

Charles Edwin Prentis

Sept .30, 1847-Aug .10, 1942
Lot E 479
94 years
Donated park land

- Born to John Brewster Prentis and Catherine Phelps Williams in Rutland, WI, west of Chicago. He had three sisters: Helen, Mary and Elizabeth
- Worked as a bookkeeper in Madison, WI
- In 1869 at 23, he and Andrew Lee opened a general merchandizing business near the Missouri River
- In 1871, opened Prentis & Newton First Bank
- On November 7, 1872, Mary Francis Stanley and he were married. The couple had two children; Charles Stanley and Kathryn Belle
- In 1880, son Charles died from diphtheria at six years
- In 1881, the flood destroyed both businesses, prompting a relocation above the bluff
- The couple built a home at 215 Court Street overlooking the river bottom
- In the late 1800s, he purchased property which is the present site of Prentis Park
- In September of 1906, Mary passed
- On September 2, 1909, Mary's sister, Arabella (Belle), and he were married
- As a community leader, and a stalwart Republican, he held many local offices including mayor (1913-16)
- He was a prominent member and deacon of the Congregational Church, assisting in the planning and building of four churches, the latest is the current UCC, where he laid the cornerstone
- Known as one of the wealthiest citizens, he owned over 7,000 acres in Clay County and was a stockholder and president of a Citizens Bank & Trust
- In 1923, when Belle passed, he donated 10 acres in her memory. It was previously purchased from Egbert and Hattie Collar and had been part of the AA Carpenter Homestead with an orchard and nursery
- Kathryn, his daughter, passed away in 1930 at age 53. The youngest of her two sons was only 9
- His former home on Court Street was donated to the USD endowment
- Hospitalized in Sioux City on April 27 until his death

Prentis Park Chronology

- 1923**-Prentis donated ten acres and the landscape architect. Landscaping and benches were donated by the Civic Council
- 1929**-Residents voted to build a \$25,000 pool complex
- 1930**-Prentis donated an additional 10 acres providing for a baseball diamond and football field
- 1933**-The log cabin was erected (Girl Scout Cabin)
- 1934**-Grill Box donated by the American Legion
- 1935**-City bought the final two acres for parking and construction of Prentis Street
- 1935-1938** Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided funds for gardening, landscaping, pergola and grandstand
- 1936**-Pergola (Clark & Prentis) built, then removed in the early '50s
- 1937**-Bandshell included three millstones, one from the Bloomingdale Mill supervised by Ole Anderson, local mason and woodcarver
Caretakers House was built
- 1938**-Baseball grandstand, dugouts and bathrooms
- 1940**-Maintenance building, horseshoe pit and volleyball court we added in the early 1940s
- 1966**-Pool replaced with T-shaped pool and bathhouse
- 1980**-Picnic shelters
- 2001**-Prentis Park was added to the National Register of Historical Places
- 2017**- Prentis Plunge opened
- July 2023-Prentis Park Centennial Celebration**

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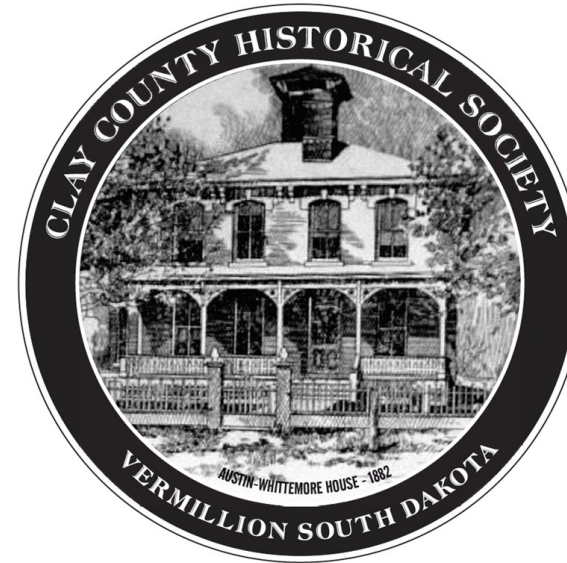
Thanks to

- *Bluff View Cemetery Board*
- *Prentis Park Centennial Committee: Susan Keith Gray, Evelyn Schlenker*
- *Storytellers: Cheryl Breske, Steve Ford, Geoffrey Gray-Lobe, Connie Krueger, Bill Ranney, and Steve Ward*
- *CCHS Board of Directors & Cemetery Tour Committee*

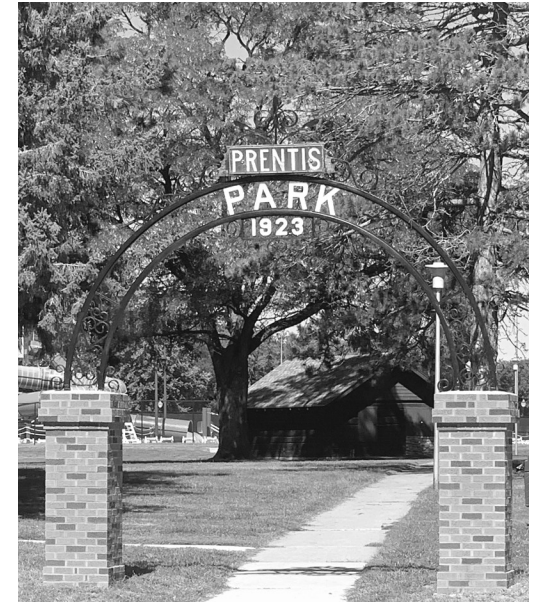
The mission of the Clay County (SD) Historical Society is to bring together those people interested in the history and prehistory of Clay County and adjacent areas.

CCHS Yearly Membership

- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
- \$75 Institutional
- \$250 Individual Lifetime



The Austin-Whittemore House
(home of the Clay County Historical Society)
15 Austin Street, is open on
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
from 10:00-2:00 and by appointment
605-624-8266
ClayCoHistory@yahoo.com
www.cchssd.org



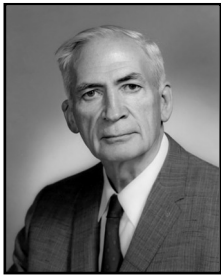
The Clay County
Historical Society
presents

Spoken History Cemetery Tour

“Pioneers of the Park”

Monday, October 10, 2022
5:30 p.m.

Bluff View/Calvary Cemetery
Vermillion, SD



Harold Edwin Brookman

Nov. 5, 1886-Oct. 7, 1967
Lot SW 988
80 years
Councilman in support of park

- Born in Vermillion to SE Brookman and Anna C. Collisii, he was the oldest, followed by Murray, and twins, Lowell and Lawrence
- Graduated from USD in 1910 with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and was a Cross Country team leader
- He earned the M.S. from the “State University” and also studied at the Trenton Art School in Trenton, NJ
- In 1911, he was employed by Brooks Manufacturing Company
- On October 2, 1914, He married Mabel “Ruth” Timmerman at her family home in Ames, NY. The couple planned to live in Trenton, NJ, where he was the assistant superintendent of the Mott Iron Works
- Exactly nine months later, the couple had a son, Bruce Terrance born on July 19, 1915. Janice Marie was born on November 27, 1919
- In December of 1920, he had resigned his position with the Mott Iron Works and was an engineer on a water power project in Richfield, ID
- The following year, he started teaching engineering at USD until the program was discontinued (1931)
- Most of his career was closely associated with the USD Engineering Department
- He designed the Danforth Chapel and several other buildings on the USD campus
- During WWII, he directed a training course for construction work in war industries
- After WWII, the Department of Applied Sciences was developed with Brookman as department chair
- In 1942, their family residence was 404 Cottage Avenue
- He served on the Vermillion City Council for six years and was also a city engineer
- Brookman Hall, a USD men’s dormitory, was built in his honor at a cost of \$565,000 in 1963
- He died in Yankton following a short term illness



Lillian (Lilly) Mae (Robinson) Collar

Oct. 5, 1863-May 29, 1940
Lot SW 976
76 years
Girl Scout Log Cabin

- Born on October 5, 1863, to Miner and Mary J. Robinson, early Clay County settlers from New York (1861)
- As a child, attended old log cabin school below the Vermillion bluffs, the first school building in Dakota Territory
- On April 5, 1881, she married William Augustus Collar, second oldest son of Benajar W. Collar, another pioneer family whose story is rich in Clay County history
- Five children were born to the couple, Roy, Wilda Mae, Grace, Lyle, and Kenneth
- She was a pioneer member of the first Baptist church in the Dakota Territory
- She was also affiliated with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York
- She was a charter member of the Log School House Association (LHSA) which included those who attended between 1864-1871
- In 1909, eight LSHA members formed the ‘76 Club with a purpose to “perpetuate early day Dakota history” and she served as president
- In 1933, the ‘76 Club financed and supervised the placement of the log cabin in Prentis Park, moving it from the Ufford farm
- Labor used to re-construct the cabin in the park was provided by the Civil Works Administration, part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal (1933-34)
- When the Works Progress Administration formed in 1935, many of these projects were absorbed
- The cabin was to be maintained by the ‘76 Club as “a monument to all the brave pioneers”. In more recent times the building became known as the Girl Scout House
- When she died at the age of 76 (happenstance), she was survived by her husband, her 5 children, 14 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren



Howard William Connors

July 12, 1917-Feb. 28, 2007
Calvary Block 41
89 years
Baseball Influencer

- The eldest son of Edward and Rose (Sheehan) Connors, he was born in Jefferson, SD, and was followed by siblings, Rosemary, Lois, Edward, and Margaret Anne
- His education journey included St Peter’s elementary, Jefferson HS, Southern State College (Springfield, SD) and a 1938 baccalaureate degree from USD in Mathematics, where he was an all-around athlete in basketball, football, and baseball
- In 1929, Vermillion organized their first municipal baseball team
- He earned a masters degree in Mathematics from USD
- He played professional baseball with the Sioux Falls Canaries for three seasons (1938-40). He met Babe Ruth at a Sioux Falls Barnstorming event in 1940
- He and Margaret Mary Schmitz were married on May 21, 1940 in Jefferson and the couple had six children, Patricia (passed away from pneumonia at 3), Mary Ann, Marjorie, Robert, Catherine, and Carla
- From 1938-43 he taught math at Jefferson HS and then at Vermillion HS, where he was also the principal at only 24
- From 1944-46, he entered the US Navy, completed officer training at Harvard University, and served in the Pacific Theatre on the USS Arctic as a petty officer
- Upon his return, he started a 40-year career at USD as a Mathematics faculty member, coach (basketball, track, and baseball), Arts & Sciences associate dean, and 12 years as the Dean of Men
- In May of 1948, lights were added to the baseball field allowing for night games for both baseball and high school football
- Margaret passed away in 2005 after a long illness
- He died not long after in Cedar Rapids, IA, where two of his daughters (Marjorie and Catherine) resided



John Edward, Sr & Anna M. (Hansen) Erickson

John: July 8, 1891-Sept. 12, 1947
Anna: June 6, 1893-Oct. 26, 1966
Lot: E 619
Prentis Park Caretaker

- John’s parents, Bernhard Sigward Erickson and Anna B Iverson, were 1865 immigrants from Trondheim, Norway
- John was born on July 8, 1891, in Norway Township, Clay County, SD, and had four siblings: Carl, Alma, Amanda and (Julian) Sigard
- Anna’s parents, Andrew Christian Hansen and Catherine Marie Asmussen, emigrated from Denmark and homesteaded in Norway Township., about three miles from the Erickson family
- Anna was born in Clay County on June 6, 1893 and had seven sisters: Tillie, Marie, Metha, Christina, Clara, Margaret, and Alice One infant brother, Hans, passed
- On Feb 20, 1913, the couple married at Bergen Lutheran Church which was likely where they met
- Over 19 years they had ten children—Sigward, Mildred, John Jr, Ernest, Clarence, Melvin, Anna Mae, Catherine, and Richard (Dutch)
- John was a tenant farmer, renting as many as seven different farms throughout the county, and three different houses in Vermillion
- He also was the custodian of Trinity Lutheran Church and Dakota Hospital
- In 1937, John was hired as the Prentis Park caretaker and the family moved into the brand-new caretaker house on the grounds. Eight children were still living at home in the 24’x24’ house
- Anna worked as a cook and laundress at the hospital
- On September 12, 1947, John passed away at 56 His obituary said, *“As caretaker of Prentis Park, he has worked hard and faithfully to make it the beautiful place it is today It will be hard to replace him”*
- In the fall of 1948, the city provided a home on the golf course for the family, but it was without running water. They had to bucket water from a cistern
- In March of 1949, Anna deeded her first home on 214 East Main where she ran a boarding house, rented rooms, and served meals to patrons
- Anna died at 73 after a long illness