VISION  Inspire discovery and open minds to help shape the future of vibrant communities.

MISSION  Identify, preserve, interpret, and promote the heritage of North Dakota and its people.

CORE PURPOSE  Respect the past, serve the present, inspire the future.

Greetings History Enthusiasts,

At the State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2021 was a year of learning. In my first full year serving the people of North Dakota as agency director, I felt as if I had the most to learn. I learned more about the importance of our state historic sites as both vital centers of education and tourism drivers for their communities. I learned about the state Legislature and my role representing the agency to our lawmakers. I learned about the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and considerable knowledge to our cause. I met many of our Foundation members in North Dakota whose support is critical to the State Historical Society.

The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic provided insight and in many ways was a year of significant impact. All of us learned a great deal about digital engagement. Despite the limitations posed by COVID-19, we learned that our commitment to and relationships with communities could thrive digitally. As life got back to normal in the second half of 2021, some familiar patterns reemerged. Visitation at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum began the long climb toward pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile, our state historic sites thrived with 2021 visitation more than double 2019 levels. Event rentals started to resemble pre-COVID levels.

We produced enriching learning opportunities for the public and took on new endeavors. Our team opened major exhibitions on Sitting Bull, regional fashion, and ceramics. We partnered with the state Parks and Recreation Department to launch the North Dakota Passport guidebook. We expanded our education curriculums. We added the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center and Fort Mandan in Washburn to our inventory of state historic sites.

Throughout the year, I continued to learn about our amazing employees whose dedication and passion inspire me each day. The incredible people who work with our agency across North Dakota are fully committed to our history and using this history to make a difference in the world.

Altogether 2021 was a remarkable year for the State Historical Society, and I am grateful to have been a part of it.

Bill Peterson
Director, State Historical Society of North Dakota
Creating Inspiring Education Opportunities

Our Audience Engagement & Museum team launched a number of exhibits in 2021 sure to delight, inform, and inspire visitors of all ages.

SEE HOW ELEGANCE AND SENSIBILITY HAVE CO-EXISTED AND EVOLVED in our region’s sartorial choices at Fashion & Function: North Dakota Style, the largest exhibition to date of the State Museum’s clothing collection. Native American-designed attire, entertainer Lawrence Welk’s suit, wedding dresses from across the decades, and even a hockey jersey worn by Grand Forks native Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson during the 2009 International Ice Hockey Federation World Women’s Championship game in Finland are among the items on view.

FROM TRAINING PANTS AND VIDEO GAME CONSOLES to vintage car seats and pedal pushers, take a walk down memory lanes past and present at Recent Donations, which showcases an eclectic mix of artifacts new to the State Museum. On view in the Corridor of History through November 2022.

EXPLORE THE MAN AND THE MEMORIES in Sitting Bull, an exhibit at the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center near Williston featuring artifacts related to the famous Hunkpapa Lakota leader’s legacy, including his association with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show. Through May 2026.

Look What You Can Explore in State Collections!

119,620 books & other publications
2.1 million photographs
1,581 newspaper titles
4,500 oral histories
3,350 manuscript collections
1,750 local government record series
2,314 state government record series
2,350 feet of shelf space of moving image collections
80,000+ museum artifacts
12 million+ archaeological artifacts
9% of N.D. acres surveyed for cultural resources
19,500 cultural resource reports & 71,000 site forms used by 590 specialists

2021 AT A GLANCE

80,000 square feet of exhibits
513,153 visitors annually
46,000 agency social media followers
626,088 users of agency websites
4,500 oral histories
3,350 manuscript collections
1,581 newspaper titles
2.1 million photographs
1,750 local government record series
2,314 state government record series
1,581 newspaper titles
200 volunteers
10,000 volunteer hours
2 new national register listings

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Acclaimed artist and author S.D. Nelson donated 135 significant objects and book illustrations from his lengthy career. His contemporary works mostly feature his artistic interpretation of Native American stories and traditions. Nelson’s work is currently on view at the State Museum in All Is Grass and Clouds, Forever: The Art of S.D. Nelson.

IN 2021, GOV. DOUG BURGUM SIGNED INTO LAW LANDMARK LEGISLATION (S.B. 2304) requiring all schools to teach Native history. We’re excited this curriculum will be housed on our North Dakota Studies “Native Americans in North Dakota” portal, which already offers extensive resources on the region’s Indigenous peoples. Content focusing on tribal history, sovereignty, culture, and treaty rights will be updated as new lesson plans become available for students.

AFTER A NEARLY TWO-YEAR ABSENCE, DAKOTA THE DINOMUMMY, the state’s most famous mummified fossil, returned to view in an updated exhibit with interactive experiences like a touchable 3D model of its skin. In addition to new research findings on the hadrosaur, first discovered on a ranch near Marmarth in 1999, the exhibit includes Dakota’s tail, an arm, and a foot, and is accompanied by a life-size mural of the 23-foot-long dino. To celebrate, we hosted Dakota the Dinomummy Day in October, featuring family activities, talks, and the launch of “Prehistories: Dakota the Dinomummy,” a new children’s book by North Dakota Geological Survey Paleontologist Becky Barnes.

Did you know? Exhibits such as the Dinomummy are made possible due to a partnership between the State Historical Society and the Geological Survey. Since 1991, the state’s paleontology lab and fossil collection has been housed at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck. In addition to the three paleontologists who work on-site, over 1,000 specimens are on display throughout our museum galleries.

THE AGENCY TEAMED UP WITH THE NORTH DAKOTA PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT to produce a new guidebook to state historic sites and parks. Visitors to the 37 featured destinations can collect a unique stamp or transfer a stamp to their North Dakota Passport. Purchase passports online or at any of our Museum Stores for $9.95.

Although grooved mauls are common to the region, this artifact’s parallel fluted grooves (more commonly seen on grooved axes) make it a unique addition to our archaeological collections. It was found in Stutsman County just south of Plow Lake and donated by Gary Andres. The sledgehammers of prehistoric times, grooved mauls were used for food preparation tasks such as breaking bison bones to extract marrow and pounding dried meats and chokecherries.

Education consultant Clayton Small facilitates a discussion on Native American curriculum development at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in May.
Establishing Deeper Connections With Core Constituencies

A ONCE UNASSUMING TUNNEL connecting the eastern edge of the North Dakota State Capitol Complex with Myron Atkinson Park was reimagined as the vibrant Heritage Art Tunnel. The tunnel's agriculture and energy-themed murals, designed by Bismarck artist Melissa Gordon, draw inspiration from State Museum exhibits and North Dakota Studies curriculum. A project of the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber EDC's Leadership Program, the art tunnel initiative was carried out in partnership with Dakota West Arts Council, the State Historical Society, and the North Dakota Council on the Arts.

WORKING IN TANDEM WITH METCALF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS, the State Historic Preservation Office wrapped up a yearlong survey project for the Highland Acres neighborhood in Bismarck. Highland Acres, a post-World War II development designed to address the housing shortages of the era, is home to more than 350 properties the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission has nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. Two areas in Bismarck have achieved this designation: the Downtown Bismarck Historic District and the Cathedral Area Historic District.

Fans of Strasburg's most famous son can take a sentimental journey through the pages of The Lawrence Welk Show Musical Family News in the Archives’ Orin G. Libby Memorial Reading Room. OCLC 36440584

Thanks to a generous donation of memorabilia by Sister Luke Hoschette of St. Cloud, Minnesota, the State Archives is now home to a nearly complete set of The Lawrence Welk Show Musical Family News. The fan newsletter, published from summer 1992 until December 2010 by the Oklahoma Network, offered tidbits on former Welk show stars and info on upcoming TV tribute shows and live performances (hello, Lennon Sisters!).

DONATION DEEP DIVES

We were grateful to receive two Mandan language books from State Historical Board member Amy Mossett. A joint initiative of the Nu'eta Language Initiative in Twin Buttes and the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University, the limited circulation books provide an accessible introduction to Mandan. Basic Mandan and Mandan Phrase Book are on view until September 2022 in the Native American Hall of Honor exhibit at the State Museum in the case highlighting educator Lydia Sage-Chase, who was known for her work preserving and promoting the Mandan language.

In 2021, we added the Nickel Trophy to our museum collection, after obtaining the required higher education signatures. Until its retirement in 2003, the trophy was awarded to the winner of the regular season football game between the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University. The subject of numerous high-profile “kidnapping” attempts over the years by students from the rival schools, the trophy, which since 2018 has resided at the ND Heritage Center, is now on exhibit in Fashion & Function: North Dakota Style.

This ancient and rare Native copper point from the Archaic period (5500 B.C. to 400 B.C.) was one of many projectile points from southeastern North Dakota collected by Fred Maercklein in the early part of the 20th century. The collection, donated by Mark Maercklein, will be used by the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Department for educational and reference purposes.

Ellendale Public School students learn about the region’s 19th-century fur trade business during a “Red River Rendezvous” outreach program in October. The new role-playing game, developed by agency staff, allows participants to barter and trade for historically accurate goods.

HAVE A BURNING QUESTION ABOUT NORTH DAKOTA HISTORY OR YOUR FAMILY TREE? The friendly and knowledgeable staff at the State Archives is always ready to help. In 2021, we responded to 1,843 patron requests and welcomed 1,454 visitors to the reading room. We freshened up the space with new carpeting, chairs, and tables.
THE AGENCY’S PORTFOLIO OF STATE HISTORIC SITES AND MUSEUMS GREW TO 59 when the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center and Fort Mandan State Historic Site in Washburn were transferred to the agency from the ND Parks and Recreation Department in July 2021. Along with the management of the Interpretive Center, the agency assumed guardianship of an estimated 475 artworks, which include the center’s complete set of Swiss artist Karl Bodmer’s 81 aquatints mostly depicting the people and places of the upper Missouri River. The aquatints, exhibited on a rotating basis at the Interpretive Center, present a rare record of frontier Native life in the early 1830s.

AS CUSTODIANS OF OUR STATE’S HISTORICAL RESOURCES, the agency carried out 32 capital improvement projects across 16 state historic sites. Projects included repairs to the Civilian Conservation Corps-constructed fieldstone shelter at Fort Clark State Historic Site, as well as structural work on the girls dormitory and print and tailor shops at Fort Totten State Historic Site near the shores of Devils Lake in Fort Totten.

This 1930s-era shelter at Fort Clark State Historic Site received a new log-and-cedar roof.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE STAFF UPDATED THE STATE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, comprising both archaeological and historical components. Periodic updating of the plan is a federal requirement for North Dakota’s participation in the National Historic Preservation program. Annually, the National Historic Preservation program, sponsored by the National Park Service, brings about $750,000 to the state to underwrite historic property surveys, National Register of Historic Places nominations, building restorations, site protection, certified local government activities, technical assistance to the public, and other initiatives.

A PAINTING OF BISMARCK FOUNDING MOTHER LINDA SLAUGHTER returned to the State Museum collection after a two-year conservation project in Minneapolis, which saw the 1881 portrait cleaned, old varnish replaced, and several tears repaired. Thanks to superb work by the Midwest Art Conservation Center, the painting of the pioneering educator, author, and activist will delight audiences for years to come.

A conservative puts the finishing touches on the Linda Slaughter portrait. Courtesy MACC

IT WAS A BANNER YEAR FOR VISITATION AT MANY OF OUR STATE HISTORIC SITES, with staff seeing attendance more than double over 2019 pre-pandemic numbers. Sites witnessing the highest growth in visitation during the past year were Fort Clark (81%), Camp Hancock (76%), and Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site (61%).

A new upstairs exhibit recreating the former U.S. Weather Bureau Station offices at Camp Hancock is among the site’s many attractions.

North Dakota State University students from Prof. Tom Isen’s public history class take part in a service-learning expedition to repaint part of the barn at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site in October. A cutout of the famed bandleader and musician directs from the back row.
LET’S HEAR IT FOR TEAMWORK! As part of an ND Department of Commerce initiative, the Interpretive Center at the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site unveiled an exciting new visitor services area. The site was the first in North Dakota to receive the materials and state branding, which involved improvements to the front desk, a new brochure space and wall mural of the Chateau, as well as a selfie station to help commemorate visitors’ western Dakota adventures.

Entries in the 1918 New England Directory published by the North Dakota Independent Telephone Co. OCLC 1280313241

Embracing Technology

IN CONJUNCTION WITH BISMARCK-BASED FRONTIER PRECISION, State Historical Society archaeologists Timothy Reed and Andrew Clark continued their documentation of the 19th-century steamboat Abner O’Neal. They used a submersible remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to collect underwater footage of the Missouri River wreck site. Ongoing analysis of collected imagery, including from a previous mission to survey the site via drone, allows the Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department to assess the site’s condition and state of preservation. The ill-fated steamboat sank in July 1892 after hitting a snag in the Painted Woods Creek area while ferrying wheat from Washburn to Mandan.
**DONATION DEEP DIVES**

Statewide health care facilities graciously donated materials related to COVID-19, including test kits and vaccine boxes, to help us save the material culture of the pandemic.

**THINK ARCHAEOLOGISTS ONLY WORK WITH SHOVELS?** Think again. Staff in the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Department began creating 3D models of artifacts such as chipped stone tools, pottery sherds, ground stone tools, shell artifacts, and stone effigies after purchasing a sophisticated Artec Spider 3D Scanner. The models will be available on the State Historical Society website in the future to increase the public’s access to the collections as well as preserve digital copies of rare, fragile, and valuable artifacts.

**ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE STATE LEGISLATURE IN 2021** enabled the agency to carry out upgrades to Preservica, the State Archives’ digital preservation system and repository. The funding allowed us to migrate digital archives to a more stable vendor-managed cloud environment.

**STATE ARCHIVES STAFF SCANNED MORE THAN 1,500 MAPS** to ensure their accessibility for future generations, including hundreds of maps of small North Dakota towns produced by the Fire Underwriters Inspection Bureau in the early to mid-20th century. These maps are notable for their color-coded buildings indicating type of construction materials used and also feature helpful information on firefighting resources in these communities.

**NATIVE AMERICAN HALL OF HONOR PROGRAM RETURNS:** After a hiatus the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Native American Hall of Honor program and exhibit returned to the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in September 2021. A partnership of the Foundation, the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, and the State Historical Society, the initiative recognizes Native Americans who have gone above and beyond in representing their tribes and cultures. Individuals honored in the Military/Veteran, Leadership, and Legend categories include, respectively, Vietnam veteran Dave Dauphinais (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), Lydia Sage-Chase (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation), and Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe). Emceed by former Executive Director of the Indian Affairs Commission Scott Davis, the ceremony also featured remarks from Gov. Doug Burgum, Sen. Kevin Cramer, tribal leaders, honorees, family members, and friends. A corresponding exhibit in the State Museum was produced by Audience Engagement & Museum Department staff.

**SHSND MUSEUM COLLECTION**

Yesterday’s news is now part of the historical record thanks to a donation by the Forum Communications Co. to the State Archives of more than 2,000 tapes of WDAZ-TV coverage of northeastern North Dakota and northwest Minnesota. The news and sports reporting, spanning 1978 to 2012, includes coverage of the 1997 Red River flood and the Dru Sjodin murder trial.

**FOLLOWERS FIRST LADY GRACE LINK CELEBRATES 103RD BIRTHDAY AT THE STATE MUSEUM:** The Foundation along with the State Historical Society was pleased to host a reception at the ND Heritage Center in honor of former North Dakota first lady Grace Link’s 103rd birthday on Sept. 13, 2021. During the event, Link, who attended with her four sons, their spouses, and other family members, presented her silk satin wedding dress to the agency. She also took part in an oral history interview about the dress and significant moments from her 1939 wedding to future Gov. Art Link. The dress is currently in the Fashion & Function exhibition at the State Museum.

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**BASIL MEMBERS:** Dalles Schneider retired from the Foundation board after 17 years of service. During his tenure, Schneider played a significant role in developing the trustee program and helped garner funds from the North Dakota Grocers Association for the Phase II expansion of the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. We will miss his leadership, wisdom, and friendship.

On Thanksgiving Day, our friend and board member Dennis Johnson of Watford City passed away. Johnson served on the Foundation board for nine years. His love of history and professional expertise were greatly appreciated. He will be missed.
It’s almost the weekend!

Don’t forget the North Dakota Passport, your all-in-one guide to making this summer the most memorable yet for you and your family!

Packed with insider fun facts and must-see activities, the North Dakota Passport takes you on adventures as you collect stamps at 37 featured destinations. The book comes with crayons and a drawstring backpack. Purchase online or at any State Historical Society Museum Store.

Are you ready for a North Dakota road trip?