

**STURGIS  
&  
MEADE  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

Newsletter, March 2020, Vol. 5, Issue 1



Photo Courtesy of Bob Davis

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**2020 History Day theme is Early Characters of  
Sturgis and Meade County ... *Kris Hubbard***

The Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society's theme for its 6th Annual History Days on Friday and Saturday, June 19 - 20, is "Early Characters of Sturgis & Meade County."

Historical Society president Mark Rambow said the Society is interested in all kinds of characters, famous and infamous, good and bad, or simply a family member who deserves to be remembered, from any era of local history.

Examples include, General Sturgis, Poker Alice, Grasshopper Jim, Calamity Jane, Caleb Carlton, Annie Tallent, Curley Grimes, Charles Nolin, Rev. Erskine, Father Columban, J. J. Davenport, H. O. Anderson, Pappy and Pearl Hoyle, and so on.

"We welcome anyone who has a character in mind to participate," Rambow said.

*History Day, continued on page 2*

**HISTORY DAY THEME  
TO CELEBRATE  
EARLY CHARACTERS  
OF STURGIS AND  
MEADE COUNTY**

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This year's History Day has a theme that is sure to be popular: celebrating the early characters of Sturgis and Meade County.

Historical Society President, Mark Rambow, previews one of the most famous—Poker Alice—in a feature article on Page 4 that uncovers new insights that you may not have known about the notorious Sturgis Madam.



2020 Taste of Sturgis first place Peoples' Choice Award went to L. Jeffery Catering/Grocery Mart. Pictured are, from the left, Historical Society President Mark Rambow, Historical Society Treasurer Janice Lundgren, Lori Jeffery Kirk of L. Jeffery Catering, Ryan Meyer of Grocery Mart, and Historical Society Vice President Ross Lamphere. (Photo by Kris Hubbard)

## History Day, *continued from Page 1*

“Participation can be through an informative booth at our reception, a reenactment of the character, or both. Persons dressed in character are also invited to walk in the parade on Saturday.”

Rambow suggested that those interested to please first check with the historical society when selecting a character to make sure that person isn't already taken! “Use your imagination,” he said. “We are famous for our many characters!”

## Taste of Sturgis 2020 ... *Kris Hubbard*

More than 225 people attended the fifth annual Taste of Sturgis - a fundraiser for the Sturgis and Meade County Historical Society - held Jan. 10 at Sturgis City Auditorium.

The People's Choice Award, as determined by those in attendance, went to L. Jeffery Catering/Grocery Mart, first; Uncle Louie's Diner, second; and Weimer's Diner and Donuts, third.

Also serving bites of food were Arby's, Jambonz Grill and Pub, La Risa Mexican Cuisine, Loud American Roadhouse, Sidehack Saloon and The Knuckle Saloon. The Oasis provided a cash bar.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will enable the nonprofit organization to carry out its mission of preserving, protecting and promoting Sturgis and Meade County History.

“The money raised will help us preserve and document the

collection items we have acquired,” said Historical Society President Mark Rambow. “It will also allow us to continue to offer important programming to the community,” he said.

“We thank everyone who attended this event,” said Rambow. “We also thank the businesses that donated food and their employees who worked at our fundraiser. We could not have had such a successful event without the support of the community.”

In addition to the businesses listed above, Historical Society sponsors also include City of Sturgis, Dakota Hills Assisted Living, Davenport Family Real Estate, First Interstate Bank, First National Bank, KBHB Radio, Meade County Commission, Meade County Senior Center Association, Sturgis Photo and Gifts, The Home Slice Group and The Local.



Krissie Traversie, front right, and Michael Adams serve up gumbo for Jambonz Grill and Pub. In line for their samples are, from the front left, Eric Robinson, Katie Robinson, David Gilbert and Scott Graves. (Photo by Kris Hubbard)

# Taste of Sturgis 2020 ... *Kris Hubbard*



Tami DesJarlais waits for Nick Scott to make her omelet at the Uncle Louie's Diner booth. Those stopping at Uncle Louie's, which took second place Peoples' Choice Award, could also sample New England clam chowder. Also pictured are Sierra Lippert, left center, and owner David Stewart. (Photo by Kris Hubbard)



Connie Evers, right, tops off the evening with some sweet treats from Jan Weimer of Weimer's Diner and Donuts, recipient of third place Peoples' Choice. (Photo by Kris Hubbard)



Carol and Ken Sabers line up for their taste of white chicken enchiladas from La Risa Mexican Cuisine. Serving up the food are Lisa Cress, front left, and Eric Swanson. (Photo by Kris Hubbard)

## Poker Alice Takes On the US Army ... *Mark Rambow*

While Sturgis has been home to several true “characters” of the Old West, perhaps none is more associated with the town than “Poker Alice.” Alice Ivers Tubbs was known throughout the West, but it was in Sturgis where she went from being a recognizable name in Western mining towns, to being a true legend of the American West.

The incident which did so much to propel Alice to infamy took place in 1913. Alice, after spending a portion of the 1890s in Deadwood and Lead, had married Warren G. Tubbs and retired to ranch life north of Sturgis near the Moreau River, raising a family. When Tubbs died in 1909, however, Alice buried him in Sturgis, and opened a gambling house to sup-



Warren G. Tubbs grave at St. Aloysius Catholic Cemetery

port herself. It was located in a two-story house just outside of the city limits on the north bank of Bear Butte Creek, at the crossing of Junction Avenue. Alice’s “house” featured not only gambling, but also prostitutes, catering to the cavalrymen stationed at Fort Meade, just over a mile to the east.

On the night of July 15, 1913, Alice’s place was busy. Fort Meade was home to elements of the 12th US Cavalry, but that week it was also hosting 12 companies of the South Dakota National Guard, who were there for summer training.

On this particular evening, it is said that five regular Army men, accompanied by

a number of the members of the National Guard, went to the Tubbs “resort” with the avowed intention of starting a “rough house.” The proprietress and the women residing within the house recognized that their language and condition suggested trouble, so they refused them entrance.



The “Poker Alice” Tubbs house at its original location

Angered by the refusal of the women to entertain them, the soldiers surrounded the house at about 10:30 p.m. They began by cutting the telephone and electrical light wires leading to the building, and, in the darkness, began throwing stones through the windows.

At this juncture, Mrs. Tubbs, “Poker Alice,” the fifty-year-old gambler and madam, appeared in an upper window and started shooting calmly into the crowd with a Winchester rifle. It is said that five shots took effect on the unruly soldiers. One soldier, Private Ben Koetzle of Troop K, 12th Cavalry, was shot in the head, inflicting a wound from which he died at about midnight. He was 26 years of age. Another bullet struck Private Joseph C. Miner, about 22 years of age, also of Troop K, about three inches from the heart, piercing the lungs, causing an injury from which he was not, at the time, expected to recover. The other bullets hit three other men, one of whom was said to be a private citizen.

Once things had calmed down shortly after the shooting, Sheriff Collins and State’s Attorney Gray, along with local police, went to the Tubbs resort and placed “Poker Alice” and six of the female “inmates” of the house under arrest. They were placed in the county jail, and at a preliminary hearing the next evening before Justice Marshal, the State filed charges of disorderly conduct binding each of the defendants over in the sum of \$3,000.

*Poker Alice, continued on page 5*

## **Poker Alice, *continued from Page 4***

This was while awaiting the results of the wound inflicted upon Private Miner, after which the State was expected to file more serious charges.



**“Poker Alice” Tubbs**

Following the shooting, the officer in command at Fort Meade issued an order forbidding any of the United States troops to enter the town. A similar order was issued by the officer in charge of the National Guard encampment.

The fallout from the incident was quick. Within a couple of days, the National Guard stated that “after a most careful investigation of the facts,” they came to the conclusion that none of the State Guard were involved in the incident, despite reports of two being in the group assaulting the house. They stated that “nothing but United States Cavalrymen were at Poker Alice's place when the trouble occurred”. They then cut short their training, hired two special trains, and shipped all of the troops back to their respective corners of the state.

Alice was not charged in the killing of Private Koetzle. It

was found that she had been protecting her property and acting in self-defense. However, she was charged with “keeping a house of ill-fame,” and bound over with a \$1,000 bond, which she promptly paid.

The six women who had also been arrested with her, Jennie Palmer and Bessie Brundidge, both of Sturgis; Ann Carr and Birdie Harris, of Lead; and Mabel Smith and Edith Brown of Deadwood, each pled guilty to “frequenting a house of ill-fame,” were fined \$15, and ordered to appear as witnesses against Alice in her trial.

Ultimately, Poker Alice was only fined for operating her “house of ill-fame”.

With the ban against soldiers coming into Sturgis being quickly lifted, everything soon returned to normal.

There were more brushes with the law in the years to come, including more gunplay, and even serious charges during prohibition. However, this episode cemented “Poker Alice’s” reputation and reminded people that she was not a character to be reckoned with. Her status as an early character of Sturgis and the American West was assured.



**“Poker Alice” Tubbs grave at St. Aloysius Catholic Cemetery**

## Scoop of History and Annual Meeting – March 28 ... *Mark Rambow*

### *Scoop of History Topic is “Community Memories”*

The Sturgis and Meade County Historical Society will be holding our Annual Meeting on March 28, 2020, at the Sturgis Public Library. It is our annual opportunity to review the past year, elect new board members and answer any questions from the membership.

We are pairing this year's Annual Meeting with our next “Scoop of History” program. This month's Scoop will be an opportunity to share your stories, photos, yearbooks or whatever!

What a great opportunity to get out those old photos again and see what memories they may spark from others in attendance. Or simply come in to see and hear what others have to show off.

The Scoop of History is scheduled from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. The brief Annual Meeting will follow from 3:00 to 3:30 p.m.



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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, March 17, 6:30 p.m. — MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office**

**Saturday, March 28, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. — SCOOP OF HISTORY  
“Community Memories,” followed by  
ANNUAL MEETING, 3:00—3:30 p.m., Sturgis Public Library**

**Friday, April 17, Noon — HISTORY AT HIGH NOON, “Music in Sturgis: Learning to Play and Sing,” David Super, Sturgis Public Library**

**Tuesday, April 21, 6:30 p.m.— MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office**

**Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m.— MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office**

**Tuesday, June 16 - 6:30 pm — MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office**

**Friday & Saturday, June 19 & 20 — 6TH ANNUAL HISTORY DAY,  
Sturgis City Auditorium**

## Your Membership Dues are Payable on June 15

Remember, ALL dues are payable on June 15 of each year. Options for paying your dues include:

- a) fill out the membership form below and drop it off at the membership table in the City Auditorium during History Day on June 19 or 20. We will accept your check or credit card;
- b) fill out the membership form below and mail it with your check to the address listed on the form; or
- c) go online to the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society website at [SturgisHistory.org](http://SturgisHistory.org), and click on *Membership and Donations*—> *Membership*, fill out the membership form (renewing members must also fill out a new form), and make your payment through PayPal using your credit card.



If you have any questions, please contact Membership Chair Leona Howe Schroeder at [leonags@aol.com](mailto:leonags@aol.com) or 605-939-9979.

*We appreciate all your support and contributions to the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society, and we hope you are enjoying your membership!*

### STURGIS & MEADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Our goal is to preserve, protect and promote the history of Sturgis and Meade County. We cannot do this alone ... this is done through memberships, sponsorships and donations. The Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society is a 501©3 nonprofit organization. Therefore, sponsorships and donations are tax-deductible; membership dues are not tax deductible. New membership year starts June 15.

#### Registration Information

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Level Desired

Individual: \$25.00                     
  Family: \$35.00                     
  Student: \$15.00  
 Business Sponsorship: \$250.00                     
  Life Membership: \$5,000.00

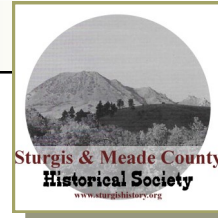
Please send this form, accompanied by a check for your membership, to:

Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 221  
Sturgis, SD 57785

You may also register, pay dues, and donate online with a credit card or PayPal at: [www.SturgisHistory.org](http://www.SturgisHistory.org)

## STURGIS & MEADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 221, Sturgis, SD 57785



### Board Officers

Mark Rambow, President, [mark@sturgishistory.org](mailto:mark@sturgishistory.org)

Ross Lamphere, Vice President

Rebecca Porter-Watson, Secretary

Janice Lundgren, Treasurer

### On Line

Website: [www.sturgishistory.org](http://www.sturgishistory.org)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/sturgishistory.org](https://www.facebook.com/sturgishistory.org)

## OUR SPONSORS

Arby's

City of Sturgis

Dakota Hills Assisted  
Living

Davenport Family Real  
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First Interstate Bank

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Jambonz Grill & Pub

KBHB Radio

L. Jeffery Catering

La Risa Mexican Cuisine

Loud American Road-  
house

Meade County  
Commission

Meade County  
Senior Center  
Association

Sidehack Saloon

Sturgis Photo & Gifts

The HomeSlice Group

The Knuckle Saloon

The Local

The Oasis Bar

Uncle Louie's Diner

Weimer's Diner & Donuts

Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society

P. O. Box 221

Sturgis, SD 57785

*"History is who we are and why we are the way we are."*

—David McCullough