

**FOR RELEASE:** March 23, 2015

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## **State Historical Society Recognizes Women's History Month**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota State Historical Society and organizations across the country are recognizing March as “Women’s History Month.”

“Women’s History Month” had its origins as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress authorized and requested the president to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982, as “Women’s History Week.”

In 1987, after being petitioned by the National Women’s History Project, Congress designated the month of March 1987 as “Women’s History Month.” Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the president to proclaim March of each year as “Women’s History Month.”

Since 1995, presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama have issued a series of annual proclamations designating the month of March as “Women’s History Month.”

“Letters, diaries, reminiscences, photographs and organizational records bring history alive through the voices of women who participated in events as they happened,” said Chelle Somsen, state archivist for the State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. “Donors to the State Archives are aware of the significance of women and their contributions to the history of our state, seen in the increasing volume of women’s resources added regularly to the archives collections.”

One recent example of such a donation is a collection for Esther V. Headley, a noted South Dakota educator. Esther (Sundvold) Headley-Stiles was born Sept. 29, 1905, at Carpenter to Martin and Inger (Skinrud) Sundvold. Educated in South Dakota, she earned her teaching certificate in 1924 and taught in Spink and Clark counties for several years. She married George Headley on June 12, 1935, and they farmed near Garden City until 1976.

Headley was a member of numerous boards and committees at both the state and national level, being president of the South Dakota Parent Teachers Association, national vice president of the PTA and an appointee to the National Citizen’s Council of Better Schools. She was also South Dakota president of the American Association of the United Nations. The collection includes speeches, news clippings, scrapbooks, booklets and correspondence concerning her various volunteer efforts from the late 1930s to the 1960s.

Contact the State Historical Society-Archives to discuss donating items that add to South Dakota’s rich history. Reach the State Archives by phone at (605) 773-3804, email at [archref@state.sd.us](mailto:archref@state.sd.us) or visit [history.sd.gov/archives](http://history.sd.gov/archives).

**Editor's Note: The Esther V. Headley Collection of the South Dakota State Historical Society-Archives includes correspondence, brochures and scrapbooks concerning her career in education dating from the 1930s to the 1960s.**

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*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.*