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Victorian house thrills visitors

By Pat Schiefen

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For Victorian fans, the Queen Anne Ennis-Handy House, 13th and Center, Goodland, has been restored by the Sherman County Historical Society.

The residence sports a wrought iron-style fenced yard surrounding the house with a wrap-around porch a balcony with gingerbread trim.

The house, which has a southern view overlooking Goodland's oldest park, Chambers, was on the cutting edge of technology in its day. It was one of the first homes in the county to be wired for electricity and telephone. The kitchen, basement wash room and a large bathroom on the second floor were plumbed for running water.

Members of the Sherman County Historical Society have raised money and volunteered their time and work to restore the house to its original luster and to get it listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Plans for the Late Victorian Queen Anne-style house began in December 1905, according to the society's application to get the house on the Register of Historic Kansas Places. Mary Seaman Ennis purchased three city lots and contracted with Fred Hunt to build the 1,768-square-foot, three-bedroom, one-bath home.

She was the widow of William Ennis, who operated one of Goodland's first drug stores and a successful entrepreneur in her own right: as a young woman. She and her sisters Lyda and Margaret managed the Montezuma Hotel in Burlington.

In 1894, the sisters came to Goodland to operate the prestigious Palace Hotel. After the hotel burned in 1896, the Seaman sisters opened a millinery shop, which quickly became known for the elegance and intricacy of its designs.

In the Friday, March 1, 1907, issue of the Goodland Republic, the house was described as a two-story composite Gothic structure

with four gables, two porches, one one-story and two two-story bay windows and a balcony. It was built on a three-foot brick foundation with a brick basement under half of the structure.

The plans included a covered back porch on the northeast corner of the house and a one-car garage. The garage later was replaced with a larger two-car structure and covered breezeway.

The interior woodwork is finished oak. Two flights of stairs rise to the second level. The entry hall and stairway are decorated with Corinthian columns, railings and banisters.

A 105-year-old piano, played by members of the historical society, entertains guests at special events in the home. Bruce Lantry, owner of Lantry Piano Service near Imperial, Neb., put new strings in the 1901 piano in 2006.

Logos inside the piano say it was made by Western Cottage Piano and Organ Co. for the L.B. Merrifield Co. Lantry looked in a list of piano companies in a book and discovered the piano's serial number indicates it was made before 1902.

It was from the Dr. A.C. Gulick home, said David Branda, president of the historical society, and was donated by Gulick's granddaughter Karen Neitzel. It's in really good shape, Branda said.

The builder moved west from his native New York to work on the railroad. After working in Goodland as a conductor for the Rock Island Line, Hunt left to become a master carpenter. He built homes, businesses, hospitals, churches and schools in Goodland and Sherman County.

The house has been the scene for gatherings for various groups to have receptions and parties. At Christmas the exterior is lit up with a sleigh on the back porch and there is a different themed Christmas tree in every room.

The home is open for tours from 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Monday.

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