



The Carnegie Courier

Newsletter of

The Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)
& The Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)

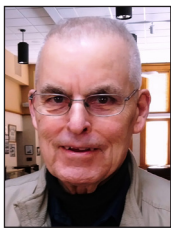
Volume XII, Number 2

www.mitchellcarnegie.com

Summer 2019

Honoring Mitchell's fire service all summer

The Carnegie Resource Center is presenting our Salute to Firefighters on June 7 and 8 at the CRC.



Swenson

Join us as we pay tribute to our first responders throughout the years.

On Friday night all the department vehicles will be on display on Main Street from 5th Avenue to 3rd Avenue to the Carnegie.

Check out the antique hose carts parked in our front yard on loan from Dakota Discovery. At 7 p.m., the Public Safety Chief will present the History of the Mitchell Fire Department.

Several individuals, as well as the Mitchell Fire Department, have loaned us numerous items for display, like the 1895 Banner that the Mitchell FD won after winning the competition three consecutive years.

Just think, it is 126 years old as they first won it in 1893. Please stop in and take a look. I think you will find it most interesting. See the enclosed flyer for details.

We have been asked to as-

ist a couple of local businesses to research their history because they are turning 100 years old this year.

What an accomplishment for any kind of business to last 100 years!

Shafer Memorials and Tessier's Inc. are both looking forward to the next 100.

Our beautiful building has suffered some damage to the front wall. When the contractor gets started, we will get the news on just how serious the damage is.

One thing for sure, it will be expensive.

Thank you for everything you do to assist us whether it be donating items, money or your time and efforts, we truly THANK YOU.

~ Lyle Swenson, President



This banner was the prize in 1895 for the Mitchell Volunteer Fire Fighters. A team had to take first place three consecutive years in the annual state competition with other fire fighter teams before they could take permanent possession of the banner. Mitchell took first place in 1893 in Mitchell, in 1894 in Canton and 1895 in Madison.



Mitchell Firefighters helping Lyle Swenson unveil the banner are Daniel Esh, Scott Tschetter, Zach Dalrymple, Swenson, Assistant Fire Chief Marius Laursen, Joe Dolezal and Justin Adams.

Genealogy Corner

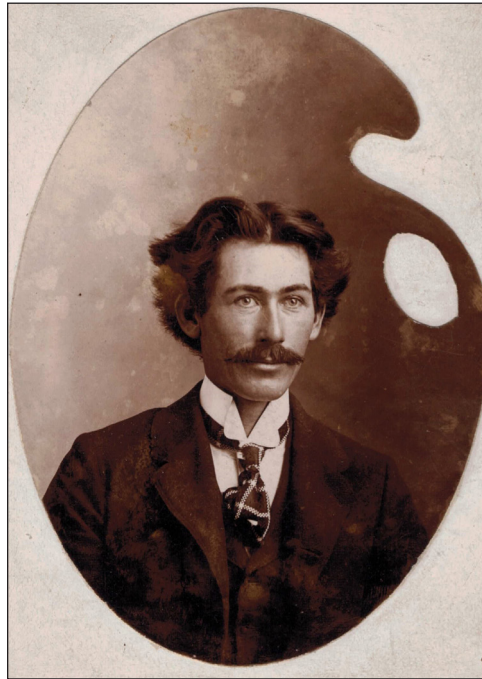
By Beth J. (Vlasman)Walz

We would like to say THANK YOU to the Register of Deeds Office staff for allowing the Mitchell Area Genealogical Society to host a work night at their office. They were wonderful to work with and having a special night all to ourselves was amazing. Please don't hesitate to stop in and ask for their help with your research. If you are going to the courthouse, MAGS has South Dakota Genealogy Society research cards available for purchase at a cost of \$5. The research card allows you to access court house records.

Our programs are held on the first Monday of each month. The only exceptions would be for Monday holidays. A list of our upcoming programs is listed on the last page of this newsletter. If you have any areas of particular interest please let us know. We are always looking for interesting programs and speakers. Have a family history to share? Let us know about that also. We are trying a few new things this year and have a discussion group scheduled as a program. We would like to encourage all of you to attend and bring your pictures.

Some of our members have attended the South Dakota State Genealogical Society meetings, several seminars, and programs presented by other genealogical societies. We love to share information that we learn and bring new ideas to our group.

Who, What, Where, When



The above pictures show the same man. One is a portrait that looks like a painting pallet around it. Neither picture has a studio name on it. If you know the identity of this man or any other information please contact us at 605-996-3209.

Family honored with Century Family certificate

The Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS) recently issued a Century Family Certificate for Henry John and Kate (DeValk) Toppen. Both Henry and Kate were born in Chicago. They were married June 8, 1908, in Norman, Okla. While they lived in Oklahoma, their first four children were born. The third child born to this union was Elizabeth Marie Toppen.

Elizabeth Toppen married Clarence Menning on May 10, 1933, in Douglas County, S.D. To this union Mildred Menning was born. Mildred Menning married Bernard Vlasman. Bernard and Millie's children are Alan, Beth and Karen.

The proof found to qualify for a Century Family Certificate includes U.S. Census records from 1930 and



Kate and Henry J. Toppen

1920, as well as South Dakota Census Records from 1935 and 1925. The 1925 Census records indicate the family moved to South Dakota in 1919.

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Century Family ... cont. from page 2

To qualify for a Century Family Certificate, you must be able to provide proof that your ancestors lived in South Dakota at least 100 years ago. There are two other types of certificates that can be applied for. To qualify for a Pioneer Certificate a person must have lived in South Dakota prior to Nov. 2, 1889. An Early Settler Certificate can be issued if you have proof that your family lived in South Dakota prior to on or before Nov. 2, 1909. All of these certificates require proof that you are a direct descendant of that ancestor.

MAGS only wants copies of these important documents. Applications can be picked up at the Carnegie Resource Center or downloaded from the Carnegie website <http://www.mitchellcarnegie.com>.



Pictured are 12 of the 14 children born to Henry and Kate Toppen's. In the back row, first woman from the left, is Elizabeth Toppen Menning.

S.D.'s first female volunteer firefighter

Woman's 99 years in Mitchell make her wise in history, as well as part of it

"Where I could be of use I was glad to do my duty."
Helen Montgomery



By MARI OLSON
The Daily Republic

Seven months shy of her 100th birthday, Helen Montgomery chats about her life in Mitchell as a youth, a business owner and the first female volunteer firefighter in South Dakota.

"When you're filling out your taxes, think of me," she said, smiling.

Next April, Montgomery will turn 100 years old, and though she would rather celebrate her birthday quietly, as usual, her family would like to throw a party. "They want an open house ... we'll see," she said.

Montgomery's ability to recall her past in detail isn't due to special vitamins or an unusual lifestyle.

"Well, I never smoked and only had the occasional cocktail," she said.

She can recall in detail her youth in Mitchell, her job running her family's gas station, and what it was like being the first female volunteer firefighter in South Dakota.

She was born in 1905 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in 1910 she moved to Mitchell with her parents, Edward and Gertrude Sherwood.

"I remember my mother asked my father, 'Where are you taking me, to the end of the world?'" said Montgomery, about the



Helen Montgomery, 99, of Mitchell, looks through clippings of stories written about her. She made history in the 1940's when she became the first female volunteer firefighter in South Dakota, and was again featured in *The Daily Republic* for taking over her father's business in the 1950's.

The Daily Republic Story Continued
September 4, 2014 on Page 4

Plano School showed dedication to education, hard work

By Dorothy Walz Molumby

At the turn of the century, 1900, Plano Township had five one-room school houses located around the perimeter of the township. The people at the edges of the township had an advantage as the people in the center of the township had two or three miles to go to school. They walked two times a day. There were no cars. If they did take the children to school, it was by horse and buggy. In bad weather, they missed school. Some finished eighth grade and some did not. School was a seven-month term.

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Pictured is the memorial erected in memory of the Plano School, which was six miles south of Mitchell in Plano Township.

First Female Volunteer Firefighter ...

town with no paved roads and, at that time, a population of about 6,500 people.

"You could go anyplace you wanted to and have no fear at all," she said. "It was a friendly city."

She began school in Minneapolis to become a music teacher. "I came back after one year to help my mother after a car accident," she said. Her mother broke both legs in the accident.

She then attended the University of South Dakota for two years and finished at Dakota Wesleyan with a degree in education.

She taught for four years in Parker, teaching freshman and sophomore English and grade school through high school music, and she taught for two years in Farmer, teaching third, fourth, seventh and eighth grade and some music classes.

Her father ran Sherwood Petroleum Corporation and convinced his daughter to begin working for him in the early 1930s, first as a bookkeeper. Later, after his death in 1954, she ran the business herself until retiring in 1971.

"He taught me that you talk to everyone," she said. "You get fur-

ther with honey than vinegar."

She learned to "order gasoline and products, pay for freight, see that the trucks were serviced ... and take care of country delivery for farmers," she said.

Montgomery had always had an interest in local fires. Her family's gas station was in what is now the closed C-Mart station just across from the fire station, so when the fire whistle would sound across town, she would run across the street to find out where it was at.

She never thought her curiosity would make her a part of South Dakota history, but a routine trip across the street would result in Montgomery becoming the first female volunteer firefighter in the state.

During World War II, volunteer firefighters were in short supply.

"There were just enough men to take the trucks out," Montgomery said, but no one to shut the doors or answer phones.

One day the whistle blew and she ran across the street. "I wanted to know where the fire was," she said. "When there was no one there to take the telephone calls, I picked it up."

This is important because if no

one was in the building, the volunteers calling in would not know where to go.

"The fire chief, Asa Wheeler, told the mayor, 'Put her on the payroll,'" she said.

Lyle Swenson, a volunteer firefighter for 35 years, remembers Montgomery waving at the volunteers driving by the station to get directions to the fire.

"She is a classy lady," Swenson said about Montgomery. The two work together on Mitchell's Historical Society.

"I witnessed some great big fires," she said.

The one that broke her heart was the year the Livery Barn burned. Inside were the Wells Fargo Delivery horses, which all died.

During the burning of a hotel on First and Main Street, she and the fire chief were out of town. "I was visiting my brother in California — Asa and I were both out of town for the largest fire," she said, chuckling at the irony.

"I was once saved from a fire," she said about another occasion.

She and some other Mitchell people were in Madison for a historical meeting when her hotel

caught on fire.

"I opened my door and the hall was full of smoke," she said. A young Mitchell man, also there for the meeting, tried getting her to go down the hall with him, but she refused and went to her window, waiting for the fire fighters to take her down a ladder. Her friend didn't follow and died of smoke inhalation.

A teacher, business owner, wife, mother and firefighter — one wouldn't think Montgomery would have had time for anything else. But she also volunteered for about eight organizations.

Among those organizations, she also served on the boards for the Community Chest, Salvation Army, Wesley Acres, and Associated Charities, she said.

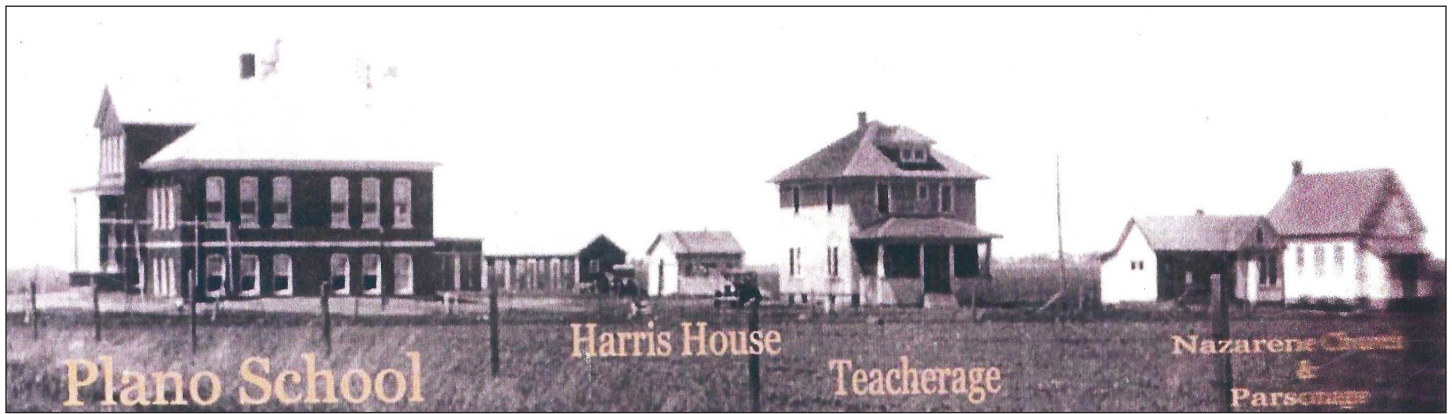
"I wanted to be a part of the community and do my part where I could be needed," Montgomery said. "Where I could be of use I was glad to do my duty."

As far as advice to future generations of women, Montgomery said, "Be part of the community. ... Be friendly with people and take advice where it's given to you. Enjoy working with people in organizations."

Continued from Page 3

Daily Republic

September 4, 2004



Plano Consolidated School was located in Plano Township, Hanson County, six miles north and six miles east of Mitchell, S D. The photo was taken by Fred (Fritz) Harris, sometime after 1929.

Plano School ... Continued from Page 4

Teachers were not qualified as some were eighth grade graduates with three or four months of summer training. Their pay was \$25 per month.

Henry Thompson was a young man from Plano Township who was elected to the Legislature. A bill was enacted to permit townships to consolidate all their one-room schools into one unit. The bill also provided for bond issues to finance them. It was a hard sell for the people of Plano. Quite a few of the men, led by Warren Ewing, took petitions around. Finally, after much work, enough petitions were signed so that a school board was elected. Next came the bond issue, which was carried. The bonds were sold to Mitchell National Bank. The bond issue was \$15,000.

A site was chosen, and two acres of land was donated by School and Public Lands. Then they drilled a

well to a depth of over 160 feet with 15 feet into the granite. The building was constructed and operational in 1915. In 1916, there were 84 pupils enrolled.

The Plano Consolidated School was completely modern for its day with an electric power plant and a steam boiler. Four horse-drawn school buses were purchased, which did not contain any way to heat the buses. A horse barn was built in 1916 to house the buses and 14 horses. The cost of the horse barn was \$840.

A superintendent was hired at \$100 per month and his wife taught and was paid \$50 per month. The school had one high school teacher and two grade school teachers. The first year that the school operated was the worst. The superintendent didn't work out. The winter brought very heavy snows and cold. The buses tipped

over from the drifts. Some needed four horses to pull them instead of two. With no heat in the buses, some parents refused to send their children. The school closed in March.

The next year a good superintendent was hired and small kerosene heaters were installed in the buses.

About 1918, the two years of high school became accredited. This meant that the students could enter any other school without an entrance examination. In 1920, a teacher's cottage was built for a cost of \$4,847 and the school board purchased 10 acres of land at a cost of \$15 per acre. In 1921, Plano became a four-year high school. There were three graduates of the four-year high program in 1924,

Little changed over the years. The teacher's cottage was occupied by the superintendent and sometimes some students boarded

there during the school year. Busing was upgraded from horse-drawn buses to cars or in some cases a pickup or small truck with an enclosure in the back. There were benches on each side with heat coming from a pipe which ran under the seat. In the early 1950s, modern school buses were used.

Plano Consolidated School included students from adjoining counties of Sanborn, Miner, Davison and at one time even a few families south of Highway 38.

Located north of the school were the Harris house, the Teacherage (teachers lived there), a Nazarene church and parsonage.

The school was used as a community center during its existence. Showers, plays, meetings and many other types of events were hosted there.

Continued on page 6

Plano School ... Continued from Page 5

A hot lunch program was started with one hired cook and mothers as assistants. The mothers worked a day for each child enrolled in the school.

In 1952, the horse barn, which had been converted into a gymnasium and a shop, burned. In 1953, a quonset-type gymnasium with a locker room and stage was constructed at a cost of \$12,000.

In 1962, there were a total of 147 students and had the largest graduating class of 18 students. In 1967 the last class graduated from Plano Consolidated School. The school joined the Mitchell School District in 1968 but continued operating a grade school for two more years. After the grade school closed, the school and grounds were used by Mitchell Vo-Tech for their electrical high line and plumbing classes.

In 1992, a suspicious fire destroyed the unoccupied school, gym and teacher's cottage. In June 2000, a memorial was erected at the site using original bricks from the school. The memorial contains lists of all the graduates of Plano High School.

Hopefully this memorial will stand for another 100 years to remind people of the dedication to education, hard work and pride of another era.

MAHS receives grant to replace limestone facade

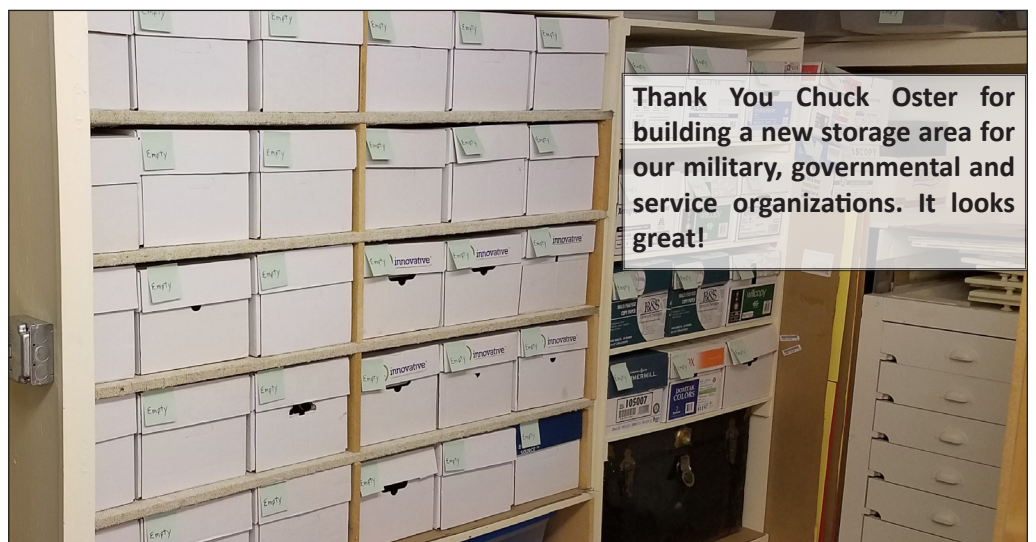
Deadwood Preservation Commission Awarded the Mitchell Area Historical Society a \$10,000 Outside of Deadwood grant to aid in paying for expensive replacement of a Kasota limestone lintel above a second story front exterior window and repair of water damage to the wall.

The project will be done by a firm in Parkston, S.D., Mid-Continental Restoration Co., Inc., which is able to supply similar Kasota limestone and shape it to replace the 116-year old lintel.

The Outside of Deadwood grant is funded from gambling proceeds in Deadwood.



A Big THANK YOU to the students and staff of Dakota Wesleyan University who helped the Carnegie Resource Center on Giveback Day. They did various tasks for us including inventory, cataloging, filing and scanning. Back row: Jordan Gau, Dustin Wheeler, Joel Reinesch, Derek Lien; Middle row: Kayla Cerny, Laurie Johnson, President Amy Novak, Fredel Thomas, Lisa Larson and Mary Stahl. Front row: Justena Amiotte, Taylor Hoppe, Grace Rule and Natasha Letcher.



Firesteel Chapter, NSDAR, meets at Carnegie

By *Andrea Sindt*

On Dec. 10, 2016, Firesteel Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of The American Revolution (DAR) was officially established in Mitchell with 18 members. The group meets the second Saturday of the month at the Carnegie Resource Center.

The Revolutionary War lasted for eight long years, beginning with the battle between British troops and local Massachusetts militia at Lexington and Concord, Mass., on April 19, 1775, and ending with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

If your family tree in America stretches back to that time period, it is likely you can claim descendency from at least one ancestor who had some type of service related to the Revolutionary War effort. Application forms are available at the Carnegie Resource Center. If you are not sure of your ancestry, the DAR members will be happy to help in proving your lineage.

Mitchell has a rich tradition of DAR. The Peabody Chapter, NSDAR was active between the 1920s and 1960s. Many

scholarships and awards were presented during those years. One of the chapter achievements was installing a large granite stone with a bronze plaque on Highway 16, at the "Y" junction about one and one-half mile east of Mitchell, to mark the site of the Fort Thompson Trail, the first onset route of the James River Valley and the Fort Thompson Trail, which was much used during the Black Hills gold rush. Close to this junction was Firesteel, the pioneer settlement and trading post, 1874-1880. About 50 rods (235 yards), close to the "Jim Town" Trail, is the site of the first frame house in Davison County built in 1873, and which served as the Firesteel Post Office and was the home of H. C. Greene.

The present Firesteel Chapter, NSDAR has become caretakers of this noteworthy historical marker.

The lineage society's meetings and activities are based on DAR service to historic preservation, education and patriotism. The Firesteel Chapter sponsors the DAR Good Citizens Award contest for this region which consists of approximately 30 high schools. Created in 1934,

the Good Citizens Award is intended to encourage and reward the qualities of good citizenship.

In 2018 Firesteel Chapter had six applicants who were judged by six non-DAR persons. Four winners received scholarship funds, a certificate, and a lapel pin.

Each state winner receives an additional award. This year Firesteel Chapter awarded \$1,200.00 to five high school senior winners of the Good Citizen Contest who wrote on the theme of "What new challenges will America face as we move forward in the future?" and to eight winners of the SD State DAR Scholarship for Military Descendants.

Officers of the local chapter are Regent Jeanine Bleeker, Vice Regent Kristin Biskeborn, Chaplain Ann Morris, Recording Secretary Mona Zirpel, Corresponding Secretary Andrea Sindt, Treasurer Andrea Sindt, Registrar Verena Edinger and Historian Betty Christensen. Visitors are welcome. For more information call (605) 996-2246 or (605) 942-7018 or e-mail: vernaleigh@icloud.com

This partial ad copied from a newspaper in our archives caught our attention with the prices and descriptions. Hope you enjoy!

4-PLAYER BADMINTON SET
While they last **57c set**

Regular 25c **PADDLE BALL**
Plastic paddle with rubber return ball. **13c**

Mitchell Daily Republic
Dated June 29, 1966

BOYS' HIGH CANVAS TENNIS SHOES
Sizes 11 to 2 and 2½ to 6. Black or White Tops. Irregulars of \$2.98 Tennis Shoes.
\$2.27



GIANT SIZE BATH TOWELS
Many styles and colors — fringed and hemmed edges. Irregulars of regular 1.98 towels. Your Choice **1.17**



Rubber Thong Sandals
Sizes to fit Men, Women, Children
25c & 39c pair



GIRLS' SWIM SUITS
One and two piece styles. Cottons and nylon stretch. Sizes 4 to 14.
1.88 up

OPEN SUNDAY 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. 2 BLOCKS NORTH OF THE CORN PALACE



Shop in **Sunshine** every day
Food Markets

Upcoming Events

All are held at the Carnegie and begin at 7:00 unless stated otherwise

June 3 - MAGS - Ethan Historical Society
Ethan Main St

June 7 - Salute to Firefighters
CRC Open 9:00 am – 9:00 pm
7:00 pm Lyndon Overweg

History of Mitchell Fire Department

June 8 - Salute to Firefighters
CRC open 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

June 17 - MAHS - Archeology Update
Dr. Adrien Hannus & Dr. Alan Outram

July 1 - MAGS – Occupations of our ancestors
Discussion Night - Bring pictures

July 15 - MAHS – Gopal Vyas
100th Anniversary of Tessier's

Aug. 5 - MAGS – Virginia Hansen
Preserving family Documents

Sept. 9 - MAGS – Yvonne Haefner
Germans from Russia

Sept. 16 - MAHS Annual Dinner
Wesley Acres 6:30 pm
Pegie Douglas

The Life & Music of Badger Clark

Needs and Wants Section

Help!!

Mitchell Area Historical Society is looking for the following items to add to its collection.

- A&W “Baby” Rootbeer Mug
- Mitchell City Directories – Years 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956, 1959, 1962 and 1968.

Refurbished computers for sale

Features: Microsoft Office Professional 2007, Access, Excel, Outlook, Power Po Features: Microsoft Office Professional 2007-Access, Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, Word.

System includes: tower, keyboard and mouse.

No Monitor, No Pen or Touch Input.

No Ongoing Support

Specifications: Processor: Intel®Core™2 Duo CPU, E4500 @ 2.20 GHz 3.45 GHz

Installed Memory (RAM): 2.00 GB (1.87 GB Usable)

System Type: 32-bit operating system.

Price \$93.90 plus tax.

Carnegie Resource Center
119 West Third Avenue
Mitchell, S.D. 57301

