



south Dakota state Historical society HISTORY NOTES

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Collections Return to CHC in 2025 Renovated Museum to Open in 2026

The year was certainly busy!

After moving back into the Cultural Heritage Center in the fall of 2024, archives staff worked hard throughout the spring to move over 8,000 boxes of documents out of storage and into the new shelving units. Likewise, the museum curators managed the reception of the collection into their new storage spaces and reorganized all the objects into a larger storage area that is better suited for the artifacts and provides the curators with a better working environment. Chelle Somsen and her team reopened the State Archives to the public on 7 July.

In early February, we hosted middle and high school social studies teachers as they attended “Capitol Connections,” showing them the renovations and what’s coming in the museum. We will be doing so again in 2026. Hosting teachers supports history and specifically South Dakota’s history in our classrooms.

Holding the annual South Dakota History Conference in Deadwood was also part of our continuing work to reach out across the state. Deadwood was a great host, and all in attendance enjoyed the presentations, which ranged from archaeology to recent history. Save the dates for the upcoming conference (details on back page). We have big things in store!

Speaking of big things, two tremendous efforts will come together in 2026, with the State Museum reopening and the nation celebrating its semiquincentennial. As many of you may know, the museum concepts and design work have been under way since 2022. As we developed concepts for the different exhibits, we worked to include advisors from the Lakota and Dakota communities and college history faculty. We traveled around the state to gather member and public input. Then the detailed work began, with continued collaboration with our Lakota language and culture advisors to select artifacts, write text, and make choices needed to complete



Archivist Sara Casper places the final box from off-site storage into the new collections annex at the Cultural Heritage Center. Staff photo

the designs. Along the way, we received wonderful artifacts from kind donors, whose generosity continues to enhance South Dakota’s history. Our museum contractor, Split Rock Studios, has been working to render all the details into designs that can be used for exhibit construction. General construction began in the museum in November, and we expect Split Rock to begin construction of the eleven permanent exhibits soon. The Society’s curators will also put together a temporary exhibit, “Grit & Glory,” which, along with two permanent exhibits, will be open to the public in time for the nation’s 250th birthday. We appreciate your patience, your support, and, in many cases, your participation in completing our new State Museum.

We’d love your help in spreading the word and encouraging friends who love history to become Historical Society members.

Museum Connects Past and Future

The most intense work for any museum is building relationships. Progress on the South Dakota State Historical Society's renovated museum has continued, and it is expected to open 1 July with a new exhibit titled "Grit & Glory" in the temporary gallery and two of the new rooms. Meanwhile, the museum team worked diligently to expand and deepen its relationships with advisors and collaborators. The amount of work completed by our partners is both staggering and deeply appreciated.

Relationships continue to be important for producing the new state history exhibit. Just as the museum team last year attended "Share Your Voice" meetings across the state, gathering input from the public and advice from academics and American Indian elders and scholars, work this year continued as we collated input from American Indians with the goal of fine-tuning narratives. Native advisors have helped us accurately translate words and concepts. The museum team has also worked with the exhibit contractor Split Rock Studios to ensure technical details are understood. And the team works with Craig Valenti, the site manager of McGough Construction from Sioux Falls who is building the exhibit infrastructure, to make sure dimensions will support the exhibits crafted by Split Rock Studios.

Museum staff consulted with a broad range of potential artifact donors. With 34,000 artifacts in the collection, chances are we already have excellent examples of certain objects. However, the staff is always watching as history is continually made. Last year, Carter Sanderson became the first-ever South Dakotan to be drafted into the NHL,



Team South Dakota Jersey worn by Carter Sanderson in 2021. The following year, the team won the USA Hockey Tier II 14U National Championship in Kalamazoo, Michigan, ultimately contributing to Sanderson's selection in the NHL Draft in 2025. Photo by David M. Grabitske



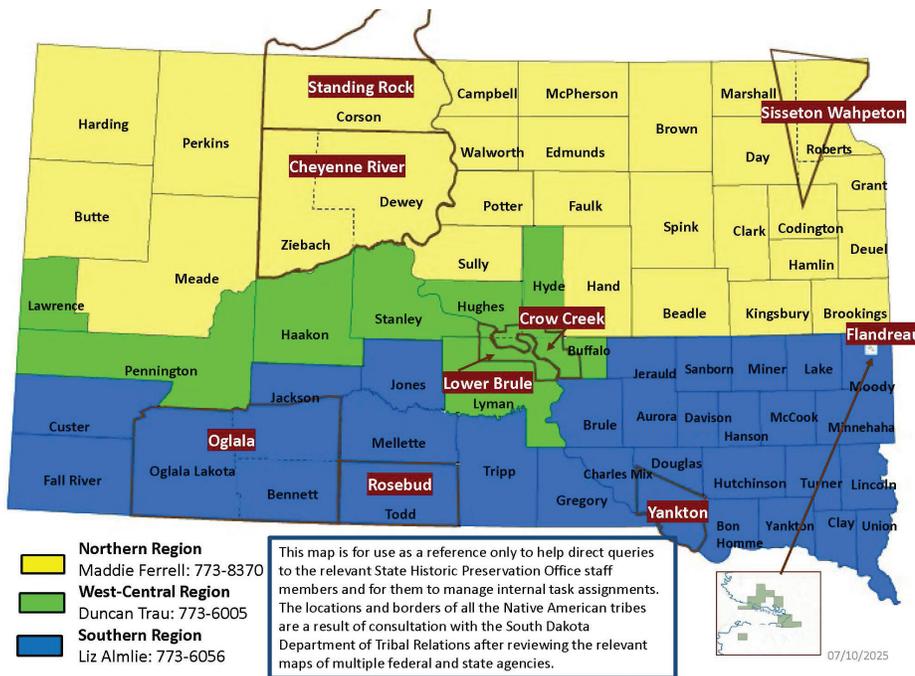
Clear Lake Historical Society Museum, Clear Lake, South Dakota. Although having a small storefront, the building is deeper and more spacious than its entrance suggests. Photo by David M. Grabitske

when he was selected by the Pittsburgh Penguins. Museum staff reached out to his family for an appropriate artifact to represent this story. In addition, several new donations developed via internal relationships with the Society's Foundation and Press. Staff accepted key items from the Hogen Hardware collection, uniquely exhibited in a grain bin, from just north of Kadoka. Janet Brekke of Sioux Falls opened her aunt's trunks and revealed the fascinating story of Frances Flint of Doland, a Red Cross recreation worker from World War II through the Vietnam War. The Society's artifacts constitute a representative reference collection that accurately reflects the story of the state, obtained through the generosity of donors. We are grateful for the opportunity to build relationships with donors, and outreach efforts ensure the collection will have the resources for anyone wanting to learn about the state.

Museum staff also hosted programs to connect with the public. On 1 November, staff members welcomed families to the Cultural Heritage Center for a "Make It and Take It" program to craft Christmas ornaments. Staff also hit the road and visited museums across the state, learning about their successes and challenges. Many local history organizations were founded at the same time as Dakota Territory, and local museums continue to carry on vital historical work. Their creativity in solving problems and compellingly presenting history was on full view.

Relationships move history forward.

SHPO Creates Historic Preservation Management Map



South Dakota Historic Preservation Management Map showing all nine federally recognized tribes with intact territorial boundaries. Staff image

The South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) experienced a year of leadership transition while continuing its core responsibilities in historic preservation, compliance, grants administration, and public outreach. Throughout the year, SHPO staff maintained continuity in National Register of Historic Places nominations, project reviews, and coordination with local, state, federal, and tribal partners.

A major accomplishment of the year was the development and implementation of a new South Dakota Historic Preservation (SDHP) Management Map, designed first and foremost to affirm and respect tribal sovereignty within the State of South Dakota. The new map formally incorporates the locations and territorial boundaries of all nine federally recognized tribes in South Dakota, ensuring they are clearly and visibly recognized in SHPO's statewide management framework.

Importantly, the map was deliberately structured to maintain the territorial integrity of each tribe, avoiding the division of any tribal lands across multiple SHPO management regions. By ensuring that no tribe's territory is split between two or three administrative regions, the SHPO strengthened clarity, consistency, and respect in consultation, communication, and coordination. This approach reinforces government-to-government

relationships and reflects SHPO's commitment to working with tribes as sovereign partners.

Beyond its significance for tribal consultation, the new management map also improves internal coordination and public service by clearly defining regional responsibilities for SHPO staff. The framework enhances responsiveness, supports workload balance, and provides clearer points of contact for tribal governments, local communities, federal agencies, and the public.

During the year, SHPO staff worked with property owners, local preservation commissions, and the National Park Service to place eight properties on the National Register of Historic Places, along with approving updates to existing historic districts. SHPO also continued to administer the Deadwood Fund Grant Program, supporting preservation work on historic properties across the state.

Through regulatory work, grants, education, and outreach—including archaeology camps, student programs, and collaboration with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices—the SHPO advanced its mission to preserve South Dakota's historic and cultural resources while honoring the sovereignty, history, and living presence of its tribal nations.

Archival Collections and Researchers Return to CHC

In 2025, the archives-related portions of the Cultural Heritage Center renovation project came to a close. The installation of compact shelving in the new storage annex was completed on 17 April, allowing the archives' collections to rejoin archives staff at the Cultural Heritage Center. Iron Mountain once again assisted archives staff with the collections move, which involved not only moving 22,000 special collection library books, 8,291 record volumes, and 12,351 archival boxes—in order—to their new permanent homes, but also the installation of forty-seven heavy microfilm cabinets and reconfiguring map cabinets to make best use of the space. The collections move began on 28 April and continued until 18 June. After taking a couple weeks to settle in and label shelves, archives staff began accepting reservations for researchers and providing in-person access to the collections with a soft opening of the research room on 7 July.

Governor Rhoden proclaimed October as Archives Month in South Dakota. The theme, “Back in Business,” celebrated the reopening of the State Archives and recognized the importance of local businesses and organizations to South Dakota history. A poster was designed showcasing images of South Dakota businesses and mailed to historical organizations throughout the state. The poster and proclamation were available on the State Archives website. The State Archives held a formal grand opening and open house on 9 October, which included tours of the newly renovated archival spaces and the storage annex, light refreshments, and a slideshow presentation of photographs taken throughout the renovation project. Other events included Electronic Records Day on 10 October, and a

presentation by Matthew Reitzel titled “South Dakota State Archives: The Move, the Mall, and the Return,” held at Rawlins Library in Pierre on 23 October. The presentation described the process of moving the collections before and after the renovation and the modified work processes necessary to operate out of an office at the Northridge Plaza shopping center.

The South Dakota State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) received a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2025 to support training of archivists and others responsible for preserving archival materials. The SHRAB used these funds to offer a free “Basics of Archives” online workshop on 16 October for archival collections managers who had no previous formal archival training. SHRAB grant funds were also used to provide travel scholarships to archivists in the state to support their professional development.

In 2025, the State Archives:

Received 167 new donations, totaling 300.8 cubic feet and 208,785.49 MB of records.

Cataloged 527 new library books.

Scanned 34,289 documents and photographs in the new Digitization Lab.

Processed and made accessible 328.69 cubic feet of manuscript collections and government records.

Had 463 researchers visit the Research Room (from when it reopened on 7 July through 31 December).

Reached 1,068 people through presentations, consultations, and site visits.

Added 1,252 government and manuscript accessions to ArchivesSpace, our online catalog.



The State Archives Open House Ribbon-Cutting event was held on 9 Oct. 2025 to celebrate the opening of the archives to the public after the renovation. Archives staff pictured L-R: Sarah Kirchman, Cherri Reed, Sara Casper, Chelle Somsen, Kim Smith, Kevin DeVries, Justin Stauder, and Matthew Reitzel (not pictured: Nicole Hosette and Steve Mayer). Staff photo

ARC Hosts Annual History Conference, Updates State's Archaeological GIS Data

The Archaeological Research Center's 20 full-time and seasonal staff completed 161 cultural resources reports in 2025. From these efforts, 56 archaeological sites and 194 structures were recorded, and 26 site evaluations were undertaken by ARC archaeologists. Two large long-term projects were completed, including the survey report for a multi-year project in Walworth County for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a mitigative project in Hutchinson County for the South Dakota Department of Transportation.

The ARC's Geographic Information System (GIS) team updated or added approximately 13,370 survey boundaries, site boundaries, investigation boundaries, National Register of Historic Places boundaries, and subsurface testing features to the statewide geodatabase. This has been a major effort and provides invaluable accuracy to the location of South Dakota's recorded cultural resources. Records staff at the ARC processed 421 archaeological reports from private contractors, federal agencies, and in-house contract projects. Along with these reports, 238 newly recorded archaeological sites were added to the database, and 180 previously recorded sites were updated with new information, including boundary modifications, revisits, reevaluations, and monitoring.

In 2025, the ARC provided comments on 113 mining permit applications, including many in the Black Hills. For archaeological work on state lands, the ARC reviewed and granted 6 permits to contractors. Many of the 36 burial reports the ARC fielded in 2025 involved behind-the-scenes research efforts and tribal consultation to protect confidential burial sites. The ARC also contributed to one joint repatriation, which was published in the Federal Register pursuant to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Curation staff assigned a total of 25 new accession numbers, received one transfer, accepted one donation, and completed one outgoing transfer in 2025.

ARC hosted a well-received and sold-out History Conference in Deadwood in May. ARC archaeologists also supported SHPO's efforts at the 2025 Archaeology Camp in June. And 2025 proved to be a popular year for



ARC staff member Katie Anderson leads a local *FIRST* LEGO League group on a tour of the ARC office on 30 Sept. 2025. Staff photo

archaeology, as ARC fielded numerous requests from *FIRST* LEGO Leagues around the country for input on this year's theme, "Unearthed," which asked teams to become junior archaeologists. *FIRST* LEGO Leagues are designed for students ages 4–16 to explore engineering, research, and problem-solving with LEGOs. In September, ARC hosted a *FIRST* LEGO League group and created an interactive activity (an archaeology layer cake with candy "artifacts") to teach the kids about excavation, soil stratigraphy, and the importance of notetaking.



ARC staff members Megan Ostrenga Fabricius and Lynn Eschenbaum answer questions about careers in archaeology at the 2025 Eighth Grade Career Fair in Rapid City on 12 Nov. 2025. Staff photo

Research & Publishing Celebrates Award-Winning Publications

Award-winning books are a great measure of success for our small nonprofit SDHS Press. In the past year, *Georgia Jipp: Blizzard Pilot*, written by Laura Beth Dean and illustrated by Jeanne Bowman, swept the children's picture book award competitions, winning the Moonbeam, the Spur, the Willa, and the Will Rogers Medallion Awards. In addition, *A Phantom Storm: Sitting Bull, America, and the Ghost Dance* by Norman Matteoni won the silver Will Rogers Medallion for Western Nonfiction, and the John M. Carroll Literary Award for "Best Book on Custer and His Times" from the Little Big Horn Associates.

We expect 2026 to bring news of additional award winners. New 2025 publications included: *Wilder Weather: What Laura Ingalls Wilder Teaches Us about the Weather, Climate, and Protecting What We Cherish* by Barbara Boustead; children's picture book *Badger Clark: Poetry Wrangler* written by Nancy Bo Flood and illustrated by Jeanne Bowman; *A Legislature of Citizens*, which is a collection of articles about the South Dakota Legislature, edited by SDHS Press staff; *The White River Badlands: Its History and Characters* by Philip S. Hall; *Special Places, Sacred Circles: A Memoir* by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve; and volumes two and three of the Black Hills History Tours series by David A. Wolff, *Gateway to the Hills* and *On the Narrow Gauge and Beyond*. SDHS Press also published our very first children's board book, *Halhata na Thathanka / Maggie and Buffalo*, written and illustrated by Alfreda Beartrack Algeo.

Our Research & Publishing arm published four quarterly issues of volume 55 of the *South Dakota History* journal, including an extended retrospective on the 1968 Victory Special campaign train, Ella Cara Deloria's *Fire Thunder*



SDHS Press founder and Pioneer Girl Project director emerita Nancy Tystad Koupal accepts the Legacy Award from the Laura Ingalls Wilder Legacy and Research Association at LauraPalooza in Sioux Falls on 10 July 2025. The award honored Koupal for her significant contributions to Wilder scholarship through her work on the Pioneer Girl Project books and blog, published by SDHS Press. Staff photo

narratives, articles on Sioux Falls history, a discussion of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *The First Four Years*, Rose Wilder Lane's contributions as a public intellectual, and the adventures of two young women exploring Dakota Territory in 1880. Associate editor Craig Walters retired in August. A search for a replacement is underway.

Press staff attended several conferences in 2025, including the Augustana Center for Western Studies' Dakota Conference, the South Dakota State Historical Society's annual conference, the South Dakota Department of Education's literacy conference, the Western Writers of America annual convention, LauraPalooza, the South Dakota Festival of Books, the West River History Conference, and the South Dakota Indian Education Summit. Press director Dedra Birzer presented at the Western Writers conference, LauraPalooza, and The Lost Region conference.

Our monthly History Talks virtual speaker series continued throughout 2025, with episodes featuring Tony Venhuizen, Bernie Hunhoff, Terry Woster, Cindy Wilson, Rob Galler, Barbara Boustead, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, S. D. Nelson, Philip S. Hall, Kelly Kirk, Kelly O'Dea, Terry C. Anderson, Makenzie Huber, and David A. Wolff. Past episodes are available for viewing on the SDHS Foundation YouTube channel.

We are grateful to South Dakota State Historical Society members for their support of our publications and programs. You inspire us to live out our mission to publish high-quality journals and books on the rich history and culture of our state and region.



Author Laura Beth Dean and SDHS Press director Dedra Birzer show off the Spur Award plaques awarded to *Georgia Jipp: Blizzard Pilot* for Best Western Children's Picture Book at the Western Writers of America Spur Awards banquet on 21 June 2025 in Amarillo, Texas. Staff photo

SDHS Foundation Donors Support Numerous Projects

As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful for the generosity and confidence of our donors, members, and partners. Your support strengthened civic education, preserved irreplaceable history, and advanced major initiatives that will shape how future generations experience and understand our state's story.

Thanks to donors, students visited the state capitol to learn about the 100th Session of the South Dakota Legislature and participated in Archaeology Camp. Support also made possible the annual history conference, History Talks programs, new oral history interviews, historical publications, and expanded digital collections. These efforts continue to connect people of all ages with South Dakota's past in meaningful and accessible ways.

The Foundation experienced a leadership transition during the year. Tony Venhuizen was appointed Lieutenant Governor and stepped down as Foundation president while continuing his service on the board. Patricia Miller was elected to complete his term. We also strengthened our staff capacity with the addition of Clarissia Drefs as Executive Administrative Assistant to the CEO, with a focus on finance. We are grateful for the leadership and support that guided the Foundation through this transition.

Fundraising efforts focused on the renovation of the state museum at the Cultural Heritage Center. Leadership gifts from T. Denny Sanford and the Great Plains Education Foundation helped launch the private campaign supporting exhibit renewal. The State of South Dakota committed \$17.8 million toward building expansion and modernization, while

the Foundation's private philanthropic goal of four million dollars will allow exhibits to be refabricated and enhanced. Three exhibit areas will open in July 2026 in conjunction with America's 250th anniversary, with the full museum scheduled to reopen in December.

In April, current and former lawmakers were invited to the capitol for a special gathering commemorating the 100th regular session of the South Dakota Legislature. The Foundation served as fiscal and event partner, providing financial oversight, grant assistance, and ticket processing for more than 450 attendees. The effort honored legislative service and strengthened public understanding of South Dakota's democratic traditions.

The Foundation is proud to serve as the fundraising partner for America's 250th South Dakota Commission. Projects included a custom Parkwest Arms rifle raffle, new statewide promotional partnerships, and a collaboration with Platte Creek Brewing Company to create Dakota Liberty Beer, with proceeds supporting education and commemorative activities leading up to the nation's sesquicentennial.

We are thankful for donors whose gifts had lasting impact, including Verna Kay Bormann, the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation, the City of Deadwood, Dana and LaDawn Dykhouse, Bob Foley, the Tim Forsch family, David Hartley, Louie LaLonde and Saloon #10, Michael Lewis, Fred and Pam Lillibridge, Patricia Miller, Larry and Diane Ness, the Page sisters (Jane, Ruth, Ann, and Mary), Steve and Marianne Perkins, Ruth Schmidt, and the South Dakota Community Foundation. Their leadership gifts supported museum collections, archives digitization, publications, and educational outreach, ensuring South Dakota's history is preserved and accessible to all. These efforts are made possible through the generosity of people who believe in the value of history.



The SDHS Foundation kicked off the annual history conference on 8 May with an evening at Deadwood's Saloon #10. The live reenactment of the infamous shooting of Wild Bill Hickok at the place where it happened provided an entertaining South Dakota history lesson. Staff photo

State Historical Society and Foundation Volunteers 2025

Volunteers help us to preserve and interpret South Dakota history as they greet, guide, research, and perform other vital tasks for our organization. We are grateful to the following individuals and organizations for sharing their time, talents, and treasures with the South Dakota State Historical Society.

Their dedication ensures the continued vitality of the Society.

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is pleased to receive donations of books, manuscripts, documents, photographs, artifacts, and services. The Society is grateful to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the preservation of South Dakota's heritage through their generous gifts.

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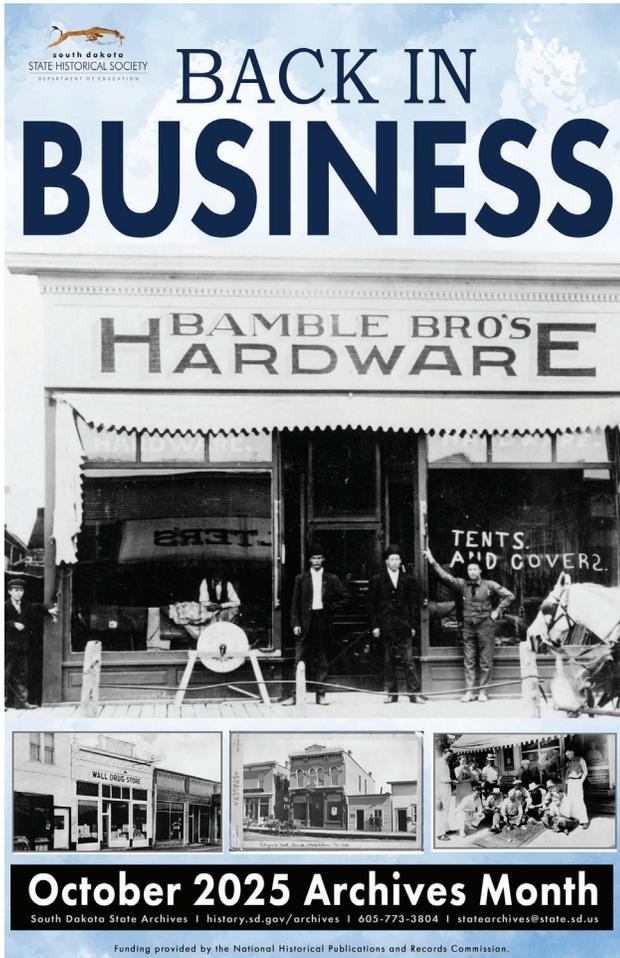
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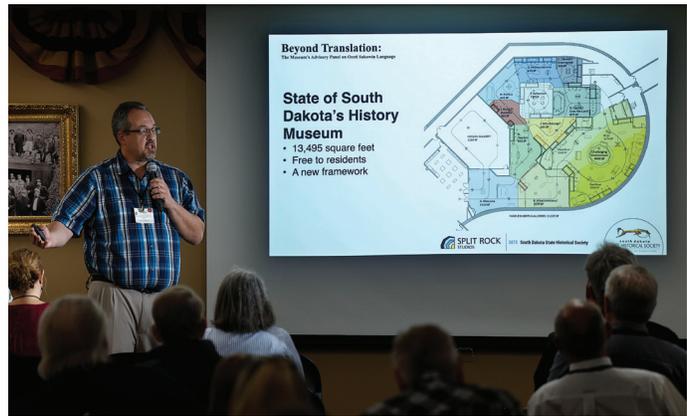
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South Dakota Archives Month was celebrated in October 2025. The theme “Back in Business” was portrayed in the posters sent out to archives across the state.



The annual History Conference took place in Deadwood on 8–9 May, hosted by the Archaeological Research Center. Historian Patricia Limerick served as the keynote speaker for the Governor’s Awards in History Luncheon. Her entertaining and thoughtful speech even included a limerick dedicated to State Historian Ben Jones. Richard Carlson photo



At the annual SDSHS history conference, Dan Moeckley gives a presentation on the plans for the completely renovated State Museum.



Ben Jones, Historical Society director and chair of South Dakota’s America 250 Commission, welcomes Governor Larry Rhoden to the “America 250: Declare Your Independence” event at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, where Rhoden spoke to the crowd and signed a commemorative Declaration of Independence on 28 August. Staff photo



Campers learn how to conduct archaeological excavations at the Kids Archaeology Camp, held 10–12 June. Staff photo

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Save the Date



Join us at the South Dakota State Historical Society Annual History Conference in Pierre and Fort Pierre, 2–3 June 2026, to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States of America! The conference theme is “Grit and Glory: America’s 250th.” From the glory of the founding documents and their role in South Dakota history, to a sneak peek at grittier days highlighted in the exhibit marking America’s 250 years, sessions will cover a wide range of topics that incorporate the values of the American Revolution and the resiliency of the American spirit. Mark your calendars and plan to attend!