



Megan Olson and Larry Bradley stand among the equipment from The Vermillion Broom Factory currently on display in the W.H. Over Museum. Pictured behind them is William D. "Bill" Burr, who operated the factory from 1937 until its closing in 1983. (Photo by David Lias)

Brooms/ from page 1

using that equipment in 20 minutes. "Some of these kinds of operations could make 6,000 brooms a year," he said.

According to Burr family members, most of the time the factory was a one-man operation. At times when demand was heavy, however, up to 10 people would work at the business.

"A series of brooms were made, all the way from whisk brooms to hearth brooms to what they called "trailer house" brooms and warehouse brooms — all different sizes," he said. "They were all made totally by hand. There was no electricity used, except for later in the factory's operation. They did use electricity to power equipment to get the seeds off the broomcorn."

"This equipment was made in 1870," Bradley said, further explaining the contents of the museum exhibit, "and the most powerful machinery was foot-powered. Everything is still functional, so we still could make brooms with it today."

The display includes a timeline that points out the development of this unique Vermillion industry. In 1865, Merrick Burr homesteaded two miles north of Vermillion. In 1885, his son, Newton, launched The Vermillion Broom Factory.

Merrick died in 1892, and soon after, William S. Burr, brother of Newton, joined the partnership. A two-story brick building housing the factory was built at 2309 N. University Road.

In 1907, the partnership of William S. and Newton Burr dissolved. William S. Burr died in 1936. The next year, his son, William D. "Bill" Burr resumed the broom factory's operations. The factory was busy manufacturing brooms until 1983, when it ceased operation.

It's likely that the broom factory wasn't the first manufacturing establishment in Vermillion's long history.

"I'm sure that there were a lot of other operations where people were manufacturing or producing something," Bradley said, "but this one lasted probably longer than any other one, and with the same equipment."

A wide range of people helped make this exhibit possible at the W.H. Over Museum.

"Most of the staff here at the museum has worked on it," Bradley said, "and the university students have spent time on this off-and-on since early summer."

One of the students was working on a master's degree in anthropology. "This was one of her projects," he said, "and we have other students from a

museum studies class that helped out."

The Burr family donated the equipment featured in the display to the museum. "Some of the material itself, some of the extra labels, even one of the electric lights that hung in the building were donated," Bradley said, "so we have the entire operation as it was when it was shut down."

More than a quarter century has passed since the last Burr broom was manufactured. The building on University Road that housed the factory is still standing. "A lot of people in town have Burr brooms, and they remember going to this particular location. He (Bill Burr) sold popcorn as well — a lot of people would go out there to pick up popcorn, and they would horse-shoe games in the area."

"Apparently, part of the attraction of it all was that it just served as a gathering place from time to time," he said.

The Burr family initially grew the special corn needed to make the brooms. Eventually, they began importing the corn from other areas in the United States. The demise of the factory, in part, came about when supplies of the corn became inadequate.

"Eventually, he (Burr) couldn't get enough corn, and that's when the business kind of collapsed," Bradley said. "What makes this display so interesting is that we have the original equipment from day one when they were in operation, and it's also interesting because it was a specific family operation and it lasted so long."

Megan Olson, a graduate student from USD, who is working on her master's degree in interdisciplinary studies, helped make the museum display a reality.

"Instead of doing a thesis, this was my project," she said, "which was lot more fun than writing a thesis. And, I'm a

lifelong Vermillion resident, so it was fun to learn something about Vermillion history."

Olson treasures the opportunity she's had in the last year to work with the Clay County Historical Society. "And the USD graphics department really came through for us. It was fun that this project touches on an important part of Vermillion history, and it coincides with city's sesquicentennial."

She was happy to see many people stop by the exhibit, look over the equipment and other items on display, and learn about an important piece of the community's past.

"I think it's great to bring all of that information out," Olson said. "This factory was here for almost 100 years, and maybe some people didn't know that."

Olson, herself Vermillion native, learned new things about her hometown's past thanks to this project.

"It was a great experience, and I'm glad I could do this," she said. Olson was a 1-year-old when the factory closed, so she had no personal knowledge of its operation when she began her work on this project.

"My family, of course, had heard of the broom factory, and when I brought it up and told them who I was contacting, they knew them," she said.

"Even though this equipment is what we would term archaic and old and so on, it was hand-powered or foot-powered, all of it, and it was functioning right up into the 1980s, and provided income. It didn't have to be electrified," Bradley said.

Other than a single-bulb electric light that hung from the ceiling, and a single piece of electric-powered machinery late in the factory's history that removed seeds from the corn plant material, the only other thing that was plugged in was a radio that Bill Burr operated while building brooms so he could listen to ball games.

H1N1/ from page 1

have the mismatch from circulating strains."

The current H1N1 flu has produced challenges never before faced in medicine, Huber said.

"We are at a truly interesting time," he said. "This influenza is something we haven't seen before in the human population, which causes the pandemic."

Not only did researchers face a virus they hadn't seen, but extensive testing was required to ensure the vaccine was safe for the general public, he said.

In addition, this has become the first pandemic in which the nasal vaccination has become available, he said. Efforts are under way to expand the use of nasal vaccines beyond the current ages 2-49, but complications could arise in the elderly, he said.

Officials were also successful in creating public awareness about H1N1 and the importance of vaccinations, he said. Attention has been focused on early vaccinations for seasonal flu as well as H1N1, he said.

"Our surveillance is good in regards to H1N1. We are very good at getting the word out," he said. "As we saw with shutting down schools, our pre-pandemic preparedness shows our plans do work."

The H1N1 pandemic arose last April and struck hard over the summer, which is unusual for influenza, Huber said. While the number of H1N1 cases has apparently subsided, Huber anticipates another wave of flu in the coming weeks.

H1N1 has a high infection ability shortly before symptoms appear and after the fever is past, Huber said. H1N1 has hit youngsters hard because a child's infection period covers 10 days, beginning six days before symptoms appear — compared to one day for adults — and continues until one day after a fever disappears.

South Dakota has recorded H1N1 deaths in different age groups. However, the death of a Sioux Falls child from H1N1 has accelerated many parents' demand for the vaccine.

The flu itself doesn't create all of the problems, Huber said. "The secondary complications are significant," he said.

Much is at stake in finding a faster process for producing vaccinations, Huber said.

Influenza in the United States takes an annual toll of 36,000 deaths; 200,000 hospitalizations; 25 million doctor visits; 95 million infections and illnesses; and \$3-15 billion in economic costs, including lost time at work.

Huber emphasized that H1N1 — named "swine flu" at first — does not come from hogs and is not acquired by eating pork. H1N1 contains bits of swine influenza, which contributed to the name, he said.

Researchers can learn from past pandemics, which occur every 10 to 40 years, Huber said.

In 1918, the United States saw 25 million infected and 500,000 deaths. Worldwide, the figures were 500 million cases with estimates of as many as 100 million deaths.

The 1918 pandemic also included a spike in mortality among people in their 20s and 30s, which is unusual for influenza, Huber said.

"In 1900, the U.S. life expectancy was 45 years," he said. "But in 1918-19, the life expectancy dropped 10 years strictly because of the flu pandemic."

Thanks in large part to vaccines, life expectancy didn't see those drops during pandemics in the 1980s and 1990s, he said.

No vaccine was available for the 1918 flu pandemic. In 1933, Influenza A virus was isolated and a vaccine was licensed in 1945. However,

evidence arose only two years later that the virus had changed and the vaccine was not protecting against H1N1.

In 1952, the World Health Organization (WHO) received global surveillance. More viral shifts occurred in following years, with the re-emergence of seasonal H1N1 in 1977. The avian (bird) flu showed up in humans in 1997 and came back in 2003, and the possibility remains of an avian pandemic.

H1N1 flu has also returned, Huber said. Work continues on vaccines, he added.

"This is not the end for influenza season," he said. "It will be interesting to see how it plays out, especially since we had vaccinations early."

Huber defended the measures taken for H1N1, including quarantines and the closing of schools.

"It was very important early on, especially because we don't know what the virus was going to do," he said. "In hindsight, it looks like we overdid it, but it was better to err on the side of caution."

Huber warned against complacency during future outbreaks. "We hope we don't just assume it was like the last time and not take measures," he said.

Now in his second year at USD, Huber is building up a new virology research group. Even if the current vaccine proves highly successful, researchers need to continue their work, he said.

"There is still the potential for other strains to create a pandemic. It's not the only H1N1 we have," he said. "If we can fine tune the vaccine, we will be better prepared for the future."

COUPON

DEADWOOD

10% OFF

WITH COUPON

• 24 HR Casino - Slots set at the Highest %
Payback, so you have a better chance to win!!!

• Indoor Pool - Spa

Not Valid with any other discount

196 Cliff Street • Deadwood, SD • Local 1-605-578-2535 • Toll Free 1-800-800-9000

Book reservations live on www.deadwoodsuper8.com

Join Us For A

Holiday Open House

December 17th
Vermillion Branch
During Regular Business Hours

Holiday Treats And Refreshments

We Are Your
CorTrust Bank
Member FDIC www.cortrustbank.com

At a time of sorrow & uncertainty, you can count on us for the support you need.

- Prearrangement Services Available
- Video Tributes • Several Cremation Options Available

Iverson-Siecke-Kober
Funeral Home

402 East Main St. Vermillion, SD 57069
624-4466
www.koberfuneralhome.com

Lori Kober
Funeral Director Co-Owner

Tom Kober
Co-Owner

Melanie Roberts
Executive Assistant

Lynn Laursen
Videographer

Allen Siecke
Funeral Director

It's A Natural

Clean, quiet and efficient. From warm, comfortable heating to the utmost in cooking performance, natural gas is a smart choice. At MidAmerican Energy, we're committed to keeping up with all your natural gas needs and dedicated to delivering it in the safest, most reliable way possible. Naturally.

MidAmerican ENERGY
OBSESSIVELY. RELENTLESSLY. AT YOUR SERVICE.

888-427-5632
www.MIDAMERICANENERGY.com

Safety