

State Historical Society celebrates its 120th birthday

The South Dakota State Historical Society celebrated its 120th birthday in early February. In January of 1901 Governor Charles Herreid asked the legislature to pass a bill to create the “Department of History.” It did so quickly and on February 5 of that year he signed the bill into law. The new state agency quickly merged with the Historical Society which had been chartered just a few days before. Doane Robinson became the Secretary and began his time serving South Dakota and working to, as the statute says, “collect, preserve, exhibit, and publish material for the study of history, especially the history of this state. . .” and “the upper great plains.” Over the years, but particularly in the 1930s, the 1970s, and again in the late 1980s with the acquisition of the Cultural Heritage Center, the organization has carried on those duties, modernizing its methods and scope and today maintains the state’s Archeological Research Center in Rapid City, the state Archives, the state Museum, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Research and Publishing office all in Pierre. We also have important support from the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation that manages the South Dakota Historical Society Press and provides other critical support. The effort has grown a great deal in the last 120 years, and I look forward to continuing its work.

Looking through Doane Robinson’s papers of that first year, I found a letter from General William H. H. Beadle, President of what was called the State Normal School, now Dakota State University, in Madison. Evidently, Robinson had asked Beadle to



write, or contribute to, what would become a published and first-rate history of the young state. Beadle wrote him a response declining but expressed his adamant view that the history not, “sketch an outline of mere political facts” but instead capture the, “real forces, the movements, . . . and enduring sentiments” of South Dakotans who made the state. I had to *slow down* to read his letter written in that long-hand, 19th century style. I appreciate his words’ ability to carry a charm and wisdom that still ring true today. A colleague and I are planning on submitting a book proposal to the SDHS Press to write a new history of South Dakota and we hope it will be published in the next two to three years. When doing so, we’ll come back time

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The 2021 Casey Tibbs Match of Champions will be held Saturday, June 5, in Fort Pierre. The PRCA-sanctioned Saddle Bronc Riding event brings the nation’s top cowboys and the best stock in the Midwest to the Stanley County Fairgrounds for a night of top-notch rodeo entertainment.

“It was a heartbreaking decision to cancel the 2020 Match,” says Casey Tibbs South Dakota Rodeo Center Executive Director, Kalyn Eulberg. “With so many unknowns surrounding the global pandemic and the strain it caused our sponsors, at the time, we believed it was the best choice. However, the Casey Tibbs Board of Director’s feels it necessary to hold the event this year, and hopefully bring some normalcy and excitement back to our community.”

Anyone with questions or wanting to sponsor this year’s event is encouraged to contact Kalyn with the Casey Tibbs South Dakota Rodeo Center at 605-494-1094.

The 53rd annual Dakota Conference on the Northern Great Plains is Thursday and Friday, August 5-6 in Sioux Falls, hosted by the Center for Western Studies at Augustana University.

The theme of this year’s conference is “Farming, Ranching and Sustainability on the Northern Great Plains.” Presentation and session proposals are due by May 7. Please email proposal title, brief description, short biographical

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sketch, and full contact information to dakotaconference@augie.edu or use the online submission form at www.augie.edu/dakotaconference. There is a limit of one presentation per individual.

The Tri-State Museum and Visitor Center in Belle Fourche recently held a Family Fun Day. Entitled "Extraordinary Elephants," the event included an educational film about elephants and their habitats and culture. There were several elephant crafts, including one to make a mini elephant out of pom-poms. The museum held drawings for Seymour Simon's book "Elephants" and an elephant puzzle. All who attended received a free take-home packet of info, puzzles and games about elephants. Refreshments were served.

The annual History Conference of the South Dakota State Historical Society will take place April 23-24. It will be an online-only event, through Zoom. Organized by the society's museum staff, the theme is "South Dakota Icons" and will include presentations on well-known South Dakota people, places and things. For more information go to the society's website at history.sd.gov.

If your museum or history group would like to share your happenings or officers with Hoofprints readers, please email it to Jeff.Mammenga@state.sd.us or send it to Hoofprints, South Dakota State Historical Society, 900 Governors Dr., Pierre, SD 57501.

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and time again to Beadle's advice in order to capture the sentiments of South Dakotans.

Thank you for your work and everything you do to support South Dakota's history and the history and memory of our communities.



Grant Co. Historical Society restores church bell tower

The Grant County Historical Society of Milbank restored the bell tower on the Brown Earth Indian Church near Stockholm last fall.

The tower was stripped down to its original corner posts, which were found to still be intact, having existed in place since 1879. Many of the original exterior boards were quite deteriorated.

Kevin Locke and Tucker Getslaff did the restoration work, using plywood as the underlayment

and cedar siding for the exterior. They quickly discovered that the original corner posts were now as hard as iron, which required a lot of predrilling before any attachments could be made. The tower was then primed and painted and today is a gleaming white.

Society officials also added a granite bench in front of the tower, thanks to a financial donation from the Milbank Town & Country Garden Club.

State Railroad Museum provides program about history of Mickelson Trail

As residents and visitors walk the George S. Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills, conversation often turns to the trail's railroad history. South Dakota State Railroad Museum Curator Rick Mills provides a PowerPoint program detailing the Trail's 110 miles of history in photos and stories - stretching from Edgemont to Custer, and on to Deadwood.

Mills presented this program for the Custer County Historical Society on Saturday, March 6.

Rick Mills is a fifth generation resident of the Black Hills region in western South Dakota. He currently

serves as the Director/Curator of the South Dakota State Railroad Museum in Hill City.

Mills wrote and published his first book on railroad history in 1985, and has since authored five books on regional railroad history, coauthored and contributed to seven other books, produced articles, scripts, and photo essays for history publications and video productions.

He has been involved with programming for SD Public Broadcasting, the History Channel, and the Discovery Channel, and is again a presenter for the SD Humanities Council Speakers Bureau in 2021.