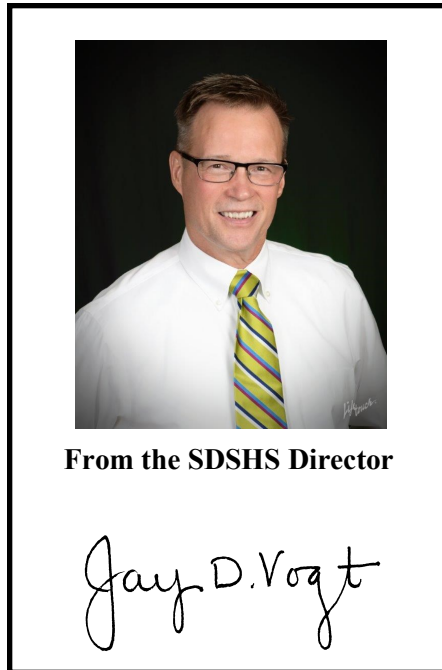


## Anxious to get ‘Back to Normal’ during/after the pandemic

What is back to normal? Starting March 16, schools sent students home to suddenly become remote learners and the teachers were trying to provide meaningful instruction not knowing if they were returning to the classrooms or not. Governor Kristi Noem sent state employees home for a week, and it expanded to over two months. Many employees saw the first week like an extended “snow day.” The reality is that as a state agency, we had work that had to be done. It was a challenge to have employees work remotely from home, especially not being prepared for such a drastic move. The museum and the research room in the Cultural Heritage Center closed, and the stores at both the Center and Capitol closed.

I reported to the office from the beginning. It was so much easier, and nicer, having the entire Cultural Heritage Center to myself. As essential employees, office directors started working at least part of the week from the office after the first week. By mid-May, employees were coming and going from the Cultural Heritage Center. Things were different at the Archaeological Research Center in Rapid City. For all practical purposes, they were getting kicked out of their facility, so while a new facility was being prepared to meet their unique needs, the staff was packing for the move.

Starting in May, we began preparing our “Back to Normal Plan.” Our goals were to get all Cultural Heritage Center employees working at full capacity in their regular office spaces by July 6, and the Archaeological Research Center moved to their new facility by July 1 and most employees in



their new workstations by July 13. Our plan was to open the museum, research room, and stores by July 20. A main concern was the health and safety of the staff, volunteers and visitors, while providing our services to the public and to state and local government. A large part of health and safety relies on individual, personal responsibility for hand-washing, wearing face masks, social distancing, monitoring health, and staying home if sick.

Although I say we make history every day, we are living through historic times. Because we are experiencing a historic pandemic, the archives created a program “Telling Your Story: Documenting COVID-19 in South Dakota,”

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## Field Reports

The Newell Museum reopened in May and, thanks to a generous donation, showed off a new LED lighting system. Curator Linda Velder, beginning her 25th year with the museum, is busy doing family histories and research for out-of-staters and sorting through new collections — mostly estates.

Current museum board members, most of whom are descendants of homesteaders in the Newell area, include: Chairman — David Morell, Vice Chairman — Douglas Parrow, Treasurer — Annitta Stolnack, Secretary — Sheryle Scott, Publicity — Lynette Culver.

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Due to COVID-19, summer programs at the Codington County Heritage Museum in Watertown went viral. Parents could sign up their children on the museum’s webpage and receive a box of supplies needed to complete the activities and an email with a link to the video of the programs. Over 100 children signed up to participate. Claudia Brunick-Spieker led the programs, with the help of two of her grandsons, who did a great job of asking questions and playing games for the kids at home to see. The museum is open regular hours, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 1-5 p.m. on Saturdays, but the number of people who can be in the building at one time is limited.

The museum’s current board of directors includes: President — Roger Whittle, Vice President — Vince Foley, Secretary — Shelly Alvine, Treasurer — Kris Fey;

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# Vogt

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asking South Dakotans to share their stories, photographs, art projects, short audio recordings and videos, correspondence associated with the coronavirus pandemic, etc. Visit to learn more and donate: <https://history.sd.gov/archives/covid19.aspx>.

**S**o how did we do? By Memorial Day, approximately 60 percent of the State Historical Society employees were back to work in their respective offices. Most were back a week later by June 1. Everyone was back to their building by July 1, with just a few medical exceptions. We were urged to open the Cultural Heritage Center as quickly as possible and the museum, research room and stores started welcoming guests by Monday, June 15. The Archaeological Research Center got moved on time and continued to unpack. Because many of our volunteers were reluctant to return, we decided not to offer expanded summer hours for the museum. The research room is open by appointment. Everyone entering the buildings is encouraged to take their temperature and answer a few questions about their health. The idea is to make our guests, staff and volunteers consider their health before coming into the buildings. We strongly encourage mask wearing, and the employees are asked to wear a mask when not at their individual workstation.

**I** am not sure what back to normal is? We have a new normal, which I believe we all hope is temporary. My wife has probably made over 300 face masks. We gave them to family and friends. I brought many to the office, and she took enough to school for all her students. I miss seeing peoples' faces, but I prefer the protection of wearing a mask. I have washed my hands (for 20 seconds) and used more hand sanitizer in the last six months that I probably had in the previous six years. I have not been able to stop touching my face. I miss shaking hands and hugging people. I have gotten used to online meetings, but I miss seeing people in-person. A benefit of the pandemic is we have a family Zoom meeting every two weeks, which we could have done before, but seem somehow required to do so now to keep in contact. I hope that by next summer, we can be "back to normal," and you can continue to do your fine work collecting, preserving, interpreting and promoting the history of your community and area. Thank you. jdv

## Yankton museum reopens July 1

The Mead Cultural Education Center, home to the Dakota Territorial Museum, in Yankton reopened to the public on July 1, with four new exhibits.

The newest permanent exhibit "Yankton State Hospital: Minds, Methods, and Medicine" is a four-room display exploring the history of the mental health campus from its start in 1879 to the modern era.

Temporary exhibits at the Mead on display for the summer include: "General Federation of Women's Club 100th Anniversary Exhibit" which highlights the group's work over the last 100 years. "Living Traditions Dakota, Nakota, Lakota Art" and "Drawn To the Land—Homesteading Dakota" are traveling exhibits made possible through the South Dakota State Historical Society and will include additional artifacts from



**Part of the "Yankton State Hospital: Minds, Methods, and Medicine" exhibit.**

the Dakota Territorial Museum Collection.

The Children's Transportation Museum is temporarily closed until further notice.

Visitors are asked to call ahead for available guest slots at 605-665-3898. The building is limited to 10 percent occupancy or 30 people at any given time for now.

For more information visit [meadbuilding.org](http://meadbuilding.org), email [info@meadbuilding.org](mailto:info@meadbuilding.org) or call 665-3898.

## More Field Reports

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and directors Jon Iverson, Dana Lindner, Joy Nelson, Denise Ottenbacher, Tim Oviatt and Sue Pearson.

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The South Dakota State Railroad Museum, Ltd. (SDSRM) in Hot Springs turned 10 years old on May 1, and the museum is commemorating this "milepost" with a special event - a "Soiree," or evening party or gathering, to be specific.

On October 3rd at 6pm, museum supporters are invited to "Cowboys, Cowgirls, and Cowcatchers Soiree," an evening of music, food, beverages, and a special meet-and-greet with TRAINS Magazine editor Jim Wrinn and railroad author Cate Kratville-Wrinn. Suggested attire is handkerchiefs/masks accompanied by a railroad hat or Stetson/bonnet of your choice.

More special guests, live and online auction items, and related events for the day will be announced in the coming weeks.

Soiree tickets are \$35 for individuals and \$50 for couples - Call the Mu-

seum at 605-574-9000 to reserve your Soiree tickets as soon as possible.

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A new exhibit about the history of Deadwood's brothels opened Aug. 1 in Deadwood. The Brothel Deadwood, three years in the making, hopes to set the record straight on misconceptions of the city's brothels and the women who worked there, said Carolyn Weber, executive director of Deadwood History, Inc. From 1876 to when they were closed down in 1980, the brothels were an important part of the community, Weber said, providing an estimated \$1 million to the local economy each year. For \$15, museum attendees can walk through the parlor where gentlemen would wait and eventually select their company, four service rooms, a model bedroom, the madam's office and the madam's bedroom. Brothel Deadwood hours through Sept. 30 are 11 a.m.-7 p.m.. Attendees must be 16 years or older. The museum is in the same location as the former Beige Door of the old Shasta Rooms, above the Eagle Bar at 608 Main Street.