

Joint Newsletter of the
W. H. OVER MUSEUM,
CLAY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION,
AND THE CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Clay County, Vermillion, South Dakota

Spring/Summer 2020



W. H. Over Museum

Address: 1110 N. University
 414 E. Clark Street
 Vermillion, SD 57069
 605-659-6151

Email: whover@usd.edu
Website: whovermuseum.org

**WH Over Museum
 Officers and Board Members
 2020**

- Larry Bradley (President)
- Maxine Johnson (First Vice President)
- Jack Powell (Second Vice President)
- Evelyn Schlenker (Secretary)
- Nancy Craig
- Kevin Jacobson
- Scott Jensen
- David Moen
- Lynn Muller
- Gary Bottolfson
- Sarah Chadima
- James Stone
- Patrick Gross (ad hoc)
- Gene Iverson (honorary)

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Found in the Collections. . . .

Edna Lass: Honorary Colonel Exhibit

By Evelyn Schlenker

A new exhibit in the “Time to Remember” room contains parts of the honorary colonel uniform that Edna Lass wore in 1929 as well as a photograph of Ms. Lass and certificate denoting the honor. At the time Edna Lass was a senior at the University of South Dakota. The impetus for assembling the exhibit was a phone call from her son James Mundt inquiring about his mother’s uniform, which had been donated to the Over Museum. He was interested in seeing it, preferably as

part of an exhibit. The items associated with the Lass collection were located and with the help of several volunteers put on display. Below is a photograph of Ms. Lass when she is dressed in the honorary colonel uniform. The other photograph is of the uniform on a mannequin, photograph, and certificate as part of the new exhibit. Mr. Mundt and his son viewed the exhibit in November, 2019.



Current exhibit in the Museum of Edna Lass Uniform and items



*Photograph of Edna Lass
 Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum*

Found in the Collections continued

Tuberculosis and the Custer Sanatorium

By Evelyn Schlenker

Tuberculosis (also known as TB, the white plague, phthisis, consumption or scrofula), is an ancient, dreaded disease that can affect any part of the body. The organ most affected by TB is the lungs.

Epidemics of TB were associated with the 19th century Industrial Revolution and the development of factories where people were in close contact. Other conditions ripe for people to develop TB were asylums, prisons, and tenement houses. In 1882 Robert Koch determined the cause of the disease, a bacterium named *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

At that time no antibiotics were available to treat the disease and many people who contracted and developed active TB died. Many other people harbored the TB bacillus in their lungs or had latent TB which could become active later in life.

One approach to treating the disease was to place TB-infected individuals in sanitoriums (sometimes also called sanitariums) which started in Europe in 1850 by George Bodington. The sanitoriums emphasized clean beds, healthy habits, clean air and sunlight. Soon afterwards more sanatoria were founded in Europe and later in the 19th century in the United States starting with the Adirondack Cottage Sanitarium at Saranac Lake (upstate New York) founded by Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, who also suffered from TB. Aside with the premise that these institutions would help ill patients recover from TB, the sanitoriums also isolated infected patients from healthy people.

During the late 19th through the middle of the 20th century in the Northern Plains, sanatoria were established in every state to treat TB patients. In 1909 the State Tuberculosis Sanitarium (also called Santor) near Custer, South Dakota was opened. During a recent inventory of W. H. Over Museum collections, we found a medically historic important projector and a series of 40 glass slides depicting lung X-rays from TB patients who resided in the Sanatorium in the 1930's. Another slide showed a photograph of the facility itself. The slides show a variety of TB



The Custer Sanatorium (Santor) in the 1930's. (Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum)

presentations in the lung. Some slides of X-rays indicate that disease was located in discrete parts of the patients' lungs, other slides indicated that disease spread throughout the lung (as shown in the X-ray below). The Sanatorium was active until 1962. Thankfully TB is not the scourge it once was in South Dakota, but we must not lose sight that it still is the number one infectious disease cause of death in the world today.



*Chest X-ray of a patient with millinery TB
Photos courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum*

Found in the Collections continued

Oscar Howe: North American Indian Costumes Book

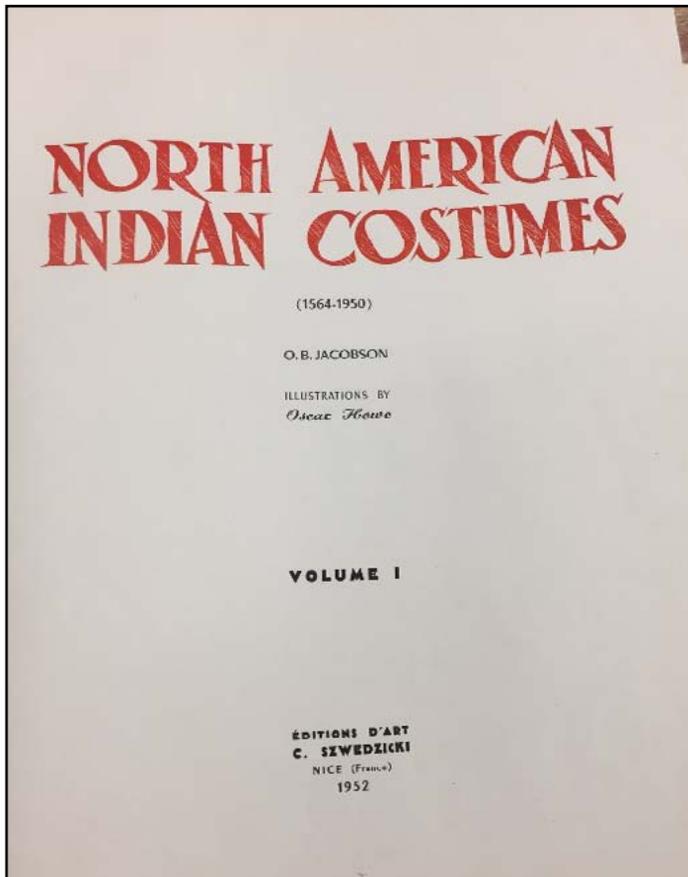
By Evelyn Schlenker

During inventorying the collection, we found an important book of Oscar Howe's paintings of Native American costumes. The book: *North American Indian Costumes (1564-1950)*, v.1 with an introduction by Oscar Brousse Jacobson was published in Nice, France as *Editions d'Art*, published by C. Szwedzicki in 1952. A commentary in the book describes the artist and the significance of the volume as follows:

"This portfolio volume (vol. I of the work) contains 25 illustrations by the noted Native American artist Oscar Howe (Mazuha Hokshina). A Yanktonai Dakota artist trained at the Studio of Santa Fe Indian School, the Dakota Wesleyan University, and the University of Oklahoma, Howe is perhaps best known for his 1940s, New Deal-era Works Progress Administration (WPA) murals. Jacobson, a collector of Native American art and director of the University of Oklahoma's School of Art [sic where he received his MFA degree], provides a brief introductory essay on indigenous dress, along

with lengthy captions for each plate, incorporating specific cultural and historical information. The plates were printed in the pochoir manner, which emphasizes Howe's clean lines and bright colors."

Over the years, Oscar Howe received many honors for his unique artwork including: Artist Laureate of South Dakota in 1960 and in 1973 he was named first recipient of the South Dakota Governor's Award for Creative Achievement. In 1957 Oscar Howe became Professor of Art at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion where he taught until 1983. He had a studio and gallery in the old Carnegie Library building on campus. In addition, Oscar Howe was an assistant director at the W. H. Over Museum and donated this volume. A gallery dedicated to Oscar Howe's artwork is located in Old Main and a yearly lecture about Native American art is given in his honor.



Book cover drawn by Oscar Howe. Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum



Painting by Oscar Howe for the book. Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum

The Sloat Round Barn

By Evelyn Schlenker

Jim Stone who has surveyed over 350 barns in Clay County and has a deep interest in barns. The barn described in this article is unique in several ways. The Sloat Round Barn, one of few of its kind still in existence, is located Potter County not far from Gettysburg, South Dakota. The picture shows that it is a true round barn with a two pitch conical rook and a gambrel roofed entrance. The barn is 100 feet in diameter, possibly the largest round barn in South Dakota. It housed hogs, dairy cattle and beef cattle.

The picture of the barn (to the right) from 1992 was obtained from Clayton Sloat, a descendent of the builder and a cousin to the owner. The barn was built in 1916. Thanks to Pat Gross and Evelyn Schlenker for some of the history. The barn was still standing in 2017, but all of the red paint was gone and there were holes in the roof. Pat Gross told us that “a fiend and he stacked 20,000 small bales of hay in this barn one summer. They were paid \$5.00 per day.”



Photograph of the Sloat Round Barn in 1992

New Officers and Board Members of the Friends of the W. H. Over Museum

On January 26, 2020 at Annual Meeting the following individuals were elected:

President: Larry Bradley, First Vice President: Maxine Johnson,

Second Vice President: Jack Powell, and Secretary: Evelyn Schlenker.

Newly elected Board members included Nancy Craig, Kevin Jacobson, Scott Jensen, David Moen, and Lynn Muller. These individuals joined current Board members Gary Bottolfson, Sarah Chadima, Jim Stone and ad hoc member Pat Gross and honorary member Gene Iverson.

Renovation of the Lawyer’s Office Exhibit at the W. H. Over Museum

Vermillion is the county seat of Clay County as well as the home of the University of South Dakota. As a consequence, there have always been numerous lawyers who had their practice in Vermillion, some also taught in the Law School, founded in 1901. Although an exhibit was originally constructed a couple of years to simulate what a law office may have been like in the 1920’s, the exhibit has a new striking component, an eight foot long, seven feet high, metal vertical filing cabinet. The total number of files and drawers in the cabinet are 206, many of which are numbered. On the side of the cabinet is a small yellow sticker that reads “Property of the State of South Dakota, Secretary of State”. The cabinet is painted to look like wood, possibly mahogany. Unfortunately, some research is required to determine how this magnificent item became part of the Over collection and now has a prominent place in the Lawyer’s Office exhibit.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker

Then and Now, A Series on Historic Homes

The Lee & Prentis Homes on Court Street

By Evelyn Schlenker

Andrew E. Lee and Charles Prentis were friends and early settlers in Vermillion, starting a joint business in 1869. After the 1881 flood, the business was moved above the bluff and located in a brick building on Vine Street. Andrew E. Lee became mayor of Vermillion from 1892-1896 and then Governor of South Dakota from 1896-1900. Charles Prentis was also mayor of Vermillion serving from 1913 until 1916. Both men were influential in the development of Vermillion and owned extensive tracts of land in Clay County.

In addition, both men occupied houses across the street from each other overlooking the bluff. Prentis' home was located at 215 Court Street and Lee's home was located at 224 Court Street. The houses were constructed about the same time 1900 and 1897, respectively. In 2016, the Bluff Historic District was created that included both structures and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Because of the drastic changes in the Lee house, it is not contributing to the historic district, whereas the Prentis house is little changed, although the garage is newer.

The Lee House

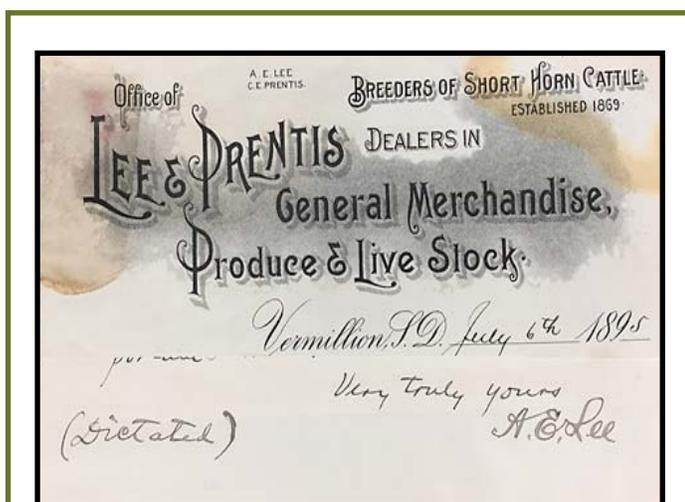
Prior to Lee owning the house, the Ely family occupied the building as seen in the black and white photo below. Substantial changes to the structure were initiated by the Litzelmans, owners of the house after the Lees. Note the extensive open porch and decorative touches to the windows. By contrast, the photograph of the blue house shows that the porch on the first floor and the smaller porch on the second floor window have been enclosed. Still evident are the rose granite around the foundation and delineating the parts of the porch. The siding and awnings are made of vinyl. Over the years the architectural characteristics of the building were markedly altered.



Lee House - Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum



Lee House - Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker



Letterhead of the Lee and Prentis business in 1895.

A. E. Lee signed the letter that was cropped.

Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum.

Then and Now, A Series on Historic Homes

The Prentis House

According to the description of the house in the nomination form for the Bluff District, prepared by Crystal Kulhanek and Liz Almlı, the Prentis house shows distinct architectural features.

This two-story Colonial Revival house has a painted brick foundation. The hip roof has asphalt shingles and closed eaves. The frame house has wooden clapboard siding, as well as classical dentil moldings and Doric columns on the full-width one-story porch and the gable roof dormer. The dormer has a multi-pane Palladian window and cornice returns. Wide front steps lead up to the centered main entrance. The porch has Doric columns, turned balusters, and an open upper deck with a modern metal railing. Corner boards with flared Ionic capitals frame the home and the roof dormer. Fenestration is one-over-one with wooden sashes, with picture windows with transoms flanking the entrance. On the north elevation, there is a central two-story canted bay. On the south elevation, there is a Palladian-shaped porch with Doric columns, dentil molding, and a metal upper balustrade that has a setback enclosure of framed-in screen material.



Prentis House - 1929 Coyote Yearbook, Courtesy of the W. H. Over Museum



Prentis House - Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker, 2020

The Thompson House (403 East Main Street)

Myron D. Thompson was an early pioneer and entrepreneur in Vermillion. He was one of the few people who built his home above the Bluff in 1872 in what is now the Forest Avenue Historic District, while his business was conducted below the bluff. In the 1890's Thompson purchased land on East Main Street (W 130' OF N 216' OF BLK 78 SMITHS) west of his friend's Darwin Inman and Thompson moved his home to a new location. Sioux Rose Quartzite blocks were added to the house in the front, side and formed the porch, as seen in this early photograph above. Over the years, the building was converted to apartments and the architectural character of the building markedly changed as noted in the second picture. At present the building is slated for demolition. Before that happens, a survey of the house, photographs and portions of the house will be removed for a new exhibit at the W. H. Over Museum.



*Thompson House
Courtesy of the Clay County Historical Society*



Thompson House - Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker

University Historic District Association Activities - March 2020

The University Historic District Association (UHDA) continues to work towards the maintenance, preservation and improvement of our neighborhood. Recently, we have been involved in several large projects. First of all, in response to the needs of the neighborhood, USD hired contractors to wrap the exhaust fans on top of the Lee Medical Building at the corner of North Dakota and Clark Streets to reduce the noise output. We would like to thank USD and President Sheila Gestring and Assistant VP Kevin O’Kelley for helping to address this issue.

One of our goals as an association is to maintain the historical appearance and historically contributing qualities of many structures in our neighborhood. Zoning can have an important impact on us. We are presently an R-2 Residential District which means that 4-plexes are allowed without a conditional-use permit. Many residential neighborhoods are zoned R-1 where only 2-plexes are allowed. The 4-plex type of construction, either as a new or altered structure can detract from the historical nature of our neighborhood. Due to our proximity to the university, rental property use is expected and we are happy to coexist with renters, however, we would like to see that owner-occupied or rented structures maintain their contributing historical appearances and that any new construction is not unrelated to this appearance. We continue to have discussions with a number of advisors about how to address what is allowed to be built in our neighborhood. We have plans to have city engineer José Dominguez present possible solutions that we might adopt if we as a community choose to pursue them. These can include down-zoning to R-1, overlay zoning or, thirdly, creating a new type of zoning for historical residential neighborhoods. We hope that many neighbors, as well as residents of other historical residential neighborhoods, will join us for a future meeting on this topic. We will make a concerted effort to notify interested persons when this meeting will take place.

Each fall and spring, we hold a neighborhood Clean Up Day to take yard waste and unpainted wood from our neighborhood to the city landfill. This is usually around Earth Day in April. Email updates, newsletters and flyers are used to provide notices and information on our projects. Despite the debris from our beautiful trees, trees are also a part of our historical appearance. Each spring, we encourage residents to plant trees which can be purchased at a discount through the city

or through the Clay County Extension Office.

The UHDA board meets monthly. General meetings for the entire neighborhood are held in June, September and March (postponed this year). The June meeting is the annual meeting where new board members are selected. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of the month. Meeting locations TBA. For information, visit our Facebook page or contact Susan Keith Gray, president, at susankeith.gray@gmail.com or Randy Von Ehwegen, co-secretary, at randyvonehwegen@gmail.com. Other board members are Jill VonEhwegen (co-secretary), Ed Gerrish (vice-president), Dan Neufeld, Teresa Gilbertson, Claude Garelik, Joan Holter, Martha Fagg and Ariel Rosenberg.

Items in the Thompson House

On Monday, March 16, 2020 members of the CCH-PC, the Clay County Historical Society, the Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission and the Friends of the W. H. Over Museum viewed the inside of the Thompson house described in an accompanying article. Although the building was devoid of furniture, a number of items remained from the past including a variety of widths of wooden floors. Shown here are two photographs detailing a few of the features of we noticed.



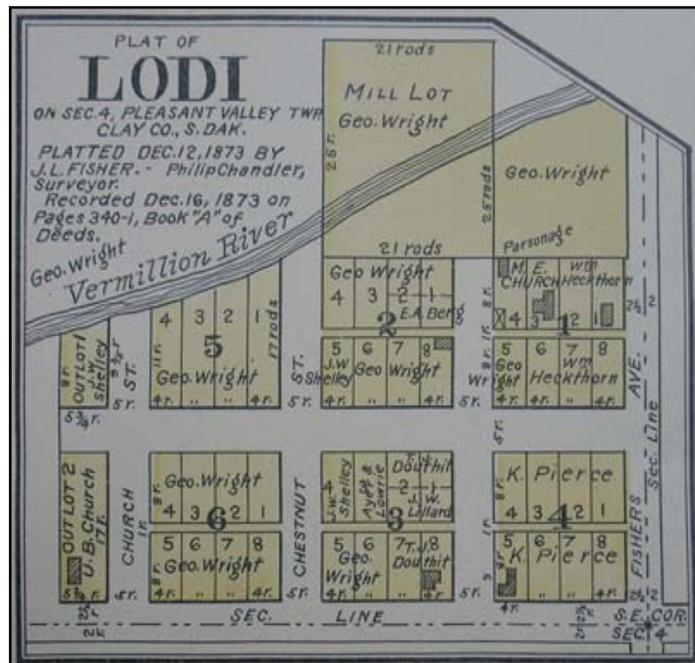
Interior Items in Thompson House - Photos by Evelyn Schlenker

William Ranney Presentation and Archeological Studies Continue

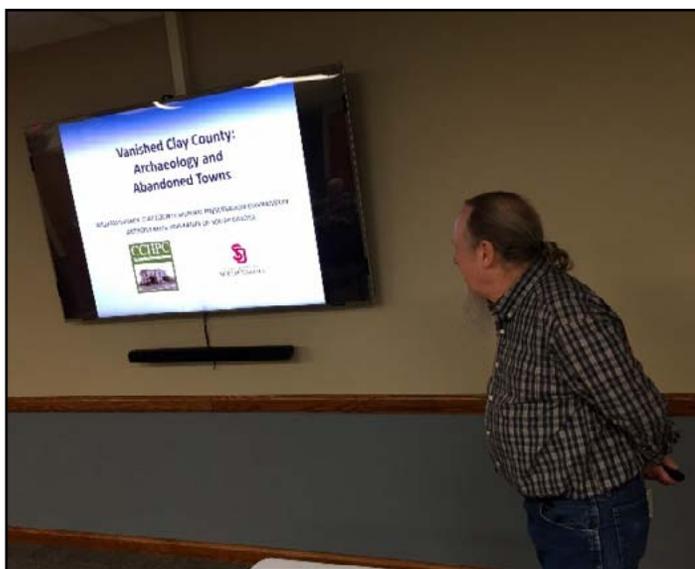
On February 26, 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Kozak Room of the Vermillion Public Library Clay County Historic Preservation Commission member Bill Ranney presented an excellent talk entitled: "Vanished Clay County: Archaeology and Forgotten Towns." He summarized what he and Dr. Tony Kruse (University of South Dakota, USD) found last summer examining several sites in Clay County including Original Vermillion (pre-1881), the Ufford property, the Poor Farm Cemetery, and Lamb Taylor Homestead. In addition, some sites were surveyed around what was the town of Bloomingdale, South Dakota. The investigators are using and will continue to several sources of information to collaborate sites including early newspapers, information from residents who know the areas, images at the W. H. Over Museum, and shovel tests. Bill is also interested in uncovering prehistoric sites.

The survey of Clay County will continue this spring, in conjunction with USD. Although the original intent of the survey was to concentrate on the bluffs overlooking the Vermillion River valley, searching for prehistoric sites, they have expanded the survey to the other areas of Clay County and are also looking for historic sites. They have a half section of upland that has the remains of three historic sites to record, and a bluff top ridge overlooking the Missouri River that will be tested for prehistoric material. They will continue to look at the areas of original Vermillion and the abandoned community and grist mill of Bloomingdale, as well as additional areas of the Ufford farm east of Vermillion.

Hopefully, they will gain landowner permissions to look at the town site of Lodi, which also has the remnants of a grain mill. There are also two log cabins we will be exploring. Updates of their work will be presented in future installments.



Lodi plat map



Bill Ranney during his presentation

CCHPC

Clay County Historic Preservation Commission



Address: 211 West Main Street, Suite 102
Vermillion, SD 57069

email: whitewilson@msn.com

Website: cchpc.org

**Officers and Board Members of the Clay County
Historic Preservation Commission 2020**
Jim Wilson (Chair), Tom Sorensen (Vice-Chair)
Gloria Hensley (Treasurer), Evelyn Schlenker (Secretary)
Dennis Konkler, Patrick Morrison, Bill Ranney,
Jim Stone, Monica Iverson, and Tim Schreiner

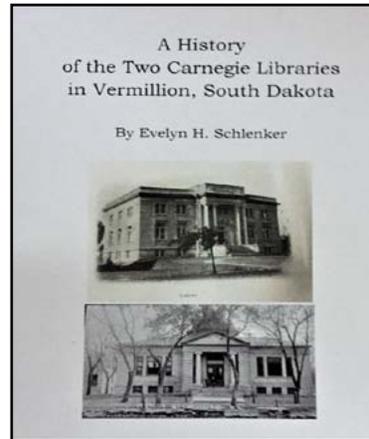
A New Book about the History of the Two Carnegie Libraries in Vermillion

By Evelyn Schlenker

Enjoy reading a book about the two Carnegie Libraries in Vermillion that has been recently published and is available on digitally (<http://cchpc.org/enjoy-reading-a-book-about-the-two-carnegie-libraries-in-vermillion/>)! Both Carnegie library buildings were constructed in the early part of the 20th century and were designed by well-known architect Joseph Schwarz. One served the citizens of Vermillion and surrounding areas, the other became the University of South Dakota Library. In South Dakota 25 community Carnegie libraries were constructed and only Vermillion and Yankton had the distinction of having two Carnegie Libraries. Over time, both Vermillion's Carnegie libraries were used for other purposes. The Vermillion public library, owned by the City of Vermillion, has been leased to law firms from 1978 to the present. In 1983 the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The University of South Dakota (USD) Carnegie building was doubled in size in 1940. In the 1960's the USD student population increased so much that a new library building was needed. In 1967, the old library building was designated to house museum first the W. H. Over Dakota Museum. Gradually, the Shrine to

Music Museum occupied a couple of rooms. By 1984, the Shrine to Music Museum took over the entire building and the Over Museum moved to a newly constructed building on campus. In 2002 the Shrine to Music Museum changed its name to the National Music Museum. Starting in April of 2019 the Carnegie building started being renovated and a new extension constructed. This building is not on the National Register of Historic Places. Thus, both Carnegie library buildings in Vermillion stood the test of time and contributed to the architectural and cultural history of South Dakota.



Cover of the book. The top picture is of the original Carnegie Library at University of South Dakota and the bottom is an early picture of the Vermillion Carnegie Library.

Photographs are courtesy of the Coyote Yearbook, 1912 and the Clay County Historical Society.

Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission Update March 2020

The Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission (VHPC) has been hard at work to fulfill our mission, to protect, preserve, and restore Vermillion's historic and cultural assets through public education, workshops, and outreach to the community. Recently we have been working on three distinct projects.

First, this commission is continuing its pursuit of a possible new historic district in an area bordered by Main Street on the north, South University Street on the east, the bluff on the south and the Forest Avenue Historic district to the west. The commission is applying for 2020-21 funds from the State Historic Preservation Office to hire a consultant to begin a formal survey to apply to the Department of the Interior for potential listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Second, the commission worked with the city to add permitting of roofing and siding to the Vermillion city code. Vermillion joined many municipalities with this extra level of protection for all property owners for

appropriate workmanship and to allow the city to better assess the needs for preserving historic materials.

Finally, the brick columns supporting Prentis Park's archways at the southwest and northwest entrances need repairs. Vermillion's Prentis Park was built in 1923 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The city of Vermillion is working with the VHPC to assure the best possible solution that will preserve historical materials while addressing wear and tear.

The VHPC is comprised of seven members with rotating terms. Members are chosen for their interest and expertise in history, architecture, archeology, city planning and related fields. Annually interested residents of the city of Vermillion may apply at the city website for membership. Current commissioners are Susan Keith Gray, chair, Ed Gerrish, vice-chair, Bill Dendinger, Dietrik Vanderhill, Gloria Hensley, Cyndy Chaney and Jim Wilson.

The Clay County Court House

By Dan Christopherson

Would we abandon our beautiful historic State Capital building in Pierre because it needed renovation and expansion? Let's not abandon our historic center of Clay County government for those reasons either.....

The Clay County Court House was constructed in 1912-13 and has served us for over one hundred years. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and continues to be one of the great historic properties in the state of South Dakota.

Court House Photos from the Archives



Laying of the cornerstone on the court house



Yes, additional space and major interior remodeling are definitely needed. The jail, especially, is in need of replacement and expansion. However, abandoning the current building and the entire existing campus in favor of a completely new remote location is not the most responsible choice.

There is sufficient land available at the current site for a responsible and architecturally similar building addition. Also, the County already owns more land north across adjoining National Street. Washington Street to the West may also be an option.

Klein McCarthy Architects of St. Louis Park, MN were hired by the Clay County Commission at a cost of \$68,970 to investigate the situation and make a recommendation. Klein McCarthy recommended in their report that Clay County continue to utilize the historic courthouse as that would be the least cost to taxpayers.

Clay County Historical Society strongly believes that we should preserve our handsome, historic courthouse with the necessary additions, maintenance and updates to make it a quality workplace for our county employees.

Clay County Historical Society
Annual Meeting
at the
Austin-Whittemore House
has
been
postponed!

*Please watch our facebook page
and the local media for
information on the annual meeting
and other events...
such as the Ice Cream
Social in June and Music
Monday's held in the Summer.*

Annual dues are due April 1, 2020.



Address: Clay County Historical Society
15 Austin St, Vermillion, SD 57069
Phone - 605-624-8266
Web page - cchssd.org
Email - claycohistory@yahoo.com
We are on Facebook – Search for
Clay County Historical Society
Vermillion South Dakota

The Austin Whittemore House is open:
Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 10am-2pm.

A-W is available for family gatherings,
meetings, class reunions, weddings,
showers, business meetings, etc.,
call 624-8266 to schedule.

CCHS Web Page includes:

- Upcoming events
- Newsletter
- Monthly minutes
- Story of Austin-Whittemore House
- List of pictorial books and maps of Vermillion and the Clay County area
- Officers/Directors

**MEMBERSHIP DUES
ARE DUE April 1, 2020**

Membership Dues are:
Individual \$25
Family \$40
Institutional \$75
Life Member \$250

CCHS Elected Board of Directors:

April 1, 2019-March 31, 2020
President - Dan Christopherson
Vice President - Gloria Hensley
Recording Secretary - Erin Burrow
Membership Secretary - Ruth Bylander
Treasurer - Joni Freidel
Past President - Maxine Johnson
Directors - Barb Campbell, Jim Stone,
Kevin Jacobson, Lisa Johnson
Art Rusch, Judy Sullivan, Tom Sorensen

Appointed Positions
Executive Director Wess Pravecek
CCHPC Representative Jim Stone

From the Desk...

I'm looking at the calendar that was put together for the 2009 Vermillion sesquicentennial and it really contains a lot of great historical information. You're not going to be tested on remembering any of these dates, but did you know:

- On March 2, 1861, Dakota Territory was created by Congress when the bill is signed by President Buchanan.
- On March 27, 1881, Ice jam develops on the Missouri River and water begins to flood Vermillion.
- On April 15, 1919, Women vote in a city election for the first time.
- On May 24, 1919, Soldiers returning from WW1 form Wallace Post No. 1 as a unit of the American Legion, named in honor of Col. Elmer J. Wallace, who was killed in France.
- On May 20, 1922, KUSD radio begins broadcasting its first music and voice program under the direction of Earnest Lawrence.

All of these events were the starting points of growth and development of Clay County and the people who helped it to grow.

What's piqued my interest lately in community history, besides my new-found passion of working for the CCHS, is my joining a South Dakota group on face book who shares information about the towns they grew up in and what our families were like as we grew up. We are all from different parts of the state and grew up in different eras but it's so interesting to see how much we have in common....great memories, loyalty to family and strong faith. This seems to be the underlying backbone of folks from the midwest. Even though our communities have grown along with our families, technology has made a big difference in our lives. Even though it seems to take up a little too much of our time, our phones, tablets and laptops still keep us informed and connected.

The last few months have been keeping me busy with email requests from people interested in finding information about family members who have a connection to Dakota Territory/Clay County. With information from old county atlases, cemetery records and information squirreled away in the files, I sometimes hit the jackpot and find information that helps to put these folks one step closer to making a family connection. Because you all have some kind of a connection to the Clay County, information that you share about your families can become a part of this invaluable information that helps to make our records even more complete. Thank you for sharing what you have and helping to make the Austin-Whittemore House a valuable treasure trove.

Thank you for your membership and support to the Clay County Historical Society. We are currently entering our new fiscal year on April 1 so let this also serve as a reminder that your dues are due! If I've already heard from you, thank you. If not, I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Wess Pravecek
Executive Director

Vermillion Masons Lodge Celebrates 150th Anniversary

Courtesy of Vermillion Plain Talk

Members of the Masonic Grand Lodge of South Dakota celebrated the beginnings of the fraternal organization in Vermillion by making a bit of history of their own.

Masons performed a historic cornerstone re-dedication ceremony as part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the dedication of what was originally Incense Lodge #257, chartered in 1869 by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. The ceremony was held Sunday afternoon in the Masonic Lodge in Vermillion, known as Incense Lodge #2, located at 7 West Main in the heart of the community's downtown.

Incense Lodge #2 was named in 1875, when the Grand Lodge of Iowa gave its jurisdictional rights to the newly formed Grand Lodge of Dakota, making it the second oldest lodge in the jurisdiction behind St. John's Lodge in Yankton.

Tom Sorensen, the Worshipful Master of Incense

Lodge #2, thanked the members of the Order of Eastern Star Juno Chapter #44 who helped make Sunday's ceremony possible.

"As old as this lodge is, the Order of the Eastern Star has been under our roof, according to our history books, since 1898," Sorensen said. "We have a partnership that goes back a long ways."

Masonry, a benevolent, educational and charitable organization, is the world's oldest and largest fraternity of men dedicated to helping each other and contributes to the betterment of society. Masonic lodges across South Dakota support various local youth and community projects and humanitarian efforts through South Dakota Masonic Charities.

"The Masons here in Vermillion and Clay County and in this area, in February of last year, celebrated its 150th year and it takes time to plan things and get people together," Sorensen said. "We were established

continued



Masons Marching at the corner of Main and Dakota Streets - Vermillion Incense Lodge No. 2 was instituted on February 10, 1869, in the Vermillion Baptist Church. This fraternal organization grew rapidly, and by 1885, there were forty-three members. The Masons, like the G.A.R. and Odd Fellows, participated in most of the parades in town. The Masons are portrayed here, proudly marching in their dress uniforms past the corner of Main and Dakota Streets. Note: The Methodist Church and house on the corner of Dakota and National Streets in the background and the dirt streets.

Photos and captions taken from the book

From the River Valleys to the Rising Bluff; A Pictorial History of Vermillion, South Dakota 1859 - 2009 by Thomas R. Thaden

as a lodge in 1869 when Dakota Territory was here and stretched from the Missouri River all the way to Canada”.

Incense Lodge #2 was instrumental in helping install and establish the Grand Lodge of Dakota Territory, Sorensen said. The lodge was first known as Incense Lodge #247 under the jurisdiction of Iowa.

After Dakota Territory became North Dakota and South Dakota on Nov. 2, 1889, Incense Lodge #2 in Vermillion became part of the Mason’s South Dakota jurisdiction.

“We were established as a lodge on Feb. 10, 1869, under dispensation issued by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. The Grand Lodge had received due application as early as 1867, but it took a couple years for everything to happen,” Sorensen said.

The first communication of Iowa’s new Incense Lodge was held in a room on the second story of a building below the bluff in what’s known as Original

Vermillion. “It moved several times until finally we established our lodge in this building and then later

we remodeled and added on to it,” Sorensen said. The lodge is the home of several historic documents, including its original charter.

Sorensen noted a photograph showing a partially built Clay County Courthouse and the large crowd that had gathered for the ceremony of laying the building’s cornerstone. “The Grand Lodge of South Dakota helped handle this in 1912 at the Clay County Courthouse,” he said. “We have a very rich history and this is the latest part of our history so watch what happens.”

According to a document prepared by the Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center in 2017, there was Masonic activity as early as 1862 in what is now South Dakota. The first charter was issued under the jurisdiction of Iowa to a lodge in Yankton, Dakota Territory, in 1863. By 1875, there were five lodges, all in the southeastern part of the territory.

In 1875, the Iowa Grand Lodge instituted the Grand Lodge of Dakota at Vermillion. In October 1899, 10 years after statehood was granted, North Dakota and South Dakota were split into two Grand Lodges.



Parade Moving Cornerstone for Courthouse, June 1912

In 1911, the decision was made to build a new courthouse on the northwest corner of Main and High streets. Reed’s Band and the Masons lead the Parade for the cornerstone, which was brought up from the depot. They are shown here on Main Street approaching the new site. Note the Fullerton Lumber building and the Waldorf Hotel in the background and the brick sidewalk on the right.

The Influenza Epidemic of 1918

During these trying times, I thought I would post a little historical information about the influenza epidemic of 1918.

This information comes from the book Clay County: Chapters Out of the Past by Herbert S. Schell.

It was determined in 1916 that Vermillion could not hope to maintain a hospital facility without a building expressly erected for the purpose. "Vermillion was just left without any Hospital during the influenza epidemic in the latter part of 1918 and early weeks of 1919. The annex to the Episcopal church building on North Dakota Street was, however, utilized as an infirmary by the university in connection with the military programs maintained on the campus, particularly the students army training Corps. Under the direction of Dr Francis E. Townsend, the medical officer in charge of the student units, the fraternity houses were turned into hospitals for about 200 cases and were taken care of with generous help from the local citizenry.

Within Vermillion the epidemic presented formidable nursing problems. In its search for adequate facilities for the carrying of the ill, the town converted the vacant SJ Lewis house on the southwest corner of Main and University into Temporary Hospital quarters. An item in the Dakota Republican on December 12th 1918 states that the Lewis house had 'again' been transformed into a hospital, referring apparently to earlier utilization for similar purposes.

The following excerpt is from History of Clay County South Dakota by Herbert S. Schell.

"An influenza epidemic which swept across the nation during the latter part of 1918 and early 1919 seriously impeded the war activities. Clay County was particularly hard hit. As cases began to multiply it, health authorities in Vermillion on October 17th ordered public schools, churches, and theaters closed until further notice, and banned all public meetings. The University at the time discontinued classes, advising non-resident students to return to their homes. The soldiers remained in their barracks until October 28th when their classes resumed.

The ban in the town was lifted on November 10th. Although there was a serious recurrence of the epidemic during December, public places remained open. The State Board of Health, however,

prohibited church funerals. Seven soldiers succumbed to the disease at the University, and there were a number of deaths in the city as well as the rest of the county.

The scarcity of nursing help in Vermillion became a serious problem during the epidemic. Few families were unaffected and, in some instances, the entire household was down with illness. To alleviate the crisis, the commercial Club appointed a special committee to locate persons available for nursing services. At the same time the house, constructed by S.J. Lewis at the corner of Main and University and which stood empty at the time, was converted into a community hospital so that 'flu cases' might be more conveniently taken care of. By the early part of 1919 the epidemic began to abate."



Pictured above - Helgeson Pharmacy, 1901

This building was located at 12 West Main Street.

Note the dirt streets and street light.

Alfred Helgeson, owner, sold the pharmacy in 1907 to Roy Davis. The Pharmacy became known as Davis Drug and was a part of Main Street until the year 2000 when the Davis Pharmacy moved to Cherry Street.



CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

605-624-8266 • claycohistory@yahoo.com • www.cchssd.org
15 Austin Street • Vermillion, SD 57069

November 21, 2019

We believe that Clay County needs to preserve our handsome, historic courthouse.

The courthouse was built in 1912-1913 and has served Clay County for over one hundred years as the center of county government and for judicial functions. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and has been on the register for over 35 years.

In most counties, courthouses are unmatched in terms of architectural and historical significance, making courthouse preservation an important issue. This is certainly true in Clay County.

The recent studies of the Clay County Courthouse, done by Klein McCarthy Architects of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, who were hired by the Clay County Commissioners at a cost of \$68,970 (according to the County Auditor's Office), recommend and report:

- 1) Both the courthouse and the Public Safety center are in relatively good condition for their age and type of building. (KM 3/13/18 report pages 30, and 105 and 7/31/18 report page 10)
- 2) Both the courthouse and the Public Safety building have many years of life remaining but are in need of repairs and upgrades (KM 3/13/18 report Page 105) which are possible and less costly.
- 3) The existing courthouse building is not suited for many other purposes and would have very little value for a new owner other than gaining property in the downtown area. (KM 3/13/18 report page 112)
- 4) Klein McCarthy recommends that Clay County adopt Option D (an addition to the current courthouse), as that continues to utilize the existing historic courthouse with the least cost to the taxpayers. (KM 7/31/18 report page 47) Klein McCarthy specifically recommends against Option RG (building a completely new courthouse at a remote site), because that is the most expensive option. They estimated that would cost \$49 million dollars plus the cost of land. (KM 7/31/18 report page 45). TLM Correctional Consultants, who were hired by Klein McCarthy, reported that Clay County has some of the highest median property taxes in the United States. (KM 3/13/18 report, Appendix page 56).
- 5) Klein McCarthy recommends Option D (continuing the courthouse in the downtown location) as the best solution with the least construction costs (KM 7/31/18 report page 47). Contrary to the architect's recommendation, which keeps the existing historic courthouse with the least cost to taxpayers, the county's facility planning committee recommends relocating "all government services to a remote site" and vacating the present historic courthouse.

We believe that Clay County should preserve our historic courthouse under county ownership and control with the necessary maintenance and updates to make it a quality workplace for our county employees. Covenants covering the historical attributes of the courthouse may or may not guarantee preservation of this important structure. If it is sold to someone else, for whatever purpose, then the county may have very little control over what the subsequent owners do to the building, including tearing it down, allowing it to deteriorate or changing its outward appearance.

Sincerely,

Clay County Historical Society
Austin-Whittemore House
15 Austin Street
Vermillion, SD 57069
claycohistory@yahoo.com

President – Dan Christopherson
Vice President – Gloria Hensley
Recording Secretary – Erin Burrow
Membership Secy – Ruth Bylander
Treasurer – Joni Freidel
Past President – Maxine Johnson
Directors – Barb Campbell, Jim Stone,
Kevin Jacobson, Lisa Johnson,
Art Rusch, Judy Sullivan, Tom Sorensen
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Joint Newsletter of the
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Thank you for your support!



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