

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 22, 2010

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

Photos of 1990s South Dakota donated to State Historical Society

PIERRE, S.D. – October is “Archives Month,” a time for professional organizations and repositories in South Dakota and around the nation to highlight the importance of maintaining records of enduring value.

One such example is a collection of photographs from the “recent past” acquired by the South Dakota State Historical Society-Archives from Vernell and Louise Johnson of Lyons. The approximately 2,500 color 4-by-6 photographs are of barns, elevators, churches, country schools, courthouses, and old country farms.

Upon their retirement, the Johnsons traveled extensively, taking photographs. Some of the photos in the collection appear in books the Johnsons have published, including “South Dakota: Every Town on the Map and More: A Pictorial History” and the recent “Barns in 50 States and Several Foreign Countries.”

Matthew T. Reitzel, a manuscript archivist with the State Archives, said there are three things that make the collection unique: 1. the vast majority of photos are dated to the mid to late 1990s; 2. the images were taken throughout South Dakota; and 3. the photographs are all identified.

“It cannot be overstated how valuable this collection is,” Reitzel said. “Twenty-five, fifty, or one hundred years from now, researchers will visit the State Archives and view an extensive collection of photographs of different structures throughout the state, from a particular time period in South Dakota’s history.

“Imagine if there was a collection of 2,500 photos from the 1900s, 1950s, or any decade of barns, elevators, churches, and courthouses taken throughout the state,” Reitzel said. “It would be the crown jewel of any archives collection.”

Reitzel said the collection offers a special glimpse into our recent past.

“Even today, in 2010, a number of the structures photographed in this collection have been removed, destroyed or demolished,” he said.

To donate items to the State Historical Society from the recent past, or any materials relating to the history of South Dakota, please contact Reitzel at (605) 773-3615 or Dan Brosz, museum curator of collections, at (605) 773-6013.

The South Dakota State Historical Society-Archives office is located at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The State Archives is open Monday through Friday and the

first Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CDT. Contact the archives by email at archref@state.sd.us or by phone at (605) 773-3804.



Caption:

Elevator from Wentworth, SD, one of the approximately 2,500 photographs taken in the 1990s donated to the South Dakota State Historical Society-Archives.

-30-

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism and State Development and strives to help the state meet the goals of the 2010 Initiative by enhancing history as a tool for economic development and cultural tourism. The society 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 for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.