

MEAD

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beautiful stencil work. There is a different design in every parlor room."

An art documentarian from the University of South Dakota, Nancy Losacker, was called in to document the work.

"She peeled away layers to see what was there and determined it is a pounce pattern not a traditional stencil pattern," Nelson said. "The designs were created by someone holding a stencil up and blowing chalk onto it and then the colors were painted in by hand. It was determined that the same person did all of it. Unfortunately there are no photographs that show this work."

The style is art deco so it can reasonably be determined it was done in the late 1920s or early 1930s.

"It is extremely colorful with pastel greens, blues and a lot of pink," Nelson said. "At one time it was a very colorful building. Originally, the walls were painted a bright white. Some have suggested the designs were done as a tribute to Dr. Mead, who died in 1924."

Unfortunately, in the late 1940s the philosophy of the medical profession changed and the entire interior of the building was painted an institutional green.

"The thinking of the times was that the building should be as bland as possible to avoid too much stimulation," Nelson said. "I've talked to people who worked in the building for more than 20 years and they say they can't remember the walls and ceilings being any color other than green, but we do know that by the time the building was vacated the green had been replaced with a soft brown tone."

The final inspection of the new roof are now complete on the building and Nelson said that alone is a huge relief.

"I no longer have to cringe every time it rains or snows and worry about what new damage we'll find the next time we visit the building," she said.

Although the roof was a major accomplishment, providing a defense from the elements, Nelson said there is no time to rest.

"We are working on lead paint stabilization next," she said. "We are going to do our best to preserve as much of the artwork in

the building in a safe manner. Plans are in place to put glass or plexiglass covers over portions of the artwork so it can be safely viewed."

The board is also working on how to best utilize the space without extremely modifying it.

"Some of the patient rooms are too small for our purposes, so we may have to take out some walls, but we are going to make sure the corridors look the same," Nelson said.

Plans are also under way for security and the addition of an elevator in the building.

"There will be an elevator," Nelson said. "We want to make sure we are ADA compliant and that everyone will get the same experience. We plan to add a ramp to the front entrance so that everyone will enter the same way."

The next phase of the renovation is securing the heating and cooling for the building, which includes replacing all the windows.

"We are putting new replicated storms on the outside of the building but the actual windows will not open since we have to keep everything climate controlled and free of dust so the museum's collection will not be harmed," Nelson said.

To finance all the window replacements, the public is invited to purchase windows in memory or as tributes.

"We have 70 windows available for purchase," Nelson said. "The price ranges are \$250-\$1,500 so we can find about anything in your price range."

One of the best parts of the window project is the stories people tell Nelson and her staff when they purchase a window.

"One woman bought a particular basement window because that was the room her office was in," Nelson said. "Some have bought windows in honor of a loved one who worked in the building or as a tribute to their relatives who homesteaded in the area."

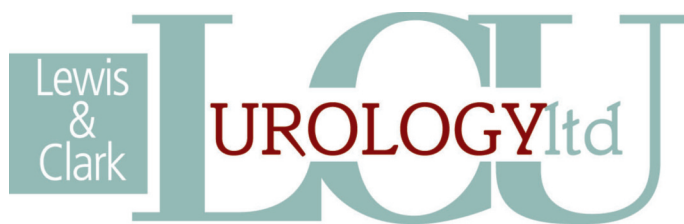
"In 50 years, most of the people who gave will be gone, but anyone touring the building will be able to read all the tributes on the windows and that in itself will tell a story. I love being a part of that whole thing – the history of the building and the history in the making. We really want the community to be a part of this project because we are doing it for them."

For more information about the Yankton County Historical Society and the Mead project visit dakotaterritorialmuseum.org.

■ by Tera Schmidt

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