

## Early Education

for 3-18-14

The first settlers had deep concern for the education of their children and took steps to provide facilities. They pooled their resources in private homes until 1865, when a log schoolhouse was erected at the foot of the Dakota Street ravine by Captain Nelson Miner and his cavalry troop. This log structure, regarded as the first permanent schoolhouse in Dakota Territory, was replaced in 1873 with a two story building on present day Church Street at the end of Bloomingdale.

The major educational event in the early history of Clay County was the establishment of the University of Dakota in 1881. Although in 1862 the first territorial legislature authorized a university at Vermillion, the objective as not attained until the citizens of Vermillion took steps to set up an institution through local resources. Following approval of a \$10,000 bond issue by the Clay County voters on March 13, 1882, a local board of trustees drew up plans for a two story structure on a twenty acre tract northeast of town. By the time the legislature gave its approval in February of 1883, the new institution was already in operation, holding classes in the courthouse building during campus construction.

During the early years, town leadership decided to clean up the city's river town drinking and gambling for the sake of the University students. The Territorial Legislature banned the sale of intoxicating liquor within three miles of Dakota University. Enforcement was difficult as saloons moved to an island area, not far from today's airport, that was claimed by both Nebraska and South Dakota. Students used the confusion to avoid enforcement action, pleading in each state's court that they had in fact been in the other state. Not until the late 1890's was the problem resolved, when a court awarded the land to South Dakota.