



# The Window

Official Newsletter of the Brookings County Historical Society



## Old 1884 building survives its long haul

## Decade of repairs completed for spring debut

The Brookings County Museum's old James and Emma Hauxhurst house will soon be back to a smattering of its old glorious self.

Depending upon how pandemic worries and woes fade and flounder, the museum board is hoping to show the old house off to the public for the first time next spring.

It's been a long haul for the 1884 residence that for more than a century resided at 510 Third Street in neighboring Brookings.

It was set to be razed about ten years ago—along with nearly all of the structures on that block—to make way for the current Brookings City-County Governmental Services Building.

But thanks to a small group of Brookings citizens with an interest in history, the home was saved. That contingent paid to move the house to the county's museum, and it was trundled off to a special part of the Volga City Park in the winter of 2011.

That seven-mile journey was coordinated and planned by Pat Fishback and the late Mary Bibby, both of Brookings.

The old house was built by James Hauxhurst, former Medary area homesteader who became a Brookings businessman and county political figure. It was in a condition not conducive to the move. But the main historic part of the structure, albeit in somewhat of a run-down condition, easily made the trip.

Not only did the Brookings group pay for moving the house, but they also paid the cost of building a foundation for the two-story building.

But even that long and expensive haul from Brookings to Volga was insignificant compared to what was next on the agenda. The museum board voted to refurbish it.

That became a major undertaking.

Originally, board members thought they and volunteers with special skills could do most of the work.

That didn't always work out.

Fortunately, just the man to take on the refurbishing of the old home became a member of the museum's board of directors. That man was Phil Wagner of



The Hauxhurst House

Brookings, who has been a part of the construction industry in Brookings for 57 years. His knowledge and expertise were invaluable in what would become a decade-long effort to bring the house back to its 1880s glory.

Because the one-story rear portion of the house had to be left in Brookings, the home's exposed rear wall had to be rebuilt. There were also many exterior issues, including reattaching the home's front porch and painting.

Continued inside



Back side of house removed



Rear of house refurbished



Porch and patch-work needed, 2011

# Historic 1884 home

Continued from front

Once the exterior issues were taken care of, the interior and its major challenges were next on the “to-do” list. Electrical power was brought to the building and a furnace donated by Brian Gatzke of Brookings was installed so work could be done during the winter months.

For the next several years, work progressed, mostly by museum board members. As this work moved forward, it was determined that because of an extremely steep, narrow and hazardous stairway to the second floor, only the lower level would be refurbished.

Volunteers removed cupboards and bathrooms, and pried shower stalls loose from their mooring. Paint was stripped from window frames and new paint added. Workers pried up several layers of carpets and rugs. They scraped and steamed off four layers of wallpaper and tore down walls that had been added in the 1960s and 1970s when the house was converted into four apartments.

Volunteers working on the building’s exterior continued through the years as money, time and help became available.

Some years, hardly any progress was made. This was especially true in 2017 and 2018 when the museum was building the nearby Trygve Trooien Horse-Drawn Museum funded by Trooien’s \$100,000 bequest.

Finally, the “grunt” work of tearing out and hauling more than a century’s worth of detritus out of the home was completed. The next phase was done by experienced carpenters and craftsmen.

For this, the museum’s limited budgets were sorely tested. To save funds, volunteers became free laborer-assistants, helping contractors where directed.

To move the project along and to meet expenses, a major fund drive was necessary. Individual contacts and a fund raising mailer that included an 1800s variety square nail in each envelope, was sent to museum friends everywhere. Thanks to hundreds of museum fans plus area businesses, \$25,000 was raised.

In a final refurbishing push initiated more than a year ago, museum board

members Floyd Havrevold and Larry Ust, both businessmen from Volga, stepped forward to provide leadership.

In his retirement, Havrevold was able to spend hundreds of hours doing the little things that needed to be done.

Now, the major work has boiled down to the placement in the house of period furniture for the “new” old house that is being supervised by board members Shirley Deethhardt of Aurora and Darla Strande of Brookings.

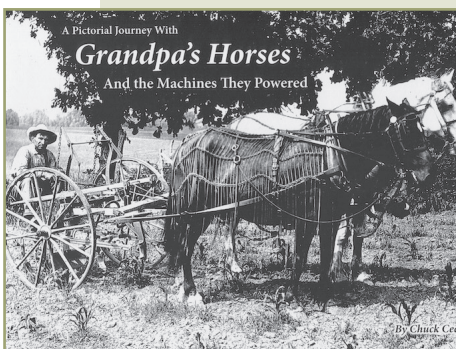
Preparing the Hauxhurst house for its opening next spring has been a long haul for the museum. 🌿



The Hauxhurst House on Third Street in Brookings.



Floyd Havrevold, left, and his son Wade, took time this fall to work on the aging Hauxhurst House windows. Note the windows decorative design. As funds permit, windows of similar design will replace these 136-year-old windows. (Museum Photo)



## “Grandpa's Horses” dedicated to Trooien

A book dedicated to the late Trygve Trooien, Oak Lake farmer and benefactor of the new Trooien Horse-Drawn Museum, has been written by Chuck Cecil.

The idea of Cecil’s book, *Grandpa’s Horses*, originated as he worked with others preparing the museum building for its grand opening in 2018. The 130-page book contains more than 275 old photographs of South Dakotans at work and play with their horses during the late 1890s to the 1930s.

Cecil has assigned a share of the book’s profits to the Brookings County Museum. More information, including ordering instructions, are in the book section of the museum’s website: [brookingscountymuseum.org](http://brookingscountymuseum.org)



# Brookings County Museum reorganizes

Partly due to the pandemic, the governing board of the Brookings County Historical Society/Museum voted at its annual meeting in October to try an experimental co-leadership concept.

Society members also elected two new board members, Lynette Nelson of Volga and Janet Gritzner of Brookings. Re-elected to the board were incumbents Larry Ust, Floyd Havrevold and Bob Buchheim, all of Volga, and Patty Kratochvil of Brookings. Other officers re-elected were Darla Strande of Brookings, treasurer, and Buchheim, secretary.

For the first time since the society was organized in Brookings in 1939, its leadership will operate through the next 12 months under a co-presidency model.

This will reduce the growing work load for which the society's president is responsible, including the numerous public contacts necessary. With six buildings in the museum complex and assets in excess of \$800,000, a co-presidency can better direct the maintenance and improvements necessary for the museum campus.

Elected co-presidents were incumbent Phil Wagner of Brookings and board member Shirley Deethhardt of Aurora. Among other leadership duties, Deethhardt will work with volunteers in filling out and staging with period furnishings and accoutrements of the age in the newly refurbished 1894 James Hauxhurst house.

Two long-time museum leaders, former president Harold Christianson and vice-president Jerry Leslie, both of Volga, are retiring from the board. They were given emeritus status. ❀

## Big surprises discovered in Volga home

**Editor's Note:** The following story of "An Old House," is part of a report Mrs. Edward VanderWal of rural Volga wrote to be included in the history of her Extension Club annual report.

In the first three months of 1971 we were remodeling our house located one-fourth mile north of Volga. We had to take out part of a wall to do this. In the wall we found a small piece of a newspaper, the Chicago Mirror, bearing the date 1882.

An advertisement in this paper encouraged subscriptions to various sporting and comic papers entitling subscribers to a chance of "getting the grand gift prize worth \$350 to be given away in January, 1883".

We have reasons to believe from the construction of the house and thickness of the kitchen walls that the kitchen part of the house was built earlier than the living room where this particular wall was located.

The studding and other original wood were the rough, unplanned lumber of that day. The nails were square.

According to the title abstract, the land where the house is located was owned by Lewis Johnson in 1882.

In the same wall, on top of a door heading, we found some tools where builders had apparently dropped them while the upper story of the home was being constructed. The tools found were a claw hammer, a tack hammer with nail puller on the end, a screwdriver and a table knife.

By this evidence we now know the house is nearly 100 years old at this writing and that there was a very unhappy carpenter involved in its construction. ❀



## History's footprint

Early snowfall in Brookings County this fall revealed an old wagon road that is sometimes visible, depending on the weather. The road is in a hilly area of Section 20 in Oslo Township four or five miles east of Sinai.

The possibility of the tracks being a part of the Noble Trail constructed by the federal government in the 1850s was considered, but that historic road from Medary skirted the south side of Lake Campbell and then barely touched Oslo township.

Medary, incidentally, was named by Samuel Medary, Jr., the engineer working on that trail. His father was governor of Minnesota.

Other old-timers believe the trail in Oslo Township is the remainder of a wagon road that in the late 1880s ran from Oldham in Kingsbury County to Brookings.

Another mystery about the road is that it appears to be a two-way wagon trail, with two sets of wagon wheel tracks for some distance.

(Photo courtesy of Darrel Kleinjan)

## Museum recipient of annual Allegra grant

The Brookings County Museum has been awarded an Allegra "FootPRINT" grant of \$250.

This is the 15th year Allegra has helped area not-for-profit organizations such as the museum.

As in the past with this generous and helpful grant, the museum will use the extra funds to help in the printing of its quarterly newsletter, The Window.

# 1930s horse mill a challenge for Hope

**T**he Brookings County Museum has been given a rare 1920s era “horse mill.”

But making it presentable as a museum educational display has been an arduous task for museum board member and retired Sinai farmer Marvin Hope.

He’s the museum’s mechanical fixer. Historic artifacts arriving at the museum needing attention are always shuttled on to Hope.

With the arrival of the horse mill at the museum, Hope was determined to return the old grinder that was donated by fellow Sinai farmer Darrel Kleinjan back to something resembling its old self.

Kleinjan had spotted what he thought was an old horse-powered grinder several years ago at a large Wieman auction in Marion, S.D., and decided to bid on it after a scrap iron dealer called out a bid of \$5. “I thought it should be saved for history so I bought it for just over \$10,” Kleinjan said.

This past summer, he asked Hope if the county’s Trygve Trooien Horse-Drawn Museum that is part of the Brookings County Museum complex in Volga would be interested in it.

It a perfect fit with other museum horse-drawn equipment and conveyances.

Grain grinders were powered by horse-powered sweeps before internal combustion and electrical power came along to do the work. Corn and other grains were ground to selected coarseness as the burr-embedded mill revolved with the revolutions made around it by the circling horse.

Early advertisements of horse mills claim they could grind from 10 to 15 bushels of shelled corn per hour, or 6 to 10 bushels of ear corn an hour. The mills were also used to grind oats, barley and other grains to a desired coarseness depending on the livestock or poultry for whom the feed was being prepared.

Similar horse sweeps, some powered by as many as 16 horses, pumped water, ran sawmills or boosted the grain to storage via elevators.

The old grain grinder became a challenge for Hope.

Kleinjan’s rusted mill was probably used in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At nearly a century old, it wasn’t surprising that the grinder arrived at the county museum with pounds of rust, dirt and grease, along with a few dings, dents and some important elements missing.

The challenge was made even more difficult because there was no manufacturer or patent date to be found anywhere on the grinder. Hope searched through old catalogs and other farm equipment publications hoping to find a drawing of it, but found nothing resembling the Kleinjan mill.

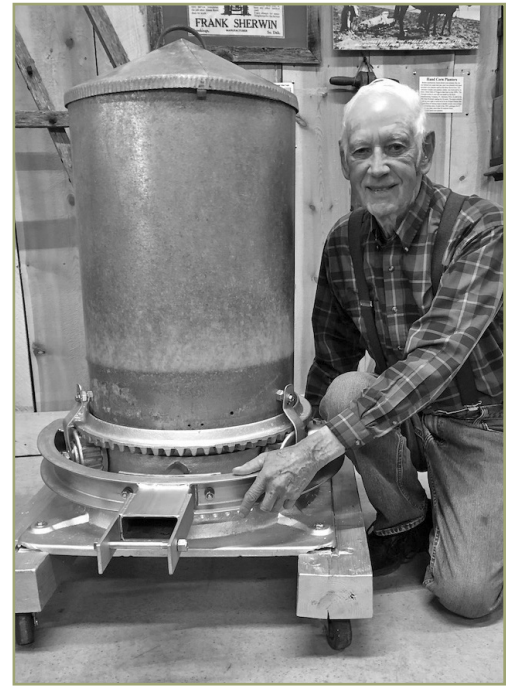
Still, Hope’s lifetime of knowledge of old farm equipment did give him hints as to what the mill once looked like, and what needed to be done to restore it.

His first challenge was that the mill’s supply bin was missing. He surmised that the bin would have held four or five bushels of corn or other grains that were gravity-fed to the grinder mechanisms.

He measured the place in which the supply bin had to be fitted, and at an auction sale this past summer in Sinai, Hope bought what he thought he needed to fill that important but missing part.

It fit perfectly.

Next, the hitching mechanism that held the mill’s “yoke,” or sweep bar, to which the circling horse was harnessed, was also missing. Hope called on veteran Volga welder and metal fabricator Scott Blase. The two figured out what the connection for the mill’s sweep bar must have looked like, and how it fit on to the gears and rotating grinders.



**Brookings County Museum board member and volunteer Marv Hope of Volga restored this old horse-powered feed grinder. The Window previously reported that the grinder was donated by Mark Stime of Sinai, which was in error. (Museum Photo)**

Blase volunteered to make the connector. It also worked perfectly.

Meanwhile, Hope was also filing off and chipping away the mill’s rusted gears and grinder burrs, and what he didn’t remove, Kevin Enevoldsen of rural Volga sandblasted it all clean as a whistle.

The machine weighs in at about 250 pounds and is difficult to move. To facilitate its use as a museum display, Hope put the old mill on wheels.

Now, thanks to Kleinjan’s generosity, Enevoldsen’s sandblasting, and Hope’s determination, all melded with Blase’s metal fabrication talents, visitors to the Trooien Horse-Drawn museum in Volga (once it opens as the pandemic ebbs next spring) will be able to see how the old horse sweep grinder transformed real horse power into feed-grinding success. 🌾

## 1926

### Name that price from the Brookings Register

1 dozen oranges .....	49¢	Post Toasties .....	15¢
3 large cans tomatoes.....	54¢	Large catsup .....	23¢
3 large cans peaches.....	75¢	1 lb. can salmon .....	16¢
3 large cans peas .....	38¢	2 pkgs Wrigley's gum.....	05¢
3 large cans corn.....	38¢	Farmers Cooperative Coal....	\$5.50/ton
Cornflakes .....	15¢		

Fad Theater	
Saturday matinee children .....	05¢
Saturday matinee adult.....	20¢
Evening.....	10¢/20¢
Metz Shoe Store: Mens work.....	98¢
Metz Shoe Store: Womens heel.....	\$2.98



# Efforts underway to computerize records

**B**rookings County Museum volunteers have embarked on a special project that will eventually computerize alphabetized index information contained in more than 30 old scrapbooks having news clippings on deaths, obituaries, marriages and significant stories related to the history of Brookings County.

The project was actually unknowingly started nearly 75 years ago by Victor Dalthorp, who before his death in the 1950s, not only left an enormous collection of artifacts to the museum, but also his huge scrapbook with stories of deaths and obituary notices from county newspapers. The large-page variety scrapbook is four inches thick. It includes nearly 1,000 names of deceased persons from the 1930s into the 1950s.

Someone—possibly the late Barbara Behrend—categorized pages and typed out an alphabetized listing of those mentioned in the book, and the page number where the individual's information is located.

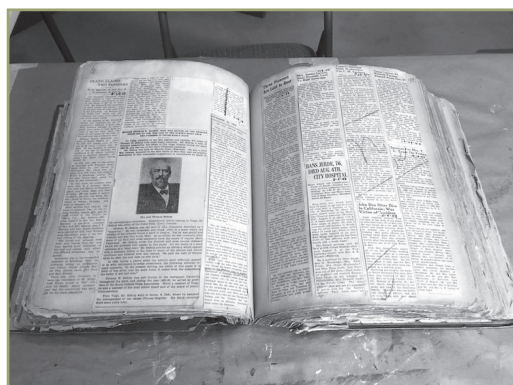
Museum volunteers have individually entered into the museum's website the death or obituary location information from the Dalthorp scrapbook.

Persons throughout the world will be able to access that list on the museum website and will then know if the person they are searching for is in the Dalthorp scrapbook. If so, they will know the page number to which they should turn when visiting the museum to find the story.

Other listings and stories, many the work of board member emeritus Grace Linn, will also eventually be computerized and become a part of the museum's website.

The Dalthorp computerized list is just the first of what volunteers will eventually tackle.

The next project to be done this winter is to computerize the alphabetized index listing, this one known to have been the



Pertinent death and obituary information on nearly 1,000 Brookings County residents in the late 1930s to the early 1950s is included in this huge Dalthorp scrapbook. (Museum Photo)

work of Barbara Behrend, from the eight large scrapbooks faithfully kept by the late Adeline Schultz Taylor. Once the Taylor books are finished, work will begin on about two dozen other unindexed scrapbooks.

Now, with the exception of the Dalthorp and Taylor list, searches for scrapbook information must be done the old-fashioned way, page by page. ❁

## A home for those "threatening" dental tools

# Dental cabinet donated to museum



The museum's small "dentist's office" of yore has now been graced with an attractive dentist's cabinet, pictured here standing behind the old dental chair.

The cabinet was donated by Phil and Roberta Wagner of Brookings. It was once in the Brookings dental office of Dr. G. M. McMann, who practiced for years on the second floor of the Bartling Building on the corner of Main and Fourth Avenue in Brookings,

Dr. McMann's business flourished especially during World War II when he had the government contract to treat the hundreds of soldiers assigned to an Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) for junior officers at then South Dakota State College.

Incidentally, the drill mechanism at far right in this picture is a foot pedal-operated drill.

## Builder of 1884 house beat Custer to the Little Big Horn

James Hauxhurst, who was the ringleader in Brookings County's most egregious election scandal, had a bad case of gold fever.

Long before his forays in Brookings County, he was on a quest for gold.

He first shuttled off to Colorado to find his fortune in the Pike's Peak neighborhood.

Gold was scarce, but he did find his future wife in Colorado.

Unfortunately, it is believed she died shortly after the birth of Elizabeth Hauxhurst in 1861.

Within months of that birth and the loss of his wife, Hauxhurst took his new daughter back to his parents' home in Wisconsin and joined a party of 14 men led by Captain James Stuart, and set out for Montana Territory in search of gold.

They also saw the potential for profit in establishing town sites for the coming army of gold seekers and settlers to that area.

Their excursion is now known as the Bighorn Expedition of 1863.

By May 8 of that year the party was at the confluence of the Little Bighorn and the Bighorn rivers near where a dozen years later Gen. George Custer would find himself.

Hauxhurst and the others pocketed some gold, but not enough to write home about.

The expedition was anything but a romantic waltz in the park. Each night during the party, concerned about hostile incursions, they posted guards. During the days, they often looked back over their shoulders.

After a few months and the death of three men from wounds caused by hostiles, the expedition ended. Twenty years later one of the men, Samuel Hauser, became Montana's Territorial Governor.

Hauxhurst decided to head for Medary, Dakota Territory, where he homesteaded and also took a 160-acre tree claim in Trenton Township, Brookings County. And then he, too, got into local politics.

# James Hauxhurst's vote canvassing fias

**T**he past is prologue for the Brookings County Museum's iconic 19th century house being readied for public introduction.

It was built by a maverick whose political shenanigans in the late 1800s forever changed Brookings County's map, and his actions most certainly stymied the future of Volga, the community where his Brookings home now stands proud as a peacock.

That old two-story house built in Brookings on Third Street across the street south from what a century later would be the home of the Brookings Public Library, was built by carpenter-cabinet maker and farm implement operator turned county official, James Hauxhurst.

At the time of the selection of Brookings as the county seat of government, he and perhaps other Brookings officials became immersed in what could be described as a scandalous vote counting foray.

In that curious counting kerfuffle, it was Hauxhurst, the chairman of the canvassing board, who decided that Brookings garnered more votes than Volga. But another chink in the vote counting would emerge to overshadow the county seat race.

## King James

James Hauxhurst was the major instigator of the counting of votes for the Register of Deeds election, and his actions inspired the editor of the Brookings County Press in 1879 to refer to him as "King James". The editor accused King James of "cold blooded rascality."

Hauxhurst had first dipped his toes in political puddles as the clerk of the first Brookings County Commission.

When the Territorial Legislature picked a three-member governing board for the county, Martin Trygstad was appointed county commission chairman. He and two other men first met in Trygstad's log cabin home in Medary on July 3, 1871.

At the time, Hauxhurst was farming a piece of land near Medary, and also had a carpentry business.

The frontier town was in the news even in the 1850s when Col. William H. Nobles and a work force were surveying and doing what they could to make a wagon road intended to be a part of a federal effort to provide access for pioneers seeking new

land through the upper Midwest and all the way to California.

## Nobles Trail

The crude road they made in this area is known as the Nobles Trail.

The Nobles group halted at Medary and shoveled down the steep banks of the Big Sioux. They gathered up field stones and threw them and some gravel into the river making a crossing for wagons. The project engineer was Samuel Medary, Jr. He christened that place Medary after his father, the governor of Minnesota Territory.

The Nobles group moved on, marking the rough road with mounds of dirt and rock at quarter-mile intervals. They passed south of Lake Campbell and into a sliver of Brookings County's Oslo Township, then trundled through Lake Sinai Township, and on to what became Wessington Springs. Work continued to the Missouri River, but that was the end of the Nobles Trail that started in Ft. Ridley, Minnesota.

The Nobles road and the birth of Medary, in an indirect way, benefited James Hauxhurst, to the future detriment of Volga.

## Settles in Medary

Hauxhurst was born in Queens County, Long Island, New York, in 1838. He moved to Wisconsin in 1855 and then on to Colorado and the gold rush in 1860. That didn't work out, so he decided to try homesteading near Medary in 1871.

Two years before he and his wife Ella arrived, the first Brookings County white child, Anna Jermstad, was born in Medary on December 2, 1869.

Medary soon had 21 city blocks and nearly two dozen business buildings. It was being promoted and developed by the Dakota Land Company. No one knew it at the time, but that affiliation would later hinder its hopes for the approaching railroad, and also help lead to the election of a new county seat town in which Hauxhurst played a major role.

By the way, Mrs. Hauxhurst and two other Medary housewives made the first American flag to be flown in Brookings County, unfurling it at Medary's Fourth of July celebration in 1871. That flag is now displayed in the South Dakota Historical Society Museum in Pierre.

Medary and the Hauxhursts prospered. Because of the apparent endorsement of the Nobles wagon road route, most people just assumed Medary was located on the best route for the coming railroad.

## The Railroad Expansion

Medary residents anxiously awaited the railroad that was then being laid down in Minnesota heading for the Missouri River at Pierre, Dakota Territory, at the rate of a mile of rails a day, each mile being laid on 2,700 wooden railroad ties.

Few knew that the Chicago NorthWestern Railroad had its own land company, the Western Town Lot Company. And the railroad didn't publicize its rail route or depot plans in advance so that town businesses could get a leg up on the development of town lots for the railroad.

So in Medary and seven miles north, in the new town of Brookings, residents were standing by for railroad news.

About that time, Hauxhurst was selected by the three-member county commission as its clerk. Later he was appointed county Register of Deeds. As Brookings County Register of Deeds, Hauxhurst's salary was not paid by taxpayers. Registers of Deeds in those days made their money by keeping all of the fees paid for recording purposes.

Soon, Chicago NorthWestern announced its Dakota Territory route. Tracks would meander up out on to the Coteau de Prairie (a rise of about 600 feet) through what is known as the Hole in the Mountain west of Lake Benton, Minn.

It was announced there would be a depot in Elkton and then the track would make a ruler straight run for a depot at Volga, west of Brookings. Medary was no longer a town with a future. Brookings wasn't even destined to be a whistle stop.

## Paying the Price

But a few wealthy land owners in and around Brookings managed to grease the palms of the railroad's agent, named Waterman, and its attorney, Thomas Brown, of Sioux Falls. As a result, it was suddenly announced that Brookings would indeed also be a rail stopping point.

Choice Brookings lots and a bit of cash helped the railroad change plans. Brookings promoters even considered renaming Brookings to Waterman, in hopes of



# co may have affected Volga's future

gaining favors with the influential agent. And Brookings promoters also promised Attorney Brown 80 acres of Brookings land plus \$150 in cash. The railroad and its town lot company also got 160 acres of prime Brookings land.

On October in 1879, the first train chugged into Brookings.

It wasn't long before folks in Brookings were questioning why the county would have the Brookings County governance headquarters in Medary when all of the

## A Speedy Move

Volga voters smelled a rat. Before some opposition to the vote could be organized, county commissioners, knowing a fight was brewing, called a meeting in Medary fourteen days after the election. Within minutes they voted to move all county records and themselves post haste to Brookings. They mounted their horses and sped to Brookings, reconvened at the Roddle Hardware Store, and resumed action on meeting agenda items. The die was cast. Brookings became the county's new seat of government.

But wait.

In that same strange election, there seemed to be more suspicious activity. It was recorded that 929 votes were cast for Peter O. Peterson of Volga for the position of Register of Deeds. Peterson received 537 votes and Hauxhurst received just 392. The race for treasurer also had some problems, but the loser candidate for that post didn't put up a fight.

Peter O. Peterson did.

But when the three-member canvassing committee met to certify the vote, commission-appointed James Hauxhurst sat at the head of the counting table. And with him leading the way, the canvassing board decided the Register of Deed vote results were in error.

Hauxhurst had won, the board certified.

## Supreme Court

Peterson rightly objected. Court cases followed. The case ended up before the South Dakota Supreme Court.

That story is told in Volume Three of Supreme Court rulings for the years 1882-1884. Peterson claimed King James had fudged the numbers. The gist was that Hauxhurst stole the 1880 Register of Deeds election.

An excerpt from the Supreme Court ledger:

*"That at said election there were 929 legal votes cast for said office, of which Peterson received 537 votes and Hauxhurst 392, thus making Peterson's majority over Hauxhurst to be 145."*

It concluded that the votes of the county's 16 precincts were gathered and that "this board of canvassers duly met to canvass, and did pretend to canvass said votes."

"Pretend"?

The Supreme Court document continued: *"He (Hauxhurst) and the other members of the said board threw out the votes of several precincts, and changed the votes cast in one of said precincts, and which votes Hauxhurst had previously concealed, and refused to present them to the board."*

*"By this means, he managed to count Peterson out and himself into said office, and said board upon such false and dishonest canvass, made and delivered to Hauxhurst a certificate that he was, at said election, elected Register of Deeds of said county by a majority of eight votes."*

*"The allegations of the complaint (by Peterson) are legally sufficient."*

Peterson got the job as Register of Deeds plus \$7,786 that was judged a fair "emolument" for the income the Register of Deeds would have earned.

## Emolument Paid

Interestingly, the election for the Register of Deeds was for a two-year term, and even back then, the case didn't make it to the Supreme Court until the 1882-1884 term. So Hauxhurst apparently served his stolen term while Peterson filed suit.

So that \$7,786 "emolument" came out of the Hauxhurst's pockets.

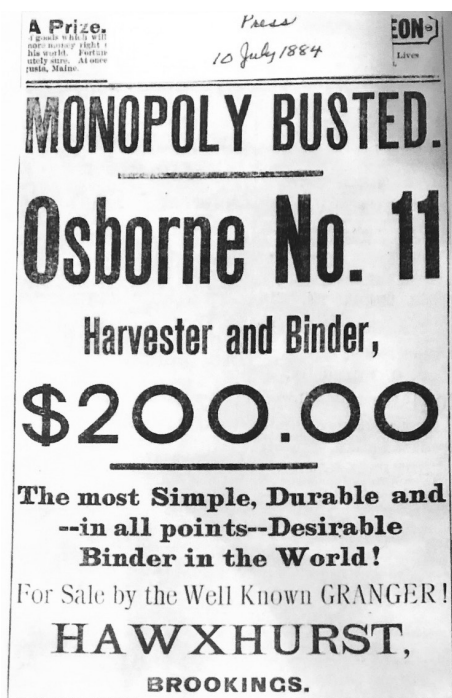
All along through the trials, Hauxhurst had claimed that the election office where the votes were kept in the Bank of Brookings building had a faulty back door lock, intimating someone gained entrance and tampered with ballots.

For many years after the shenanigans in the Register of Deeds case, county residents—particularly those in western Brookings County, wondered. Could the vote for where the county seat should be located also have been tampered with? Should the county seat have been awarded to Volga?

A few years after the fiasco of the vote counts, Hauxhurst, his wife and their three daughters, all born in the Hauxhouse house, left the Territory, settling first in Arizona and then moving on to California.

Hauxhurst died there on Sept. 28, 1915 at age 77. His wife Ella died in 1913.

Ironically, their old, proud and beautiful home in Brookings is now a museum piece located in—of all places—Volga. 🌿



In 1884, Hauxhurst (note misspelling) was in the farm machinery business. He also must have been a member of the Grange.

business and political action would be in Brookings, located almost exactly in the center of the county.

Volga also expressed the opinion that it was, after all, larger than Brookings, and it was on high ground, reminding everyone that Brookings often flooded. They called it a frog pond.

Rumors and accusations between the two communities festered. Money was donated, lawyers were hired.

On Nov. 4, 1879, voters cast ballots for candidates vying for county offices, and for where the county's seat of governance should be. Hauxhurst was a candidate for a second Register of Deeds slot. Brookings won easily in the county seat question, with 60 percent of the 375 votes cast.

# Even chickens had to hold on tight in those rolling Dakota dust storms

by Cliff Jacobson

**Editor's Note:** The late Cliff Jacobson was the oldest son of John and Anna Jacobson, who in the 1930s farmed in Preston Township north of Volga, and in 1935 moved to the family farm two miles west of Bruce. Cliff graduated from Volga High School in 1942, served in WW II and returned to graduate from South Dakota State University. He became an official with Sioux Valley Electric. Below is his description of life during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression.

There are probably three factors that made up the Great Depression period of 1929 to 1939.

Wind, dust and no or low prices for what little you managed to produce is one way to describe that dark period.

1. Drought: Said another way, not enough rain to produce a crop. Crops ranged from poor to nothing. Oats was mowed as a hay crop...too short and light to cut and thresh. Pastures were brown and bare. Cattle were herded in the road ditches all summer for lack of pasture.

It was so dry in the mid-1930s that we could hunt across the entire lake bed of Lake Oakwood.

2. Wind and dust: The extremely dry soil conditions combined with the wind to cause dust storms the likes of which had never been seen before. One day the kerosene lamp had to be lit in the school house by mid-afternoon because there was so much dirt and dust in the air that it got too dark. Often a lantern had to be used to do chores, not because it was that late in the day but because the dirt in the air cut out the light from the sun.

It is no wonder the period was called the "dirty thirties." When anyone had to go outside for chores or anything, wet cloths would be wrapped across your nose and mouth to screen out the dust.

The damp clothing would become black from the dust screened out of the air while inhaling through the cloth, Chickens would squat on the ground and clutch vegetation to keep from being blown away. Russian thistles required very little moisture to grow, and grow they did.

When mature, the wind broke the thistles loose and they rolled in the wind. They piled up on the fences where they caught the dust and dirt, like a snow fence catches snow. The dirt drifts piled up so high that cattle and hogs walked right over the top of the fence.

Ditches had to be dug parallel to the fence to keep livestock in. These were the times and conditions that led to the soil conservation practices of today.

3. No money: Crops had been poor and what little farmers did have were worth very little. One year, my parents, John and Anna, did have some corn. John hauled a load to town to sell so he could buy coal.

The load of corn bought a "dab" of coal in the corner of the wagon box. It was a lousy B.T.U. exchange. So John and Anna began burning the corn on the ear. It burned well and hot. So hot that it was hard on stove grates.

The corn kept you warm though, and cooked your food. It was tough though, burning what you had been taught was a

food for both humans and animals. But you had to compromise your principles because of the times.

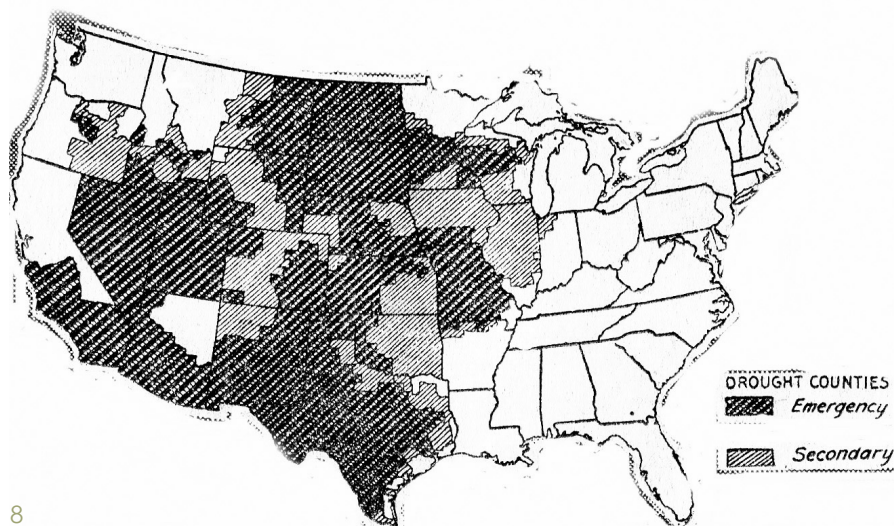
One day our neighbor came over because he knew John was going to town. He asked John if he could loan him a quarter. He was to use the quarter to buy 25 cents worth of sugar for the man, who had a wife and family of four or five children.

Well, that was the Dirty Thirties, The Great Depression...drought, wind, financial hardships and little hope. Everyone was in the same boat to some degree. There were no rich neighbors.

Many of those who had owned their farms lost them. The Rural Credit Administration ended up owning half the farms in the country. A family that had come from Norway to farm in our neighborhood lost their farm.

We always had enough to eat and mother knew how to make good food without spending a lot of money. It may not always have been elaborate fare. There were lots of "Johnny Cakes" (corn meal mush), pancakes, bread with sour cream and sugar on it, eggs, some kind of a flat bread baked on the top of the stove (where lefse was also made), and Rummegrout (a Norwegian mush made from cream).

I don't know if our diet was well balanced. But in those days, just having something was more important than having something right.



Visit [brookingscountymuseum.org](http://brookingscountymuseum.org)  
where history comes alive.



## Many now ghost towns

# Politics and people decided the locations of county towns

In the early years, post offices were often established by the wishes and whims of congressmen.

Most of these “political plums” came into being, served for a while, and then passed on, depending upon who was representing the area in Washington at the time.

Many of the “towns” were farms owned by the politically influential. In most cases, the towns established along rail lines were the ones that survived the test of time. But even a spot along the rail line wasn’t a guarantee for survival.

Railroads located their “whistle stops” where water was easily available to feed the steam-powered engines, and consideration was based on the distance of farms in the area to the new depots.

Farmers in the early days depended mostly on oxen for transportation to haul people and produce to transportation centers. A yoke of oxen plodded along at about two miles an hour, so when possible, railroads tried to establish communities that would allow farmers to make the trip from farm to market and back to farm in one day.

Another determining factor in locating towns along the rail lines was money. In some instances, a railroad attorney in charge of selecting rail stops might accept a “gift” for his whistle stop picks.

When the rail line serving Brookings County with east-west service was headed west through South Dakota, its plan was to establish a depot at Elkton after the train’s long, difficult climb up out of the “Hole in the Mountain” west of Lake Benton, Minn.

There was no plan for the Chicago and NorthWestern railroad to establish a depot at what became the City of Brookings. Volga was intended to be the next stop after the train left Elkton.

But some land owners where Brookings is now located sought out the railroad’s attorney, and the railroad’s depot location plan was soon amended.

In Brookings County, the surviving communities are White, Bushnell,

Elkton, Brookings, Aurora, Volga, Bruce and Sinai. All are or were at one time railroad towns.

The following list of communities (actually sites of post offices), was compiled by former Brookings barber, poet and amateur historian Charlie Poole.

Poole included the list in his interesting, 30-page History of Brookings County, the original typed copy of which is available for review in the Brookings County Museum’s Archives section.

Ahnberg, Oct. 27, 1920

Argo, April 7, 1880 to Feb. 28, 1903

Athelwold, March 25, 1892 to Sept. 14, 1901

Aurora, Jan. 7, 1880

Bainbridge, Dec. 11, 1879 to Aug. 10, 1884

Barton Feb. 12, 1880 to Oct. 1, 1934

Bloomington, Dec. 4 1878 to Feb. 9, 1880

Brookings, Dec. 9, 1879

Bruce, 1883

Bushnell, formerly Fountain, name changed Jan. 26, 1885

Clare, May 17, 1883 to March 4, 1922

Elkton, 1882, formerly Ivanhoe that was located between Verdi and Aurora

Fountain, July 30, 1880 to July 17, 1925, but changed to Bushnell June 26, 1885

Grant, June 10, 1879. Discontinued 1885. Re-established June 30, 1890 to July 31, 1900

Harton, June 21, 1877 to Dec. 2, 1878

Ivanhoe, June 16, 1880 to Feb. 10, 1921

Lake Village, established Aug. 19, 1873 to March 15 1879

Laketon, Jan. 25, 1886 to Sept. 30, 1901

Medary, established July 8, 1881, discontinued Jan. 31, 1883

Modina, Sept. 20, 1878 to Feb. 9, 1880

Mundahl, April 14, 1879 to Oct. 17, 1879

New Denmark, Dec. 19, 1878 to Oct. 14, 1879

Oakwood, established Nov. 20, 1874 to July 25, 1896

Orness, July 25, 1896 to May 25, 1901

Prairie Farm, Jan. 4, 1876 to July 31, 1901

Renshaw, formerly Modina, names changed Feb. 3, 1879

Sherman, Jan. 15, 1878 to Nov. 25, 1881

Sinai, Jan 2, 1897

Sterling, Jan. 20, 1880 to June 14, 1880

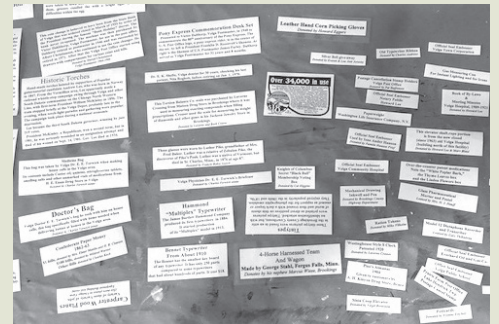
Volga, formerly Renshaw, changed to Volga Dec. 2, 1879

White, formerly Barton, changed to White May 24, 1886



## Archives Area Expanded

The re-arrangement of displays and cases in the main museum has allowed an expansion of the museum’s growing Archives Room. It was needed, as this old photograph of visitors looking through historic documents shows.



## Artifacts Identified

So visitors will know more about artifacts on display, and, when available, the donor of each item, museum, volunteers this fall and winter have written, laminated and placed more than 300 identification cards like these.



## SDSU Ag Heritage Museum Help

One of the impressive signs the South Dakota Agricultural Heritage Museum has given to the Brookings County Museum.

## The call went out and

# Museum fans picked up their phone

When the call went out for old telephones and telephone memorabilia, Brookings County Museum fans picked up their phones.

One was Al Rogers of Brookings, who donated a 1990s public outdoor pay phone booth complete with an old coin-operated pay telephone.

Its pay phone even has the old 1960s era Myrtle (MY) phone number prefix displayed under the center celluloid number's window on its circular dial.

More standard telephones were gifts from Leland and Virginia Schlimmer of Volga. The former museum board member and his wife gave the museum a dozen old telephone models, including a rare 1920s model candlestick phone.

Mary and Russell Bjerke of Brookings dug deep and found an old desk model telephone for the museum's growing collection. Gary Dusharm of Brookings donated a rare 1930s desk-style telephone with a crank that made it an office intercom system. Short and long rings in assigned sequences indicated to whom the office intercom was intended.

Phil Wagner of Brookings donated several early cell phones, including a big and

bulky early mobile cell phone for use in automobiles, using the car's cigarette lighter as the power source.

The museum has for years had a very old wooden wall-mounted phone in the kitchen of its 1930s era pioneer farm home, but now has need for another of those old "party-line" phones. If one is available, it will be mounted on the wall in the museum's remodeled 1894 James Hauxhurst house that was once on Third Street in Brookings across the street south of the Public Library on the site of the new Brookings County and City Governmental Services Center.

Hauxhurst was the county commissioner's first clerk and moved to Brookings from now defunct Medary seven miles south of Brookings after voters selected Brookings as the county seat. His home in Brookings was scheduled to be razed for construction of the governmental services building, but was saved and moved to the Volga museum site.

The most unusual recent telephone donation is the Rogers pay phone and outdoor phone booth. Tracing its genealogy has been challenging, but it is believed the booth Rogers purchased from a Volga family about 25 years ago may be one that once was stationed on a sidewalk

in Brookings or a nearby Brookings county community.

The old pay phone and booth and the other telephone models recently obtained will join the museum's growing display of telephone technology, including the first telephone ever in Brookings County. It may well be the first telephone in the state.

That early phone was made in 1881 by young Sherman Poole of Brookings.

The Poole family operated a Brookings livery barn that was located about a block away from the Poole home, then located on the corner of Third Street and Fifth Avenue. The phone Poole crafted was used by the family to communicate between home and the livery barn.

Poole used a technique of transporting understandable speech over an electric wire that had been introduced by Alexander Graham Bell six years earlier. Poole used the drum skin from a toy drum, two of his mother's larger coat buttons, and glass bottle necks as insulators for the copper wire connections from home to barn.

The wire transported sound vibration of the toy drum calf skins that were important parts of the phones that were fastened to the walls of the house and barn. A signal was given by tapping one of the drum skins



Brookings businessman Al Rogers, center, called on Kent Leibel, left, and Tom Yseth, right, to help load up the outdoor telephone booth including the pay phone inside that he recently donated to the Brookings County Museum. (Museum Photo)



and was plainly audible at the other end. Two people could then communicate by talking into the drum halves.

Imagine the terse messages. One of the most common was probably "Supper's ready."

This early phone was given to the museum in the late 1960s by the Poole family. It would be more than two decades after the devices young Poole put together before the city embarked on its long telephone ownership journey.

But telephone entrepreneurs were promoting phone use in Brookings long before the city decided to get into the phone business.

In 1896, T. F. Robinson of Pipestone, MN applied for a Brookings telephone

franchise. City leaders agreed, but only if Robinson provided two free telephones for city use. Robinson balked. The city relented, and the franchise was granted without that caveat.

After starts and stops and the issuing of a second phone franchise, there was by 1900 a workable system of sixty or seventy telephones in Brookings. About that time, a rural Brookings telephone system was also developed.

In 1903, the City of Brookings purchased the city telephone system from the Dakota Central Telephone Company. A switchboard was in the telephone building, which is today the western half of the Swiftel headquarters on Fourth Street.

Under city management, the system continued to grow. In 1921, telephone operators kept a log of phone calls in Brookings for a five-day period. During that time, 33,000 local calls were made. The number of calls for connections per telephone operator were 270 per hour for a 12-hour period.

In 1921, local operators connected only 739 long distance calls.

In 1958, the city ended operator service and switched to dial phones. All Brookings phone numbers had the prefix Myrtle, (MY) and a four-digit number. The city at that time had 3,900 phones, 500 of which were at South Dakota State University, then State College. In 1982, the Myrtle prefix was dropped and a 692 prefix was initiated. By 1989, installation was started on a fiber optics line to Sioux Falls. ❁

## WANTED



The museum would like to include in the refurbished James Hauxhurst House an old wall phone such as this one that is displayed in the museum's early farm home display in the Main Museum building. If you would like to donate one of these very old telephones for display in the Hauxhurst house, call the museum at 827-2811.

## Let's have a Spring Yard Sale

Plans continue for a gigantic spring yard sale of duplicate items, old books, school desks, tables, chair, shelving, un-needed museum equipment and flotsam and jetsam.

## In search of Rural Electric artifacts

The museum is attempting to add more items to its rural electrification display. Needed are old items such as early light bulbs, flyers and invoices regarding the REA and charges for electrical services, and other related items.

## Connect with us at 605-827-2303

For the first time in the history of the Brookings County Museum, there is a telephone operating 24-7. Past experiments with telephones involved operating only during the museum season. Now, it's accessible 365 days a year,

There's a possibility the museum office may not be staffed on the day you place a call, but leave your message. The telephone is monitored daily to insure rapid responses.

## Special thanks to our heavy lifter

When heavy lifting of a museum item is needed, the call goes out to retired Volga businessman Scott Blase.

Scott and his fork lift are always there to help. He's yet to accept payment for his efforts. That's not all.

If some specialized piece of equipment needs repair, or if the museum needs something created, such as the braces holding the heavy ox yokes on display in the Horse-Drawn Museum, or part for a horse mill need to be created (see page 4) Scott steps up and solves the problem.

The Brookings County Museum board of directors would like to publicly thank Scott for all he does for the museum, the community, and Brookings County.

## Your gift is welcome

Your generous gifts are always appreciated and are put to good use in making your museum better. The museum has no paid employees, but depends on volunteer help. Send your gift and any message you wish in the enclosed return envelope.

# Meet the designer behind The Window and a volunteer in many other ways

For a dozen years Volga resident Mary Bjerke has been the voluntary design expert who adds the polish to The Window, the museum’s quarterly newsletter.

Thanks to her efforts, the publication is one of the best newsletters produced by any South Dakota county.

The Brookings County native lives in Volga with her husband Russell. They have two daughters, Christianne Beringer and Nichole Hofer, and four grandchildren: Preston and Lillian Beringer, and Allie and Turner Hofer.

Mary is Channel Marketing Manager at Larson Manufacturing in Brookings where storm doors are made. The 1994 graduate of SDSU with a degree in Visual Arts, who makes the Window sparkle, isn’t resting on her laurels.

The former mayor of Volga and City Council member dedicates much of her spare time to volunteering and helping others.

“I enjoy giving back wherever possible, and that’s been especially rewarding and fun with the design work I provide for the Window,” Bjerke said. “For 12 years I’ve had the opportunity to read the stories and enjoy the photographs about the history of the county where I grew up.”

In addition to her work with The Window, she has also developed promotional graphics for many non-profits in the Brookings area.

Bjerke has also spent several years volunteering with the Brookings Marathon and Brookings Area United Way. She most recently completed a term on the Board of Directors for Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota.

Bjerke is especially proud of her donation of blood stem cells to a 20-year-old woman from Germany who was suffering from acute myelogenous leukemia. The two were matched through a program conducted by Heart of America’s National Marrow Donor Program.

She and her husband Russell traveled to Germany in 2012 to meet Stefanie Wolff and her family and returned again in 2017 to witness her marriage to Alex Dölz. They are hoping to travel back to Europe this summer to welcome their new granddaughter, Johanna Mary, born on New Year's Day, 2021. “Sharing my life with Steffi and her family is truly one of life’s greatest blessings,” Bjerke said.

Bjerke has received numerous awards throughout her career for her volunteer service. But in the eyes of Brookings County Museum



Mary Bjerke, former Volga mayor and an SDSU graduate in Visual Arts, is also the person who for the last dozen years has put a glisten and glitter in The Window.

newsletter editor and writers, she’s also an award winner for her talent in publication design. “She puts everything in a welcoming, meaningful and interesting order for Window readers,” says editor Chuck Cecil. 🌟

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

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 EDITOR: Chuck Cecil, Brookings  
 DESIGNER: Mary Bjerke, Volga  
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