

Entering Howard County

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1021 Sixth Street / St. Paul, Nebraska / 68873

www.historichc.org

Winter Issue 2001



My FAVORITE
Places
IN HOWARD
County



By Ron W. Sack



Part four in a series of four.

eople and the homes they live in can shape our lives. For me, there is a person and a place which I will forever hold dear: my Grandmother Pauline Sack and her house at 506 Seventh Street in St. Paul. Maya Angelou—the great poet, writer, and humanitarian—said this to us at a presentation we attended, "Once in your life, if you are lucky, someone will come along and save you." I felt as though she had written this about my grandmother.

Continued from page 1.

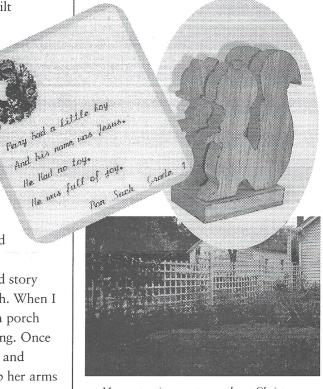
I felt as though 506 Seventh Street was another home for me. Granted, I had everything I wanted with my wonderful parents, sister, and brothers, but my grandmother and her home offered me something different. The home was a refuge. A place where I could go and just be. She had no rules for me. I could come and go as I wished.

This majestic home was built around 1910. It has strong influences of the Dutch Colonial style with its steeply-pitched gambrel roof and full second story. It is a style that was popular in America from 1890 to 1920. Impressive details of the exterior of the home included beveled and leaded glass windows, columns topped off with ionic capitals, painted shingles on the attic and second story levels and a wrap-around porch. When I was young, grandmother had a porch swing suspended from the ceiling. Once in a while she would come out and swing with us. She would wrap her arms around our shoulders and, even though the night was cool, I felt warm.

I never realized I would never feel this safe again.

Her home had a wonderful setting. An extensive hedge bordered the entire perimeter of the home. You could find me there on summer afternoons trimming it. I created projects for myself in grandmother's yard just to be around her. I painted her backyard fence, raked and mowed the lawn, painted the house and garage, and of course there was my annual ritual with the Christmas decorations. Displaying her ivory-colored nativity set was something I always looked forward to. Because, together, we made it into an event. It started with going to

the country to my father's bale barn and getting five of the most golden straw bales I could find. These became the side walls of a stable. I would then grab my trusty saw and venture into the pasture and track down a perfect cedar tree and cut off several of its lower branches. These we used for the roof of the stable.



My masterpieces: a poem about Christmas, the legendary squirrel napkin holder, and grandmother's backyard fence.

When back in town, I would go upstairs into the closet of the west room and bring down this massive box which was much larger than I. Then I would gather the necessary extension cords and begin my quest outside. I unloaded everything on the southwest corner of the front porch. First I assembled the straw bales as if they were bricks in a manner that formed a stable. I ran a plank across the top portion of the straw bales and then capped it off with cedar branches. One by one I took the figurines out of the big box and placed them in the stable. First Mary, then Joseph, and then, of course,

baby Jesus. After I had everything displayed and connected, I would run inside and have grandmother come out and look. She would always come back with the comment, "You've outdone yourself. This is the best Nativity ever."

For me, that moment will forever be Christmas.

It was now time for hot chocolate and a freshly baked roll. I would then go upstairs and follow through with the remaining decorations for the inside of the house. Whatever I did seemed to please her. Starting when I was about twelve years old and continued even through my college and professional years in the city, I would always come home and decorate her house for Christmas. I never missed a beat...mainly because she never missed a beat with me.

She instilled in me a sense of trust at an early age. In junior high I often stayed late after school for wrestling practice, band practice, or just to hang out with my friends. Not having a car, I had no way to make it back to the farm, so I often spent the night at her home. It was then that she gave me a key to her place. At age fourteen, no one else at this point in my life empowered me with so much trust. But it was more than that, it was respect.

Inside the house, grandmother had a full basement, second floor, and an attic, all for me to experience. The open oak staircase was played on by many a grandchild. She let me roam wherever I wanted to. Upstairs, downstairs, in the attic and under the porch. This was the freedom I longed for.

The beveled leaded windows created rainbows of color as the warm sun would set to the west. The colors sparkled on the oak staircase and made it feel magical. I had never seen prisms before. Her home educated me about good design. About things like Ionic columns, the "Egg and Dart" principle,

Continued from page 2.

and symmetry and balance. The place ignited my senses.

I would stake my claim upstairs—I etched my initials into the north bedroom door. In most kingdoms I would have been banished. Grandmother didn't say a word. The initials are still there now.

Upstairs and downstairs were treasures galore. Playing with the polar bear rug, ivory tusks, and countless souvenirs the Andersons had from Europe, made me feel as if I had traveled the world in one afternoon.

My grandmother was the first to make me realize we are all one. She embraced people in her home through her hospitality and entertaining and made me understand that the world was a bit bigger than St. Paul. Her guests over the years included Sr. Ann's friend Dr. Lee and his family who were from Japan and Ruth Floyd, a friend of

Aunt Darlene's who reminded me of Pearl Bailey. At a time when everyone ir. St. Paul seemed to look alike and come from the same background, my grandmother's house became for me a great melting pot. Being able to experience diversity in St. Paul in the early 1970s was a rarity. Her simple actions always taught me to keep an open mind.

On Sunday afternoons when it was winter, the grandchildren built snow forts in the yard "white palaces," as grandmother called them. On occasions it was too cold to venture outside, so she would round us up and play the games she learned when she grew up in the Great Depression. Games like "Button, Button, Who's Got The Button." All of the grandchildren would squat on the floor and form a circle around her. Slowly, she

would walk in front of us, bend over, gently touch our hands, and pretend to give us a button as we held our hands together. But she would pick only one of us to receive the button. The object of the game was simple...to guess which one had the button. Grandmother gave me the button on many occasions. "Button, Button" became the symbol of the friendship which she and I would develop together over the years. Her giving me something...me giving her something.



My grandmother's house on a cool day in March, 1990. The home would be a haven for me, a refuge for creativity, strength, and understanding.

Her gifts didn't stop there. She embraced my creativity at an early age. A poem I was involved with in the first grade at Catholic school not only made it into grandmother's Christmas cards, but was laminated and displayed in her home and in her scrapbooks.

While in industrial arts class in junior high, I designed my first creation out of wood—a squirrel napkin holder. This was to be the end-all of napkin holders; a magnificent work of art. The holder consisted of two silhouettes of squirrels hand-cut from

oak and joined together with another piece of oak at the base. I worked on this for days. It was, without a doubt, the worst creation I had ever designed (but at the time I didn't know that). I was so proud of what I accomplished. Finally the day came when I had it finished. I proudly wrapped it up and gave it to grandmother on Christmas. She loved it. She made me feel as if I were Michelangelo and that I had just created a priceless work of art. Well, to her it was priceless; she never parted with it. It held a prominent place in her kitchen for the next twenty

years. Had she not placed it there with so much honor and respect, my spirits would have been crushed and I might not have ever wanted to design another thing in my life again.

I think she knew that. I

think she knew my ego was quite fragile at that time. It was her support for my creative endeavors, some of which were triumphs and some of which were failures, that created the artist in me. I would go on giving her Christmas and birthday gifts for the next twenty years. I never realized it until now, but her embracing my gifts at such an early age always made me look forward to giving her a gift whenever an

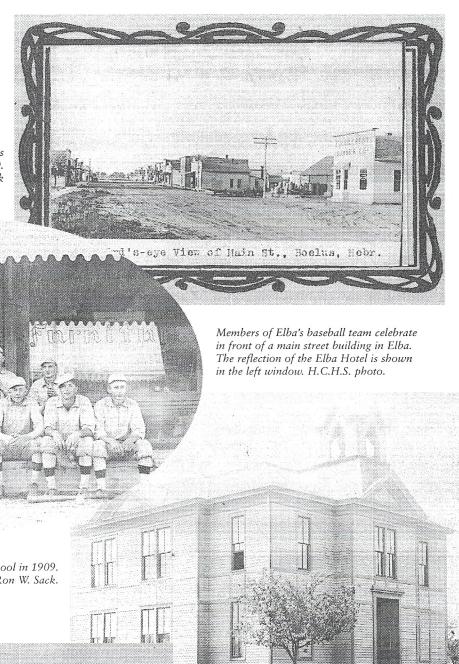
I now look into my hands and see all of the buttons my grandmother has given me. My hands are so full I can't begin to carry them all. Although, one by one, I am beginning to give them away...to the people and the places who could really use a part of that wonderful woman I called my grandmother and my best friend.

occasion presented itself.

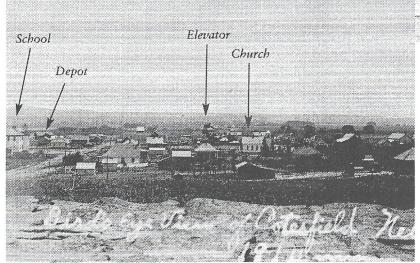
A look at Howard County through the years... Boelus, Elba, and Cotesfield.

By Ron W. Sack

This is what main street in Boelus looked like around 1900. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack



The stately Elba High School in 1909. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack.



1911 post card says this is a bird's eye view of Cotesfield. Schoolhouse is visible in the left edge of the photo. Methodist church, elevator, and depot are visible as well. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack.

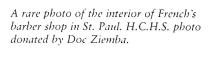
A look at Howard County through the years... St. Paul and Farwell.

> St. Paul's Howard Avenue on a hot summer afternoon in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of Jan and Bill Sack.

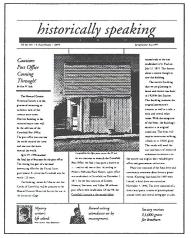


A look at a general store in Howard County. This one is Fred Olsen's store of Farwell. H.C.H.S. photo donated by the Olsen family.

St. Paul's impressive brick main street buildings are showcased in this photo. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack.



A look at how our newsletter has educated Howard County about Howard County.



Summer 1997 (debut issue)

- Cotesfield Post Office
- Encampment
- Economic development



Fall 1997 issue

- Lorkoskys at the World's Fair
- Cotesfield
- Polish Catholic Churches



Winter 1997 issue

- SPHS championship basketball
- Baseball capital
- Farwell Presbyterian Church



Spring 1998 issue

- Jean Potts
- Farwell basketball
- · Cotesfield P.O. wins award



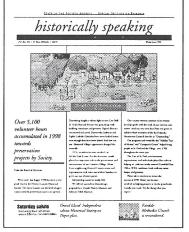
Summer 1998 issue

- Street lamps and walkway
- First exhibit to honor a woman



Fall 1998 issue

- St. Libory's early history
- Depot plan in action
- Dannebrog's City Hall

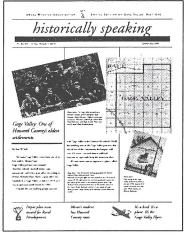


Winter 1998 issue

- Site plan gets noticed
- Praise from G.I. Independent
- Fairdale Methodist Church

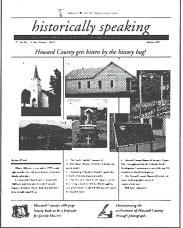


- Depot move
- Remembering Cushing High
- Veterans' history



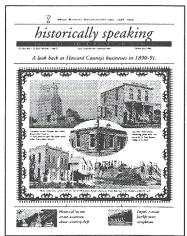
Summer 1999 issue

- Gage Valley
- Dannevirke history
- Artist Frank Vavra
- Depot plan wins award



Fall 1999 issue

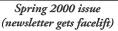
- History bug in Howard Co.
- History book



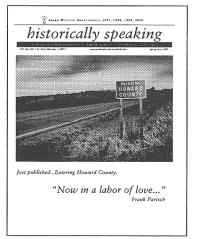
Winter 1999 issue

- Early businesses in Howard Co.
- · Cemetery theft wins award



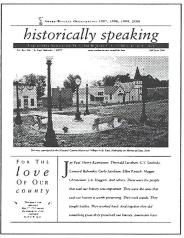


- St. Libory's watermelons
- Depot wins \$125,000 grant



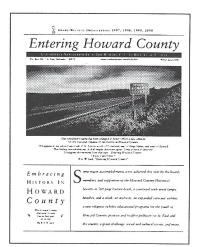
Summer 2000 issue

- History book is launched
- Historic homes



Fall 2000 issue

- Courtyard is dedicated
- History book



Winter 2000 issue (name change)

- History book
- · Society wins award



Spring 2001 issue

- Riviera Theatre of St. Paul
- Nysted school



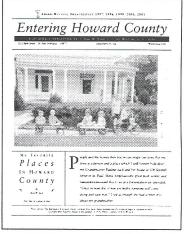
Summer 2001 issue

- Cemeteries and my Grandmother
- Farmers' Union gas station
- Cotesfield depot



Fall 2001 issue

- Leth's IGA of St. Paul
- History book wins awards
- Country schools



Winter 2001 issue

- My Grandmother's house
- Historic photographs

Sack bids farewell to newsletter.

By Ron W. Sack

It has been a busy five years for the Historical Society. Perhaps that is an understatement. It has been a very, very busy five years. Recently I was looking through my stack of papers and was overwhelmed at what we were able to accomplish together with the newsletters.

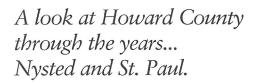
First titled *historically speaking* and later renamed *Entering Howard County*, this newsletter has documented nearly 200 pages of Howard County history over the past five years. It has promoted, protected, and preserved our history. And that's what a good historical society newsletter should be all about.

As I look back on my five years as editor and designer, I thank you for making the Howard County Historical Society what it is today—a strong, growing organization. I also thank you for taking the time to write down and send me your

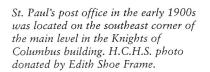
cherished stories. Believe me, they are important and well worth preserving.

I wish Roderick Burkhardt and Kim Turpitt all the best as they take on the responsibilities as newsletter editor and designer respectively. I can now look forward to spending more time on the other Historical Society projects which have been piling up.

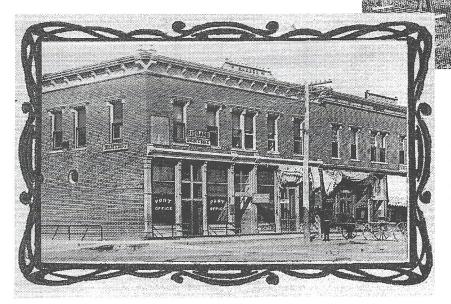
I wish to leave you with an old Native American saying which I have always kept close to me, "We will forever be remembered by the footprints we leave behind."



The L. Petersen & Co. Store of Nysted. This rare photo showcases one of Nysted's landmarks. It also housed the post office. H.C.H.S. photo.



Gruber and Svoboda's brickyard in St. Paul prospered. Buildings erected of these bricks included the Business College, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, the original Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Gruber's house, and many others in the surrounding area. This photo was taken around 1900. H.C.H.S. photo donated by the C.V. Svoboda family.



St. Paul's post office was located in the southeast corner of what is now the Knights of Columbus building. Fortunately this building has changed little over the years. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack.

2001 Historical Society accomplishments.

By Ron W. Sack

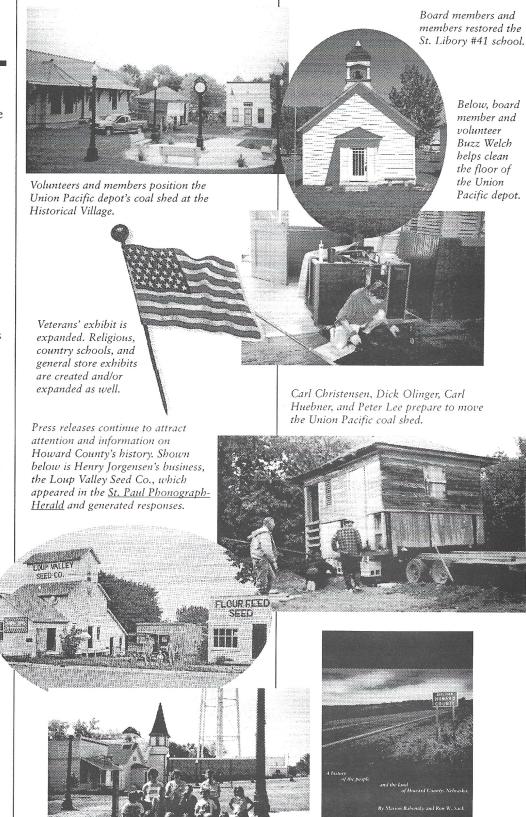
Together, we've done a lot to preserve and protect Howard County's history. Although the Society didn't break the last two years' records for volunteer hours, we did achieve some pretty significant accomplishments.

Two projects which promote and protect our history are the Royal Coachmen's restoration of the Farmers' Union gas station and the Veterans' Memorial Walk. Even though these projects were not the Historical Society's projects, they helped impact the area around the Historical Village and create a wonderful historic district and are worth saluting.

Topping off the list for the Historical Society is Brock Hanisch's Eagle Scout project: a stately brick sign which reads "Howard County Historical Village" and is capped off with a historic school bell from St. Paul High.

Some of the other highlights include:

- Restoration of St. Libory Dist. #41
- Improvements to the general store
- Expansion of the Veterans' exhibit
- Landscaping the courtyard and fence
- Preservation of the U.P. coal shed
- Preservation of the W.P.A. outhouse
- National awards for history book
- Consolidation of storage from Farmers' Union to Cushman building
- "Holiday Tour of Homes"
- "Show Your Stuff" and bake sale
- Quarterly newsletters and column
- Accessioning/identification of artifacts
- Press releases to improve the image of St. Paul and Howard Co.
- Living history, tours, and exhibits
- Depot restoration



Education and tourism continue. Above, a group

from Wood River Elementary School visits the

Historical Village.

and national spotlight with awards and kudos.

History book is in state

So near and yet so far.

By Marion Bahensky

Our hardworking volunteers, led by Carl Christensen, have moved the old St. Paul Union Pacific coal shed/outhouse to the Historical Village where it will be painted and shingled to match the depot and used for storage. The Village store has been reorganized, scrubbed shiny clean, and we are adding professional display labels for every item, with explanations of pioneer use. The St. Libory school belfry no longer leaks, and the school is sparkling clean with new paint and non-school items removed. Friends are restoring the blackboard and desks. We are collecting marvellous anecdotes from country-school days. We have wonderful plans for landscaping the grounds and renovation of the depot to be a super museum (more than doubling our climate-controlled space). Our Village is so near to perfection...and then the lowest bid for the depot work came in at about \$100,000 more than our \$125,000 grant will provide.

The Directors and the architect have gone back to the drawing board. He is scrutinizing every sub-bid to find wiggle room. We Directors are tackling every single non-skilled task in the depot to cut costs there. Buzz Welch has taken down a 12x12 foot wall all by herself. We are trying to find a friend/carpenter to do our skilled carpentry at a lesser cost than the bid. We furnished the architect with a list of 19 items that we can eliminate or do ourselves. We hope soon to receive a revised bid of (MUCH) less than \$224,300. Considering that ten of the thirteen directors are of retirement age, you may call us dedicated and brave.

As soon as we know how much money we have to raise, we will go all out to find and apply for more grants. (We now have \$50,000.) We will pursue every fund-raising project we can think of. We are hosting more visitors every day. We are bringing tourist dollars to Howard County, as well as creating a dynamic image for St. Paul. We continue to provide educational programs and even some money-making ones.

From the President.

By Mena Sprague

Happy Holidays to all and Blessings for a safe and peaceful New Year! As my term as President comes to an end, I am pleased with the progress and projects

completed and I am grateful to ALL the volunteers for their hard work. Our village continues to improve, we have a great newsletter, our history book continues to win awards, our school is nearly restored, and there are improvements at the Gruber House. I also thank the volunteers who helped with our annual "Show Your Stuff" in April, our

November 25th

Bake Sale and Fund-Raiser and all the hours spent on our annual Holiday Home Tour. Because of you, we have a prominent and proud Historical Society.

Thanks to Brock Hanisch for beautifying our village with a brick background, bell platform and sign. The bell was given to the St. Paul school by J.N. Paul in 1908.

We awarded the contract bid for restoring the depot. We had hoped that with the grant and money already raised, we would have enough money for completion of restoration of the depot.

We as a community and as a nation have suffered a terrible loss September 11, 2001. We offer our love and support to those who have lost family and friends and we are grateful for our families and our friends. We are a strong and a compassionate nation; we will overcome.

Aebraska State Tegislature

SENATOR VICKIE D. MCDONALD

District No. 41 Rt. 1, Box 12A Rockville, Nebraska 68871

Legislative Address: State Capitol PO Box 94804 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4604 (402) 471-2631



Ninety-Seventh Lagislature

October 23, 2001

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overnment, Military and Veterans Affa
Urban Affairs
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Marion Bahensky 1021 6th Street St. Paul, NE 68873

Dear Marion:

Congratulations on the "best non-fiction book" designation recently awarded to Entering Howard County by the Nebraska Library Commission. I'm sure that you and the Howard County Historical Society are rightfully proud of the awards and recognition you've received since the book was published last year. The book itself is a fascinating way to learn more about Howard County and the people who made it the thriving county that it is today.

Howard County is very lucky to have dedicated volunteers like you and the other members of the Historical Society. Now your history will never be lost to time.

Sincerely,

VICKIE D. McDONALD State Senator

State and national officials continue to be impressed with the history book "Entering Howard County." Above is a letter from Nebraska State Senator Vickie McDonald.

For those of you thinking about a holiday gift, our book "Entering Howard County" makes a great stocking stuffer.

Please use the form below to send in your order.

Also, as the year ends, please keep the Historical Society in mind for a possible donation (and your end-of-the-year tax deduction!).

Photocopy or cut along dotted line and send in. --

Yes, I woul Howard County Histo	D LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMPLETION OF THE RICAL VILLAGE BY HELPING PRESERVE THE UNION PACIFIC DEPOT.
I want to help fund	this much needed and final project which will house new exhibits and storage space. I wish to donate:
\$100 \$250 \$500	\$1,000\$2,500\$5,000\$10,000Other
Name	
Address	
City	State Zip
Phone	
All donations over \$100 will be remem Donatio	bered on the Donor Board which will be prominently displayed in the restored depot. ons of \$2,500 or more will receive special recognition.
Name you	wished to have inscribed.
(Be sure to i Send in your tax-d	de out to the Howard County Historical Society, is tax-deductible. ndicate the "Depot Campaign" on your check memo area.) eductible donation to us at: 1021 Sixth Street, St. Paul, NE 68873 rical Society at the address above or contact any of the other board members. Thank you!
It's Your M	Memory. It's Our History. It's Worth Saving.
Yes, please send co	Photocopy or cut along dotted line and send in
Address:	
City:	State: Zip:
1.) Number of History Books:	x \$75.00 =
2.) Shipping and Handling (\$5.00 3.) Tax:	0 per book, if desired): x \$ 5.00 =
5% Nebraska Sales Tax (<u>\$3.75</u> OR 6% St. Paul City Sales Tax	per book, if purchased in state):
Make checks payable to to	the Howard County Historical Society Total: \$ = tt, St. Paul, Nebraska 68873

Expanded research continues on schools.

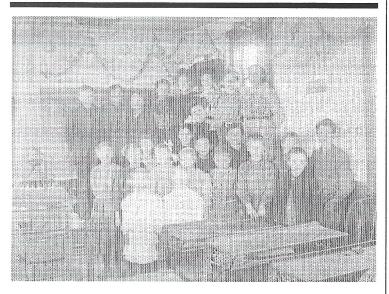


Photo above: District #12 in Howard County donated by Ernest Wissbaum. The Howard County Historical Society is currently restoring the St. Libory #41 school and is inviting everyone to help preserve the history of rural education by donating artifacts, photos and written history.

Entering Howard County

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