President’s Message
By John Nelson

I’ll use my message this issue to put in a plug for one of my own goals—finding some old photos of my house at 1314 NE 3rd Avenue. I’m not sure that’s always been its address. We bought the house from Francis and Nancy McGowan, who bought it from the Samples, who bought it from someone else. Some have called it the Fisher house, and word is that it was part of a dairy farm. Do you know its history?

My wife and I have been working to shape it into a house a bit more like the one that was originally built. We’ve got plans, and we’ve got dreams. For now we’re working on the plans, one of which is replacing the fireplace (an addition in the 70’s) with a wood stove that will do some real heating. As we remodel, the history of the building unfolds, the wood beneath the carpet revealing a old wall, one layer of wallpaper reveals another. Plan to hear some about our process in future issues.

Sometimes the house offers up the promise of riches. In an upstairs closet, I noticed a loose floorboard that looked worn. When popped loose, it revealed a stack of money beneath the insulation, a big stack, with big denominations. It was play money, but still, the pleasure of finding it, and knowing that someone hid it, was a treat.

Any old photos or info would be welcome!

LCHS President finds a wad of cash!
This month marks the 120th anniversary of the Children’s Blizzard, a meteorological catastrophe of such horrendous proportions and impact that it is often referred to as just “The Blizzard.” “The Blizzard” invokes images of bitter cold air plunging from the north, cutting winds, snow and ice slashing like knives, and death in a bleak landscape so obscured that people couldn’t tell left from right, up from down, and, even in some cases, hot from cold.

The weather on January 12, 1888 dawned clear and much warmer, a welcome break from the previous weeks. It seemed like the perfect time for farmers to catch up on work and for students to return to school. Some didn’t bother to wear warm coats or boots. Then, the weather turned, quickly and viciously, stranding and disorienting countless people. By the next morning, more than 100 schoolchildren and many adults lay frozen or dying on the American plains.

Stories of this storm’s hardships in Lake County have been passed down from generation to generation. In 1940, the Lake County Superintendent of Schools compiled some of these, along with other stories, in Pioneer Stories of Lake County.

Southwest of Madison, Will Larrington and his daughter Christie had been doing chores in the barn. Christie, almost unrecognizable from snow and ice, finally made her way back to the house. It was some time before her father finally crawled there. He was lost until he got his bearings by coming across the place where the family dumped ashes south of the house and used it as a marker.

Rella Hammer, the teacher at the nearby Boyd School, was able to use a horse and sled to take her students home with her. There, they burned furniture for heat. When that gave out, they crawled into bed to keep warm.

In the northeast part of Lake County, schoolteacher Mr. Storey dismissed his students early. A.B. and Isaac Halseth, minus their brother August who had gone home earlier after a quarrel, set off for home. At one point, Isaac wanted to stop to rest but his older brother, knowing death could be just a rest away, wouldn’t let him. After first stumbling upon a barn, the Halseths followed a path leading to the Gates’ farm house, which they circled several times before finding the door. Five and a half hours after leaving their sod schoolhouse, the boys found a safe shelter. Still disoriented the next morning, they had to be shown twice the way to go home.

In Madison, Hugh Murray had been out all night, burrowing into a snow drift when he could no longer go on. The next morning, he crawled out, only to find he was a block from his own home.

At least one death, a child, was reported in Lake County. A young Scandinavian boy who had been fishing became lost and froze to death. Tracks showed he had passed within three feet of a wagon tongue in a barnyard, so close, yet so far, from safety.

For further information on the Children’s Blizzard of 1888, Pioneer Stories of Lake County is available from the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum. A riveting, enthralling account of this national tragedy and its repercussions can be found in David Laskin’s The Children’s Blizzard, available at libraries and bookstores. Some words of warning, though. You will want a warm blanket and something hot to drink while you’re reading this excellent account. This is hard to put down; you find yourself on the edge of your seat, waiting to see which pioneers survive and which don’t.
Molumby Donations

New acquisitions at the museum include several items from Larry Molumby, whose family hails from Nunda (see the related article on the driving accident). These items are represented at right.

Mr. Molumby has sent his mother’s wedding dress, a fashionable gown in the flapper style. He included also his father’s letter sweater with the letter M on the front.

Also shown are various photos and other documents that can be seen by visiting the Museum.

Vintage Museum Sign

Also please note the old Museum sign from the era when the LCHS housed its holdings in the courthouse basement. See page 4 for a photo of that sign.

Memorials

Memorial funds for Chuck Weidenman arrived from
- Pat Bulick
- Walt Schaefer
- Joanne Gagnon
- Barbara Turner
- Sherry and Mark Waba
- And anonymous donors

Donation

Larry Molumby honors his Molumby, Sjoland, Cole, and Goodroad ancestors with a generous donation to the Museum. Thank you!
By Dr. Delmer J. Dooley

The Smith-Zimmermann Museum takes its name from Edith and Lillie Zimmermann, who grew up in Dakota Territory and attended Normal State College in Madison. Both later taught in Lake County.

George Smith, the son of another early pioneering family, was one of the incorporators of the Lake County Historical Society and served as its first president in 1952.

From 1953 to 1962, the collection of materials and artifacts was housed and displayed in a basement room at the Lake County Courthouse (see the sign included here). George Smith, a close friend of Lillie Zimmermann, matched her gift of $55,000 to build the present Museum on the campus of Dakota State University. This effort was successfully completed with the assistance of Senator Karl Mundt. The dedication of the Museum was held March 2, 1961. In 1962, all contents were moved to the new Smith-Zimmermann Museum.

Lake County, for several years, levied $500 per year to assist in purchasing equipment and materials needed by the Museum. The Museum’s collection, owned by the Lake County Historical Society, has grown to fill all available space.

Since its earliest years, the number of yearly visitors has been more than 3,000 per year. Many school children and other groups throughout the county and neighboring counties have scheduled visits to the Museum.

In 1973, the state museums were placed under the newly created State Office of Cultural Preservation. In 1982, our Museum became a full-fledged State Museum, with a full-time curator paid for by the state. The contract provided that should the State not provide funds, the entire collection would revert to the Lake County Historical Society. This writer served as President of the Lake County Historical Society from 1985 to 1988. During this time, the state legislators were convinced to return autonomy of the Museum to the Lake County Historical Society.

During the period the Smith-Zimmermann was operated by the State Office of Cultural Preservation, some positive development assistance was given to the Museum. This included awareness and information of historical preservation policies and procedures within the state and county. Several buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. A state museum specialist was requested and sent to the Museum to advise and assist in methods used to index and catalog artifacts.

In 1991, the state agreed to pay a portion of the Museum’s operating costs for the next four years. During that time, the challenge was to raise budget funds to keep the Museum in operation.

The task of raising funds began with a grant to write a history of Lake County. This book, published in 1995, raised the first sizeable endowment to operate the Museum and its programs. The interest from the endowment, as well as support from Lake County, the City of Madison, Thrivent Financial Services, volunteers, auctions, grants, donations, and membership dues, has made it possible to meet yearly expenses of about $20,000.

Continued on page 5
Some of the highlights of the Lake County Historical Society include the installation of bronze historical markers to designate historical points of interest in the county: the colony of Badus, the Grandview Hotel, Old Madison, Townsite of Old Herman, and the rescue site of white women from Inkpaduta. The Society has also given assistance to the registration of historic homes and the Madison Historic district, established Madison’s historical tour route, supported the restoration of the Luce Log Cabin and Herman Luce Days at the state park, and staged a pageant—“Madison, The First Hundred Years”—in 1979. 1995’s History of Lake County, a book of 1009 pages, garnered a national award. In 1999, the LCHS received the Governor’s award for outstanding contributions to the history of this area of the state.

We have also hosted a Smithsonian exhibit titled “Yesterday’s Tomorrows” and we sponsored the Great Plains Chautauqua July 13-20, 2006. In the spring and fall, we organize ethnic-cooking demonstrations where attendees can sample the fare and receive recipes. Throughout the year, the Society sponsors brown-bag programs, usually during the noon hour, featuring speakers and programs.

Board members are dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Lake County.
The story of Claus Hexom and Edward Hexom

By Gene Hexom

Claus Hexom moved from Decorah, Iowa to Lake County in 1886 with his brother, Julius, and their parents, Christian and Pernille Hexom, farmers in Leroy and Rutland Townships. Claus and Julius learned the stone-cutting trade while living in Decorah. Claus and his son, Edward, operated the Hexom Monument Company in Madison for many years. The business was located in the early 1900s in a building at the corner of West Center Street and Van Eps Avenue. This building, pictured here, is now owned by Dr. Derrill Hanson and occupants of the building include Kundert-Williams Insurance, Dr. Hanson’s dental offices, and AAA Travel Service. Rental apartments occupy the second floor.

Sometime in the 1920s, Claus Hexom built the three-story apartment building on the corner of Egan Avenue and Highway 34. He and his son, Edward, operated their monument business out of the rear of this building. Claus died in 1949 at the age of 88 years. Edward continued to operate the business for a number of years before he retired. The Hexom apartment building on Egan Avenue was later owned by Marilyn and Bill Barger and today is owned by Tim Bege man and Ed Hansen.

A Cold Case in Madison?

Discussion among newsletter committee members turned recently to murders in Lake County—yes, murder. Member Dale Nighbert read the following article in The Madison Daily Leader. His story will follow in a later issue.

Nov. 5, 1957

The skull of a human, presumably that of a woman because it was quite small, was found at the county gravel pit 1 mile east and one mile south of Madison today. The skull was found this morning by an employee. It was lying exposed on dry grass at the edge of the pit. Sheriff Norman McGil livray, Coroner Don Weiland and State Attorney Robert Spencer found the jaw bone when they investigated the spot this afternoon. There were several silver fillings in the teeth. County officers are conducting further investigation.
C.B. Kennedy Home in Parts

By Cindy Bilka

C.B. Kennedy was known as “The Father of Madison” since it was on his land that the city of new Madison was founded in 1880. Kennedy also donated the 20 acres of land for the school now known as Dakota State University.

The museum recently received a surprising call from Kennedy’s great-grandson, Bob Maskel of Edmonton, Alberta. We discussed the Kennedy items the Museum has and Maskel’s plans to visit. When he asked if the Kennedy house was still standing, I had to laugh over the serendipity of the question. At that same moment, John Maloney was visiting the Museum. I had wondered about the Kennedy home and had asked John, who is an excellent source of Madison history.

After having been rented and suffering general neglect for about 30 years, the Kennedy home (which had been at 405 N. Egan Avenue where the Cal Mathison home now stands) was deemed no longer worthy of its place on Madison’s scenic, residential part of Egan Avenue. Just after World War II, the home was cut in two and moved, with each part becoming a separate house. The movers: John Maloney and his father Earl.

The photograph shows one part of the original house and is located at 106 West Avenue North. The other is within a block or so, probably on Center Street.

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Items at the Courthouse

For Veteran’s Day, 2007, the Museum provided a small collection of its military holdings that were used in an excellent Courthouse display honoring veterans. Items were located in a first floor display case.

Pictured here are some of those items, including artifacts from The First World War.

The Museum seeks to make its holdings as visible as possible, sometimes making collections or items available to be displayed in places other than the Museum.

If you have a need or an idea for items to be displayed, contact us!
By Cindy Bilka

Many remember an auto accident in Sioux Falls last September in which two teens were killed as they sped down a road where drag races are often held. This horrific event occurred just two days after the Museum received a letter from Larry Molumby concerning his grandfather’s fatal accident.

**Death Of A Pioneer**

The Molumby accident is one of the earliest fatal motor vehicle accidents in the history of Lake County. Over 92 years ago, on August 23, 1915, 59-year-old John Molumby, a retired farmer and one of the county’s early pioneers, was out for a ride to visit the family farm northeast of Nunda with his family and two other passengers. Eight or nine people (reports vary) were in Molumby’s five-passenger Oldsmobile Reo.

East of Madison, they met Dr. Goldman and his nurse, Lena Schmitt, who were returning from a call in Rutland. Molumby descendants have been told that the two drivers then started speeding along side-by-side. After Molumby pulled ahead, he hit a rut and lost control when he went to pull over in front of Goldman. The Reo rolled and passengers “were thrown clear of the auto in every direction,” according to one newspaper report. Dr. Goldman and Lena Schmitt immediately stopped to aid the injured.

John Molumby was seriously injured but did not wish to go to the hospital. Instead, he was helped to rise and then walked to a vehicle, which brought him home to Madison. His granddaughter Kathleen Hunter of Ramona, daughter of Molumby’s daughter Mae, recalls, “My mother said he sat down in his chair at home and that soon he was gone.” The ribs over his heart had been crushed by the steering wheel before he was thrown. His wife Mary had been found with her hair tangled in the spokes of a broken wheel. Her back was badly injured and it was feared that she would die as well. She did live but never recovered her full health and suffered the rest of her life. Four-year-old Lawrence Molumby, father of Larry Molumby, had a broken collarbone. Ligaments were torn from nine-year-old Joseph Molumby’s left leg. Many of the others suffered a variety of bruises but were otherwise all right.

All were loaded into vehicles owned by Dr. Goldman, Mike Peters, and J.F. Fisher. The Molumbys were brought to their home, which stood at the current site of the Sunshine Food Store parking lot.

They were attended by Drs. Goldman, Kellogg, and Daniels. Mrs. Madison and

**Continued on page 9.**
Molumby Speeding Fatality (continued)

her daughter, who were also passengers in the Reo, were taken to her sister’s home and were attended by Dr. Westaby.

The gruesome scene became an attraction for sightseers as word of the accident spread. Vehicles and roads continue to improve, but human nature remains the same. History does repeat itself.

Recent Speeding Issues

While racing in the city of Madison or in Lake County is not as big a problem as it was years ago, speeding is still a common infraction.

“Actually very few speeding tickets are the result of an accident,” related one police department spokesperson, an encouraging fact. It’s comforting to think speeders are caught before they can cause accidents. Speed was also a factor in a deadly accident on Second Avenue in Madison in September 2004.

Driving safely is still the best bet. No family should experience what the Molumby family did in 1915 or what the other family did in 2004.

Thanks to Larry Molumby, Kathleen Huntimer, Lake County Sheriff Roger Hartman, and the Madison Police Department for information and help for this article.

Auto companies like Dodge encouraged driver safety with cards such as this one.

The Reo automobile pictured for comparison in this photo from an online source is a bit newer than the Molumby car, but it illustrates what the car looked like generally before it was destroyed in the fatal accident. Note the soft top that, in the other photo, is entirely crushed by the rollover.

We Need Your Help!

The Lake County Historical Society and the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum need your help. You can help preserve our heritage and improve the Museum:

1. Become a member of the Lake County Historical Society. Dues are just $10 per year! Members receive the newsletter and information about the Museum and can vote at the annual meeting of the LCHS.

2. Make an annual financial contribution to the Museum to build our endowment or support our annual budget.

3. Consider a memorial gift to the Museum in memory of a loved one.

4. Consider an estate gift to the Museum as part of your estate plan. Consult your legal advisor or estate planner when preparing your will or estate plan. The LCHS is a non-profit corporation under state law and is organized exclusively for the charitable, educational, and scientific purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts to the LCHS are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.

5. Become a Museum volunteer. Volunteers do many jobs at the Museum that take little time and effort. Volunteer workers help free up time for our Museum director to develop and expand our operation.
Above: Jacki Myers from Brandon provided musical entertainment for the Lake County Historical Society's Christmas program, leading the gathering in song as they enjoyed an Christmas cookies provided by LCHS members and board.
Below: Tony Shatz (left) and Tom Tabor answer question from Boy Scouts and others during the Veteran's Day program.
**LCHS Membership**

**Membership Rolls**

**Paid 2008 memberships and donations have been received from the following people.**

(* denotes new members.)

Sandra and Roger Ayers
Nila and Arnold Baltzer
Ruby Beto
Irma and Red Beukelman
Joyce Bjorklund
Christina and Justin Blessinger
Ann M. Bormolini
Jackie and Greg Bortnem
Signe Boudreau
Sharon L. Brown
Susan Brucks*
Fred Buehler
Lenora Christensen
Gladys Costlow
Stanley Cross*
Clara and Myron Downs
The Eyecare Center of Madison
Russell Gerrits*
Nancy Gienapp
Sylvia and John Gist
Don Grimes*
Dan Hansen*
Donna Hansen
Shirley Hanson
Carroll Heath*
Marilyn and Gene Hexom
Floris Hilmoe
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Patricia and Lawrence Molumby
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Susan and Marty Warns*
Terry Weiland
Kathy and Ted Weiland
Kjersten Welch
Della Whitcomb*
Kelli Wollman
Andy Wood
Floy Wood
Etta and Vern Woodard

We have also received donations from several people in memory of Charles Wiedenman.

Thank You!

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**If you have not sent us your membership dues for 2008, or if you have a change of address, please complete the following form and mail it to the Lake County Historical Society, Smith Zimmermann Heritage Museum, 221 NE 8th St., Madison, SD 57042. Thank you!**

**Name:** ____________________________ **Phone:** __________

**Address:** __________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Family Membership: $10.00**

**Additional Contribution:** ________.
Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum
221 8th Street Northeast
Madison, SD 57042
Phone: 605-256-5308
E-mail: smith.zimmermann@dsu.edu

Lake County Historical Society

LCHS Heritage Herald
The Heritage Herald is published quarterly by members of the Lake County Historical Society. The purpose of this society is to collect, document, preserve, and interpret artifacts and documents that reflect the present cultural and developmental history of the Lake County area from the mid 1800s to the present and to encourage an understanding and appreciation for the history and progress of Lake County and the contributions of the county’s residents.

If you have questions or comments, please contact our Museum’s curator, Cindy Bilka. The LCHS’s Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum located on the campus of Dakota State University.

Board of Directors:
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Cindy Bilka, Curator
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Museum Hours
Tuesday-Friday 1:00-4:30

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Lake County Historical Society
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