

CCHS Heritage Notes

for 3-25-14

Inevitably, the History of Vermillion has reflected the prominent role of men in economic, professional, political, and other activities of the period. The less heralded, but indispensable contributions of women were, however, also a part of the labors of each generation. Although women occupied subordinate positions in some respects, they shared the responsibilities of life with men on equal terms. This relationship was a partnership based upon both necessity and mutual trust. The result was a division of labor-the woman usually confining her activities to the home and to limited aspects of the community, while the man assumed the economic and political responsibilities.

At times, the women unflinchingly contributed wider services and talents. Many an instance may be cited when the pioneer woman, compelled by dire circumstance or sudden tragedy, extended her normal family duties to include the handling of business affairs.

Unique among the many women's organizations in South Dakota is the Civic Council in Vermillion. It was organized in 1920 by representatives of various women's societies and clubs in the city, including church organizations. Originally concerned primarily with civic improvement, including the beautification of Vermillion, the Civic Council gradually shifted its major interest to local welfare problems.

After carrying on its sales operations in various quarters, including city hall and the public library, in recent years the Civic Council has been maintaining its own building on Market Street. Operating funds are derived from donations of household items, clothing and toys. The store staff is supplemented by many volunteers.

Vermillion continues to enjoy the spirit of volunteerism pioneered in the early days of the city. Scores of civic and fraternal groups involving both women and men meet regularly in the community. These groups raise significant funds and provide untold volunteer hours each year for the betterment of Vermillion.