At the September 2006 meeting, the LCHS Board of Directors approved a change in the membership dates. Dues will now cover the calendar year, January 1 through December 31. Until this change, the membership year was from one October to the next. We hope this will make it easier for members to remember when dues are to be paid.

The Lake County Historical Society will be holding its annual meeting October 22, 2006 from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. at the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum in Madison. This year’s featured speaker is Joe Walwik, associate professor of history at Dakota State University. Four individuals--Chuck Wiedeman, Fritz Krueger, John Hess and the late Martin Gienapp--and one organization--the Questors--will be honored for the contributions to the preservation of local history, the LCHS and the Smith-Zimmermann Museum. A light lunch will follow the meeting.

PAID YOUR DUES?

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The cast of the melodrama performed at the Great Plains Chautauqua. Look inside for more about Chautauqua.
Charles Wiedenman, retired Madison businessman, donated much of his personal household goods to the Smith-Zimmermann Museum, which was sold at auction at the Wiedenman home. Items for the sale included furniture, household appliances, power tools, collectibles, and other miscellany. Wiedenman also offered two vehicles for the auction, a 1995 Ford Ranger 4WD with only 30,000 miles and a 1999 Ford Taurus SE with 34,000 miles. Each brought more than the estimated price, a substantial boon for the museum.

"This is an extraordinary gift," said Jim Swanson, LCHS president, "and will be a welcome boost to our museum budget. With the cost of energy going up, our bills have skyrocketed, and we weren't prepared for a deficit."

Wiedenman, who spent much of his life in the Madison community, was a partner with his father Walt in the Wiedenman Insurance Company for many years. Before that, he was an electrical engineer with Westinghouse in Chicago. He also spent two years in the military when the local National Guard unit was activated during the Korean War. Wiedenman has long been associated with the operation of the trains at Prairie Village and has been involved with the Smith-Zimmermann Museum.

This auction was held in lieu of the annual museum benefit auction. "On behalf of the Lake County Historical Society," Swanson added, "I want to thank Chuck for his generosity and concern for the S-Z Museum. He has always been a local history buff, and his gift will be translated into more and better services at the museum."

Wiedenman’s gift was supplemented by a number of donations from the local community. A light lunch was served, and the many people who attended were pleased with the items and with the pleasant weather, unlike the heat that had plagued the museum’s annual auction for years.
“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the number of moments that take our breath away.”

These are words that Jamie Nolting, this summer’s work-study student at the museum, tries to live by. Jamie’s energy, drive and dedication took our breath away. LCHS President Jim Swan-son said, “She was always upbeat, always cheerful.”

Nolting, one of four girls and a junior accounting major from Sturgis, SD, came to DSU after visiting her oldest sister, who was attending the university. Since her father is the technical coordinator for the Meade County school district, Nolting grew up with technology and the technology here convinced her to enroll at DSU.

The job at the museum was a change for Nolting. “I didn’t know they had a work-study here. Most college students don’t know the museum is here,” she said.

Nolting herself didn’t know what she was getting into. An ace with the computer, she scanned and produced scrapbooks, posters, maps and postcards. “The scrapbook was the most difficult and monotonous,” according to Nolt-
ing. Scanning the original book for reproduction didn’t work so she had to find the same articles in old newspapers and then scan those before cutting, copying and pasting them together to replicate the original scrapbook.

Other museum projects Nolting didn’t anticipate when the summer started included patching walls when shelves were removed, painting, rearranging and helping sort through boxes of papers and other items.

Museum curator Cindy Bilka praised Nolting, saying, “Jamie never complained, no matter what she was asked to do. The museum got more than its money’s worth with her. She made the transition of curators a smoother process than it could have been.” Former curator John Hess added, “With her positive attitude it’s easy to say she will be an asset in the work world when she finishes her de-

Nolting had a busy summer; besides working at the museum, she also worked at DSU’s grant office, a job she continues now that school has started again. She’s also active with the Living Hope Wesleyan Church, where she is the technical coordinator, a member of the “Praise” team and a member of the choir. She loves singing, which she does often, and is also a member of the DSU Singers.

In her spare time, Nolting enjoys spending time with her hus-

band Robbie, singing, and relaxing by playing video games. Although she likes this area, she and Robbie hope to get back to the Sturgis-

Rapid City area eventually. The lure of family and the Black Hills keeps calling.

We wish Jamie, who gives so tirelessly and cheerfully of herself and her talents the best.

WANTED!

_The Heritage Herald_ depends on you. We are always seeking stories, story ideas, or commentary of any sort for possible inclusion in the LCHS newsletter. Write to us!

The museum would like to collect any stories about area time cap-
sules and the last DSU powder puff football game (in 1985).

Memorials to Martin Gienapp

The museum gratefully acknowledges memorials in the name of Mar-
tin Gienapp from William Ellingson, Miriam Wenk, Leland and Carol White, and the law firm of Ericsson, Ericsson, and Leibel.

Thank you.
The Lake County Historical Society will recognize four of its members at the annual meeting for outstanding contributions to the Society and to the Smith-Zimmermann Museum.

Those selected for this achievement are Fritz Krueger, Chuck Wiedenman, John Hess, and the late Martin Gienapp.

Fritz Krueger was chosen for several reasons. His outstanding donations to the annual Museum Benefit auction are well known. For several years Fritz donated antiques and other items from the old family farm. These contributions were a sustaining part of many of the auctions and amounted to literally thousands of dollars. Fritz has also been an active as well as an honorary member of the LCRS board for many years.

Fritz has a long-time association with Lake County. His family moved to Lake County in the late 1800's and established their farm in Farmington Township where Fritz was born in 1911. Later the family relocated to LeRoy Township in 1917 where Fritz lived and farmed for many years. A few years ago Fritz moved from there to his brother's home place. Last June Fritz moved to Heritage Assisted Living, where he now lives. So, except for the three years he spent in the army during WWII, Fritz has lived in Lake County for his entire life.

Chuck Wiedenman is also nearly a life-long resident of Lake County. He has also made a generous contribution (see story) to the LCRS. Because of illness, Chuck was unable live by himself in the beautiful home he had built on Egan Avenue. Last year Chuck indicated that he wanted to help the Museum by donating the proceeds of his personal property to the LCHS.

He approved an auction sale to do just that. The proceeds of the sale netted the Museum nearly $20,000, a major contribution to the Museum's endowment fund.

Chuck has always been deeply interested in local history. He has been a dedicated worker at the railroad in Prairie Village and has been a long-time member of the LCHS. Chuck is now living at Beverly Health Care in Madison.

John Hess, who was the curator of the Museum for the past three years, is a person who has plunged himself into local history. John did an outstanding job in his tenure as curator, and the Society was sorry to lose his services. Besides doing an outstanding job with programs and with maintaining the Museum, John concluded his term with a special gift to the Museum, the profit from buying, improving, and selling a house.

With a great deal of help from volunteers, especially Andy Wood and Bill Klopf, John spent many, many hours renovating the Jess Rames home. John donated the profit from the home to the Society, a gift of over $20,000. This gift was another wonderful addition to the endowment fund.

John is also from a family with long-term association with Lake County. His grandparents came to Lake County in 1900. John was born in Madison in 1963, attended DSU for one year and left to get a degree in computer science and business at Mankato State University. John spent the next 15 years in Albuquerque, San Diego, and Denver before returning to Madison. John is now a landlord in Madison.

Martin Gienapp, who recently passed away, was a dedicated worker and supporter of the Museum. Martin was a board member and museum volunteer for many years. Martin for years kept the Museum open on Saturdays, a time when few others wanted to work. He also enjoyed doing programs for the Madison nursing homes because as he once said, "I enjoy entertaining these old people.” Martin was over 90 when he said that.

Martin was also a life-long Lake County resident. He grew up on the family farm near Chester and later farmed that homestead himself. He and his wife moved to Madison in 1976, where he became active in the community. He wrote several articles about Chester for the Heritage Herald.

These four active supporters have helped the Museum immeasurably, and the community owes them a great deal of gratitude. The LCHS is proud to honor such deserving patrons for their wonderful support and hard work.
A Note from the New Curator—Cindy Bilka

Permit me to introduce myself. I am Cindy Bilka, the new curator at the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum. Now a resident of Chester, I have been a resident of Lake County since 1969. My husband and I have three children, a son-in-law, a granddaughter, and a grandchild expected next April.

Little did I know what I was getting myself into when I first saw the ad listing the job opening. My teaching degree with majors in history and English qualified me for the job and applying and passing the interview were the easy parts.

What is the hard part? Where do I start? There is the fact that we have so many interesting artifacts of all shapes, sizes, and origins and I want to know the stories behind each and every one. To me, they represent people’s hopes and dreams, fears and sorrows. What would the person who used the foot-powered washing machine think about while she worked? The supper she still needed to fix? Dreams of her children’s futures?

And then there are the military uniforms. How hard was it for these young men and women to adapt to the realities and locations of the wars they fought in? What did they miss the most as they were thousands of miles away from home? What did they write about when they sent letters home?

Each hatpin, each plow, each carpenter’s plane, each kerosene lamp has a story. I know I won’t learn them all; I’ll learn very few of them, but for me the joy will be in trying. Each day here at the museum is like Christmas to me because I see a different artifact, photograph, or even a visitor to the museum. It’s hard to decide where to go, what to do or see, or who to talk to first.

At times it’s difficult to plod along with all the mundane chores around the Smith-Zimmermann—the general cleaning, bookkeeping, cataloguing, etc.—but sometimes even those lead to fascinating snippets of information. If it weren’t for some of these routine chores, I wouldn’t have found the letters written by General Beadle or known just how many members there are in the Lake County Historical Society.

My first month at the museum was far from dull. The first week began with a LCHS board meeting and ended with the Chuck Wiedenman auction to benefit the museum. During the second week, I was fortunate to visit with students from Tamagawa University in Tokyo. I have also had the chance to meet and visit many other fascinating people, including relatives of the Boyd family (whose 1878 covered wagon is in the museum), a descendant of the Baker family whose name was given to Baker Park (where the Chautauqua grounds at Lake Madison were located), Fritz Krueger (whose vast knowledge of Lake County and the museum has helped fill in stories for some of our artifacts) and even a very nice Madison police officer (who quickly responded to my call when our summer work-study student, a volunteer, and I found some live ammunition in the office). These are just a few of the people I have been fortunate enough to meet. I love my job!

While there may be times I wonder what I have gotten myself into, most of the time I look forward to what challenges lie ahead. I hope to learn more area history and then be able to share it.

I’ll see you at the museum.
Threshing Grain during Yesteryear

By Dale Nighbert

Two miles west of Madison, SD, overlooking the shores of beautiful Lake Herman sets the famed historic Prairie Village. This unique 140-acre living museum is a home for numerous antique agricultural machines, over 50 preserved buildings – many dating back to the 1890s era, an 1893 model steam carousel, and a fully operational train. This settlement, whose beginnings began in 1966, was created to preserve, commemorate, and honor the pioneer spirit of those days long-gone-by.

One of the special features of Prairie Village over the years has been its annual Steam Threshing Jamboree. Every August thousands of visitors from near and far gather to participate in this 3-day event. The threshing demonstrations held during this time have become a testimony to the old-time farming practices of our early South Dakota settlers.

The first “unofficial” Threshing Jamboree in Lake County was held in 1961. During that time, a small group of men got together to test the interest of such a jamboree in our area. Here is that story:

Once upon a time . . .

Nearly 800 curious spectators watched intently as they witnessed the old-fashioned threshing exhibition held one Sunday afternoon at the Joe Habeger farm 13 miles north of Madison. This interested crowd of on-lookers – young and old – watched with fascination as the old gas-powered engines from days long-gone-by hummed and purred. The old-time threshing machine did its job – separating the chaff from the grain. A field of oats had been planted earlier that spring by Darwin Unzelman, the tenant on the farm. Once the crop had ripened, Unzelman harvested and bound the grain that was to be threshed.

These bundles were pitched into the 1915 Aultman-Taylor wooden threshing machine’s feeder that was belted to and powered by a nearby old tractor. Other tractors – ones that had seen better days – stood ready and waiting to collect the freshly threshed grain into the wooden wagons that were hitched to them. The weather was perfect, and the antique farm machinery worked almost flawlessly.

Many of the old-timers who attended reflected on the “good old days” – the way farming used to be done. Perhaps some could be heard saying, “Boy, this sure brings back a lot of memories.” Exclamations from those of the younger generation could have been “Wow! I remember Grandpa telling stories about how this used to be done!”

As the thresher was emptying its grain into the waiting wagons, other visitors walked around the field and checked out the equipment that was on display. Habeger showed several of his antique tractors – a 1913 Flower City, a 1915 two-cylinder Case, a 1919 Fordson, a 25-45 horse-power Case, and a Thieman tractor made out of a Model A Ford. One of the biggest pieces of machinery at the exhibition was a 35-70 HP Minneapolis tractor. This giant weighed 22,500 pounds and had drive wheels over seven feet in diameter. Norman Lease showed his 10-20 Case tractor, and Charlie Driscoll brought his 1926 Model T truck that was also used to haul the threshed grain.

This “threshing bee” was organized as a test to determine the amount of interest in such an activity. The response from the crowd was very encouraging. Little did the organizers know that the success of this one-day event would lead not only to other threshing jamborees, but the building of a museum that would become a home to this annual event – the historic Prairie Village.

So, over the sound of those gas-powered engines from yesteryear, through an occasional puff of smoke, and the smell of freshly threshed grain, the old-fashioned threshing demonstration held that Sunday, September 3, 1961, continued.

Within a year after this event, an organization that called themselves the Eastern South Dakota Threshermen’s Association formed. Charter members were Charles Driscoll, Joe Habeger, Sam Johnson, George Klinker, Norman Lease, Adrian McCracken, Palmer Re-

Continued on the next page——
inicke, and Darwin Unzelman. For the next three years, beginning in 1963, other threshing events were held at the Habeger farm.

During the fall of 1965, a Madison Chamber of Commerce committee became interested in moving this event closer to the Madison area. Through a joint effort of the ESDTA and the Chamber committee, a fund drive was organized. Their efforts lead to the purchase of the land west of Madison.

In 1966, this now popular annual event was held at its new home, the historic Prairie Village.

And so, the story goes . . .

Above: Two old threshing machines at work.
Postcards sell
farm equipment

Story by Gene Hexom — postcard from the Hexom collection

The postcard on the facing page, distributed by the J.I, Case Threshing Machine Co. of Racine, Wisconsin, advertised a Case 6 h.p. engine (18 brake h.p.) for $500 and an 18 x 36 in. steel separator with a hand feed attachment and folding stacker for $380 — both for $880.

The first threshing machines were made mostly of wood which meant a great deal of maintenance and repair and a shorter life for the machine. The introduction of steel separators was a big improvement in durability and extended life of the machine. This size steam engine was fairly small, compared to some of the monster engines used for field work; however this Case engine was big enough to power the separator.

This postcard also shows stack threshing. Farmers would stack their grain bundles in large, carefully shaped stacks (to shed water) and do their threshing later in the summer or early fall after the hectic pace of shock threshing was completed. Shock threshing involved placing six to eight grain bundles together in small shocks throughout the grain field. After the grain was shocked (by hand), bundle haulers would drive their teams of horses pulling hay racks (bundle wagons) through the field, pitching the shocks of grain on the hay rack and deliver the load to the threshing machine. The threshing rig was generally set up close to the farmstead so the farmer could make use of the straw pile for livestock bedding.

The “threshing ring”

It was common for a group of eight to ten farmers to form a “threshing ring” and work together for the summer grain harvest, moving from farm to farm as quickly as possible until the job was done. There was always a little jockeying for position as to who would be first and so on down the list until the last farmer’s crop was threshed. However, this was usually determined by which fields ripened first, then cut and shocked. Sometimes, if several farmers were ready to thresh at the same time, they would draw lots or look at last year’s order to see that everyone got a fair shake.

Generally, one or two farmers in the threshing ring would own the equipment and the others would pay for the threshing service, based on the amount of grain harvested.

Threshing was a labor-
intensive job. Besides the engine/separator operators and grain haulers, several men with teams of horses and hay racks were needed to haul bundles. Extra hands were often needed to pitch bundles onto the wagons and then off the wagons into the separator.

**Hard work for the women**

It was a big job for the farm women, too. This crew of 12 to 15 hungry men had to be fed at least the noon meal and a big lunch in the afternoon. This meant large quantities of meat, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, bread, pies, and desserts – all made from scratch. The women worked in the hot kitchen while the men endured the hot, dusty conditions in the field.

Then, in the afternoon about 3 p.m., the women would head to the field with large pans of meat and egg sandwiches, cake, lemonade and hot coffee (preferably egg coffee if you were Scandinavian). Yes, they drank hot coffee on 90 degree plus days – and they drank it by the gallon!

After threshing was complete at each farm, the host farmer was expected to furnish a couple of cases of cold beer for the crew before they loaded up and moved the equipment to the next farm. It was kind of a toast or mini-celebration that the job was done at that place. After the “beer break,” it was time to head-em-up and move on.

By the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, the grain combine was rapidly replacing the threshing machine, and the steam engines had been replaced with gas tractors.

For the young guys, it was a huge leap forward in harvesting technology. For the old-timers it was a sad ending to see the trusty Case thresher and the old steam engine rusting away in the tree grove.
The Great Plains Chautauqua came back to Madison for a week this summer, a cooperative effort by Dakota State University, the Madison Area Arts Council, and the Lake County Historical Society. Just like in the old days, they came and set up a big tent, a few hundred folding chairs, and a small stage. When they left, they took the tent, the chairs, and the stage, but they left hundreds of memories for hundreds of men, women, and children who attended one of the events.

The Chautauqua troupe from Lincoln, Nebraska, consisting of five presenters, a hostess, and a tentmaster, arrived on July 12 and left on July 19. In that time, there were ten adult and children’s workshops, five evening presentations, and a host of other activities. Unfortunately, the troupe’s arrival coincided with a heat wave that lasted beyond their stay.

Think of it as a traveling cultural activity. In the old days, Chautauqua troupes toured small towns like Madison bringing lectures and performances to people aching for a taste of big city culture. Madison in the 1890’s and onward stood above other small towns because of its Chautauqua grounds north of Lake Madison, which featured a permanent site with a hotel, a pavilion, and many camping sites. People came from far and wide to attend the summer events until the 1930’s, when Chautauqua faded in the face of technological innovation.

But recent efforts have brought the Chautauqua back.

The most recent incarnation included William Clark, played by Patrick McGinnis, Clark’s manservant York, played by Charles Everett Pace, and Tecumseh, played by Jerome Kills Small. Also included were John Jacob Astor, played by D. Jerome Tweton, Sacajawea, played by Cody Harjo, and Dolley Madison, played by Tonia Compton.

Each day’s events, held at Madison’s schools and libraries, typically included several workshops, such as “Lewis and Clark Go Grocery Shopping.” Evening events focused on one historical person, with opening acts of local entertainment. In the historical presentations, Dolley Madison acted as host, the historical figure gave a brief talk, and then they fielded questions from the audience first as their historical figure and then as the scholar.

Despite the heat, well over a hundred people filled the tent each evening, and sometimes fifty or more people attended the workshops.

Madison’s connection to the Chautauqua was cited throughout the week, beginning with Risë Smith’s presentation on the history of the site. The museum featured an outstanding collection of artifacts from the Lake Madison Chautauqua, prepared by curator John Hess and volunteers. In addition, the actual ticket booth from the old Chautauqua grounds was brought to the site, having been saved from the Prairie Village burn pile and is in the process of being rebuilt.

Many area volunteers and civic organizations devoted long hours to bringing the Great Plains Chautauqua to Madison, a history and cultural lesson that we hope will live as long in memory as those from the first Chautauqua.

The official logo of the Great Plains Chautauqua includes photos of all the performers.
Chautauqua Organizers and Volunteers were not the only ones whose efforts led to the Chautauqua event this summer.

Local institutions also contributed cash amounts in support of the week-long event. Offer your thanks to these sponsors:
- Great Western Bank
- The County of Lake County
- Heartland Consumer’s Power District
- East River Federal Credit Union
- East River Electric Power Cooperative
- The City of Madison
- Sioux Valley Electric
- The Questors
- Prostrollo’s
- AmericInn
- 2nd Street Diner
- Madison Discount Liquor
- Jubilee
- Madison Radio Shack
- Montgomery’s Furniture
- Dairy Queen
- Madison Daily Leader
- Dakota State University
- And many individuals.

The event was possible only with their generosity.

Thank you for your support!
LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

We encourage people to visit the museum, which is on the north end of the DSU campus. Visitor parking is usually available during school hours. The Museum is dedicated to preserving the history of Lake County, and has many donated objects which were used within the county after it was settled in 1871.

We have to ask for your help through memberships and additional donations to operate the Smith-Zimmermann Heritage Museum, which is free to the public, and to carry on programs we offer through the society, which are also free. If you are not a member, please consider joining.

Some contributions have gone to the Museum Endowment Fund to help ensure the museum will have long-term stability. Contributions also are used to pay day-to-day expenses. If you have friends or relatives who you think would enjoy a membership, consider making them a member on your behalf.

Our family membership is $10.00 a year. You may send dues and/or contributions to: Lake County Historical Society, 221 8th St. NE, Madison, SD 57042.
Phone: 605-256-5308

Board Members:
President: Jim Swanson
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Spread the Word!
A Word from John Hess, former Museum Curator: It’s important that our community understand the valuable asset it has in the S-Z Museum. We seem to be quite a misunderstood little museum. Many think we are part of the college, still a state museum, or have restricted entrance only for members. We can change that. Help let people know we are a free museum dedicated to Lake County’s history. Please spread the word. Visit the museum. Bring friends and relatives who visit the area. Call and ask about using the museum space for a special event. We make a great backdrop for reunions and other gatherings. If you would like to do some volunteering at the museum, give us a call.

LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WE'RE ON THE WEB: HTTP://WWW.SMITH-ZIMMERMANN.DSU.EDU/

The Smith-Zimmermann Museum
221 8th Street NE
Madison, South Dakota 57042