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

Clay County, Vermillion, South Dakota

Spring 2024

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All for the Good of the Community

(Compiled by Dan Christopherson from documents at the Austin-Whittemore House)

Inevitably, the History of Vermillion has reflected the prominent role of men in economic, professional, political, and other activities of the period. The less heralded, but indispensable contributions of women were, however, also a part of the labors of each generation. Although women occupied subordinate positions in some respects, they shared the responsibilities of life with men on equal terms. This relationship was a partnership based upon both necessity and mutual trust. The result was a division of labor-the woman usually confining her activities to the home and to limited aspects of the community, while the man assumed the economic and political responsibilities.

At times, the women unflinchingly contributed wider services and talents. Many an instance may be cited when the pioneer woman, compelled by dire circumstance or sudden tragedy, extended her normal family duties to include the handling of business affairs.

Unique among the many women's organizations in South Dakota is the Civic Council in Vermillion. It was organized in 1920 by representatives of various women's societies and clubs in the city, including church organizations. Originally concerned primarily with civic improvement, including the beautification of Vermillion, the Civic Council gradually shifted its major interest to local welfare problems.

After carrying on its sales operations in various quarters, including city hall and the public library, in recent years the Civic Council has been maintaining its own building on Market Street. Operating funds are derived from donations and sales of household items, clothing and toys. The store staff is supplemented by many volunteers.

Vermillion continues to enjoy the spirit of volunteerism pioneered in the early days of the city. Scores of civic and fraternal groups involving both women and men meet regularly in the community. These groups raise significant funds and provide untold volunteer hours each year for the betterment of Vermillion.

ANNUAL TOUR OF HOMES RETURNS!

The Clay County Historical Society's Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the popular annual tour of homes event will again take place on Friday, December 6, 2024. This signature event was last held in December 2019, shortly before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The historical society's tour of homes committee has begun the process of finding homes in the Vermillion area to include in this year's tour. The committee is also seeking additional homes for inclusion in the tour. If you are interested in being a host for this event please contact the historical society's executive director, Wess Pravecek, at the Austin-Whittemore House at 605) 677-8701.



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 ARE DUE January 1, 2024

Membership Dues are: Individual \$25 Family \$40 Business/Organization \$75 Individual Lifetime \$250

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

Appointed Positions Executive Director Wess Pravecek CCHPC Representative Jim Stone

From the Desk...

It's Easter Sunday as I'm sitting in my chair at home writing my message "from the desk" for the newsletter. I remember lots of Easters when I was a little girl and being excited about having a new hat and some gloves that took longer to put on than the church service lasted. I've probably mentioned often that I feel fortunate to have had a family that shares so many warm memories. It's been a day for reflection and a month of interesting events.

About a month ago I started what I consider prep time for receiving a new shoulder. After years of thinking I could lift and carry objects that weighed as much as I did, my right shoulder said enough. After physical therapy and injections, my physician asked if I knew any good surgeons in Sioux Falls. Call me perceptive but that was the final straw. The surgery went well. Two of my daughters served as in-home nurses when I came home from the hospital and they were wonderful.

Now I want to talk about the goodness of a community. I moved back to Vermillion 30+ years ago because I thought it would be a good place to raise my children. Boy did I hit the nail on the head. My girls have graduated from high school and college and gone off to become real human beings. I've always thought that my friends in the community played a big part of the nurturing process. Now with my children grown and I'm living the life of a semi-retired person, here I am preparing for some new parts. My friend Kent said that it seems like we wake up one day and our body's check-engine light goes off and we start fixing knees, shoulders, ankles. After my surgery and my girls finished the home health gig, I was going to be on my own. Enter the community. I haven't gone a day without friends, neighbors, cousins calling and offering rides, bringing food, walking my dog. The Clay County Historical Society board members have been taking turns covering my duties at the Austin-Whittemore House. What more could I ask for! This is what a real community does...it cares for one another.

I think about how this midwestern quality has been passed down through the decades. Friends and neighbors have been helping each other whether it was finishing bringing in a crop, caring for children, providing groceries, fixing a car, caring for livestock. If something needs to be done, it happens. This is how Clay County and all of its wonderful small communities have survived...hard work and generous souls.

My love and thanks go out to everyone who stepped up to help me and I plan to pay it forward.

Now let's get down to some fun upcoming events in the community. June 6 – CCHS Ice Cream Social; June 14-16 – Vermillion High School All-School Reunion; October 14 – Spoken History Cemetery Tour; December 6 – CCHS Holiday Tour of Homes. Stay tuned for more details on these events. Feel free to contact the Austin-Whittemore House for more information. 605-624-8266 claycohistory@yahoo.com and check out our FaceBook page. Think Spring!

Wess Pravecek, Executive Director Austin-Whittemore House

We're a Big Part of Your Community

Clay County has a colorful and fascinating history and you are part of it.

The Clay County Historical Society helps keep that history alive.

We play a big part in your community. Here's how:

- ☐ People from across the country with Clay County roots have discovered more about their families with our help.
- ☐ University students use our resources for educational history projects.
- ☐ Elementary age children learn about pioneer times and the area's first schoolhouse.
- ☐ The stories of Clay County's citizens are explored in annual cemetery walks.
- ☐ We bring the community together for food, entertainment, history and more.
- ☐ We offer a window into the 1880s at the Austin Whittemore House and Museum in downtown Vermillion.

We would like you to be a part of that legacy. Join CCHS today.

- \$ 25 Annual membership
- \$ 40 -- Family membership
- \$ 75 Business/Organization membership
- \$250 Individual Lifetime membership

Send your check today to: CCHS - 15 Austin Street, Vermillion, SD 57069 Thank you

Save the date

Thursday, June 6th 5:00 to 7:00 pm

FOR THE
Clay County Historical Society
Annual

Ice Cream Social

on the lawn of the Austin Whittemore House

Serving taverns, pie, desserts, coffee & lemonade

Art Rusch Receives Award



The Center for Western Studies at Augustana University has announced that former judge, the Honorable Arthur L. Rusch (Vermillion, SD), is the recipient of the 2024 Dakota Conference Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the Northern Plains. The 56th Annual Dakota Conference held in Sioux Falls, April 25-26, 2024, included presentations on issues relating to topics about the history and cultures of South Dakota and the Northern Plains.

Former Judge Rusch's selection as the recipient is well-deserved. His significant contributions to preserving the cultural heritage of this region are evident through various mediums. His book, "County Capitols: The Courthouses of South Dakota," published by the South Dakota State Historical Society Press in 2014, stands as a testament to his dedication to documenting and showcasing the architectural and historical significance of South Dakota's courthouses. Furthermore, he received a regional Emmy nomination for his involvement as a consultant for South Dakota Public Broadcasting's documentary, "Temples of Justice," which explores the role of courthouses in South Dakota's history.

Rusch's previous recognitions from the Center for Western Studies, the "Richard Cropp Award" and the "Ardyce Samp Award" for his presentations at Dakota Conferences, indeed underscore his ongoing contributions to advancing understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of this region.

This selection as the recipient of the 2024 Dakota Conference Award serves as a fitting tribute to Judge Rusch's lifelong dedication to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Northern Plains. The Clay County Historical Society joins in the celebration and extends heartfelt congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

Joni Freidel CCHS

CCHS BYLAWS UPDATE

The Clay County Historical Society
Board of Directors is recommending a
Bylaws refresh to the general membership.
A special meeting to discuss the proposal will
be open to the general membership

WEDNESDAY MORNING MAY 15, 2024 at 9:30 AM AUSTIN-WHITTEMORE HOUSE

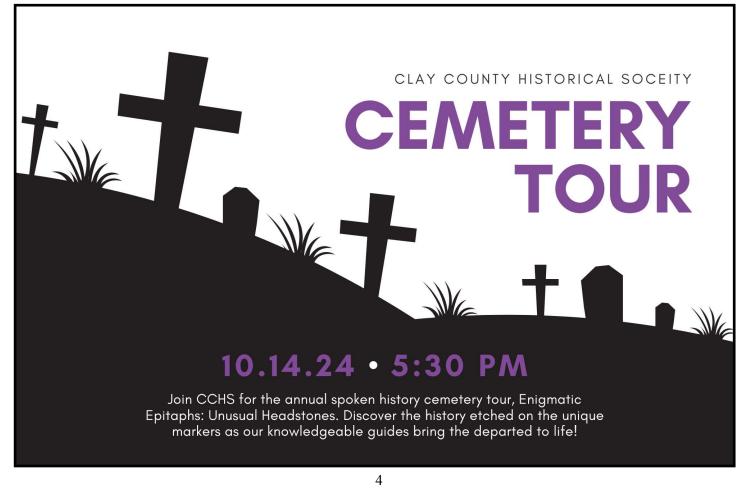
This action will synchronize our fiscal year with the calendar year of January-December, and reformat some of the content for ease of reading and definition.

These changes were researched and studied by CCHS Vice President Kevin Jacobson and CCHS Board member Judge Art Rusch.

The proposed document may be viewed at www.cchssd.org

Dan Christopherson, CCHS President







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 2022-2023

Larry Bradley (President)

David Moen (First Vice President)

Lynn Muller (Second Vice President)

William Ranney (Treasurer)

Maxine Johnson (Secretary)

Jim Stone

Pat Gross

Scott Jensen

Tony Krus

Bianaca Krus

Kevin Jacobson

Calvin Brink

Erin Wohletz



MESSAGE FROM MAXINE

In addition to having some delightful groups of students visiting the museum from Crofton, we have just finished up our annual Easter event. This year, the children met in Sletwold Hall, and they had three crafts to finish before they embarked on the Easter egg hunt. The crafts were to create an Easter basket and a mini pinata that just happened to be shaped like a carrot, and then there were lots of pictures to color. The eggs were hidden in eight locations and the instructions were to 'hop like a bunny at the fire truck'; to proceed to the mummy and visit a little bit; and then to the bear where you were expected to say hello in bear talk. The claim shanty and the buffalo were next, and each hunter was to sign their name and write down what the buffalo is called in Lakota. The next step was to make their way to the one-room school and sign their name on the blackboard and to find their final egg at the Doctor's Office. After each hunter found their allotted eight eggs, it was back to Sletwold Hall to enjoy some ice cream and to make the mandated coyote call. It was a fun afternoon.

The next scheduled event is the annual fun celebration of Rhubarb Day that is always held the first Sunday in June – June 2 this year. We will begin our fun at 2:00 p.m. and everyone who comes is encouraged to bring their favorite rhubarb recipe. The willing tasters will cast votes for their favorite and whichever tart treat gets the largest number of votes will be the winner. There will be three winners awarded. There will also be a silent auction and we have begun collecting wonderful things to tempt bidding! If you have something to contribute for the auction, please bring it to the museum. We encourage Friends of the Museum to consider donating items for the silent auction. Entertainment will be provided by Bruce Gray and Cindy Gehm – can't miss with these plans!

We are also hoping to have a special day when we will have several speakers to talk to our guests about some of our new exhibits. We have the Civil War cannon's new wheels, a wonderful collection of Vermillion Red Sox baseball memorabilia and a beautiful mounted grizzly bear that has a story to tell, as well as the 20 fantastic hand created dolls made by Dr. Virginia Johnson. John Banasiak has an intriguing display of found treasures artwork in Sletwold Hall that he would love to tell you about. As soon as we can get the day scheduled, you will be the first to know.

In the meanwhile, we are enjoying the yearly influx of school children, and we have lots of things for them to do. There are hidden things in the murals that they can look for, and a wonderful old car that has a fantastic sounding horn that needs to be honked. Even though we don't charge visitors to the Over, as a rule, everyone is required to howl like a coyote before they can leave. Just maybe we'll tune up the player piano and visitors can dance their way out of the Over to the tune of the Beer Barrel Polka!

Maxine Johnson

W. H. Over Museum Notes

Since our Fall 2023 Newsletter, the Over Museum held the annual Pumpkin Carving and Christmas Festival events and placed two temporary exhibits in Sletwold Hall. The annual Pumpkin Carving took place on October 29. Pumpkins were donated by the Finnegan family from Newcastle, Nebraska and Instant ice cream was made courtesy of the Department of Chemistry. Around 45 people attended, with a good time had by all.

After Halloween, we set up a Veteran's Day Exhibit in Sletwold Hall. It was curated by Dr. Lynn Muller, who was assisted by Tami Plank, Bill Ranney, Marina Sereda and Sonia Hernandez. An advertisement for the exhibit in the Broadcaster drew out several Vermillion veterans who graciously loaned some of their private possessions to put on exhibit. We were able to represent the four major branches of the U.S. military, but we did not have U.S. Coast Guard or Merchant Marine items (hint, hint). We will be putting up the exhibit again this coming November.

Sonia Hernandez and Maxine Johnson planned and managed the Christmas Festival held on Sunday, December 5. Over 200 people attended the event, with 16 vendors selling various holiday items. The Vermillion Children's Choir and the Clay County Cloggers provided entertainment.

During the month of January and early part of February, Bill, Sonia, and Sarah Ames moved the Gift Shop into what had been the Discovery Room. Our youngest visitors now have a playroom in the old cloakroom. The project was delayed for several weeks while we endured a real South Dakota winter in mid-January.

The Friends of the W. H. Over Museum Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, February 18. Eight members of the Board of Directors were present, along with nine members from the general membership. Changing the organization's by-laws was discussed, and the membership will hear more about this soon. Scott Jensen has proposed that the museum sell a calendar with advertising and raffle as a fund-raising venture. The election of officers for the coming year took place, with all present officers retaining their current position except for Secretary - Maxine Johnson replaced Evelyn Schlenker.

Next on the calendar was our 2024 Easter at the Museum held on Saturday, March 23. About 60 people came to the museum to make Easter baskets and carrot pinatas, and to hunt for Easter eggs hidden throughout the museum. Maxine Johnson, Dave Moen, Lynn Muller, Larry Bradley, and Marina Sereda provided guidance and supervision, and were assisted by the Jolley JJ 4-H Club of Vermillion.









W. H. OVER MUSEUM NEWS

Our current temporary exhibit in Sletwold Hall is artwork by Fine Arts Professor John Banasiak. You may have crossed paths with John at the Civic Council or at rummage sales acquiring objects for these pieces, which need to be seen up close and personal to be appreciated! This exhibit will be up through the summer.

Members of the Mydland family visited the museum this winter to view the Mydland claim shanty that we have on display. The descendants were a grandson, a great granddaughter and a great-great granddaughter of the original homesteader who lived in the shanty. The grandson remembers playing in the shanty when he was a child and was able to show us the exact location of the structure on a map. In all, 2,943 visitors came to the W. H. Over Museum this last year, which included folks from Australia, Canada, Brazil, Germany, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Norway. At least nine school groups came for guided tours, and twelve different University of South Dakota classes. Visitations are not up to pre-COVID levels but are slowly growing (we had 5,003 in 2019).

Detailed information for this article can be found in the 2023 Annual Report. Copies are available to pick up at the museum's front desk. Call (605-659-6151) or email (whover@usd.edu) to make arrangements to get a copy.

The Musuem



By Tami K. Plank, Collections Manager

The W. H. Over Museum, established in 1883, has a wide collection based on its Mission Statement and today holds over 60,000 artifacts. In 2023 alone over 38 collections totaling some 1,163 artifacts were donated to the museum. These collections came from not only area residents but from places as far away as Mesa, Arizona and Missouri City, Texas.

This year donations included the Vermillion Red Sox Baseball Team (2023.12), a 1982 KayPro II laptop computer with manuals and software (2023.14), North American animal mounts (2023.15), the Carlsen Cartography Collection (2023.13), the Dr. Virginia Johnson Doll Collection (2023.13), and an American Flyer Miniature Electrical Train Set (2023.24). One donation that stands out is a pair of elephant tusks taken in Zimbabwe in 1999. Several federal requirements had to be met in order for the museum to legally accept this donation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department granted written permission.

Over the past year the W. H. Over Collections
Department, as customary, has worked closely with
the Executive Committee on collections, exhibits and
special events. All three areas are important to the
museum's success and take a great deal of teamwork and
talent from various museum personnel to be a success.









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)

Patrick Morrison (Treasurer)

Evelyn Schlenker (Secretary)

Jim Stone

William Ranney

Dennis Konkler

Monica Iverson

Constance Krueger

Brendyn Richards

Preservation Awards: 2023

On November 15, 2023, the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission presented Preservation Awards at a noon Rotary meeting. The four awards were based on long-term preservation and/or restoration of a structure by individuals or an organization.

The first award was the Brookman/Flanagin House at 404 Cottage Avenue currently owned by the Flanagin Family. This house was built in 1894 and was home to the Brookman family for over 70 years before the Flanagan's bought it in the 1970s.. The house maintains many of its original architectural characteristics on outside and inside the building. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 28, 2023.





The second award went to the University of South Dakota (USD) Carnegie Library Building owned by the university. A very recent modern addition to the west does not detract from the well-preserved building constructed in 1910-1911 and enlarged in 1940. As part of the renovation of the Carnegie building, many important architectural features on the outside and inside of the building are preserved.



The third award went to the unique corn crib and granary in Clay County owned by Dan Hedeen. The corncrib is composed of hollow iron tiles (seen in the smaller photograph). The granary above the corn crib and base of the structure are made of solid bricks.



The fourth award went to Gale Gors who renovated Kate's Cottage located in Clay County, SD. The cottage built in the early twentieth century had fallen into disrepair. To the right, Gale Gors is presenting the story of restoring the cottage. Behind her are photographs she took of different steps in the restoration process.



Each of the owners had a chance to describe their efforts to maintain the building. Although Andrew Flanigan was unable to attend, he wrote a letter describing renovations of the Brookman/Flanigan house that Evelyn Schlenker read.



Stacey McMahan, a principal architect at Koch Hazard Architects, Sioux Falls, spoke of the recent work completed at the Carnegie Library Building on the University of South Dakota home of the National Music Museum (NMM). On her right her is Dwight Vaugh, Director of the NMM. On her left is Evelyn Schlenker and at the far-left is Dr. Bruce Kelly, Dean of Fine Arts.

This program and past preservation award programs are well received and highlight the strong support of citizens and organizations to preserve historic structures in Clay County. The awardees are cognizant how preservation contributes to the legacy of these structures and the architectural wealth of Clay County.

Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission Update

The final 2023 Prentis Park centennial celebration was the publication of a children's book, A Talk in the Park written by Evelyn Schlenker and illustrated by Becca Gehm. The book is available online at cchpc.org. Copies may be purchased from the Austin Whittemore House and the W. H. Over Museum.

In June, the commission hired preservation specialist Michelle Dennis to inventory the buildings on the University of South Dakota campus. Dennis documented all university buildings from 1883 to the present. She denotes three time periods: the historical core from 1883-1930; 1940-1975 covering the Great Depression and Post World-War II development; and those built afterwards that are not yet considered historic.

On the afternoon of March 13, 2024, the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) in conjunction with the VHPC had a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate the John A. Jolley Historic District, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 17, 2022. The district contains over 400 structures and is bordered by Main Street to the north, Pine/ Plum Streets to east, Lewis/Canby Streets to the bluff to the south and the Forest Avenue Historic District to the west.

The event, held outside of and in Jolley School, was very well attended by members of the VCDC, VHPC, City Council members, Mayor Jon Cole, Liz Almlie (State Historic Preservation Office), Michelle Dennis (who wrote the Jolley Historic District nomination for the National Register of Historic Places), as well as residents and friends of the historic district.



Photograph thanks to the VCDC

Mayor Cole, Alderman Ward, Liz Almlie, Bill Dendinger, Susan Keith Gray (Chair of VHPC), Erin Beyers, and Jim Peterson (President of the VCDC) prior to cutting the ribbon.

Transom Windows: Functional and Ornamental Architectural Elements

Transom windows made of clear glass, translucent glass, frosted glass, beveled glass or stained-glass are found above doors and windows. Located in the interior of a house they can be hinged open to promote light and air flow. In addition, transoms may be situated over exterior doors and windows to allow additional light to enter a room.

During the Victorian period, transom windows became popular and ornate. Some transoms are rectangular in shape, others arched. The transom consisted of stained glass, lead beveled glass, and/or contain jeweled glass elements. Light flowing through these windows added to the external and internal beauty of the building. Beveled glass in the transoms acts like prisms illuminating a room with rainbows.



Photo by Bill Rann

An example oif a hinged transom above a door at the former Saginaw School in Clay County, SD.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

An arched beveled and stained-glass transom above a window in the Brookman/Flanagan house in Vermillion. Note the beveled glass and stained-glass elements in the transom.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

An example of a beveled leaded glass transom with geometric designs is illustrated in the transom from a house on Forest Avenue. This type of design acts like prisms allowing rainbows to be generated.

This design is prominent in houses in Vermillion.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

The exterior transom windows in the 1903 Carnegie Vermillion Public Library are clear glass with little ornamentation. The intent was to increase the amount of light entering the library building.



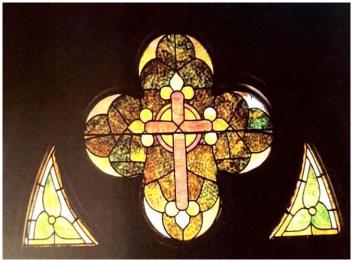
Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

The transom above the original entrance to the University of South Dakota Carnegie library, now part of the National Music Museum, consists of a scalloped beveled lead glass motif. The picture below was taken before the recent renovation of the building.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

Shown is a transom above a large picture window in the pastor's office in the 1889 section of First Baptist Church Main Street. Note the variety of beveled glass and jewels (smaller round glass inserts) as well as the clear and yellow rippled framing glass that make up the transom.



Photograph by Aaron Packard.

Below is a photograph of the elaborate stained-glass transom located above the entrance door to the Washington Arts Center, formerly Saint Agnes Catholic Church constructed in 1904.

This complements the exquisite stained-glass windows in the building described in the book "The Magic of Glass" (Pressing Matters, 2008).



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.
An example of an arched stained-glass transom is found in the Danforth Meditation Chapel on the University of South Dakota campus. Stained glass windows and this transom were added to the Danforth Chapel in 1962, about eight years after the building was constructed.

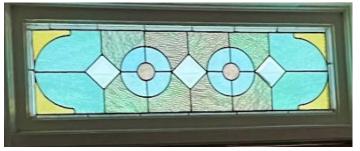


Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

Transom from a house in the Bluff Historic District.



Photo by Evelyn Schlenker.

Over the main entrance door to the to the United Church of Christ Congregational on East Main Street, is a large arched clear glass transom that opens to let in air. The building was constructed in 1928-1929.

Thus, transoms are composed of different types of glass and a variety of designs. In Clay County they are found in homes, public and private buildings, and houses of worship. Transoms are architectural design features that contribute aesthetic and functional elements to buildings.

Joint Newsletter of the

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, W. H. OVER MUSEUM AND

CLAY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

15 Austin Street Vermillion, SD 57069

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Three organizations join together for one newsletter:

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W. H. OVER MUSEUM, AND THE
CLAY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please contact your organizations and notify them of any temporary or permanent change of address.

Thank you for your support!







Clay County Historic
Preservation Commission
cchpc.org