

Derogatory names focus of Board of Geographic Names

In 2009 the State Legislature created the South Dakota Board of Geographic Names, with the purpose of eliminating derogatory names from geological sites statewide. The board consists of representatives of four state government departments and one office: Tribal Relations, Environment and Natural Resources, Transportation, Tourism, and the South Dakota State Historical Society. I was appointed to represent the State Historical Society and provide a historical perspective to the discussions.

The board is currently working through its first recommended name change: Negro Creek to Howes Creek in Meade County. The board will be meeting in early December to finalize the name change and begin a discussion on other names.

The purpose of the board is to provide a process for public involvement. In 2001, the United States Board on Geographic Names refused to approve a list of name changes offered by the State of South Dakota because public comment was not taken into account in determining the new names. With the creation of the South Dakota Board of Geographic Names, a public involvement process which includes public notice and a comment form has been adopted. Visit www.sdbgn.sd.gov to learn more.

As part of considering new names for Negro Creek, the board heard from over two dozen individuals, some with multiple recommendations. The legend for the current name is that the creek was named such be-

From the SDSHS Director



Jay D. Vogt

cause a Negro family lived along it. In the discussions and suggestions for renaming the creek, it seemed appropriate to name the creek for that family. However, we have found no evidence that such a family lived near the creek. Consequently, the board is recommending Howes Creek, named for the post office located at the intersection of South Dakota Highways 43 and 73, near the creek. Howes post office was named for South Dakotan W.W. Howes, who served as an assistance U.S. postmaster general from 1933 to 1940.

Once the board formally approves the new name, it will be sent to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for their

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Field Reports

The National Music Museum at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion has a new director. Cleveland Johnson took over that leadership position as of Nov. 1. Johnson most recently served as executive director of the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship at the Thomas J. Watson Foundation in New York City.

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The Spearfish Area Historical Society has been holding programs the first Tuesday of each month recently. September's program was "Firearms in the Early Black Hills," by Ivan Hovland. October's was "Early Broadcasting in the Black Hills," by Larry Miller, Jim Thompson and Verne Sheppard. November's program, on Nov. 6, is "The Stratosphere Launch," by Linfred Schuttler. All programs are free and open to the public. Call (605) 642-9378 for more information.

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The Dalesburg Scandinavian Association, headquartered in Vermillion, has announced several upcoming events. After hosting their annual meeting and luncheon on Nov. 1, the association has the 35th annual "Celebration of the St. Lucia Tradition in Dalesburg" on Saturday, Dec. 8, at the Dalesburg Lutheran Church. Next year's 144th annual "Midsummer Festival

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In Dalesburg" is Friday, June 21 and Sunday, June 23.

Other upcoming area events include the annual "Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner" on Saturday, Dec. 1, at St. Paul Lutheran Church in rural Elk Point and a "Christmas Festival" on Sunday, Dec. 2, at the W.H. Over Museum in Vermillion.

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October was proclaimed as "Archives Month" in South Dakota by Gov. Dennis Daugaard. The Newell Museum in Museum participated by having a display at the West River History Conference in Rapid City. The traveling display depicted "Homesteading in Butte County." Association members also displayed two maps, from 1879 and 1881, which showed homesteading along the Belle Fourche River and Horse Creek and identified area farmers.

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Several people recently joined the board of directors of the Grant County Historical Society in Milbank. They include Bobbi Sue Leonard, Gloria Cooley, Marsha Lundberg, Marge Nowick and Shirley Zahn. The society also recently added the First Congregational Church in Milbank to its list of properties.

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Is your history group's information current on the website of the South Dakota State Historical Society?

To find out, go to www.history.sd.gov and click on "About Us" on the top of the page. Then click on "Organizations Guide" under "Resources" on the right-hand side of the page. If you'd like to make changes, please send them to Jeff Mammenga at the contact information on the top of the front page of this publication.

West River History Conference has record attendance

A record attendance of more than 100 people participated in the recently completed 20th annual West River History Conference in Rapid City, as presenters, exhibitors, sponsors and those who came to listen and learn. Thanks to all who helped make this conference a success.

In addition to top-notch featured speakers — Sequoia Crosswhite, Jim Hatzell, Johanna Meier, and the Rockerville Blue Grass Band with special surprise guest, Kenny Putnam — several new features this year enhanced the experience for participants: the new venue at the lovely Hilton Garden Inn in Rapid City, the addition of a Friday evening reception, and the closing "Fozzle" which sent participants home tapping their toes to this traditional American music form.

More exhibitors than ever before displayed an array of antiques, rare books, new history books and information of historical interest.

The 2013 conference will be held Oct. 3-5 in Rapid City.

Following are the 2011 prize winners. Best papers were announced at

Friday's awards luncheon:

Honorable Mention: Larry Wilbur, "The Battle of Whitestone Hill"

Honorable Mention: John Timm, "Inside the Civil War with Arthur Mellette"

3rd Place: Matsuko Vary, "Calamity Jane - the Woman Behind the Legend"

2nd Place: Tim Velder, "George Sitts: A Look Back at a Classic Crime Story"

1st Place: Lilah Pengra, "John Brazeau: His Origin in St. Louis and Exploits on the Upper Missouri"

Bob Lee Award for Outstanding paper on Frontier Military History: Jack Bradt: "In his Brother's Shadow: The Story of Brevet Lt. Colonel Thomas W. Custer from Birth to his Death at the Little Big Horn"

WRHC Director's Award: Marti Fuerst: "The 1972 Black Hills Flood: Archiving Oral History on the Web"

Herb Blakely Award: Ann Stanton, Rapid City

Zoom Zoom Award: Patti Storm, Faith

Sandria Friske Helping Hand Award: Jan Rathbun, Rapid City

SDSHS Holiday Open House set for Nov. 23

The annual Holiday Open House of the South Dakota State Historical Society is Friday, Nov. 23, from Noon to 4:30 p.m. at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

The event has become a holiday kick-off tradition for many in the Pierre-Fort Pierre area and is usually attended by 600-plus people. They come to see how the Cultural Heritage Center is decorated for the holidays. This year, two display cases in the lobby will feature holiday collections. An antique sleigh from the museum's collection will also be displayed.

The event also features free admission to the museum, free entertainment and holiday treats, living-history demonstrations and, for the kids, pictures with Santa Claus.

People also come for great buys on unique holiday gifts from the Heritage Store.

"Our open house is always a fun

event," said Jay D. Vogt, SDSHS director. "Every year, people tell me they look forward to coming up to the Cultural Heritage Center the day after Thanksgiving."

The museum and store will be open extended hours for the holidays, Monday-Saturday until 6:30 p.m., from Nov. 26-Dec. 22. Sunday hours will remain 1-4:30 p.m.

Vogt

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consideration.

The Board of Geographic Names is working from a list of offensive names designated in the 2001 legislation. These names contain the words Negro or Squaw. Modern-day sensibilities find this offensive. Changing the names does not change of the history of these places. Actually, the name changes are part of the history. jdv