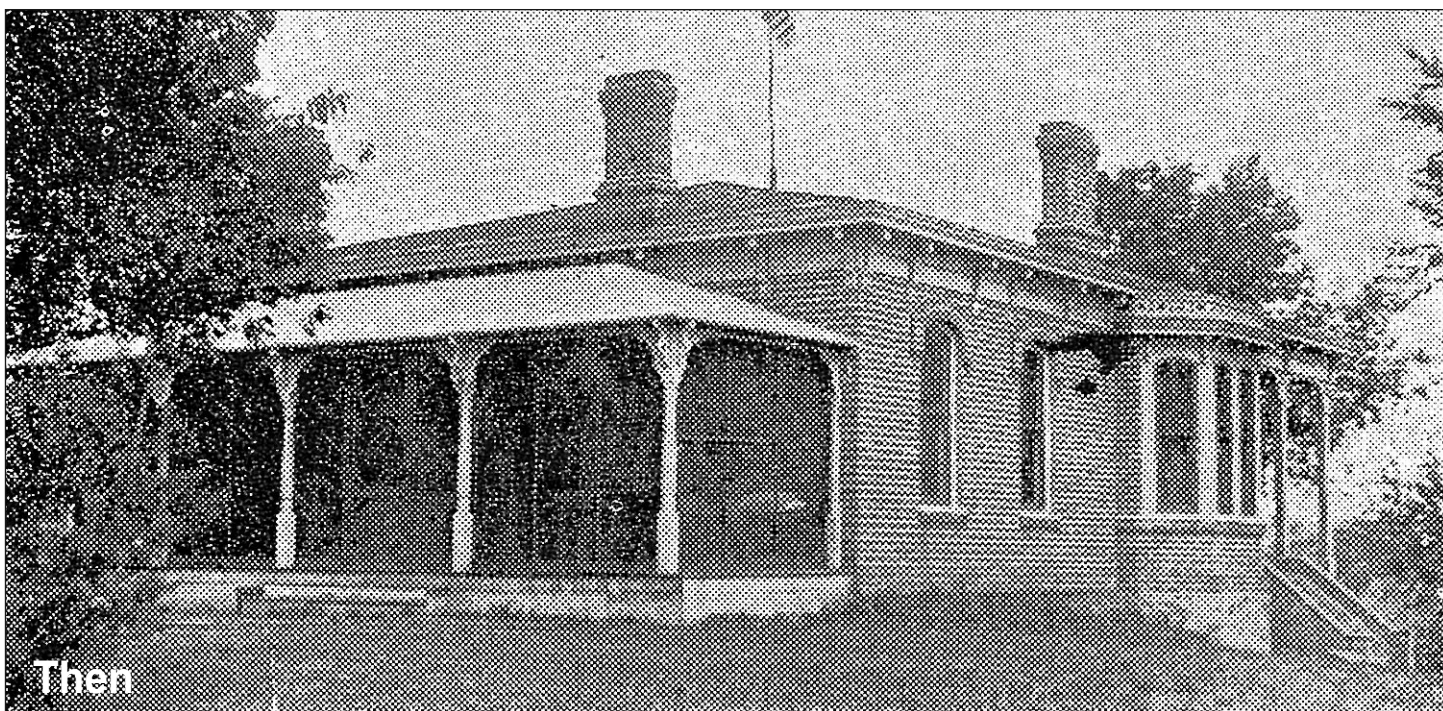


HISTORIC HOMES OF YANKTON

A Look At The William L. Box House

Yankton's Territorial Homes, Revisited — A Sesquicentennial Series



Then

THE WILLIAM L. BOX HOUSE
2000 JOHN STREET

The historic cottage-style brick home built in 1883 for Wm. L. Box by Thornton Moulton Builders of Yankton, D.T. is situated on the slope of a hill which in those days lay outside the east boundary of the prospering village. The home's commanding view overlooks Gurney Nurseries and Sertoma Park from its location at 2000 John Street one block east of Peninah and 19th Streets, and sweeps beyond Ferdig Avenue to the Jim River area and to the Nebraska shore on the south.

Civil War veteran, market gardener, enthusiastic politician and prominent citizen Wm. L. Box was born on March 16, 1844, in Ontario, Canada, and died September 25, 1927. In his youth he served with Company G, 108th New York Volunteers, was wounded three times, most severely in the Battle of Gettysburg, and at age 22 headed west. After his horses and wagon were stolen by Indians in Nebraska Territory, he secured work as laborer on the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1868 Box returned to Canada to marry Amelia Lang. The following year the couple came to Yankton, Dakota Territory, and secured a homestead. They

lived in a log home said to have been located either at the base of their hill or south of Third and Linn Streets. In time the couple would have six children: Harry, Charles, Harriet, Edwin, Margaret, and Millie. Box would serve on the jury which convicted Jack McCall in 1876 and also in the South Dakota House of Representatives in 1893-1894. Of his stay there, he was described in Volume I, Biographical Directory of the South Dakota Legislature... "as a large man with bushy red beard, a jolly laugh and a disposition to stir up the animals... and on several occasions has shown the House a point or two on fighting..."

The original "Contract's Articles of Agreement" dated May 3, 1883, between Box and builder Moulton required that the one-story dwelling be completed before August 10, 1883, and that payment be made in four installments as follows: first, \$400 when granite foundation was completed and first joist on; second, \$700 when brick walls were completed and ceiling joist on; third, \$500 when ready for plastering; and final payment \$987 at completion for a total of \$2,587.

The home features a large bay window, carved oak woodwork, parlors separated by sliding doors, and a tiled fireplace in the master bedroom. A Christmas card dated 1951 composed by Harry and May Box and addressed to "all Hillcrest

friends whoever and wherever they may be," featured a photo of the couple before the fireplace as well as a photo of the home as it originally looked. Modifications began in the mid 1950s when the Carl Olson family purchased the property. In 1977, Sid Gurney and his son Jay Gurney acquired the home and acreage for nursery purposes. Since then, Jay and his wife Tracy have replaced the large open porch bordering the south exterior with a two bedroom frame addition and have enclosed the north porch. Original concrete steps leading into the house at the north porch now face south rather than east.

Box was a gardener. He experimented with crops, among them Spanish tobacco. Deep wagon wheel indentations in native grasses remain in a circular drive leading up to and around the house. They were created after decades of use by guests in their horse drawn vehicles and by his wagons loaded with home-grown produce for delivery to regular customers in Yankton, perhaps even dairy products.

As his property increased, the prosperous farmer donated land at today's north Ferdig for what would be called Box School and where three of his children attended. By 1902, the one room frame building had deteriorated and was replaced at the same site by a one-story brick structure.

That school would become known as the first Grove School, because of a large stand of trees which flourished alongside. The grove was said to have figured in bootlegging incidents during prohibition. In time a growing school population required a larger schoolhouse, also to be known as Grove School, which was built at the south end of Ferdig. It has been suggested that the brick school building still standing at North Ferdig may once have served Yankton as a "Pest House" where victims of contagious diseases were secluded. At present, tenants occupy the property.

Although guests no longer drive up the circular drive to the Box House, the large bay window remains as frontispiece and testament to territorial luxury. An original cedar tree in the front yard, gnarled with age, has recently succumbed; however, plentiful shrubs, including persistent mulberry trees, continue to flourish on the grassy hillside below, effectively screening the house from view. The Gurney family accesses the home at the rear, which retains much of the original architecture. A private driveway circles down to nursery grounds below.

Because of its location and limited accessibility, the Box House is relatively unnoticed but remains an example of Yankton's prominent territorial homes.



Now

PLANT EXCHANGE

Crofton Lawns And Gardens Tour June 18

BY BRENDA K JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Baseball park landscaping, a scenic owner built pond and flowerbeds, a cabin with natural landscaping, a Japanese inspired Koi fish pond, a Zen garden and more at Saturday's Fifth Crofton Tour of Lawns and Gardens. Admire at will and leave, or chat with the five site homeowners. The tour can be a relaxing time outdoors or inspiration for your own yard ideas. Tours start at the Crofton Senior Citizen Center, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. A fee of \$10 includes a light lunch.

"This lawn and garden tour is a way to recognize the hard work people put into their lawns and gardens around Crofton," organizer Virginia Lange said. "The tour proceeds are for the Crofton Senior Citizens Center. We would like all to admire the beauty of our small towns."

One of the tour sites features a low-maintenance yard overlooking an expansive view of Crofton. Lisa and Tim Allen bought their country home over seven years ago.

"I'm not a hobby gardener, at least not now," Lisa said. "I have an indoor green thumb with houseplants, but the kids are young now. We're full time parents and work full time." With five children ranging from age fifteen to two, a yard requiring low upkeep fits their needs.

Previous-owner established specimen trees, shelterbelt, and perennial landscaping were the starting points for their yard.

"We want to add to what is here with our own emphasis," Lisa said, and we want to cut down on mowing." Berms at both sides of the yard add intermediate height, color, and detail with objects, stone, and perennial leaf and color contrast, with orange and purple at this time.

"We picked rugged perennials for these



Lisa and Tim Allen's country home is one of the five lawn and garden tour sites on the Crofton tour Saturday. Berm perennial bed accents their yard.

beds. We lived before in Southern Colorado and like that look. After they built the berms and added rock cover, Lisa moved the containers of perennials around on the berm for eye appeal. "I read the tags to see how tall each plant would get." That helped her decide the best position for each plant.

"Then Tim would dig the hole and together we would place the plants where needed." We watered the plants the first year, and now this spring, they all came back but one."

Tour visitors will enjoy the rest of their yard and spots for future plans, but another site of family cooperative effort is in their backyard.

"Kids and I garden," Lisa said. "The older kids pull weeds and help pick vegetables as well as mow the yard for chores. I want them to learn how things grow." Grass clippings mulch covers the garden. The kids have figured out that mowing and weeding go hand in hand.

PLANTS AROUND US

"Plant Exchange" on June 3rd had a photo out of place. A reader from Springfield took the time to comment that Dames rocket is not dill. Thanks for showing that you read and contribute to "Plant Exchange."

— Brenda K Johnson

Damesrockets made the prairie feel like home. Its dime-size fragrant bluish-purple flowers cluster near the top with lance-like leaves below, on a stem over two feet tall. Damesrockets can be found at abandoned farm home sites and open woods predominately in the Central and Northern Great Plains. Not native plants, these escaped ornamentals were among the first flowers widely planted by early pioneers of the region. As with other members of the Mustard family, the short-lived perennials produced lots of seed, and the plants often re-seeded themselves.

Today's Damesrocket progeny are a reminder of their place in history. Damesrocket seed are sometimes planted in roadside flower mixtures for spring display. Ground-foraging birds eat its seed. Its roots

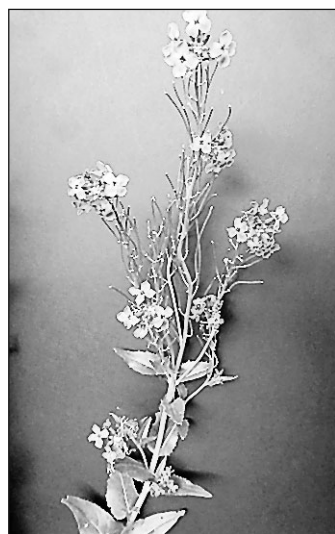


PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Damesrocket or Vesper flower has been cultivated for thousands of years but pioneers brought seed with them from Europe and Siberia when they settled on the Northern Plains.

are shallow. The plant is non-poisonous, and "is rarely present in large enough number to be a problem" according to the source Weeds of the Great Plains.

Damesrocket, *Hesperis matronalis*, was originally known as Vesper flower for the women who treasured the evening fragrance in their early Roman gardens, according to Van Bruggen's Wildflowers, Grasses, & Other Plants of the Northern Plains and Black Hills. The plants are native to Europe and Siberia. Tiny wind-borne seed germinate and produce a flower the second year. Sources vary but Van Bruggen referred to it as a biennial. The required volume and tenacity of Damesrocket seed to appear in recently disturbed soil with no other like plants nearby is as characteristic as its ability to re-seed and establish in a new location.

White flowering forms, *Hesperis albiflora*, are available for cultivation. Cross-pollination with the introduced Damesrocket may occur, according to Prairie Lands Gardener's Guide by Barash.

LAWNS & GARDENS

Saturday June 18
8 a.m.-1 p.m.
Tour starts at
Crofton Senior
Citizen Center

JUNE PLANT TIPS

Linda Brown, Nursery Supervisor at Bomgaars Supply, 2300 Broadway in Yankton, has had plant shipments from a five state region this season. "We order plants as local as possible but need large suppliers for the plant variety." Brown shares information about Stepables perennial groundcover. "These miniature dianthus, sedum, veronica, thymus or euonymus can be planted on or around a pathway, in a rock garden or around ponds and are a finer version of groundcover."

- Be sure to keep these plants watered until established.

- Read the tags to choose best sun or shade Stepables for your site and ones that fit your degree of foot traffic.

- Once established, these plants can be mowed or trimmed with an edger for a low maintenance groundcover.

Share Your Memories

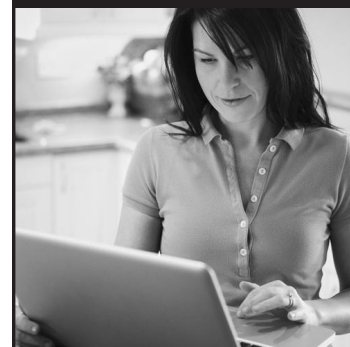
With The P&D

Due to the hectic spring, the Press & Dakotan's 150th anniversary edition has been rescheduled for Saturday, Aug. 6. With the publication pushed back, we have re-opened our request for readers to share their memories of Yankton for its 150th anniversary.

We will be taking these submissions until 5 p.m. Wednesday, July 20.

Keep your response limited to 400 words, and we'll publish as many of your entries as we can fit into a forthcoming special edition of the Press & Dakotan that will mark this 150th anniversary. Responses should be mailed to the Press & Dakotan c/o 150th Anniversary Reflections, PO Box 56, Yankton, SD 57078. Or, preferably, e-mail them to yankton150@yankton.net with the subject "150th Anniversary Reflections." Historic photos are also welcome. Please include your name, address and a phone number with all entries.

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