

Let's Party: North Dakota Gears Up to Mark Nation's 250th

Theodore Roosevelt re-enactor John Dobmeier brandishes a copy of the Declaration of Independence. The opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora will coincide with the nation's 250th birthday in July.

A commemoration of the United States' upcoming semiquincentennial kicked off on North Dakota's statehood day with a rousing welcome from none other than former President Theodore Roosevelt—well, okay, his re-enactor John Dobmeier.

"136 years ago today, North Dakota became the 39th state in this union," Dobmeier said during the Nov. 2 event at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. "We are also celebrating that union. This coming summer 250 years ago, we declared independence from a government that was not our own."

The program included remarks from Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson, adjutant general of the North Dakota National Guard, and State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, chair of the ND250 Commission. St. Mary's Central High School Wind Orchestra of Bismarck performed the national anthem.

Johnson highlighted the state's exceptional record of military service, spanning the Spanish-American War to the global war on terror and beyond. "Our population serves in the military at the highest rate of any state," he said, adding that the new Military Gallery taking shape on the south side of the building would honor those contributions.

(cont.)

Celebration (cont.)

Noting the many ways North Dakota has contributed to the United States' story, Peterson emphasized its leading role in feeding, powering, and defending the world. "Today is a great time to embrace our history," he said.

Nearly 500 people turned out for musical and historical performances, a book talk by former North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple, face painting, and booths hosted by community organizations and military representatives. Nathan Baumgartner, a farmer who drove up from Linton, said his two young children enjoyed the activities and loved "everything here." He added: "It's amazing to see where we came from and where we are today and to think about where we'll be in 250 years."

The ND250 Commission, which sponsored the event, was established by the North Dakota Legislature within the State Historical Society to mark the 250th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026. For information on how you can get involved and upcoming events, visit nd.gov/north-dakotas-celebration-americas-250th.



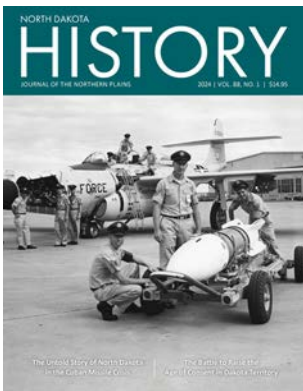
Former Gov. Jack Dalrymple signs a copy of his book "Oliver Dalrymple and His Bonanza Farm: A Pictorial Biography and History" for Dana Henry, Mrs. North Dakota America 2025. Located west of Fargo, the Dalrymple farm, managed by his great-grandfather and once the largest cultivated farm in the world, helped publicize the region in the late 19th century.



Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson, adjutant general of the North Dakota National Guard, reflects on the state's outsize contributions to the nation's defense.



Marli Livingston, 9, enjoys face painting by Theo Art School of Bismarck.



Journal Takes Top Prize at Museum Conference

A recent issue of *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* received first place in the 2025 Mountain-Plains Museums Association Publication Design Competition for magazines, newsletters, and quarterly/biannual publications! The prize was awarded at the organization's annual conference in Omaha.

Produced by the Audience Engagement & Museum Department, the winning issue from 2024 featured articles on North Dakota's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis and on the legislative battle to raise the age of consent in Dakota Territory.

Grants Celebrating North Dakota 250 Awarded

A grant from the ND250 Commission will help bring an upcoming exhibit at NDSU exploring the journey of Germans from Russia immigrants to a much wider audience. The \$9,950 grant, awarded to the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, will fund a virtual tour of the exhibit, expanding access to archival material and stories that highlight these immigrants' contributions. The award was one of nearly \$50,000 in Community Initiatives Grants recently distributed to help mark North Dakota's role in the American journey. Other awards include:

- \$8,249 to the City of Carrington to install interpretive signs as part of its Walking the Prairie Story Trail.
- \$10,000 to Dakota Pro Musica to help support a three-concert series on U.S. choral and vocal musical excellence.

- \$10,000 to the Pembina County Historical Society to fund the design and construction of a colonial-style cider press at its community orchard.
- \$10,000 to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation to fund digital 250th education programming for students.



The next review of grants takes place Jan. 1, 2026. Each grant recipient is required to have a minimum 20% local match for their project. To find grant ideas for your community and to apply, visit history.nd.gov/hp/grants.html.



To make way for the Military Gallery addition, the French Gratitude Train boxcar was moved to its new home adjacent to the All Veterans Centennial Memorial earlier this fall.

Military Gallery Construction Underway

If you've visited the state Capitol grounds in recent months, you've likely noticed a changing landscape as construction on the new Military Gallery begins. While walking routes and parking options look a little different these days, the ND Heritage Center & State Museum remains open and ready to serve you.

Designed by Zerr Berg Architects and BWBR, the gallery will showcase stories of North Dakota's military history from early Native American practices before statehood to today. The 70,000-square-foot expansion to the ND Heritage Center will also include an event space, an expanded café, and a new outdoor courtyard and amphitheater. Ralph Appelbaum Associates is developing the gallery's exhibit design and content with input from staff and key stakeholders.

A joint project of the ND National Guard, the State Historical Society, and their foundations, the roughly \$80 million project is being funded through a mix of private and public money and is expected to open in late 2027. To contribute financially or donate an item to the gallery, visit statemuseum.nd.gov/exhibits/nd-military-gallery. You can also view a time-lapse video of construction [here](#).

Museum Stores Make Holiday Shopping a Breeze

Holiday shopping got you stumped? Our Museum Stores have gifts for everyone on your list.



Art lovers will appreciate new T-shirts, mugs, stickers, and prints featuring the stunning watercolors of Medora, the Marquise de Morès. Produced in tandem with a new exhibit on Medora's life and art at the State Museum, these items will inspire and delight. And for budding artists, our watercolor kits are a must.



Next year, the United States turns 250. To celebrate, we've rolled out a line of America 250 and North Dakota 250 products, including plush stuffed animals, flags, and shirts.

Items featuring mascots from state historic sites are a great memento of a fun and educational day out. Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site's Arnie the Eagle ornament adds a patriotic touch to any tree; while Sheriff Hank of the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site appears on a new kids' water bottle. Or choose from our range of state historic sites and museums puzzles—sure to be a hit with family and friends.



Of course, you will always find your favorite Pride of Dakota products, and look for new additions in our stores, as we continually update our offerings. From food to crafts to custom artwork and jewelry, we've got you covered!



Discover these and other cool gifts at our Museum Stores across the state or online at statemuseum.nd.gov/store. And don't forget—Foundation members always receive 15% off their purchases and 30% off up to three items with their double discount coupon Dec. 1-19.

Shop at these store locations:

- North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum
- Chateau de Morès Interpretive Center
- Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center
- Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center
- Pembina State Museum
- Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site

Medora Excavations Shed Light on 1880s Military Encampment



State Archaeologist Andrew Robinson, left, and North Dakota State University student Lukas Olason document an excavation site during an October dig.



Research Archaeologist Margie Patton uses the agency's magnetometer to search for areas of past human activity. Both the Marquis de Morès and future President Theodore Roosevelt visited the site in 1883.

Archaeology & Historic Preservation Department team members in partnership with the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation are helping document the former location of a late 1800s military encampment (cantonment) in Medora.

Built in 1879 near the Little Missouri River, the cantonment housed soldiers guarding the construction of the railroad until 1883 when it became a hunting lodge and resort. Four years later, the site burned down. Everything was destroyed but the former hospital building, which was moved to Dickinson.

Beginning last summer, agency archaeologists and others carried out field research at the site, using geophysical remote sensing equipment and uncrewed aerial vehicles (drones) to identify areas where potential surface and subsurface features might be found. Subsequent digs unearthed a variety of artifacts, including cartridge cases, buttons, suspender buckles, window glass, and even a tin toy soldier and fragments of a porcelain doll. A floor or part of a wall was also excavated.

In summer 2026, the team plans to conduct additional research. They also hope to learn more about the people who once used the buildings there. Watch an "Our Heritage" video about the field work at bit.ly/MedoraDig.

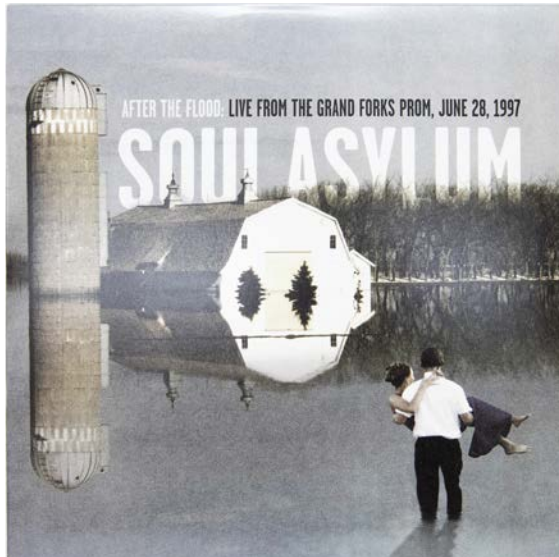


A suspender buckle engraved with a Hercules-like figure and made by Boston Elastic Fabric Co. was among the artifacts found at the site.

New to the Collections

Oh, What a Night

After the Red River flood inundated Grand Forks and shuttered schools in April 1997, a joint prom was held in a hangar at the Grand Forks Air Force Base with Minneapolis-based Soul Asylum headlining. The band recorded the concert and later released it as *After the Flood: Live from the Grand Forks Prom, June 28, 1997*. Featuring hits such as the '90s anthem "Runaway Train," the 2025 vinyl re-release was purchased by Rare Bird Records of Mandan, which generously answered our recent call for donations from the event.

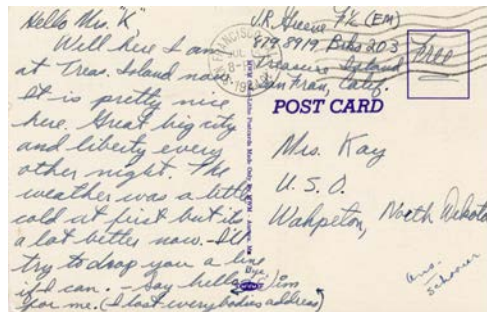


A flooded farmstead and a man carrying a woman through the water appears on the front cover of Soul Asylum's double album with an image of downtown Grand Forks' burnt-out Security Building on the back. SHSND 2025.91.1

Letters to Mrs. K

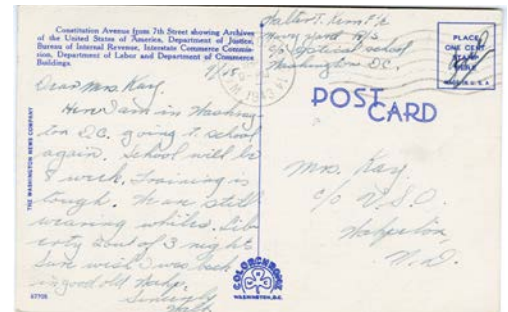
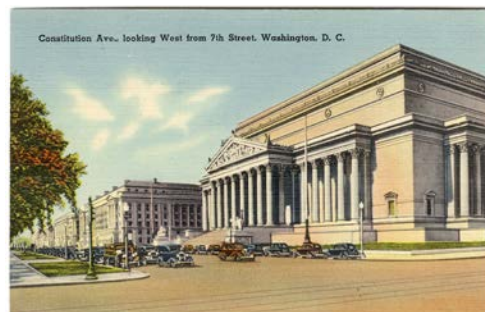
During World War II, Mabel Kachelhoffer was director of the USO club that served military personnel training at what was then known as the Wahpeton State School of Science. To the soldiers, she was simply "Mrs. K," and they never forgot her—their devotion evident in the postcards they sent her after they shipped out to locations across the country.

Dozens of their postcards as well as V-mail (Victory Mail) were recently donated to the State Archives by her grandson Mike Worner and his wife, Marilyn. These notes, mostly simple hellos and quick updates, echo the uncertainty and homesickness of wartime life but also the excitement of new places and experiences.



Jim sent this humorous postcard capturing the plight of an enlisted sailor on KP duty from Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. "Great big city and liberty every other night," he wrote in July 1944. SHSND SA 11714-0001-003

"Training is tough. ... Sure wish I was back in good old Wahp," noted Walt in this September 1943 postcard of Washington, D.C., where he was stationed at the Navy Yard. SHSND SA 11714-0001-002



It's Wunnerful, Wunnerful



SHSND SA 11583-00001

Pack of Outlaws



SHSND 2025.90.25

We were thrilled to recently add the original 1903 Welk homestead certificate to our Lawrence Welk Collection. The Welk homestead, which celebrated its 10th anniversary as a state historic site last summer, is the birthplace of the famed entertainer and entrepreneur. Donated by Dana Kramer, the certificate was granted by the U.S. government to Lawrence's father, Ludwig, a German Russian immigrant to the area. Kramer received it from her mother, Welk's late niece Evelyn Schwab.

See a copy of the certificate on display at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site outside Strasburg.

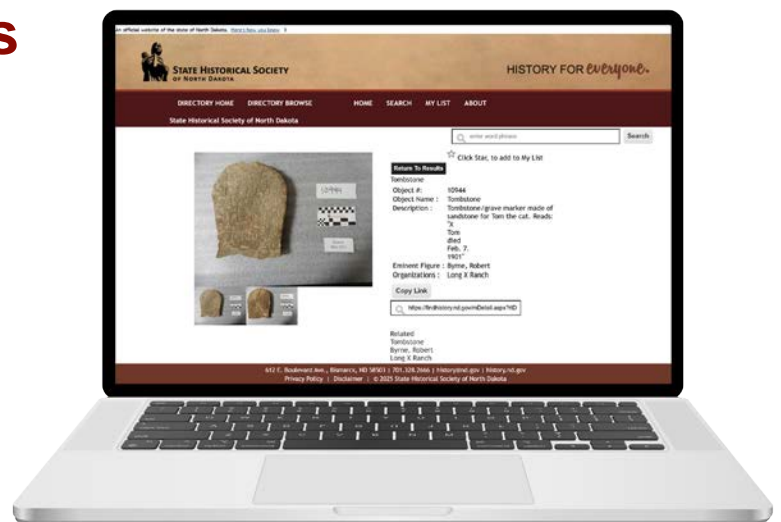
Less than a month after the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, playing cards featuring the "52 Most Wanted" members of the Iraqi regime and military were distributed to service personnel.

Each card in this deck, donated by Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran David Gray, identifies key Iraqi leadership figures, including ace of spades Saddam Hussein. Initially intended to familiarize troops with the enemy, the cards quickly became a popular item for civilians to collect.

History at Your Fingertips

Explore millions of items in the State Historical Society collections on the go or from the comfort of your home.

With the launch of our findhistory web portal, a growing number of photographs, manuscripts, records, publications, and artifacts are now searchable online. You can even sort collections by topic or research interest. Digitized issues of *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* are also accessible through the portal. Staff members are adding new items every day. To get started on your history journey, visit findhistory.nd.gov.





Celebrity Spotting

In September, agency staff welcomed the cast and crew of “Elkhorn” to the Chateau de Morès State Historic Site for tours during the Medora premiere of the show’s second season. The INSP television series is loosely based on the experiences of Theodore Roosevelt, Medora, and the Marquis de Morès during their time in the Badlands. We especially enjoyed working with Jeff DuJardin (the Marquis) and Ashton Solecki (Medora) pictured far right above.

Local History Awardees Honored

After learning there was a Venlo in North Dakota, Dutch native Toine Schreinemachers spent decades researching the story of the small farming community in Ransom County that shares the name of his hometown in the Netherlands.

Schreinemachers, a butcher by trade and a historian by passion, recently returned to North Dakota to receive a 2025 Local History Award from the State Historical Society.

He was one of three individuals and a museum recognized for their outstanding contributions to North Dakota’s history at a Nov. 5 awards luncheon sponsored by the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation.

In addition to Schreinemachers, the Excellence in Local History Award was presented to the Fargo Air Museum, whose exhibits educate the public about aviation heritage. Former State Archivist Gerald G. Newborg of Bismarck received the Heritage Profile Honor Award for his work preserving and expanding access to North Dakota’s archival collections. The late Arlene Saugstad of Minot, a writer and editor who helped shape the history and culture of her community through her support for the arts, was recognized posthumously with the North Dakota Person of History Award.



Recipients of the 2025 Local History Awards and their representatives with State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson (fourth from left) and Dale Lennon, executive director of the Foundation (far right).

New “Our Heritage” Videos Highlight Ladies Historical Society, Ritterbush Architects



New Media Specialist Adam Pfeifer scopes out a building designed by brothers Robert A. and Clarence Ritterbush and their partner Arthur Van Horn in downtown Oakes while filming a recent “Our Heritage” video. The 1920s-era brick structure now houses a thrift store.

Each month, the “Our Heritage” video series shines a light on prominent North Dakotans, historical topics, or related themes, often drawing on the agency’s staff experts and collection of 14 million artifacts to bring the subject to life.

Check out recent releases on the Ladies Historical Society, a group formed in 1889 by North Dakota women that would evolve into today’s State Historical Society; on the Ritterbush family of architects whose work would shape the face of Bismarck and the state; and on two of our lesser-known state historic sites, Lake Johnson and Camp Arnold, which played small roles in 1860s military expeditions.

Since launching the series in early 2024, New Media Specialist Adam Pfeifer has produced more than 20 videos spotlighting everything from the career of North Dakota’s first licensed female physician to the Minot native credited with sinking the largest warship by a U.S. submarine. View them at bit.ly/OurHeritageVideos.

Two North Dakota Properties Added to National Register

A Petersburg auditorium and a Bismarck residence have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places 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.

An example of Public Works Administration Art Moderne architecture, the 1934 Petersburg Auditorium in Nelson County housed community activities during the Depression. It also served as a movie theater.

Designed by the architectural firm of Purcell, Fieck, and Elmslie, the Prairie Style Patrick E. Byrne House was built in 1912. Part of the Bismarck Cathedral Area Historic District, the residence is an excellent example of the firm’s work in North Dakota and represents a pivotal commission.



Petersburg Auditorium. Photo by Hepper Olson Architects



Patrick Byrne House. Photo by Emily Sakariassen

New Animation Enlivens State Museum Gallery



Did you know? The extinct marine sea turtle known as *Archelon ischyros* was roughly the same size as a Volkswagen Beetle.

These and other fun facts about the ND Heritage Center & State Museum's *Archelon* fossil cast come to life in a new animation for kids produced by the Audience Engagement & Museum Department. The film, which features an animated *Archelon* and a Volkswagen Beetle, provides a playful and accessible intro to the creature once known as the ruler turtle. It can be viewed in the Adaptation Gallery: Geologic Time.

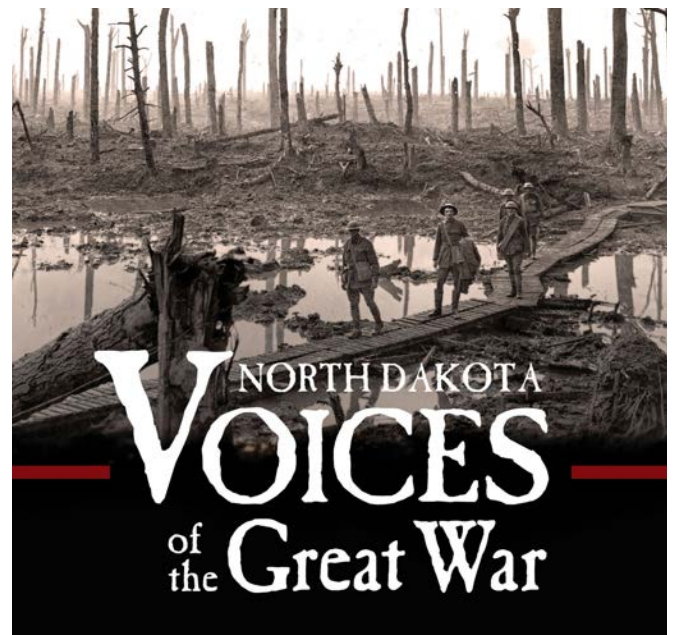
Remembering WWI

North Dakotans' experiences in World War I took center stage in a play presented at the ND Heritage Center the week of Veterans Day.

Based on letters in the State Archives sent to and from North Dakota family members serving in France during WWI and interwoven with songs from the era, *North Dakota Voices of the Great War* follows the highs and lows of wartime life as told by soldiers and nurses on the front and the families who supported them from home.

Produced by the State Historical Society and directed by Gallery Guide Tom Chase, the play was written by University of Mary faculty Daniel Bielinski and Joseph T. Stuart, Ph.D., and first performed by the university's theater department.

Service members and their families could attend the play, which ran from Nov. 11-16, free of charge on Veterans Day.



Grants Available for Preservation Training

The North Dakota State Historical Records Advisory Board was awarded a \$14,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Administered by the State Historical Society, the grant will support historical records management and preservation training in North Dakota. A maximum of \$1,500 may be awarded per applicant seeking professional development in archival and records management practices until the funds are exhausted.

Those eligible include staff and volunteers at local historical societies, archivists, records managers, and county or state government employees responsible for managing public records. Applicants must be North Dakota residents and demonstrate how the proposed training will benefit their work with historical records.

To apply, visit history.nd.gov/archives/shrab.html, or request an application from the State Archives, archives@nd.gov/701.328.2091.

FOUNDATION NOTES



History's
Foundation
State Historical Society
of North Dakota Foundation

Supporting the Military Gallery: On Aug. 11, the Foundation helped sponsor a Military Gallery campaign event with the Minot Area Chamber EDC in Minot. The program featured a video presentation and remarks from Minot Area Chamber EDC President and CEO Brekka Kramer, Brig. Gen. Jackie Huber, State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, and Wing Commanders Col. Jesse Lamarand and Col. James Schlabach. PACE Fundraising representative Michelle Brislin concluded the program with an update on the campaign's progress.



Restoring a Huey Helicopter: The Bell HH-1H Iroquois "Huey" helicopter at the Oscar-Zero Missile Alert Facility got a facelift with support from the Foundation, which contributed \$9,000 to the project. The aircraft received a full exterior repaint, restoring its authentic appearance. A striking addition to the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site near Cooperstown, the Huey enhances the visitor experience and strengthens the connection to North Dakota's military heritage. During the Cold War and beyond, Hueys were critical to missile field support operations due to their ability to quickly cover vast areas. This Huey served at the Grand Forks missile field during the 1990s.

Enriching Our Artistic Legacy: The Foundation is grateful for a generous gift from Mel Webster of Bismarck, who donated three watercolor paintings by renowned Western artist Michael Haynes—*His Sister's Son*, *Arikara Warrior*, and *Peacock Feather*—to the Foundation. These works, now part of the State Historical Society's museum collections, enhance our ability to share stories of the northern Plains through history and art.

From left: State Historical Society Director Bill Peterson, Mel Webster, and Foundation Executive Director Dale Lennon.



Making Way for a New Era: As part of the Military Gallery construction, the Foundation made significant adjustments to its office space at the ND Heritage Center. Construction created a need for a new volunteer workstation, different storage space, and moving mail operations to the boardroom. These changes allow the Foundation to continue to work effectively as the new gallery takes shape.

Foundation volunteers Dolores Boint and Lawrence Klemer settle into their new space.

Dale Lennon, Executive Director, State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation
P.O. Box 1976, Bismarck, ND 58502-1976 • 701.222.1966 • Dale@statehistoricalfoundation.org • statehistoricalfoundation.org



North Dakota Heritage Center
612 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58505-0830

NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
UNITED
PRINTING



Toasting in the New Year

Historical Cocktails

Demos & Tasting

Tuesday, Dec. 30
6:30–8 p.m.
ND Heritage Center
& State Museum

\$30 | Ages 21+
[HistoricalCocktails.
eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)



Plains Talk is published by the State Historical Society of North Dakota, ND Heritage Center, 612 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck, ND 58505/701.328.2666/history.nd.gov. Bill Peterson, Director; Bree Gallagher, *Plains Talk* Editor. *Plains Talk* is a benefit to members of the SHSND Foundation.

North Dakota State Historical Board: Amy Mossett, Halliday, President; Matt Dunlevy, Grand Forks, Vice President; Lacey Anderson, Bismarck, Secretary; Tyler Hamman, Bismarck; Rolf Sletten, Bismarck; Richard Stenberg, Williston; Alan Svanes, Kintyre; Thomas Beadle, State Treasurer; 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: Bruce Dolezal, Dickinson, President; 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; Dennis Hill, Bismarck; Nancy Johnson, Fargo; Ben Murphy, Killdeer; Shirley J. Olgeirson, Bismarck; Ryan Taylor, Bismarck

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter!
history.nd.gov/enews

