from Dannebrog by the name of Nellis captured events, buildings, rivers and bridges with his lens. Researchers today are grateful to Nellis because his postcards offer a glimpse of what life was like back in Dannebrog.

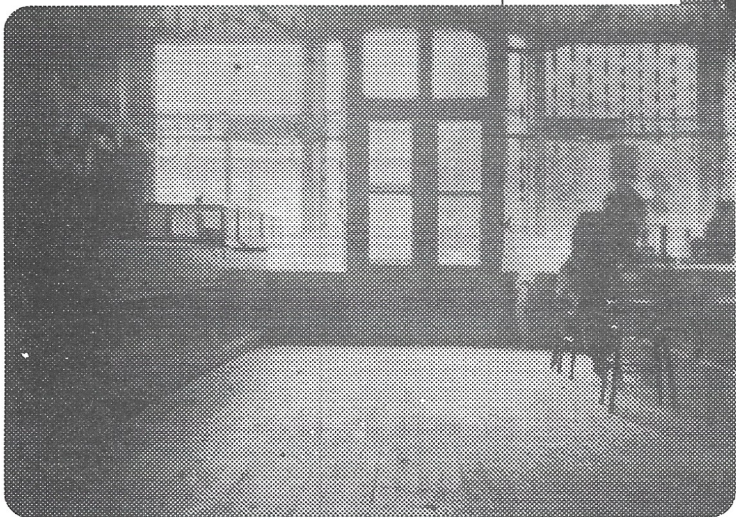


If it wasn't for Nellis, a Dannebrog photographer, much of Dannebrog's history would have been lost. Nellis ran a studio on Dannebrog's main street. He painstakingly recorded the events in the community. He captured everything from the "Great Dannebrog Flood" to a fine mess of fish on the Middle Loup River. Nellis postcard photographs courtesy of Ron W. Sack.



*Left photo: A group of Danes prepares for a concert in the middle of the street on May 30, 1916.*

*Bottom photo: The Lincoln Commercial Band from Lincoln, Nebraska marches through the Dannebrog community in 1911. Both are Nellis postcard photographs and appear courtesy of Ron W. Sack.*



*Top left photo: A lonely unknown soul inhabits a store in Dannebrog. Date unknown.*

*Top photo: Horse and buggy park in front of Hald's Store on a sunny day in Dannebrog. This photograph was taken from the second floor studio owned by Nellis. His studio was just across the street from Hald's Store.*



*Left photo: Nellis also captured the architecture of the Dannebrog community. The Union Pacific depot quietly awaits the next train. Nellis postcard photographs courtesy of Ron W. Sack.*



## *Riviera Theater's history is being preserved.*

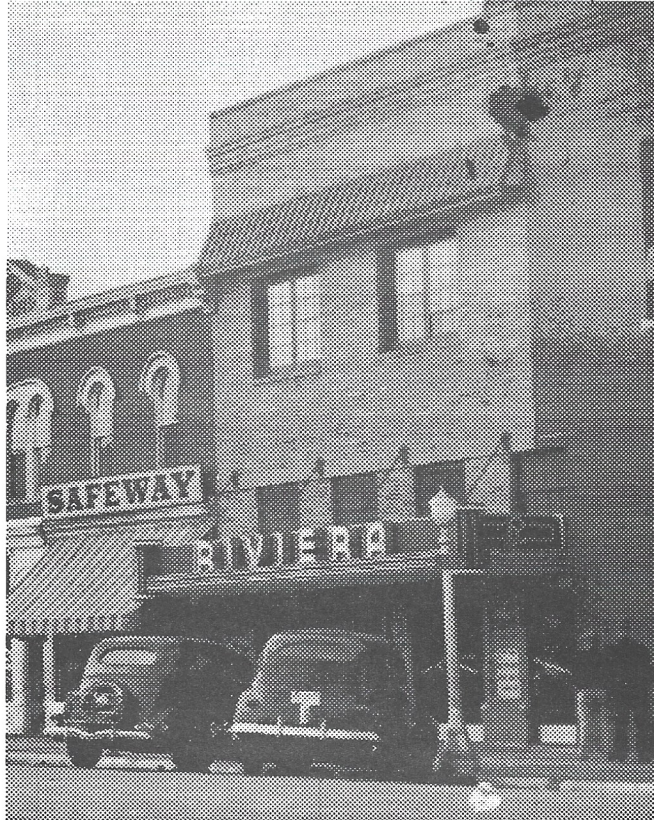
By Ron Sack

For me, the Riviera Theater played such an important role in the lives of the people from Howard County. It is unfortunate that much of its history has been lost. I hope we can change that. I am in the process of compiling stories, artifacts and history on this Howard County landmark.

Recently I uncovered data on Mons Thompson, who was one of the owners. He was born in Bergen, Norway on December 19, 1895, the son of Andrew and Emma Monson Thompson. He came with his parents to America in 1896 locating in Scandia, Kansas and later moving to Superior, Nebraska in 1898.

In 1906 he was an apprentice with the moving picture operator, Mr. Hader, in Superior, Nebraska. From 1907-14 he was the moving picture operator in the old Adelite Theater (first moving picture theatre in Superior). He moved back to Kansas in 1914 and was the operator and assistant manager of the Brown Grand Theater and the White Way Theater in Concordia. The majestic Brown Theater still stands and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It remains one of the best preserved theaters in the Midwest.

Thompson later moved back to Nebraska and was the manager of the Strand Theater in Hastings from



*Saint Paul's Riviera is fondly remembered by former patrons and employees. H.C.H.S. photo.*

1919-20. Other stints included manager of the E.C. Preston Theaters, in Central City, Holdrege and Grand Island and manager of the Hobart Swan Theaters in Kearney and the Sun Theater in York.

Thompson received a break when he was appointed a sales representative for Universal Film Corporation in 1923. Omaha, Des Moines and Sioux Falls were some of the cities he served.

Thompson bought the Riviera Theater in Saint Paul in 1932. During that time, he made the theater one of the finest in the area. He was also chairman of the Motion Picture Theater Owners Association of Nebraska and Iowa while living in Saint Paul.

In 1939, Saint Paul's Riviera Theater had the claim of the largest use of neon in the area—over 210 feet of neon was used to illuminate the letters and

graphics of the theater's sign.

I was able to locate old phonograph records which contain sound effects used by the theater when it was a silent screen theater. Some of the sound effects included thunder and cymbals clashing. I also located several old cardboard posters from the 1940s at antique shops around the country which are marked "Riviera Theater, Saint Paul, Nebraska."

For me, the Riviera was yet another way the world entered Saint Paul.

*Others remember the Riviera...*

"I lived in St. Paul from 1924 until 1942 and in the 1930s saw the cowboy shows on Saturday night. First runs were on Sunday at 25c and if you saved your ticket stub you could get in free on the rerun of the same show on Monday."

**Charles I. Cerney M.D.**  
Zanesville, Ohio

"Thanks for the memories. I printed out the picture to put in my book of 'memories.' During high school, I was an usher at the Riviera. That was great. Being an usher provided me with being able to see the movies as well as earn some spending money."

**Dycke Sevcik**  
Casper, Wyoming

"I remember the piano player by the name of Jessie Mason. She was such a terrific player. Mason played during the era of the silent screen.

**Georgia Jensen**  
Lincoln, Nebraska



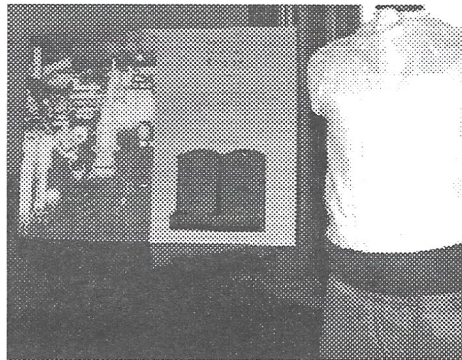
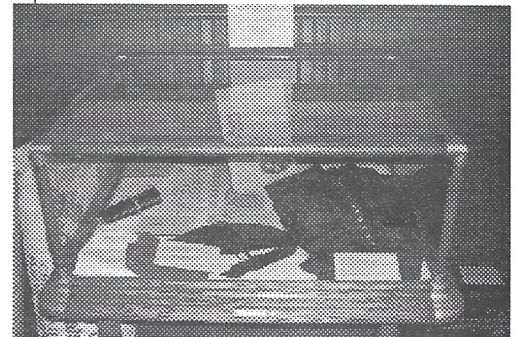
## Saint Libory exhibit showcases railroad and town's history.

By Ron Sack

What do feed sacks, ink pens, clothing and family photographs have in common? All of these artifacts are part of the new exhibit in the depot honoring Saint Libory's history. This exhibit shows how the railroad shaped the town and people and made them prosper. Saint Libory was the natural choice for this exhibit since it was the first town in the county reached by the railroad.

We are grateful to all of the people who took the time to submit their photographs and artifacts.

Top photo: The main focus of the Saint Libory exhibit shows how the lives were shaped by the arrival of the railroad. Family photographs of the early immigrants were placed on the wall near the opening display panel. The majority of the immigrants came from Germany, with several coming from Ireland. Right photo: A glass case holds artifacts relating to the Haggart and O'Halleran families. They were among the first settlers in the area. Also included in the case are ink pens once used by patrons of the Saint Libory Precinct during the Presidential elections along with clothing worn by Orphan Train rider Jerry Cordes.



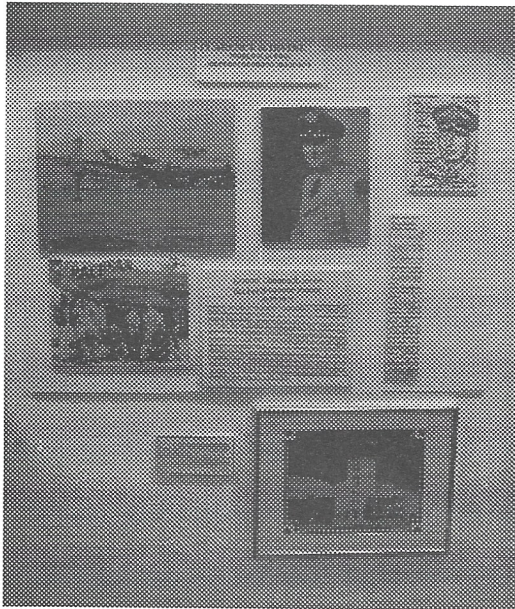
Alberta Cordes of Saint Libory loaned the historical society clothing, shown at the far right of this photo, worn by her husband, Jerry Cordes, when he arrived in Saint Libory on the Orphan Train. A matchstick holder from the Leschinsky Store is also featured in the exhibit and is shown to the left of the clothing.



Feed sacks found in Saint Libory's old Union Pacific depot were donated by Union Grain of Saint Libory.

## Exhibits expanded to honor veterans.

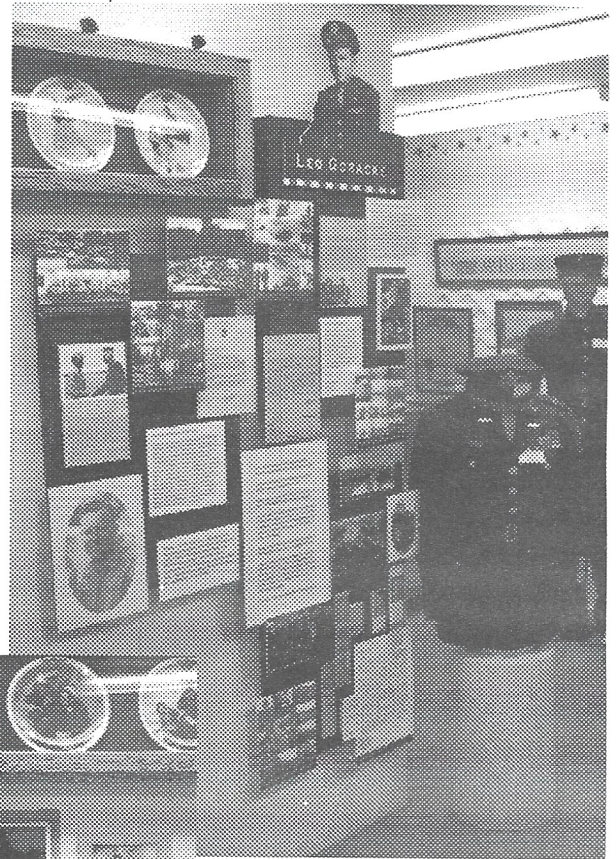
A large crowd was on hand over Memorial Day weekend at the Gruber House to honor all Howard County veterans. Attendees were able to view the three expanded exhibits honoring Howard County's Silver Star recipients Clarence Irvine, Alvin Christensen and Leo Goracke. These exhibits are showcased in the following three photographs.



Left photo: Clarence Irvine's Silver Star exhibit.

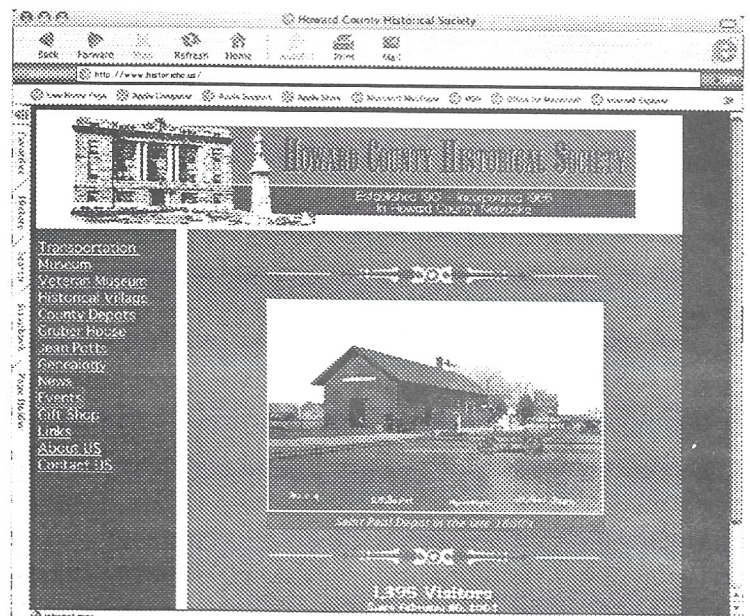
Right photo: Leo Goracke's Silver Star exhibit.

Bottom photo: Alvin Christensen's Silver Star exhibit.



## www.historichc.us continues to provide valuable information.

If it has been a while since you visited our website, please take the time to do so. Our revamped site offers plenty of information and historic photographs. Sections include the Transportation Museum, Veterans' Exhibit, Historical Village, County Depots, Gruber House, Jean Potts, Genealogy, News, Events and Gift Shop. We are grateful to Roderick Burkhardt who maintains this valuable resource for us.



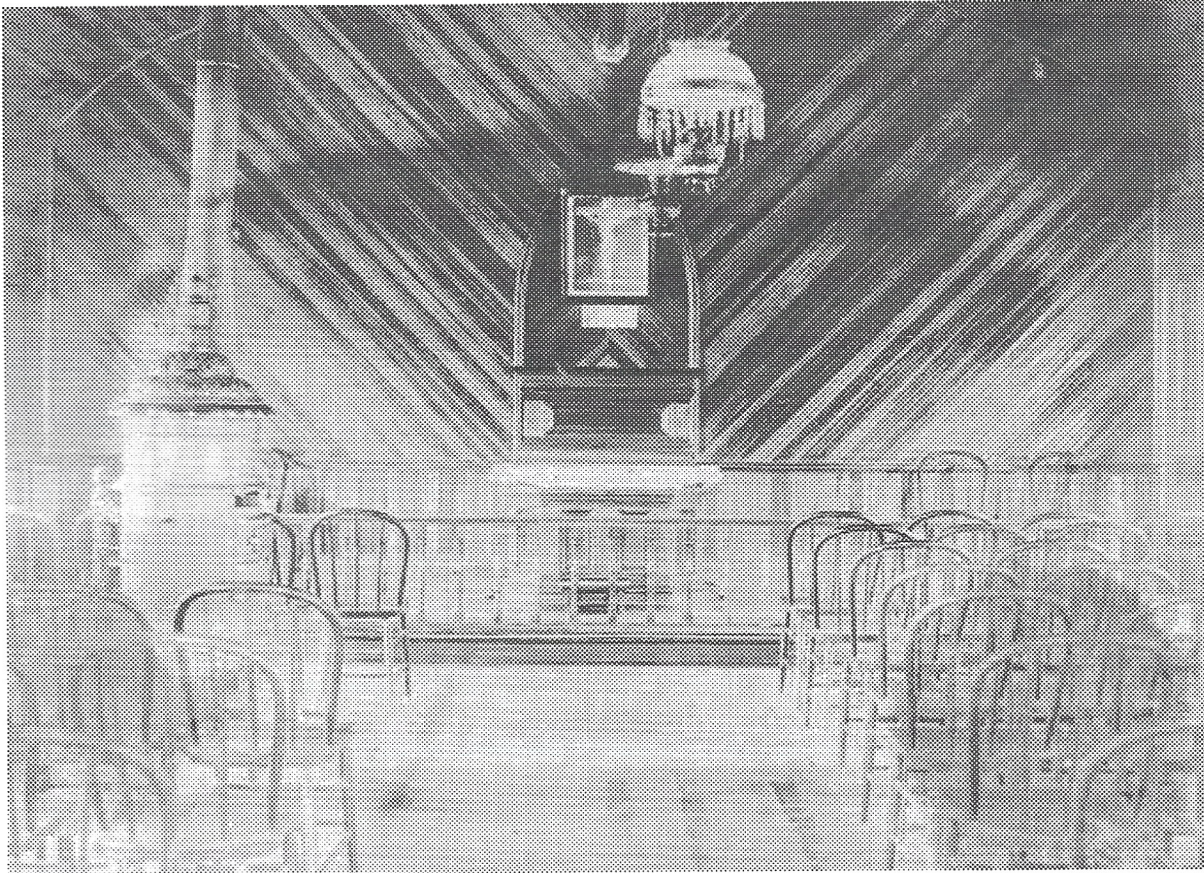
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## A look back at the Dry Creek Lutheran Church.

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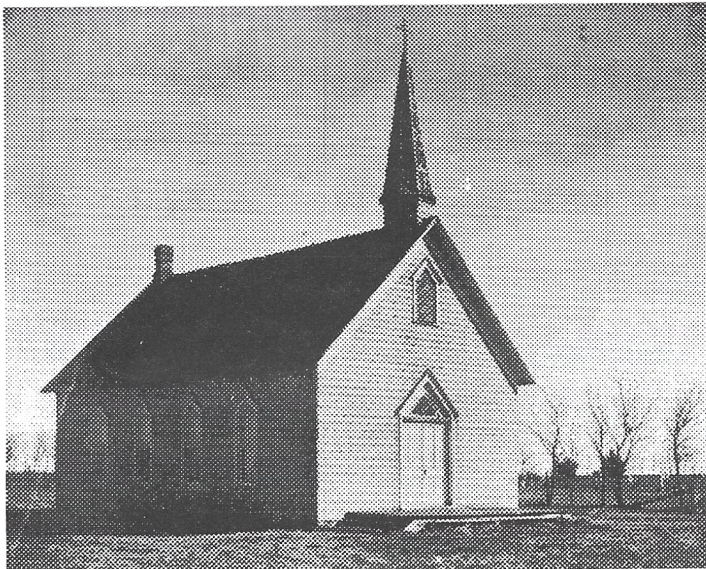
Member and fellow historian Marilyn Nelson of Boelus shares history and a few photographs from this historic church.

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A rare look at the interior of the Dry Creek Lutheran Church. This photograph shows what the church looked like before the pews were added in 1921. Photo courtesy of Dave Osborne.

*Photo below:* Ane Madsen Sorensen, grandmother of Marilyn Nelson, at the Loup Fork Cemetery with a portion of Dry Creek Lutheran Church in the background. Photo courtesy of Marilyn Nelson.



The Dry Creek Lutheran Church was one of many historic Danish Lutheran churches which dotted the prairie in Howard County. Photo courtesy of Dave Osborne.

### *Listing of the pastors that served Dry Creek.*

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1872-74 and 1886-1888 Hans Hansen  
(as ordained pastor from 1886-1888)

1874-1876	A.M. Andersen
1874-1884	Lay pastor S. Johnson
1879-1883	S.H. Madsen
1882-1884	A. Rasmussen
1885-1886	Jens Danielsen
1888-1892	Louis Johnson
1892-1927	J.Chr. Pedersen
1927-1928	James P. Christensen
1928-1929	A.S. Nielsen
1929-1934	Harold C. Jensen
1935-1937	Bernard J Engskow
1937-1947	Laurits C. Hansen
1947-1950	Student pastors
1950-1955	Eugene Wekander
1956-1958	Viggo J. Petersen
1959-1962	Richard A. Thompson

1962 Dissolved and moved to Dannebrog and became Our Saviours Lutheran Church.



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Unable find the time to help the Historical Society?
Would like to help at the Historical Village, but don't live nearby?
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Questions?
Contact the Historical Society at the address above or any of the board members.

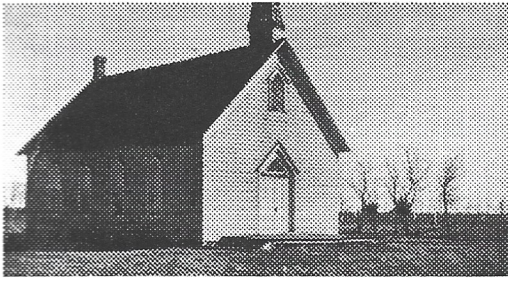
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*Upcoming Historical Society Programs*

September 12, 2004 — Noted songwriter and vocalist—Peggy Lang from Dannebrog—will be performing a songfest at the Historical Village in Saint Paul. Lang performs country, folk and original music at 2:00 p.m. This is one performance you won't want to miss.

October 17, 2004 — Film...*A Portrait of Maya Angelou*. Join Angelou as she returns to her hometown of Stamps, Arkansas. Part of Bill Moyers' series *Creativity*. Location: Saint Paul Community Library, 2:00 p.m.

November 28, 2004 — Annual Bake Sale. A selection of baked good available for sale...just in time for the holiday season.

December 12, 2004 — 10th Annual Holiday Tour of Homes. Tour showcases several historic and new homes in the Saint Paul area.

We would like to thank those who support our events.

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PUBLISHER:  
 Howard County Historical Society

EDITOR:  
 Ron W. Sack

LAYOUT AND DESIGN:  
 Ron W. Sack

CIRCULATION:  
 500+

MAILING ADDRESS:  
 P.O. Box 1, Saint Paul, NE 68873

MEMBERSHIP (INCLUDES NEWSLETTER  
 SUBSCRIPTION & MAILINGS):  
 \$10 per person

Preserving the history of:  
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 Dannebrog, Dannevirke,  
 Elba, Fairdale, Farwell, Nysted,  
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 and Warsaw

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Depot

*Photograph on mailing side: Dry Creek Lutheran Church.*