Identify
Volunteer Gavin Muri helps sort Larson Village artifacts at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum.

Preserve
Jenny Yearous, Audience Engagement & Museum team, cleans the USS North Dakota punchbowl.

Interpret
Guest speaker D. Joyce Kitson tells a story at a Whitestone Hill State Historic Site event.

Promote
Director Claudia Berg presents the Excellence in Local History Award to Rosalie Etherington, superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital.
Connecting Communities

With 57 historic sites and the State Museum located throughout North Dakota, our relationships across geographic locations and cultures are critical to creating an impact. We’re here to help connect North Dakota communities with history, culture, and current happenings shaping our collective future.

To bring the best experience to a diverse audience of individuals and communities we serve, we have continued to enhance our services and sites.

Here are some highlights:

- The return of the Cultural Heritage Grant program in 2019 is providing a boost to county and local museums. One of our new grant categories invites teachers to undertake a Main Street project to yield long-term community benefits.
- Capital improvements at historic sites helped preserve those important places for the next generation, and we are thankful for the funding and support of our state legislators. These real places offer unique experiences for visitors, students, and lifelong curiosity seekers.
- Our staff helped individuals and community leaders gain new National Register listings. These represent a variety of historic locations and stories, all valuable places worthy of preservation.
- We simplified the donation process and are grateful to donors of artifacts to the state collections.
- Certain staff teams were realigned to better address current needs. Most staff also participated in newly offered professional development opportunities.

Claudia Berg
Director, 2014–2020

Bill Peterson
Director as of July 2020

After 38 years at the State Historical Society as a champion of community partnerships, Director Claudia Berg announced her retirement, and the State Historical Board began the process in October to seek a new director to head the agency. Berg stated, “A sincere thank you to agency staff, Historical Board members, Foundation staff and board members, volunteers, Friends Groups, donors, partners, preservationists, and heritage, cultural and historical organizations for the opportunity to work alongside you in creating a better place for generations to come.”

We are profoundly grateful for the ongoing support of the citizens of North Dakota and look forward to continuing to build community partnerships.
2019 at a glance

- **65,000** SQ. FT. OF EXHIBITS
  - ND HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM AND 10 STATE HISTORIC SITES

- **381,650+** VISITORS ANNUALLY TO STATE MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES

- **8** CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- **57 STATE MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES**
  - 49 HISTORIC BUILDINGS
  - 5 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS
  - 18 SERVICE BUILDINGS
  - 19 CCC MARKERS/KIOSKS
  - ON A TOTAL OF 1,176 ACRES
  - THAT’S A LOT OF GRASS TO MOW!

- **269,557** AGENCY WEBSITE USERS

- **236,755** ND STUDIES WEBSITE USERS

- **8** FRIENDS GROUPS SUPPORTING HISTORIC SITES

- **10** FRIENDS GROUPS

- **115,000** BOOKS & OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- **15,000** MAPS

- **2.1 MILLION** PHOTOGRAPHS

- **1,474** NEWSPAPER TITLES

- **3,000** ORAL HISTORIES

- **2,698** MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

- **125,000†** PALEO SPECIMENS
  - MINERAL RESOURCES, ND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- **1,705** LOCAL ARCHIVAL RECORDS SERIES

- **2,357** STATE ARCHIVAL RECORDS SERIES

- **2,223** FEET OF SHELF SPACE OF MOVING IMAGE FILM

- **80,000** MUSEUM ARTIFACTS

- **12 MILLION†** ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS

- **9%** OF ND ACRES SURVEYED FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

- **18,000** CULTURAL RESOURCE REPORTS & SITE FORMS USED BY **880†** SPECIALISTS

- **11,000** ANNUAL CULTURAL RESOURCE REVIEWS OF FEDERAL AND STATE UNDERTAKINGS

- **75** EMPLOYEES
  - 75 FULL TIME
  - 100+ PART TIME & SEASONAL

- **200** VOLUNTEERS

- **3,000** FEET OF SHELF SPACE OF MOVING IMAGE FILM

- **12,900+** HOURS ANNUALLY

- **21,860** CITIZENS ATTENDED OUR PROGRAMS & EVENTS

- **269,557** AGENCY WEBSITE USERS

- **236,755** ND STUDIES WEBSITE USERS

Look what you can explore in State Collections!

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We’re part of the national Blue Star Museum program. We welcomed 556 veterans, military personnel, and their families to state historic sites. We are grateful for those who serve, including members of our staff and State Historical Board.

Creating Inspiring Education Opportunities

About 11,150 North Dakota students experienced hands-on educational opportunities and tours at the State Museum and state historic sites. Camp Hancock staff offered opportunities to discover, interpret, and have fun learning about Bismarck’s earliest history.

Our staff hosted more than 200 programs and special events across North Dakota attended by nearly 22,000 citizens. There was something for everyone, from concerts to “how-to” sessions on book repair to a Ranger Swap of staff between the Chateau de Morés State Historic Site near Medora and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Some even danced a polka to accordion favorites at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site near Strasburg!

Did you know?

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2019 Historical Society staff: Adam Davis, security officer, NDNG
Paul Grahl, maintenance & construction supervisor, US Marine Corps
Lorna Meidinger, architectural historian, NDNG, active

Kyle Nelson, Fort Totten site supervisor, US Army, NDNG
David Schlecht, electronic technician, US Marine Corps
Brett Schroeder, security officer, NDNG

Teachers, students, and lifelong learners can access free resources and curriculum about our state at ndstudies.gov. In 2019, we added a unit called “Citizenship of North Dakota” for fourth graders. We also added content for eighth graders about woman suffrage to mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. As a program partnership, the North Dakota Woman Suffrage Centennial Committee hosted “Celebrating 100 Years of Votes for Women” for adults and children at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum on Dec. 1.
We’re forging deeper bonds with communities close to our state historic sites. At Fort Totten State Historic Site, our staff created an ice-skating rink for the community to enjoy. The staff also donated 517 pounds of food to the local Hope Center to help feed the hungry. Our Friends Group also runs the historic Totten Trail Inn, allowing travelers to stay in an original building of the fort.

With assistance from our Archaeology & Historic Preservation team, five North Dakota properties were added to the National Register of Historic Places: De Morés Memorial Park in Medora; Fort Buford Stage Road near Washburn; Wabek Consolidated School near Plaza; Icelandic Evangelical Lutheran Church, also known as the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of St. John, in Pembina; and Forest River State Bank on Front Street in Forest River.
North Dakota artifacts are going places! Our Audience Engagement & Museum staff took a road trip to the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, to hand-deliver a loan of Sitting Bull’s buffalo robe from our collection. The art gallery is exhibiting it for international travelers to view. Thirty-two museum artifacts were loaned to cultural centers and museums for public viewing in 2019.

Eight honorees were inducted into the Native American Hall of Honor at the State Museum in Bismarck as part of an annual partnership program of the State Historical Society and the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission. This annual program recognizes contributions of both living and deceased Native Americans from tribes across the state.

Twenty-two organizations were provided with $400,000 of Cultural Heritage Grants by the State Historical Society for 2019–2021, thanks to funding and support from the state legislature. Eligible projects included capital improvements, exhibits, special projects or events, education, and collections. “These grants provide a rare funding source and important sparkplugs that energize our communities to preserve, document, and present North Dakota’s heritage in their communities,” said Claudia Berg, director.

Our Audience Engagement & Museum team created new exhibits for public enjoyment including The Prairie Post Office, working with authors K. Amy Phillips and Steven R. Bolduc, and Woman Suffrage in North Dakota at the State Museum in Bismarck with assistance from the North Dakota Woman Suffrage Centennial Committee. We also partnered with Gateway to Science Learning Center to bring in Nano, an interactive exhibit engaging audiences in nanoscale science, engineering, and technology.

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Optimizing Our Assets

We completed numerous capital improvement projects at state historic sites to help preserve them for generations to come. One project involved installing new cedar shingles on the Former Governors’ Mansion in Bismarck, partly with the help of a $15,000 grant from the Northern Plains Heritage Foundation received by the Society for the Preservation of the Former Governors’ Mansion. In addition, a beautiful reproduction six-foot lighting rod was created and donated by Tom DaSilva of Bismarck.

How many museum staff does it take to change a lightbulb? Using a lift, two Audience Engagement & Museum staffers, Bryan Turnbow (pictured) and Andrew Kerr, changed more than 500 bulbs to LEDs at the State Museum in 2019. Additional bulbs have been swapped for LEDs at several state historic sites for long-term cost savings.

The Archaeology & Historic Preservation staff acquired 55 collections comprised of thousands of artifacts. More than half of those objects came to us from the US Forest Service. Six collections came from South Dakota Archaeological Research Center, and three were provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers-Omaha.

The State Archives is the official keeper of state government records and also collects materials from private donors. In 2019, staff took in 2,525 photographs, over 400 feet of paper records, and 14 GB of electronic records from government agencies and private entities. These are permanently preserved for present and future generations to access.
Seventy donations to the museum collection came mostly from private citizens. Many thanks to those who have donated these treasured items.

We are grateful for the donation of a horse stick created by North Dakota artist Butch Thunderhawk.

Our wonderful volunteers provided 12,991 hours of service to the agency in 2019. We appreciate the dedication of our volunteers and Friends Groups.

First 100 Hours of Service awardees with Lieut. Gov. Brent Sanford and Visitor Services Coordinator Beth Campbell. Volunteers from left: Arlene Olson, LaRayne Martel, Kathy Wilner, and Beverly Keesey
Embracing Technology

Did you know we use drones in our work? Staff use drones at state historic sites to film and photograph archaeological sites and historic buildings to document conditions, and for maintenance and publicity uses. Tim Reed, research archaeologist with our Archaeology & Historic Preservation Division, is a certified drone pilot!

The Chateau de Morés and Fort Totten hosted our first virtual testing of an Ask-An-Expert program with 39 Strasburg students who asked questions to our on-site experts. Watch for more enhancements and testing in classrooms as we broaden our real-time education reach and share our state’s history.

We’re connecting with 27,000 social media followers with new content every day. You can also access the latest information through our agency e-newsletter, education e-newsletter, and staff blogs.

Follow Us!

Thank you to our North Dakota Studies website viewers. You participated in over 1.27 million pageviews. Our additional agency websites had over 875,000 pageviews.

Did you know?

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Our online audience has a new opportunity to explore constellations, Mars, and other night sky activities through North Dakota Night Sky, our first digital exhibit of its kind created by our staff. View the 360° video on your phone, computer, or VR headset at ndstudies.gov/nightsky. Learn about North Dakota’s contributions to engineering, technology, and exploration related to Mars.
Foundation Year In Review

Celebration of Life for Virginia A. Nelsen: A host of people from across the United States gathered at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum to celebrate and honor the life of Virginia Nelsen. Virginia served as executive director of the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation for 17 years. Many memories were shared with laughter, tears and appreciation for Virginia’s strength and the great love she demonstrated to many people. Lecture Room B at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum is named in her honor.

Foundation Family Heritage Memorial Program and Direct Mail Efforts: The Foundation continues to receive hundreds of obituaries from our funeral home partners across the state. Our faithful volunteer team does a fantastic job of editing and printing the final copies of the histories and sending them to family members. The team completed and uploaded 771 new memorials in the Family History kiosk. We continue to get positive feedback from family members and friends about the program. The direct mail team sent 113,616 pieces of mail this year. The Foundation depends greatly on the generous gifts from our donors and visitors from across North Dakota and many other states.

Foundation Receives a Gift from a Trustee/Donor Estate: The Foundation is intentional about developing and maintaining relationships with our donors at all levels. The Trustee program was started by individuals who had the spirit of an entrepreneur. Ruth Dahlgren Hartman was one of those who had an early investment in the State Historical Society of North Dakota and its Foundation. Ruth had many years of generous giving as a History’s Trustee and as an Expansion Donor. At the end of her life, Ruth chose to leave a gift to the Foundation. We appreciate her legacy investment and feel honored to have known Ruth.

Dollars Given to ND Heritage Center and Historic Sites Projects: The Foundation receives donations specifically designated for projects at the ND Heritage Center and historic sites. These are just a few examples of the projects we supported this year: Bond repayment at Chateau De Morés; sidewalks at Pembina State Museum; a new roof at the Former Governors’ Mansion; Native American Hall of Honor at the State Museum; Society staff development grants; benches at the Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center and the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile Site.

Grateful for Lantermans’ Support: The Foundation is saddened by the passing of our friend and donor Kirk Lanterman on Nov. 1, 2019. Kirk and Janet Lanterman donated $500,000 to the Newcomers and Settlement exhibit located in the Inspiration Gallery: Yesterday and Today at the State Museum. Kirk was an avidly proud North Dakotan; he loved and lived the values of the state where he grew up. North Dakota will miss Kirk. Thank you, Kirk and Janet, for your great generosity.
Participants enjoyed creating their own artwork during several Canvas & Cocktails events at the State Museum during our The Horse in North Dakota exhibit.

Plains Talk is published by the State Historical Society of North Dakota as a benefit to members of the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation.

ND Heritage Center & State Museum
612 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58505
701.328.2666