

and stimulating pieces hoping they would make a connection with something soothing.”

As the women’s ward of the hospital, the Mead Building was home to patients suffering from a wide array of illness.

“There was the basic depression, the elderly, those with autism and Down’s syndrome, among others,” Nelson said. “One wing of the hospital still houses a water treatment tub and electroshock mechanism is still there.”

Probably the most elegant and well-known feature of the building is the marble staircase.

“We don’t know where it came from,” Nelson explained. “There is no documentation at HSC.”

Nelson said there are several different possibilities about how the majestic staircase came to be.

“One idea is that Dr. Mead acquired marble and had it shipped back to build the staircase, another is that it was to be used on an additional floor of the Capitol building in Pierre but that floor was never built and the marble was given to HSC. It is the same marble but the Capitol was finished in 1910 and there is no documentation to support this theory. The most widely believed story locally is that it was originally intended to be part of a house a very wealthy man planned to build in Yankton for his wife. The story goes that his wife died and the house was never built so he donated the marble to Dr. Mead. The only problem is that there is no documentation and no one seems to know the name of this wealthy man.”

Nelson said she does know that the marble the staircase is made of is not from Italy but rather domestic marble from the continental U.S. It is verifiable that the craftsman who built the staircase was Italian.

Marble from the building has been sent off

for geologic survey to pinpoint where it came from.

The Mead Building was closed in 1981 and maintenance was stopped at that time. The building fell into disrepair but a 2008 structural analysis funded in part by a National Trust for Historic Preservation Matching Grant, found the building to be structurally sound.

The Yankton County Historical Society became interested in Mead after it was set for demolition by the State of South Dakota in December 2007. In February 2008, the group’s board of directors voted unanimously in favor of investigating the building for a new location of the Dakota Territorial Museum. Two years later the group obtained a lease from the State of South Dakota for use of the building, which also succeeded in removing Mead from the demolition list as long as the YCHS project moves forward. If the project does not succeed the building will be torn down.

Nelson said YCHS has a 20-year lease with the state. The museum must be moved into the building by December 31, 2018.

“The terms also say that Yankton County Historical Society can buy the building from the state for \$1 as long as we are moved in by the 20-year mark,” she said.

The renovations of the building have unearthed several hidden treasures, Nelson said.

In addition to the staircase and the beautiful dental molding throughout the building, unique design work has been found under the building’s peeling paint.

“The moisture that seeped into the building over the years has caused the paint to peel in most rooms,” she said. “Underneath we found



**MEAD** continued on page 18



Matt Dvorak, PT



Michelle Valencsin, PT

Morgen Square

260.5003

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