

A Tale of Two Vermillion Carnegie Libraries

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In the early twentieth century, Vermillion was home to two Carnegie libraries. One, a public library, served the citizens of Vermillion and Clay County. The other, an academic library for the University of South Dakota (USD), was available to students and faculty. The community strongly supported both libraries and their mission to educate and enlighten the area's residents. Importantly, these iconic historic structures withstood the test of time and continue to contribute to the heritage of Vermillion and South Dakota.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Andrew Carnegie, an industrial titan who had made his fortune in steel, became a leading philanthropist. Carnegie's efforts included donating money for the construction of libraries in the United States. His belief in the transformative educational opportunities that public libraries provided stemmed from his experiences growing up in Scotland, where his father loaned his small book collection out to the family's less fortunate neighbors. The Carnegie Corporation gave over \$56 million to build public and academic libraries. Most of the 2,509 Carnegie libraries were constructed from 1890 to 1916.¹

The Carnegie Corporation helped establish a total of twenty-five public libraries and two academic libraries—one at USD and the other at Yankton College, now part of the federal prison system—in South Dakota. Currently, the Carnegie library building is located in the Yankton College Historic District.² Both Yankton and Vermillion also construct-

1. George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), pp. 3–23.

2. Susan L. Richards, "The Building of Carnegie Libraries in South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 20 (Spring 1990): 1–16. The Yankton Public Library was constructed in 1902. The building served as a library until 1973 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 (Yankton Carnegie Library, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 7 Aug. 1979, National Register Digital Assets, National Park Service, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/79002412>). Currently the building houses the Horn Law Office.

ed public libraries to provide patrons opportunities for education, community, and public events. Eight of the twenty-five original public Carnegie libraries constructed in South Dakota were demolished. Fourteen are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and three are located in a historic district. Only eight still function as libraries.³

To garner library building funds from the Carnegie Corporation, applicants had to fill out forms guaranteeing that their cities had populations greater than one thousand residents. The city also had to pledge to make an annual donation of 10 percent of the cost of the library for its upkeep. In addition, the location of the library had to be easily accessible to its patrons. Fees and donations would contribute to buying books, shelving, and furniture.⁴

James Bertram, the gatekeeper who reviewed the applications, served as Andrew Carnegie's secretary. Bertram was extremely selective about the building applications and letters of support he received from city officials and denied requests for various reasons. Sometimes he determined that a community's existing library was adequate, or that the building should be a state or historical society library. He also voted against libraries that required user subscriptions. In other cases, he deemed funds from local philanthropists adequate to construct a local library or claimed that the forms were not filled out properly. Bertram expected communities that met his approval to hire an architect knowledgeable about constructing Carnegie libraries and provided sample blueprints to help in this endeavor.⁵

Vermillion was one of many communities that sent applications for funding to Bertram. The city was founded in 1859 as a river town bounded by the Vermillion and Missouri rivers to the east and south and by

3. The Carnegie libraries in South Dakota listed on the National Register of Historic Places are located in Brookings, Dallas, Dell Rapids, Canton, Lake Andes, Milbank, Rapid City, Redfield, Sioux Falls, Sisseton, Tyndall, Vermillion, Watertown, and Yankton. The Carnegie libraries in Mitchell, Deadwood, and Hot Springs are located in a historic district. "South Dakota State Register of Historic Places," South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, <https://history.sd.gov/preservation/docs/SRHP.pdf>; Liz Almlie, in discussion with author, 8 Mar. 2021.

4. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries*, pp. 34–56.

5. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



Andrew Carnegie, pictured here in the late nineteenth century, was a leading industrialist and philanthropist. His corporation helped build thousands of libraries in the United States.

bluffs to the north.⁶ It soon became a thriving community of six hundred people.⁷ In 1881, disaster struck in the form of mass flooding and huge ice floes that destroyed three quarters of the town's buildings. Consequently, citizens quickly rebuilt, moving the town to higher ground on the bluffs. In 1882, as part of its revival, citizens decided to build the University of Dakota—which the territorial legislature had founded in 1862—with the first classes held in the county courthouse.⁸ By 1883, portions of University Hall officially opened, though the building was not fully completed until 1886.⁹ The architect was Wallace Dow, a prominent Sioux Falls builder. The building contained classrooms, a museum, and a library consisting of several reading rooms.¹⁰

In 1893, a massive fire consumed University Hall and destroyed the contents of the library, laboratories, offices, and the museum. A few students were injured, but no fatalities occurred. USD president Joseph A. Mauck, who led the school from 1891 to 1897, wrote an open letter to the students published in the school newspaper, the *Volante*. He stated that while University Hall was being rebuilt, classes would continue in other buildings without interruption. Mauck remarked that, “a University consists more in the spirit of the men and women who comprise it than in the buildings and other material equipment.”¹¹ Within a month of the fire, Vermillion residents had raised \$10,216.50 and Clay County issued bonds worth \$30,000 to rebuild, underscoring the community's significant support for the university.

The institution asked Dow to design a new University Hall building. In addition to changing the architectural design to a Georgian Revival style, he also incorporated parts of the old building. The exterior featured Sioux Falls rose granite with limestone accents. Dow also included some of the stone and other material from the Dakota Building—a

6. Herbert Schell, *Clay County: Chapters Out of The Past* (Vermillion: Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce, 1985).

7. Works Progress Administration, *Vermillion, a Civic Picture: A Report on Municipal Government* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1942), p. 5.

8. Cedric C. Cummins, *The University of South Dakota, 1862–1966* (Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1975), pp. 3–16.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–25.

10. Jennifer Dumke, *W. L. Dow: The Architect Who Shaped Sioux Falls* (Charleston, S.Car.: History Press, 2013), pp. 105–7.

11. *Volante*, 13 Oct. 1993.



This book from the USD Library was destroyed in the 1893 fire that consumed the entire University Hall building.

temporary structure that he constructed for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago—into the exterior and interior designs. These additions came at a low price—Mauck purchased the Dakota Building for just seventy-six dollars. The new University Hall was finished in 1895 and contained reading rooms and a library.¹²

Less than ten years later, these library facilities proved inadequate. The student population had grown from 290 in 1895 to 458 in 1905. The populations of Vermillion and Clay County, meanwhile, increased to over 2,100 and 9,300 people, respectively. As of 1900, however, the public library consisted of a reading room in the city hall building. With the continued growth of the city and county, residents believed that constructing new libraries for the university and the general public was essential. USD president Garrett Droppers, who took over from Mauck

12. Dumke, W. L. Dow, pp. 107–11.

in 1899, and other local leaders believed they could raise enough funds for both projects.¹³

Another key player in developing these libraries was their architect, Joseph Schwarz. Born in New York City on 22 February 1858, Schwarz moved west with his family, first to La Crosse, Wisconsin, and then to Sioux Falls in 1881, where he lived until his death. His background in contracting and carpentry was in high demand in the rapidly growing city. Schwarz learned his trade through an apprenticeship, a common practice of the time. He worked as an architect across the Great Plains, including in South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa, from 1895 to 1924.¹⁴

After Schwarz passed away on 26 December 1927, his obituary lauded his excellent reputation as the designer of many prominent buildings in Sioux Falls and the surrounding area.¹⁵ His architectural accomplishments in the city included the Carpenter and Cataract Hotels, the Masonic Temple, the Cathedral School, the Congregational, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches, the Manchester Biscuit Company plant, and parts of Washington High School, as well as several residences. Additionally, Schwarz was responsible for designing county courthouses in Lyons and Moody counties in South Dakota, and in Rock Rapids, Iowa. Schwarz also designed the law and chemistry buildings at USD, in addition to the buildings he designed for Augustana College and Sioux Falls College. Many of his buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁶

Throughout much of his career, Schwarz's main professional competitor was Wallace Dow. Dow had arrived in Sioux Falls first and had the additional advantage of being Anglo-American, Protestant, and connected with prominent politicians and businessmen in the Republican-dominated territory. By contrast, Schwarz, a Catholic and a Democrat, was an outsider. One of the greatest competitions between

13. WPA, *Vermillion, a Civic Picture*, p. 11.

14. Michael Bedeau, "Joseph Schwarz," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart, <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.arc.o42>.

15. *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 28 Dec. 1927.

16. "Joseph Schwarz (Architect)," *People Pill*, <https://peoplepill.com/people/joseph-schwarz-1>.

the two architects was the bid for the Minnehaha County Courthouse (now the Courthouse Museum) in 1890. Dow won the contract with a bid of \$80,000, whereas Schwarz bid \$100,000. The building cost \$100,000 to construct. After Dow retired in 1905, Schwarz's firm obtained many public commissions for academic and civic buildings as the population of the northern plains continued to grow.¹⁷

Efforts to build a new public library in Vermillion began in 1902. A petition signed by 397 Vermillion voters requested that the city levy taxes amounting to \$2 million to purchase books and \$3 million to purchase a site to house the proposed library. The Vermillion Public Library Association was formed to secure the funds to pay for the site, building materials, and labor. In January 1903, Vermillion agreed to appropriate \$1,000 annually to support the library. By 6 April 1903, the city council passed a resolution to form a building committee of seven prominent citizens to oversee the construction of the Vermillion Public Library.¹⁸

The committee agreed upon lots eleven and twelve of block twenty-six near downtown Vermillion as the location of the library. By July 1903, almost all of the \$1,185 needed to purchase the lots had been raised. Vermillion agreed to pay the \$1,000 stipulated by the Carnegie Corporation by 21 September 1903. The committee selected Schwarz as the architect for the project. If there were other applicants for the contract, it is not clear from either the Vermillion City Council or Vermillion Library Board minutes. Construction on the building began in 1903. It was open to the public by April 1904.¹⁹

The first floor of the library is raised off street level above a half-story basement. The brick building has a Sioux Falls granite facade outlining the basement windows. The central entrance bay projects into a portico beyond the front facade with a recessed door flanked by two Ionic stone columns. The main body of the building is approximately 40 by 59 feet. A metal, octagonal dome above the lobby contains a skylight. Windows in the front of the building are composed in three bays; the

17. Dumke, W. L. *Dow*, pp. 75–76.

18. Vermillion City Council (VCC) meeting minutes, 4 Aug. 1902, 15 Jan. 1903, Vermillion City Hall. The building committee included L. T. Sweezy, J. L. Jolley, C. E. Prentis, Garrett Droppers, E. C. Barton, C. J. Gunderson, and A. Helgeson.

19. VCC meeting minutes, 6 July 1903; Stephen K. Ward, *Women and Wine: The Making of the Vermillion Public Library in a Man's World* (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, 2004), p. 29.



The Cataract Hotel was rebuilt for the fourth time in 1901. Joseph Schwarz designed this version of the Sioux Falls landmark.

side bays contain two windows each. At the rear of the building, a large, three-part window illuminates the stack room. The Neoclassical style of this building was common in many Carnegie libraries in the United States.²⁰ No photographs of the interior of the building when it served as a library exist.

The library board struggled to maintain the integrity of the building throughout the early twentieth century. The necessary repairs included fixing the roof, shoring up the floors as the weight of the additional book stacks increased, installing a drinking fountain, and laying down a cork carpet to reduce the noise that the children's library in the basement produced. In addition, new entrances were constructed on the south and east sides of the building. The funds to support the library primarily came from the city, with additional monies coming from private donations. Moreover, since both citizens of Vermillion and elsewhere in Clay County used the facility, the library board re-

20. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, pp. 38-39.

quested funds from the county commissioners, who first granted them in 1926.²¹

Beginning in 1924, the library board frequently mentioned the need to enlarge the building due to population growth. Although no expansion materialized at that time, the group established a building fund. In 1935, the board contacted the Works Progress Administration (WPA) about the possibility of constructing a new addition. On 1 July 1936, Harold Benedict Gotaas, a city engineer and USD faculty member, designed a blueprint for the expansion. In August 1936, M. L. Chaney, chairman of the library board, presented these plans to the city council. The city used these plans to apply for WPA funding, with the provision that the city furnish the materials and the WPA cover the labor costs.²²

The possibility of expanding the library did not resurface again in board discussions until 1958. By 1974, the Vermillion Library Board chose Bob Carmack, dean of USD Libraries and a city council appointee, as the head of a committee to investigate the construction of a new building. It was not until 1977 that the city accrued adequate funds to build a new library.

The new library was located directly south of the old building. Some of the furnishings and most of books from the old library were moved into the new structure. On 19 October 1978, Linda Hurd, in an article in the *Vermillion Plain Talk*, noted that the “Diamond Jubilee” of the Vermillion Public Library would be celebrated two days later at 4:00 p.m. The article cited excerpts from Vermillion Library Board of Trustees meeting minutes to highlight changes to the building, such as accidental damage to the glass dome.²³

The fate of the old building was a tricky question. In 1977, Sara Engelhardt, representing the Carnegie Corporation, wrote to library director Robert Precoda and explained that the Carnegie building could be used for other purposes. Engelhardt concluded her letter as follows, “Neither Mr. Carnegie’s heirs nor the Carnegie Corporation has any legal standing in the issue of what becomes of the original library buildings. The

21. Interview with Fern Kaufman, former librarian at the Carnegie Vermillion Public Library, 8 Sep. 2019.

22. Vermillion Library Board (VLB) meeting minutes, 3 Aug. 1924, 29 Oct. 1935; VCC meeting minutes, 3 Aug. 1936.

23. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 19 Oct. 1978.

gift was made to the town of Vermillion which provided a site and operating support for the library. All conditions for the gift were made. It is up to the town as to how the building should now be used.”²⁴ To gather public input regarding the fate of the old library, the city placed an advertisement in the 12 October 1978 issue of the *Vermillion Plain Talk*.²⁵

During a city council meeting later that month, several organizations expressed interest in the building.²⁶ The Teen Center and the Vermillion Area Arts Council (VAAC) both desired to use the space. Alderman Paul Hasse suggested that instead of selling the land or the building, the city should rent it to cover maintenance costs. By contrast, Alderwoman Judith Krueger reported that the library board wanted to sell both the land and building and use the proceeds to help fund the new library.

24. Sara Engelhardt to Robert Precoda, 12 July 1977, Vermillion Library Archives.

25. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 12 Oct. 1978.

26. VCC meeting minutes, 16 Oct. 1978.



This photograph shows the former Vermillion Public Library building as it currently appears. Law offices now rent the building.

The council eventually passed a motion to allow the Teen Center and the VAAC to rent the building. On 6 November 1978, Kris Bowers, the VAAC's treasurer, mentioned that the old library should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.²⁷

Less than a year later, Larry Nelson proposed that his law firm—Mimick, Nelson and McCulloch—lease the building. A lease agreement between the firm and the city was confirmed by 5 July 1979. The five year agreement stipulated that rent would be \$350 per month, which included \$150 in cash and \$200 that could be used to improve the building. The city was obligated to make certain repairs, while the firm paid for utilities. Finally, the firm was allowed to sublet space in the building and had the right to be the first entity to renew the lease.²⁸

Shortly after this agreement was reached, Tom Vogel, chair of the Clay County Commission and an accountant, sued the City of Vermillion and the firm, stating that the lease agreement was illegal and violated several sections of state law.²⁹ Vogel charged that the city did not call for or advertise bids for the building or allow a lease contract. Eventually, it came to light that Vogel wanted to buy the building to install his own accounting business. The suits brought by Vogel against the city and the firm ultimately failed.³⁰

By 1980, the firm was in the midst of improving the old Carnegie library. A group of the company's staff and their friends worked to renovate the building, completing an estimated "350 hours of work." Their labor included replastering the upstairs, replacing the front door, repainting the interior of the building, and removing paint and residue from the woodwork. Other renovations included "replacing missing textured glass dividers between the foyer and other sections of the building, structural maintenance of the basement and replacing the floor in the north wing with a historically suitable covering."³¹

City officials and residents have always appreciated the historical significance of the old library building. In 1982, the building was part of the Clay County Historic Survey. The building was added to the Nation-

27. *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1978.

28. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1979.

29. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 16 Aug. 1979.

30. VCC meeting minutes, 7 Apr. 1980.

31. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 7 Feb. 1980.

al Register of Historic Places on 18 August 1983.³² At present, the city of Vermillion owns the library building and leases it to James McCulloch, who houses his law office there.³³ The building retains its historic significance and contributes to the history and culture of Vermillion. Its historic status gives the city added impetus to preserve the building.

The effort to construct a Carnegie Library on USD's campus faced more challenges than the campaign to build the public library. In the early twentieth century, USD president Garrett Droppers had adamantly promoted building both libraries. In his correspondence with the Carnegie Corporation, he even suggested that the organization grant funds for the university library first. The relationship between Droppers and Carnegie's secretary James Bertram, however, was testy, as their correspondence makes clear.³⁴ Further, Droppers did not have the authority to ask for either library to be built because he was not the mayor. He also lacked the backing of the South Dakota Board of Regents, which had to agree to provide the 10 percent annual contribution for library maintenance. The failure of his appeal may have been related to any of these factors.³⁵

According to historian Herbert Schell, Droppers was an excellent teacher, well-liked by faculty and students. He was also instrumental in the development of the university's law and music schools and set the stage for the formation of its schools of business, engineering, and medicine.³⁶ During his tenure as president, however, Droppers did not fit into the social and political environment of Vermillion. He often shared his left-leaning political opinions in local newspapers. Although the state was generally politically progressive at the time, Droppers was seen as a radical socialist. Moreover, Droppers was a Unitarian. His

32. An article in the *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 12 Oct. 1983, announced the building's National Register designation along with that of the Clay County Courthouse.

33. Interview with James E. McCullough, 19 Aug. 2019. More recently the basement windows were boarded to prevent vandalism. According to McCulloch, water damage to the basement from a malfunctioning sprinkler system associated with the new library extension still needs repair.

34. Ward, *Women and Wine*, pp. 18–23.

35. "Ninth Biennial Report of the Board of Regents of the State of South Dakota to the Governor" (1907), pp. 301–2, Public Documents of the State of South Dakota, USD Archives and Special Collections.

36. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 26 Feb. 1980.



Garrett Droppers served as USD president from 1899 to 1906. He encountered resistance to his effort to build a Carnegie library on campus from James Bertram, the official in charge of distributing funds for such projects.

association with this liberal Protestant denomination stood in contrast with the town's predominantly conservative churchgoers. In addition, countering the strong, pervasive temperance movement of the era, he served wine at receptions in his home. Thus, he made enemies of individuals like Elias Willey, editor of the *Dakota Republican* newspaper, Vermillion mayor W. C. Bryant, and prominent businessmen M. D.

Thompson and Darwin Inman. This turmoil created such tension that three clergymen and the aforementioned men petitioned Governor Charles Herreid to relieve Droppers from his position in 1903. Yet due to extraordinarily strong support from faculty and students, as well as the baseless nature of the accusations, Droppers remained president.³⁷ Droppers eventually resigned his position in 1906 and went on to teach economics at the University of Chicago and Williams College. He was later appointed minister to Greece by U.S. president Woodrow Wilson.³⁸

Although Droppers's effort failed, he laid the groundwork to obtain a Carnegie library for the university. On 6 February 1909, Franklin Gault, president of USD from 1906 to 1913, attempted to increase Carnegie Corporation funding for the university library from \$30,000 to \$40,000, but met resistance from Bertram. A few days later, Bertram reminded Gault that the original amount agreed on in 1906 was \$30,000 and the board of regents had not pledged funds for maintenance.³⁹

Gault responded to Bertram on 19 February 1909 by outlining the need for the increased dollar request. He claimed that the change reflected the cost of building materials, a larger student body, an inadequate current library, and the increased willingness of the board of regents to provide the maintenance fee. In addition, more money was available to purchase library books. By 2 March 1909, however, the funds were still not granted. It was not until 21 January 1910 that Bertram approved \$40,000 of Carnegie funds for the structure. By then, the building had finally gained the support of the state legislature and the board of regents through a joint resolution.⁴⁰

The proposed location for the Carnegie library was the southwest corner of the campus. Architect Joseph Schwarz's plans for the two-story library with a basement illustrate his careful attention to detail.⁴¹ In 1910, USD secretary C. A. Sloan put advertisements for contractors in

37. Cummins, *University of South Dakota*, pp. 70–74.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

39. Untitled document, Box 1, President Gault Files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

40. E. C. Ericson to James Bertram, undated letter, Box 1, President Gault files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

41. Untitled document, Box 1, President Gault Files, USD Archives and Special Collections.



The USD library was rebuilt in 1911. By the 1930s, it needed additional renovations to accommodate a larger student population.

the *Improvement Bulletin*. The estimates for building costs included train cars of cut stone, brick, lumber, and other components, in addition to labor.⁴² The new library was finished in 1911. A picture of the building indicates its unique architectural characteristics, including the Indiana Bedford limestone exterior. The central entrance bay projects into a portico beyond the front facade, with a recessed door flanked by two Ionic stone columns on each side. Light entered the library through many large windows on four sides of the building, as well as basement windows and a skylight. Entrance to the building on the south was via a flight of stairs.

Sketches by library director Ruth Bergman from 1930 provide views of the building's interior. The basement was used to prepare books and store unbound government documents. Heating and plumbing facilities were located on the northeast corner of the basement, as was the janitor's room. The first floor was dedicated to reading rooms, book and periodical stacks, a card catalog, and a station for checking out books.

42. "Bill of components needed to build the University Carnegie Library Building," File 5, Box 2, Charles Sloan files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

The second floor contained stacks for periodicals and newspapers. A few reading tables were available on this floor. For several years, the northeast section of the second floor also housed the university's art department.⁴³

By 1936, student enrollment at USD reached about nine hundred. President I. D. Weeks, who served from 1933 to 1966, considered constructing an addition to the old Carnegie library a priority.⁴⁴ An initial application to the Public Works Administration (PWA), a New Deal program that helped fund public works projects during the Great Depression, was rejected. In 1939, the board of regents gave Weeks full approval to move forward with the project, but stipulated that the state would not pay for the project. With greater support from the regents, the PWA accepted Weeks's second application. The regents then passed a resolution to approve the PWA funding.⁴⁵ That money combined with student fees collected for the University Library Revenue Fund (\$7.00 per year and \$1.00 for the summer) covered maintenance costs for the building.⁴⁶ Hugill and Blatherwick Architects of Sioux Falls were selected to design the addition. The firm, founded by George C. Hugill and Wilfred F. Blatherwick in 1921, designed many structures in South Dakota that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁷

The addition doubled the size of the building. Like the old library, builders used Indiana Bedford limestone.⁴⁸ Construction, however, faced delays, including a two-month draftsmen strike at the Indiana Limestone Corporation. The net result was that the board of regents, as well as the PWA, had to consent to allow the project to move forward several times. Though correspondence about the delays was heated at times, the builders eventually finished and the new University Library was dedicated on 10 October 1940.

43. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 10 Aug. 1967.

44. Cummins, *University of South Dakota*, p. 312.

45. Untitled document, File 7, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

46. Cummings, *University of South Dakota*, pp. 215–16.

47. "South Dakota Architects: W. F. Blatherwick, C. V. Booth, R. H. Booth," *History in South Dakota* (blog), 12 Sept. 2017, <https://historysouthdakota.wordpress.com/2017/09/12/south-dakota-architects-w-f-blatherwick-c-v-booth-r-h-booth/>.

48. John Keller to State Board of Regents and President Weeks, 1 Aug. 1939, File 13, Box 29, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

Dedicatory Exercises

for the
University of South Dakota Library
Thursday, October 10, 4:30 p. m.
on the Library Lawn

President I. D. Weeks Presiding

Dedicatory address

Charles H. Brown, Librarian of Iowa State College, and President-Elect of the American Library Association.

Presentation of Building

D. R. Kemmicott, Regional Director for Federal Public Works Administration.

Acceptance of Building

Hon. E. M. Mumford, President of Board of Regents.
President Weeks.

Address

Mrs. E. R. Doering, Secretary of Board of Regents.

Tour of Building

5:00-6:00 p. m.

The dedication of the expanded USD library on 10 October 1940 was a major event, as the program seen here suggests. President I. D. Weeks was a key player in completing the renovation.

By 1966, USD's enrollment had climbed to four thousand students, and the campus needed a larger library.⁴⁹ The university faced the question of what to do with the Carnegie building once the new library was complete. The old library ultimately became a different type of educational institution: a museum. Weeks and the board of regents first suggested that the vacated Carnegie building would be an excellent facility to house the extensive W. H. Over Museum collections that occupied space in the basement of Slagle Hall. Founded in 1883 as the University Museum, the museum was named after longtime director William Henry Over in 1948.⁵⁰ It contained cultural and natural history artifacts that were integral to the university's educational and research missions. The need for additional offices in Slagle Hall pushed the ad-

49. Cummings, *University of South Dakota*, p. 312.

50. Otto Neuhaus, "A Seed on Fertile Ground," *South Dakota Magazine* (May/June 2000), <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/a-seed-on-fertile-ground>.

ministration to move the museum to a new location.⁵¹ Before the move took place, however, Weeks had to garner support from the regents.

Funds to convert the library into a museum came from the board of regents and several private donors. Carl A. Norgen, a prominent supporter of the museum, donated \$100,000 toward the conversion and to develop natural history exhibits. In addition, in 1966, James H. Howard, the museum's director, wrote a two-page letter to the USD faculty entitled "Statement on Museum Policy" that detailed the mission, activities, and goals of the institution in its new home. He also encouraged the faculty to present suggestions to plan, develop, and produce an updated museum.⁵²

The W. H. Over Museum was not the only occupant of the Carnegie building. In 1967, Arne Larson, who the USD School of Music hired the previous year, was given room 104 of the old library for teaching and rehearsing material from the Golden Age of Bands, spanning from 1860 to 1915. The room also allowed him to display a portion of historic instruments from his collection of about 2,500 instruments that were housed in Old Main.⁵³

The Carnegie building was also home to prominent Yanktonai Dakota artist and university professor Oscar Howe, who worked at USD from 1951 to 1980. He also served as assistant director of the W. H. Over Museum, developing exhibits on subjects such as the Battle of Slim Buttes, which is still on display. With a gallery and studio on-site, he contributed several art pieces to the museum. The Old Main building on the USD campus currently houses a gallery dedicated to Howe's artwork, which moved out from the Carnegie building when Larson's collection of musical instruments grew.⁵⁴

51. Untitled document, File 8, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

52. Untitled document, File 9, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

53. *Volante*, 21 Feb. 1967. For his extensive and excellent work in promoting music in South Dakota, Professor Arne Larson was inducted into South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1979 ("Champion of Excellence: Arne Larson," South Dakota Hall of Fame, https://sdexcellence.org/Arne_Larson_1979).

54. Oscar Howe, *Oscar Howe, Artist: Paintings and Commentaries by Oscar Howe* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1974). Oscar Howe was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1979 ("Champion of Excellence: Oscar Howe," South Dakota Hall of Fame, https://sdexcellence.org/Oscar_Howe_1979).



Oscar Howe instructs students in one of his art classes at USD in 1967. Howe was an influential painter who worked in the tradition of northern plains Indian art.

Several considerations determined the fate of the old library building. The first was the 1973 passage of Executive Order 73-1, whereby the university and board of regents gave ownership of the W. H. Over Museum collections—but not the Carnegie building itself—to the state’s newly created Office of Cultural Preservation.⁵⁵ In a significant shift, a museum run by USD since 1883 was now managed by the state of South Dakota.

Another decisive factor was Arne Larson’s growing collection of musical instruments. In 1973, André B. Larson, Arne Larson’s son, used his father’s collection to found the Shrine to Music Museum and the

55. South Dakota Executive Order no. 73-1, Forty-Eighth Legislative assembly (1973), Section 254.

Center for the Study of the History of Musical Instruments at USD. As these holdings grew, the Shrine obtained several more rooms to develop display galleries. André B. Larson continued collecting world-class instruments, sheet music, and ephemera that required more space for exhibition, curation, and conservation.⁵⁶ He received collections of instruments from a variety of time periods and from countries all over the world. In 1979, Arne Larson donated his entire collection to USD. The following year, a new conservation laboratory was constructed in the Carnegie building's basement.⁵⁷

By the early 1980s, USD president Joseph McFadden, who was on the Shrine's board of trustees, strongly supported the expansion of the Shrine and suggested that the W. H. Over Museum find another home. He argued that the Over was no longer under the control of the uni-

56. John Koster, "André Larson (1942–2017): A Memorial Portrait," *Galpin Society Journal* 71 (Mar. 2018): 279–83.

57. Newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS), Oct. 1980.



Arne Larson (left) and James Howard (right) stand in front of the entrance of the Carnegie library building on USD's campus. At the time, the building housed both the Shrine to Music Museum and the W. H. Over Museum.

versity according to Executive Order 73-1, while the Shrine was part of USD. Initially, McFadden suggested that the Over occupy several buildings on the USD campus—Old Main, Old Armory, and the Old Law School Library—as well as the National Bank building in Vermillion and the Mead building in Yankton. None of these sites were considered suitable to house the Over's collections and exhibits. Old Main, for instance, had been condemned since the early 1970s. In 1984, the W. H. Over Museum moved out of the Carnegie building. The museum's new building on campus opened four years later.⁵⁸

After the Shrine took over the entire Carnegie building, major renovation projects commenced, including the installation of new exhibit galleries and an elevator to improve accessibility. Other improvements included a new heating and cooling system and increased storage space for instruments. By 1985, the new elevator was in place and several of the windows in the building were replaced either by brick and limestone or special glass to decrease the corrosive activity of sunlight on the instruments.

Additional improvements to the building occurred over the years. For example, in 2004, the building—renamed the National Music Museum (NMM) in 2002—had a new roof installed and was tuck-pointed, meaning that new mortar was added. Shortly afterward, the museum's board of trustees considered renovating and expanding the building. In 2017, the NMM received approval to construct a three-level addition and renovate the older building to improve accessibility, increase the number of exhibit galleries, enlarge and update the concert area, and increase conservation and storage space.⁵⁹ Funds for this major project came from donors, the board of regents, the NMM's board of trustees, USD, and the city. On 7 October 2018, the NMM was officially closed for renovation. It is set to fully reopen in 2022.⁶⁰

The renovations will increase exhibit and storage space and provide a new acoustically enhanced venue for musical performances. A recent tour of the facility indicates the care taken to maintain and respect the integral architectural characteristics of the Carnegie building and to

58. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 20 Mar. 1980; Julius Fishburne, "Presentation to the USD Planning Committee and Dr. McFadden," 9 Feb. 1983, W. H. Over Museum Archives, USD.

59. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 6 Apr. 2018.

60. *Ibid.*, 30 July 2021.



This modern-day photo of the National Music Museum demonstrates how much the original Carnegie library building has been altered.

enhance the accessibility of the NMM with the new wing. In addition, in the fall of 2019, the NMM's new off-site Preservation and Research Center opened, increasing storage space for instruments and research capacity for museum staffers and patrons.⁶¹

The two Carnegie library buildings in Vermillion have a long history of furthering the education of the community and garnering support from patrons and donors, including USD, the board of regents, the city and state governments, the NMM's board of trustees, and many selfless individuals. Built in the early twentieth century, both structures helped educate patrons for several decades before coming to serve a wide range of purposes, from law offices to museums.

61. National Music Museum Newsletter, Fall 2019.

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On the cover: Several climbers scale a rock face on Cowboy Hill in Rapid City. The area has become a world-class rock climbing destination.

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