

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

Spring 2017

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"The History Lady"

Our very own History Lady, Cleo Jean Erickson, left us to continue with her legacy on January 12, 2017. Cleo was the matriarch of the Clay County Historical Society, working tirelessly to advance the interests of local history for many decades. She gave us a firm foundation as we attempt to follow in her footsteps of bringing together those folks interested in the history of Clay County and adjacent areas.



Since the earlier days of "saving" the Austin-Whittemore House from demolition, to seeing to its continuing refurbishing efforts, Cleo was a stalwart! Her dedication, tenacity, caring and attention to detail are evident every day as we do our best to continue to carry on her mission.

Thank you sincerely, Cleo! We really, really miss you!!

Dan Christopherson
CCHS President

Annual Meeting

April 6, 2017

Membership

Due

See Page 5

Senate Commemoration Honoring Cleo

District 17 Sen. Art Rusch of Vermillion presents Susan Jones a copy of Senate Commemoration No. 19, which was introduced by Rusch and several other legislators during the current session of the state Legislature in Pierre. The commemoration honors Cleo Erickson, Jones' mother, as "The History Lady" of Vermillion.



Erickson passed away Jan. 12. Witnessing the presentation, which took place in the Austin-Whittemore House in Vermillion, are Gloria Hensley, vice president of the board of directors of the Clay County Historical Society, and Wess Pravecek, the society's executive director.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our CCHS Board was honored to hold the "Celebration of Life" January 17, 2017 our dear "History Lady" Cleo Erickson at her beloved Austin-Whittemore House. I am sure most of you know that Cleo was one of the ladies responsible for saving this house to be the home to the Clay County Historical Society. This will always be her house and the Board will see that it is remembered this way.

On March 30, 2017, the CCHS Board will host 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 Board will host the Clay County Commissioners for a luncheon March 21, 2017. This is one of our ways of saying thank you for supporting us.

April 6, 2017, is our Annual Board of Directors meeting to be held at the Austin-Whittemore House.

On April 22, 2017, Judy Sullivan and Gloria Hensley will host "Cleo's Table" on behalf of the Board for the annual ESA Tour of Tables. Susan Jones, Cleo's

daughter, will be our special guest. Susan has graciously offered the use of her Mother's dishes and items for this benefit to St. Jude's Children's Hospital. The ESA ladies have always been generous by assisting us in our events so we are happy to do this for them.

May 20, 2017, 10am -1pm, we will have a fundraiser, the "Attic Treasures" sale, on the lawn of the A-W House. Donated items may be dropped off one week in advance: Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10-2. Save your garage sale items. No clothing or appliances. Call the House 624-8266 if you have questions. Please help us out.

June 15, 2017, will be our annual Ice Cream Social fundraiser on the grounds of the Austin-Whittemore House from 5:00-7:00 pm. Please join us for some great food and fellowship. The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission will join us in celebrating Historic Preservation month.

This Fall we will host a Clay County Veteran's Memorial session. We will give you more details at a later date.

Gloria Hensley
CCHS Vice President

The Annual Meeting of the Clay County Historical Society will be held at the Austin-Whittemore House, April 6, 2017 at 6:25.

A short business meeting will be held with the election of officers/directors for the new year. Reports and information about the past year will be discussed. Refreshments will follow.

Board of Directors
April 1 2016-March 31 2017

President	Dan Christopherson
Vice President	Glory Hensley
Recording Secretary	Lisa Johnson
Membership Secretary	Ruth Bylander
Treasurer	Caitlin Collier
Past President	Maxine Johnson
Life-time Director:	Ann Severson
Elected Directors:	Erin Burrow
	Barb Campbell
	Art Rusch
	Judy Sullivan
	Marvin Walz

Executive Director:
Wess Pravecek

CCHPC Representative:
Jim Stone

Newsletter/Web Editor:
Judy Sullivan

**CCHS Minutes And
Historical Books for Sale**

Listed on Web Site:
www.cchssd.org

From the Desk –

About once a month when I come to work at the Austin-Whittemore House, I'm met by a gray cat sitting on the front porch. I have now affectionately named him "Horace". He doesn't let me get too close to him before he takes off but it makes me feel as though the spirit of Horace Austin does actually live in the house. It's pretty well known and accepted that the spirits of Horace and his daughter Helen "Pansy" Austin-Whittemore live on in the AW House. With all of the events and tours that we are hosting, our visitors are intrigued by this notion. I personally find comfort in the idea that the family who lived in this house from 1882 to 1968 somehow have chosen to remain here. Doesn't it make sense that when you dedicate a lot of your life to a place or job or vocation, a part of you stays there, whether it's your actual spirit or the energy you created while you were there.

There's a real feeling of loss in our community. Two kind and dedicated spirits passed away after Christmas. Our beloved friend Cleo Erickson, the true "History Lady", died unexpectedly in late December. She was doing something that she loved to do, traveling and visiting friends in Washington state. In her eulogy, her son Paul said "how many people do you know who fly in for their own funeral". It made all of us chuckle because we knew that Cleo was indeed a free spirit. She was one of the dedicated people who helped to save the A-W house and make it a place where people can come and seek out family and county history plus

add something wonderful by sharing their own history.

Our friend, Marion Kryger, also passed away this year. He was a lifetime member and a lifetime learner. Through his generosity and curiosity, he created our 1884 county map of Dakota territory that serves as a literal "roadmap" to families' histories. He also put together a wonderful book about the history of country schools in Clay County and it features photographs of all of the students who were eighth grade graduates from these rural schools. We have posted these photos under "links" on our website. These two wonderful people are not with us physically any more, but their spirits will also remain with us always.

On that note I want to thank all of you for your support. We all have some connection to the Clay County so it does make us kindred spirits. The door here is always open so please stop by and visit. Please keep in mind that I'm wanting everyone to know that the house is available to be "lived in" again through meetings, parties, gatherings of all sorts. Let me know what you're interested in and we'll negotiate a "donation for use" that will help keep the doors open for all. My phone number is 605-624-8266 and my email is claycohistory@yahoo.com. Stay in touch!

Wess Pravecek
Executive Director



CCHS Receives Grant From VACF

The Clay County Historical Society received a grant from the Vermillion Area Community Foundation in the amount of \$1,000 to purchase a cast iron wall-hung kitchen sink with a drainboard. It is a replica of what they used in the olden days (1930-40). Pictured is Deb Christensen the VACF representative, Jim Stone who helped with installing the sink and Dan Christopherson the CCHS President.

Thank you very much. The kitchen crew almost enjoy doing the dishes now!

Thank you for donating the following items and the support to the CCHS:

- **Rosalie Hubert via Joe Conroy** - US Navy Photography Book **Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Harbor**
- **Cleo Erickson** - Collection of children's books and a few pieces of Cleo's baby clothing and her button shoes
- **Gwen Cleary** - Autobiography of Agnes Dowd Sloan
- **Jack Powell** - Painting of the Austin-Whittemore House done by Yvonne Stark from Young Moore Estate
- **Shirley Huber** - Several mens and womens hats from JoEllen and Merlin Tipton estate
Children's classroom books from 1906-1922
- **Mary Hanson** - Round playing cards that had belonged to Pansy Austin Whittemore
- **Carol Ericson-Anderson** - Large Rag Rug
- **Helen Brown** - 1952 Sweater Dress
- **Dan Ballard** - Round wooden cheese box from Council Oaks, Vermillion, SD
- **Burnell Hanson** - Family photos (Edna & Floyd Hanson) plus Center Point school material
- **Marilyn Isaacson** - Tea service and cake stand
- **Lucy Elliott** - Family photos and postcards
- **Marvin Walz** - New US flag
- **Rachel Meidinger** - Scrapbooks and articles about the Tom & Buds grocery store fire
- **Maxine and Allen Johnson** - Steamer trunk
- **Jim and Linda Stone** - Material and work on the gazebo
- **Jim and Linda Stone** - cedar chest
- **Vermillion Area Community Foundation** - \$1,000 grant
- **Jim Stone and Gene Hawkins** - Installing kitchen sink
- **Clay County Commission** - Continued support
- **Ron Johnson** - \$100 donation
- **Memorials** - Cleo Erickson - \$2,675
- **Memorials** - Marion Kryger - \$1,025
- **Memorials** - Nancy Bylander - \$35

WISH LIST

Does anyone have a somewhat older cart, that has wheels, and is in pretty good condition that they would want to donate? The gals in the kitchen and Marvin are in need of cart to use in the kitchen to stack dishes and to be able to wheel it around to pick up dishes.

The Log School House is in need of one or two evergreen trees. The school looks so lonesome and bare out on the corner all by itself. If anyone would like to donate money toward an evergreen, please call or send money to the Clay County Historical Society.

Thank you again for all your support!

CCHS Annual Renewal Membership
April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

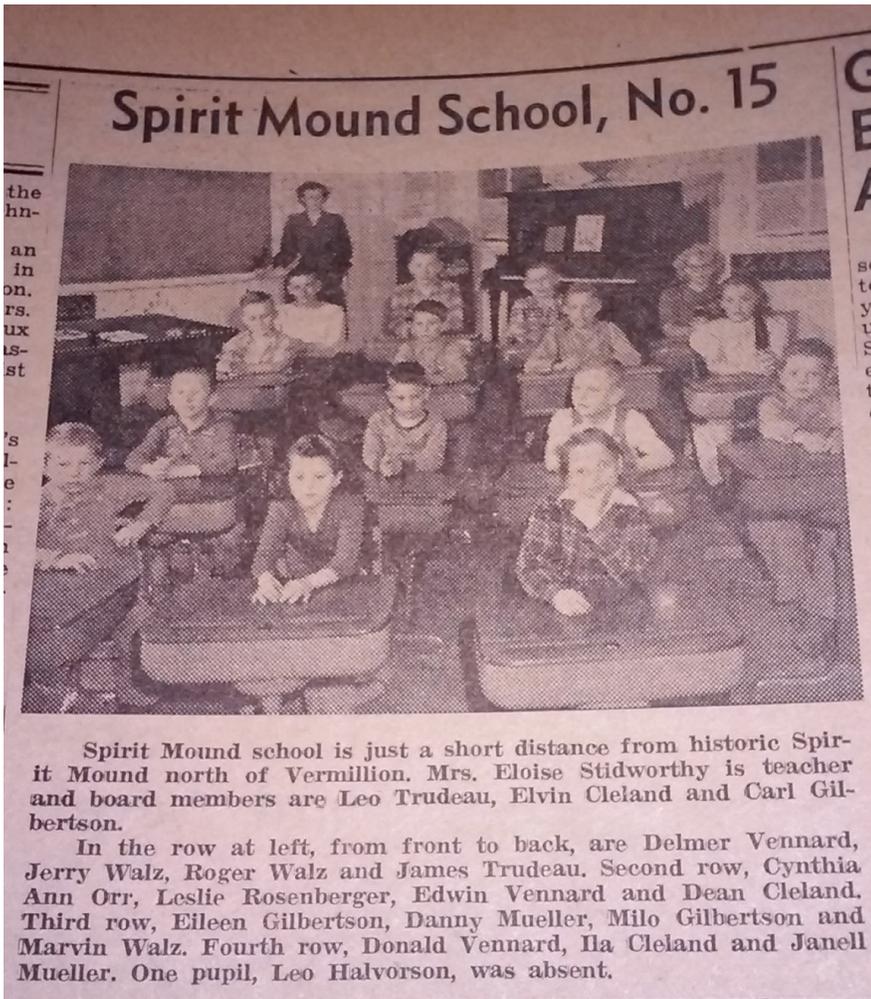
Newsletter Delivery: E-mail Mail

Individual Member: \$ 25.00 Family Membership: \$ 40.00

Institutional: \$ 75.00 Life Member/per person: \$250.00

Payable to: Clay County Historical Society

Mail to: Clay County Historical Society, 15 Austin Street, Vermillion, SD 57069



Plain Talk
March 30, 1950

**Do you recognize one of
our board members?**

Dakota Republic 1918

There are many people in Vermillion who strenuously object to the ordinance passed by the council with reference to a tax or license on male and female dogs. The tax on males is \$10 per year and on females \$25. They contend that it is unfair, and that if enforced the poor man will have to get rid of his dog, while the citizen in comfortable circumstances can well afford to keep one on hand. And that's just the way the matter strikes us. The editor hasn't a dog, hence we are not hit personally. But we opine that the council would do the wise thing to repeal the ordinance recently passed, likewise the one covering the removal of outhouses and cess pools where maintained within 200 feet of any city sewer. Neither are essential at this time. We should like to see the dog tax remain at \$1 and the owners compelled to tag dogs. Otherwise get rid of them. The council can be of material aid, however, to most of us this spring and summer if they will grant the privilege of picking off chickens that are allowed to feed on neighbors' gardens. It won't take long to abolish this nuisance under such circumstances.

Clay County Historical Society

15 Austin Street

Vermillion, SD 57069

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

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

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

Search for Clay County Historical Society on Facebook!

A-W House is open:

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

10am-2pm

Thank you for your support!