



Austin-Whittemore House

Home of the

Clay County Historical Society
15 Austin, Vermillion SD 57069
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Fall/Winter Newsletter - Nov 2012

News from President Tom Thaden

Many improvements were made at the Austin-Whittemore House over the summer. Board members Marvin Walz and Gary Bottolfson washed many of the windows as well as helped clean up some of the excessive vegetation on the grounds. Marvin painted and fixed the sign in front of the house. CCHS member Marion Kryger replaced the flag for the house. Different board members all pitched in and helped paint the porch of the house in time for Dakota Days.

OLD LOG CABIN SCHOOLHOUSE.....

The Clay County Historical Preservation Commission (CCHPC) has teamed up with the Clay County Historical Society (CCHS) in an effort to get the old log cabin schoolhouse listed on either the State or National Register of Historic Places. Throughout its history in four different locations, the old log schoolhouse has served to help educate the citizens and schoolchildren of Vermillion and the surrounding area. When Dr. W.H. Over came up with this idea in 1938, it brought together everyone in the community, including the instructors and students at the University of South Dakota, the businesspeople of Vermillion who donated money for the projects, and prominent citizens of the city who served on the committee. Ever since then, the building has remained intact, although relocated many times and repaired to look like new each time it was moved. As Vermillion was the site of the first permanent schoolhouse in Dakota Territory and Rachael Ross (Austin) was one of the first teachers, it is only just that the old log schoolhouse finally be given a permanent home on the SW corner of the Austin-Whittemore property. Both the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission and Clay County Historical Society will take part in this project to once again give Vermillion's students the opportunity to learn about the early education history of the city and what it was like to attend class in a one room log cabin schoolhouse.



In August, Jim Stone, who is doing the Barn Documentation project for the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) came upon something that was also of interest to the Clay County Historical Society. Jim was told that someone had the stage curtain from the Garfield Township Hall inside their barn. What was unique about the curtain, though, is that it is made of canvas and is painted by hand to look like a real stage curtain.



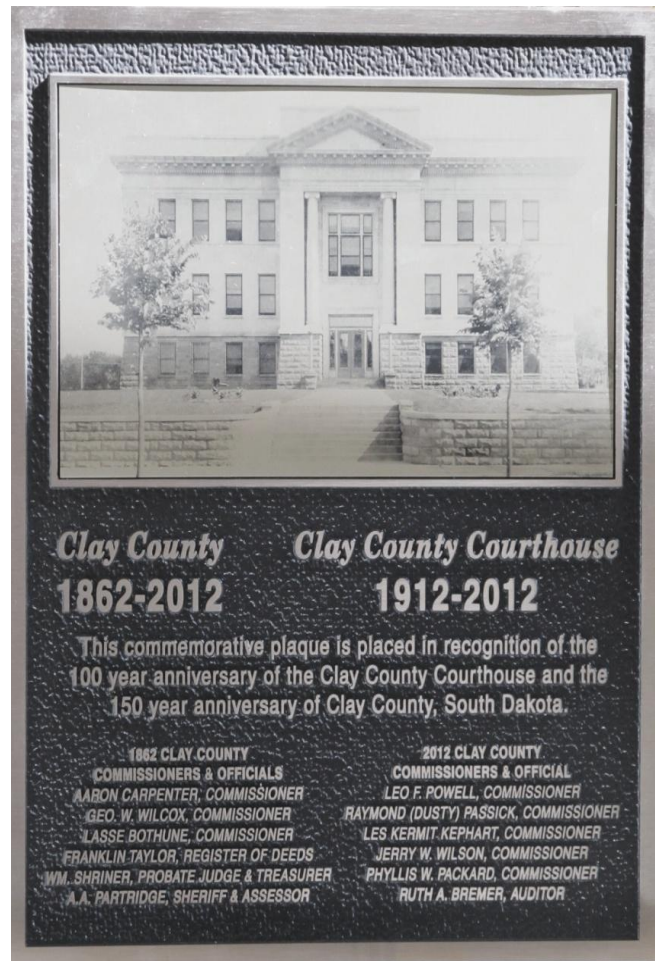
Garfield Township Hall Stage Curtain

Of special interest to the CCHS is that the curtain also has the hand painted advertisements for 29 different businesses in in Clay County. The only business that is still in operation is Davis Drug. Although it was quite dusty and had a tear in the middle, the curtain is going to be restored at the W.H. Over Museum and then displayed on a wall for all to see.



Garfield Township Hall Stage Curtain Advertisement

On September 21, 2012 there was a commemoration ceremony held for the 100th birthday of the Clay County Courthouse and the 150th anniversary of the founding of Clay County, named after Henry Clay. The ceremony that started at 5:30 PM on the front lawn and entrance of the Courthouse was attended by about 200 citizens. Leo Powell, Clay County Commissioner gave a short opening speech and dedicated a plaque commemorating both events. Jim Wilson, President of the CCHPC followed with an introduction to the Clay County Courthouse centennial book, copies of which were available from the CCHS. Judge Arthur Rusch then discussed the history of courts in Clay County, the building of the Courthouse and its unique characteristics. He also went over a history of the judges in Clay County and odd goings on at the Courthouse over its 100 year history.



Clay County Courthouse 2012



Laying of the Corner Stone at the Clay County Courthouse

News from the Office

The month of September becomes a busy time at the Historical Society and October continues with more out of town visitors and researchers.

This past week a member of the Jordan family who lives in Illinois, came by to research her family. In our files we have two large books of the Jordan family history. She was delighted to find a way to answer so many of her questions about the family. As we have the Bluff View Cemetery records on file in our office, she was able to find and visit the graves of her relatives. She was quite surprised to learn that her relative, Peter Jordan, had once owned the property and sold it to the Cemetery Association many years ago.

Other visitors have come from Baltimore, Maryland, Seattle, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon to find their ancestors.

Dakota Day is always an interesting day at the Austin Whittemore House when the Dignitaries and other important people gather for coffee and rolls while awaiting their rides in the parade. This year we met Mr. & Mrs. Tom Brokaw who were Parade Marshalls for the Dakota Day Parade. Other guests included former USD Presidents, Dr. and Mrs. Richard Bowen and Dr. Charles and Mrs. Lien. The Bowens now live in Idaho and the Liens live in Louisiana. Several acquisitions have been given to us the past months. Dr. Carl Christol Jr's family sent family history and photos to us. Dr. Christol was a brother of one of our charter members, Mr. Max Christol.

Mrs. James Olson gifted to us the wedding dress of her Mother, Hazel Jensen who married Chester Dean in July of 1935 and the wedding dress of her husband's Grandmother, Christine Anderson who married Fred Olson in May of 1898.

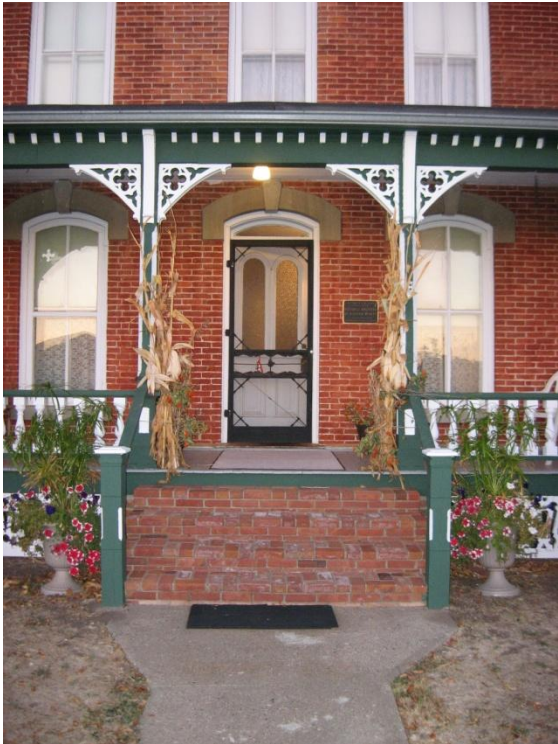
Several photos of the Ole Bervin family were received from Kristin Rydholm of Chicago, Ill. and the obituary of Lewis and Julia Bervin, parents of Ole Bervin. Julia passed away in July of 1936 and at that time she was the oldest living person in Clay County.

Another envelope was received from Denver, Colorado with three post card photos of the Dredge Boats used on the Vermillion River in the early 1900's. The sender did not include their name but we thank whoever thought of getting them back to Clay County.

The gift of four framed photos of the Vermillion area was recently received from Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Willroth, Sr. We thank Bill and Joan for the fine gift of local history.

The last gift received to date is the history of The Vermillion Saddle Club. Three large notebooks of minutes of their meetings, membership rolls, posters used to advertise their events and much more information about the Club is now stored in our history files.

We would like to extend a big thank you to Leo Powell for the fall decorations of pumpkins, gourds, watermelons, corn and corn stalks that he donated. It really did add so much to the house for Dakota Days.



Christmas time will soon be here. Please watch for announcements of our events. On December 1st we will be giving away a beautiful quilt. Anyone interested in purchasing a chance to win the quilt may stop by the Austin-Whittemore House. The chances are \$5.00 each or \$12.00 for three. The quilt top was made in the 1930's and was recently quilted. The quilt has never been used.

By popular demand, the CCHS will have its Sweets and Treats Saturday, December 8th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Austin-Whittemore House, 15 Austin Street. Everyone is welcome to come and select their own Christmas treats from our large selection of homemade cookies, bars, breads and other goodies.

The Tour of Homes will not be held this year but please watch for the other activities to be held at the Austin-Whittemore this Winter.

Cleo Erickson
CCHS Board of Director

Clay County Historical Society Receives Award

Early in the morning on April 24, Tom Thaden, Cleo Erickson, and Maxine Johnson left Vermillion [chauffeured by Paul Erickson] for Pierre to receive an award from the South Dakota State Historical Society historical preservation. The award was presented at a luncheon which was held at the Pierre Ramkota. Cleo graciously accepted the award on behalf of the Clay County Historical Society and gave a brief overview of the work which is carried out by the CCHS. In her remarks, Cleo mentioned the many individuals who come to the Austin-Whittemore House, or inquire by mail, e-mail, or phone, seeking information on their ancestors. She mentioned the extensive collection of obituaries, photographs, and newspaper articles as well as family artifacts which are housed in the A-W House. This was one of four awards presented on that day – our Clay County Historical Society received this award for all of its efforts. I would like to take this time to duly recognize Cleo Erickson; without her steadfast dedication and devotion, most of this work would not be done and I would like to express appreciation on behalf of all the members and of those who have been assisted in their family research by Cleo.

Maxine Johnson
CCHS Vice President

Dress Forms: The Clay County Historical Society is in need of dress forms. They can be old, used or whatever anyone would have to donate to us. We need more forms for displaying wedding dresses and other items of clothing.



Note of Interest: This old wooden water line was dug up when the CCHS replaced the sewer line early Fall.



74" SQUARE VINTAGE QUILT DONATED

The appliqued quilt top was crafted pre-February 1940 by sisters, Mrs. George (Josie) Scott and Mrs. Den (Millie) Geary of Vermillion. It was donated to the Clay County Historical Society by Josie's grand-daughter, Luann Ouellette.

Earlier this year Pauline Grossman of Vermillion did the backing and quilting.



Josie and Millie

Josie and Millie were known to quilt most week-day afternoons. When Millie died in February 1940, Josie was not known to have resumed quilting. Unfinished quilts and quilt tops were found packed away in Josie's home after her move to the Vermillion Nursing Home in September 1966.



Pre-1940 Quilt

The CCHS will hold a drawing for the quilt December 1st at the Austin-Whittemore House .

Happy Holidays!

From the CCHS Board:

Tom Thaden, President

Maxine Johnson, Vice President

Judy Sullivan, Secretary

Luann Ouellette, Treasurer

Gloria Hensley, Past President

Cleo Erickson, Director

Ann Severson, Director

Joe Hoffman, Director

Gary Bottolfson, Director

Marvin Walz, Director

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 \$35.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 37.64 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$35.00 + 5.00 shipping/handling to other states

History of Dakota Territory ... originally published in 1869 and 1870. 125 pages

A history of the Territory of Dakota tells about the Homestead land and the towns in the area. It describes the location of timber land, steam mills, water, and the climate and soil. It's a good source for those looking at the area.

Price \$15.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 16.13 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$15.00 + 5.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 \$5.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 5.38 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$5.00 + 3.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 \$12.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 12.90 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$12.00 + 5.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 \$15.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 16.13 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$15.00 + 5.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 \$7.00 + 7.5% tax = \$ 7.53 / add \$ 5.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses

Price \$7.00 + 5.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 + 7.5% tax = \$10.75 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses
Price \$10.00 + 3.00 shipping & handling to other states

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

Price \$10.00 + 7.5% tax = \$10.75 / add \$ 3.00 shipping & handling to SD addresses
Price \$10.00 + 3.00 shipping & handling to other states

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 either SD addresses or addresses in other states

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**TO ORDER:**

please make check payable to Clay County Historical Society, Inc.

and mail to 15 Austin St.  
Vermillion, SD 57069

At this time, we do not have the capability to accept debit or credit card charges. We're sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

**QUERIES**

Questions, such as shipping and handling costs outside the United States, please contact the Historical Society at the address above or

phone 605-624-8266 e-mail [claycohistory@yahoo.com](mailto:claycohistory@yahoo.com) website [www.cchssd.org](http://www.cchssd.org)

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Check out the [Clay County Historical Society](http://www.cchssd.org) website for upcoming events, links to other interesting historical websites, to order historical books and for new or renewal membership forms.

Please note that 2013 membership dues are due April 1st.

Clay County Historical Society

Membership Application / Renewal

Membership Year is April 1 – March 31*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

_____ Individual Member:	\$ 15.00	_____ Family Membership:	\$ 25.00
_____ Institutional:	\$ 50.00	_____ Life Member/per person:	\$200.00

Please mail check payable to Clay County Historical Society, Inc.

And mail to
CCHS
15 Austin Street
Vermillion, SD 57069

If you have questions about membership or the Society, please call us at
(605) 624-8266 or e-mail us at claycohistory@yahoo.com or write to us
at the above address.

***NOTE:**

In a revised opinion, we were able to revert to the CCHS Fiscal Year being April 1-March 31.

Any news you'd like to share?

Clay County/Vermillion area surnames of interest to you
