

Chapter 1 - History

The present town of Madison was developed from the merging of two villages – Madison and Herman (Madison Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). The old village of Madison was first established along the southern shores of Lake Madison in 1870 when William Lee and Charles Walker arrived in the Dakota Territory. At the same time, the village of Herman was settled on the north shore of Lake Herman by Herman Luce and his family (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

In January of 1873, Lake County was established and the following fall the Governor appointed three county commissioners to organize the county. The first business of the county commissioners was the selection of old Madison as the county seat. The town was platted and named in July of 1875. William Van Eps, the Sioux Falls townsite promoter, named the town and Lake Madison because the lake and lake shore reminded him of his former home, Madison, Wisconsin. The town of Herman was platted in June of 1878 and grew to be a rival of Madison (Madison Area Chamber of Commerce 2007).

In March 1878, C.B. Kennedy and his family arrived in the Dakota Territory and secured a homestead and tree claim of 320 acres. At that time there were only about nine families in the Lake County, all located in the lake area. In 1880, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad was extended west from Flandreau, first to Wentworth and then to C.B. Kennedy's homestead (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d). The survey missed the old town of Madison by three miles, but passed through the town of Herman (Madison Area Chamber of Commerce 2007).

The development of the railroad led to the establishment of "new" Madison at its current location when Kennedy issued an invitation to the current residents of Madison to move to his homestead (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d). Kennedy had little difficulty convincing the people of old Madison to relocate their town on his land. Negotiations were made and he immediately platted the town, which he named new Madison (Madison Area Chamber of Commerce 2007).

Kennedy had also invited the town of Herman to move to the new Madison town site. The residents of Herman first refused Kennedy's offer and demanded a new county seat be selected by the county commissioners. The residents of Herman and Wentworth, located eight miles east of Madison, both wanted their towns to be the county seat. Considerable rivalry and bickering ensued between Madison and Herman about the county seat designation (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

A committee made up of three members of each town met to arbitrate the issue. After a meeting that lasted all night and several following meetings, still nothing was resolved. About this time, the people of Madison learned that three buildings at Herman were for sale. These buildings were purchased by Kennedy and two others and moved to new Madison. Following the relocation of the buildings to new Madison, the committee met again, it was decided to let the railroad officials make the decision. When the officials decided in favor of new Madison, most of Herman agreed to move to new Madison beginning in August of 1880 (Madison Area Chamber of Commerce 2007).

The first train arrived in Madison on January 18, 1881. The original Lake County Courthouse (Figure 1.1) was built in 1884 (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

Madison's first city government was established on May 1, 1881 when the town was incorporated under the provisions of the Territorial Code. J.A. Trow was elected the first mayor on April 8, 1885 when the city organization was established under a private charter. The City's government has evolved since its establishment:

- 1881-1885 – village council
- 1885-1912 – aldermanic form of government
- 1912-1946 – city council
- 1946-1956 – city manager
- 1956-*present* – city commission (City of Madison 1996)

In 1881, C.B. Kennedy, who was by now the local representative to the territorial legislature, was successful in securing the Dakota Normal School, the first teacher education school in the territory. It was the beginning of what is now Dakota State University, one of the finest computer and information systems schools in the entire Midwest. The school has served the state continuously for 114 years. Other educational facilities in Madison began and grew with the town. Through the years, the school system has grown to include three public and one parochial elementary schools, a middle school, a senior high school (Figure 1.2), and Aim High, an alternative school (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

The first religious services recorded for the area were in old Madison in 1873. The first organized church was the Presbyterian Church at old Madison in 1878. In 1877, a Norwegian Lutheran minister was believed to have conducted a service in the home of Torkel Hanson. This eventually led to the establishment of the Lake Madison Lutheran Church. As with education, religion and churches have grown with the community. Today, there are churches representing a wide variety of denominations in and around the city of Madison (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

Figure 1.1. Original Lake County Courthouse (Fisher n.d).

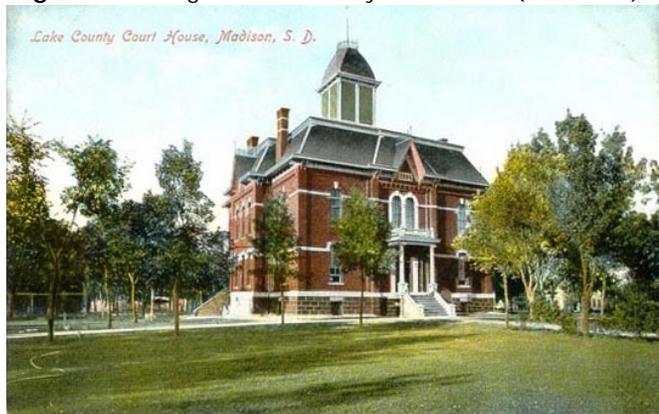


Figure 1.2. Original high school (Fisher n.d).



From the very beginning, Madison has been a progressive community having strong values in culture and the arts. In 1891, the Madison people built the Lake Madison Chautauqua on the northwest shore of Lake Madison, an institution which brought culture, education, inspiration, and entertainment to an appreciative audience (Figure 1.3). The first visitors came by horse and buggy and by a narrow-gauge steam railway running from Madison to the Chautauqua grounds. Later, the Milwaukee line running from Sioux Falls to Madison built a spur into the Chautauqua. Thousands of visitors from a four-state area came to be entertained by the Chautauqua performers of national and international renown. Included on the Chautauqua billings were speakers, teachers, preachers, explorers, scientists, politicians, statesmen, singers, violinists, pianists, choruses, bands, orchestras, storytellers, jugglers, magicians, and many more. The Chautauqua lasted until 1933, although its effectiveness dwindled conspicuously in the last several years of its existence (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d.).

Figure 1.3. Chautauqua Hotel, Lake Madison (Fisher n.d.)



available (Smith-Zimmerman Heritage Museum n.d).

In 1964, the City established the Madison City Plan Commission. The original function was to adopt a master plan for development. Eventually, the Plan Commission was given the authority to make platting, subdivision regulations, and zoning recommendations to the City Commission.

This tradition of culture continues through an active Madison Arts Council, local libraries, schools and museums. The community remembers and preserves its heritage in two outstanding museums. The Smith-Zimmermann Museum was built in 1960 on the campus of Dakota State University to reflect the ethnic background of the early settlers. Prairie Village was built on the shores of Lake Herman in 1966. In the mid-1970's, a steam railroad was added to the Village. Camping sites are also