



Austin-Whittemore House

HOME OF THE *Clay County Historical Society*

15 Austin Street, Vermillion SD 57069

605-624-8266 / www.cchssd.org / claycohistory@yahoo.com

Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2015

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Board of Directors

- Maxine Johnson, President
- Caitlin Collier, Vice President
- Judy Sullivan, Secretary
- Luann Ouellette, Treasurer
- Joe Hoffman, Past President
- Life-time Directors:
 - Cleo Erickson
 - Ann Severson
- Elected Directors:
 - Gary Bottolfson
 - Dan Christopherson
 - Art Rusch
 - Marvin Walz

Message from CCHS President Maxine Johnson

The annual ice cream social is in the very final stages of happening. This is a signature event for the Clay County Historical Society and the very first fundraiser held by this stalwart group was an ice cream social. The first one was held in the yard of the Max and Phyllis Christol's home so many years ago – complete with lots of mosquitoes. Our stalwart planners, Lisa Johnson and Gloria Christopherson take this project in hand nearly every year and they have every detail tended to and the mosquitoes are told to take the evening off. Unless weather prevails, the social will be outdoors on the lawn of the Austin-Whittemore House. This year the new-old schoolhouse will be open to visitors and the McNeills will once again entertain with their own special brand of crowd-pleasing music. This social marks the beginning of summer every year and the first tavern and ice cream never tastes better than it does at this event!

We have had a wonderful year at the House – Cleo decided that it was time to have time to herself and Wess Pravacek took her place at the desk. Wess has always got a project or an idea to run past the board and has a way of prodding activity. She has already learned lots about Clay County and Vermillion and all the surrounding little towns – be aware that she wants to get you involved in keeping track of all kinds of events from our area. Change sometimes is hard; these two fine ladies have made our change very pleasant and Cleo is just a phone call away from a question.

We had all our usual events and at the annual meeting Joe Hoffman again had appraisals for articles that members or friends wanted to bring in. As usual, there were some fantastic and beautiful things. Judy Sullivan brought in some children's puzzles that Joe pointed out had pieces in shapes today's kids would not recognize for what they were, i.e. a telephone. The things that I planned to take in stayed safely sitting on my table at home; so, I still don't know if the red glass is really Mary Gregory or not. A very special event was the sharing of all of the Valentines that Ann Severson had saved throughout the marriage she and Maurice had enjoyed.

We nominated our ad hoc member, Jim Stone, who is engaged in researching barns in this county to receive the Governor's Award for Historical Preservation; he was presented a certificate but wasn't awarded the major recognition.

There were ten nominees so there must have been some super, super things going on. We decided that he is worthy of that award and we are proud to recognize his achievement and hope that you have been able to look at his book about the barns. There are some beautiful pictures and wonderful stories about these important farm structures.

Otherwise, we continue to offer this wonderful house for various kinds of gatherings and it is a wonderful place for showers of all kinds or just a meeting of your organization. The board cleaned the house and grounds early in May so it looks very nice and the white lilac should boom once again very soon. Plans to put a sidewalk leading to the schoolhouse are underway and that should be completed before the end of summer. The House is like any other house – things break, get old, need to be replaced so it's an ongoing project. We are lucky to have such a conscientious board to take care of this treasure. Come visit some time and especially plan to come to the ice cream social. The House will be open for tours. Also, thank all of you who renewed your membership or joined for the first time.

NEWS FROM THE W. H. OVER

Our big event this spring is the annual Rhubarb Day which is how we welcome spring. This year's Day has been especially special as we have been privileged to have the Homestead exhibit by Judy Thompson on display in Sletwold Hall. Judy was the featured speaker for Rhubarb Day which was Sunday, June 7. We usually have this day on a Saturday, but Judy had a workshop the previous day and we really wanted to have her speak, so we changed. Right now, we are busy creating new display cases for some of the exotic animals gifted to the Museum by William Heubaum of Yankton. Our Easter basket making party was a huge success and we had the most basket makers ever. We are also busy with school tours. Usually we have the tour and follow that with a scavenger hunt. We have had several home schooled groups and it is always so much fun to see what the students like to see. The old worn siding on the front of the building has been replaced and our next projects will be the creation of a club for children – Soup/Sandwich/ Song – and the painting and hanging of four barn quilts for our outside wall. Busy summer – fun times – come on over to the Over.



The Clay County Historical Society will be having their **Annual Ice Cream Social Thursday, June 18th from 5-7pm** on the lawn of the beautiful Austin-Whittemore House. There will be music by the McNeills and carry out will be available. In case of bad weather, the event will be held at the Eagles Lodge, 114 West Main. We hope to see you there!

The Austin-Whittemore House is available for showers, weddings, birthdays, meetings, class reunions, or family gatherings. Just call 624-8266 to schedule your event.

From the Desk....

Hello Summer! We've been busy here at the "House" catching up with the spring cleaning and repairs. Thank goodness we have a governing board that doesn't hesitate to pick up a mop, hammer and a bucket of paint. At the annual meeting held in April, an election of officers was held and we have one new member to add to the board of directors list. Caitlin Collier was elected to serve as the vice president. Thanks to Caitlin for stepping up and a big thanks to the existing board for their dedication to the CCHS.

This beautiful Austin-Whittemore house was brought back to life in the early 1970's. Because there were insightful people in the community who saw value in history, the house continues to be not only beautiful, but also serves as a place where Clay County historical items are gathered and stored, welcomes visitors for tours and also is a great place to hold events. Part of our summer schedule includes a bridal shower, a visit from a group of Red Hat ladies from Orange City, IA, a family gathering in August and of course our annual CCHS Ice Cream Social which will be held on June 18th.

This past spring, 45 USD students from Dr. Jing An's social studies class visited the house. I think it would be fair to say that Dr. An's passion for history rubbed off on these students because they were pleasantly surprised at how interesting our organization and house turned out to be. The students who visited, who will soon be teachers, enjoyed seeing the newly built replica of Dakota Territory's first school which is located on the corner of our property. They were impressed that in 1864 Captain Nelson Miner proposed to settlers that a school be built. The visiting students were **really** thankful that the education system has progressed to what it is today and that school rooms have improved drastically!

Thank you for the acquisitions....

- Agnes and Richard Mockler Family
Map of the United States dated 1894
Perfect for the log school house
- Marvin Waltz
Building frame for the 1894 map
and hanging map in the log school house
- Esther and Wayne Knutson
Snack sets, oil painting and cotton skirt and blouse from the
early 1900's
- Pat Callin – from the estate of her mother's, Harriet Randall
Framed photos of sites in Vermillion
- Larry Madsen
Assortment of books
- Henry Yankowski
Pikes Peak Regional Building Enterprises
Dell Laptop Computer

Please feel free to contact me at 605-624 8266 or claycohistory@yahoo.com. The door is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Thanks for your support.

Wess Pravecek

Requests for the house....

- Buffet or sideboard for the dining room
- Hat tree for entry
- Umbrella stand for entry
- Donations for the purchase of red-white-blue bunting for the front porch

The following Norway and Alsen articles were submitted by Tom Thaden, a member of the Clay County Historical Society....

Dakota Republican – July 12, 1917

The Fourth of July celebration in Norway Twp. was a success. Rain stopped the doings in the forenoon, but the sky cleared up and afternoon was just right for a celebration. Everyone had dinner, and then things started. The program was opened with music by the band. The program was cut short on account of being late in starting, and Hon. Carl Gunderson who was to have been the speaker of the day did not come out on account of the rain in the afternoon. The sports started at 2:30, and the results were as follows:

Girls' Race, 9 to 12 yrs. – Alice Brunick, 1st; Hilma Hanson, 2nd

Girls' Race, 12 to 15 yrs. – Elsie Mount, 1st; Minona Bottolfson, 2nd

Boys' Race, 9 to 12 yrs. – Henry Millick, 1st; Charles Mount, 2nd

Boys' Race, 12 to 15 yrs. – David Powell, 1st; Ross Tomason, 2nd

Boys' Race, over 15 – Frank Lund, 1st; George Washburn, 2nd

Free-for-all Foot Race – L.H. Ahrendt, 1st; Martin Jorgenson, 2nd

Three-legged Race – Eli Hanson and Nels Brunick, 1st; L.H. Ahrendt and Hans Jaspersen, 2nd

Fat Man's Race – Walter Peterson, 1st; Frank Orr, 2nd

Horse Race – Vernon Brown, 1st; Virgil Brown, 2nd

Ford Race – Thomas Dains, 1st; Nels Nelson, 2nd

The ball game was between the married and single men, and was won by the former by a score of 9 to 13. The battery for the married men were Bob and Frank Orr, and for the single men Ben Brunick and Nels Nelson.

The band boys wish to thank all who joined the celebration, and all who helped in making the day a success.

Labor Day at Alsen

Big Crowd in Attendance at the Annual

Picnic in Spite of the Threatening Weather

Dakota Republican – September 10, 1914

Monday morning boded no good for the annual M.W.A. Labor Day picnic at Alsen, but the rain clouds blew away after the copious downpour and the sun came out to dispel the gloom. The result was that there was a big crowd present at the annual affair, and it was a success in spite of the fact that the crowd was not as large as it undoubtedly would have been had it not been for the early morning rain and the following threatening skies.

The program of the day was well carried out. A good crowd listened to Antoinette Funk of Chicago, the speaker of the day. The Democrats held a big meeting and launched their campaign for the fall. The baseball game between Alton and Hurley resulted in favor of the former by a score of 7 to 0. The bowery dance was well patronized, both in the afternoon and evening, and all enjoyed the music furnished by the Collins Orchestra. There was plenty of entertainment of all kinds, and what time was not spent in taking in the different shows was left free for the button-holing by the politicians that were on the grounds. Taking it all in all, it was about as successful as any of the picnics held every year in the big grove at Alsen. The Alsen Woodsmen certainly did everything in their power to make it an interesting occasion for those who attended, and their efforts were appreciated by all.

Vermillion was well represented, but only about a quarter of those went who would have gone had the weather been good. The city band went up to help advertise the Clay County Fair, and the fair managers were on hand with a goodly amount of advertising matter.

Tom is also compiling information from the Dakota Republican papers and pictures from the Clay County Historical Society files for articles to be published each week in the Plain Talk.

The Clay County Historical Society (CCHS) has a number of pictures on file at the A-W House but some old time pictures can be viewed on-line through the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission web site. Go to <http://www.cchpc.org/gallery/view.php?i=1> to view pictures.

Below is a list of pictures that the CCHS is looking for and if you would like to share call 605-624-8266 or email CCHS claycohistory@yahoo.com. Thank you in advance.

- Anything Pre-flood Vermillion (either above or below the bluff)
- Industries (brick, cigars, milling, canning, windows & sash)
- Anything showing development of Cherry St.
- Any interior shot of the Waldorf, especially the front desk and reception room
- Pictures between 1950 and 1990
- Razing of major buildings downtown (except for March Theater)
- Buildings being moved up to the bluff after the flood
- CCC Camp Nursery on the island
- Roller skating rinks
- Old golf courses (University, Airport Rd, Prentis Park)
- Wherry Park or Austin Park (esp. bandshell and campground)
- Clay County Fairgrounds with old buildings, grandstand, and racetrack
- Steamboat and Stagecoach in Vermillion
- Original Dakota Southern Railroad Depot in Vermillion from 1872-1881
- Original airport west of town
- Old power plant / mill on Center St.
- Any shot of Center St showing east side with stores or west side with blacksmith shop
- Any old map of Vermillion showing the names of streets below the bluff before 1881
- Any interior shot of the Old Courthouse or Original City Hall
- The paving of the streets after 1917 (part paved, part dirt)
- City mail delivery when it first started up
- Interior of any old businesses in town (above or below the bluff)
- Small towns and villages in Clay County (Burbank, Meckling, Wakonda, Volin, Westreville, Bloomingdale, Greenfield, Lodi, Dalesburg, and Alsen)
- Any residential view of the N-S streets without the trees obscuring the view of the houses

We are always looking for interesting stories about families or happenings in the communities in the past.
If you would like to share, please contact us.

Historical Related Items Available

From the River Valleys to the Rising Bluff ... A Pictorial History of Vermillion, South Dakota 1859-2009 304 pages. This publication was sponsored by the Clay County Historical Society, Inc. for the Vermillion Sesquicentennial in 2009. The book conveys Vermillion's history through pictures and text.

Price \$25.00 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling

Dakota's First Lynching ... The booklet tells the lively story about James Hogan, a "desperado of the worst character". James Hogan's body was seen hanging from a roadside tree near the mouth of the Vermillion River on 26 February 1866. It's a mysterious little book to read.

Price \$3.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

Hay Country ... A history of the Meckling and Gayville SD area makes this a great book for a historian. It also contains the history of many families that settled in Norway and Meckling townships.

Price \$6.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

History of Clay County ... The book was written in 1976 by Dr. Herbert S. Schell and tells the "grass-roots" story of Clay County. The author traces Clay County from the pre-settlement period to the 1970's. It has numerous illustrations and a comprehensive index.

Price \$8.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

Clay County Place Names ... Names of schools, churches, villages, parks are listed in the book. A map of the county is included showing exact locations of the above name places. Some pictures are included.

Price \$6.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

Clay County Country School CD ... A history of the country schools in Clay County with many photos of schools buildings and students. The CD contains many Clay County 8th Grade Country School graduation pictures. Most have students identified. Would appreciate names of "unknown" students pictured.

Price \$10.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

Clay County Homestead Map of 1884 ... approximate size 17-1/2" x 22-1/2"; shipped in mailing tube

Price \$10.00 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling

1902 Clay County Map... compiled and drawn from Special Services and Office Records by E. Frank Peterson, Map Publisher, Vermillion. Approximate size 17-1/2" X 22-1/2"; shipped in mailing tube

Price Free / \$3.00 for shipping & handling

TO ORDER:

please make check payable to Clay County Historical Society, Inc.
mail to 15 Austin St., Vermillion, SD 57069

Questions

phone 605-624-8266

e-mail claycohistory@yahoo.com

website www.cchssd.org

Clay County Historical Society

15 Austin Street

Vermillion, SD 57069

ICE CREAM SOCIAL THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH

Remember to check Clay County Historical Website for news and events.

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

We are on facebook too!

A-W House is open: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10am-2pm

Thank you for your support!