

Perkins County turns 125

By Jo McCormick

Park Ridge Resident

Happy birthday Perkins County—birthed from Keith County 125 long and arduous, but successful years ago this month, Nov. 9, 1887. So here I go with my cogitation.

There was a visitor to our front room; he was a lanky man who had long hair and sported a mustache and beard on his face. Upon his head there was a big, wide-brimmed hat and upon his feet riding boots reaching well above his knees.

He sported a gun belt on his hip and rifle in hand. Clothing appeared to be buckskin. He parked his horse, tethered to a tree. As he was leaving sometime later, he wrote his name upon our wall—W.F. Cody.

Have you ever heard of poetic license? This intro was an example of such.

Our front room of which I spoke was once a land office in “downtown” Madrid. It was moved to the McCormick property just north of the railroad tracks to become a garage and that’s what it was. Eventually it became an attached-to-the-house garage and in 2005 it was incorporated into the house.

In the course of remodeling, the piece of wood upon which Cody had inscribed his name was destined to the trash heap. But because we knew it was there, it was rescued by the contractor. It is now residing in the basement as are other historical mementos. Buffalo Bill had undoubtedly paid a visit to Frank Wheeler’s land office in Madrid when he frequented this area.

Another item relegated to the basement history locker was a World Herald recreated work of their cartoonist Mike Parks as a tribute to Nebraska’s 1967 Centennial Celebration. All 93 counties were featured—following is the Perkins County entry:

An early historian described Perkins County as “wild, with a restless people in a thinly populated country.” The county seat was named for Ulysses S. Grant. Elsie was named to honor Charles E. Perkins’ daughter. Perkins was president of the railroad instrumental in settling the area. Perkins County was also credited with being a rendezvous of a notorious band of train robbers whose loot in one raid was \$60,000—a fortune in them thar days.

Surely would be a bit tricky to rob a train on the line today. Where would you hide carloads of corn, wheat or ethanol?

A couple of quips I read in a book of 20,000 of them are apropos—

1. History teaches us the mistakes we are going to make.
 2. For the sake of prosperity, let’s hope a lot of the history being made today won’t repeat itself.
- Later, God willing.

-Jo