

Collections of the State Historical Society hold our history

The mission of the South Dakota State Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the history of the people of South Dakota. Every once in a while, I am asked to reply to a questionnaire or explain some function of our operation or provide a report, and I marvel at the success of your State Historical Society and the efforts throughout the state by local history-related organizations. Recently I had to provide some information on our collections for a fiscal year-end report. Although the original request was for a “copy of our collection inventory,” I instead prepared an explanation of our collections. The purpose of our collections is largely for education and research, and we maintain archaeological, archival, museum and property collections.

The archaeology collection includes approximately 6,000 cubic feet of artifacts and over 200 linear feet of associated documentation (accession, catalog and photographic records). The bulk of the artifact volume includes unmodified faunal remains, lithic tools and debitage, prehistoric pottery fragments, historic materials, and unprocessed soil samples.

The archival collection includes audio and film records; 20,385 library books, manuscripts (personal papers and documents); 8,252 maps; 196 cubic feet of photographs; 24,796 rolls of microfilm (17,000 rolls contain newspapers); and 15,659 cubic feet of state, county and city government records. The archives collection contains over 12,000 cubic feet of records that document many aspects of South Da-

From the SDSHS Director



Jay D. Vogt

kota’s history and heritage, 7,088 gigabytes of electronic records, and 21,313 rolls of original microfilm stored off-site for protection.

The museum collection holds approximately 33,000 artifacts relating to the human experience in South Dakota. The collection is particularly strong in American Indian, military and political history, and includes a wide variety of materials from pre-contact to the settlement period to statehood to the Great Depression to the present. The Great Sioux Horse Effigy, the Verendrye Plate and a Jefferson Peace Medal are among some of our prized artifacts. The museum collection is the foundation of our exhibitions in the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center.

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Field Reports

The Brown County Historical Society announced its annual Historical Research and Writing Awards for Northern State University and Presentation College students. First place went to Zackary Krage (NSU) for his paper titled “People and a Palace: The Story of the Interstate Grain Palace.” Casey Henry (PC) received second place for his paper on “The Reawakening of the Warrior Spirit,” and Tabitha DeVoss (NSU) received third place for her paper on “Richmond Lake: The Answer to Aberdeen’s Damn Dreams.” Each of the students received a certificate and a cash prize for their winning papers.

The Codington County Historical Society in Watertown is having its annual Historic Homes Tour on Saturday, Aug. 6. This year three homes on the shores of Lake Kampeska will be featured: Conda Williams at 728 S. Lake Drive; Craig & Cindy Christianson at 430 S. Lake Dr. and Jeri Hoftiezer at 392 S. Lake Dr. Call (605) 886-7335 for more information.

Current officers of the Oelrichs Historical Society in Oelrichs include: President — Vince Logue; Vice-President — Ron Rickenbach; Treasurer — Joe Logue; and Secretary — Katie Merdanian. The society holds quarterly meetings, in January, April, July and October.

Two groups win Governor's Awards for History

Two groups were presented with organizational Governor's Awards for History during the South Dakota State Historical Society's annual history conference in April in Pierre.

One winner was the Mount Rushmore Society. Formed in 1930, everything the society does is to preserve the meaning and significance of Mount Rushmore National Memorial for future generations. The society raised millions of dollars to improve the facilities at Mount Rushmore in the 1990s and does everything from publishing books and other materials to educate visitors to the mountain to organizing the annual fireworks celebration. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the completion of the carving of the monument. Accepting the award on behalf of others was Judy Allen, board president.

A second organizational winner was the Verendrye Museum's "Bring It Home" Committee, which was responsible for returning and rehabilitating the 1906 Fort Pierre Railroad Depot. The depot was sold to a rancher and moved to his property near Mud Butte, 160 miles from Fort Pierre, in 1964. Nearly 50 years later, the depot



Accepting the Governor's Award for History on behalf of the Fort Pierre Verendrye Museum's "Bring It Home" Committee were, from left, Charles Poches, Britt Williams, Larry Cronin, Connie Grittner, Bonnie Ackerman (widow of Mark "Sharky" Drees) and Gary Grittner (holding award). Presenters were, at right, Education Secretary Melody Schopp and South Dakota State Historical Society Director Jay D. Vogt.

was "discovered" and moved back to Fort Pierre. The committee raised nearly \$1 million to support the project, and the depot will now serve as a museum to educate people about the history of the Pierre/Fort Pierre area. Accepting the award on behalf of other committee members was Gary Grittner, chairman.

On hand to help present the awards was Melody Schopp, secretary of the Department of Education.

Next year's history conference is April 28-29 in Sioux Falls. The theme will be "Laura Ingalls Wilder: A 150-Year Legacy."



Schopp and Vogt also presented a Governor's Award to the Mount Rushmore Society, represented by Judy Allen, board president.

Vogt

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The State Historical Society is responsible for three properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1877, the Oahe Chapel, located near the Oahe Dam north of Pierre, has been restored to its 1907 appearance. The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society partners with the State Historical Society to maintain the building and open it in the summer. The Fort Pierre Chouteau archaeological site and the Verendrye Monument site are both National Historic Landmarks. The namesake for both the cities of Fort Pierre and Pierre, Fort Pierre Chouteau was originally constructed in 1832 for the Ameri-



The Verendrye Plate is one of the featured items in the museum at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

can Fur Company and was one of the most important fur trade forts on the Great Plains. The Verendrye Monument overlooks the present City of Fort Pierre and is the spot

where in 1743 Louis-Joseph and François de La Verendrye and two voyagers buried a lead plate claiming the region for France. This is the first physical evidence of non-Indians being in the future state of South Dakota. The plate is on display in the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center.

Local archaeological societies, archives, history-related groups, and museums have extensive collections, also. We all do amazing work, and it is a major responsibility to take care of our history, to ensure that present and future generations know about our past, and to enlighten us to make thoughtful decisions because of our knowledge of our history. Keep up the good work and visit us at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. jdv