

# The Docket

A quarterly newsletter for Friends of  
The Custer County 1881 Courthouse Museum  
and Members of the Custer County Historical Society

January 2015

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[www.1881courthousemuseum.com](http://www.1881courthousemuseum.com)

## Museum Grants

The 1881 Courthouse Museum has received several important grants in the last few months. The Oswald Family Foundation has awarded the museum \$2,000 for our Youth Program. We received a grant of \$10,000 for our preservation project and another \$13,000 from the South Dakota State Historical Society's Deadwood Fund Grant to finish much needed structural repairs to the building. We thank all these entities for their support. There is more information about these grants below.

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## Christmas Event

On Saturday, December 6th the Museum hosted a pre-Christmas sale in the bookstore/gift shop. Starting at noon, with customers waiting for the front doors to be unlocked, until well after 4 pm, we had a steady flow of guests. We had a number of items on sale, as well as three new area books, and three local authors signing their children's books. All in all, it was a very successful event, where we made over \$1,800.

We still have a few copies of "Pioneer Girl", the new biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder, and the pictorial book "Our Black Hills & Badlands", which has a number of photos provided by the 1881 Courthouse Museum.

Gary is usually in the Museum office from 8 until noon, and he would be happy to help you with a book purchase.

Unfortunately, we no longer have any copies of "Cooks in the Parks".

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## 2015 Marks Museum Anniversary

The year 2015 brings with it the observance of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the 1881 Courthouse Museum.

Following the announcement in 1973 by Custer County Board of Commissioners that a new courthouse would be built and the old building retired, the Custer County Historical Society initiated a petition throughout the county requesting that the old historical building be turned over to the Society and be converted into a museum to preserve the history of the Southern Black Hills.

Over the next two years, the transformation of Custer County government took place and in the year 1975 the new building was complete and the old courthouse was vacant. It was that year the museum was born.

This year, when the Museum opens for the season in May, a flag-raising ceremony will inaugurate the occasion. Thanks to the generosity of Board of Trustees member Chuck Cochran, a replica of the 1881 United States Flag will be raised to fly over the 134 year old structure

Throughout the year, the Museum staff and volunteers will conduct a variety of observances to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and renew this structure as the permanent repository of the vast and fascinating history of Custer County, South Dakota.

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Jeanine Gould of Pacer Corporation describing the variety of minerals found in the Black Hills.

### **Youth Activities at the Museum**

The 1881 Courthouse Museum in Custer will kick off a monthly series of programs for children and youth beginning Friday January 9<sup>th</sup>, according to Gary Enright, Director.

“This project will be implemented in cooperation with the “Kid Stop” program at the local YMCA”, Enright stated. “We are working with Erica Van Horn who is coordinating the educational programs at the YMCA. We expect about three-dozen young people in grades K through 5.”

“The initial program will feature a brief history of the importance of the mining industry in Custer County. The featured presenter at this program will be Jeannie Gould of the Pacer Corporation. Ms. Gould’s program will be designed to increase understanding among students of the fascinating history and importance

of the mining industry in the Black Hills.” Enright added.

“Future programs being planned include “Kids and Valentines” to be conducted by Sandy Ackman, “Legends and Culture of Native Americans”, conducted by Jay Red Hawk, both of Custer, and ‘The Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder’ presented by Bonita Ley of Rapid City.” Enright continued.

“We are investigating the development of other programs which will utilize some of our region’s assets including a nature study in Custer State Park, the importance of the lumber and logging industry in this area, as well as the presentation of the historical aspects of some of our most popular holidays including Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.” The Director said.

“We are very pleased that funding for this project is being underwritten through a grant to the Museum from the Oswald Family Foundation.” Enright stated. “The grant in the amount of \$2,000 was presented late last year to fund our overall educational project titled ‘*All History Is Local*’, presented to the Museum by the Oswald Family”.

The monthly programs will take place in the Museum at 411 Mt. Rushmore Road, the second Friday of each month beginning at 10:00 am and lasting until noon. Custer area Museum volunteers will be participating in these programs, setting up the facilities, helping presenters, distributing materials and coordinating the implementation of each program.

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### **Old Time Country Fair:**

Yes, it's that time of year when we start planning for our annual Old Time Country Fair, which will be held on July 2, 3 and 4 during 2015.

We plan on filling the Museum grounds with vendors, and will be selling Schwann's ice cream products again. We also plan on having antique autos and tractors on display on 4th Street.

Since 2015 is the 40th anniversary of the 1881 Courthouse Museum, we plan to make this Old Time Country Fair an "anniversary" event.

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## **Museum Director's Report**

**By Gary Enright**

Most people have the idea that when a museum closes for the season that the winter months equal a great deal of time off for those on the staff or volunteer. True, most of the volunteers who greet visitors and answer questions for tourists, do take the winter off. But behind the scene there's a lot going on.

In this first year as your Director, I have learned that the quiet off-season provides an excellent time for planning, organizing, and developing projects and displays that will enhance the museum in future months and years.

For instance, the on-going cataloging of materials, photographs and donated items, which make up the displays and the permanent records of the Museum, is a long and difficult task. Those who are involved in this undertaking are demonstrating their keen abilities for organizational expertise. The Preservation and Collections committees work throughout the year accessioning, de-accessioning and archiving our inventory. Helen Carney, Cynthia McCahon, Delmar Brown, Joani Houlihan, Tom Martin, Denny Hickok, Phyllis Stozt and Maggie Prah make up these committees and can be found searching through the stored items in the Museum to make our institution even more valuable to the preservation of

history than it presently is. We are fortunate to have them.

Planning projects and displays for the upcoming season and future years also takes a lot of time and study. In addition, the on-going public relations with community, regional, and state-level organizations dealing in the preservation of history, also increases during the winter months.

This is the time of the year when we spend considerable effort investigating the various sources of grants and funding programs for the Museum. During this past year we have been fortunate to solicit and receive much-needed funding for maintenance and repairs on this historic building, obtaining the latest state-of-the-art equipment to assist in preservation of newspapers, historical documents and papers, and the funding of various programs which serve the community.

All in all, the winter months do offer some much needed time off for most of us but monthly board and committee meetings are still held and there seems to be a daily stream of helpers and friends who make regular stops just to see what's going on. As a reminder, the Museum Office is staffed Monday through Friday from 8 am to noon.

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## **Museum Receives Historic Preservation Grant**

Leon Nepper, Chairman of the Board of Trustees received notification from South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard, that the 1881 Courthouse Museum in Custer has been awarded a matching grant in the amount of \$13,000.00, from the South Dakota Historical Society's Deadwood Fund.

Nepper said, "The grant will be matched by funds the Board of Trustees has accumulated through donations to the Capital Improvement Funds at the

Museum. We are grateful for the support of the Deadwood Fund and for the hundreds of individual citizens who contribute to our funds set aside to maintain this grand historic building.”

In his letter to the Museum, Governor Dugaard noted, “Your dedication to protecting and preserving our state’s history and heritage is important to your community and all of South Dakota. Together with monies made available from the Deadwood Fund, your financial investment and historical preservation work help maintain the economic viability and importance of historic properties.”

Nepper added, “We are pleased that the State Historical Society has designated these funds for the 1881 Courthouse Museum repairs and improvements. The building is entering its 134<sup>th</sup> year of existence and is one of the oldest and most well preserved structures in the State of South Dakota, dating back to Dakota Territory days when the building served as the Custer County Courthouse for 94 years from 1881 to 1975.”

The Museum Board Chairman continued, “This grant is especially significant since these structural repairs on the building will take place during the Museum’s 40<sup>th</sup> year as the repository of the history of Custer City, Custer County, and the Southern Black Hills. Each year this building becomes more valuable to this community, the Black Hills, the State of South Dakota, and to the entire region. Each year thousands of tourists visit this institution and leave behind glowing comments regarding the significance of the displays and historic preservation featured here.”

Nepper concluded, “The Museum leadership and staff will develop a schedule for completion of the necessary repairs which will take place in the coming weeks prior to the season opening

schedule for mid-May. A public grant award ceremony, ribbon cutting, and dedication of the project in cooperation with the South Dakota State Historical Society, will be scheduled following the completion of the maintenance and repairs.”

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## **Custer County Historical Society Program Schedule - 2015:**

*The Pine Room in the Custer County  
Courthouse Annex*

*(Adjacent to the Custer County Library)-  
First Saturdays @ 2:00 p.m.*

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>** “The Search for Black Gold in Fall River County” – David Schnute, a retired National Park Ranger, explores the Dillon Oil speculative venture in which fortunes were lost, just west of Hot Springs. Schnute studied the role of the media in stoking the flames of oil fever in 1929- 30. His pictures reveal his painstaking research at the Fall River Museum (Hot Springs). His grandfather was an executive of the Dillon Oil Co.

(Please Note: Mr. Schnute’s talk was cancelled due to inclement weather. It will be re-scheduled for next year.)

**February 7<sup>th</sup>** “Mounted Archery Techniques” – Jay Red Hawk, a Custer resident, frequently lectures on the American Natives, whose horsemanship rivaled the fabled Cossack warriors of Old Russia. In 2003, he shot his first buffalo while on horseback, using a traditional Lakota bow (sinew-backed, plains ash bow, and handmade stone point arrows). Red Hawk’s lectures and published papers have been given in a variety of locations (Canada, Korea, England’s Royal Archives, & Germany).

**March 7<sup>th</sup>** “A Historic Look: The Carving of Mt. Rushmore to the Challenge of Preservation” – Blaine Kortemeyer, Custer, Assistant Chief Park Ranger for 13 years, will explain the

present work being done at Rushmore. His many visuals include a hologram.

April 11<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday)

“Remembering a WWI Hero from South Dakota” – Arley Fadness’s 8<sup>th</sup> book (*Balloons Aloft*), includes a story of a balloonist from Huron, SD, who used his skills to help win WWI. A retired minister living in Custer, Dr. Fadness is a frequent speaker for historical groups.

May 2<sup>nd</sup> -- (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday)

“If You Have To Grow Up, It Might As Well Be In A Small Town” – Phyllis Schrag, of Sioux Falls says, “Growing up in a 1950’s small town has some unique advantages that modern children will never experience. This story-telling style of lecture explores commonalities found in South Dakota small towns. Details of lessons learned from a child’s point-of-view will evoke many individual memories among audience members.” Schrag is a speaker from the South Dakota Humanities Council.

June 6<sup>th</sup>

“The Polio Epidemic Here” – Cindy Messenger of Hot Springs, a librarian, will tell how the epidemic during the 1950’s & 1960’s was handled by the West River Polio hospital. Nine doctors and an army of physical therapists and nurses worked with the victims – 521 cases in just the first 11 months. In these difficult times, i.e. the Ebola crisis, the polio epidemic should be studied.

October 3<sup>rd</sup>

“As Good as Remington and Russell”, Ed McGaa Eagle Man’s varied career includes that of fighter pilot, surviving 110 combat missions for the Marines. He is the author of numerous books. His law degree is from the University of South Dakota. His new interest is in the artist Charles Schreyvogel, whose paintings illustrated the Mongolian style of riding for the RedCloud/Crazy Horse warrior, allowing

both hands free for aiming a rifle on the run. All though Eagle Man lives in Hill City, he is a frequent lecturer at Crazy Horse and in Europe.

November 7<sup>th</sup>

“Our National Parks Yesterday and Today” – Paul Horsted of Custer will return and share his experience in re-photographing historic photo sites in 25 National Parks across America, including several in the Black Hills area. Paul, his wife Camille, and daughter Anna Marie collaborate in the planning of the many Horsted publications. This program will be a sneak peak at his next book, not yet released.

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### Mary Chilton DAR Foundation Grant

The 1881 Courthouse Museum has received a generous \$10,000 grant from the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation. This money will be used to purchase a microfilm reader/scanner and much of the available microfilm of the Custer Chronicle. As more money becomes available, we will complete our collection of Chronicle papers and purchase the available microfilm of other Custer County papers. Our goal is to have all this information readily available to the public for research and study.

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### Volunteers at Work



Volunteers preparing the annual Friends of the Museum mailing.

## **Hermosa Arts and History Association – HAHA**

HAHA now has a website – the address is below. Please check it out to find out all that these folks are doing in Hermosa.

<http://www.hermosahistory.org>

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## **Fairburn Museum**

The museum does not have a regular staff so if you would like to take a tour contact Sally Nordstrom at 255-4807 or Marie Gruwell, 255-4758 to arrange a time to visit.

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## **Friends of the Museum and Capital Improvement Campaign Donors**

A complete list of these donors is available at the museum.

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## **Fund Raisers**

Lynn's Dakotamart's We Care Program  
Bring your Lynn's Dakotamart Receipts to the Museum and we can raise money with them.

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## **Foundations Who Have Donated to the 1881 Courthouse Museum**

Deadwood Historic Preservation  
Commission South Dakota State  
Historical Society's Deadwood Fund  
Grant

Outside of Deadwood Fund  
Oswald Family Foundation

Adams Mastrovich Foundation, Mary  
Mastrovich

Mary Chilton DAR Foundation  
South Dakota Community Foundation/  
First Interstate Bank  
South Dakota Community Foundation  
South Dakota Re-Grant  
First Interstate Bank

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