



## Design Detectives: Investigating the Welk Homestead's Early Color Scheme

*Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna holds up a swatch book at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site. Rooms have been restored to a color palette reflecting the home's historical colors.*

Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna credits a few lines in a Works Progress Administration guidebook about North Dakota with piquing his interest in the interior color scheme of the buildings at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site. Noting that floors in German Russian homes such as the Welks' were "invariably" painted orange, the book also mentioned the prevalence of "bright colors" and "wainscoting."

But at the 1899 Welk Homestead near Strasburg, where entertainer Lawrence Welk grew up, the rooms were white, the result of a 1990s restoration. "It would be very unlikely for a German Russian house to be white inside at that time," says Hanna.

When a capital improvement project last spring to repair the house's cracked plaster walls necessitated repainting, Hanna decided to investigate. Lead Historic Preservationist Lorna Meidinger and Hanna poured over photographs of the restoration looking for clues to the earliest color schemes. Armed with a swatch book, Hanna traveled to the homestead in July to collect samples and match colors.

In a handful of places, the original paint survived. Two circa 1890s doors from the mud brick house were found in the barn. Under layers of other paint, one door turned out to be barn red, the other a wood stain. Additionally, an area near the stairs leading down into the root cellar retained its initial blue paint. With those and other samples in hand, Hanna was able to determine colors closer to what the early Welks might have chosen. The rooms now feature Ukrainian blue walls and ceilings and barn red trim, colors popular in German Russian homes in the early 20th century.

Moving forward, Hanna intends to repaint the floors in a vivid red and yellow ochre design and restore wainscoting to some rooms.

Agency Hosts Mountain-Plains Museums Association Reception



The State Historical Society was thrilled to host the opening reception of the 2024 Mountain-Plains Museums Association conference “Trails to the Future: Change & Resilience” Oct. 6 at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck. During the three-day conference, about 180 participants heard from museum professionals on a range of topics from interpreting sites to collections management strategies to social media marketing. Sixteen agency staffers presented at the conference held at the Bismarck Event Center. While in the capital city, attendees had opportunities to visit state historic sites, learn about the rich history of the Missouri River, get a behind-the-scenes tour of the ND Heritage Center, sample regional cuisine, and even take in the local arts scene.

Conference attendees try their hand at Scandinavian folk art designs during the opening reception at the ND Heritage Center.

Initiative to Mark America’s 250th Birthday Moves Ahead

North Dakota’s replica Liberty Bell is now on exhibit at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum to kick off commemorations of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. This fulfills a directive of the state Legislature that the North Dakota 250 commission, chaired by agency Director Bill Peterson, identify prominent locations for the bell’s display. In 1950, the bell toured North Dakota on a Ford flatbed truck as part of a national effort to promote the sale of U.S. savings bonds.

An exhibition at the State Museum exploring the people, places, and forces that have shaped the region and state over the past 250 years will open in fall 2025 to mark the semiquincentennial.



North Dakota’s replica Liberty Bell makes a stop in downtown Rugby, June 21, 1950. See it today on exhibit at the State Museum. Strand Studio Photo Collection, NDSU Archives

History’s Helpers

Three individuals received Local History Awards at a Nov. 12 luncheon at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. The Excellence in Local History Award was given to Jon McMillan of Grand Forks and Allan Burke of Linton. McMillan, a member of the State Historical Society Foundation Board, is a former president of the North Dakota Archaeological Association. Burke, former co-owner of the *Emmons County Record*, is founder and curator of the Braddock News Letterpress Museum. The Heritage Profile Honor Award went to Curtis Eriksmoen of Bismarck, whose long-running “Did You Know That ... ?” history column in regional newspapers showcased a wide array of notable North Dakotans.



2024 Excellence in Local History Awardee Allan Burke feeds paper into an antique printing press at the Braddock News Letterpress Museum.

ND Military Gallery Design Plans Approved

The planned North Dakota Military Gallery addition to the ND Heritage Center & State Museum is moving ahead after architectural design development drawings for the project were approved by the Capitol Grounds Planning Commission. Construction is expected to begin in fall 2025 and be completed in fall 2027.

The roughly 67,000-square-foot addition will include a 20,000-square-foot military gallery, a North Dakota National Guard regimental room available to the public for rental events, and an expanded café area. As part of the project, a new outdoor courtyard and amphitheater space will be created. Located on the south side of the ND Heritage Center, the gallery, a joint project of the ND National Guard, the State Historical Society, and their respective foundations, will explore our military history from early Native American practices before statehood to today.

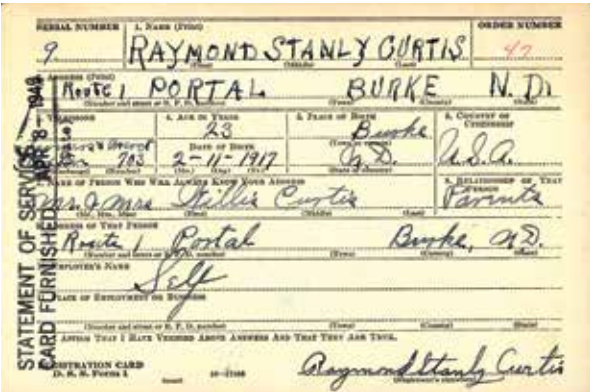


This rendering by Zerr Berg Architects and BWBR shows the new main entrance to the ND Heritage Center once the military gallery addition is complete.

To donate, visit [ndngfoundation.org/donate/donationform/](https://ndngfoundation.org/donate/donationform/) and select “Support the Military Gallery Project” in the “Where would you like your donation to go?” field.

Capturing Military Memories

In August, State Archives team members Sarah Walker and Lindsay Meidinger conducted an oral history with one of North Dakota’s oldest living veterans, Raymond Curtis, 107, of Minot. Curtis enlisted in the U.S. Army in January 1941 and was trained in communications, serving across the United States and in Germany, where he saw action in battle and guarded POWs. After the conclusion of World War II, he returned to the family farm near Columbus, North Dakota. To learn more about Curtis’ experiences in war and peace, contact [archives@nd.gov](mailto:archives@nd.gov) or visit the State Archives Reading Room.



107-year-old veteran Raymond Curtis recounted memories of World War II, including his enlistment and hearing news of Pearl Harbor, in a recent interview with State Archives staff. At right, his draft registration card. Courtesy Raymond Curtis



Former Minuteman crew members reminisce about their time at the underground Oscar-Zero Launch Control Center during a reunion of Grand Forks Air Force Base’s 321st Missile Wing on June 7. More than 60 people attended the event at Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site outside Cooperstown, with another reunion planned there next year. This vital site preserves the legacy of Cold War missile facilities in North Dakota.

# National History Day in North Dakota Outreach Nets New Participants



National History Day in North Dakota students, teachers, and chaperones at the national contest welcome ceremony in College Park, Maryland, June 2024.

An agreement with Fargo Public Schools ensures that all 10th grade social studies classes in the district will participate in the 2024-25 National History Day in North Dakota program. Students will draw on critical reading and research skills to complete a project related to this year’s theme of “Rights & Responsibilities in History.” Five additional schools—Fargo South High School, Minot High School, Roosevelt Public School in Carson, Trenton School, and Dickinson High School—are also expected to participate, bringing the program’s reach to more than 1,000 students. Regional contests will be held in March 2025, with the state competition taking place in April.

In 2023-24, more than 180 North Dakota students took part in the program, with 22 advancing to the June national competition in the Washington, D.C., area to present their work.

While on the East Coast, they visited the U.S. Capitol and met with Rep. Kelly Armstrong. North Dakota’s junior outstanding affiliate entry was awarded to Victoria Britt of Jim Hill Middle School and Clara Zheng of Erik Ramstad Middle School in Minot for “Turning Point in Photographic Equipment.” North Dakota’s senior outstanding affiliate entry was awarded to Mya Glynn of Ellendale High School for “Hunger’s Turning Point: The Minnesota Starvation Experiment.” Outstanding affiliate entry distinctions are given to one junior and senior project from each state.

For more information on the 2025 competition, visit [nd.nhd.org](http://nd.nhd.org) or contact state coordinator Madison Milbrath, 701.328.2794/[mrmlbrath@nd.gov](mailto:mrmlbrath@nd.gov).

## ND Heritage Center Expansion Turns 10

The agency marked the 10th anniversary of the ND Heritage Center & State Museum expansion Nov. 2—North Dakota’s 135th birthday—with a full day of family-friendly activities and presentations ranging from Lawrence Welk selfies to pottery making to a book signing with celebrated photographer Shane Balkowitsch (yes, there was cake!). “We are grateful to have welcomed more than 2 million guests to our larger and enhanced facility since 2014,” notes State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson. “We serve as a connecting point to the state’s heritage, enriching the lives of all North Dakotans and guiding visitors to attractions across the state.”

Confetti descends on dignitaries at the 2014 opening of the expansion, which nearly doubled the size of the facility designed to help preserve and share the state’s history.



# Summer Teacher Workshops at State Historic Sites Address Impact of Boarding Schools, Trade



Teachers at the Fort Totten workshop look at a timeline showing the impact of government policies on Native Americans throughout U.S. history.

Sixty-five teachers from across North Dakota attended free workshops organized by the Audience Engagement & Museum Department education team over the summer. Participants have the option to receive graduate credit for the workshops.

In July, the agency hosted “History and Healing: From Assimilation to Reclamation at Fort Totten Boarding School” at Fort Totten State Historic Site. Featuring talks by tribal leaders and experts on topics ranging from the legacy of the Native American boarding school era at the site to the role of trauma in the classroom, the workshops were geared to helping familiarize educators with North Dakota Studies and with North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (NDNAEU), tools that can assist them meet state requirements to teach Native history. Participants also played traditional games and attended the Fort Totten Days Powwow.

Then in August, agency staff led “Trade and Transportation in North Dakota” at the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site in Medora. During the workshop, attendees learned about historic trade and transportation methods via lectures and hands-on activities. Teachers received lessons and content to help them teach the North Dakota Studies curriculum and were introduced to learning opportunities at state historic sites and museums.

## New Technology in State Archives Improves Efficiency

Thanks to a 5% matching grant from the North Dakota Newspaper Association Education Foundation and funding from the state Legislature, the State Archives has purchased an SMA 51 Archive Writer allowing digital newspapers to be quickly downloaded and printed onto microfilm and eliminating distorted images caused by human error. All 76 North Dakota newspapers preserved on microfilm by the agency will be processed using the new technology by the beginning of 2025.

Meanwhile, the SMA Scan Master, a new imaging system in the State Archives, speeds up the scanning of oversize items (up to 36 by 50 inches) such as maps and newspapers. Its adjustable platforms and overhead cameras also ensure the integrity of bound volumes by allowing images to be taken from above, while other features effortlessly crop and straighten scans.



Reformatting Technician Tam Leben uses the State Archives’ new Scan Master to digitize an issue of the Ransom County Gazette.

# New to the Collections

## Roll of Honor

Military service looms large in a trio of recent donations to the State Archives, notes Manuscript Archivist Emily Kubischta.

A scrapbook of illustrations by the late Linn Stuckenbruck, a B-17 navigator from Jamestown shot down in December 1943 over northern Holland who subsequently spent two years in a German POW camp, was donated by his sister-in-law Eve Hensler of West Fargo. The “pictorial history” of the war features vivid watercolor and pencil sketches of his capture and subsequent life in Stalag Luft 1 as well as personal observations chronicling the loneliness and deprivations of his wartime existence. Scanned pages of Stuckenbruck’s scrapbook are available online at SHSND Photobook.

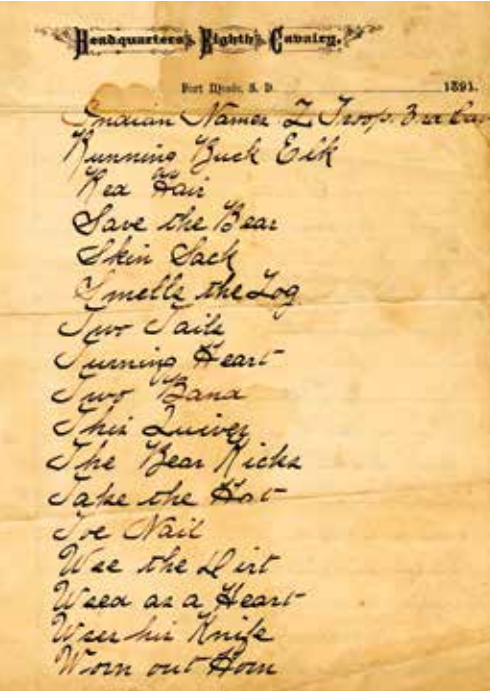
Eve Hensler said the release earlier this year of the Apple TV+ drama “Masters of the Air,” which follows the exploits of a similar group of B-17 crewmen stationed in the United Kingdom during WWII, sparked the donation of her brother-in-law’s scrapbook. Here, Linn Stuckenbruck (inset, circa 1945) depicts the isolation of his imprisonment in a German POW camp. SHSND SA 11658-00001-33, 11658-00002



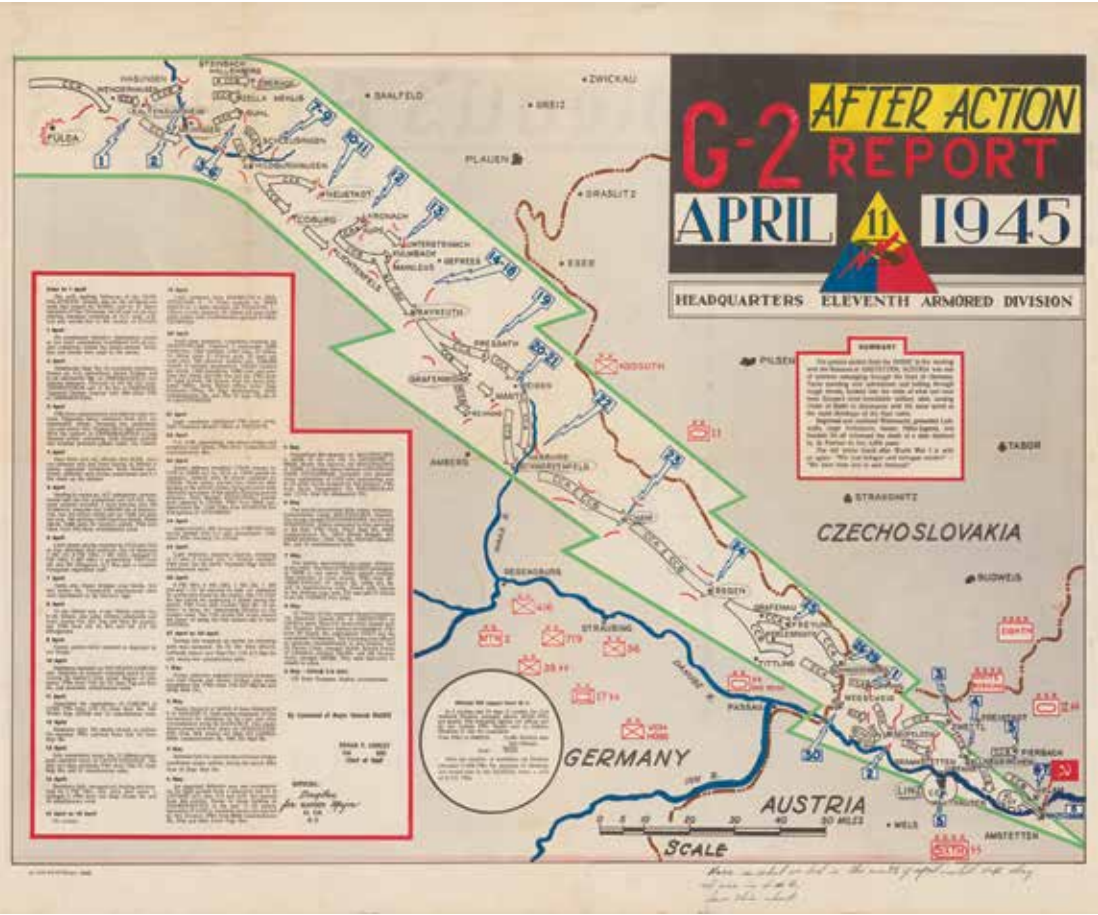
Finally, a logbook documenting the 8th Cavalry’s 1888 march from Eagle Pass, Texas, to Fort Buford in Dakota Territory was donated as part of the William Bihlmire Papers. Cpl. Bihlmire recorded his company’s day-to-day movements during what is believed to be the longest continuous cavalry march in U.S. history. According to the Texas State Historical Association, the roughly 2,400-mile march was undertaken as part of “an experiment to see if cavalry troops could be moved easily across the expanding western territories.”



Cpl. William Bihlmire, circled, Fort Meade, 1888. SHSND SA 11657-00011



Bihlmire’s logbook records every Native American guide who helped the 8th Cavalry on their march to Dakota Territory. SHSND SA 11657-00004



This map, showing the 11th Armored Division’s troop movements from April to May 1945, including their liberation of a Nazi concentration camp, was among Cpl. Frank Ellwein’s papers. At right, Ellwein on a Sherman tank, circa 1945. SHSND SA 11656-00169, 11656-00047

Photographs and other materials related to the late Frank Ellwein’s wartime experiences, donated by his daughters, detail his time fighting with the 11th Armored Division under Gen. George Patton, including action at the Battle of the Bulge and liberating the Nazi concentration camp at Mauthausen in Austria. The late Ellwein, born in Otter Creek, enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after graduating from Mandan High School and returned to the area soon after the war.



## Notable North Dakotans

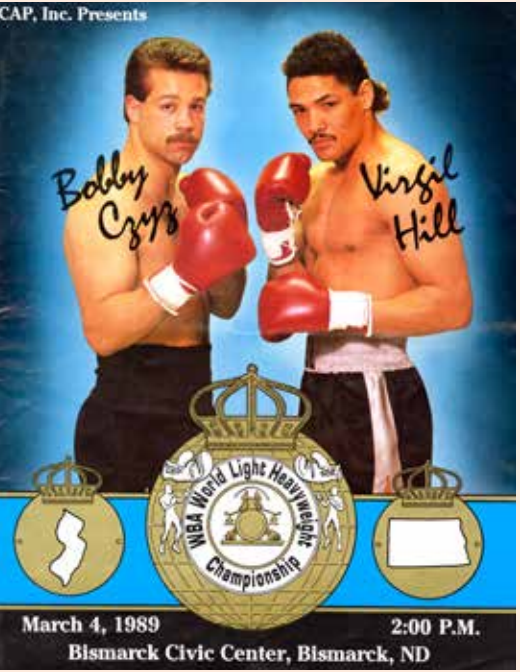
Items related to two recent recipients of the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award, given to North Dakotans who have achieved national recognition in their fields of endeavor, recently entered the collections.

A North Dakota state flag carried in space by NASA astronaut James Buchli and presented to Gov. Doug Burgum when Buchli was honored with the award this year, has been gifted to the

State Historical Society. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, Buchli, the first North Dakotan to fly in space, took part in four successful space shuttle missions. Meanwhile, Rita Nodland of Bismarck donated dozens of programs and tickets from boxer Virgil Hill’s fights to the State Archives. Hill, who was raised in Grand Forks and Williston, is a five-time world champion and Olympic silver medalist. He received the Rough Rider Award in 2023.



Gov. Doug Burgum, New Rockford native James Buchli, State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, and Secretary of State Michael Howe with the North Dakota flag Buchli took to space in 1985. At right, a program from boxer Virgil Hill’s March 4, 1989, WBA World Light Heavyweight Championship match versus Bobby Czyz at what was then known as the Bismarck Civic Center. Office of the Governor, SHSND SA 11615-00033



# Restoring a Community Treasure

Thanks in part to a federally funded \$24,600 historic preservation grant and a \$250,000 appropriation from the state Legislature (both administered by the State Historical Society), the Ellendale Opera House completed a major restoration of its west wall, sidewalk, and foundation.

In July, Grants & Contracts Officer Amy Munson, Lead Historic Preservationist Lorna Meidinger, and Architectural Project Manager Tom Linn traveled to Ellendale to ensure the project met historic preservation standards required for federal grants. O.P.E.R.A., Inc., the nonprofit that owns and operates the building, is raising money to restore the building’s Main Street storefronts.

Munson said initial work to repair the opera house’s west wall and sidewalk had revealed significant additional structural issues requiring the installation of shoring while portions of the foundation on the building’s west side were rebuilt.

The opera house, which celebrated its 115th birthday earlier this fall, long served as a centerpiece of the community, occupying a substantial portion of a city block in downtown Ellendale. Constructed largely in the Chicago School style, the three-story brick opera house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. O.P.E.R.A. aims to restore the building to its original community use.



The Ellendale Opera House, the focus of an ongoing restoration project, once hosted Shakespeare plays, boxing matches, and fireman’s balls in its upstairs 700-seat auditorium.



Ellendale Opera House, early 20th century. SHSND SA 11339-00018

# Historic District Listed in National Register Expands



Most of the homes in the Torrance Addition were built in the late 1950s. Photo by Jim Fuglie

Bismarck’s Highland Acres Historic District has been expanded to include the 20 residences in the Torrance Addition along Arthur Drive. The district, first listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2022, is significant at the local level both for its role in community development and planning and for being an enclave of mid-century and contemporary residential buildings where several architects, prominent builders, and a variety of individuals chose to build their homes. Constructed between 1948 and the 1970s to meet the housing needs of returning World War II veterans and their families, the district is characterized by trapezoidal lots to accommodate hilly topography, long curvilinear streets, and spacious front yards.

The National Register is the federal government’s list of properties it considers worthy of preservation and recognition. North Dakota nominations are coordinated by the State Historical Society.

# See North Dakota Folk Art at the Chateau

An updated version of *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains* is now on view at the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site’s Interpretive Center.

Based on the North Dakota Council on the Arts’ book of the same name, the exhibit features 21 folk art objects, ranging from Czech Easter eggs to an Armenian brass repoussé Bible cover to Ukrainian table decorations. The items are exhibited alongside framed text and image panels from the book.

*Sundogs and Sunflowers*, produced by the arts council, was earlier on view at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck and at the Pembina State Museum.



Gary Paulsen carved this traditional Norwegian ale bowl with horsehead handles from basswood. SHSND 2019.5.19

# German Russian Folk Art Exhibit Opens at the State Museum

Repurpose. Reuse. Recycle. German Russian immigrants to North Dakota were already applying today’s sustainability principles to crafting in the 1800s. These homesteaders decorated with handcrafted textiles, embroidery, woodcarving, and ironwork. A new exhibit at the ND Heritage Center, *The Art of Making Do: Folk Culture & Heritage of*

*Germans From Russia*, brings together past and current folk art and metalwork from Logan, McIntosh, and Emmons counties, as well as from the State Historical Society collections. The exhibit, a partnership with the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, runs from Nov. 13, 2024, to fall 2025.



The traditions, trades, and skills embodied by North Dakota’s German Russian immigrants take shape in this iron cross by artist Bradley Haas of Ashley. Iron crosses were a distinctive feature of the graves of early Germans from Russia on the northern Plains.

# Medora Portrait on View in *There’s a Story There*



*There’s a Story There: Art in the State Collections*, showcasing 19 North Dakota-related artworks spanning the 1830s to 2011, is on view at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck until May 24, 2025.

See a recently conserved portrait of Medora von Hoffman, the wealthy New York debutante who would go on to marry the Marquis de Morès, as well as works by prominent artists such as John James

Audubon, George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and John Singer Sargent. Subjects include notable figures from the region’s history, including pioneer Linda W. Slaughter, entrepreneur William George Fargo, and Mandan chief Mató-Tópe (Four Bears), as well as its landscapes, forts, and wildlife.

This is the first exhibit devoted to a sampling of fine arts within the State Museum’s valuable collections.

Charles François Jalabert’s 1874 portrait of Medora von Hoffman. SHSND 1972.1630

## Summer Learning at State Museums and Historic Sites



A girl brushes sand from a toy dinosaur fossil during the “Little Kids, Big World” Digging for Dinosaurs program in June. Children listened to a dinosaur dig story before going on their own “dig.”



Leland Vetter of Linton leads a ropemaking demonstration as part of “Agriculture Education Day” at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in August. The event, which featured hands-on activities and a visit from ND Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring, aimed to raise awareness of the many facets of the state’s leading industry.



Children learn about state symbols such as curling, the official sport of North Dakota, at a “Junior Historians” program in June. The new series, which launched over the summer, is intended for grades K-5. It takes place Wednesdays at 4 p.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m.



Kiara Weems of Minot works on her papermaking skills as part of a “Trailblazers Series” program in July at Fort Mandan State Historic Site. The 17-week series of programs and presentations concluded Sept. 25 and touched on subjects ranging from bird watching to pemmican making.

## Snapshots in Time

Over the summer, the State Historical Society helped North Dakota communities document contents found in time capsules. In June, agency staff assisted Burleigh County officials with the handling and transport of unearthed items from Driscoll Sibley Park, including a VHS tape, belt buckle, buttons, newspapers, and centennial books. The items, many of which had suffered water damage, were brought back to the ND Heritage Center in Bismarck where they were dried and photographed. Digitized images of some of the items will be made available online by Burleigh County. The following month as part of its 125th anniversary celebrations, Wilton opened a time capsule from 1977 buried during the dedication of its city hall flagpole. Among the finds were an unlabeled roll of undeveloped film containing pictures of that dedication and photographs of every Wilton home from that year. State Historical Society staff digitized the contents, which the city plans to display.



Assistant Curator of Collections Lori Nohner and Deputy State Archivist Lindsay Meidinger remove items from a time capsule in Driscoll Sibley Park. A newspaper article from the capsule revealed the contents were buried June 14, 1989. The capsule was exhumed on the 50th anniversary of the park’s dedication.

## Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site Escape Room Reopens to Public



Visit the Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site’s escape room and help find Limpy Jack.

Located in the courthouse basement, the escape room takes its inspiration from the colorful 19th-century gambler, drinker, stagecoach driver, attorney, and “Jack of all trades” known as Limpy Jack, who would often sleep off his binges in the Jamestown jail. In this scenario, Limpy Jack has gone missing. Sheriff Archibald McKechnie needs to find him fast before the winter elements get to Limpy Jack. The escape room, which reopened to the public over the summer, invites participants to complete a series of puzzles and challenges within 60 minutes leading them to a note with his location.

Reservations must be made 48 hours in advance. To book, visit [statemuseum.nd.gov/courthouse-escape-room](http://statemuseum.nd.gov/courthouse-escape-room). The one-hour experience, available Monday-Friday, costs \$25/person.

## Bringing Local History Online

Every time North Dakota State University Professor Tom Isern steps in the front door of the McIntosh County Heritage Center in Ashley, he marvels at a *Pelz* sheepskin coat, traditionally worn by men of German Russian heritage, on display in the foyer. While often overlooked, he says, such items are invested with tremendous cultural significance.

But when it comes to digitally documenting and cataloging collections for wider consumption, many local historical societies and museums are in need of a helping hand. Enter the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation, which is partnering with the McIntosh County center and others throughout the state to begin cataloging artifacts to upload into the Foundation's web-based collections management database tool, Re:discovery Software's Proficio. Meanwhile, agency staff is offering guidance on the types of cataloging information needed for items placed into this database.

With the assistance of Isern's history students at North Dakota State University, so far about 70% of the center's items (or 700-some artifacts) have been cataloged. Isern and his students have also made similar visits to the Enderlin Historical Society and Museum this fall, helping refine an existing catalog for upload into the database.

Likewise, students in Assistant Professor Zahra Moss' North Dakota history class at Dakota College at Bottineau expect to complete an artifact inventory of the Bottineau County Museum's schoolhouse collection by December. Other cultural institutions that have expressed interest in receiving assistance from the Foundation include the Hettinger County Historical Society Museum in Regent and Towner's McHenry County Historical Society Museum.



NDSU history students catalog military items at the McIntosh County Heritage Center. When the project is complete, the items will be available to view online.

## New Mission Statement Emphasizes Power of History to Change Lives

After a year-long collaborative process involving staff and agency leadership, the State Historical Society has a new mission: "Empower Through History."

Agency Director Bill Peterson says he hopes it "helps people realize how North Dakota's history shapes lives and influences

our future." The new mission statement was needed, he adds, to reflect how "history compels us to think differently all the time." It replaces "Identify, preserve, interpret, and promote the heritage of North Dakota and its people" and was approved by the State Historical Board in July as part of the agency's 2025-27 strategic plan.

## Remembering Whitestone Hill

More than 230 schoolchildren and visitors attended the agency's Whitestone Hill Education Day Sept. 18 to learn about the lives, cultures, and ecosystem of the area. The annual event, geared for grades 4-6, featured sessions on the history of Whitestone Hill State Historic Site, Dakota hand games, atlatl throwing, parfleche painting, prairie plants and animals, the fur trade, and how to shoot a bow and arrow and erect a tipi.

A place of remembrance for the 100 to 300 mostly Lakotas and Dakotas massacred there in 1863 by U.S. soldiers, Whitestone Hill State Historic Site near Kulm was a seasonal home for Indigenous peoples in the area. Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna says the education day was designed for people "to learn about not only the human tragedy that happened at Whitestone, but also the traditional lifeways of Dakota people."



Willowbank Colony School and Edgeley Public School students learn how to erect a tipi during Whitestone Hill Education Day.

## Calling All North Dakota Teens!

The State Historical Society is currently accepting submissions for the 2025 "Teen Takeover" contest. North Dakota teens ages 13 to 18 are invited to submit an original work interpreting the theme "What North Dakota Means to Me" by Dec. 1. Find contest details at [statemuseum.nd.gov/teen-takeover](http://statemuseum.nd.gov/teen-takeover).

Finalists Olivia Stramer of Bismarck, left, and Josephine Legge of Spiritwood at the opening reception for the 2024 "Teen Takeover" exhibit at the ND Heritage Center, March 2024.



About 90 Welk descendants visited the Welk Homestead State Historic Site during a June family reunion in Strasburg.

# Agency Staffer Receives Governor’s Travel and Tourism Award

Congratulations to the State Historical Society’s Rob Branting, who was awarded a Governor’s Travel and Tourism Award at the North Dakota Travel Industry Conference in April. Branting, site supervisor at the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site near Cooperstown, received the 2024 Heritage Award for a Front-line Tourism Employee. Passionate about Cold War history, Branting is known for his humorous and informative social media posts and commitment to making a complex subject engaging and interesting for visitors. Under his stewardship, site visitation has reached record numbers and continues to grow.



Gov. Doug Burgum with Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site Supervisor Rob Branting. Photo by Dennis Krull



Audience Engagement & Museum Department Director Kim Jondahl and State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson participate in an Aug. 14 Beam Signing Ceremony, joining supporters in adding their signatures to a commemorative beam to permanently hang over the “Man in the Arena” gallery of the future Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora.

# Rolf Sletten Appointed to State Historical Board

A warm welcome to Rolf Sletten of Bismarck who joined the State Historical Board in July.

Sletten, an author and historian whose books include “Medora: Boom, Bust, and Resurrection” and “Roosevelt’s Ranches: The Maltese Cross and the Elkhorn,” replaces Calvin Grinnell, a historian and member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, who had served on the board since 2008.

# Stay Connected at State Historic Sites

A major expansion of public Wi-Fi access across North Dakota’s state historic sites is nearly complete. During the current biennium, Wi-Fi has been added and/or expanded to the following sites: Fort Totten, 1883 Stutsman County Courthouse, the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile site, Pembina State Museum, Chateau de Morès, Camp Hancock, and Fort Abercrombie. Meanwhile, the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center and Fort Buford are expected to have Wi-Fi installed by the end of the year.



Education & Engagement Manager Laura Forde explains how to make Scandinavian nisser to young attendees of Minot’s Norsk Høstfest festival in September. According to Nordic folklore, the nisser are mythological creatures associated with the success and well-being of farms and households.



**Leaving a Legacy.** The State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation recently received a \$5,865,699 donation from the estate of Sebastian George Spangler. This generous gift, the largest in the Foundation’s history, will provide ongoing support for the Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site in Jamestown. The funds will be divided between an endowment for future courthouse support and a special project fund to address specific needs. Spangler, a respected farmer, cattle rancher, and antique business owner, was a lifelong member of the Jamestown community. His dedication to the town’s heritage will be honored through this significant contribution.

Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon and State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson accept a nearly \$5.9 million presentation check to support the Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site.

**Preserving Our Artistic Heritage.** Thanks to Sam McQuade Jr.’s generous gift of \$150,000, the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation has purchased 26 Karl Bodmer aquatints from Masters Gallery in Bismarck. The gift was made in memory of McQuade’s late wife, Maryvonne McQuade. The aquatints, produced in 1839 and based on works created during Bodmer’s 1832-34 expedition with Prince Maximilian to the upper Missouri River, have been gifted by the Foundation to the State Historical Society, ensuring both the preservation and accessibility of these culturally significant artworks.

**New Board Members.** The Foundation proudly welcomes two new board members: Nikki Berg Burin and Ben Murphy. Berg Burin, an assistant professor in the Department of History and American Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota who has been on the faculty since 2012, brings a wealth of knowledge in history and a strong commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of the region. Ben Murphy, a U.S. Navy veteran and successful entrepreneur in the ranching industry, adds a unique perspective with his leadership experience and dedication to North Dakota’s rural heritage.



David Borlaug and Marci Narum of Masters Gallery deliver the original Bodmer aquatints to agency staff. From left: Assistant Curator of Collections Lori Nohner, Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon, State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, Audience Engagement & Museum Department Director Kim Jondahl, Narum, Borlaug, and Head of Curatorial Services Melissa Thompson.



Nikki Berg Burin



Ben Murphy

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## SNOWMANY HOLIDAY GIFTS!

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ND Heritage Center  
& State Museum

Chateau de Morès  
Interpretive Center

Fort Abercrombie  
State Historic Site

Lewis & Clark  
Interpretive Center

Missouri-Yellowstone  
Confluence Interpretive Center

Pembina State Museum

Ronald Reagan Minuteman  
Missile State Historic Site

See [history.nd.gov/visit](http://history.nd.gov/visit) for current hours.



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