

ANSWERING THE CALL OF HISTORY

By Kelly Hagen

All across the vast landscape of North Dakota this summer, the state's rich history is calling out to tourists from around the world and local residents alike. Pick up the phone and take that call.

History on Call, a phone service provided by a partnership between the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, is just a phone call away for anyone looking for information on North Dakota's many historic sites. Call 701-557-9190 and follow the prompts to enter specific keypad numbers, or "stop numbers," that are assigned to each site, for all the important information that is needed before heading out on a summer visit to a historic site.

All of North Dakota's historic sites opened for the summer season on May 16, and will remain open through September 15. Members of the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation receive free admission to the sites. All the information about joining can be found online at www.statehistoricalfoundation.com or by calling 701-222-1966.

Answer history's call this summer at the 55 state historic sites across the state. Here's what is happening at four of them:

Fort Buford State Historic Site

Located at the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, Fort Buford is observing a historic milestone this summer. On July 17 it will host a special event marking the 130th anniversary of Sitting Bull's surrender. Five years after defeating Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull returned from exile in Canada, and formally turned himself in at Fort Buford on July 20, 1881.

The event will feature a number of speakers and attractions, including a special presentation from Ernie LaPointe, the great-grandson of Sitting Bull, and the dedication of a Sitting Bull pictograph.

"LaPointe will speak," says Steve Reidburn, the site supervisor. "He has books and DVDs that tell the story of his great-grandfather. They were told to him through oral history from his grandmother and his mother. He has a unique way of expressing himself."

The historical significance of the area is its location at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, says Reidburn. "From the early people to present day, the joining of those two



big rivers is a unique spot. From 1805, when Lewis and Clark came through here, to present day, it's always been a gathering point for many, many generations."

Fort Buford is located between Highways 1804 and 58, 18 miles west of Williston. It is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for children ages six-15, and ages five and under free. Special admission rates available for groups. All fees include admittance to the adjacent Confluence Center.

For more information, call 701-572-9034 or visit www.history.nd.gov.

Fort Totten State Historic Site

History can be recounted in profoundly different ways, depending on whose vantage point is being represented. At Fort Totten, visitors can immerse themselves in different perspectives of the site's long evolution in form and function.

"When you walk out onto the grounds, it feels like you're walking into a historical setting," says Chris Johnson, the SHSND's museum director. "The fort was used as a military fort from the 1860s up until 1890, and then it was transferred and converted to use as an industrial school to teach Native American children how to become farmers and harness makers."

Visitors can then choose what time period they want to learn more about on the guided tours of the grounds. "We've created four fictional characters," says Johnson, "and in a sense, each of them gives you a tour of the fort grounds, but it has different emphasis as you go through there."

Visitors can choose as their guide a U.S. Army frontier soldier from the 1870s, a young female Chippewa student from the 1890s, a teacher of the early 1900s, or a teen male Dakota (Sioux) basketball player, who will share their perspective on what happened during their time at Fort Totten. Johnson says these tours and characters were compiled from oral histories given by Spirit Lake tribal members, and other 19th and 20th century accounts.

The site, which includes 17 original buildings, is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through September 15. The admission cost is \$4 per adult, \$1.50 for ages six to 15, and free for those five and under.





This artist's rendering shows the expansion of the North Dakota Heritage Center. Construction on this \$52 million project was begun in March. The 97,000-square-foot addition will nearly double its size, adding exhibit galleries, interactive exhibits, a 60-seat theater, café, outdoor patio and much more. Completion is scheduled for North Dakota's 125th anniversary of statehood November 2, 2014. The Heritage Center remains open daily for visitors and facility users. Parts of the main gallery may be closed occasionally to accommodate the construction work. *Hammel, Green and Abrahamson (HGA), Inc.*

Fort Totten State Historic Site is located 13 miles southwest of Devils Lake, on the edge of the town of Fort Totten. For additional information, call 701-766-4441 or visit www.history.nd.gov.

Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site

As the "Gateway to the Dakotas," Fort Abercrombie played an important role as the first permanent United States military fort established in what would become North Dakota.

Throughout the summer, there are living history events or demonstrations, says Diane Rogness, historic sites manager for the SHSND. "It's a great chance for kids and families to get an idea of what life was like at the fort, what life was like in times before us. And it's fun."

The site's permanent exhibit, *Beyond the Boundaries: The History of Fort Abercrombie*, tells the history of this historic landmark, including the site's important role in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, when the area was besieged by Dakota warriors for almost six weeks.

Rogness says the exhibit was developed in collaboration with Native Americans. "There is a great Native American component to it. It also talks about the oxcart on the Red River Trail. It talks about steamboating on the Red River. It talks about Fort Abercrombie, and what happened to it after it became a historic site."



The fort is located on the eastern edge of the town of Abercrombie, 35 miles south of Fargo. Museum hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, through September 15, and the site is open year-round. Visitors can explore

the historic grounds at no cost and admission to the site's museum is \$7 for adults, \$3 for ages six to 15, and free for youth five and under. For more information, call 701-553-8513 or visit www.history.nd.gov.

Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site

The Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile site is a monument to a more recent chapter in our nation's history. It stood as part of the strategy of nuclear deterrence during the half century of hostile relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, known as the Cold War.

The site was recipient of the 2010 Governor's Travel and Tourism award as the state's outstanding attraction of the year, and visitors will walk away from the facilities with a better understanding of how much destructive power stood at the ready, 24/7, hidden deep in the plains of

North Dakota. The site's permanent exhibit, *America's Ace in the Hole: North Dakota and the Cold War*, features historic photographs, archival images and an award-winning video at this can't-miss attraction.



Visitors can go 60 feet below ground and see the launch control center, says Mark Sundlov, site supervisor. "This is where two missile launch officers sat between 1966 and 1997, and monitored 10 nuclear missiles, and awaited a presidential order to launch those missiles."

The Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site is located near Cooperstown. The Oscar-Zero Launch Control Center is four miles north of Cooperstown on Highway 45, and the November-33 Missile Facility can be found two miles east of Cooperstown on Highway 200. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$3 for ages six to 15, and free for those five and under. Summer hours run 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

For more information, call 701-797-3691 or visit www.history.nd.gov.

The State Historical Society of North Dakota preserves and interprets treasures past and present, and works to share them with residents and visitors through a variety of services. For more information about the state's history agency and its programs, call 701-328-2666 or visit www.history.nd.gov.