

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

Clay County, Vermillion, South Dakota

Winter 2025

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The University of South Dakota Core Historic District Nomination

By Tim Schreiner

The historic core buildings of the University of South Dakota campus has taken a major step toward becoming an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

On December 13, 2024, the South Dakota State Historical Society Board of Trustees (the Trustees) voted unanimously to adopt the nomination and forward it to the National Park Service for final approval.

Included in the historic district designation are 14 buildings and two sites built between 1882 and 1954. The buildings are clustered around Old Main and are mostly near the south edge of the campus along East Clark Street. The district stretches from the South Dakota Union to the Arts & Sciences building (former law school) on the south; and from Pardee-Estee Laboratory to Noteboom Hall on the north.

The nomination was funded and supported by the Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission and the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission. The area includes what some refer to as “The Quad,” a green area surrounded by the oldest buildings on campus: East Hall, Old Main, Belbas Hall, the National Music Museum (former Carnegie Library), and Slagle Hall. Old Main and East Hall are the oldest structures; Noteboom Hall and Danforth Chapel, built in 1954, are the newest.

“We are celebrating a historic jewel, the greatest single collection of historic structures in southeastern South Dakota,” said Tim Schreiner, chair of the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission. He noted that the university was the first public school of higher education established by the state Legislature (1862). It is the oldest public university in either Dakotas.

In 1883 the University of Dakota began to take shape with the construction of the west wing of University Hall that was gutted by fire in 1893 and reconstructed as Old Main.

University attorney A.J. Franken expressed concern that the designation would hamper maintenance on the buildings if historical concerns were raised. The Trustees found the concerns “unconvincing” and said that at worst a proposal of major work by the university would merely ensure that a conversation happens before the work is completed. The designation applies to the exteriors of the buildings but not the interiors. Vermillion Mayor Jon Cole wrote a letter to the board in opposition to the proposal.

“We see this as a positive all the way around,” Schreiner said. “It will help promote the historical significance of the University and Vermillion to students, prospective faculty, and visitors, as well as the residents of the area.”

Preservation Awards: 2024

On October 23, 2024, at the noon Rotary meeting, the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) gave four awards. Three awards were for organizations or individuals who preserved historic structures in Clay County, South Dakota. The fourth award went to Jim Wilson in recognition of the outstanding historic preservation work he has done over four decades. The following sections will touch on the awardees and their accomplishments with expanded descriptions of two of the structures and preservation efforts.



Jim Wilson
Photo by Tim Schreiner

Special Recognition: Jim Wilson

Much deserving this award is Jim Wilson. Jim's education was in the areas of political science and government as well as architecture at the University of New Mexico. Since 1980, Jim Wilson consulted about preservation and rehabilitation of historical sites through his firm White Wilson Associates. From 1979-1996 he was a historic preservation architect for the South Dakota Historic Preservation Office when it was in Vermillion, South Dakota. For three years, Jim was an historic preservation architect in West Virginia. From 1999 to 2006 Jim was the historic preservation architect and commission officer in Deadwood, South Dakota. Following extensive fires in the city in 1987, subsequent funds garnered through the initiation of Deadwood gambling were used for preservation efforts in the city and state of South Dakota.

In 2006 Jim Wilson retired. He and his wife Anne returned to Vermillion. Jim continued his preservation work as chair of the CCHPC, a role he held for 10 years. Currently, Jim is Vice Chair of the CCHPC, a member of the Vermillion Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as a member of the Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission. During his tenure on the preservation commissions, two new historic districts were placed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Bluff Historic District and the Jolley Historic District. In addition, Jim helped get four buildings placed on the National Register of Historic Places. He also helped develop the

highly successful Missouri Valley Historic Preservation Conference held in Vermillion in 2018, wrote several books (available on the CCHPC website), gave tours of downtown Vermillion historic buildings, and taught OLLI courses in Vermillion. Thus, Jim's long-term knowledge and activism in preservation has made major contributions to historic preservation in South Dakota.

Restoration of the Saginaw School

By Dawne Olson

One of the few remaining rural schoolhouses, the Saginaw School, was constructed in 1873, and the building was moved several times. In 1969 the building ceased being a school. Needing workspace for her new business, in 2016 Dawne Olson started renovating the building for a wood-working shop and classroom. The photograph below shows Dawne Olson and her renovated workshop. Further information can be found at : <https://4windswoodcraft.wixsite.com/mysite>.



Interior view of the Saginaw School.

Photograph taken by William Ranney.

The Bergen Lutheran Church: Located on Timber Road in Meckling, South Dakota

The Bergen Lutheran Church on Timber Road started construction in 1909. Becky Aga accepted the award for the Bergen Lutheran Church and presented a history of the Bergen Lutheran parish and previous church. Below are excerpts from her presentation that she shared with us.

The Bergen Lutheran Church was organized as The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Dakota Territory on October 8, 1864. The church building you see today is affectionately known by the moniker of "The Little White Church on Timber Road." It is a landmark in the community.

The early pioneers placed great importance on their faith and the construction of a church within the community. The first church was constructed in 1871. Discussions began in 1903 and in 1909, to build a new church with new materials. The cornerstone for the present church was laid on October 3, 1909. The present church was completed in 1910 and dedicated on June 11th, 1911.

They took great pride in the church building and made updates as necessary. In 1924, the north end of the basement was excavated for a kitchen. In 1939, it was voted to apply for an electric line. The first electric bill was \$1.40. In 1940, an outside door into the kitchen was added.

In 1948, the basement walls were removed and rebuilt. Parts of those original walls are still visible in a couple areas of the basement. Concrete was poured over the basement floor and asphalt tile was laid in 1953.

The brown ceiling in the sanctuary that we see today was installed in 1950. I often wonder what it covers, because my mother and her siblings told of looking up during services and staring at a mural on the ceiling. An old photo of the interior shows crosses and a bible on the ceiling above the altar.

The outside concrete steps were installed in 1956. These replaced the old wooden steps. The concrete steps were first carpeted in 1981 and since then the carpet has been replaced twice.

In 1986, steel siding was put on the church at a cost of \$13,012.14. A "Siding Signing Sunday" was held on Sunday, May 18th that year. There are photos in our archives of members signing their names. The bottom five rows of siding on the south side of the church building have those signatures. When the siding was put on, this enclosed the bell tower; so in 1987, crosses were put on the church where the louvers would have been. The bell remains inside the tower.

Discussions began in 1989 for plans for a Fellowship Hall. Fundraising began in 1992. The groundbreaking was held on May 22, 1994. Most of the money was raised



An early image of the Bergen Lutheran Church.

Thanks to Becky Aga.



A recent photograph of the church and graveyard.

Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker

prior to construction. On June 29, 1997, the hall was dedicated.

Since that time, necessary upkeep projects ensued – painting, carpeting, furnaces/air conditioners, and updated lights. Carpet was put in the basement over the tile. Trustees elected to our council are mostly responsible for the upkeep of the building.

A church is more than a building, but Bergen Church has stood on this prairie for 114 years, through storms, drought, floods. It is our prayer and our hope that this building will be a landmark and a place of worship for many generations to come. Thanks be to God.

The Solomon Anderson Barn: 30535 470th Ave, Garfield Township

Mary Quirk, the great granddaughter of Solomon Anderson who constructed the barn, received the preservation award for work her family has done to preserve the stock barn. The homestead, dating back to the late 19th century, consisted of over 600 acres of land, several structures including the large horse barn (according to Jim Stone, who surveyed the structure, it is 43 feet long, 60 feet high, and 17 feet wide). The homestead was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.



Mary Quirk receiving her preservation award.

According to an article by Herbert Schell in the February 9, 1983, *Vermillion Plain Talk*, Solomon Anderson, started farming his acreage in the 1870s. He was an innovative businessman who developed improved farming methods, including ways of milking his cows, storing grain and silage, and even hosted an early telephone line out of Alsen, South Dakota. Following Solomon Anderson's retirement, his son Andrew took the reins, but sadly died at the age of 47 from a farming accident.

The family held possession of the land and structures to this day. Mary Quirk kindly shared a photograph of the barn from the early 1900s and a more recent picture.



The barn in the early 1900s.



A recent picture of the barn.

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

Development of National Historic Landmark Nomination for Spirit Mound

By Bill Ranney

The recent zoning decisions affecting Spirit Mound prompted discussions about how to protect the viewshed around the historic prairie. The concept of viewshed within the Historic Preservation community arose in part from a development proposed in 1955 that would have adversely affected the view from the front of Mount Vernon, George Washington's home. That initial challenge was successfully countered, but there has been a continued fight to protect the viewshed. Protective approaches included acquisition of adjacent properties, scenic easements, and land conservation easements. (A detailed timeline of the efforts to protect the Mount Vernon viewshed can be found at <https://mtv-main-assets.mountvernon.org/files/pages/linkset/uploads/3-brief-history-mv-viewshed.pdf>)

A major action to protect the Spirit Mound viewshed is to have the site designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL). Advice from Curt Dimmick, Superintendent of the Missouri National Recreational River, and from Liz Almlie, South Dakota Historic Preservation Specialist for the Southern Region, suggested the first step is to update the National Register form for Spirit Mound. The original National Historic Register of Historic Places (NHRHP) nomination was submitted by General Lloyd Moses and approved in 1974. Much has happened to Spirit Mound and the surrounding land since then, including the recent history of acquiring the property where Spirit Mound sits and Spirit Mound becoming part of the South Dakota parks system, in association with the National Park Service, all of which will be added to the new nomination form.

A second step will be to seek input from Native American tribes most closely associated with Spirit Mound. A possible result of this interaction may have the property designated a Traditional Cultural Landscape.

The final step will be to prepare a National Historic Landmark nomination for Spirit Mound Historic Prairie. There are currently sixteen National Landmarks in South Dakota, which include Bear Butte and the Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village. One nearby NHL is the Sergeant Floyd Monument in Sioux City. The present marble monument replaced a cedar post put in by Lewis and Clark in 1804 to commemorate where Sergeant Floyd died. The monument is recognized by the Department of the Interior as the first National Historic Landmark.

The process of formulating a National Historic Landmark nomination is a lengthy endeavor and will take two to five years to accomplish. The process has multiple levels of review, starting with a letter of inquiry



Photograph by Evelyn Schlenker

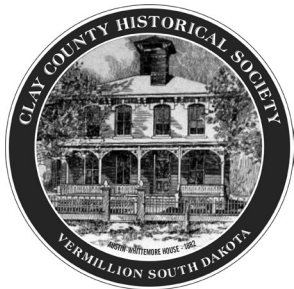
from the Spirit Mound Trust to the National Park Service and the NHL staff to determine if the property meets the needed criteria. If this step passes, additional steps include consulting national experts, the Landmarks Committee, and the National Park System Advisory Board, with a final determination by the Secretary of the Interior.

This fall, the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) voted to sponsor the preparation a revised National Register form. The goal will be to have the revised form completed this winter and submitted in Spring, 2025. A letter of inquiry from the Spirit Mound Trust for National Historic Landmark status should also be prepared. As is all too apparent, the fight to protect our historic resources is often subject to the vagaries of political decision-making, and our timeline for the completion of a National Historic Landmark nomination will have to reflect those vagaries.

Nominations for Upcoming Preservation Awards

Do you know of an individual or organization with a historic property or building that has been renovated and/or maintained over time in Clay County?

We'd like to know more. Please send information to Evelyn.Schlenker@usd.edu.



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

MEMBERSHIP DUES

January 1, 2025

Membership Dues are:

Individual \$25

Family \$40

Business/Organization \$75

Individual Lifetime \$250

CCHS Elected Board of Directors: January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025

President - Kevin Jacobson

Vice President - Joni Freidel,

Recording Secretary - Constance
Krueger

Membership Secretary - Ruth Bylander

Treasurer - Kathleen Kavanaugh

Past President - Dan Christopherson

Directors - Jim Stone, Art Rusch,

Judy Sullivan, Katie Heine,

Maxine Johnson

Appointed Positions

Executive Director Wess Pravecek

CCHPC Representative Jim Stone

From the Desk...

First of all, Happy New Year! I think I'm preaching to the choir when I say the older we get, the faster each year seems to go by. For the most part we can't add much time to our life so we'd better add more life to the time we have left! Let's go for it!

I took a little time off over the Christmas holiday and spent some quality time in my recliner. Now that I'm back into the "swing" of things and have had people dropping into the AW House to visit, it's come to my attention that I need to let folks know or remind some of you of a couple of gifts that our friend Marion Kryger left us.

One gem is the photo history of 8th grade graduates from country schools in Clay County. From 1896 to 1970, 8th grade graduates from each school came into Vermillion and had their picture taken as a group with all of the other 8th grade grads. For the most part, these students have been identified and linked to the school that they came from. I have a three-ring binder here at the Austin-Whittemore House with all of these pictures and we also have these photos on our web page www.cchssd.org under links. For me, one of these photos is personal. It let me see my oldest sister, Anita Berntson, as a 1951 graduate of Bluff Center #45. These young people are part of our families and people who helped to build the communities that we live in today.

Another gift from Marion, with considerable assistance from his daughter Becky Aga, is the 1884 map of Clay County. This map identifies all of the land owners in each township in 1884. I can't tell you how many times I've helped families locate and track how many years their family may have owned land in this county. It's remarkable how many families still own these pieces of property. Smaller versions of the map are available for sale at the AW House and are suitable for framing. This map is also on display at the Clay County Courthouse. Marion died on January 19, 2017 but his love of Clay County and its history lives on.

This beautiful Austin-Whittemore House truly is a safe haven for Clay County History. Whether it's photographs, volumes of *Dakota Republican* or *Vermillion Plain Talk* newspapers going back to the early 1900's or family histories that families have shared, we invite you to come to the house and see what we have or share pieces of history that can be added to the archives to be shared with others. In the immortal words of my mother, Lillian Berntson, you're never too old to learn something new. I'm going for it!!

Happy New Year and thank you for your support of the Clay County Historical Society.

Wess Pravecek, Executive Director
Austin-Whittemore House

Recap of 2024 Cemetery Tour

The 2024 CCHS Spoken History Cemetery Tour, themed “Enigmatic Epitaphs: Unusual Headstones,” explored the captivating life stories of cemetery residents, with their headstones offering a unique glimpse into their pasts. In addition to the biographical narratives, attendees were introduced to various symbols found on headstones, along with explanations of their meanings.

The 2024 Cemetery Tour Committee (Maxine Johnson, Doug Kronaizl, Art Rusch, Wess Pravecek, Constance Krueger, and Joni Freidel) carefully selected the theme and significant headstones, conducting research into the life stories behind each one. Special thanks are due to the actors who portrayed each historical figure, generously donating their time.

1. Joseph H. Hinchliff (Kevin O’Kelley) - A lectern holding a Bible, engraved with details of his Civil War service in the “War of the Rebellion”.

2. Winona “Dolly” Axtell Lyon (Kelsey Collier-Wise) - Lifelong philanthropists, the Lyon family obelisk signifies rebirth and a connection between heaven and earth.

3. Charles S. Overhulse (Sagan Marcus) - A tree stump marks the life interrupted of this young man, tragically dying after an accidental shooting while sledding.

4. Frances Stark Moritz Rabusch (Mecia Graham)- The Rabusch family’s unusual metal monument is decorated with a cross of faith and flowers symbolizing immortality.

5. Niels Urup (Bryce Mayrose) - An unadorned granite boulder with a small nameplate reflects a life-long career in construction.

A regular attendee of the past seven tours, Julie Heine, shared her thoughts: “I have thoroughly enjoyed it every year because we learn about people and the history of Vermillion. This tour was incredibly eye-opening. Not only did we learn about the lives of some fascinating individuals but discovered the meanings behind the symbols on their headstones which added a whole new layer of depth to their stories.” Thanks to the Bluff View Cemetery Board and the Prentis Park Centennial Committee for their support of this event

The “Cemetery Headstone Symbolism” list is on the cchssd.org website or it may be accessed by scanning the code to the right.



*Spoken History Cemetery Tour 2024 Actors –
Kevin O’Kelley, Sagan Marcus, Bryce Mayrose,
Mecia Graham and Kelsey Collier-Wise*



***Mark your calendars for
Monday, October 7, for the
2025 Spoken History Cemetery Tour.***

TOUR OF HOMES A SUCCESS

On December 6, 2024, the Clay County Historical Society resumed sponsorship of its annual tour of homes, after a 5-year hiatus. For many years, the historical society has realized that the tour of homes event is a perfect way to kick off celebration of the Holiday Season.

The Clay County Tour of Homes this year combined the grandeur of three historic homes owned by Carol Sanderson, Darcy and Russ Olson, and the historical society (the Austin-Whittemore House), Jessica and Tyler Messersmith's new home in Bliss Point, and a tastefully remodeled bed-and-breakfast, known as the Main Street Inn and owned by Courtney and Carson Merkwan.

Tour ticket holders had an opportunity to visit the five homes in the community at their leisure, taking time to explore each unique property. They were inspired by interior design, architecture, and seasonal decorations. Each property on the tour was festively decorated with special décor ranging from historic to new.

A reception was held at the conclusion of the tour, at the Clay County Historical Society's Austin-Whittemore House. Reception attendees enjoyed an evening of live entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, holiday cookies, and champagne. Santa was also on hand to greet and visit with attendees, making the night truly special for all involved.

The Clay County Historical Society is very grateful for the generosity of property owners to open their doors to welcome holiday guests. The Historical Society is also very thankful for community support in the tour of homes. This year's event wouldn't have been a success without community members coming together to celebrate the start of the Holiday Season.

All of the proceeds from the tour of homes event will benefit on operations and repairs of the Austin-Whittemore House, one of the premier historic homes in the region.

*Thank you
to all
who helped make
this year's
event a success.*

*We hope to see you
again next year.*



*Holiday music provided by siblings
Dale Johnson and Paula Nelson.*



Holiday decorations at the AW House.



*Lisa Johnson, food guru, and staff
Marvin Walz and Jim Stone.*



Guests enjoying holiday treats



*Santa visiting with Cindy Chaney
and sister Jane.*



Lambda Chi Alpha House



Carol Sanderson making krumkake



Main Street Inn



Griffen Petersen, president, greets guests at the Lambda Chi Alpha House



Carol Sanderson Home



Courtney and Carson Merkwan, Main Street Inn owners



Tyler and Jessica Messersmith with Ella and Adi



Jessica and Tyler Messersmith home



Russ and Darcy Olson



Russ and Darcy Olson dining room. Nut Cracker collection

From the Archives - Twenty Years Ago: Vermillion City Hall

August 2, 2005

To the Citizens of Vermillion:

The City Hall Site Selection Committee has presented its report and a ranking of the final four sites to the Vermillion City Council. After working diligently since March 2004, this group of twelve citizens ranked the final four sites as follows:

1. Demolish and/or move the current City Hall at 25 Center Street and build a new facility on the same site
2. Purchase, lease or lease/purchase the Bank of the West building at 15 E. Main and remodel it for use as City Hall
3. Purchase the old National Guard Armory on the South edge of Market Street at Bloomingdale, demolish the building and construct a new City Hall at that location
4. Purchase the current Fullerton Lumber Company location at 113 W. Main, demolish the buildings and construct a new City Hall on the site

At the regular City Council meeting on August 1, 2005, the council accepted the report of the committee and extended thanks for the many meetings, monumental research and countless hours that this group completed to arrive at this final ranking.

The council then directed the City Manager to research needed procedures and provide additional information for the August 15 regular council meeting. This will involve cost estimates of what will be needed to thoroughly research each of the four sites to obtain hard costs of the actual development of each of the sites. It may be cost prohibitive to get hard numbers of each of the sites, and if so the feeling of the council is to do a minimum of at least the top two.

The council will then have at least two clear options with accurate cost estimates to present to the public for their input over the next few months.

It is my wish that we as a community adopt this City Hall plan as our legacy project for our Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) coming up in 2009. It is important to note that this will be funded with second penny sales tax capital fund revenue and will not impact property taxes. I believe we owe it to ourselves and future generations to make a significant investment like this that will potentially serve our community for the next hundred years. We ask private firms to make investments such as this in our City to create jobs, and it is just as important that we invest in ourselves and our future.

As you may remember, in years past I personally advocated the remodeling of the current City Hall building. Although I still believe that almost any building can be remodeled given enough time and money, it is my opinion now that this would not be a wise and prudent use of tax dollars. Public buildings are held to a higher

standard by building codes and rehabbing the current structure for use as City Hall would cost more than it is worth, in my opinion. If we create a tasteful and functional building with state of the art technology it will still be in use many years after all of us are gone. This is the most cost effective solution over the long haul and the most responsible use of public funds.

Please be assured that public information will be available and public input will be solicited every step of the way. However, the final responsibility rests with elected officials and at some point in the future there are nine of us that are charged with making this very important decision. I am asking for your input over the next few months, both now and later, and especially after hard numbers for the options become available. When we as elected officials are satisfied we have enough information, we will do our constitutional duty and make a decision.

It is my heartfelt desire that we band together as a united community and work together to carry out the wishes of the majority.

Sincerely,
Dan Christopherson
Mayor of Vermillion

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

The Clay County Historical Society keeps our rich and colorful history alive with

- ☐ A look into homes from various eras in the annual Tour of Homes.
- ☐ A journey into lives from the past with the annual Cemetery Walk.
- ☐ A visit to the turn of the 20th century with year-round tours of the historic Austin-Whittemore House.
- ☐ Educational opportunities for students from kindergarten to university.
- ☐ Research materials and information.

The new membership year begins in January. Please make your annual donation today or consider an additional gift. Your support keeps the doors open.

Here's how: send your donation to:

CCHS, 15 Austin St., Vermillion, SD 57069

\$25 annual membership | \$40 family membership
\$250 lifetime membership | \$_____ additional gift

Or stop by the house, Open most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm.

Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. CCHS is a great option for estate planning as well. Thanks again



Address: 1110 N. University
414 E. Clark Street
Vermillion, SD 57069
605-659-6151

Email: whoever@usd.edu
Website: whoevermuseum.org

WH Over Museum Officers and Board Members 2023-2024

Lynn Muller
(President)

David Moen
(First Vice President)

Calvin Brink
(Second Vice President)

William Ranney
(Treasurer)

Maxine Johnson
(Secretary)

Jim Stone

Scott Jensen

Tony Krus

Erin Wohletz

Aaron Mayer

Jordan Kerkman



MESSAGE FROM MAXINE

2024 Events

The events each year begin with the annual Make-A-Valentine party that is modeled after the one-room school annual Valentine's Day parties. The children make Valentines to be distributed at the Care Center in Vermillion or to be given to individuals who receive Meals on Wheels through the ROC's program. The past few years, the fun activity for our events is to allow the children to decorate, as they please, Rice Krispie bars which they do to their hearts' content.

The Easter Event was on March 23rd and included decorating paper bags, making carrot mini-pinatas, hunting for eggs and eating ice cream. We had 56 guests: 23 children and 33 adults.

We also had an Indian Taco sale on April 6th and 7th for the 50th Annual 2024 Wacipi (Powwow) happening next door at the Dakota Dome. There were over 200 visitors to the museum. Additionally, the Clothesline Project coincided with this event, which was to bring awareness to abuse survivors. Visitors had the chance to design their own t-shirts for a collaborative art display.

Rhubarb Day is always scheduled for the first Sunday in June and we automatically declare ourselves the Rhubarb Capitol of the World. This year, music was provided by Bruce Gray and Cindy Gehm. Three prizes were awarded although all of the rhubarb recipes submitted were exceptionally tasty.

Chili Blues was reinstated on October 5th and we had three winners, with Tim Sereda taking 1st place for his Adobe Chili and 2nd and 3rd place split between Pam Kadous (Road Kill Chili) and Bill Ranney (Cincinnati Chili). Prizes were awarded for the three first- place winners. We had eight chili cooks, 29 tickets sold, and entertainment provided by Tim Snow (guitar). Plans are underway to keep this fun tradition at the W. H. Over Museum and we hope to add other activities to add to the fun of tasting good chili and visiting with friends.

The annual Pumpkin Carving Day was held on October 27th. Pumpkins were provided by Michelle Finnegan. We had 68 visitors – 41 children and 27 adults. We ran out of pumpkins twice. Next year we should aim to have 50 pumpkins. Once again, the 4-H members were invaluable assistants for all of our events and provided help for the young participants.

This year's annual Christmas Festival took place on December 8th! We had a day of good weather and a good number of vendors. The trees decorated by various individuals and groups were in "The Time To Remember Gallery" along with the hospitality table. The Friends also sponsored their traditional bake sale that we have labeled the 'Best in the State.'

Throughout the year, we host many tours that consist of various clubs, school children, and University classes. One of the classes also stages a spear throwing activity on our front lawn.

We are looking forward to another year of fun events for our members to enjoy.

Maxine Johnson

The Collections Grow

By Tami K. Plank

W. H. Over Collections Department



A Pitney Bowes Mail Opener machine purchased for \$223.96 in 1951 and used until 2023.

The Friends of the W. H. Over Museum Collections Department continues its work with the same goals and aspirations in taking care of the collections that have been abided to over the past 33 years. The collection, part of which is owned by the Friends of the W. H. Over Museum and the other part owned by the State of South Dakota, consists of some 100,000 artifacts.

In 2024 some 35 individual collections that included about 850 individual items were donated to the museum. These donations came from South Dakota as well as the states of Colorado, Nebraska, Arizona, Michigan, Iowa, North Carolina, and Texas. Unique items include an electric letter opener donated from the local rural electric company; three bronze statues designed by Michael R. Turma of Hot Springs, South Dakota that once stood in front of the National Music Museum as part of the Townseley Courtyard; and an original oil painting "The Arrival of the Omaha at the Sioux City Landing, 1856" by Artist Gary R. Lucy. These donations along with the other 850 plus items require proper care including completed paperwork, complete cataloging and proper storage.

The Old Lilac Bush

By Tami K. Plank

Collections Manager

In the June 1949 issue of the *Museum News* editor Dr. W. H. Over wrote "By the first of May in South Dakota we are all looking forward to its purple blossoms for this old shrub has always been an enchantment, especially to older flower lovers, for it was one of the first plants set out by our earliest settlers."

Copying from the *Living Museum*, published by the Illinois State Museum in April 1949, Over quoted: "On a seedy embankment above the rutted lane, a massive lilac bush puts forth leaves and purple blossoms when spring

time once again is on the land. The house and the people who built it and lived in it are gone, but the ability of the lilac to withstand the impact of centuries enables it to mark where human habitation used to be."

Quoting Dr. Over "How true this is all over the land, for in our travels many times we have noticed a lone clump of lilac bushes and knew that in the dim past someone had lived there and planted the bush. The lilac is always ready to challenge springtime with its purple, perfumed blossoms and is always welcomed . . ."

Although this was written over 75 years ago the landmark designation of the old lilac bush stands true today. On the Minnesota farm where I grew up in the early 1960s the farm buildings have long since been leveled but the large lilac bush that I used to play under puts forth every spring its familiar fragrant purple flowers.



This lilac bush along the South Dakota-Minnesota border hides a pioneer cemetery of many unmarked graves.

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



2 1110 University St, Vermillion, SD
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whoever@uscd.edu



Honoring the Women of Wounded Knee

W. H. Over Museum will be presenting this 50th anniversary traveling exhibit from February through April 2025. Visitors can hear the stories of Wounded Knee's matriarchs in their own words. From the Warrior Women Project description:

"The 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee was a defining moment in the centuries-long struggle for American Indian self-determination and has become a world-wide emblem for Indigenous resurgence . . .

Drawing on two decades of oral history interviewing and a range of archival material, the exhibit provides an intimate, immersive learning experience that sheds new light on how Indian women forged a self-governing community and brought self-determination into being. Comprising 16 retractable panels, the exhibit includes 12 life-size panels dedicated to individual women narrators, conveying their biographies and experiences, while accompanying tablets showcase clips from their oral history interviews."



Join Us for Upcoming Spring Events

FEB 9 Valentine's Day: Cardmaking
Sunday February 9, 2PM

APR 13 Easter: Candy Hunt, Piñata | Sunday April 13, 2PM

JUN 1 Rhubarb Day Celebration & Silent Auction
Sunday June 1, 2PM

www.whovermuseum.org



2024 in Review AT THE W. H. OVER MUSEUM



Fine Arts professor John Banasiak leads a workshop based on his exhibit.



Over the summer, W. H. Over Museum hosted John Banasiak's exhibit "Altare" in Sletwold Hall.



The exhibit is comprised of assemblages of found objects fashioned into small shrines.



Participants like Grace Freeman, in the Altare workshop created their own shrines of found objects.



Chili Blues was held on October 6. The museum inherited the event from the Vermillion Arts Council.



The Annual Christmas Festival was held on Sunday, December 8. Nineteen vendors had holiday items for sale.



Tim Snow played blues guitar for the 2024 Chili Blues Cook Off. This will be an annual event for the museum.



The Vermillion Children's Choir performed in Sletwold Hall at the beginning of the 2024 Christmas Festival.



The Veteran's Day exhibit was shown through the month of November. The U.S. Flag from the Battleship South Dakota was a prominent part of the display.



The Clay County Cloggers also performed at the festival.

Join us again next year!

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

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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




W. H. Over Museum
VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA