

Special exhibit, events & activities
Women Homesteaders
of the Northern Great Plains

- opens August 5, Dakota Buttes Museum -

by Bonnie Smith

They were a tough lot, eager for adventure but filled with hope, willing to try something new that held great promise. The odds were against them, yet most persevered through the long dark winters and the sizzling heat of summers, in quest of free land promised by the Homestead Act of 1862.

Under that law, a parcel of mostly 160 acres of land was granted to heads of household over 21 years old who were US citizens or had declared their intention to become US citizens. To earn those acres, homesteaders had to "establish and maintain a residence and improve and cultivate the land" for a minimum of five years [H. Elaine Lindgren, *Land in Her Own Name*, 1996, pg 61]. Many people in the southwest corner of North Dakota and the northwest corner of South Dakota are the living legacy of these strong, capable homesteaders who built a new life on the Northern Great Plains.

Land in Her Own Name, the special traveling exhibit from the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND) at the Dakota Buttes Museum (DBM) this year, focuses on the women who were part of that homestead movement. That exhibit along with new local exhibits relating to homesteading will be at the Dakota Buttes Historical Society/Museum (DBHS/M) in southeast Hettinger, ND, from August 5 through September 14. Related events and activities for school students and the public are scheduled during that time.

In support of the Adams County Fair, two special events are planned during Fair weekend. The opening program of the *Land in Her Own Name* exhibit takes place on Friday, August 5 at 1:00 pm in building two of the museum with an explanation of Homestead Laws and Process by Ginger Dangerud. Following that, Marge Yohe and Betty Svihovec will share tales of local women homesteaders. Abbey Richards will address the Modern Homesteader movement after which there will be an old-fashioned coffee time and Ceil Anne Clement, local storyteller, will focus on storytelling at the heart of human experience.

That program is followed the next morning, Saturday, August 6, also during Fair weekend, at 10:00 am by a discussion of H. Elaine Lindgren's book *Land in Her Own Name*. Books are available at KB Jewelers in Hettinger or through the Adams

County Library, Hettinger. Reading of the book beforehand is recommended, but not required. Discussion will cover, but not be limited to, the following: Arriving at the Homestead; Building a Shelter; Plowing, Preparing and Seeding the Land; Water, Food and Fuel; Bartering and Trading; Home Remedies and Survival Techniques; and Gatherings, Parties and Get-togethers.

Later, on Friday, August 26, a day of hands-on demonstrations of homestead life and activities will take place. From 8:30 am - 3:00 pm that day, school students, teachers and the public are invited to learn more about such homestead skills as clothes washing, spinning and weaving, fermenting vegetables, churning butter, cutting and laying sod, quilting, country school life, children's songs and games, and more. The public is welcome at any time during the day. For school appointments, please call 701-567-2771.

On Sunday, September 4, a bus tour of selected homesteads in Adams County begins at 1:00 pm at the museum. Tour participants will be taken to an early stone house, a sod house, a rammed earth home, and a wooden clapboard structure, returning to the museum for a light supper following the tour.

The SHSND *Land in Her Own Name* exhibit will be at the DBM through September 14.

All events are free and open to area students, schools and the public. Donations are appreciated.

The Dakota Buttes Museum is open Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1:00 - 4:00 pm or by appointment. To set up an appointment, call any of the numbers given on the museum's west door or leave a message at the museum (701-567-4429).

The Dakota Buttes Museum is operated by the Dakota Buttes Historical Society, the official historical society of Adams County, ND.