

# EMPOWER THROUGH HISTORY

Plains Talk  
Vol. 55 | No. 1

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



STATE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
OF NORTH DAKOTA



History's  
*Foundation*  
State Historical Society  
of North Dakota Foundation



Sixth Infantry reenactors fold the flag at the end of the season in September at Fort Buford State Historic Site.



Williston High School students Airabella Carter, Emalie Sorensen, and Isabel Gutierrez present their 2024 National History Day in North Dakota project at a March regional contest.



A young girl channels her inner Lawrence Welk during the 10th anniversary celebrations of the ND Heritage Center & State Museum expansion in November.

**EMPOWERED**  
Having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself  
*Merriam-Webster*



University of Mary students help inventory the State Museum's textile collection during the school's annual Day of Service in October.



State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, left, and Deputy State Archivist Lindsay Meidinger, far right, lend a hand during the July opening of a time capsule in Wilton.



A "Little Kids, Big World" participant holds up his rendition of the North Dakota flag in November.

## Empower Through History



**Hello Everyone,**  
In 2024, the State Historical Society of North Dakota changed our mission from "Identify, preserve, interpret, and promote the heritage of North Dakota and its people" to "Empower through history." Why did we do this? The prior mission was based on business practices. History as carried out by the agency aims to improve the world around us, and our mission should focus on that. Yes, we do identify, preserve, interpret, and promote North Dakota's history, but have you ever wondered why we do that?

North Dakotans understand how important it is to know family history. We pass down stories, photos, personal belongings, even farms and ranches from generation to generation. Many North Dakotans have traveled to their ancestral homelands to meet relatives and build more details into their own historical narratives. Understanding our past at a personal level strengthens us and, in turn, strengthens our connections to loved ones, neighbors, and our communities. When these individual histories are collected and shared by the State Historical Society, those bonds to one another and to North Dakota are further cemented.

Our work creates the North Dakota narrative and allows all North Dakotans to find their place in the state's story. The State Archives, the Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department, and the Audience Engagement & Museum Department collectively contain the "genetic code" of the immense North Dakota character. This character forms our personalities, viewpoints, work ethic, and temperaments. Whether we stay in the state for our entire lives or just a short time, we are forever molded by being North Dakotans. Together, we shape the world in immeasurable ways due to our individual and shared histories. In their myriad of professions and pursuits, North Dakotans have left an indelible mark on the world. That is the power of history. We simply changed our mission to recognize that power.

Kindest regards,  
*Bill Peterson*  
Bill Peterson  
Director, State Historical Society of North Dakota

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

**MISSION** Empower through history.

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

### 2024 North Dakota State Historical Board

- Matt Dunlevy, Grand Forks, President
- Amy Mossett, Halliday, Vice President
- Lacey Anderson, Bismarck, Secretary
- Rolf Sletten, Bismarck
- Richard Stenberg, Williston
- Alan Svanes, Kintyre
- H. Patrick Weir, Medora
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- Ron Henke, Director, Department of Transportation
- Michael Howe, Secretary of State
- Sara Otte Coleman, Director, Department of Commerce-Tourism Division
- Cody Schulz, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

### SHSND Foundation Board

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- Twyla Baker, New Town, Vice President
- Paul Olson, Fargo, Immediate Past President
- Jan Murtha, Dickinson, Treasurer
- Darrell Dorgan, Bismarck, Secretary
- Nikki Berg Burin, Grand Forks
- Jon Erickson, Minot
- Armen Hanson, Devils Lake
- Dennis Hill, Bismarck
- Nancy Johnson, Fargo
- Jon McMillan, Grand Forks
- Ben Murphy, Killdeer
- Ryan Taylor, Bismarck

**Cover:** Young girls paint traditional Scandinavian rosemaling designs at Minot's Norsk Høstfest festival in September. In addition to creating folk art, visitors to the State Historical Society's booth could flip lefse, make pine cone nisser (gnome-like creatures), and visit with staff about genealogy resources.

# 2024 at a Glance

**584,333 VISITORS**  
ANNUALLY TO STATE MUSEUMS  
AND HISTORIC SITES

**10 FRIENDS GROUPS**  
SUPPORTING  
**10 HISTORIC SITES**

**80,000**  
SQ. FT.  
OF EXHIBITS  
STATE MUSEUMS  
AND HISTORIC SITES

**60 STATE MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES**  
ON A TOTAL OF  
**1,224 ACRES**  
*(Lawn care is life!)*

- 49 HISTORIC BUILDINGS
- 8 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS
- 21 SERVICE BUILDINGS
- 19 CCC MARKERS/KIOSKS

**1**  
GOVERNING  
BOARD

**200**  
VOLUNTEERS  
**9,000**  
HOURS ANNUALLY

**3**  
NEW NATIONAL  
REGISTER LISTINGS

**3,300**  
ANNUAL CULTURAL  
RESOURCE REVIEWS  
OF FEDERAL AND  
STATE UDERTAKINGS

**EMPLOYEES**  
**83.5 FULL TIME**  
**119 TEMPORARY**

**588,604**  
NEW USERS OF  
AGENCY WEBSITES

**69,356**  
AGENCY SOCIAL  
MEDIA FOLLOWERS

## Creating Inspiring Education Opportunities

**SUPERHEROES, GERMAN RUSSIAN FOLK ART, AND PIONEERING NORTH DAKOTANS** were among the subjects of temporary exhibits that opened at the State Museum.

*Marvelocity: The Art of Alex Ross* showcased the Marvel Comics illustrator's classic renditions of characters such as Spider-Man, Captain America, Storm, and Black Panther. Organized by the Dunn Museum in Illinois, the exhibition featured paintings, drawings, and 3D busts.

Works by John James Audubon, George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and John Singer Sargent are part of *There's a Story There: Art in the State Collections*. Subjects include notable figures from the region's history, including entrepreneur William Fargo and Mandan chief Mató-Tópe, as well as its landscapes and wildlife. The first exhibit devoted to fine arts within the State Museum's collections, the exhibit is on view through 2026.

Handcrafted textiles, embroidery, woodcarving, and ironwork from Logan, McIntosh, and Emmons counties as well as from the state collections are front and center in *The Art of Making Do: Folk Culture and Heritage of Germans From Russia*. The exhibit, a partnership with the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, runs to fall 2025.

In other exhibit news, the Chateau de Morés State Historic Site's Interpretive Center in Medora opened *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*. Produced by the North Dakota Council on the Arts, the exhibit includes 21 folk art objects.



Visitors and staff get into the spirit of *Marvelocity: The Art of Alex Ross* at an exhibit-related event in March 2024.



This hand-painted schnapps glass is on view in *The Art of Making Do*.

## LOOK WHAT YOU CAN EXPLORE IN STATE COLLECTIONS!

**130,779** BOOKS & OTHER PUBLICATIONS

**2.1** MILLION PHOTOGRAPHS

**1,581** NEWSPAPER TITLES

**4,575** ORAL HISTORIES

**3,597** MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

**1,903** LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORD SERIES

**2,369** STATE GOVERNMENT RECORD SERIES

**3,000** FEET OF SHELF SPACE OF MOVING IMAGE COLLECTIONS

**85,000+** MUSEUM ARTIFACTS

**12 MILLION+** ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS

**9%** OF N.D. ACRES SURVEYED FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

**21,000** CULTURAL RESOURCE REPORTS &

**76,000** SITE FORMS USED BY **595** SPECIALISTS

## Impact the Present

Kudos to the more than 700 children who helped us with our "Hunt for Hank" over the summer at the Chateau de Morés State Historic Site. During the hunt, pictures of a charming stuffed toy raccoon named Sheriff Hank were hidden throughout the Chateau. Children were deputized to help find the sheriff, who was on the prowl for "naughty people," says Site Supervisor Keshna DeJesus.

Kids who successfully wrote down the room and artifact where Sheriff Hank was located received a prize. Look for new Hank stuffed toys (which sold out in 2024) to hit the site's Museum Store shelves in 2025 when the hunt returns for the summer months.



Sheriff Hank stands sentry at the Chateau de Morés in Medora.

**A NEW NORTH DAKOTA MILITARY GALLERY ADDITION** to the ND Heritage Center & State Museum will break ground in 2025. Construction on the roughly 70,000-square-foot addition, a joint project of the North Dakota National Guard, the State Historical Society, and their respective foundations, is expected to be completed in fall 2027. The internationally acclaimed Ralph Applebaum Associates (RAA) will design the exhibits with input from staff, armed forces personnel, and a Native American committee.



View of the outdoor space and amphitheater after the military gallery addition is complete. Zerr Berg Architects/BWBR



SHSND 1983.431

**TO KICKOFF UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS OF THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY** of the United States in 2026, staff placed North Dakota's replica Liberty Bell on exhibit at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. This fulfills a directive of the state Legislature that the North Dakota 250 Commission identify prominent locations to exhibit the bell, gifted to the state in 1950 as part of a national effort to promote the sale of U.S. savings bonds.



Head of Reference Services Sarah Walker teaches Elise Meidinger about the basics of doing oral histories during a "Little Kids, Big World" program at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum.

**WHETHER HOSTING AGRICULTURE AND EXPLORER DAYS** at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum, bringing students in touch with the past at our stellar state historic sites, or developing North Dakota Studies-themed workshops for teachers, our education team inspires a lifetime of learning.

In 2024, educational programs, including field trips, special events, offsite outreach, and virtual programs, reached 30,865 people, a 19% increase over the previous year. Meanwhile, the National History Day in North Dakota program, which invites students in grades 6-12 to explore the past through research and creative history projects, saw a 219% increase in participation, with 185 North Dakotans taking part. In addition, 65 teachers from across the state attended continuing education workshops hosted by the agency geared toward helping them meet state standards.

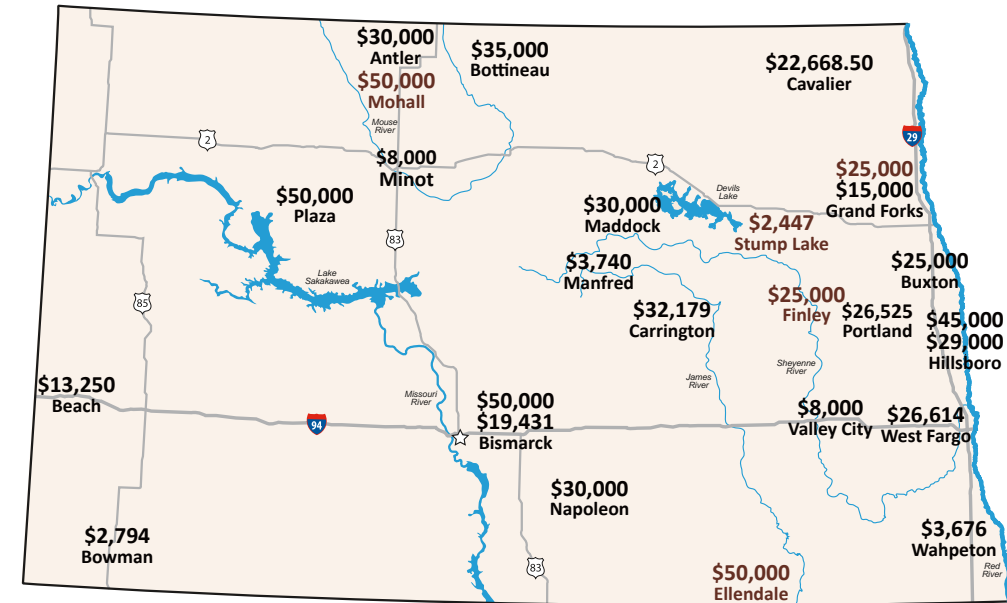


More than 200 students attended education days at Fort Totten State Historic Site and at Whitestone Hill State Historic Site in September.



Twenty-two North Dakota students competed in the National History Day contest in the Washington, D.C., area in 2024 after winning awards in the state contest sponsored by our agency.

## Establishing Deeper Connections With Core Constituencies



\*Cultural Heritage Grants are denoted in black; Historic Preservation Fund grants are in brown.

**IN 2024, WE DISTRIBUTED MORE THAN \$150,000** in Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants to five North Dakota organizations. HPF grants, made possible by a federal appropriation from the National Park Service, are available for historic and archaeological properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Courthouses in Renville, Dickey, and Steele counties were among the recipients, which also included the Grand Forks County Fairgrounds and the Old Settler's Pavilion in Stump Lake.

In addition, funding from the state Legislature enabled us to award \$500,000 in Cultural Heritage Grants to 21 North Dakota organizations in the 2023-2025 biennium. These grants provide funding to nonprofit organizations and city, county, and tribal governments. Eligible projects include capital improvements, exhibits, special projects or events, educational activities, and collections.

**FOUR INDIVIDUALS AND ONE COLLEGE BASKETBALL TEAM** were inducted into the North Dakota Native American Hall of Honor in the Sports and Leadership categories. Those honored included former United Tribes Technical College assistant men's basketball coach Rusty Gillette, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation; Parshall Braves football and basketball star Terry Kraft, MHA Nation; the 1997-98 United Tribes Technical College Men's Basketball Team, multiple federally recognized tribes; attorney and former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Thomas W. Fredericks, MHA Nation; and longtime New Town educator Marc Bluestone Sr., MHA Nation.

A partnership of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, the State Historical Society, and the State Historical Society Foundation, the annual program and exhibit at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum recognizes Native Americans who have gone above and beyond in representing their tribes and cultures.



Former Carter Administration official Thomas Fredericks was among the 2024 inductees to the Native American Hall of Honor.

**WITH NEW NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION ACT (NAGPRA) REQUIREMENTS** released in January 2024, the agency has been working to ensure that federally required inventories of any human remains and funerary, sacred, and cultural patrimony objects in the state collections are updated in consultation with tribal nations and appropriate federal agencies. Our NAGPRA committee removed some related items from exhibit across agency properties. We hired professional consultants to help us meet the new guidelines as mandated by 2029. To learn more about how the State Historical Society is complying with the NAGPRA law, visit [history.nd.gov/nagpra](http://history.nd.gov/nagpra).



*Rob Branting, site supervisor at the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site, accepts a 2024 Travel and Tourism Award from then-Gov. Doug Burgum in April. Photo by Dennis Krull*

**THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES ADDED THREE NEW NORTH DAKOTA LISTINGS**, including a county fair pavilion, a barn, and an expansion to a historic district. 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.

The **1919 Towner County Fairgrounds Pavilion** in Cando was built next to the horse racetrack shortly after the county fair was established. It hosted food competitions and exhibits, weekly dances, and other events. In addition to this social history, the pavilion boasts a unique hybrid truss system.



*Nels Ophaug Farm Barn. Photo by Olen Ophaug*

The **Nels Ophaug Farm Barn** near McVille was constructed in 1905 as a gambrel-roofed bank barn with a stone foundation for dairy, calving, and horses. After a windstorm destroyed the upper level, the barn was partially rebuilt in 1943 with a Gothic-arched roof. Ophaug, a Norwegian immigrant who served in the North Dakota

House of Representatives from 1921 to 1923, built both the original barn and the reconstructed upper level. The barn is an excellent example of its type and attests to trends in agricultural development in North Dakota.

The **expansion of the Highland Acres Historic District** includes 20 residences mostly built in the 1950s. The Bismarck district, first listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2022, is significant both for its role in post-World War II community development and planning and for being an enclave of mid-century and contemporary residences where several architects and prominent builders chose to live.

## Impact the Present

In nearly a quarter century at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck, volunteer Erlys Fardal has accomplished what no known person has before: clocked 10,000 hours of service. The Enderlin native’s impressive record—reached on Oct. 29—began in 2002 after her husband’s death when she started helping out with obituaries and naturalization records in the State Archives. Given the backlog, she “worked a little longer” each day. Then the Museum Store needed help. Soon her half-day per week commitment had mushroomed, as had its scope. Today, you’ll find her at the agency up to four days a week—greeting visitors at the front desk, updating information for the State Archives’ databases, or assisting the Foundation with administrative work.

Fardal, 90, says volunteering keeps her “learning all the time.” She also treasures Thursday morning coffees with her colleagues, “a tradition now for almost 20 years.” But the most fun she’s ever had? That would be the Halloween she dressed up as a cow during a “Farmer in the Dell”-themed children’s program in the Inspiration Gallery. “The farmer and his wife were there, too,” she laughs.



*Super volunteer Erlys Fardal greets visitors to the State Museum.*



*Yoga on the Plains? Not quite. Reenactors perform exercises as “punishment” for not cleaning their barracks during a 6th Infantry demonstration at Fort Buford State Historic Site. Next year, men, don’t leave those mops at home!*

## Impact the Present

Staff from the Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department carried out 3,300 cultural resource reviews of federal and state undertakings, a 50% increase from 2022. Our team worked to ensure the protection of cultural resources on key projects such as Summit Carbon Solutions’ proposed Midwest Carbon Express pipeline; North Dakota Department of Transportation road improvements in preparation for the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora; and the development of the JETx transmission line from Jamestown to Ellendale, a joint project of Otter Tail Power and Montana-Dakota Utilities.

# Optimizing Our Assets

**AS CARETAKER OF THE STATE'S HISTORIC SITES**, the agency completed 36 capital improvement projects across 14 properties. Chief among these were a remodel of the Whitestone Hill site supervisor house, new exterior paint as well as foundation and deck stabilization work at the Chateau de Morès in Medora, and the rethinking of the logs at the Gingras Trading Post outside of Walhalla.

*Gingras Trading Post. Courtesy Blake Kobiela*

**LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR YOUR SPECIAL EVENT?** The ND Heritage Center & State Museum offers a stunning space for dinners, meetings, parties, and weddings. In 2024, revenue from event rentals grew by 23%. For information about booking, visit [statemuseum.nd.gov/about/rentals](http://statemuseum.nd.gov/about/rentals).



**THE NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM** in Bismarck received the highest national recognition afforded to museums in the United States, reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. Accreditation signals our commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards, and continued institutional improvement. The State Museum has been accredited since 1986.



**HOME TO MORE THAN 10 MILES OF PAPER DOCUMENTS**, the North Dakota State Archives offers the ultimate trip down memory lane. Additionally, we hold 68 terabytes of digital records. Explore these holdings, which include government records, photographs, and manuscript collections, both online and in-person. In 2024, the team welcomed 1,465 visitors to the Orin G. Libby Memorial Reading Room and led an additional 420 people on behind-the-scenes tours. Our team also connected virtually with 1,615 patrons and donors.



## NEW TO THE COLLECTIONS



**WE WERE THRILLED TO RECEIVE THE BROOCH** worn by prominent Bismarck pioneer Linda Slaughter in a 19th-century painting gifted to the State Historical Society a century ago. Donated by Slaughter descendent Tim Meland, the brooch is believed to be made of water opals. The Slaughter portrait became the second artwork added to our museum collections in 1924 and has undergone significant conservation in recent years. See it in the *There's a Story There* fine arts exhibit at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum.

*Donor Tim Meland holds the brooch worn by Linda Slaughter in this circa 1880 portrait. SHSND 2024.74.1*

**DID YOU KNOW? THE STATE ARCHIVES IS THE REPOSITORY** for all state government records with historical value. At the conclusion of Gov. Doug Burgum's second term in 2024, we received more than 3 terabytes of digital photographs from the state Department of Transportation, North Dakota's official gubernatorial photographers. Covering 2016-2024, the photos capture all aspects of Burgum's tenure, from bill signings and daily work to inaugural balls and groundbreaking ceremonies. In addition to the images, the State Archives also took in 43 linear feet of paper materials and 142 gigabytes of digital records from the governor's office.

*Then-Gov. Doug Burgum and his wife, Kathryn, are escorted to the State of the State address on Jan. 3, 2017. SHSND SA State Series 31843*



## Impact the Present

The agency's reinterpretation of the Whitestone Hill State Historic Site near Kulm was recognized by the National Association for Interpretation, receiving first place in the "Difficult Topics" category at the 2024 Interpretive Media Awards.

Whitestone Hill, long interpreted as a battlefield, is now presented as a place of solemn remembrance for the Native victims of an 1863 massacre by Gen. Alfred Sully and his troops. To these ends, the agency replaced the site's single interpretive sign with 15 panels reflecting a contemporary understanding of the event and informed by discussions with tribal knowledge keepers and the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission. View the panels at [bit.ly/WhitestoneHill](http://bit.ly/WhitestoneHill).



**AT THE HEIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** in 2020, this sign, donated by the North Dakota Governor's Office, was visible during then-Gov. Doug Burgum's web addresses including his live April 23 Team ND Town Hall. The "STOP COVID" sign urges people to "BE NORTH DAKOTA SMART STAY 6FT APART."

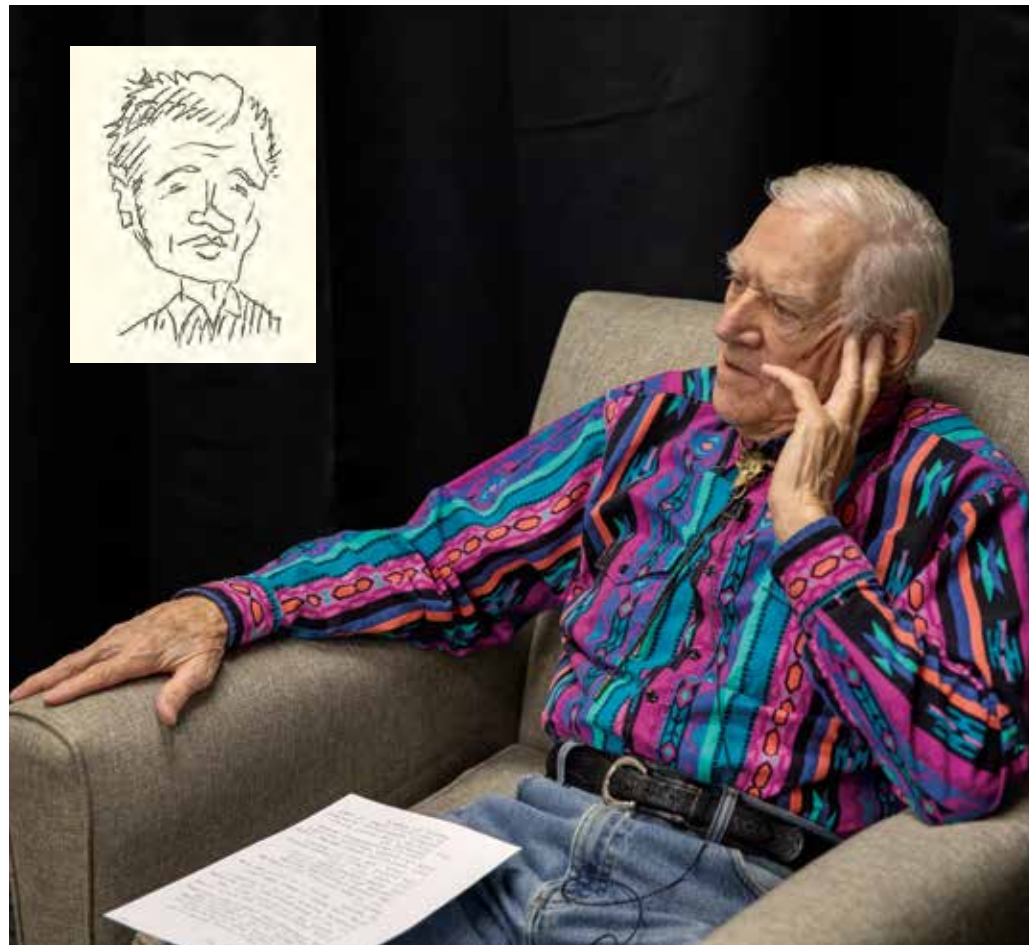
SHSND 2024.19.1

**LEGENDARY ARTIST OF THE AMERICAN WEST VERN ERICKSON** recently gifted us his prized ledger containing a chronological inventory of his art from 1948 to 2024. The ledger, rescued from the supply department of Florida's Eglin Air Force Base when Erickson was stationed there in the late 1950s, also documents his exhibits, publications, and correspondence, among other aspects of his career.

"My mother kept sketches way back in 1948 that I had done—that's how I knew I had started then," the 88-year-old Erickson reflects, noting that



SHSND MSS 11667-00001



Artist Vern Erickson, whose work depicts the history of the upper Missouri River, reflected on his life and career in a recent oral history interview with State Archives staff. His ledger, at left, contains an inventory of his work. Erickson sketched this caricature of himself, inset above, for a 1963 Plains Talk.

he first picked up a brush at the urging of a World War I veteran and local artist known as Baw Jensen, who lived a few doors down from his family in Esmond. "He always asked me to his studio. We spent a lot of time in there." For Erickson, who once worked for the State Historical Society as a museum assistant, art is a means to communicate history, something he's been doing now for more than seven decades. "Everything I do is accurate," he emphasizes. "If it isn't, to some people it wouldn't mean much."

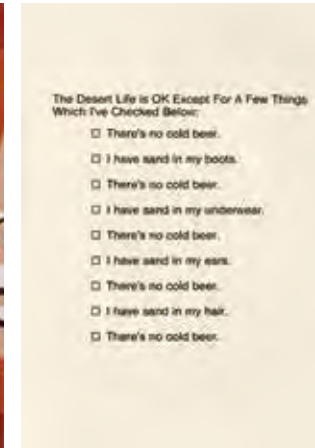
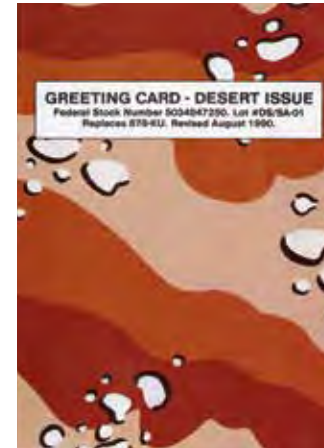


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**ESTHER RANDALL KREBSBACH EARNED THIS MAROON AND GOLD LETTERMAN PATCH** in drama while a student at Sanish High School in the early 1950s. A member of the last graduating class to attend school in the building before Sanish was flooded due to the construction of the Garrison Dam, Krebsbach and her family were among those displaced and relocated to New Town. Krebsbach, who now lives in Garrison, gifted the patch to Hunter Andes, who donated it to our museum collections.

**IN DECEMBER 1990, JUST MONTHS AFTER IRAQI LEADER** Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, 125 members of the 191st military police company of Mandan were deployed to serve at an Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) camp in Saudi Arabia. Mark Forster of Bismarck was among those military police stationed at the 401 EPW camp in northern Saudi Arabia, helping transport prisoners, guard the wire, and even construct the camp as it grew to hold 20,000 POWs.

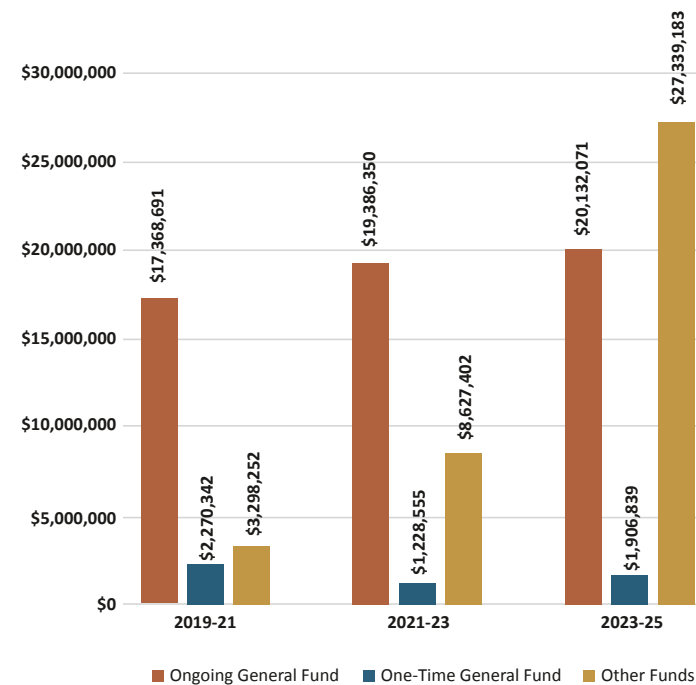
Forster's gift preserves his memories of that time, including photographs, a scan of his diary, video footage of the camp, night gear, and a military chaplain-issued Bible. His donations, featuring images of prisoners, military convoys, company latrines, and even the odd herd of wild camels, provide a compelling look into wartime life beyond the frontlines.



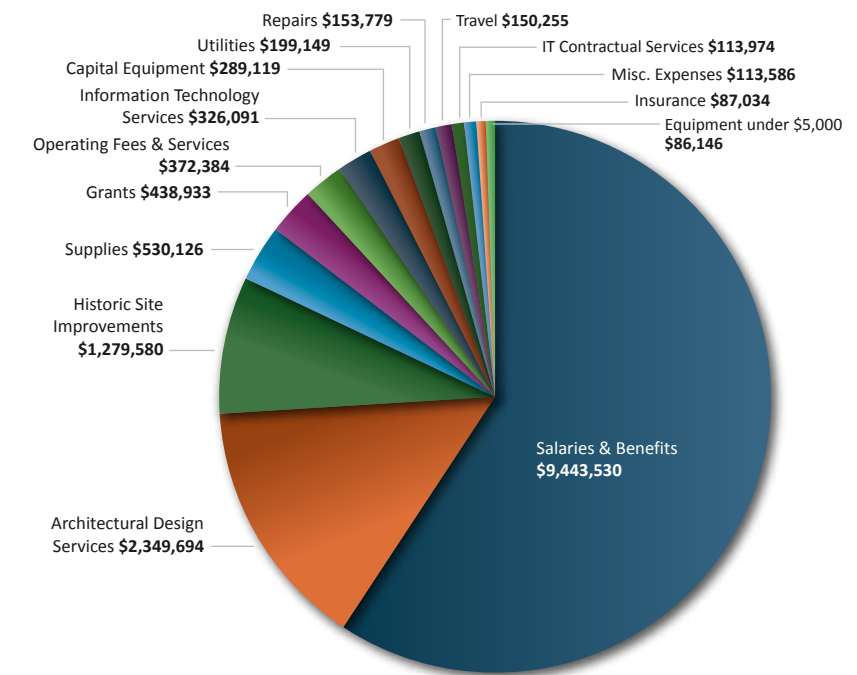
Top right, Mark Forster's camel hide boots and helmet from his Gulf War deployment. Left, a humorous greeting card Forster purchased in the PX shop at Dhahran Air Force Base declares that "Desert Life is OK," save for the lack of cold beer and abundance of sand in your hair. At right, Forster gets a haircut. SHSND SA 11662-00158, 00003



## Financials



APPROPRIATIONS



EXPENDITURES

# Embracing Technology



**NEW TECHNOLOGY IS IMPROVING EFFICIENCY** and expanding the scope of agency work. A Historic Preservation Fund grant administered by the National Park Service enabled the Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department's purchase of an electromagnetic induction meter, completing the agency's suite of archaeological geophysics instruments. The meter can show areas of soil movement like mounds and ditches as well as indicate the existence of underground features such as stone foundations and hearths.

Meanwhile, a 5% matching grant from the North Dakota Newspaper Association Education Foundation and funding from the state Legislature allowed the State Archives to acquire an SMA 51 Archive Writer. The machine quickly downloads and prints digital newspapers onto microfilm. Additionally, the State Archives bought a new imaging system, the SMA Scan Master, with funding from the state Legislature. The system speeds up the scanning of oversize items such as maps and newspapers.

*Historic Preservation Specialist Erica Scherr demonstrates the agency's new electromagnetic induction meter.*

**A MAJOR EXPANSION OF PUBLIC WI-FI ACCESS** across North Dakota's state historic sites is nearly complete. During the 2023-2025 biennium, Wi-Fi was added and/or expanded to Fort Totten, 1883 Stutsman County Courthouse, the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile site, Pembina State Museum, Chateau de Morès, Camp Hancock, and Fort Abercrombie.



## Impact the Present

Ever wondered if a giant prehistoric elephant might be lurking under your garage? Thanks to the agency's geophysical equipment, the Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department and the North Dakota Geological Survey are helping one landowner determine just that.

The mystery dates to the late 1980s when teeth from a woolly mammoth were found during the construction of a northwest North Dakota garage. However, the foundation was laid before the site could be excavated. More than three decades later, State Geologist Ed Murphy came across his notes from that time and contacted the current landowner, who agreed to a test dig. Local schoolchildren were invited to observe. During fieldwork, the team uncovered pieces of bone and mammoth tusk dating to the ice age. Using ground-penetrating radar and a resistivity meter, they also explored other areas around the garage and discovered anomalies (differences from the soil) they hope to return and investigate. The team is still on the hunt for a complete mammoth skeleton—something that's never been found in North Dakota!



*Agency Research Archaeologist Brittany Brooks, left, searches for anomalies using ground-penetrating radar. At right, Senior Paleontologist Clint Boyd of the ND Geological Survey digs for mammoth bones.*

# Foundation Year in Review

**ENSURING AN ARTISTIC LEGACY:** Thanks to two generous contributions from Sam McQuade Jr., given in memory of his late wife, Maryvonne McQuade, the Foundation was able to make some remarkable acquisitions that will enhance North Dakota's cultural heritage. The first allowed for the purchase of 26 rare 19th-century aquatints based on works Swiss artist Karl Bodmer created during his 1832-34 expedition to the upper Missouri River. The Bodmer aquatints have been gifted to the State Historical Society. The second contribution enabled the Foundation to acquire a bronze bust titled "Medora," now prominently displayed in the Foundation office.



*Shannon McQuade-Ely views Bodmer aquatints purchased with funds donated by her father.*

**STUTSMAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE GETS BIG BOOST:** On Sept. 18, 2024, the Foundation received a generous donation of nearly \$5.9 million from the estate of George Spangler. This contribution, the largest in the Foundation's history, will be allocated to an endowment to ensure ongoing support for the courthouse as well as to a special project fund for the site. Spangler was a farmer, cattle rancher, and antique business owner until 2003.



**HONORING THOSE WHO KEEP HISTORY ALIVE:** On Nov. 12, the Foundation hosted the Local History Award Ceremony, presenting the Excellence in Local History Award to Allan Burke and Jon McMillan and the Heritage Profile Honor Award to Curtis Eriksmoen. During the event, the Foundation and the State Historical Society unveiled a plaque commemorating the 2014 capital campaign for the ND Heritage Center expansion. This plaque, located near the Foundation office at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum, honors individuals whose dedication and passion helped shape the current facility.

*From left: Awardee Allan Burke, State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, Awardees Jon McMillan and Curtis Eriksmoen, Jan Eriksmoen, and Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon.*

**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE NEW NORTH DAKOTA MILITARY GALLERY:** The Foundation along with Fargo-based PACE Fundraising established naming rights values for the ND Military Gallery addition to the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum. For more information on naming rights and eligible spaces in the gallery scheduled to break ground in 2025, contact Dale Lennon, Dale@statehistoricalfoundation.org.

**A FOND FAREWELL TO TWO LONGTIME BOARD MEMBERS:** With deep appreciation and gratitude for their many years of service, we announce the retirement of two esteemed members of the Foundation's board of directors, Jon McMillan of Grand Forks and Armen Hanson of Devils Lake.



*Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon with retiring board members Armen Hanson, left, and Jon McMillan.*





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North Dakota Heritage Center  
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*Plesiosaur at the State Museum, Bismarck*

# Jaw dropping adventures.

Discover awesome fossils, artifacts, and family-friendly activities at the State Museum in Bismarck and historic sites across North Dakota.

Plan a visit today!  
[history.nd.gov/visit](https://history.nd.gov/visit)



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*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.

HISTORY FOR  
*everyone.*