Joint Newsletter of the
W. H. Over Museum,
Clay County Historic Preservation Commission,
and the Clay County Historical Society

Clay County, Vermillion, South Dakota Fall 2024

INSIDE THIS EDITION

W. H. OVER MUSEUM

CLAY COUNTY HISTORIC COMMISSION

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

W. H. Over Museum Notes

Chili Blues are back! The W. H. Over Museum will be assuming the responsibilities of this annual event on Sunday, October 6, at the beginning of Dakota Days week. The last Chili Blues was over five years ago when it was hosted by the Vermillion Area Arts Council (VAAC) and held at the Washington Street Arts Center. The VAAC is now merging with the Vermillion Cultural Association (VCA). W. H. Over will host Chili Blues from 5:00 to 9:00 in Sletwold Hall. We are still looking for event sponsors and for dessert contributions. There will be live music by Tim Snow.

We will again put up military displays in November in honor of Veteran's Day and all who have served in the U.S. military. Last year three local vets loaned the museum their collections for the exhibit, as did several other area residents. Please spread the word to other vets or families who would be willing to put material on display for November. We had the four major services represented last year, but we did not have any items from the U. S. Coast Guard or Merchant Marine!

Two events for our membership to participate in is the Annual Meeting and Rhubarb Days. The annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 19, this coming year. We will be voting on revised by-laws and new officers. We also plan on having the silent auction again on Rhubarb Day next summer, so start gathering your items! Rhubarb Day will be held on Sunday afternoon, June 1, 2025.

Please note - we are always looking for volunteers! Michaella Hesman, the work-study student who started with us in June, has written an article on the Heikes Dollhouse. Our volunteer Andrew Granaas comes in once a week and is helping to enhance the agricultural display and exhibit labels. And finally, we will be closed on all Saturdays that USD plays a home football game at the Dome due to parking availability.

The Heikes Dollhouse

Michaella Hesman

The Heikes Dollhouse (Cat. No 2013.42.01) is a miniature of the Heikes family farmhouse made by Kathryn (Kay) Anne Thoreson Heikes in the early 1980s. Kay was born on September 20, 1928 in Dell Rapids, SD. Her parents, Swede and Marie (Hanson) Thoreson, were Scandinavian, mainly Norwegian. Kay graduated from Beresford High School in 1945 and then went to college at the University of South Dakota until December 27, 1946 when she married her husband Russel (Russ) Heikes at Beresford. Kay became a farmer's wife and lived on a farm about a mile away from the current location of the W.H. Over Museum with her husband Russ and their two children. Kay returned to the University of South Dakota to become a nurse after her sons had grown up and received her nursing degree from the University of South Dakota in 1972 at the age of 44. She worked as a registered nurse for many years and at many places before retiring from nursing in 1995. Kay Heikes died January 7, 2003 at the Sioux Valley Vermillion Hospital at the age of 74.

Along with being a nurse and farmer's wife, Kay became a master quilter, baker, wood carver, and needle artist. Kay put her wood carving talents on display at the Northwest Iowa's Woodcarvers' Show and Competition held in Sioux City on March 15, 2000. Those that knew Kay mentioned that when she began a new carving, she would look at the piece of wood and say "…and there's a whale in this wood"! Before you knew it a whale appeared just like she said. This wood carving talent can be seen by looking at the

Exterior view of the doll house

The attic we just discovered!

dollhouse, the furniture, the four small people and the clown in the display. When you look inside the dollhouse you will notice that Kay added pictures of people, farm scenes, and silhouettes that have been shrunk down to fit inside small frames and placed in certain areas or rooms. Some of the pictures are of Kay's family and of the farm she lived on, some are relatives of other people she knew, and the silhouettes are of famous people like George and Martha Washington. She hung this dollhouse in her kitchen and referred to it as "my small world". Kay also decorated it appropriately for each holiday. Today the sunroom has been left decorated for Christmas because that was her favorite holiday.

The Heikes family farmhouse that the dollhouse is modelled on is a specialty house called a Kit House and it is just one of many that were built between 1908 and 1942 by Sears, Roebuck and Co. through their project called "Modern Homes". These houses were purchased by homeowners through a specialty Sears catalog. All the supplies for each kit house would then be shipped to the homeowner by train, which was the primary form of transport for these houses. The homeowner could then build the home using an instruction booklet or hire a contractor. Every piece of the house was labeled and crafted for each specific house design so that the homeowner or contractor would just have to put it together like a puzzle. Sears, Roebuck and Co. built over 63,000 homes ranging from Individual Homes to Home Club Developments during the 34 years of the "Modern Homes" project. However, this project officially ended sometime in 1942 due to the war-time restrictions placed on the sale of materials for these Kit Houses.

Inside view of the doll house with Heikes family photos.

The Heikes dollhouse was gifted to the W.H. Over Museum in 2009. Soon after it was acquired Gene Iverson, Ken Wurtz, and John Spurlock built the display case. The exterior areas of the display were cleaned and decorated by Maxine Johnson. Recently the Heikes families came to the W.H. Over Museum to show Kay's grandchildren and great-grandchildren the farmhouse replica.

Our New Front Lobby


Join us for the
W. H. Over Museum's
Chili Blues
COOK OFF!
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6TH
5PM - 9PM IN SLETWOLD HALL
Make the best chili to win prizes
The Chili Blues cook off competition will be judged by attendees. Bring your appetite and your best chili recipe! $15 adults, $10 for students, $5 for ages 6-12 and children under 6 eat free. There will be LIVE MUSIC and prizes!
NO ENTRY FEE
CONTACT US AT
WHOVER@USD.EDU TO ENTER
For more information:
www.whovermuseum.org
605-659-6151
Vermillion Area Arts Council
Washington Street Art Center
vermillion
CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
United Way

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 2023-2024

Larry Bradley
(President)

David Moen
(First Vice President)

Lynn Muller
(Second Vice President)

William Ranney
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Maxine Johnson
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Pat Gross

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Bianaca Krus

Kevin Jacobson

Calvin Brink

Erin Wohletz

United Way

Message from Maxine

One of the oldest holiday celebrations in Vermillion – perhaps the oldest – is the annual Christmas festival sponsored by the Friends of the Over Museum and held each year on the first Sunday in December (unless that weekend falls after Thanksgiving). We invite local crafts people to present their products for sale or to demonstrate their craft. We are always amazed at the multitude of talent in our area. This year's festival will be on December 8 from 1-4:30 p.m. We also include the best bake sale in the state, a growing hospitality table, a space to relax and visit, an array of talent in Sletwold Hall, 4-H members helping our young visitors create something to take home, and a spectacular display of Christmas trees in the "Time to Remember" gallery. The museum is always filled with visitors who enjoy this day. If you would like to have a table or space, please let us know and we'll happily include you!

As we begin to look forward to fall, there are other events that we traditionally present and we try to celebrate holidays such as Hallowe'en and Valentine's Day by having activities that children can enjoy. Hallowe'en finds us carving pumpkins and just plain having a fun afternoon. Valentine's Day will find us in the One-Room School space and that's when we create a Valentine's Day party from yesteryear and create cards to deliver to Sanford's Vermillion Care Center or to include with Meals on Wheels deliveries.

We also celebrate Veterans' Day with an exhibit in Sletwold Hall honoring our veterans. One of the events we are looking forward to planning in the year to come is our membership banquet in January. We also would like to plan a day of having some of our exhibits showcased including the Baseball Exhibit and Viginia Johnson's dolls. We also have new replica wheels on the Civil War cannon that need to be appreciated.

Some other possible events include traveling exhibits that will require some fundraising and sponsorship. On July 27, a workshop dubbed "Not Just for Kids" was held that gave both children and adults the chance to emulate a display like the one now on exhibit in Sletwold Hall. The exhibit was created by Fine Arts professor Jon Banasiak and utilizes just about any tiny object that can be glued down! It was a fun one. We also plan to resurrect Chili Blues and have that tasty cookoff this fall to coincide with Dakota Days. We are open every day Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. and visitors are always welcome – we have a bottomless coffee pot, a playroom for the kids and guest book to sign.

Maxine Johnson

W. H. Over Museum

GIFT SHOP

OPEN
MON-SAT
10AM-4PM

BEAD SUPPLIES
BOOKS
JEWELRY
ORIGINAL ART
NUMBERED PRINTS

One of a kind art and gifts

1110 University St, Vermillion, SD
605-659-6151
whover@usd.edu

W. H. OVER MUSEUM'S ANNUAL

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

08

DECEMBER

1PM - 4:30PM

HANDMADE CRAFTS,
GIFT VENDORS & FOOD

1110 University Street, Vermillion, SD
Email: whover@usd.edu
Phone: 605-659-6151

Two New CCHPC Publications

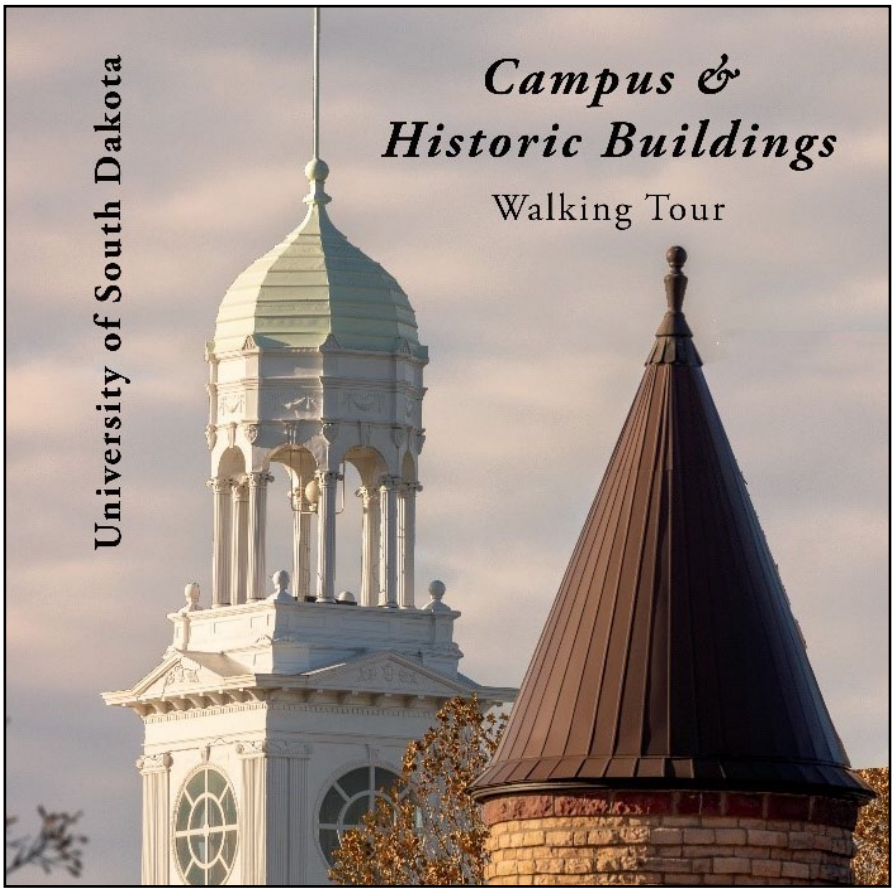
The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission announces the two books hot off the press. The first book written by Tim Schreiner describes a new walking tour book of the entire campus of the University of South Dakota (USD) including two buildings, Cook House and the President's House, not located on campus but integral to the function and history of the university. Tim includes narratives about each structure as well as color photographs he took. Maps show the location of each structure and suggested tours.

Aside from describing and depicting standing structures, Tim includes black and white photographs of buildings that are no longer present on campus. Photographs and background information was gleaned from USD Archives and Special Collections, the Clay County Historical Society Archives, an inventory of USD structures compiled by Michelle Dennis, and several books about the history of the university.

The second book "A Campus Walk with Rabbit, was written by Evelyn Schlenker and illustrated by Rebecca Gehm, is a children's tour book of the historic buildings and structures primarily in the southern portion of the USD campus.

The book describes how a retired USD professor walking his dog, Rabbit, and two elementary aged children, Alexa and Henry view characteristics of buildings and structures they encounter during their walk on the USD campus. With the help of the professor, the children learn a little about each structure. In the meantime, Rabbit, excited to chase squirrels and possibly bunnies, adds humor to the book. A map at the end of the book denotes the structures the group visit and the route they take.

The two books are available in digital versions on the Clay County Historic Preservation website and in print at the W. H. Over Museum and the Austin-Whittemore house.



Cover of the new walking tour book.

The illustration shows Rabbit near a stone marking the location of the razed Science Hall building. The Pardee-Estee Laboratory (Chemistry) building is in the background.

Belbas Center aka the Old Armory, Gymnasium, "The Bastille," "The Castle," and Girls Gym on the USD campus

Perhaps no University of South Dakota (USD) building has had more names associated with it than what is now called Belbas Center. Belbas is one of two buildings on the USD campus on the National Register of Historic Places: the other is Old Main. Constructed in 1905, the building served was the campus armory.

The Ricardson Romanesque style three story structure, designed by architects Kinney and Detweiler, is composed of quartzite up to the windows and brick to the second floor. Turrets located on the southeast and southwest corners of the building give it the appearance of a castle. The third floor composed of wood and brick featured an additional gymnasium space.

The distinctive structure was known as "The Bastille" and the "Castle on Campus." In addition to providing space for the military and athletic departments, its spacious first floor gymnasium was the site of many parties, celebrations, banquets and dances. During World War I the building served as an army training facility and barracks. After the "New Armory" (now Al Neuharth Media Center) was built in 1929, the Castle became known variously as the "Old Gym" or the "Girls Gym." For many years prior to the 1980s, students played intramural sports in the building.

In the 1980s it served as Facilities' Management shop. On October 31, 2002, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places (https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/74abffb5-8105-4e36-b5da-d6600c7b74bf). Subsequently, it was renovated in 2004 to house Student Services. Belbas Center was named for Dean Belbas, a 1956 USD alum, former vice president of General Mills, and a former chairman of the board of the USD Foundation.

Front view of Belbas Center
Photograph by Tim Schreiner.

A rear view of Belbas Center showing a wooden third floor structure with brick work on the east and west sides.
Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker.

The End of an Era: Austin and Jolley Elementary Schools No Longer Schools

May 16, 2024, marked the last day of classes for Austin and Jolley Elementary school children. In the Fall of 2024 students attend a new elementary school serving pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students adjacent to the Middle School.

Jolley and Austin schools were built in 1954. Additions and changes to the schools occurred in the 1990s. Austin School replaced the two-story brick West Side/Austin School built in 1897, expanded in 1911 and razed in the 1950s. The land that the current Austin School occupied was donated to the City of Vermillion by Rachal Ross Austin to develop a park in memory of her husband Horace Austin, an early Vermillion pioneer.

Before the most recent Jolley School, a two-story brick East Side/Jolley School was built in 1902-1903 on land to the north of Jolley school and expanded in 1911. After no longer serving as a school the older building was used for counselling and hearing and speech clinics. It was razed in the early 1980's and the land used as a soccer field. The playground was a popular place for neighborhood children.

Austin School will take on a new role as the home of the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Plains in Vermillion. By contrast, the Vermillion School District with a memorandum of agreement donated Jolley School and surrounding lots to the City of Vermillion who plans to raze the building. It should be noted that Jolley School is a contributory structure in the Jolley Historic District (https://history.sd.gov/preservation/docs/Jolley%20Historic%20District_board%20draft_2022July.pdf). Proposed uses of the land include lots for houses and a pocket park on the south side of the parcel.

Prior to the closure of both schools, Tim Schreiner took pictures of the exterior and interior of both schools.

Austin School exterior view

Austin School exterior view entrance

Austin School Library Classroom

Jolley School Classroom

CCHPC

Clay County Historic Preservation Commission

211 West Main Street, Suite 102
Vermillion, SD 57069
Website: cchpc.org
Email:tomsesq@gmail.com

Clay County Historic Preservation Commission Board Members

Tim Schreiner (Chair)

Jim Wilson (Vice-Chair)

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Evelyn Schlenker (Secretary)

Jim Stone

William Ranney

Dennis Konkler

Monica Iverson

Constance Krueger

Brendyn Richards

CCHPC Requests Nominations for Preservation Awards

The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) is seeking nominations for historic properties and buildings in Clay County that have been renovated and/or maintained over time for Preservation Awards. Awards are given to individuals and/or organizations. Awardees will be selected by the CCHPC based on the information about the structure including what the structure is, when it was built, who built it, what it is or was used for, and who owns it.

Please send information regarding a property or structure that you wish to nominate to Evelyn.Schlenker@usd.edu. Your input is important!

Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission Update: August 2024

In March of each year the Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission completes its CLG (Certified Local Government) grant applications to fund projects for the following year to the South Dakota Historic Preservation Office/ National Park Service. A major VHPC's FY25 project is the development of a website to inform the public about Vermillion's historic districts and properties and help answer Vermillion citizens with questions about historic preservation.

In May, VHPC Chair Susan Keith Gray attended the 2024 state CLG Historic Preservation conference at the Old Courthouse Museum in Sioux Falls. The Sioux Falls hosts showcased many historic preservation success stories. A walk through the downtown historic districts culminated in the keynote presentation held in the historic State Theater on S. Phillips Avenue. South Dakota native Donavan Rypkema, founder of Place Economics of Washington, D.C., spoke on *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation*. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Cathedral historic district in Sioux Falls. Participants were treated to tours of four district buildings and the Pettigrew Home and Museum. Field trips to the Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum highlighted the East Sioux Falls historic site on its grounds. A special presentation outlined the often-overlooked African American heritage in Sioux Falls. It was enlightening to see how other communities promote historic preservation and to visit with representatives from the whole state of South Dakota.

On an ongoing basis, the commissioners review a variety of exterior construction permits requested on historic district buildings or individual historic buildings in Vermillion. We make recommendations to the Vermillion Building Official concerning if a change will "…encroach upon, damage or destroy…" a historic property. Most often, permits are for windows, roofs, siding, fences, garages, signs, etc. Recently, the commissioners worked with the city to establish design guidelines for new building construction within the proposed Jolley Planned Development District located within the Jolley Historic District.

The Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission's mission is *"…to protect, preserve, and restore Vermillion's historic and cultural assets through public education, workshops, and outreach to the community*.' It 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. Interested residents of the city of Vermillion may apply annually (August/September) at the city website. Current commissioners are Susan Keith Gray, chair, Erin Beyers, Cyndy Chaney, Bill Dendinger, Carson Merkwan, Dietrik Vanderhill, and Jim Wilson.

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
- Story of Austin-Whittermore House
- List of pictorial books and maps of Vermillion and the Clay County area
- Officers/Directors

MEMBERSHIP DUES
January 1, 2024
Membership Dues are:
Individual $25
Family $40
Business/Organization $75
Individual Lifetime $250

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CCHS Elected Board of Directors:
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
President - Dan Christopherson
Vice President - Kevin Jacobson
Recording Secretary - Constance Krueger
Membership Secretary - Ruth Bylander
Treasurer - Kathleen Kavanaugh
Past President - Maxine Johnson
Directors - Jim Stone, Art Rusch, Judy Sullivan, Tom Sorensen, Katie Heine, Joni Freidel, Barb Campbell

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Appointed Positions
Executive Director Wess Pravecek
CCHPC Representative Jim Stone

From the Desk…

It's September so I guess we can say that summer is in the rearview mirror. We've probably all participated in ice cream socials, family picnics, some sort of vacation and a trip to the pharmacy for a bottle of calamine lotion. The bugs have had a good summer, too. What I love most about Clay County is that many of the summer events that I took part in as a kid are still happening, maybe in a little more "slick" fashion but still happening. The local swimming hole is now a really nice pool but the swimming lessons are still available and the kids are still splashing and laughing and wearing off lots of energy. Local libraries are open for kids to continue with their love of reading and there are fun projects to go along with the summer theme. Summer rec offers all kinds of things for kids to take part in and then there's BASEBALL. If you didn't play this past summer, you may have at some point in your life and never lost the love for it. Don't forget about the community theatre. I don't know of anything else in Vermillion that involves more age groups. Whether you are an actor, tailor, carpenter, musician, set designer, you name it, the theatre has a place where you can fit in. If you've never gone to one of the performances, you've really missed out. The Clay County Fair is another institution in the county that all ages enjoy. My brother used to show sheep, my sisters and I sewed, baked and put together projects with my mother hovering over our shoulders making sure we made the deadlines. It was a time when we could get aquainted with kids from all over the county and wrap up the summer with fun-filled style.

The Austin-Whittemore House holds lots of photos and stories of these summers of the past. I try to include photos on our Facebook page that may bring back some memories. We continue to have visitors come through the A-W House just to see what this beautiful house looks like. When folks find out that we have all sorts of resources about the county, which include photos, obituaries, volumes of old newspapers, cemetery records, VHS and USD yearbooks, information about the county's history and growth, we feel the guests can see that there's real historic value residing in this home museum.

This coming fall and winter, we will offer more events that will add to the community's history. On Monday, October 14th, we will be hosting our 7th annual Spoken History Cemetery Tour - _Enigmatic Headstones?_. Our goal for this event from the very first year was to share information about the people who have come before us. If there's some entertainment that goes along with this, so be it! After a four-year hiatus, the Holiday Tour of Homes will start up again on Friday, December 6th. We have five wonderful families who have graciously agreed to decorate early and open their homes and share their holiday traditions. We hope that you will consider supporting these events by attending. These projects help to financially support the Clay County Historical Society and its mission to provide a place where interested people can find some of the county's history. For more information on the Austin-Whittemore House, please feel free to contact me at 605-624-8266 or www.claycohistory@yahoo.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Have a wonderful autumn and holiday season!!

Wess Pravecek, Executive Director
Austin-Whittemore House

Mark your calendar for the 2024 Spoken History Cemetery Tour

"Enigmatic Epitaphs: Unusual Headstones"

Monday, October 14 – 5:30 PM

In the realm of remembrance, headstones serve as enduring tributes to lives that have passed. However, there's a subtle detail often overlooked—the deep symbolism carved into these stones. Far more than just decoration, these symbols can reveal a person's story. From a column representing a noble life lived to a tree stump indicating life interrupted, each symbol holds its own significance. These carvings reveal tales of resilience and faith in an existence beyond death.

In Richard D. Harnois' master's thesis, "Gone to a Better Land: A Study of Gravestone Forms, Art, and Symbolism," he investigates the development and significance of designs, art, and symbols. This research includes local insights from his native Vermillion, which will be highlighted during the tour. We will share the hidden stories of these former Clay County residents and their unusual headstones:

1. Joseph H. Hinchliff (1834-1908)
2. Mary (Hills) Lyon (~1833-1892)
3. Charles S. Overhulse (1874-1894)
4. John N. Rabusch (1867-1918)
5. Niels Urup (1918-1996)

Ticket reservations or $20 tour donations are available until Friday, October 11th at the Austin-Whittemore House which is open on M, W, F from 10:00-2:00. At the cemetery, walk-ins will be accommodated on a space available basis.

Rain or shine - mark your calendars for Monday, October 14, at 5:30 pm at the Bluff View/Calvary Cemetery (599 Pinehurst Avenue).

Holiday Tour of Homes

The Clay County Historical Society's Tour of Homes is back! After having taken a hiatus since 2019, this festive annual event is getting back up to speed and plans are under way. This year's event will be held Friday, December 6th from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. followed by a reception starting at 7:00 p.m. at the beautifully decorated Austin-Whittemore House located at 15 Austin Street. Thanks to the 5 wonderful homes that will be on this year's tour. They are as follows:

The Lambda Chi
Max Anderson, President
327 N. Pine St.

The Main Street Inn
Courtney & Carson Merkwan
221 E. Main St.

Carol Sanderson Home
18 Forest Ave.

Darcy and Russ Olson Home
302 Lewis St.

Jessica and Tyler Messersmith Home
308 O'Keefe Ave. (Bliss Pointe)

Tickets may be purchased at the Austin-Whittemore House at 15 Austin Street, Davis Pharmacy at 5 West Cherry and with Lisa Johnson at the Spa at Wynie Maes 25 West Main Street. Ticket sales will start on November 11th. The price per ticket is $25.00. Hosts will check off their home on the ticket as guests enter their home. This ticket is also to be used for the reception. Thank you for supporting the Clay County Historical Society and Happy Holidays!

Wase' wakpa

August 1, 2024

By Tom Sorensen, CCHS Board Member

INTRODUCTION: Fortunate is the person who enjoys friendly access to those who know about a variety of topics and keeps open doors of factual discovery. Whether knowledgeable in researching cultural history or having the education, talents and communication skills to provide factual, scientific layers of local knowledge, friends are valuable on any level. This article has been trimmed to a length reasonable enough to be included in a periodic newsletter, but the vast information and resources of those providing oral and written history might be compared to the interesting and revealing layers of the soil and rock below and adjacent to us resembling a nice, wide slice of layer cake. Each layer is revealing, especially when nature herself reacts with the weather and other factors to create visible smoke and enough heat, whether by lightning or spontaneously, to turn clay and rock the French color of vermillion. What follows is but a taste of the complex reactions for which people have adopted uses in their art, ceremonies, and constructions. I am sincerely grateful for the kind contributions by the people referenced below.

Wase' wakpa

Wase' is a Native (Lakota) noun referring to red earth, the (French) color vermillion and paint. Wakpa is a river, creek, or stream of water in a valley. (According to the Lakota-English Dictionary, Red Cloud *(mahpiya luta)* Indian School, Inc., Pine Ridge, SD, Beuchel, Rev. Eugene, S.J., Black Eagle *(Wanbli Sapa)*, 1970, 1983 - **wase'** (wah-SAY,*wakpa* (WAHK-pah).

This street marker was placed at Dakota & Main Streets as part of the recent downtown Main Street improvement project. Members of the city council directed that wase'wakpa be included somewhere, said City Manager John Prescott. An entry marker to downtown was chosen and approved by the council, and engineers complied. Photo by Tom Sorensen

According to **Mr. Jerome Kills Small**, a Lakota-English linguist, speaker, drum maker, and story teller, ceremonial paint from clay with the reddish hue found in the Vermillion area long ago was mixed with bear grease to make paint, often for ceremonies. A chunk of the red clay (if burnt like rock) could be filed-off with a rasp or other scraping tool into powder to mix and make an oil paint of sorts. The red-clay paint was used for much of the Native art, including tipi skins and robes, and for body paint for important ceremonies such as pledgers/participants in the Sun Dance. In particular, too, in ceremonies for women in their "coming of age, as a rite of passage," he said. This rite in Lakota is called *Isnagi* (ish-'nah-ghee)." The term used in the Beuchel Dictionary is "puberty." In preparation for the ceremony, "a sacred tipi is put up and the holy man comes and purifies the pipe" and other items for use, according to *Sacred Ground*, Zeilinger, Ron M.Div, Tipi Press, Chamberlain, South Dakota,1986.

While heated clay and paint and bricks are the focus here, for clarity, Clay County was named in honor of Henry Clay, who was appointed Secretary of State by U.S. President John Quincy Adams on March 7, 1825. (https://history.state.gov). Clay served until March 3, 1829. He was famous as an orator and the "Great Pacificator" for his contributions to domestic policy as a diplomat. Jerome adds that maybe the Native people call it Clay County for their own purposes.

Kills Small and other Native elders, educators, and leaders explain that rivers, streams, and creeks have wakpa, a valley (and even if the water dries up, the valley remains). A fairly small stream of water would be termed wakpala. He said gathering items (including Echinacea) on or near the sides of river banks is easier than digging straight down. The Vermillion River, especially near where the river's former mouth met the Missouri River, is a good example.

An Oglala Lakota from Porcupine, South Dakota, on the Oglala Oyate Reservation, Kills Small is a 1997 graduate from the University of South Dakota (USD), with an M.A. in Selected Studies. English is his second language. He retired after 20 years at USD, but still teaches people Lakota, American Indian Thought, Siouan Tribal Culture, and Early-Native American History. {Pilamaya Jerome. Omayakiye!}

Another Lakota-English speaker and educator, **Mr. Doyle Pipe On Head**, agrees that to his knowledge, the name *wase wakpa* was given to this area - Valley of the Paint - because the tribes and bands in the area would gather red earth from the river banks. He also confirms what he learned from his elders that the paints were applied as makeup for women and various other uses. French-Canadian trappers were in these areas before other settlers and the French word for described the red as vermillion, he said, "So, that French description is more likely how this area became to be called Vermillion by the early settlers." Doyle is a Sun Dancer, *Traditional* powwow *(wacipi)* dancer, and a Lakota traditional healer. He represents his family's 6th generation, embodying in the 21st century his native Lakota cultural leadership values of caring for his people. For several years Doyle worked in upper management at Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing and now works for Thunder Valley, a community development corporation.

continued next page

According the Clay County Historical Society (CCHS) in *Vermillion Founded Heritage Notes For 9-3-13*, the first predominantly-white people to visit the site of Vermillion were the fur traders who visited in the late 1700's. "Remains of trading stations were found by Lewis & Clark when they traveled in the area in 1804. Lewis & Clark also journeyed to Spirit Mound, seven miles North of Vermillion on August 25, 1804. The CCHS note said, that historic records indicate that "Vermillion was established as a community in 1859, although it was laid out as a town site below the bluff in 1857. No permanent settlement had been permitted" until after the Treaty of Washington (aka Treaty of 1858) 'signed' by a tribal leader, Strikes the Ree *(pananapapi)* also "Struck By The Ree." Ree is an abbreviation of Arikara (ah-REE-kera). "The post office was established on April 17, 1860, the same year in which Vermillion's articles of incorporation were prepared, but were not actually filed until 1862," the CCHS report said. "Vermillion was platted in 1869 years after the first settlers arrived and the original plat consisted of 120 acres."

Native men and women functioned in separate artistic domains, according to Native Americans, Trudy Griffin-Pierce, Michael Friedman Publishing Group, Inc., 1996 (Foreword by Vine Deloria, Jr.). "Women embellished clothing and household objects, and men painted spiritual symbols on the outside of tipis and made objects for war, hunting, and ceremonies. A woman often painted a robe for her husband." There were "paint-gatherers" who gathered and prepared minerals and other pigment sources, the book explains. "Color was vitally important to their expression."

The Beuchel dictionary explains another major French influence in names. The French put together two words from Algonquin - *nadowe* (snake) and sioux (little), and applied by the Ojibwa. This could have been interpreted as snakes hiding in the grasses before an attack or when people wore their hair in long braids, resembling snakes, according to Kills Small. "The name *Nadowesioux* was used by Father Paul LeJeune in 1640 on information of Jean Nicollet who visited the Sioux country of Wisconsin about 1634 or 1635," according to Leo P. Gilroy in the preface of Buechel's *Lakota-English Dictionary*. The Native Sioux are in three major groups - Lakota, Dakota and Nakota - and all their dialects are very similar, he said.

Geology & Scientific Experts: Clay, Rock, & Heat Sources

Two geologists who were consulted provided valuable insight into just what is clay. Sarah Chadima, senior geologist and environmental scientist with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (formerly two separate state departments combined in 2021). In her 42 years of experience, education and numerous public presentations, she has helped educate many (including school children) about soils and rocks, natural resources and flowing water. Her husband, Clay County Commissioner Richard Hammond, is also well-known as a geologist (now mostly retired), well driller and is otherwise widely-recognized as an information resource on water flows, well-digging, various river valleys, aquifers, wetlands and flood plains.

According to Chadima, the term 'clay' really has two definitions in the world of geology. "First, it may simply refer to **particle size** (very tiny). Second, it may refer to the mineralogy of very small particles." She said it is important to note with respect to **mineralogy** that different clay minerals have different physical properties. She explains that there are "three dominant mineral families of clay: kaolinite, illite, bentonite (important to soils eastern South Dakota, according to both Chadima and Hammond). It forms as a result of the weathering of volcanic ash. Chadima said, "Virtually all clay found at the earth's surface anywhere in eastern South Dakota will have bentonite. The main exception will be pipestone deposits (much of which is still found in Sioux Falls and north near Pipestone, Minnesota). "The logistics for obtaining pipestone are limited." While land was ceded in the 1858 Treaty, the Yankton Sioux kept the famous quarry at Pipe Stone, "permanently reserved for Indian uses," according to Gilroy.

Hammond agrees that the abundant, fairly yellow-hued clay will turn reddish when baked, and heated by various heat sources which oxidize the clay. He believes that the clay used for the Danish barn (see below) became red when heated. Both he and Chadima also point to the Ionia volcanic site across the Missouri River east of Newcastle, Nebraska, south of Vermillion may have provided a source of heat to oxidize minerals, including clay mixtures. The marker at the Ionia site, in part reads: *On August 24, 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, traveling up the Missouri River, passed a bluff about 180 to 190 feet high. Clark wrote that it appeared to have been on fire and was still very hot. He also detected signs of coal and what looked like cobalt. Later fur traders frequently noticed dense smoke and fire in this region. In 1839, J. N. Nicollet attempted to prove that these phenomena were not of volcanic origin. Nicollet theorized that the decomposition of beds of iron pyrites in contact with water resulted in a heat capable of igniting other combustible materials.*

According to Chadima and Hammond, some rocks typically have a higher-than-normal concentration of organics (coal or oil or natural gas). They may be ignited by a lightning strike or alternatively, spontaneous combustion can occur. This is due to the weathering of shale which has a relatively rich pyrite (fool's gold) content, according to a 2010 Ohio Geology newsletter. At such burning sites, similar to the Ionia location, the iron oxidizes until the sulfur ignites and keeps the fire burning.

Among her scientific travels, Chadima visited (by boat) an active, known burn site along the Missouri River between Chamberlain and Platte. An account from retired SDGS geologist Rich Bretz (in 1983) includes, "An alternative source of heat would be the ignition of natural gas from Niobrara (Chalk) Formation." Later, a reporter had asked the SDGS about these same rocks. Randy Hascall (Sioux Falls Argus Leader, June 10, 1996) reported, in part, "The latest site (of the 'Burning Bluffs'), about 50 feet long, lies northeast of the Platte-Winner Bridge" over the Missouri River." Hammond and Chadima agreed that heavy rain makes the shale along the way slippery and causes landslides, exposing a fair amount of new oil shale for combustion. Each ton of the special shale in the bluffs "from Fort Randall to Chamberlain contains several gallons of oil and a large amount of organic material, Chadima said. "So once it's ignited, it can burn on its own."

Oxidation is a chemical reaction involving the combination of an oxidizer, such as oxygen in the air, with other materials, according to *Essentials of Fire Fighting*, Vol. 7, International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), published by Oklahoma University 2018. Slow oxidation occurs when oxygen combines with iron to form rust. Further oxidation among materials can lead to smoldering, then ignition of a gas. An explosion is "ultra-rapid oxidation."

In addition to paint and art … Tons of Bricks

A book entitled The Danish Brick Barn and The Log Cabin, researched and written by **Mr. Jim Stone**, reveals other uses for clay-baked, reddish bricks, particularly in southern reaches of Clay County. Stone is a member of the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission and a board member of CCHS. He explains, "This book starts with the history of southeastern Dakota Territory from 1804, when it was still Sioux Indian Territory. It tells a story of treaties, moving the Indians farther west and opening this area to homesteaders," he said. Historical records tell of a Danish family who came to Dakota Territory in 1870 to homestead and start a new life. "This family built a brick barn that survived the 1881 flood and lasted 140 years," he said. "The bricks that were used to construct this barn and other structures were produced at a clay pit one and one half miles southwest of this barn," according to Stone. "This site produced bricks for at least four barns and four brick homes before 1890. Early brick making was very labor intensive and in undeveloped Dakota Territory this had to be even tougher." [A description of early brick-making during this time is described in detail, see chapter III of the book, found at www.CCHPC.org/resources/publications.] Also included in the book are histories written by descendants of the Calle Nissen Johnsen family and homestead, according to Stone.

The First City Hall Building in Vermillion

(Information Compiled by Dan Christopherson)

Vermillion City Hall number one was constructed beginning in the fall of 1884 on the corner of Main and Church Streets following a public vote on in May 1884 carried by a margin of 141 to 70. Bonds in the amount of $7,500 with interest at 7% were approved to finance the building.

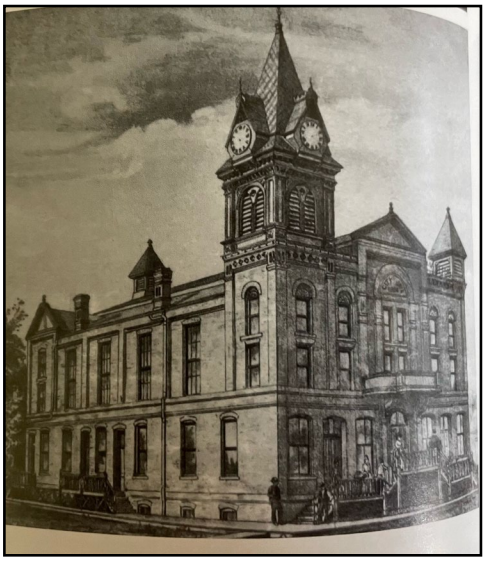
The basement was completed early in 1885, but an injunction against the project, which had been filed on November 13, 1884 by A.E. Lee and A.H. Lathrop tried to legally stop the bonds for the new building. This action stopped construction after the basement was done and a new election was held March 26, 1885.

Judge Palmer finally ruled in favor of the City by sustaining the bonds on July 2, 1885 so the construction could continue. City Hall number was completed in June 1886 and dedicated on July 4, 1886.

The building was a rectangular brick structure with a clock tower, but no clock, that served to house numerous pigeons and sparrows. It contained the city clerk's office, the council room and two store rooms on the first floor. There was a jail in the basement.

On the second floor was the stage and auditorium, with a gallery in the back. The auditorium floor was level with wooden chairs in gangs of seats and was often used for dances. The university cadets used the floor for competitive drills in the late 1890's. The large room on the first floor served at different times as a grade school room, a printing office, and a club room for firemen.

City Hall number one served its purpose for 22 years (1886-1908), and during that time graduation exercises, musical comedies, minstrel shows, dramas, and other attractions were presented within its walls.



Joint Newsletter of the
Clay County Historical Society,
W. H. Over Museum and
Clay County Historic Preservation Commission
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