

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 20, 2014

**CONTACT:** Jeff Mammenga, Media Coordinator, (605) 773-6000,  
Jeff.Mammenga@state.sd.us

**New Exhibit Entitled *South Dakota Environments: A Window to Past Times* to open at Cultural Heritage Center on April 5**

PIERRE, S.D. – The Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society will debut its new exhibit “South Dakota Environments: A Window to Past Times” on Saturday, April 5, in the Observation Gallery of the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

“We are very excited about the new exhibit,” commented Jay Smith, director of the museum. “First and foremost, it is an exciting exhibit that features four epochs of environmental history about the land that eventually became South Dakota.”

Visitors will explore the state as it looked in the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, Pleistocene and Holocene epochs and witness the animals found on the land. Animals ranging from a Tyrannosaurus Rex to a Short-Face Bear will be featured, along with a massive representation of a mammoth.

The exhibit also demonstrates how the location of the land that became South Dakota has shifted along with what became the North American continent over time in the 17-panel exploration of part of the Pangea supercontinent. Hands-on activities include creating your own environment using visual backgrounds and model dinosaurs, ancient sharks and modern animals. A special program is being planned in June to help launch the new gallery.

“We believe the new gallery complements our visitor experience,” commented Jay D. Vogt, director of the South Dakota State Historical Society. “And it will give people more to see and do at our facility.”

Admission to the exhibit is included with general admission fees to visit the museum.

The Observation Gallery features a set of windows that provide amazing views of the natural landscape as well as the manmade environment near the Cultural Heritage Center.

“We all love the view the windows provide, but they limited our ability to use the gallery because of the damage UV rays from the sun do to artifacts,” Smith said. “The brilliant new design by Kate Vandel, our curator of exhibits, alleviates this issue and gives us a beautiful new space to build exhibits. We can now use the window as an interpretive device – so we keep the tremendous view while still telling great stories about South Dakota’s history and culture.”

The exhibits in the Observation Gallery will change approximately every two years giving the museum a second rotating gallery to draw more visitation to the Cultural Heritage Center, Smith said.

For more information, visit [www.history.sd.gov](http://www.history.sd.gov) or call (605) 773-3458.

-30-

*The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit [www.history.sd.gov](http://www.history.sd.gov) for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.*