



www.preservebrookings.com

# PRESERVATION PRESS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Doors Open Brookings*

*April 28, 29*

*PB Annual Meeting*

*Meeting date and time*

*to be announced at a later*

*date. Watch for details.*

## Dates to remember

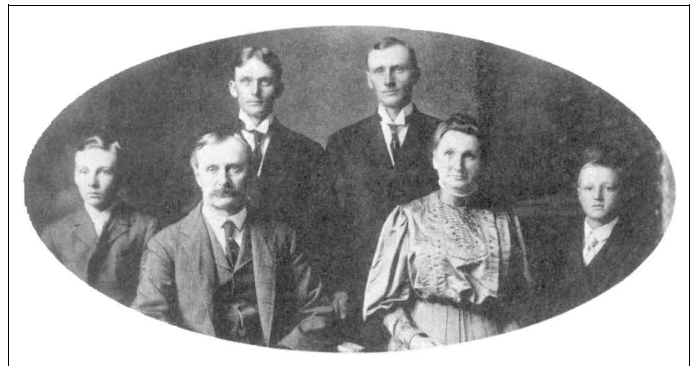
- April 28, 29—Doors Open Brookings. Formerly known as the Brookings History Garden Festival.
- April 30—Arbor Day
- May is Preservation Month—Preserve Brookings is actively seeking volunteers for various preservation activities this year.

## MICHAEL AARON HOMESTEAD LEGACY LIVES ON FOR 127 YEARS

David M Aaron filed papers for his homestead claim on June 5, 1879.

The site he chose sits just three miles north of Arlington, SD on Highway 81. Family history records show that David and a friend, John Bennett walked from Wisconsin to Dakota Territory in 1872 to investigate the land newly opened for settlement. The Land Office at the time was located in Watertown, so it is supposed they first traveled there then back 35 miles to the south to find the sites of their choice.

The two walked back to Wisconsin and spent the following seven years preparing for the trip back to Dakota Territory to claim the land they had chosen. David, his father, Michael, and his brother Will, returned to the Arlington area with wagons pulled by oxen. Michael Aaron was a Civil War veteran who fought from Gettysburg to Atlanta. John Bennett, recently married to David's sister Mary, returned in 1878. The families settled in, built sod shanties and plowed land to vali-



David Millard Aaron, and Ellen Virginia (Abbott) Aaron. Pictured with their sons from left: Lester David, Earl Everett, Clinton Abbott, and Ralph Harold. Photo taken around 1900—1906.

date their claims. In 1880, David returned to Wisconsin and in January of 1881, he married Ellen Virginia Abbott. The newlyweds traveled to Dakota by train. This was the spring after the Winter of the Big Snow. The spring floods west of Volga caused the train cars to be shunted through the water, without the locomotive.

The Aaron's sod shanty was soon replaced with a wooden two room house near the Meridian Highway. Around 1888, to house their growing family, a two story seven room house was build just north of the

...continued on page 3.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

JOHN RUFFOLO

*“Preserve Brookings has begun research on Brookings County families that have owned/operated land for over 100 years.”*

Preserve Brookings is a group of community members that protects and promotes the Brookings area historical, cultural, architectural, visual and environmental heritage through education, alliance building and action.

Our first year has been busy with regular meetings and our first annual meeting was held on June 27 of 2005, at the Old Firehall, and included a presentation by Barbara Behrends on Brookings County cemeteries and gravesites of the county. That evening, board members attended a board training seminar given by Bette Anne Beierle of South Mountain Associates.

A website, [preservebrookings.com](http://preservebrookings.com), was established for the organization and membership is now at about 40. Our education committee maintains the website and has partnered with the fourth grade teachers of Central Elementary to use photos on the site. Central’s fourth graders, while on a walking tour of the Central Historic District, took the photos. This newsletter and member-

ship letter are being mailed to members and other interested parties.

Preserve Brookings plans to be involved at the History Garden Festival for 2006 with volunteers and a booth. In 2005 Preserve Brookings purchased booth space and handed out membership brochures.

Another activity project is Century Farms. Preserve Brookings has begun research on Brookings County families that have owned/operated land for over 100 years. These stories will be published in the Town and Country Shopper and hopefully, other papers also will run them. Stories and photos will be available on the website. The annual meeting generated interest in neglected cemeteries in the county. An area youth group has expressed plans to cleanup Fountain cemetery. Plans are under way for Preserve Brookings to find local volunteers to help maintain this cemetery, if the youth group can accomplish a clean-up this spring.

Preservation Press is published quarterly by the board members of Preserve Brookings. Any items for submission can be sent to Preserve Brookings, PO Box 847, Brookings, SD 57006. Preserve Brookings is a non-profit organization located in the state of South Dakota.

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## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors members were elected in February of 2005. They all volunteered for the positions they currently hold. Each person brings a unique and personal view of history and preservation needs.

Board meetings are typically held the

second Tuesday of the month, from noon to 1:00 pm. We invite anyone interested in the group to join us for a meeting. We encourage input, ideas and insight on how Preserve Brookings can better serve the community of Brookings County.

# INSIDE STORY HEADLINE

*...continued from front page*

first wooden home. The two homes still sit on the property today. David and Michael each took tree claims across the road in Kingsbury County. This meant another wagon trip to Wisconsin for tree seedlings.

The Aaron and Bennett families promoted religious worship in the area. First, they met in homes and then in the railroad depot. Five Aarons and Bennetts were in the list of eleven charter members of Arlington's first Methodist church, built in 1886.

David Aaron passed away in 1937. He had provided a quarter section of land for each of his four sons. John Bennett did the same for each of his three sons and two daughters. None of the recipients survive today. Michael's son Lester, received his homestead quarter and at his death, gifted his land to his

great nephew, Bruce Aaron. Lester Aaron and brother Ralph, were overseas in World War I. Grandson Paul and his cousin Ralph both fought in World War II. Elias Aaron's granddaughter, Barbara Paulson, and family live on David's homestead.

Paul Aaron's daughter Patricia Kratochvil provided the details and family history for this story. Thanks to the Aaron and Bennett families for allowing Preserve Brookings to dig into their family history and use their story to promote interest in the Family Farm Legacy project.

If you have information on a Centruy Farm in Brookings County, we would love to hear your story. Please visit [www.preservebrookings.com](http://www.preservebrookings.com) for more details or call Michele Smith at 693-2976. Emails can be sent to [mrsmith@itctel.com](mailto:mrsmith@itctel.com).

*Email any questions  
or comments to  
[mrsmith@itctel.com](mailto:mrsmith@itctel.com)*

*If you are interested in  
volunteering, please  
call Patty Kratochvil  
at 697-7377  
or Michele Smith  
at 693-2976*

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT—JOHN RUFFOLO                      TERM EXPIRES 2008

VICE PRESIDENT—VACANT

TREASURER—PATTY KRATOCHVIL              TERM EXPIRES 2008

SECRETARY—MICHELE SMITH                  TERM EXPIRES 2008

### DIRECTORS:

MARY BRASHIER                                      TERM EXPIRES 2007

BOB BROCHAT                                         TERM EXPIRES 2006

RONDA HOUTMAN                                    TERM EXPIRES 2006

TERRY MOLENGRAAF                                TERM EXPIRES 2007

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PO BOX 847  
Brookings, SD 57006

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VISIT US ONLINE

PRESERVEBROOKINGS.COM

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### *Our Mission*

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*Preserve Brookings protects and promotes the historical, cultural, architectural, visual, and environmental heritage of the Brookings area through education, alliance building, and action.*

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Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5

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## PRESERVE BROOKINGS SEEKS MORE BOARD MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Preserve Brookings now has a one year history of its own. We are currently gearing up for our second annual meeting. This year's meeting will include an election of new directors and one officer position. The vice-president seat has been vacant and nominations for the position are in progress. Two current director positions are up for reelection and up to three other director positions could be filled to bring the total of the board to 11 members. Officers of Preserve Brookings serve a three year term. Director seats can be from one to three years according to the rotation.

Nominations and election ballots will be mailed when information on the annual meeting is finalized.

We are looking for volunteers to assist at the Doors Open Brookings event on April 28 and 29. Activities will be held at the park and Rec building on main street. Preserve Brookings has pledged volunteer support for Doors Open Brookings activities. Volunteers are needed to lead tours and assist in any needed capacity. Please call Michele Smith (693-2976) or Patty Kratochvil (697-7377) if you are interested in assisting with the planned activities.

*Remember to attend Doors Open Brookings ~ April 28 and 29*