



Varsity Bar

113 E Main ST

(Current Location)

Earnest (Ernie) T. Michels

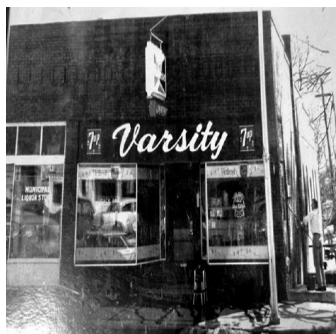
Cavalry 10, Lot 3, Space 6

(7/27/1900 – 4/21/1991)

- Born to William Sr. and Anna (Krouse) Michels, the youngest of three boys including William Jr and Frank
- He grew up in Vermillion, graduated from VHS
- Attended USD and while there enlisted in the Student Arm Training Corp.
- Ernie served in WWII and attained the rank of Corporal of the 24th Squad
- In 1925 he received his USD Law degree
- In 1929, Ernie and Gertrude (Finnell) were married. They had two sons, Thomas & James (the father of Matt Michels, SD lieutenant governor from 2011-19)
- Owner and operator of Varsity Bar and Michels Coffee Shop (near campus) in partnership with brother, Frank
- 1938-1952 Ernie was the owner and operator of Michels Motor Company followed by Michels Implement Company from 1951-1958
- From 1969-1972 he was a SD Circuit Court Judge
- On Dec. 19, 1972, Gertrude passed away.
- A man with many business hats, he was also an income tax preparer
- Charter member of the Vermillion Rotary Club
- Ernie was a member of St. Agnes Church and the Veterans of Foreign Wars

The Varsity Bar

- 1917 Michels Ice Cream Shop with George Sr.
- 1920 Michels Varsity Bar in partnership with Frank
- 1935 Michels Coffee Shop (brothers partnership)
- 1938 the Michels brothers sold
- 1952 Varsity was briefly called the Coyote Tavern



(Continued)

The Varsity Bar (continued)

- Other previous owners: Vern Christensen, Jeff Radigan, Scott Martinson, Doug Dwyer, Keith Myron, Mark Padoney (Husker), Butch Kiertzner, Scott Martinson, Greg & Grant Sammelson, and Diane Sammelson Wirth.
- The Varsity was inducted into *the 2022 SD Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* for hosting numerous bands and some national artists such as Sly Dog (Billy Ray Cyrus' band), Martha and the Vandellas, and the Hager Twins from Hee Haw.

Thanks to . . .

~ Bluff View Cemetery Board and the St. Agnes Cemetery Committee

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The mission of the Clay County (SD) Historical Society is to bring together 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 CCHS)

15 Austin Street

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
10:00-2:00 and by appointment.

605-624-8266

claycohistory@yahoo.com

www.cchssd.org



The Clay County Historical Society presents the Spoken History Cemetery Tour

“Getting Down to Business”

Monday, October 9, 2023
5:30 pm

Bluff View & Calvary
Cemeteries
Vermillion, SD



Burr Broom Factory

2309 N University AVE

(Merrigan home)

William D. Burr

Section E 358

2/17/1903-11/30/1985

- William S. Burr and Nellie (Donaldson) from Salineville, OH, were Bill's parents
- Raised in Vermillion and was a lifelong resident
- He was the sixth of seven children: siblings Frederick, Frances, Frank, Hazel, Viola and Grace
- Merrick, Bill's grandfather, homesteaded in Clay County in 1865 and was the original broom maker
- In the fall of 1886, Newton (great-uncle) was in business with Merrick, purchased new equipment, and launched manufacturing to increase production
- When Merrick passed in 1892, Newton formed a partnership with William S. Burr, who had traditionally farmed the broomcorn crop (type of sorghum)
- By this time the Burr Broom Factory was producing whisk, warehouse, household, and children's brooms
- In 1895, a two-story brick building was added to house additional equipment needed for the 30 acres farmed
- In 1897, seven tons of broomcorn was harvested using a crew of five additional workers during the winter.
- By 1901, because of increased demand, additional broomcorn and wooden handles had to be purchased outside Clay County and SD.
- In 1907, Newton moved to homestead near Quinn, SD, leaving William S. as sole proprietor
- Difficultly in raising broomcorn during draughts
- Bill, a 3rd generation broom maker, reopened the business upon requests and assumed management of the company in 1936 after his father passed
- He never married, had no children, and was a member of the Methodist Church
- Bill was a master gardener and an avid player/member of the Sioux Valley Horseshoe League
- After about 1977, no more broomcorn was grown
- Until 1983 about 2½ dozen brooms per day were manufactured
- The Burr Broom Factory legacy spanned 100+ years



G. Meisenholder Co.

1 Market Place

(Ratingen Platz)

Gottlieb W.

Meisenholder

Section SE Plot 202

12/03/1863-5/23/1957

- Gottlieb was born in Teplitza, Bessarabia, Russian Empire to (George) August and Elizabeth (Zacher)
- They immigrated in 1876 to New York and by 1877 he was living in SD
- He had three siblings named Fredericka, George Jr., Christina, and then three half-siblings: Lena, Otto George Johann and Elsa
- He and Elizabeth (Eberhardt) were married on Sept. 12, 1886, in Scotland, Bon Homme County, and they lived in Parkston for about 10 years
- The couple had 11 children: Clara, Bernhard, Edwlna, Paulina, Max, Julius, Paul, Walter, Edwin, Philo and Meta
- In 1916, Gottlieb built a craftsman-style family home from scratch at 316 University ST and later built a mid-century modern on 405 Canby ST
- The Vermillion business, previously known as Lee & Prentis which began operation in 1869, was purchased on April 1, 1919
- The 1920 census listed him as a hardware man
- With a department store concept, it was a one-stop shopping place where the whole family could be clothed, dry goods purchased, gifts bought, and the family pantry could be stocked with groceries
- In 1936, Christina passed and by that time the couple was living in Los Angeles, CA, with sons, Julius and Max
- After Gottfried retired, his children Bernhard (B.A.), Walter, and Paula operated the store until January 2, 1958 when it was closed
- By the 1940 census, Gottlieb was "unable to work"
- Gottlieb passed in CA and many websites have incorrectly listed his burial in Parkston



Jacobson's Bakery

7 E Main ST

(Mehlhaf Chiropractic)

Folmer F. Christensen

Plot 135A

4/25/1909-6/25/2000

- Born in Skiva, Denmark
- Folmer worked in three different bakeries in Denmark, learning three different skills and received a degree as a Master Baker
- He moved to Vermillion in 1929 as a baker for Jacobsen's (previously Fritz Lazz Bakery) and was considered to be a "Bakery Artist"
- Married Lola (Chamberlain) on March 10, 1934, and they had two sons: Folmer, Jr. "Nick" and Dan.
- In 1934, he introduced a bread slicing machine, which was the first in the area.
- While visiting the USA in 1941, the Danish Crown Prince sampled Folmer's "Weinerbrot" bread and the Prince said it was very good!
- The bakery proudly advertised a staff of 67 employees and Lola worked there, as well
- Noted that rationing in 1943 created "a bugaboo of shortages", the bakery still made the best baked goods
- In 1946, he purchased the bakery with Einar Laurtzen after Jacobson retired.
- Created "Brown and Serve" rolls (1949)
- In 1951, he was one of the first to begin twisting the bread, remodeled the bakery and was named to the President of State Bakers' Group
- Created a line of "New Candy" Cocomnut Fluffs, fudge varieties, and divinity.
- By 1950, he and Lola built a house at 124 Willow
- When Laurtzen retired in 1961, Folmer bought out the partnership and was sole owner of the bakery.
- In 1967, bread was still 28¢ a loaf, or two for 55¢
- Retired in 1972
- Folmer served on the Dakota Hospital Board, was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Eagles, Lions Club, and Senior Citizens' Center
- He co-chaired Lion's Club's "Pancake Days" to raise money for the new W.H. Over



Lotze & Fisher Jewelry

3 W Main ST

(Treasure Trove)

Charles (C.F.) Lotze

Section E 478 3W

2/22/1857-4/28/1930

- Born in Trumbull County, OH to George, a German-born pharmacist, and Catherine (Keck), the second child of seven
- In 1875 he headed west on his way to 'discover gold', but settled in Michigan and became a jeweler
- After arriving in Vermillion in 1879, he and C.C. Bridgeman became business partners below the bluff
- After the 1881 flood, they rebuilt on Market Street
- In 1883, Severson Grocery burned (Main & Union)
- October 10, 1885, he married Martha (Mattie Hurd) who had taught in public school. They had four children - Hazel, Marie, Laura, and a baby boy lost in 1897
- By 1887, Lotze and J.E. Fisher (Canton, SD) were partners selling everything from stationery to jewelry and from sewing machines to pianos
- In 1890 the Market ST shop burned down and a brick building was built at 3 E Main ST (Treasure Trove)
- In 1899, a new family home replaced a previous house at 208 Forest Avenue, now home to seven apartments
- When the Vermillion Hose Company No. 1 was formed in 1892, C.F. was its first chief
- Treasurer for the newly formed Vermillion Commercial Club (VCDC precursor) in 1910
- Member of the Congregational Christian Church and Incense Lodge #2 member
- In 1926, Mattie passed away while in Rochester due to surgical complications, and at some point, Marie's family moved into the 208 Forest Street home with him
- He never drove an automobile, rarely rode in one but had a fondness for horses and horse races
- Passed away from a heart attack in the back room of his store while working on the books
- At the time of his death, C.F. was the only jeweler in SD, one of the few in the northwest, and had been operating for over 50 years

