

Austin-Whittemore House

Home of the Clay County Historical Society

A PUBLICATION OF THE CLAY COUNTY AREA

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2017

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Clay County Newsletter Joining Together

The saying that "three heads are better than one" is so true for this first edition of the joint newsletter published by the Clay County Historical Society (CCHS), the Clay County Historical Preservation Commission (CCHPC) and the W.H. Over Museum. Although the missions of these three organizations have some unique differences, all have a common goal to enlighten the citizens of Clay County and South Dakota about the history and culture of people and structures in this area through maintaining archives and writings and, in the case of the W.H. Over and CCHS, exhibits that can be used for educational and research purposes. The Boards of these three organizations so integral to this region deemed it appropriate to help fulfill their missions by producing a joint newsletter. Enjoy this first edition and pass it on to friends to share and appreciate the important events and activities that these three organizations coordinate for Clay County and South Dakota.

*ALL
HAVE A
COMMON
GOAL*

**Clay
County
Historical
Society
(CCHS)**

**Clay
County
Historical
Preservation
Commission
(CCHPC)**

**W. H.
Over
Museum
referred to as the
(Over)**

CCHS PRESIDENT

The satisfaction of serving with a fantastic Board of Directors and an upbeat and knowledgeable Executive Director makes the job of President easy and rewarding.

We at the Clay County Historical Society are pleased to share our projects, archives and the Austin-Whittemore House with folks all year long. We all like to have fun while working and learning together. Thank you for supporting the CCHS and participating in our projects!

The article below is both interesting and historical.

Sincerely,
Dan Christopherson
President

From The Vermillion Police Department Files

In October of 1940, O.A. Kirby, a downtown Vermillion clothing store owner, shot and killed Peter Olson, an attorney in partnership with Mr. Payne. It was the first day of pheasant hunting season and Kirby had purchased a new shotgun. Stepping out of his clothing store across the street from the Citizens Bank, and carrying his new shotgun, he crossed the street and climbed the stairs to the Olson & Payne Law Office located over the bank. He calmly walked into Mr. Olson's small office, aimed the shotgun at Olson's head and blew him away. Kirby then attempted to fire on Mr. Payne, but a young law student doing research in the office grabbed the barrel of the shotgun and deflected the charge to the ceiling, where it blew a large hole. Phil Crew, the law student, then wrestled Kirby for possession of the weapon.

They both fell to the floor, rolled into the hallway, down the flight of stairs, out the front door, across the sidewalk, and out into the street gutter. Meanwhile, Mrs. Jim Fields, the office secretary who had just witnessed the murder, calmly phoned Police Chief Hap Fowler. Thinking that it was just a routine request from Mr. Payne to serve some papers, Chief Fowler began walking up the street toward the law office. He then saw Crew and Kirby rolling

in the gutter, with both of them grasping the shotgun. Fowler then ran up to the struggling pair, placed his foot on the gun, and pinned both combatants to the street.

Chief Fowler then took Kirby over to his clothing store across the street to find out what had happened. Kirby told Fowler he had just killed Olson and had to leave as he still had five more killings to perform and Chief Fowler was one of the names on his list. Fowler then flagged down a passing citizen and asked him to call the sheriff's office. Deputy Sheriff Pat Purcell arrived and Kirby was transported to jail. While awaiting trial, Kirby attempted to kill himself twice in the county jail. He was later tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to 10 years in prison. After serving 5 years, he was released on parole.

The mission of the Clay County (SD) Historical Society is to bring together those people interested in the history and prehistory of Clay County and adjacent areas. This is accomplished through

- Preservation of materials and records and providing accessibility or information from said materials and records.
- Disseminating historical information through publications, newspaper articles, lectures, papers, discussions and our CCHS newsletter.
- Providing programs relating to Clay County's history and families to the membership and public.
- Providing through memberships, donations, and fundraisers for the upkeep of the Austin-Whittemore House which is the Society's "home".
- Providing genealogical and historical information to interested parties.

CCHS EVENTS

We have been very busy at the Austin-Whittemore House since the last Newsletter was sent out.

Prior Events

On March 30, 2017, the CCHS Board hosted and prepared a luncheon for the Vermillion Development Chamber staff at the Austin-Whittemore House. The VDC has always assisted with our events by displaying posters, including the events in the "Chamber Chat" in the Plain Talk and including our events on their calendar.

The CCHS Board hosted and prepared a luncheon for the Clay County Commissioners on March 21, 2017, at the Austin-Whittemore House. This was one of our ways of saying thank you for their continued support.

April 6, 2017, was our Annual Board of Directors meeting held at the Austin-Whittemore House. Our 2017-2018 Board is listed in the Newsletter.

On April 22, 2017, Board members Judy Sullivan and Gloria Hensley hosted "Cleo's Table" (in memory of CCHS founder Cleo Erickson) on behalf of the CCHS Board for the annual ESA Tour of Tables. Ann Severson, our only remaining life time director on the Board, was our special guest. Dishes and items from the Austin-Whittemore House were used to decorate and set the table. Benefits from the event go to St. Jude's Children's Hospital. The ESA ladies have always been generous with their time by assisting us in our events so we were happy to do this for them. We look forward to doing this in 2018.

May 20, 2017, from 10 am-1 pm, we held our CCHS Rummage fundraiser at the Austin-Whittemore House. We appreciated people donating items for the sale. The Board members worked at the sale and enjoyed visiting with everyone.

June 12, 2017, starting at 6:30 pm, "Music Monday" with the "Clay Creek Band", was held on the grounds of the Austin-Whittemore House. A good time was had by all at this free night of music.



"Clay Creek Band"

June 29, 2017, from 5-7 pm, our annual fundraiser "CCHS Ice Cream Social" was held on the grounds of the Austin-Whittemore House. The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission supported and joined us in celebrating Historic Preservation month. We appreciated our very loyal community coming out early to support us, especially with the pending rain and bad weather.

July 31, 2017, 7-8:30 pm, "Music Monday" with "The Clutch" was held on the grounds of the Austin-Whittemore House. Everyone told us how much they appreciated this free night of music.

August 7, 2017, 7-8:30 pm, our last "Music Monday" of the season was held with "Bluff Creek" performing on the grounds of the Austin-Whittemore House. People told us they sure hoped we would do this again next summer.

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CCHS EVENTS

Upcoming Events

December 1, 2017, (Friday) 4:30-7:30 pm, will be our annual "Tour of Homes", followed by a reception at the Austin-Whittemore House, starting at 5:00 pm. There will be 4 large homes as follows:

Mark Podany and Kim Allison - 437 Park Lane
Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian architectural design

Marty and Teresa Gilbertson - 419 Park Lane
Two story colonial home

Clayton and Barb Campbell - 1919 Old Bridge Rd
Cape Cod style

Brett and Gina Mockler - 500 Oakmont Drive
Large ranch style home on the golf course

Tickets may be purchased at the Austin-Whittemore House, Nook n' Cranny, Vermillion Beauty Shop and Davis Drug in Vermillion, from November 13 until the date of the Tour.

The price is \$15 per ticket, unless you would like to use the City Transit bus as transportation to and from the homes, which has been arranged for by the Board. In this case, please see Wess Pravecek at the A-W House. Hosts will check off their home on the ticket as guests enter their home. This ticket is also to be used for the reception.

December 9, 2017, (Saturday) from 10 am-1 pm, our annual "Sweets and Treats" fundraiser, at the Austin-Whittemore House. There will be a wide variety of treats to purchase and take home. We will do your Christmas baking for you.

We hope to see you at our upcoming events and thank you for your support.

Gloria Hensley
CCHS Vice President

From the CCHS Desk...

Historic occasions come in differently sized packages. On September 3, I celebrated three years of working for the Clay County Historical Society at the Austin-Whittemore House and I'm still having fun. You know it's a great "gig" when you look forward to coming to work to see what piece of history you can uncover, or have the opportunity to meet interesting people, who are looking for information about their family or community history. I'm the first one to admit that I probably wasn't hired because of my extensive background in Clay County history but rather because it seems as if I was born to be a carnival barker. My time spent in the A-W House has brought out the history monster in me and I want to know more and share more. I look forward to year four.

There were a few major additions to the House this summer. We had a visit from Helen "Pansy" Whittemore's granddaughters, Priscilla All and husband David, and Barbara Humpert. They came in from Kansas and delivered Pansy's beautiful dresser, a set of china (see next page), a monogrammed train case and several other family treasures. It was so fun to have these ladies share family stories that came from their mother, Betty Whittemore. These wonderful gifts are now back in the house where they originally came from. Thanks to Priscilla and Barbara.

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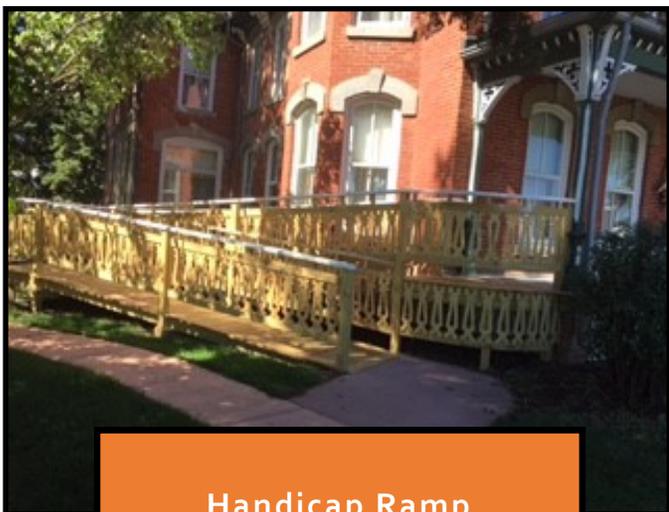
**Original Dresser With
Pansy's Granddaughters**

From the CCHS Desk...



Another acquisition is a beautiful upright piano that was donated from the Wakonda First Lutheran Church. This was the church that I grew up in and it closed its doors on Mothers' Day. We are the lucky recipients of their piano. As many of you know, Bucky Whittemore was a well-known talented pianist who grew up in this house, so it only seemed fitting that there is music in the house again.

The other major addition to the house is the ramp. This is a ramp unlike those that most of us have ever seen before. The curved banisters and fanned floor design are beautiful. We are now able to say "all are welcome" and the house is truly accessible. The ramp was designed and built by Gene Hawkins of Hawkins Construction and Jim Stone and was funded in part by memorials from the families and friends of Cleo Erickson, Marion Kryger and Nancy Bylander.



Handicap Ramp

Please stop by and see all of these new additions.

Events held this summer and early fall have included the annual ice cream social, a garage-less garage sale, graduation parties, baby showers, Music Mondays, class reunions, USD class visits, not to mention other organizations using the house for meetings. This is where I remind you that the house is available to use for all sorts of events. Think about how nice it would be to host a party or meeting and not have to fuss with your own house. If you're interested, please call me at 605-624-8266 and let's talk!

It was a busy summer with house visitors coming in from Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and various towns in South Dakota. The one thing everyone had in common was an interest in history...their own and in others who came before us.

Thanks to the CCHS Board and all of you members who make it possible to keep the Austin-Whittemore House open and available for everyone to enjoy. See you on Facebook!

Wess Pravecek
Executive Director



Vermillion High School Students
Volunteer Day

CCHS INFORMATION

**A-W House is open:
Monday/Wednesday/Friday
10am-2pm
*(more info front page)***

**The Austin-Whittemore House
is available for family
gatherings, meetings, class
reunions, weddings, showers,
business meetings, etc..
Call 624-8266 to schedule**

**CCHS Board of Directors
April 1 2017-March 31 2018**

President	Dan Christopherson
Vice President	Gloria Hensley
Recording Secretary	Lisa Johnson
Membership Secretary	Ruth Bylander
Treasurer	Joni Freidel
Past President	Maxine Johnson
Lifetime Director:	Ann Severson
Elected Directors:	Erin Burrow
	Barb Campbell
	Art Rusch
	Judy Sullivan
	Marvin Walz

**See CCHS website for upcoming
events and pictures of prior events.
Also for sale on the website is a list
of pictorial books and maps of
Vermillion and of the Clay County
area. Check it out.**

<http://www.cchssd.org/>

MEMBERSHIP:

Individual \$25

Institutional \$75

Family \$40

Life Member \$250



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Facebook**

Search for:

**Clay County Historical Society
Vermillion South Dakota**

Executive Director	Wess Pravecek
CCHPC Representative	Jim Stone
Newsletter/Web Editor	Judy Sullivan

INTRODUCING THE CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION (CCHPC)

The mission of the Clay County Historical Preservation Commission (CCHPC) is to promote, advise, and educate residents of Clay County, SD about the importance of preserving historical sites. This is accomplished by:

1. Supporting existing and identifying potential new historic sites and districts in Clay County.
2. Holding open meetings and workshops to help residents learn about preserving historic buildings.
3. Documenting and publishing information in booklets, tour guides, and books about preservation and historic sites.
4. Collaborating with Clay County entities to maintain and restore historic sites.

The CCHPC consists of board members who reside in Clay County. Board members are appointed by the Clay County Commission. For the 2017-2018 the **Board members include Jim Wilson (Chair), Molly Rozum (Treasurer), Evelyn Schlenker (Secretary), Ed Gerrish, Patrick Morrison, Ted Muenster, Bill Ranney, Tom Sorensen, Dennis Konkler, and Jim Stone.** These individuals have expertise and interest in historical preservation and many have written or contributed to numerous pub-

lications associated with documenting historical sites that are freely available to the public through our website (www.cchpc.org).

Although the CCHPC has been in existence since the 1980s, this year, it was newly authorized. The CCHPC Authorization Resolution was approved by the County Commissioners (Clay County Commissioner's meeting minutes June 13, 2017). In addition, the June 27, 2017, Commission meeting minutes show CCHPC board members and their terms were approved by the County Commission. **The CCHPC holds open meetings the second Monday of the month and workshops are held to educate the public regarding preservation methods.**

The Website also has extensive information compiled by Jim Stone about 350+ Barns in Clay County (see photo of Ostlund Barn). In the *Gallery Proofs* section of the website there are new photographs of Houses in the University Historic District taken by Lynn Muller (see photo of house on 610 East Main). This project updates previous photographs of houses in this district (formerly known as the Vermillion Historic District). The District border on the west is the alley between North Harvard and North Yale streets and on the east the alley between Willow and Pine streets. Clark Street forms the northern border of the district and East Main forms the southern border.

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The Robert Ostlund Barn: Part of Jim Stone's Barn Survey Project



610 East Main

CCHPC

Between 2015-2016, Russ Stone took photos of downtown Vermillion that are now posted as images on the Gallery titled: *Downtown Vermillion 2016 Photos by Russ Stone*. Since Russ took his pictures, the car wash at the northwest corner of Main and Forest has been torn down. These pictures are useful to compare past photos of downtown Vermillion to those in 2015-2016 and changes that will occur in the future.

Last year, the CCHPC and especially Holly Straub (then a member of the CCHPC Board) were involved in formation and dedication of a brand new historic district in Vermillion, South Dakota. On June 23, 2016, the new Bluff Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The district contains structures located on Oak Place and Court, Kidder, Church and Bloomingdale streets. This area consists of some of the oldest houses built in Vermillion, most following the flood of 1881. Structures were constructed from 1868-1957. Prominent home owners included Elias H. Willey (see photo) an early publisher of the Dakota Republican newspaper, Andrew Erikson Lee, prominent Vermillion resident and Governor of South Dakota (1897-1901), and Charles E. Prentis, a businessman with Lee and landowner in Clay County.

The new Bluff Historic District in Vermillion joins three other districts: the University Historic District (placed on the National Register in 1975), the Forest Avenue Historic District (placed on the National Register in 1979), and the Downtown Vermillion District (structures located on Main Street from Dakota to Market Streets and placed on the National Register in 2003). More detail about the historic and architectural characteristics of individual contributing and non-contributing structures constituting the new Bluff Historic District can be found in the "National Register Nomination Form" in the publications section of the CCHPC website.

Other historic sites in Clay County on the National Register are described in detail in a Clay County Historic Preservation Commission booklet (please see publications section of the website) titled *Guide to the National Register of Historic Places in Clay County, SD*.



**The Elias H. Willey House part of the
New Historic Bluff District**

Preservation Awards

The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission is pleased to announce that it has resurrected the Preservation Awards Program after a multi-year lapse. These awards recognize individuals and projects that exemplify the essence of excellent historic preservation in Clay County. Projects and individuals will be honored for restoring, rehabilitating, enhancing, or appropriately maintaining historic properties in Clay County. Awards will be announced at the noon Vermillion Rotary Club meeting on November 7 at the Neuharth Center on the USD Campus.

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CCHPCC

Preservation Alert: Potential new Historic District

The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission recently received a number of inquiries regarding the establishment of a new Historic District in Vermillion. This proposed district would be bounded by South Harvard Street, Main Street, South University, Lewis Street, Canby and Park Lane. A preliminary examination revealed that there is the potential for a historic district in this area. The Preservation Commission is interested in soliciting comments about this potential district and plans to hold a public meeting to discuss the possibility of establishing such a district.

For further information or questions, please contact Jim Wilson at whitewilson@msn.com or 605-920-6247.



New University District Sign

South Dakota Historic Preservation Commissions Conference in 2018

The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission will be hosting the third annual South Dakota meeting of the South Dakota Historic Preservation Commissions on May 16–18, 2018 in Vermillion.

This meeting will focus on *The Economics of Historic Preservation and Community Development*. The keynote speaker will be internationally prominent preservation expert Donovan Rypkema.

This conference will focus on the economic implications of historic preservation and the impact of historic preservation on community development and should be of interest to any individuals and groups interested improving the quality of life in their community.

The meeting will be open to the public and there will be an opportunity for interaction and participation.

Associate sponsors are the Clay County Historical Society and the W.H. Over Museum.

Please direct any questions to Jim Wilson at whitewilson@msn.com or 605-920-6247.

Preparation, printing, and distribution of the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission's publications have been partially financed with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap in its federally assisted programs. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write:
Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service,
P.O. Box 367127, Washington, D.C. 20003-7127.

W. H. O V E R M U S E U M

Dear Friends,

What a great idea this is to combine newsletters for three tremendously valuable organizations interested in the history of our region. This will allow us to share the news about our activities, events, interesting facts, and just how we are doing in our quest to preserve the past to be enjoyed by future generations. At the Over Museum, we are just in the final stages of doing a little bit of rearranging and a lot of cleaning, storing, labeling, and finding treasures that have been languishing in our vault for a time.

Perhaps the most noticeable addition to our treasure chest that we call the Over is the first motorized fire truck used by our volunteer fire department here in Vermillion. The history of the acquisition and use of this vehicle has provided several occasions with some good facts and great narrative about its rich background – how it got here, how long it was used – and other things like that.

The addition of the Fargo barn history is another completely new exhibit and there is a rich history of the barns that were constructed long ago by our early farmers.

We also have added several new murals for the enjoyment of our visitors and the latest is enhancing the player piano – which, by the way, could use some attention as while we have a multitude of piano rolls, including lots of USD music, sadly, it doesn't play! We're working on it and hope to have it playing very soon.

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**" Old Betsy"
First Motorized Fire Truck**

Fargo Barn



OVER (CONTINUED)

At the Over, we have created a series of events that we hope have become signature events for our community and Museum. In the spring, we celebrate rhubarb with a great recipe contest and award lots of prizes and just generally have a great time every first Sunday in June when the rhubarb is at its best.

We also welcome spring by celebrating Easter and the arrival of warm weather with a party which includes breaking a piñata so our guests can collect candy to fill the baskets they create. This year, the highlight was the Chemistry Department from USD demonstrating how to make instant ice cream – truly!

In the fall, the Sunday closest to Halloween, we welcome fall with a pumpkin carving gala in the early afternoon, which is followed by the best potluck food in the tri-state region! At that occasion, we have music and a speaker. This year's speaker will be local artist, Bonnie Sorenson.

From that event, we segue directly into Christmas activities and we are already deep into preparations for **our 53rd annual Christmas Festival – music, dancers, bake sale, groaning hospitality table, decorated trees and lots and lots of local artisans with wonderful wares. That occasion is always the first Sunday in December no matter what the weather.** We also have the local 4-H clubs on hand to entertain the youngsters before and after they visit with our resident Santa.

In between our “big” events, we schedule tours, meetings, banquets, and usually manage to have at least one open house to showcase our exhibits and welcome our local citizens for an evening of touring, visiting, and good food.

Our board meets monthly at the Over and we are open daily, except Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. – our coffee pot is bottomless and we usually have some good treats and can always take the time to visit or conduct visitors around the Museum.

We have a camera exhibit that is fantastic, a collection of Native American beadwork, moccasins, early artifacts from our first years as a state, a wonderful old 1912 car and oh so many other things that will enhance what long ago years were like. Our Discovery Room is a great place for our youngest guests to spend some time – they can play a piano with their feet or spend some time in a teepee or rearrange the doll houses as they please. There is also a Ferris wheel which needs its passengers to be changed every day – dinosaurs are especially popular passengers.

Remember, everyone is more than welcome to ‘come on over to the Over’!

With warm regards from all of us here at the Over,

Maxine Johnson, President/Event Chair

Friends of the W.H. Over Museum



Clay County Historical Society

15 Austin Street

Vermillion, SD 57069

**THREE ORGANIZATIONS JOINED TOGETHER
FOR ONE NEWSLETTER:**

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

W.H. OVER MUSEUM

Thank you for your support!