VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA
Papers 1880-2009
(bulk dates 1888-1980)
Quantity: 1 linear ft.

ACCESS: This collection is open for research without restrictions.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Negatives are located in Box 3. Photographs are located in Box 4.

PRINTED MATERIAL: Printed Materials are located in Box 1.

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PROCESSED BY: Gayla Koerting, July 2006
Doris Peterson, Updated 2008, 2009, 2010
Sarah A. Hanson, Updated 2013

History

The town received its name from the nearby river, derived from a Sioux name, Wase Wakpala, for “red stream,” that was later translated by fur traders to Vermillion. The town was founded in 1859, and the post office was established in April 1860. The articles of incorporation were not filed until 1862. Settlers began to arrive seven years later below the bluff, and the local government was organized by 1873. At that time Vermillion was often referred to as “Vermillion-Under-The-Hill” or “Vermillion on the Bottom.” However, Vermillion suffered a devastating flood on March 27, 1881; the town was relocated, replatted in 1884, and rebuilt on the bluff.

The growth of the city flourished with the founding of the flagship institution for higher education in the state, the University of South Dakota, in 1862. USD is designated as the public liberal arts university in the state and is home to a large College of Arts and Sciences, a School of Education and the state’s only School of Law, School of Medicine, accredited School of Business and College of Fine Arts. The university attracted students, faculty, and staff into the area and aided in attracting businesses into the area.

Scope and Content Note

The Vermillion, South Dakota Collection contains six series: Correspondence, Land Title Abstracts, Photographs, Printed Materials, Typescripts, and one subject series on the Vermillion Sesquicentennial.

The Correspondence series consists of three individual letters relating to Vermillion history from 1888, 1909, and 1954.

The Land Title Abstracts series contains 4 abstracts for parcels of land in Vermillion or in Clay County.

The Printed Materials series contains one successful National Register of Historic Places application for the Downtown Vermillion Historic District, one Preserve America grant application for funds to produce a publication on Vermillion’s history for the town’s sesquicentennial, two books on Vermillion’s history, newspaper clippings, and promotional literature from various city agencies. Visitor information, maps, guides, and other brochures were produced by the Chamber of Commerce for students attending USD or those individuals coming to teach/work at the university. The Vermillion Development Company produced city economic profiles to encourage business opportunities in the area. Student handbooks, play productions, and commencement materials from Vermillion Middle and High School are also included in this series.

The Photograph series contains photographs of the city mayors and managers and five 8 x 10 negatives of the Vermillion High School Basketball Team, ca. 1940s.

The Typescript series consists of a 2 page document entitled “The Military Road” by USD professor of history Cedric Cummins.

The Vermillion Sesquicentennial series contains material used to celebrate Vermillion’s 150 of existence.
**Additional Resources**

Lathrop, A.H. *Life in Vermillion before the 1881 flood and shortly after.* Vermillion, SD: Clay County Historical Society, 1970. Location: 3rd floor, Chilson Collection, F659 .V4x L37


Schell, Herbert S. *History of Clay County, South Dakota.* Vermillion, SD: Clay County Historical Society, 1976. Location: 3rd floor, Chilson Collection, F657 .C6 S34x


Sterling, Everett W. *Vermillion story, the people and events in Vermillion's founding in 1859 and growth through the first 100 years. Published on the occasion of the Vermillion Centennial, August 1859.* Vermillion, SD: Vermillion Chamber of Commerce, 1959. Location: 3rd floor, Chilson Collection, F659 .V S7x

Svingen, Orlan J. *The history of Vermillion to 1900.* MA Thesis, University of South Dakota, 1975. Location: 3rd floor, LD5071 .3x Sv36


**Related Subjects:**

Vermillion (S.D.) – History
Clay County (S.D.) – History
South Dakota – History
Vermillion (S.D.) – Social life and customs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Box 1** | CORRESPONDENCE (3 folders)  
Andrews, Elva Cornelius to Ellwood C. Perisho (Prof.), ca. Nov. 1909  
w/ encl. “A Few of the Things that Elva Cornelius Andrews Has to be Thankful For, Thanksgiving, 1909”  
Taylor, Franklin to Jacob Denel, 16 December 1888  
Rothrock, E. P. (State Geologist) to Cedric Cummins (Prof.), 22 June 1954 |
| | LAND TITLE ABSTRACTS (4 folders)  
125 Prospect, Vermillion, South Dakota  
212 Prospect, Vermillion, South Dakota  
Lots 3 and 4 in Block 3 of Hanson’s Addition, Vermillion, South Dakota  
W1/2 of NW1/4 and NW1/4 of SW1/4 of Sec1 and E1/2 of NE1/4 and NE1/4 of SE1/4 of Sec2, T92, R52, Clay County, South Dakota |
| | PRINTED MATERIALS (27 folders)  
Books: (5 folders)  
Christopherson, Dan. *Downtown Vermillion Historic District: A project of the Clay County Historic Preservation Commission.* 2003. (Copy)  
Jacobson, Kevin P. *Documenting Vermillion’s rich cultural heritage: A sesquicentennial project. City of Vermillion’s Preserve American Grant Application and Attachments.* Submitted December 13, 2005 by the Vermillion Sesquicentennial Task Force.  
Jordan, George T. *Vermillion and vicinity.* J.E. Jonnason, 1901.  
Brochures: (2 folders)  
The *Bluffs* (Multi-level Gulf Course and Residential Development), n.d.  
Resident and Visitor Information  
*Know Your Town.* ca. 1972  
*Snow Control Brochure.* 1990  
*Vermillion Briefs.* August 1995  
*Vermillion: Home of the University of South Dakota.* ca. 1940s (2 copies) |
Box No. Description

**Box 1 cont.**

**PRINTED MATERIALS cont.**

Clay County: (3 folders)

**Events**

  by Raymond W. Sargent, 28 April 1933
- Dalesburg Bank Concert, 23 February 1934
- Prairie Center Community Club, *Mrs. Briggs of the Poultry Yard.*
  10 March 1934
- National Swedish Ladies’ Concerts, City Hall, 17 Nov. 1890

Map of Clay County Place Names, from Moses, Lloyd R. *Clay County place names.* (Vermillion, SD: Clay County Historical Society, 1978), Supplement. Map shows abandoned houses, airfield, area designations, cemeteries, churches, creeks, houses, schools, Spirit Mound, highways, towns, townships, township halls

Clay Rural Water System, ca. 1975

Newspaper Clippings: (3 folders)

- *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*
  “Anna’s Place: Boarding House ‘Slows Down’ After 45 Years,” (Anna Vaith) 24 November 1957
- *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*
  “Boarding House Reach Not Always Necessary,” (Anna Vaith), 22 May 1977
  “Water Project Almost Finished,” 29 June 1980
- *Vermillion Plain Talk*
  “Six Small White Marble Headstones are Symbol of Diphtheria in Vermillion,” n.d.
  “Vermillion was Physically Demolished, but it’s Moral Fiber Stood the Test,” 25 March 196?
  “After 1880, Vermillion and Big Mo Changed, One Went South, Other North,” 18 February 1965
  “Railroad Plans Made in 1872,” 3 June 1965
  “New Historical Society to Form-Seek City History,” 17 February 1969 & 24 February 1969

Vermillion Chamber of Commerce: (5 folders)

- General Information, churches, schools, realtors, eating establishments, lodging, n.d.
- Maps, total of 5, ca. 2004, n.d.
- *Program of Action.* 1986
- Promotional Brochures, ca. 1940s, 1970s, 1980s, 1996

Vermillion Development Company: (1 folder)


Vermillion High School: (4 folders)

- Diploma, 1918, May Coverdale
- Programs, Commencement, 1975 & 1979
- Programs, Plays, 1933-1934

Vermillion Middle School: (1 folder)

- Student Handbook, 1984-1985

Vermillion Parks and Recreation: (1 folder)

- Guides, 1994-1996
Box 1 cont.  
**TYPESCRIPTS**  

Box 2  
**VERMILLION SESQUICENTENNIAL (3 folders)**  
Pins  
Business cards  
Calendars, 2009  
City Hall groundbreaking ceremony programs, September 17, 2007  
City Hall groundbreaking ceremony speech by Dan Christopherson, September 17, 2007  
City Hall dedication ceremony programs, April 30, 2009  
Community Guide, 2009, *Vermillion South Dakota the Place to Be*  
Ecumenical Worship Service programs, August 9, 2009  
*In Every Generation: An original musical photograph* play program, July 10-13, 2009  
List of mayors 1877 to 2010 and city managers 1966 to 2005, compiled August 19, 2008  
Ratingen Wind-Band programs, August 6, 2009  
*Looking Back: 150 years of history*  
*Nebraska Journal Leader* (Ponca, Nebraska), July 30, 2009  
*Plain Talk* commemorative edition, July 31, 2009  
*Press & Dakotan*, August 7, 2009

Box 3  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**  
Negatives  
Vermillion High School, Basketball Team, [1940’s?], total of 5 8x10 negatives

Box 4  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**  
Prints  
City Managers 1966-1989  
Miller, Michael G. (1966-1970)  
McClain, C. Kent (1970-1973)  
Weinaug, Carl D. (1974-1983)  
Mayors 1877-2010  
Jolley, John L. (1877-1878, 1885-1886)  
Burdick, F. N. (1878-1885, 1886-1887, 1890-1892)  
Kidder, S. W. (1887-1889)  
Palmer, S. N. (1889-1889)  
Lee, Andrew E. (1892-1896)  
Swezey, L. T. (1896-1898)  
Cox, Frederick W. (1898-1900)  
Hansen, H. E. (1900-1903)  
Ferry, H. L. (1904-1911)  
Prentis, Charles E. (1913-1916)  
Lyons, R. F. (1916-1918)  
Beede, W. H. (1918-1921)  
Thompson, M. L. (1921-1923)
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<td>Radigan, William J. (1994-2001)</td>
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<td>Christopherson, Daniel D. (2004-2010)</td>
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