

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Aug. 5, 2016

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

## **State Historical Society to Commemorate Completion of Mount Rushmore**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota State Historical Society is celebrating a monumental event.

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of construction of Mount Rushmore National Memorial will be commemorated in a program at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, Aug. 9, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

Everyone is welcome to attend the free program which features staff from the Pierre offices of the State Historical Society.

“The South Dakota State Historical Society has a special connection with Mount Rushmore. It was State Historian Doane Robinson who first had the idea of carving gigantic sculptures in the Black Hills,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. “Robinson wrote sculptor Gutzon Borglum in 1924, telling Borglum of his idea and inviting him to the Black Hills.”

During the program, Matthew Reitzel, the manuscript archivist for the State Historical Society-Archives, will talk about the Robinson/Borglum letters as well as other Mount Rushmore materials on the South Dakota Digital Archives. The letters between Robinson and Borglum are on display in the State Archives at the Cultural Heritage Center. The digital archives allow people to view photographs and other materials online without visiting the Cultural Heritage Center.

State Historical Society Director Jay D. Vogt will set the stage for the program with a PowerPoint presentation.

“Robinson’s goal was to have an attraction that would bring tourist traffic to South Dakota,” Vogt said. “He was successful in that, as Mount Rushmore National Memorial is visited by nearly 3 million people each year. Visitors come face to face with the country’s rich heritage at the Shrine of Democracy.”

Dan Brosz, the curator of collections for the Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society, will tell about the museum’s new display featuring the construction of Mount Rushmore, which was completed Oct. 31, 1941.

“Love Letters from Mount Rushmore” is a book published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press that tells of the carving of the mountain from a worker’s perspective. Author Richard Cerasani’s father was an artist and sculptor from Rochester, N.Y., who worked on Mount Rushmore in 1940. The book features letters between Cerasani’s father in South Dakota and his mother who remained in New York. Jennifer McIntyre,

the Press' marketing director/associate editor, will tell about the book. Plans are to have Cerasani join the meeting by conference call. Those at the Cultural Heritage Center will be able to hear and speak to the author. Cerasani is a professional actor who acts under the name Richard Caine. Among his roles was that of the villain Bill Watson on "General Hospital."

"Love Letters from Mount Rushmore" and other books about Mount Rushmore are available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol. Call (605) 773-6006 for more information about the program.

-30-

***About the South Dakota State Historical Society***

*The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. 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.*

***About the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation***

*The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.*