



A Scoop for the History Books: Military Gallery Breaks Ground

Dignitaries break ground on the Military Gallery, which will showcase stories of North Dakota's military history from early Native American practices before statehood to today.

After years of planning, a new Military Gallery is underway. In July, Gov. Kelly Armstrong and other officials gathered at the Prairie Amphitheater on the south side of the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum to break ground on the 70,000-square-foot addition. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the Northern Lights Atrium.

Emceed by North Dakota National Guard Historian Shirley J. Olgeirson, the program featured remarks by (pictured from left) Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson, ND National Guard adjutant general; Dr. Monica Mayer, MHA Nation tribal councilwoman; Brad Hawk, executive director of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission; Brian Berg, principal architect with Fargo-based Zerr Berg Architects, which is designing the addition; Bill Peterson, director of the State Historical Society; and Gov. Armstrong.

"The stunning facility will not only honor our veterans for their service but will also honor the 3,803 [North Dakotans] who perished for their country," said Peterson. "It will educate people about the remarkable history of the military in North Dakota and North Dakotans in the military and ... inspire people to think more deeply about what the military means and the role it plays in our society."

In addition, the expansion will feature an event center, an expanded café area, and a new outdoor courtyard and amphitheater.

(cont.)

US Flag Gets Facelift



An American flag carried by the 1st North Dakota Infantry Volunteers in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War is undergoing preservation work to stabilize its fragmented silk. Above, conservator Ann Frisina of Heartland Textile Preservation Services humidifies the 45-star flag, donated by the North Dakota adjutant general's office in 1938, as part of these efforts. A companion regimental flag, pictured alongside this flag in 1898 at right, was previously conserved and is currently on exhibit in the State Museum's Inspiration Gallery: Yesterday and Today.



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Military Gallery Design Presented



Team members from Ralph Applebaum Associates present on the exhibits schematic design for the new Military Gallery at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum in June. RAA is developing the gallery's exhibit design and content with input from key stakeholders.

Huey Helicopter To Help Tell Story of Cold War in North Dakota



The Huey chopper arrives at the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site.

It's not every day that a state historic site gets a special delivery from the U.S. Air Force.

But in early June, after a more than 1,700 mile-journey from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona, a Bell HH-1H Iroquois, also known as a Huey helicopter, arrived at the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site near Cooperstown. This Huey served at the Grand Forks missile field during the 1990s.

Site Supervisor Rob Branting called the helicopter a "tangible and eye-catching component for the site" that will tell "the story of the lengths the Air Force went to make sure all the missiles in North Dakota were at nearly 100% readiness."

The missile site preserves the Oscar-Zero Missile Alert and November-33 Launch facilities, the last remnants of the 321st

Missile Wing, a cluster of intercontinental ballistic missile launch sites once spread across eastern North Dakota.

During the Cold War and beyond, Huey helicopters were critical to missile field support operations due to their ability to quickly cover vast areas. They are still in use at the Minuteman missile field in Minot.

Funders of the roughly \$63,000 chopper project include the State Historical Society, Friends of Oscar-Zero, the Cooperstown Community Foundation, the Association of Air Force Missileers, the Cooperstown Municipal Association, and individual donors from the local community.

The Huey, on long-term loan from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, will be on view indefinitely at the site's helipad.

Groundbreaking (cont.)

The ceremony, which featured music by the ND National Guard's 188th Army Band, included a performance by the Thunder Butte Singers of the "Flag Song," a composition honoring the U.S. flag and the military sacrifice and service of Native Americans. A Native American advisory committee is helping to shape content alongside military personnel and agency staff.

A joint project of the ND National Guard, the State Historical Society, and their respective foundations, the roughly \$78 million project is being funded through a mix of private and public money. The state Legislature is providing \$39.2 million, with the remaining funds coming from private donations.



World War II and Korean War veteran Forrest "Stan" Sharkey, 99, of Bismarck waves to the crowd.



The AMVETS Post 9 Honor Guard salutes during the "Flag Song" and "The Star-Spangled Banner."



Dr. Monica Mayer of the MHA Nation, the first female physician to serve on a tribal council in the United States, gifts star quilts to Gov. Kelly Armstrong and Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson.

Teacher Workshops Explore North Dakota's Military Legacy

Sixteen teachers joined us in Cooperstown for the "Frontier to Frontlines: North Dakota's Military Legacy" workshop July 21-24. Home to the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site, the area played a significant role in the Cold War. A collaboration of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Griggs County Historical Society, and Griggs County Central Schools, the workshop examined North Dakota's contributions to the U.S. military and national defense from the 1870s to the 1990s.

Site Supervisor Rob Branting demonstrates how to use a Geiger counter to detect nuclear radiation during an activity on fallout shelters and nuclear preparedness.



Students Represent North Dakota at National History Day Contest

Eighteen North Dakota students competed in the National History Day contest in College Park, Maryland, in June. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with other students from around the United States and world, tour the U.S. Capitol, and meet with Rep. Julie Fedorchak.

The theme of this year’s contest was “Rights and Responsibilities in History.” North Dakota’s junior outstanding affiliate entry was awarded to Drew Wells of Trinity Junior High School in Dickinson for “Rights and Responsibilities of Early Ranchers in North Dakota.” Ben Guthmiller, Caylin Kraft, Lillian Rue, and Megan Mertz of Legacy High School in Bismarck were recognized as the senior outstanding affiliate entry for “Living and Breathing: The Metamorphosis of Privacy Rights in America.” Fargo North High School students Isabella Meyer,



Tessla Stevenson, Sawyer Weber, and Palmer Mack of Scranton High School visit with state contest judges about their National History Day in North Dakota entry “Her Voice Her Vote” at the ND Heritage Center in April.

Kaitlyn DesMarais, Matthew Vandrovec, and Morgan Keal’s “Redefining Rights: The ARC vs ND” was one of 47 projects selected for display at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

For information on the 2026 competition, visit nd.nhd.org, or contact state coordinator Madison Milbrath, 701.328.2794 or mrmmilbrath@nd.gov.



The North Dakota contingent poses on the U.S. Capitol steps with Rep. Julie Fedorchak.

From Politics to Pokémon: Recent Donations Opens at the State Museum



Each year, several hundred objects are donated to the state’s museum collections, mostly from private individuals. A new exhibit draws on some of our favorite acquisitions from the past two years to showcase the breadth of what we collect. Weapons from the world wars, a variety of toys, and even “The Doug Mug” from former Gov. Doug Burgum’s 2024 presidential campaign are among the exhibit’s highlights.

Do you have an item that tells a unique North Dakota story? Find our “wish list” and information on how to donate at history.nd.gov/donate.html.

When service member Forrest “Stan” Sharkey of Bismarck landed in Japan Sept. 2, 1945, V-J Day, he had this Army-issued canvas garment bag painted with colorful images of Mount Fuji and his unit emblems. The paintings served as a form of ID as luggage was shipped from one place to the next. See it in the Recent Donations exhibit at the State Museum. SHSND 2024.25.1

New Exhibit Features Medora Manca’s Watercolors

Did you know the namesake of the town of Medora was an accomplished watercolor artist?

A new exhibit highlights more than two dozen of Medora Manca’s paintings alongside photographs and personal effects from her time in the Badlands, including her riding habit and portable outdoor painting studio.

From 1883 to 1886, Medora, wife of the French nobleman the Marquis de Morès, lived seasonally at the hunting lodge they built there (later known as the Chateau de Morès). While her husband worked to realize his dream of establishing a cattle empire, the wealthy New York heiress painted and also developed a reputation as a top-notch horsewoman, sharpshooter, and hostess.

Discovered in a trunk after the State Historical Society took over management of the Chateau in 1936, the artworks depict the rugged beauty of the Badlands, the house and surrounding area, and the town of Medora, among other subjects. The paintings have been reframed and matted for display, with some exhibited alongside drone footage of the same landscapes today.

View Medora: Artist. Heiress. Bear Hunter. Namesake of a Wild West Town at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum through March 2026. The exhibit will later travel to the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site in Medora.



Medora Manca’s watercolor of the Chateau on a bluff overlooking the town that her husband named for her. SHSND 1972.91



An aerial image of a similar Badlands perspective taken by agency staff this year.

Stay Cool at the Chateau de Morès This Summer

Visitors to the Chateau de Morès in Medora no longer have to endure North Dakota’s extreme temps thanks to the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system recently installed in the 19th-century former hunting lodge.

The HVAC system benefits the Chateau and its contents, said Site Supervisor Keshna DeJesus. Built in 1883 by the Marquis de Morès, the Chateau did not include insulation, leading to dire

implications for the structure and artifacts within. “The HVAC will help prevent any additional damage and as a bonus gives the agency the option of having guests tour the Chateau during the winter months when it is currently closed,” DeJesus added.

The Chateau’s new HVAC system was one of 62 capital improvement projects totaling more than \$4 million carried out in the 2023-2025 biennium.

Welk Homestead Celebrates 10 Years as State Historic Site

More than 500 people turned out June 1 to mark the 10th anniversary of Strasburg’s Welk Homestead becoming a state historic site. The birthplace of band leader and entrepreneur Lawrence Welk, the homestead was purchased by the State Historical Society from Welk’s nieces Edna and Evelyn Schwab in 2015.

Attendees took in canning, blacksmithing, and spinning demonstrations and had the opportunity to watch the recently premiered Prairie Public documentary “Lawrence Welk: A North Dakota Farm Boy.” They also heard from speakers including state



Margaret Heron Letterman, a longtime employee of the Welk organization, and Audience Engagement & Museum Department Director Kim Jondahl unveil a statue of Lawrence Welk. Donated by the entertainer’s grandson, Jonathan Fredricks, the statue once stood outside the former Lawrence Welk Theater in Branson, Missouri.

Sens. Robert Erbele and Jeffery Magrum, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection Director Emeritus Michael Miller, and Lance Richey, author of “Champagne Times: Lawrence Welk and His American Century.”

The day-long event, which featured a tractor trek, a “Lawrence Welk Show” reenactment by the Joyful Voices choir, and kuchen (natch!), culminated in the unveiling of a life-size bronze statue of Lawrence Welk overlooking Baumgartner Lake.

In related news, permanent public restrooms have been installed at the Welk Homestead, Whitestone Hill, and Fort Buford state historic sites as part of a broader initiative to replace portable restrooms at our staffed sites.



A glorious array of tractor trek entries kicked off a fun-filled day of “Life on the Homestead” events.



Gov. Kelly Armstrong tries his hand at the classic Nintendo video game Duck Hunt during the agency’s “Technology Through Time” event. In March and April, people could revisit the analog world of manual typewriters, rotary phones, and record players as part of a hands-on display of vintage tech at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum.

Historic Mountrail County School Reborn as Community Space

An early 20th-century consolidated school—the site of a notable political first—has received a second lease on life thanks in part to a \$50,000 Cultural Heritage Grant from the State Historical Society.

That grant, funded by the state Legislature and administered by the agency, along with matching funds from an anonymous donor and support from the Mountrail County Job Development Authority, Mountrail County Historical Society, and others, allowed the Friends of Wabek to significantly rehabilitate the once-dilapidated Wabek Consolidated School.

Created in 1917 by the merging of two one-room country schoolhouses, the building is a rare example of a restored consolidated school in North Dakota. It served the now ghost town of Wabek, about 25 miles east of New Town, until closing in 1960.

In spring 1920, the school made national headlines when Gov. Lynn Frazier flew from Bismarck to Wabek to deliver a speech there while campaigning for re-election. According to *The New York Times*, it marked “the first airplane ride ever taken by a Governor in a political campaign.” The Wabek school was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019 and added to the North Dakota State Historic Sites Registry earlier this year.

English teacher Hunter Andes, who spearheaded the project, called the Cultural Heritage Grant a “godsend,” which helped the group make structural repairs on the basement, foundation, and north wall as well as renovate the library and buy new doors and windows.



Many desks in the “big classroom” are original to the school, which is available for tours, civic meetings, and events. Courtesy Hunter Andes



The newly restored Wabek Consolidated School is one of only two physically consolidated schools built before World War II still standing in North Dakota. Courtesy Hunter Andes

A Capitol Fellow

We were thrilled Patricia Byrne could visit the state Capitol in June to see the North Dakota Constitution her grandfather Secretary of State Robert Byrne rescued when the building burned in December 1930. After viewing the document in the office he once occupied, Patricia stopped by the State Archives for a tour and to see a collection of his papers there. She also donated several items to the State Historical Society, including this circa 1910 portrait of her grandfather as a young man.



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State Archivist Shane Molander, Patricia Byrne, and Secretary of State Michael Howe pose with the original 1889 state constitution. The constitution is housed in the State Archives.

Museum Store Opens at Jamestown’s 1883 Stutsman County Courthouse



Looking for the perfect gift for the history buff in your life? The Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site Museum Store, which debuted in May, is just the ticket. Offering an array of civics and North Dakota-themed items, the store is open daily (including holidays), 9 a.m.-5 p.m. from Memorial Day through Labor Day. After Labor Day, shop hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday.

You can also check out the Museum Stores at 10 other state historic sites and museums operated by the agency or shop online at statemuseum.nd.gov/store.

Fargo Church Listed in National Register



Dan Francis Photography

The First Presbyterian Church in downtown Fargo has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the federal government’s list of properties it considers worthy of preservation and recognition. North Dakota nominations are coordinated by the State Historical Society.

An excellent example of the English Gothic Revival architectural style, the 1929 church was built to accommodate a growing congregation. It was designed by Minneapolis architecture firm Lang, Raugland, and Lewis.



The ND250 Commission’s new logo will be used for marketing and promotional activities.

The North Dakota250 Commission is offering Community Initiative Grants of up to \$10,000 to support events and projects marking the 250th anniversary of the nation’s founding in 2026. Grants for projects celebrating North Dakota’s contributions to the nation’s story are available to nonprofit organizations as well as city, county, or tribal governments. For more information and deadlines, visit history.nd.gov/hp/grants.html.

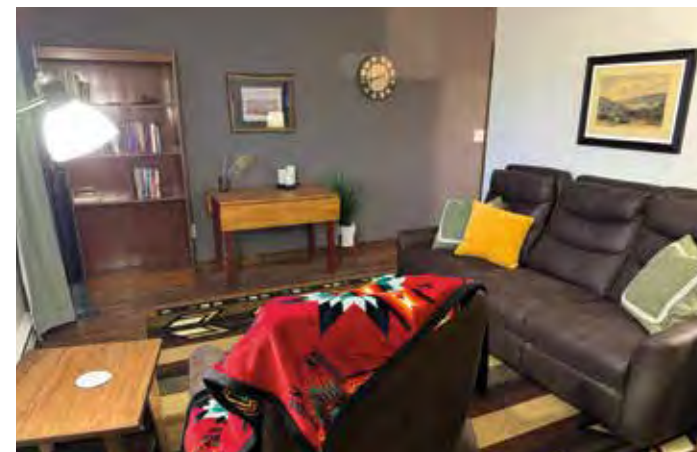
Whitestone Hill Caretaker’s Cottage Renovation Finds Inspiration in Nature

Among the dozens of capital improvement projects completed this past biennium, the interior renovation of the Whitestone Hill State Historic Site caretaker’s cottage stands out for its thoughtful design and aesthetic.

A place of remembrance for the Native American victims of an 1863 massacre there by Gen. Alfred Sully and his troops, Whitestone Hill has long been a sacred site for Native people. The recently completed renovation draws inspiration from the landscape, the colors of the Native American medicine wheel, and Works Progress Administration structures on the site to

make the space “comforting and healing,” said Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna, who oversaw the interior design.

“Sage greens, ornamental grasses, stone, and generous wood tones help one feel embraced by nature, and a handmade aesthetic is a reminder that human hands can enact caring and comfort instead of harm,” noted Hanna. “The artworks reflect uplifting facets of Whitestone’s history, from its role as a bison hunting location to its present-day preservation as a historic site.”



The south wall of the cottage was painted a hearth-like stone color “to provide a sense of grounding,” according to Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna.



Tyler Hamman Appointed to State Historical Board



Tyler Hamman. Courtesy EERC

We are pleased to welcome Tyler Hamman, assistant vice president for strategic partnerships at UND’s Energy & Environmental Research Center, to the State Historical Board. We bid a fond farewell and thank you to

Billings County State’s Attorney H. Patrick Weir, a former board president, who served on the panel from 2016 to 2025.



Jan Bernstein and Jackie Veninger-Robert of Denver-based Bernstein & Associates lead a workshop on Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act requirements for our collections staff and NAGPRA committee members in June. The consultants were hired to conduct an audit of the agency’s policies and procedures related to Native American remains and cultural items and help ensure compliance with new federal regulations.



An attendee paints the 1792 circular 13-star Betsy Ross flag at the “Stars, Stripes, and Stories” Fourth of July celebration at Fort Buford State Historic Site and Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center near Williston.

Dogs of Discovery

The State Historical Society’s first “Great Pet Trek” brought a gathering of pooches and their humans to Fort Mandan State Historic Site for a fun-filled afternoon in June. Held in honor of Meriwether Lewis’ dog Seaman, who accompanied the expedition to the area in 1804-5, the trek featured a Pet Olympics, Pet Show, and a dog walk along the Missouri River. Attendees also snagged a snapshot with our 7-foot-tall statue of the famous Newfoundland.



Bentley and Chloe Erber of Washburn pose with their goldendoodle, Gypsy, who took first place for speed in the Pet Olympics, finishing the course in an impressive 22 seconds. Now that’s a good girl!

Lynx to the Past



Troy Olson of Walhalla comes face to face with the Canada lynx his grandfather Ralph Nickerson shot in December 1933 while hunting rabbits in Hannah, North Dakota. Growing up, Olson heard stories that the lynx was at the state Capitol and dropped by the ND Heritage Center to investigate while visiting Bismarck in July. Staff were happy to unite him with the taxidermied lynx in the museum collections.



Children from the Light of Christ Summer Kids Club rinse photographic prints developed via exposure to the sun during a July program on sun prints at the Former Governors’ Mansion State Historic Site in Bismarck.

FOUNDATION NOTES



Supporting Future Energy Leaders: The “Bison to the Bakken” tour, connecting NDSU students to North Dakota’s energy industry, concluded with a May luncheon at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum. Held in the Northern Lights Atrium and sponsored by Xcel Energy, the event was coordinated in partnership with the Foundation, Xcel, and NDSU. The 12-day program promotes workforce development and talent retention.

NDSU students on the “Bison to the Bakken” tour show their pride at the ND Heritage Center.



Connecting With Core Constituencies: Along with the ND National Guard Foundation and the State Historical Society, the Foundation sponsored a booth at the Government-to-Government Conference in Bismarck. The event served as a key platform for engaging with tribal nations about the future Military Gallery at the State Museum. The gallery will honor those who serve and have served. Upcoming tribal consultations will help ensure each tribal nation’s military story is authentically and respectfully represented and shared throughout the exhibits.

ND National Guard Historian Shirley J. Olgeirson and Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon at the Government-to-Government Conference in June.

New to the Foundation: The Foundation is pleased to announce two important additions. Emily Bruer has joined as outreach and development coordinator. She oversees member engagement, customer relationship management, digital outreach, and marketing. We also welcome retired Lt. Col. Shirley J. Olgeirson to the Foundation’s board of directors. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm, Olgeirson served in multiple military branches before becoming the North Dakota National Guard historian. She remains active in historic preservation and is a member of the Joint Military Museum Advisory Committee, which is helping guide plans for the new Military Gallery.



Emily Bruer



Shirley J. Olgeirson

Celebrating Our Military Heritage: The Foundation, in partnership with the State Historical Society and the ND National Guard Foundation, hosted a Military Gallery VIP reception at the North Dakota Heritage Center. Featured speaker Gov. Kelly Armstrong joined Bill Peterson, director of the State Historical Society, and Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson, adjutant general of the ND National Guard. The event brought together legislators, government leaders, and National Guard members for an exclusive evening showcasing rare military artifacts.



State Sen. Jose Castaneda visits with State Historical Board member Lacey Anderson during April’s Military Gallery VIP reception.

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Chateau de Morès State Historic Site Medora



Fort Mandan State Historic Site and Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center Washburn



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