



NCHGS

Norman County Historical & Genealogy Society

Where History Matters

NEWSLETTER FALL 2020

One of the jobs of the Director of a Historical Society is to keep the members updated about what's happening in the work of the group. In that regard, I have been negligent! First, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support. We have 108 volunteers who, when called, will show up and work at whatever needs doing. Our Board is made up of people who are dedicated to the mission of the Society and who guide our way efficiently. This has been the strangest summer I've lived through. There has been no guest register, no fair, no Pioneer Days, and there will be no Festival of Trees. You can imagine that these non-events have drained our checkbook substantially. Our funding comes from the county, from the city of Ada, and from memberships. None of those amounts has increased recently, and we stay within those parameters. Our expenses have not decreased. In fact, Bethany required an additional \$6,000.00 in repairs this summer. We hope that you'll keep us in your end of the year financial planning this year! Here is a summary of what has happened in the village. Thanks for your support, and for believing that our HISTORY MATTERS

NEWLAND CABIN RESTORED

The project that has taken the majority of our time this summer, and four summers prior to this one, is nearly at the end of its run. John Newland's small 15'x17' log cabin has fallen into disrepair, and after four years of fundraising, searching for craftsmen, and frustration, the Society finally took on the restoration itself with

the help of John Vraa. He had a recipe for chinking material that he had used at the Sandhill Settlement in Climax and was firmly convinced that we could do the job ourselves. The little home has refurbished windows, a door, new floor joists, a new floor, and has been completely re-chinked inside and out. All of this work has been accomplished by Mike and Myrna Kiser, Christian Sterton, and a group of amazing NCHGS volunteers. The furnishings that were in the cabin have been put back into place. Thanks to all who have stepped up, and we will hope that next summer you will be able to visit us and see what we have done!



Chinking Mixers



Log Cabin Re-chinked

BETHANY CHURCH REPAIR



Bethany Church Renovated

The German Methodists built the first church in Ada in 1878. It was moved to the Prairie Village in the 70's and has served as exhibit space and later as storage for our collection. The cupola has deteriorated over the years, and last year it leaked enough to loosen the buffalo board that covers the interior. Mike Skansgaard was hired to repair the cupola and to replace the interior tiles that had fallen down. This building was broken into two years ago, so we replaced the 100-year-old doors with new metal ones, and now this little church should be dry and secure for another hundred years or so. It will be used only as storage from now on.

NORDBY SCHOOL CONTINUES TO BE RENOVATED

Chuck Nordby has spent the last three summers repairing and painting the one room school that bears his family's name. John and Mable Hubbel donated the school in the 60's and it has fascinated visitors since then. Chuck has stripped, sanded and renailed the siding, and this summer he has spent on the roof, painting and repairing the cupola. The school bell has rung again for the first time in at least 40 years!! The iconic one room school will be back in mint condition when he is finished.

COFFEE, CONVERSATION AND COVID

2020 has presented so many challenges to the Society. Because of the Covid19 pandemic, we were not allowed to be open until July, and then only on a limited basis. Our state Historical Society issued guidelines by which we must abide. Masks are required, sanitizer is made available, and our beloved Coffee and Conversation gatherings are adapted to meet these standards. We can have up to 16 people in the museum, socially distanced and masked. We set up appointments for those interested and the fun began! Our sessions averaged attendance of 16 in the morning and 14 in the afternoons. It was so great to hear from some of them, "This is the first normal thing I've done for months, thank you so much." We are pleased to report that there have still been visitors throughout the Covid-stressed season, and we are all healthy.

ROTATING EXHIBITS ARE OUR SPECIALTY

The Covid-craziness has affected our lives in so many ways. One of the strangest things for us is the lack of visitors at our facility. We spent much of last winter building four new exhibits for this summer, but very few people have seen the fruits of our labor. The Ada High School classes from 1970 through 1979 had plans for a ten-class reunion. We pulled out our Orange, Black and

White Viking artifacts and put together a welcoming exhibit for them which they will be able to appreciate next summer when they gather.



Kewpie Doll

The Norman County Ag Society (the fair) celebrated 125 years of activity in 2020. The entire wall of the north room is devoted to carnival, 4H, and FFA. Again, we will celebrate this milestone in 2021.

World War II ended 75 years ago in 1945. This historic event has been commemorated on the west wall of the north room. We have gathered uniforms from the Army, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines. There are personal narratives from five Norman County residents about their war experiences. A bomber jacket worn by Punk Johnson, Lawrence Merkins' Cootie hat, photos from the metal drive in Ada, and a gray nurses' field hat. All artifacts are related to Norman County.



Cootie Hat Worn by Lawrence Merkins

An old song suggests that you should "put on your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it". No self-respecting woman would appear in church without a hat nor would she go to an "occasion" of any sort without one that matched her dress. Our collection of hats has become a central exhibit of this season. Colleen Goltz and Linda Visser took it upon themselves to inventory our hats,

photograph them, index them, and re-box them properly. In the process, they discovered that we own over 250 hats. The hats are on display in the museum and tell lots of good stories.



Just a Sample of the Beautiful Hats

Hats are not the only things that have been inventoried this year. The clothing has been reindexed, photographed, and refolded properly for storage in our loft at the museum. This adventure has yielded over a thousand pieces of interesting things that were worn by our county's residents from the 1880's through the 1970's. All of these items are virtually stored "in the cloud" and will hopefully be accessible to all for perpetuity.

The other piece of this project has involved volunteers sewing labels into each piece of clothing and hats. The same four or five ladies have done a tremendous job of cutting and stitching labels into each garment.

EASTER BELLS AND BONNETS

The Congregational Church in Ada has been a landmark for over 100 years. It has a rich history of service to the community, and is currently owned by Bob and Mindy Kinkade. Bob called me before Easter and suggested that we provide a chance for the community to gather on Easter morning and ring the bell as a way to celebrate our "oneness". More than 40 cars turned up to listen to the old bell chime out Easter blessing, and then we paraded in cars around town wearing hats from the NCHGS collection and wishing all Happy Easter from our cars. The whole event was organized in

about four days, and we thank everyone who helped to make the day a success.

ACCESSION

Each time someone brings in a precious family item, we give it a number and describe it in our accession book. This year, our county citizens have shared 244 "new" artifacts with us. Thank you for making our collection one of the best in the area.



Debra Jacobson

IN MEMORIAM

Our Society suffered a huge loss this year with the death of Debra Jacobson, genealogist extraordinary.

Deb's passion for family history was one of the things that kept her going through all her difficult illnesses. She enjoyed the "hunt" for family stories, for organizing these stories into useable form, and for the joy that her work brought to others when she could solve a family mystery. She gave generously of her own resources and time. We are so much richer a society because of her dedication to the Genealogy process. Thank you, Deb, we miss you, and your leadership and dedication to our group. Rest well dear friend.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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We are also on Facebook

BOARD MEMBERS: Myrna Kiser, Ted Aanenson, Audrey Felske, Colleen Goltz, Kari Aanenson, Pete Kappes, Maria Tommerdahl