

Museum made from Straw

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CARTHAGE - The Carthage Straw Bale "Built" Museum is not finished, but tourists already are visiting the oddity on this small community's Main Street.

"A lot of people have stopped out of curiosity," said Don Stroud, who is the president of the Carthage Museum and Historical Society. "I think people will keep coming."

The 6,300 square foot building - lined with 2,000 straw bales - is slated to be finished by the Fifth Annual Heartland Living History Festival on July 12-13. The museum will protect and preserve history of the area and will include more than 100 newspapers, school memorabilia, and other historic items. Future plans include different exhibits, recitals, art shows, quilt shows, meetings and education programs.

Barb Hurne, secretary of the historical society, said the priority was to save the old newspapers, which date back to the 1800s.

"We want to make sure the history of this region is preserved," she said. "We wanted to help the economy and the area to attract tourists."

Hurne also considers Carthage one of the hidden secrets of South Dakota. Lake Carthage is less than a mile away and provides fishing, water skiing and other picnic activities. The city park offers full camper hookups.

The idea for the museum started back in 1998 when the historical society was reformed and looking at ways to fix a deteriorating museum building. They looked for another building for the museum, but nothing fit.

Then Pete Miller, vice president of the historical society, suggested straw bales. Members of the historical society visited different strawbale structures in Arthur, Neb., including a church built in 1925, a house built in 1928, and an autobody shop in the process of being built.

"We were so impressed with the warmth and quiet-



STANDING IN FRONT of the Carthage Straw Bale Built Museum is Sally Madison, who, along with other members of the Carthage Museum and His-

ness," said Hurne. "We decided that is what we wanted."

Concrete was poured in 2000. In the summer of 2002, it took 10,000 to 15,000 volunteer man-hours to build the framework. In October, it took another 10,000-15,000 volunteer man-hours to apply the stucco to support and protect the straw bales. Several truth windows will be installed that will allow tourists to see how the hay bales comprise the inside of the walls.

The historical society has been selling straw bale certificates that represent a straw bale being used in the building. So far, 1,000 straw bale certificates have been sold and more than \$25,000 has been raised. The historical society is looking at raising another \$30,000 from the remaining 1,000 bales. Donations start at \$20. It is estimated that approximately \$100,000 has been put into the building - all through donations and volunteer work.

"It shows that a small town can do big things," said Sally Madison, who is the treasurer of the historical society. "This started out as a dream. It shows that dreams can come true if you want them to and you work at it."

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