

The first Dakota Territory schoolhouse was built in Vermillion



Replica of the original school house

August 31, 1864, Captain Nelson Miner was Commander for the first Dakota Territory Militia unit.

Captain Nelson Miner was instrumental in the formation of the Dakota Territory Militia; he was the first in the Dakotas to initiate the program that are now called Civil-Military Projects and (IRT) Innovative Readiness Training. Obviously it was not called that 152 years ago, but it accomplishes the same mission. A Militia unit volunteering to help with community improvement projects.

In 1864 the idea for a schoolhouse was brought up by Captain Miner, Commander of Company A, 1st Dakota Cavalry. Nelson Miner was a Vermillion resident. He proposed to settlers that they build a school house. He led off by donating \$30 personally and the services of his military men.

Together, the settlers and soldiers felled cottonwood logs and with the help of the cavalry horses, dragged the logs into position. They erected the first permanent school house in all of Dakota Territory.

The one-room school house was located at the foot of Dakota Street Hill in Vermillion, with one door and windows on two sides. The logs were cottonwood found along the Missouri River, 16 and 20 feet long and more than a foot in diameter. The sides of the cabin were 8 feet high.

The first teacher was Amos F. Shaw, a Company A member, who was released from active duty to teach. Shaw taught 35 pupils and was paid by the parents at the rate of \$2.50 per pupil per year.

A replica of the one-room school house is located on Austin Street, one block from the Clay County Courthouse in Vermillion.

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