

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

Clay County, Vermillion, South Dakota

Spring 2023

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## W. H. Over Museum – The Year in Review

“Welcome to the W.H. Over Museum!” is the refrain that visitors will hear when they come to our institution. It is the greeting that Elliza Mollman always gave people as they came through our front doors. Elliza left us in January of this current year to move on with her life’s adventure. When she was just 17 years old, Elliza shared the front desk duties with Marina Serada, and started with the museum in 2021. Elliza was home schooled and is the daughter of Scott and Sandra Mollman, both of whom work in the Fine Arts Department at USD. Elliza was a real asset to the museum. She always went deep into the research, whether it was making labels for the meteorite exhibit or our developing paleontology display. We will miss her.

This past year also saw the addition of 66 display cases from the National Music Museum (NMM). Several of our existing exhibits have been moved into the new NMM display cases (meteorites and paleontology), while other NMM cases are being used to display original artwork and children’s toys. Many thanks to the Music Museum for approximately \$250,000 worth of exhibit cases, and to the many volunteers from the South Dakota Geological Survey for their assistance in moving the cases from Julian Hall to the museum.

We acquired new wheels for the 1862 Civil War cannon that has graced the USD campus for over 100 years. The replica cannon wheels were made by Hansen Wheel & Wagon Shop of Letcher, SD, which was featured on a recent SDPB-TV program. The cost of the wheels was entirely paid for through donations.

Filming for the South Dakota Public TV program “Dakota Life” occurred in the Fall. Larry Rohrer, the host of the show, filmed the introductory portions between the story segments here in the museum. The introductory portions included W. H. Over Museum history and were filmed in different locations throughout the museum. The SDPB-TV Dakota Life program aired on January 26, 2023, and the episode is titled “Detours.” The program can be viewed on the SDPB website (<https://www.sdpb.org/tv/dakotalife>).

Numerous student groups from area schools visited the museum, including Hartington, NE, and Sioux Falls, SD. Instructors from the University of South Dakota often hold a class session at the museum. These include Introduction to Archaeology (ANTH 230), World Prehistory (ANTH 305), South Dakota Prehistory (ANTH 320), Historical Archaeology (ANTH 340), Collapse of Societies (ANTH 426), World Ethnography (ANTH 460), Social Science Methods (SEED 415), Theories of Communication (CMST 405), History Topics (HIST 492), and a tour for the



*Continued on page 2*

### *Year In Review Continued*

International Students group. This semester we are hosting five students in the Museum Techniques course (ANTH 270). One of their projects will be re-designing the prehistoric stone tool exhibit.

Drop-in tours (groups without a prior reservation) included a drawing class from Fine Arts (ART 111) that came by this fall to use our exhibits as subject matter. A motorcycle club from Kansas City stopped in around Christmas on their way to Pine Ridge where they were going to drop off presents for kids. A Campus Ministry group recently came by to explore the museum. Several members of the group were especially interested in the camera exhibit. These drop-in groups are not uncommon.

We continue to refine our existing exhibits, and we are nearing completion of the “Land Seekers” exhibit. This project was begun by a museum intern last spring semester, Delaney Cowl. She is a graduate student in history, and the initial project was to illustrate local Civil War veterans who utilized the Homestead Act. The project

morphed into a larger exhibit that provided a context for EuroAmerican homesteading. She has been graciously donating her time to complete the entire display.

Sonia Hernandez joined our museum staff in January, replacing Elliza at the front desk. Sonia will also be responsible for our social media presence on the internet and is currently working on getting our website updated. W. H. Over Museum now has an Instagram account that Elliza started (@w.h.overmuseum), in addition to the Facebook page (W. H. Over Museum).

Our Annual Meeting was held on February 5th of this year. The slate of new officers for 2023 was accepted: Larry Bradley, president; Dave Moen, 1st vice-president; Lynn Muller, 2nd vice-president; Evelyn Schlenker, secretary; and Bill Ranney, treasurer. The nominating committee will consist of Sonia Hernandez, Cynthia Jensen and Tami Plank. There are many copies of the 2022 Annual Report available for members. Stop by the museum for a visit and pick up a copy!

## Collections Department

*By Tami K. Plank*

The W. H. Over Collections Department manages the collections that have been donated to the museum over the past 139 years. Inventorying, recording, documenting, storing, monitoring, and cleaning are some of the words that describe the daily activity in the vault. The W. H. Over Museum adheres to the professional standards set by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) headquartered in Washington, DC. AAM is the governing body of museum work setting professional standards and is the only institution to award accreditation to museums. Under this guidance the museum’s collection receives the most constructive care financially available.

In 2022 there were 36 collections donated to the W. H. Over Museum totaling 498 artifacts. While most of the donations came from within South Dakota, there were also contributions from Alaska, Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Virginia. There were many interesting items including a 1900 era 39”-high potato cutter made by the Aspinwall MFC Co. in Jackson, Michigan, a star quilt that had been presented to honor the work done with schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and a fly wheel from the Bloomingdale Flour Mill once located in Pleasant Valley Township, Clay County. One donation falls under the heading of “Proactive Collecting” or the collecting of items related to current day. This collection contains campaign materials from the latest local, state, and federal elections. The collections donated to the museum are welcomed examples of our history and culture, past and present.



*A 1900 era 39”-high potato cutter made by the Aspinwall MFC Co. in Jackson, Michigan. Although designed to cut potatoes for seed the potato cutter proved to be slow and cumbersome.*



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414 E. Clark Street  
Vermillion, SD 57069  
605-659-6151

**Email:** [whoever@usd.edu](mailto:whoever@usd.edu)  
**Website:** [whoevermuseum.org](http://whoevermuseum.org)

**WH Over Museum  
Officers and Board Members  
2022-2023**

**Larry Bradley**  
(President)

**David Moen**  
(First Vice President)

**Lynn Muller**  
(Second Vice President)

**Evelyn Schlenker**  
(Secretary)

**William Ranney**  
(Treasurer)

**Maxine Johnson**

**Jim Stone**

**Pat Gross**

**Scott Jensen**

**Tony Krus**

**Bianaca Krus**

**Kevin Jacobson**

**Calvin Brink**

**Erin Wohletz**



## MESSAGE FROM MAXINE

### Events

We have managed to pretty much get back to ‘normal’ since the pandemic raised its ugly head which seems like forever ago. The Friends have enjoyed the events we have once again begun to provide for our visitors. Our Christmas festival was a good one this year – we had a full house of vendors and some good talent to enjoy, a wonderful table of goodies to enjoy while visiting with friends, and the usual great bake sale. Mr. and Mrs. Santa received visitors while in the Discovery Room and everyone had a relaxing afternoon listening to the Vermillion Children’s Choir and watching the talented clog dancers. Sletwold Hall was filled with our young visitors, and they had four projects to choose from and most of them managed to take home four completed projects. Thanks to our 4H leaders and members, there were lots of things to do and enjoy and we were happy that visitors got to look at some exhibits featuring toys and a model train of long ago. Those exhibits are still in Sletwold if you want to visit.

In February, we gathered again in Sletwold Hall to make Valentines Day cards. This year’s order of business was to create at least two Valentines – one to take home and one to take to the Vermillion Care Center for the residents to enjoy. Each person who attended had the option of using as much of the Valentine trims provided as they wanted to and there were lots and lots of beautiful Valentines created and taken home and I’m sure the residents at the Care Center enjoyed those pretty mementos. There were two highlights for the afternoon – each one attending was invited to do the decorating on their special Rice Krispies treat and there were lots of sprinkles, colored sugar, and wonderfully colored frosting to use. Everyone got to sit down and watch Dr. Sereda of the USD Department of Chemistry and his daughter, Liz, create the instant ice cream which is a marvel to watch – oh sure, there’s sugar, cream, a little vanilla and a wonderful ‘mystery’ ingredient that causes some wonderful white vapor to pour from the bowl and presto, chango – some wonderful ice cream. It was a fun day.

Our next two events will be our annual Easter basket making day and candy hunt, which always includes a pinata breaking. We’ll do that the Saturday before Easter, April 8, and everyone is welcome to join us. Then, the first Sunday in June – June 4th – will find us celebrating the now annual Celebrate Rhubarb Day when we claim the title of Rhubarb Capitol of South Dakota! We will keep you posted as to time and entertainment, but we also ask you to start your quest for the best rhubarb recipe you can find. That is always a really fun day.

Besides getting back to our events, we enjoyed some great tour groups. We had several classes from USD utilizing the Over as part of their course of study and were able to read some great comments about the tours. We had a great class of third graders from Hartington and are looking forward to many more tours of students this spring. There are lots of interesting things at the Over so ‘come on over to the Over’ and enjoy visiting. There is always coffee ready to be served and the howling coyote cookie jar always has some goodies for enjoyment.

*Maxine Johnson*



## Events at the Museum



*W.H. Over held their Annual Christmas Festival on Sunday, December 4, 2022. There were Trees, Vendors, Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus, A Hospitality Table, Bake Sale - Best in the state! Clog Dancers, Children's Choir, and 4-H sponsored Children's Activities.*



## Valentine's Day

The Valentine's Day Card making party was a collaboration with two 4H clubs and the USD Chemistry department. The museum provided card samples and materials, while "Meckling Livestock" 4H club members and leaders helped to make cards. Elizabeth Sereda from Jolly JJ's 4H Club did a demonstration of "Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream making" and served ice cream to the guests. The Chemistry Department provided liquid nitrogen and made sure all safety precautions were followed. We had about 20 people present, including 11 kids. Everybody had a great time. After the event, the cards were taken to the nursing home in Vermillion.

Friends of the W. H. Over Museum  
invite you to the annual

# RHUBARB DAY

*Celebration*

**Sunday, June 4, 2023**

in Sletwold Hall at the  
W. H. Over Museum

Bring your favorite rhubarb  
creation for tasting  
**PRIZES AWARDED!**

Everyone  
Welcome!

## SAVE THE DATE

September of 2023  
marks the  
**140th**  
**Anniversary**  
of the  
W. H. Over Museum

Watch for the  
upcoming celebration!



# CCHPC

Clay County Historic Preservation Commission



211 West Main Street, Suite 102  
Vermillion, SD 57069

Website: [cchpc.org](http://cchpc.org)

Email: [tomsesq@gmail.com](mailto: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**

**Brenden Richards**

## Preservation Awards: 2022

On November 19, 2022, at a noon Rotary meeting, the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) presented four preservation awards. Before the awards were presented, the attendees learned about the functions of the CCHPC. The mission of the CCHPC is to promote, advise, and educate residents of Clay County, SD about the importance of preserving historical sites by:

1. Supporting owners of existing sites and identifying potential new historic sites and districts in Clay County.
2. Holding open meetings and workshops to help residents learn about preservation of historic buildings including tax benefits.
3. Publishing and disseminating information in booklets, tour guides, books, and on-line about preservation and historic sites.
4. Collaborating with the Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission to help preserve historic sites.

Three of the awards fell under one category: Long-term preservation and renovation of a structure by individuals or organizations. In addition, a special recognition award was given to Evelyn Schlenker for Preservation advocacy and documentation.

### The Historic Burbank School #10

The first award lauded the preservation of the Historic Burbank School #10, a structure that was constructed in 1910 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The group that has worked hard to preserve the structure is the Burbank Historical School District #10 and Park Association was represented at the ceremony by Linda Hawley and Rebecca Kruse.

The Association has held multiple, successful fundraising events to restore the building.



*Linda Hawley and  
Rebecca Kruse*



*Current picture of the schoolhouse*

### 408 East Main Street: The Chi Omega House

Another structure that was well preserved by the current owners, Claude & Jean Garelik, is a home located at 408 East Main Street. The house, built before the turn of the 20th century, was owned by several people starting with Martin J. Lewis, brother of Adele Inman and Anna Thompson who lived in houses to the south. He built the house in the late 1880's. The next long-time owner was Elon C. Barton, a very successful merchant and business partner of the Thompsons'. From 1937 to 1954, the house was used as a sorority house for Chi Omega. When they left to inhabit a newly built sorority house, the Trinity Lutheran Church

purchased the house and then sold it to Niels Urup, a contractor and builder of several houses in Vermillion. The three subsequent owners were Sylvester Clifford, a Communications Disorders Professor, Ted and Karen Muenster, and Jonathan Van Patten, School of Law Professor. The Gareliks did much to renovate and preserve the historic quality of the house.

The only major change in the outside of the house from earlier picture when it was the Chi Omega house is the removal of a railing on the second-floor level.



*Chi Omega house*

## The Gothic Round Roof Barn 30081 456th Ave. Wakonda, SD

The next award went to Joe Sokolowski who has preserved and maintained a very large and majestic dairy barn that was preserved over one hundred and ten years. According to Jim Stone, who surveyed the barn, it was built about 1910 for Rasmus Conrad, an early Clay County settler. The large barn is 72 feet long, 36 feet wide, and 34 feet high with lofts for hay and grain. A large number of

windows are located on the west and east walls. Four-foot-high concrete walls are on all sides of the exterior walls, with 2x6' walls 4' 6" tall, and 2x6' walls on the north and south walls up to the rafters. The hayloft is supported by 6x6' posts with a 3-ply 2x10' beam that supports 2x8' joist for the hayloft floor. Mr. Sokolowski did a great job of bracing the roof and covering the roof and walls with steel.



*Joe Sokolowski accepting his preservation award.*



*The barn, photo taken by Jim Stone.*

## Special Recognition Award

The last award was presented to Evelyn Schlenker, a member of CCHPC. Jim Wilson presented the award to Evelyn for publishing six books about the history of Vermillion and Clay County, as editor of the CCHPC section of the Joint Newsletter, an organizer of the Missouri Valley Historic Preservation Conference in 2018, preserving parts of the Thompson House in an exhibit at the W. H. Over Museum. This project was spearheaded by Jim Stone with assistance by Gary Bottolfson. She has been a steadfast advocate for preservation in the many talks she presented.



*Jim Wilson and Evelyn Schlenker.*



## Vermillion Historic Preservation Commission (VHPC) Update

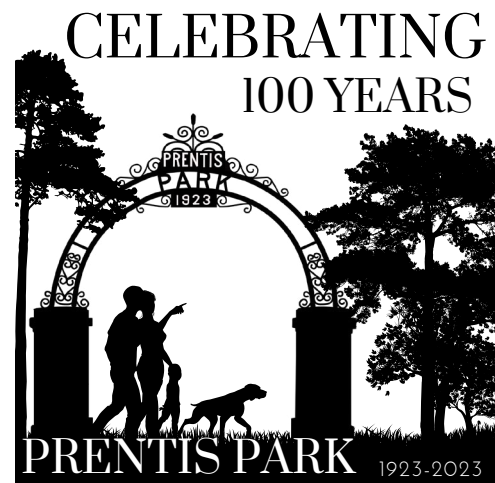
In November, the National Park Service approved two nominations of Vermillion properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. First is the John L. Jolley Historic District--the Vermillion neighborhood bordered by Main Street on the north, Forest Avenue district to the west and roughly Pine Street on the east and the bluff on the south. This district of tree-lined streets shows the residential development patterns of Vermillion between the years of 1880 and 1965, according to the nomination's author, Michelle Dennis. The district's 254 properties show examples of Queen Anne, Italianate, Second Empire, Folk Victorian, Neo-Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman Bungalow, Minimal Traditional and Ranch architectural styles. The Jolley nomination is the result of nearly three years of work.

The second nomination is for the Jacobson House at 1101 James Street. According to Michelle Dennis who wrote the application the building is "...an intact example of Mid-Century Modern architecture referred to as the Contemporary Style."

Currently, a National Register nomination application is in progress for the Brookman House at 404 Cottage Street in Vermillion. Another project, in conjunction with the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission, is collecting information about the historical buildings on the University of South Dakota (USD) campus. Because the history of Vermillion has revolved around USD since its start in 1882, it is important to create a record of its development. This information may also be used to update the USD campus tour book.

In addition, 2023 marks the 100th anniversary Prentis Park, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Plans are underway for celebratory events in July 2023. We are partnering with several organizations to plan activities which focus on aspects of the park's offerings. Confirmed events include a children's show in the park by musician Phil Baker on July 15 hosted by the National Music Museum; a 1920s period band concert on July 22; and the Vermillion Public Library's Storywalk detailing aspects of Prentis Park history. Many other activities such as baseball, swimming, historical games, art, vendors, movies and more will complete the celebration throughout the month. A Save the Date card was mailed to all area residents. Activities will be updated on our Facebook page @PrentisPark100. Contact us on this page or at [www.PrentisPark100@gmail.com](mailto:www.PrentisPark100@gmail.com).

Finally, the VHPC is considering holding a gravestone rehabilitation workshop. Information shared would include cleaning, repairs and leveling. If such a workshop would interest you, feel free to contact us at [SusanKeith.Gray@gmail.com](mailto:SusanKeith.Gray@gmail.com)

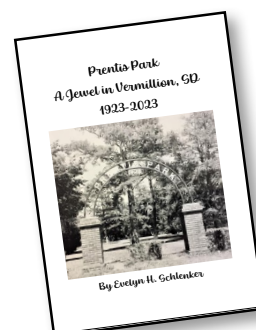


On an ongoing basis the VHPC reviews a variety of exterior construction permits requested on historic district buildings or individual historic buildings in Vermillion. We make recommendations to the Vermillion Building Official, Kalin Bird concerning whether a change will "...encroach upon, damage or destroy..." a historic property. Most often, permits are for windows, roofs, siding, fences, garages, signs, etc.

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, Ed Gerrish, vice-chair, Bill Dendinger, Erin Beyers, Dietrik Vanderhill, Cyndy Chaney and Jim Wilson.



Scan Me



Check out the new and updated books on the Clay County Historic Preservation Website: [cchpc.org](http://cchpc.org).

# The Prentis Park Centennial Book

As part of the Prentis Park centennial celebration, Evelyn Schlenker wrote a book entitled *Prentis Park: A Jewel in Vermillion, SD, 1923-2023* commemorating the development and utilization of the park by generations of individuals and groups. Copies of the book are available online on the cchpc.org website and in print at the W. H. Over Museum. Below is a summary of the book.

Following an introduction of the status of Vermillion in 1923 to 1930, the book discusses the owners of the land that became Prentis Park. An appreciation of Charles Prentis, who donated two parcels of land that constitute the bulk of the park follows.

The book then describes seminal time periods when the park underwent substantial changes, and discusses how individuals, entities, and city government transformed the park. As an appreciation of the historical significance of the park, in 2001 Prentis Park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The next section reviews the variety of activities and events held in the park over 100 years that improve the lives of the community. The book ends with remembrances of individuals and organizations who utilized the park as a “back yard” and for special activities.

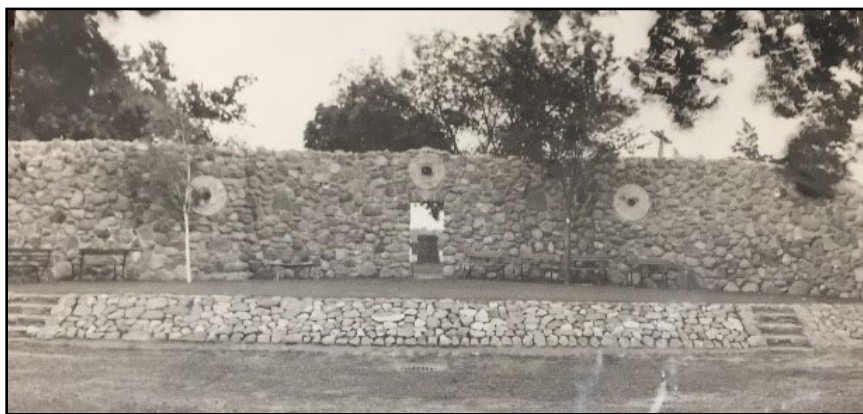
Importantly, Charles Prentis and the landscape architect he hired, Charles Ramsdell had clear visions regarding elements in the park including a bandshell, playground, skating rink, and swimming pool. They also realized the need for support from many organizations and the community for the park to be constructed, maintained, and evolve. Most of the concepts regarding the development of the park described in the 1924 letter published in the Dakota Republican newspaper signed by Ramsdell still hold true today. The greatest controversies noted in the book revolve around the construction of the three swimming pools built in 1929, 1966, and 2017. As expected, when each pool was built, it became a hub of enjoyment and exercise for countless numbers of children and adults.

Shown are just a few photographs illustrating elements and activities in the park.

The new slide, named Prentis Plunge in the second pool. Thanks to David Nelson for the photograph. In an ironic twist, Prentis Plunge became the name of the 2017 pool complex.



One of the most iconic structures in Prentis Park is the stone bandshell/amphitheater constructed in 1937. The master mason who designed and constructed the bandshell was Ole Anderson, who was paid \$300 for his efforts. Construction was also aided by funds from the Progress Works Administration. Interestingly, the bandshell/amphitheater underwent changes from the time of its construction until now. This is illustrated in the following photographs.



*Early (undated) postcard. Thanks to Jerome Anderson for the photograph. A recent photograph of the same structure indicates that most of the rocks that made up the stairs and front of the stage are missing. A few stones outline the bottom of a flower bed.*



Another popular site in Prentiss Park is the baseball diamond. Baseball is a long-time sport in Vermillion. Teams using the Prentiss Park fields included the Vermillion Eagles, Vermillion Red Sox, Vermillion Gray Sox, and the American Legion sponsored Post 1. Last year Post 1 won the state B legion championship (<https://www.aberdeennews.com/story/sports/2022/08/03/vermillion-wins-south-dakota-class-b-legion-baseball-state-championship/10219007002/>).

Over the years, other organizations also used Prentiss Park sports fields including the Vermillion High School Tanagers for football practice and the USD baseball team ([https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/University\\_of\\_South\\_Dakota](https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/University_of_South_Dakota)).

As noted in the book, Prentiss Park is constantly evolving and elements are upgraded to provide a venue for attendees of all ages and interests. Importantly, the park and activities within the park form the basis of lifetime memories. Some of which are documented by several individuals who so kindly shared their experiences.



*Thanks to Dawn Nelson for the photograph*

## The New Jolley Historic District

The new Jolley Historic District contains a wide variety of architectural house styles including Queen Anne, Folk Victoria, Minimal Traditional, Craftsman bungalow, Ranch, Neo-Classical Revival, Colonial Revival and Italianate. The Jolley school, built originally in 1958 is an example of mid-century architecture. Four buildings in the district were previously on the National Register of Historic Places.

*continued to page 10*



*402 South University St. the Colton House, built in 1938 represents Tudor Revival was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.*



*The house at 118 South University is an example of Colonial Revival and was constructed in 1910.*



A few of the  
architectual styles  
in the new Jolley  
Historic District



*This house at 421 South University, built in 1919 is an example of a Craftsman style.*



*405 Lewis Street house is an example of International Modern Style. It was constructed in 1948.*



*416 Lewis Street is an example of a Craftsman style house built in 1920. Several bevel-glass windows are located on the first floor.*



*One of the older houses in the district located at 200 S. Yale Street was built in 1890 and is an example of a Queen Anne cottage. Note the bay window and the gingerbread bargeboard trim.*





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 ARE DUE April 1, 2023**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **CCHS Elected Board of Directors: April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023**

President - Dan Christopherson  
Vice President - Kevin Jacobson  
Recording Secretary - Barb Campbell  
Membership Secretary - Ruth Bylander  
Treasurer - Joni Freidel  
Past President - Maxine Johnson  
Directors - Jim Stone, Art Rusch,  
Judy Sullivan, Tom Sorensen,  
Doris Hodgen, Katie Heine,  
Connie Krueger

\*\*\*\*\*

Appointed Positions  
Executive Director Wess Pravecek  
CCHPC Representative Jim Stone

## **CCHS ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM**

Clay County Historical Society Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday April 26, 2023 at 6:00pm at the Austin-Whittemore House. Prior to the brief business meeting, a complimentary light soup supper will be offered at 5:30pm.

Routine business as well as annual election of officers and board members will be held. An item of interest will be a discussion of possibly changing the CCHS fiscal year from the current April through March to the proposed calendar year of January through December, beginning in 2024. This will make it easier for current and future board members to keep track of annual filing requirements and membership investment due dates.

The program, beginning at 6:30pm, will be a presentation on the current and planned building improvements to the Historic Clay County Courthouse. Clay County Commissioner Dick Hammond will lead the informational program.

We invite everyone to stop by the Austin-Whittemore House on  
**WEDNESDAY APRIL 26, 2023!**

**5:30pm – COMPLIMENTARY LIGHT SOUP SUPPER**

**6:00pm – CCHS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

**6:30pm – CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE IMPROVEMENTS UPDATE**

*Thank you and Happy Spring!*  
*Dan Christopherson*  
*CCHS President*

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

The Clay County Historical Society begins a new fiscal year April 1.  
Please help preserve our history.

***Individual Membership is \$25***

***Family Membership is \$40***

***Business/Organization Membership is \$75***  
***and Lifetime Membership is \$250***

Please send check to: CCHS, 15 Austin St., Vermillion, SD 57069  
*Thank you for your support*

*Save the date*

**Thursday, June 8th**  
**5:00 to 7:00 pm**

**CCHS Annual**  
**Ice Cream Social**



**on the grounds of the Austin Whittemore House**

**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT – RIDES IN FORD MODEL T**  
**Serving taverns, pie, desserts, coffee & lemonade**

## From the CCHS Desk...

As I sit here today writing, I'm enjoying the blue sky, sunshine and 40 degree weather. In South Dakota, we call this "balmy". For the past couple of years we haven't had much snow or actual winter, as I remember what winters were like as a kid. This 2022-23 year has made up for it. The weatherman is telling us that we're within six or seven inches of matching the snowfall that we had in the winter of 1968-69. I remember that winter because I was a freshman in college and my parents and I were going to fly to Seattle to see my siblings for Christmas. My uncle had to drive us to the Sioux Falls airport in his 4-wheel drive pickup only for us to find out that the airport was closed. We ended up taking a bus to the Sioux City airport. I don't know if there was less snow there or maybe the pilot was more rambunctious. Either way, we got to Seattle and had a wonderful holiday. The weather story doesn't stop here. Seattle isn't known for its heavy snowfalls but they had one that year. We ended up taking some kind of a shuttle to the airport where we sat for the next eight hours waiting for the runways to be cleared. If you ever saw the original Airport movie, our adventure had this kind of a feel. It was the first time my Dad had flown on a commercial plane so he was getting a little anxious. I found it to be kind of exciting but I was 18. To make my long story short, South Dakota had time to shovel out and we finally got home and kissed the front step of our home in Wakonda.

In March of 1969 there were more exciting things going on in Vermillion besides weather. This is a small piece of news that appeared in the March 10, 1969 edition of the Plain Talk. *"Nearly 100 persons attended an organizational meeting of the Clay County Historical Society at the Austin School Gym Wednesday evening. The group voted to organize and authorize temporary chairman Mrs. Richard Bowen to appoint an organizational committee. Mrs. Bowen was also authorized to appoint a nominating committee. She announced that Martin Weeks had volunteered his services as attorney for the group. Mrs. Bowen said that enhancing pride of place, a historical society also enhances patriotism. She went on to say, when one feels pride as an integral part in his own small area, he also feels a part of the larger environment, his country."*

This meeting was just the start of an organization that continues to collect, preserve and take pride in the history of Clay County. I hope that you know that your membership and support helps to continue this legacy. Our fiscal year runs from April 1st to March 31st so you will be getting a reminder about your dues. The annual meeting of the Clay County Historical Society is scheduled

for April 26th. More information will follow in this newsletter. Please plan to attend if your location permits. Thanks again for your support and think Spring!

*Wess Pravecsek, Executive Director  
Clay County Historical Society*

Santa made an appearance at the Austin-Whittemore House on December 11th. He visited with 21 families and heard about their Christmas wishes. What a fun day!



*Kelsey Nelson and her son Viktor  
were among the visitors.*



## 2022 Spoken History Cemetery Tour, “Pioneers of the Park”

Prentis Park, Vermillion’s 20-acre city park, was created in 1923 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2001) for its association with the Works Progress Administration and its landscape design. The theme for the CCHS annual cemetery tour, “Pioneers of the Park” presented the life stories of some of the people who played a role in the development, maintenance, and history of Prentis Park.

The 2022 Cemetery Tour Committee (Maxine Johnson, Steven Gapp, Bill Ranney, Art Rusch, Wess Pravecek, and Joni Freidel) select the theme, significant people, and then research life stories. A special thanks to the actors behind each person’s name who donated their time and expertise.

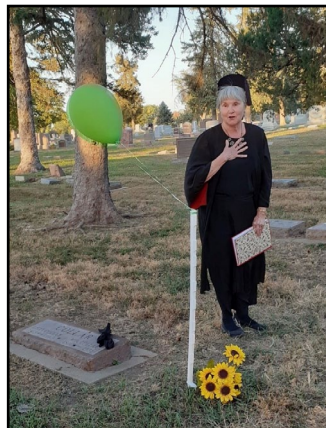
### Harold E. Brookman

(Steve Ford)  
USD Applied Science department chairman, Vermillion city engineer, and elected councilman who was instrumental with the park’s inception.



### Lily (Robinson) Collar

(Connie Krueger)  
An active member of the '76 club, who supported the construction of the replica of the first schoolhouse in SD (current Girl Scout log cabin).



### Howard W. Connors

(Geoffrey Gray-Lobe)  
This professional baseball player coached at USD, managed the Eagles Red Socks, and was influential in establishing Vermillion’s baseball culture.



### John E. & Anna (Hansen) Erickson

(Bill Ranney & Cheryl Breske)  
As the City Park caretaker, his family lived in residence. His wife was employed at Dakota Hospital as a cook and laundress.



### Charles E. Prentis

(Steve Ward)  
Community leader and businessman, he donated a total of 20 acres for the park. The first 10 was in memory of his late wife and the second for a baseball diamond and football field.



Thanks to the Bluff View Cemetery Board and the Prentis Park Centennial Committee for assisting with this year’s tour. According to Wess Pravecek, Executive Director of the Clay County Historical Society, “The tour was beautiful. The actors were terrific, and the turnout was great! We always like to have our guests leave with a little bit more information about our community than when they came in.”

*Joni Freidel, Chairman*

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Monday, October 9**

*“Getting Down to Business”*

**2023 Spoken History  
Cemetery Tour**



## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW – *from the files of the Clay County Historical Society*

*Excerpts from A.H. Lathrop interview  
by Margery Weeks in the 1970's*

### **What were some of the stores when you were a boy?**

Main Street ran from Market to the East. When they moved the town up on the hill, they thought Market would be the main street of the town, but they found it was only two blocks long. My father's house would have been right in the middle of Market Street, if they had centered the street. So they built up Market Street and then moved East on Main. Lee and Prentis, that was the big store on the corner of Market and Main. They had a brick store building down on the bottom, and tore that down and used the brick to build the one on the hill. They used the same bricks because labor was cheap. They couldn't do that now. They were Bower bricks, from the brick yard down below the hill.

Some other stores when I was growing up were Thompson-Lewis. They were on the other corner of Market and Main right across the street East from Lee & Prentis. They had a store they moved up from the bottom. A man by the name of Jensen had a drug store in that same building before the flood. But then the fire of 1890 took that and took the whole block on the South side of Main Street. That's when they built those buildings that Ray Cash was in (2 W. Main) and where they are doing the new theatre (4 W. Main). There are three buildings, and I think they were constructed in the fall of 1890.

Alfred Helgerson had the drug store that moved up on the hill, and was located on the South end of Market where the print shop is (Hill's Printing at 26 Market Street). Ole Iverson had a hardware store across the street. Then Helgerson built the store where Davis is now (12 West Main). He sold out to Roy Davis, who was Marshall Davis' father. Marshall sold to his daughter Sandra Lavin and her husband Tom Lavin.

I worked there for Roy Davis one summer....you know the drug store was a little different in those days. They sold whiskey. One of my jobs was to fill whiskey bottles from the half pint to the full quart. It was 25 cents for a half pint of whiskey, can you imagine that? A dollar for a full quart. Of course, it wasn't sealed goods, it came out of a barrel. Sealed whiskey you could get for about \$1.25 for a full quart. There were distilleries all over the country then, just like now.

Helgerson never had a fountain in the store, but another old time druggist named Clark did. He was

where Cash is now (2 W. Main). I always felt badly when they took the soda fountains out of the drug stores....I always liked those.

The drug stores were not filled with stuff the way they are now. You can't hardly move around in a drug store, now. They used to have a lot of room right in the middle. I used to have to sweep it. It was quite a job sweeping that front room out. Down back they filled prescriptions and sold patent medicine like swamproot and stomach bitters. And they had some candy, in big buckets, at least I think Clark had candy. Clark sold beer, too, but Helgerson did not sell beer.

Tom Burchill's building was moved up from below the hill and is still located at 8 E. Main where the Charcoal Lounge is now. That's quite a unique building.... I think it is the only store building still left that was moved up from the bottom.

Then there as the Grange Livery down on Center (24 Center St.) A man by the name of Milt Grange built that, and got it done just about the time the automobile was coming in. He did not own it very long and an auto dealer went in there, and fixed cars.

You know, when I was in the newspaper business, I didn't have time to write historical stuff. I was in the back room of the paper doing the mechanical work. I printed the paper for over 25 years. When I was an apprentice for three years at the paper I learned the case setting type. I set type, I fed press and I did janitor work.

I worked at the Plain Talk until January 1915, and then I went back to the Republican.

They had better equipment and everything. Did you know that at one time there were actually three newspapers in Vermillion?

Tom Eyres started the Plain Talk in 1884 and sold out at some point. The Republican

was also here at that time (the original Republican office was built about 1890.) Then at some point Knut Weeks and four other partners decided that they did not like the Plain Talk and they did not like the Republican, so they started a third paper named the Clay County Freeman. I think the Freeman ran for about five to seven years.

I have a copy of the letter my father wrote to his mother around 1880. My father wrote that he hoped to have a few more good years and maybe he could get out of debt. Then the flood came and wiped out everything and he just go farther in debt.



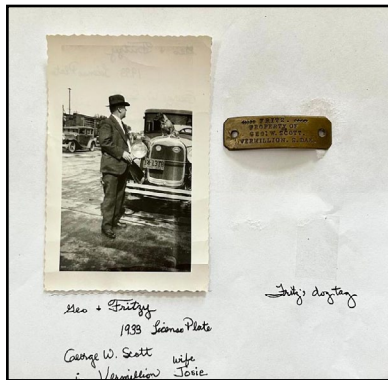
## Thanks for the Memories

*The items below have been kindly donated to the Clay County Historical Society.*

**Susan Erickson Jones**  
*Set of Haviland Limoges china that belonged to her mother, Cleo Collar Erickson*



**Luann Ouellette**  
*1959 Vermillion High School class ring; a pearl collar from the 1950's-60'; 1933 photo of grandfather, George W. Scott with his dog Fritz along with metal dog tag.*



**Mary Hoelsing Knodel**  
*Meckling memorabilia from her mother, Alice Jensen Hoelsing and grandmother, Margaret Nelson Jensen*



**John Drissen and Jennifer Drissen**  
*Herschedehall Clock. Originally belonged to their parents Emma Sorenson Drissen and Ed Drissen. Dates back to early 1920's.*



**Judy Krueger**  
*Wooden rug beater*



**Scott Munger**  
*Antique wash basin, pitcher and handled bowl; marble topped metal stand. Originally belonged to Adelle Inman and passed down through Scott's great aunt, Louise Peterson Werme and to his mother, Carrie Nelson Munger.*

Joint Newsletter of the  
CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,  
W. H. OVER MUSEUM AND  
CLAY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
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Three organizations join together for one newsletter:

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

### 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

