

## AASLH & MPMA provide local support to state's museums

A couple weeks ago, I attended the Mountain-Plains Museum Association (MPMA) conference in Lincoln, Neb. Because the conference was “close,” museum staffers Jay Smith, Ronette Rumpca, Daniel Brosz and I attended from the South Dakota State Historical Society, and we joined about another dozen South Dakotans at the meeting. Our state was well represented.

MPMA is a 10-state, regional museum association, which provides services to museums of all kinds, and their annual conference is an excellent opportunity to learn, share and network with other people who work in a museum or serve on a museum board. I have only attended four MPMA meetings, but I have developed a group of friends across the heartland of America that have been helpful to me on a professional level. Next year the MPMA conference will be in Snowmass/Aspen, Col. Visit [mpma.net](http://mpma.net) to learn more about this helpful organization.

Next year the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) conference will be held Sept. 17-20 in St. Paul, Minn. This is another “close by” opportunity for those individuals and organizations who want to attend a national history meeting. AASLH is an organization that works exclusively with historic house museums, historical societies and history museums. It is known as “Your Home for State and Local History.” I have been more involved with AASLH over the years and have found

### From the SDSHS Director



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attending their annual meeting beneficial for the State Historical Society as well as me. AASLH will be rolling out a new website in the near future. For more information on AASLH, visit [aaslh.org](http://aaslh.org)

The MPMA and the AASLH conferences are geared to people who work and volunteer for museums. They provide more “how to” information. The SDSHS conference is more of a traditional history event in which a historical topic is discussed. As part of the state’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the theme of this year’s conference is *A South Dakota Education: The History of Higher Learning in the State*. The conference will be held April 4-5, 2014, in Pierre. The archives office is organizing the meeting. I hope to see you there. JDV

### Field Reports

At least two South Dakota State Historical Society members participated as South Dakota Public Broadcasting was recently honored with three nominations at the Upper Midwest Regional Emmy Awards. Joe Tlustos of Sioux Falls, SDPB director of radio, voiced a promotional spot for the “Antiques Roadshow” television show visit to South Dakota that won an Emmy in the Program Promotion-Single Spot category. Dr. Barbara Johnson, a South Dakota Humanities Scholar from Aberdeen who has done extensive research on stained glass in the state, was featured in “Light of the Prairie,” a documentary about South Dakota’s stained glass legacy that was nominated in the Historical Documentary category. A public service announcement for the “SD My Life” website was nominated in the Community Public Service Campaign category.

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The Minnehaha County Historical Society held a reception in September at the Old Courthouse Museum in Sioux Falls to recognize Bruce Blake, who is retiring after 25 years of serving the society and its historical marker program. Through the efforts of “The Man Behind the Markers,” more than 200 historical markers were put up in Sioux Falls and the surrounding area. A book of all the marker texts, photos, maps and illustrations were on display.

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## West River History Conference awards announced

Gretchen Collier and Samantha Gores of Minot State University were able to attend this year's West River History Conference Oct. 3-5 in Rapid City as winners of the first Watson Parker Scholarship. The scholarship, named for the long-time conference supporter called the "Dean of Black Hills Historians," was made possible by the Keystone Area Historical Society and other contributors.

Best Paper awards were as follows:

Student Category (Renamed The Patti Storm Student Awards for Excellence) — First place: David Ruth, Faith, "Romanticism Gone Awry: City Slickers Guide to the West;" Second place: Katie Haines, Faith, "Dreams, Drudgery & Disenchantment;" Third place: Drew Vance, Faith, "End of the Line for the Railroad, becomes a Little Oasis on the Prairie."

Adult Category — First place:

Wayne Gilbert, Rapid City, "Incident at Lightning Creek;" Second place: Tim Velder, Sundance, Wyo., "Murder at Midnight;" Third place: John Timm, Sioux Falls, Governor Mellette's Lonely Mission;" Honorable mention: Raul Ponce de Leon, Deadwood, "Myths & Memories: Reflections of Aces & Eights" and Norma Kraemer, Rapid City, "The Flood of '72, a Nemo Perspective."

New Category: Personal Family Memories & Experiences — First place: Richard Melarvie, Mankato, Minn., "My Grandpa, An Extraordinary Common Man, His life on the Prairie, the story of James Melarvie, in his own Words;" Honorable mention: June Ring, Norris, "Puppets and Portals;" and Jean Kary, Norris, "Ride for the Herd."

History was not only shared but made at this year's conference, as Rapid City and the Black Hills were hit by a record snow storm, "Atlas," that dropped almost 2 feet of snow on Rapid City and up to 5 feet by Lead. Several scheduled speakers were unable to attend because of the storm, but conference organizers were able to find fill-ins. Several stranded motorists in the hotel "discovered" the conference and joined in on the programs.

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The Douglas County Historical Society has been remembered by a former Armour resident. Clifford Fiscus, Jr., retired marine biologist from Seattle, Wash., died in February 2013, leaving a generous portion of his estate to be divided equally between the DCHS and the Armour Carnegie Library. The three buildings housing the DCHS's collection are located on Douglas County property and operated with a small county budget plus many hours of volunteer labor. This legacy provides the means to make some immediate improvements to the museum as well as invest money that will assure funds for the future. "It is heartwarming to know Mr. Fiscus valued the cultural resources of the small community he grew up in," said Dot Hexing of the DCHS.

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The Hermosa Arts and History Association held its second annual Cemetery Walk, History Tour and Community Lunch on Oct. 12 at the Hermosa Museum and Cemetery. Events included a self-guided tour of historic sites in Hermosa and the Haha building with its beautiful Doug Hesnard Memorial Garden. Area historian and Hermosa resident Rick Mills, who is also director of the South Dakota State Railroad Museum in Hill City, led and moderated the cemetery tour, with some volunteers portraying Civil War-era soldiers, family members and various community characters. James Van Nuys and the New Bower Family Band from Rapid City provided musical entertainment and stories of their families' lives in the Hermosa, Fairburn, Keystone and Rapid City areas. The event served as a fund-raiser for the museum.

The previous Saturday, speaking to members of the 1881 Custer County Courthouse Museum in Custer, Mills gave a program about railroading's impacts on South Dakota immigration.

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The Bill Wegleitner Exhibit is on display through Nov. 15 at the Dakota Discovery Museum in Mitchell. The exhibit is a collection of paintings by Mitchell-area artist and outdoors enthusiast Bill Wegleitner. Born and raised in the Dakotas, Wegleitner has spent countless hours tracking down the back roads of the prairie. In addition to the Dakotas, Wegleitner has traveled to the Northern Rockies of Montana and Colorado and has been to the wilds of the Canadian Territories.

On Monday, Nov. 18, the museum is hosting Lynn Verschoor, director of the South Dakota Art Museum in Brookings, as part of the Middle Border Lecture Series. Verschoor will present "Harvey Dunn: the Man, the Myth & the Character."

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The Historic Homestake Opera House in Lead hosted a CD release party and concert for Paul Larson's new CD "home" on Oct. 18. Also performing were Boyd Bristow and Kenny Putnam. The event was a fundraiser for the stage design fund of the HHOH.

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The Annual Meeting & Luncheon of the Dalesburg Scandinavian Association is Nov. 11 in Beresford. The 36th annual "Celebration of the St. Lucia Tradition in Dalesburg" is Dec. 14 at the Dalesburg Lutheran Church near Vermillion.

Other holiday events in that area include the Clay County Historical Society's "Tour of Homes" on Dec. 6 in Vermillion, the annual "Lutefisk & Meatballs Dinner" at St. Paul Lutheran Church near Elk Point on Dec. 7, and the "Christmas Festival" on Dec. 8 at the W.H. Over Museum in Vermillion.

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The annual "Holiday Open House" of the South Dakota State Historical Society is Nov. 29 at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The event features free admission to the museum, holiday treats and entertainment, and pictures with Santa Claus. Call (605) 773-6000 for more information.