By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

A large crowd consisting of students, county officials and residents gathered at the courthouse on Wednesday, Sept. 5 to join in a special ceremony—commemorating Perkins County's 125th with a time capsule.

The 125th anniversary committee arranged a program and celebration whereby county patrons could place memorabilia in a 50-year time capsule that will be buried in the northeast corner of the lawn.

It will be placed alongside the already buried 50-year capsule from the county's centennial celebration 25 years ago—that time capsule will be opened in 2037. This one will be opened in 2062 when the youngest of the attendees, the kindergartners, will be in their mid-50s.

On behalf of the 125th committee, vice-chair Ronda Lawyer emceed the program which included music from the Perkins County Schools students.

The public was asked to join the band and choir in singing "The Star Spangled Banner." Kindergarten through fifth grade students put actions with their upbeat song, "Heart of America."

Perkins County Chamber President Bernie Deaver spoke about changes in the world that have taken place over the county's 125 years in existence, and the unimaginable advances that have taken place in just the last 25 years through technology via computers, internet and cell phones.

Farming is another area that has shifted over the last three decades, with Deaver commending the county's producers for being excellent stewards of the land.

"With the worst drought in 2012 that we've seen since the 1930s, no one has to worry about another dust bowl like the 1930s because of the farming practices in place today," he said.

Perkins County has kept pace with forward thinking residents, said Deaver, making the comment, "Just as we couldn't have imagined 50 years ago the things we find commonplace today, so it would also be hard to know everything the next 50 years will bring—colonization of Mars or the moon? Transition away from fossil fuels?"

In finishing his address, Deaver said, “We can’t know everything that is to come, but when this capsule is opened, it will provide a glimpse to those at the time of who we were today. One thing we can count on will be more change—and history tells us that Perkins County will not only survive but will excel with the changes.”

Up next at the podium near the front entrance of the courthouse was Leon Pankonin, chairman of the Perkins County Board of Commissioners, who said to those gathered in the shade, “This is the best place in the world to raise kids.”

Pankonin provided the introduction for Senator Mark Christensen of the 44th District, who recapped the adversities residents of Perkins County have faced in the last 125 years. He pointed out the blizzards, the droughts, the grasshopper devastation to crops, the prairie fires and influenza outbreak—life’s tragedies that bind people together.

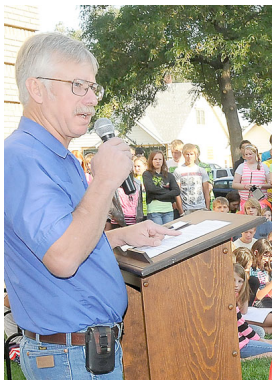
“During tough times, some leave, some grow and become strong,” said Christensen. “Let’s all be tough as we continue through the current drought and grow stronger together.”

In directly addressing the youth, Sen. Christensen said, “Perkins County is dependent on you. Your perception, your attitude, your abilities.”

In pondering what the next 125 years will hold for Perkins County and its residents, Christensen said, “What will be said about you at the 250-year celebration?

Those who overcome adversity stay, they’re strong, they grow, and they become a part of history, commented the senator.

Looking toward the young kindergartners sitting on the grass in the front row, Sen. Christensen said, “Encourage your children to work, to live, and to start new businesses in Perkins County.”

At the end of the program, sixth through 12th grade students sang “Beautiful Nebraska” and “This Land is Your Land.”

The time capsule, which was donated by Bayard-Wilbert Vault Company, was filling up quickly and residents were eager to participate in the event of sealing away current day items for 50 years. The capsule will be buried in the near future once the other capsule’s stone, (which sank slightly over time)is lifted, so the two will be level when they’re side by side on the lawn near the flags.