

Growing population, aging school led to present-day Vermillion High School

By David Lias

david.lias@plaintalk.net

The combination of a booming student enrollment and an aging high school building led to the construction of the present-day Vermillion High School on East Main St.

Students didn't let the old building go without expressing some sentiment about the three-story structure.

In the 1965 edition of the Tanager High School, they wrote, "The first school house was only a dream and a hope for a better education and future for generations to come. From this meager beginning, Vermillion expanded its dream and constructed a four-room school building."

The old Vermillion High School was constructed on Church Street in 1887. Herbert S. Schell, in his book, History of Clay County South Dakota, noted that the growing population in the city required an expansion of Vermillion's educational facilities.

A building had been constructed on West Main in 1896 to accommodate the growing number of pupils in the elementary grades. In May, 1902, voters by a 115 to 10 margin, gave their approval to the construction of a second elementary school building on South University Street.

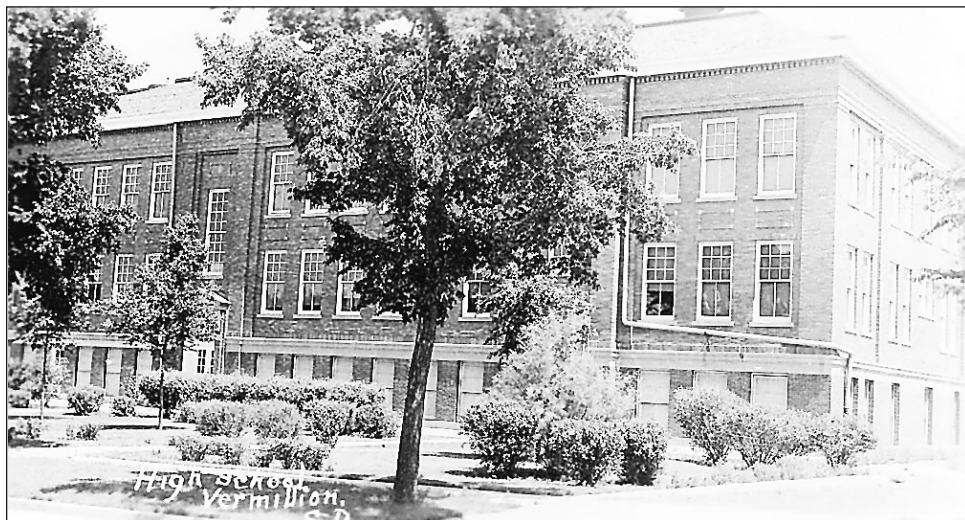
The Central or old high school building, originally erected in 1872, became rebuilt and modernized in 1911. During the process of rebuilding during 1911, high school classes met in an old convent building on High Street.

In 1906, the Vermillion board of education took steps to implement a four-year high school program that followed a new course of study. This curriculum was developed by state educators in 1903 and 1904.

At the time, the entire high school staff was made up of five people, including the superintendent. Part of the reason for the small staff was that the Vermillion community relied on the University of South Dakota for some of



ABOVE: The old Vermillion High School was constructed on Church Street in 1887.



LEFT: The Central or old high school building, originally erected in 1872, became rebuilt and modernized in 1911. The Central High School building was torn down, and a new, larger building was built directly to the east of the old site. Soon, however, the new high school building was outgrown, forcing school officials to construct an addition to the structure that nearly doubled the space available for students. The old high school building was torn down at about the same time the present high school opened in 1966, to make room for the present-day city library and water treatment plant on Church Street.

(Photos courtesy of Clay County Historical Society)

■ VHS, Page 18

■ ST. AGNES

From Page 13

the meals, and they were wonderful," Margaret said. "These were older women who had raised their own kids and they were tremendously good cooks."

Today, St. Agnes offers an integrated curriculum designed to provide for academic excellence and foster an awareness of the positive effects the gospel message has on a child's everyday life, both on a personal and community level.

The school's mission is to provide a Christ-centered, compassionate community in which to educate children's minds, hearts and spirits in the love of God, the pursuit of knowledge, the practice of gospel values, personal responsibility and service to others.

The integrated educational and religious environment encourages the discovery of Christian values during children's growth using a variety of teaching techniques promoting active learning in all subject areas of the curriculum.

Mass is celebrated by students today on a weekly basis. The Mass liturgy is prepared and presented by each class on a rotating basis. St. Agnes students choose the weekly theme, select the readings and special prayers, and participate in the celebration.

It is an atmosphere that has been present at the school since day one, attracting the Bierles and Huberts and scores of other families over the years.

"I know our kids made some very nice friends, and they seem to really enjoy going to school there," Rosalie said.

"There was a personal interest taken in all of the children, and at the time (our kids went to school) there were a lot of larger families, so the kids had a common bond," Margaret said. "Kids out of a big family have a whole different experience. There was a great deal of sharing and a great deal of having to work. I think that the Catholic school experience helped them in that way a great deal."

She is also appreciative of the generosity shown by the Vermillion Public School District over the years, allowing St. Agnes students to take part in the public school's bus service and remedial programs. "There was good cooperation, I felt," she said.

Today, there are 145 students enrolled in St. Agnes in preschool through fifth grade. The school has seen great growth in recent years, with enrollment in grades K through 5 increasing 50 percent over the past four years.

The present staff at St. Agnes is comprised of seven full-time faculty members, four part-time faculty and six support staff.

Father John Fischer, pastor of St. Agnes Parish, is superintendent and Mrs. Darla Hamm is the principal of the school.

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

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



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



Lori Kober, Funeral Director and Tom Kober, Co-Owners



Erin Feldman Intern/Pre-Need Counselor



James Bartels Intern



Eleanor Eagle Bear Personal Assistant



Lynn Lawrensen Videographer