

2025 'This Place Matters'  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Essay Contest Winners

First Place Winner

## *Triangle Ranch*

By: Ava Ireland, Kadoka

My favorite place in South Dakota is the Triangle Ranch. It has been in my Aunt Lyndy's family since 1903. Her great grandpa drove his livestock across South Dakota to homestead at the ranch. He and his wife eventually purchased an Alhambra home out of the Sears and Robuck catalog. The home was finished being built in and paid for in 1921. Before that they lived in the cabin under the hill. The cabin burnt down in the cottonwood fire in 2017 and was eventually rebuilt as part of the bed and breakfast.

My Aunt Lyndy and late Uncle Kenny turned the ranch house into a bed and breakfast in 1995. You can find Aunt Lyndy in the ranch kitchen baking muffins, banana bread, or chocolate chip cookies. Some of my favorite memories are visiting with my Uncle Kenny and snacking on Aunt Lyndy's muffins before we lost him to cancer in 2021.

My dad and our family help to take care of the cows and put up the hay. I love getting to spend most of my summer helping my aunt at her ranch and the bed and breakfast. Aunt Lyndy always has something new to teach me about the history of the ranch. Including telling me about how Natives stacked yellow rocks up on the hill to look like a person standing there during the settlement.

I hope the ranch is preserved because my Uncle Kenny is buried there in the family cemetery. I want to be able to visit him whenever I want. I miss our visits and maybe him picking on me some too.

Second Place Winner

## ***Zion Lutheran: A Home for Worship, Learning, and Inspiration***

By: Tiana Suurmeier, Tripp

Have you ever been to Scotland, South Dakota? There is a heavenly brick church on the northwest corner of town, and this is the place that matters to me. Zion is unique and I want to see it last forever because it is where I worship, attend Sunday school, and is the roots of my faith. Zion is special to me because I was baptized there and have been in that church for 10 years. My parents and some of my aunts and uncles were married in the church. I hope to accomplish a lot of things in church and learn how to bless God. Zion is where I grew up, and I hope to learn how to be a person to inspire others. In church we sing, and that is one way I can express the faith God is instilling in me and blessing me with.

Zion should be preserved because not only is it special to me but to all the members of our church. The church has people participating from newborn to 90 years old. Our church is active with many groups including youth group, confirmation, adult and youth choir, bible study, Sunday school, ladies group, community garden, and quilting for missions. The Zion church building was built in 1967 but has been a congregation since 1880. My great great grandpa and great great uncle helped during the construction and built the cabinets. Our wrought iron cross is handmade and symbolizes how we should carry out our Christian life with grapes and wheat symbolizing the bread and wine. Matching our cross is a communion rail that I receive a blessing from our pastor reminding me that I am a child of God.

Outside there is a memorial tree orchard that has a labyrinth place near it. This is a place that can assist people in meditation and prayer. The homemade foundation was made by youth in our church which I was able to partake in.

In summary, I was glad that I have an amazing community in our church to believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe Zion is a wonderful place where you can feel better, lift your spirit, and gain confidence. I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that he will keep Zion forever.

Third Place Winner

## ***Brown Hall at SDSU***

By: Jackson Lee, Brookings

Brown Hall is an important South Dakota State University campus building. It is over 66 years old! This building means a lot to me because it is named after my great-great-grandfather, George Lincoln Brown. Brown Hall shows us the history of education in South Dakota.

Brown Hall was built in 1959. It has a beautiful red brick exterior. The tall windows and big doors make it look special. Many students walk past this building every day. It is a place where learning happens.

Inside Brown Hall, there are many dorm rooms, classrooms, and offices. Students learn about different subjects and live here. They study hard to prepare for their futures. Brown Hall helps students grow and succeed. It is a place where dreams begin.

George Brown was the acting President of South Dakota State College not just once, but 6 times! He was the president of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts. He worked at the college for a long time. Before he was president, he was the vice president. He was also the dean of teachers. He had other jobs at the college too!

My great-great-grandfather was a teacher at SDSU. He taught many students. He loved helping them learn. His work made a big difference in their lives. I feel proud to have a family member connected to this building.

Brown Hall is also important to the community. It brings students from all around the country together to live and learn. The building represents hard work. It reminds us how important education is.

In conclusion, Brown Hall at SDSU is a special place in Brookings, South Dakota. It is over 66 years old and holds many memories. It matters to me because of my great-great-grandfather's legacy. This building teaches us about our past and inspires us for the future. That is why Brown Hall truly matters!