



The Window

Official Newsletter of the Brookings County Historical Society



Hello, Summer!

Museum plans opening

The Brookings County Museum in Volga will open its doors for the season on the afternoon of May 26, the day before Memorial Day.

After that Sunday opening, the museum will be open seven days a week from 1 to 4 p.m. daily until closing again after Labor Day on September 2.

Several new displays have been added this year, including a very rare John Deere & Manser Company horse-drawn one row corn planter donated by Rusty Olson of rural Volga.

The planter was first patented in the 1840s. The planter may be the oldest piece of farm equipment in the museum's large collection.

Rusty's father, Rick Olson of rural Volga has also donated a well-preserved seed corn grader and sorter, a beautiful old sythe with a long-toothed wooden grain cradle, and a rare wooden-

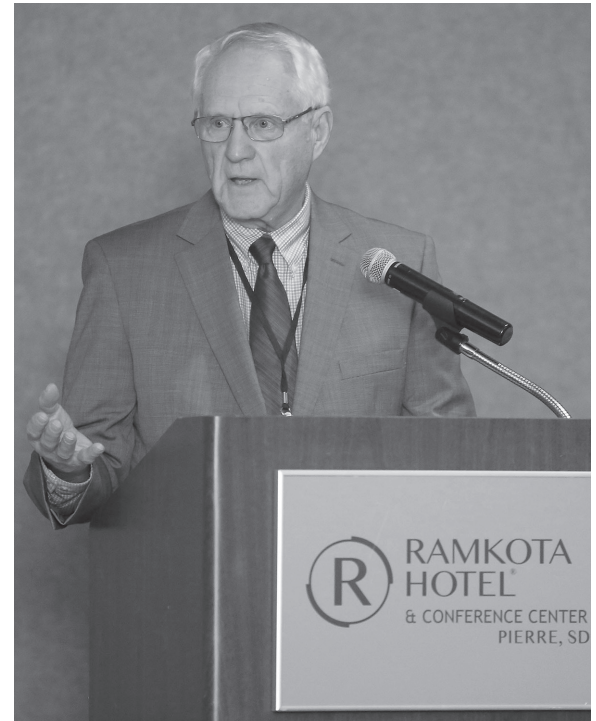
toothed rake that will be displayed in the very popular Trygve Trooien Horse-Drawn Museum.

The museum has also installed a new display case in the main museum foyer. It contains more than a dozen pair of shoes representing various eras. A tiny pair of rare infant Indian moccasins can be seen in the same case as flapper shoes from the 1920s, homesteader's felt-lined overshoes, and a pair of Vietnam War combat boots.

A welcome sign has also been added over the display welcoming visitors on their museum walk through history.

Another winter gift is an old rocking chair that Jokum Sundet, the builder of the museum's original log cabin, and his son Ole Olson Sundet used. The chair was donated by Robb Clifton Rasmussen.

An unusual, hand-crafted goat cart is a gift of Rod King and will also be on display at the museum. ❁



Statewide Recognition

Phil Wagner of Brookings, president of the Brookings County Historical Society/Museum, praised Brookings County volunteers in his acceptance of the South Dakota State Historical Society's outstanding History Organization award. He told attendees at the awards banquet in Pierre during the annual meeting of the state society that the Brookings County Museum depends entirely on volunteer assistance, noting that the museum has no paid employees. He said the award is the result of the contribution volunteers and friends of the museum provide.

Photo by Jeff Mammenga, SD State Historical Society

Looking for a few good men and women

If you'd like to help by donating a few hours of your time as a volunteer at the Brookings County Museum, give us a call. During the museum season from Memorial Day to Labor Day, volunteers are especially helpful as greeters and guides for visitors who stop by.

Both men and women who volunteer say they enjoy the work and the opportunity to be a part of the museum's efforts. If you'd like to help, give museum board member and Volunteer Coordinator Mrs. Cindy Jacobson of Volga a call at 605-690-2140. She'd love to visit with you about helping out at the museum.

Thank You!

Gifts to the Brookings County Historical Society and its County History Museum are proper tax deductions. The IRS Exempt Status Number is 23-7018164.

Life on the Prairie: Emma Stime Memoirs

By Emma Benson Stime

Editor's Note: Emma Benson Stime was born in the early 1880s on a farm just west of the Sinai Cemetery. The following edited excerpts are recollections of her childhood on that farm. Thanks to Mark and Sharon Stime for sharing these memories with all of us.

Cows were milked in the yard or the pasture. My mother always helped when the men were busy in the summer. It was the children's job to fetch tree branches or big weeds, stand by the cow and chase the flies away as it was being milked. The pails of milk were set outside the fence and younger kids were assigned as fly chasers there.

The milk was carried to the house—maybe four or five buckets with three gallons in each bucket—and strained through a wire strainer or a white cloth into pans or stone crocks and set on the cellar floor or put in deeper vessels and hung in the well.

By the next day the cream had risen to the top and we could use the skimmer, which is like a saucer with holes in it. It separated the thicker cream from the milk. The skimmed

milk was carried to the barn for the calves, pigs or chickens. The cream was kept in a cool place until churned into butter.

The Taste of Butter

Oh, how the butter tasted! My children can never get that butter in stores now. The buttermilk (after churning) was used for what we called pream, or preamost. After boiling for several hours it thickens and becomes sort of like peanut butter. The whey after the sour milk is made into cottage cheese can also be made into preamost. After the cream becomes sour we used it on bread in place of butter and was that ever good, especially on homemade bread. The “extra” butter was stored in stone jars and sold to the town grocer for six cents a pound.

Memories of herding cows stand out. From the time a child was four or five years old he or she would help older brothers and sisters in herding cows. There were not as many fences then as now. We'd start herding at 8 a.m. or as soon as the cows had been milked, and we did not plan to be back till evening or whenever the cows started to get restless, wanting to get milked.

We slept on straw mattresses full of straw after threshing. The straw, especially oat straw, was so fresh and soft. The double sized mattress was made of denim with buttoned openings to put in the straw from the haystack. So high when filled, but so flat before winter was over after months of being laid upon. Later on we'd use cornhusks, picking only the silky husks. Once in awhile we would retrieve part of a corncob put in the mattress by mistake. In making the beds we would unbutton it, put our hands into the straw to fluff it up, being gentle to avoid a dust storm. As a rule, parents had feather bed mattresses but those took years of “chicken eating” to get enough feathers to make a thick mattress. How happy when we could buy mattresses in stores.

Wood Hauling

The fuel we needed to keep warm is deeply impressed on my memory. We, as children, had to be responsible for the fuel for the home, even in winter. I can remember the first year we could afford coal. Until then the men would haul trees from the river banks, as our trees were too small. In the summer we would chop wood for heating in the winter.



The Hans Stuve family homesteaded south of Volga near where Emma Stime and her family lived. In this very old photograph, the Stuve family poses proudly in their Sunday best in front of their sod home before they moved in 1901 to New Norway, Alberta, Canada. Photo donated by Ina Everson.



Oliver and Emma Benson Stime

We would also gather corncobs from the pigpen or the feed lots. During dry years we used cow chips. After the sun had baked the cows “leavings” they were hard and dry enough to pick up and put in sacks. The wheat sacks were made from canvas cloth and were about one and a half yards long and 18 inches wide when full. We’d drag these sacks with us and were happy to find well-dried “fruits” to fill our sack. If not dry enough we would tip it over for the sun to dry it out.

When the sack was full we tied it with twine and left it in field. After a few hours of work the sacks looked like a flock of sheep resting there. Oh, how we girls hated this job.

We had what we called “boilers” that were open on one end. They resembled the old-

fashioned brass wash boilers. They were packed with flax straw. These boilers, about four feet tall with the tops taken off, were then tipped upside down on top of the cook stove. Gradually after the straw is on fire, the straw slips down as more fuel. Once in a while there would be a big “puff!” that meant the smoke and ashes were exploding and settling all over the kitchen.

When I was about eight years old, we had a coal heater. What luxury! The stove was tall and round with doors that had Isenglass windows so we could see the red coals through them. When we had the measles, I remember my father standing by the heater, doors open, putting bread on long handled forks and toasting them for us. Oh, the aroma! And how good it tasted. I can still see his gnarled and scarred hands handing us those buttered slices of toast with sugar on top.

God Was Norwegian

I believe I had the dearest father God ever made. How he loved the world. On Sundays when we had no services because the pastor came only once a month or less, my father would read the sermon written by Norwegian saints or writers. We had to sit and listen in our Sunday starched and ruffled dresses, for hours, it seemed. All this was in the Norwegian language. Of course. I thought God was a Norwegian.

As to plumbing, of course there was none. Before the days of deep wells with windmills, water was pumped by hand or pulled up from a well with ropes and buckets. Later, gas engines were used to pump it when there was no wind to turn the windmill. I can still hear my

parents saying “See if the windmill is moving so we can have some fresh water.”

Cisterns were dug near or under the houses to catch the rainwater, which was always soft. Water from deep wells was most often hard and had to be softened for washing clothes, first hauling the water into barrels and then adding lye. Before the days of lye, wood ashes were used. After about 24 hours the lye had settled and the water was soft.

Frozen Longjohns

We hung the washed clothes on a line outside to dry. In the cold weather the clothes would freeze into all shapes. The long-legged and sleeved underwear took on grotesque shapes. Taken into the house frozen and hung on lines stretched across the kitchen, they dried while we slept. But how good they smelled, and they also made good humidifiers.

Those who built outhouses were thought to be rich.

I can’t forget our first toilets. Every piece of lumber was used for homes, so there might not be enough left to build an outhouse. Where there were trees planted near the house one would find large wooden pails with nine or more holes drilled in their bottoms. They were placed here and there among the trees or shrubbery. Often a person would surprise another person sitting on one of these pails.

At school we all drank from the same water dipper without considering the dangers. There were many deaths from diphtheria and other contagious diseases, most likely brought on by sharing. But fresh air, exercise and good food also made for good resistance. ❀

Come visit us!

Open Daily May 26 – September 2
1:00 – 4 p.m.



Remember When...



Making Butter

This old picture postcard donated to the museum by Mike and Cindy Eiserman of Gold Canyon, Arizona, shows a buttermaking class at the old South Dakota State College Dairy Science building. The museum today has equipment on display similar to what you see in the photo. For example, the instructor at right is holding a wire cutter to divide the butter that was packed into the boxes at left into one-pound blocks for wrapping and sale.



District One

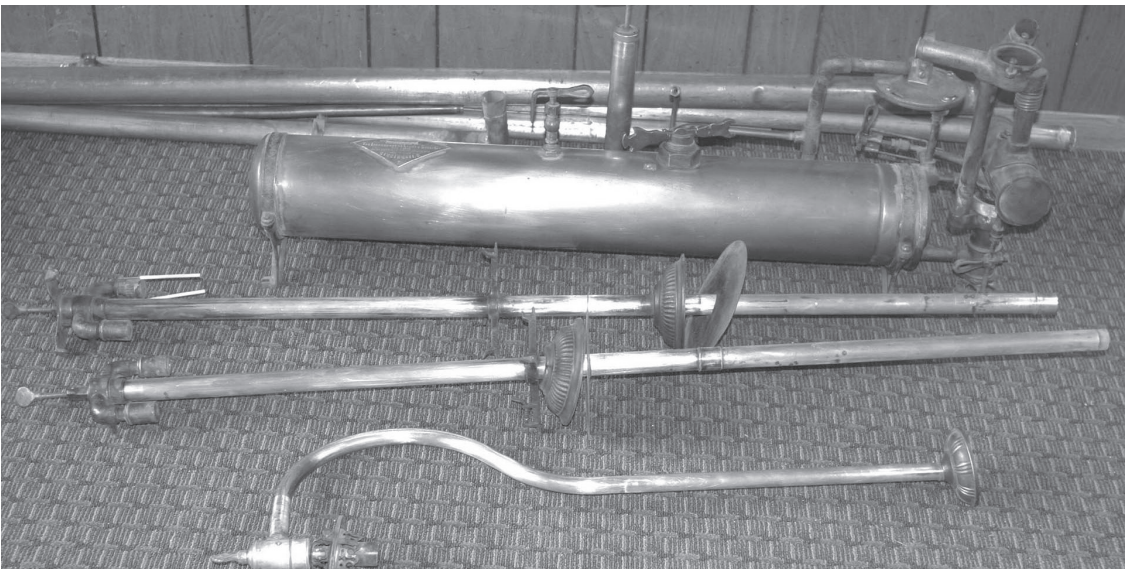
This school was located on Old Highway 77, one mile north of Brookings. Students there in 1944 were, back row, from left, John Walker, Eleanor Tillgren, Jean Thompson, Fern Justice, M. Wilcox and Harry Walker. Middle row, Kathy Hansen, John Hansen and Paul Walker. Front row, unknown, Darlene Cunningham, Janice Justice, Harvey Cunningham, David Hansen, Carolyn Cunningham and Loys Justice. Photo donated by Carolyn Cunningham Erickson.



Rick Olson of rural Volga donated this beautiful pair of early harvesting equipment—a cradle sythe and a wooden toothed rake.



This small, hand-crafted goat cart for children's enjoyment was donated by Rod King.



This rare single-cylinder gas cylinder was manufactured by the Incandescent Light and Stove Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, which was organized in 1894. White gas and air pressure (note the air pump) were used to light the Lee Store in Volga in the early days. Most of its components were made of copper, a valuable metal much in need as the nation developed electrical power. Consequently, many of these “machines” were sold as scrap metal and few survive. Scott Blase donated this early gas light technology.

SYTHE hand seeder ROCKING CHAIR
PAPER CUTTER **DONATIONS** savings bank gas lights
& ACQUISITIONS goat cart RAKE



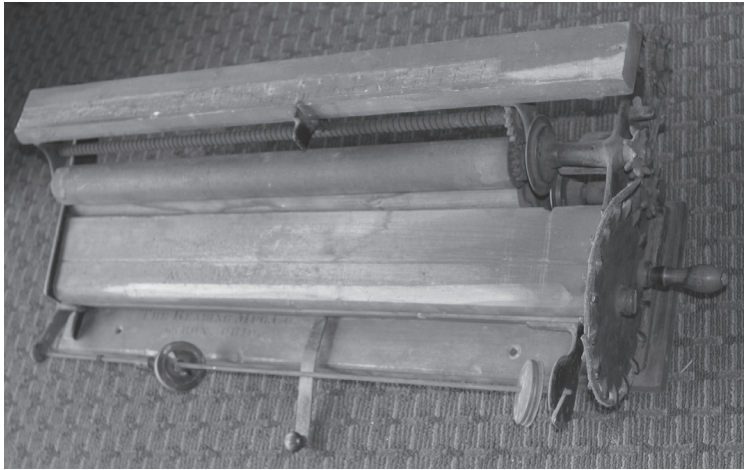
This well-preserved bank, with its original box and an interesting past, was donated by Rick Olson of rural Volga. This one (Number 1620) was given to a customer by the First State Bank of Volga in 1927. The copper plate says it is a replica of Plymouth Rock, “The Cornerstone of the Nation.” Another plate indicates “On this rock I will build my future.” In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt, battling the Great Depression, declared a bank holiday, and the bank’s future was near at hand. The bank never reopened after the holiday. (Museum officials were curious about the few coins rattling in the bank, so took it to locksmith Mike Filholm in Brookings. Mike fashioned a key and when the bank’s door fell open, out tumbled a nickel and a quarter.)



This chair belonged to Jokum Sundet and Ole Olson Sundet. Jokum built the log cabin that is now a part of the museum’s complex. Ole and Ling’s daughter Mathea (Mattie) attended the rural school that is also part of the complex. The chair was donated by Robb Clifton Rasmussen.



Henry VanMaanen of Volga donated this old hand seeder minus its shoulder strap. The seeder was purchased and used by his father, Guy VanMaanen.



This is believed to be a paper or cloth cutter used at the Lee Store in Volga. Paper, for kitchen cabinet use for example, or cloth for other uses, could be cut at any width by this machine donated by Scott Blase of Volga.



Is That a Hand Grenade?

On your visit to the Brookings County Museum this summer, look for a hand grenade. You won’t find it in the museum’s military room. It’s on the wall in the 1880 Christianson one-room rural school.

From about 1870 to 1910 when nearly every building on farms and in town were of wood and fire fighting equipment was somewhat primitive, a fire retardant was commercialized.

Because of the way it was packaged and used, it was commonly referred to as a “hand grenade.”

The grenade was a common fixture on the walls of homes, businesses and schools. It was comprised of a fist-sized glass container shaped somewhat like a light bulb.

It held a chemical that when exposed to air helped douse small fires when the glass grenade was thrown into the blaze. The glass hand grenade was thrown on the fire, it broke and a chemical reaction helped suppress the blaze.

The following is a news story that appeared in Dakota Territories in 1890:

“The secret of the hand fire grenades is out. An exchange suggests that the expensive luxury, which is very handy in case of fire, may be made by anybody at very little expense.

“The liquid contained in the fancy bottles is made by dissolving a pound of common salt and half a pound of salammonise in two quarts of water.”

The 1890 story suggested that the salt and salammonise be placed in quart jars and placed at various locations in the home.

The “hand grenade” in the museum is a commercially made item. Out of concern that the “grenade” might be accidentally knocked from its container and fear that the chemical reaction could injure museum visitors, board member Leland Schlimmer of Volga volunteered to drill a hole in the grenade and drain its contents.

He replaced the chemicals with colored water and sealed the drill hole. So what you will see on the wall of the rural school is a deactivated hand grenade. 🌿



When you visit the Christianson Family rural school building this summer, look for this “hand grenade” near the entry door of the building.

April Blizzards Bring Spring Challenges

It wasn't a record breaker with more snow and colder temperatures, but the memorable, often miserable and always constant "here today, gone tomorrow" weather during the winter of 2018-19 disrupted the usual winter months' schedule at the Brookings County Museum,

At least two of the winter board meetings had to be cancelled, and a third had limited attendance due to road conditions. Numerous museum display preparations and the usual winter maintenance and repair needs were delayed.

One long-time museum board member said the winter was the most disrupting he can remember during his more than two decades of museum service.

An even more unusual and miserable winter was the one in 1936 when the Brookings Register reported that the temperature was below zero for 35 days, from January 1 when the low was minus 14 until February 22, when the thermometer finally recorded a high of seven above.

It wasn't so much the cold this past winter, but other weather-related happenstances. For the first time in

more than a quarter century, moisture from snow melt seeped into the museum's Vintage Farm Equipment Building under the sill plate. Fortunately, damage was very minimal.

One planned improvement was completed. That was the conversion of a foyer wall in the main museum into a new display area.

But because of the unusual winter, museum volunteers had to delay planned work of other kinds, and are now scrambling to complete a long "to-do" list that usually was completed by opening day. ❄️



Museum board President Phil Wagner needed a shovel to get to his volunteer work at the museum.

NOTEWORTHY

Horse Person Hall of Fame

The South Dakota Horse Council, in conjunction with the Brookings County Museum, has established a Horse Person of the Year Hall of Fame in the museum's new Horse-Drawn Museum in Volga.

"We're very pleased to be working with leaders of the state's horse industry on this appropriate project," said Phil Wagner of Brookings, president of the Brookings County Museum complex in Volga.



"Having the Hall of Fame in the state's only museum specifically dedicated to the horse is the perfect place for recognizing persons who have distinguished themselves and dedicated their lives to the horse industry in South Dakota," he said.

Brandon Kinney of Sioux Falls, president of the South Dakota Horse Council, said that since 1981 the council has selected a South Dakota Horseperson of the Year. "We're pleased that now those men and women, and future honorees will be appropriately recognized in this new Hall of Fame that will become a permanent part of the Trygve A. Trooien Horse-Drawn Museum," he said.

Mike Olson of rural White was the 2018 South Dakota Horseperson of the Year.

Hauxhurst House Remodel Plan

Museum leadership voted unanimously this month to begin a phased refurbishing of the first floor of the famous James Hauxhurst house built in 1884 in Brookings on what is now the parking lot of the new Brookings City-County Government Services building.

The board set a goal of five years to complete five working phases that will make possible the furnishing of rooms in the old home with period furniture and furnishings.

Phase one will begin this fall with repair of structural deficiencies and window location work.

James Hauxhurst was the county's first clerk working with the County Commissioners when the Brookings county's governmental offices were in the now defunct town of Medary south of Brookings. Among other things, Hauxhurst officiated in counting votes when residents of the county voted to establish a county seat and a courthouse in Brookings.



Join us and become a member today!
History Comes Alive at the Brookings County Museum

605-690-2140 (Cynthia Jacobson)
www.brookingscountymuseum.com
Memorial Day through Labor Day
1:00 – 4:00 pm daily
We're Tax Exempt: 23-7018164



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