

STURGIS & MEADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter, November 2018, Vol. 3, Issue 4



Photo Courtesy of Bob Davis

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President's Report ... Mark Rambow

The holidays are a traditional time for us all to pause and reflect on what we are thankful for in our lives. The Sturgis and Meade County Historical Society is no different. We have had an amazing year, and appreciate all of those who made that possible!

2018 had many highlights! We again hosted "A Taste of Sturgis" to great success; sponsored several successful "Scoop of History" events; were critically involved in the rebuilding and rededication of the Nolin Monument; organized and hosted the 140th Anniversary of Sturgis and Fort Meade during our annual History Days celebration; and began the process of collecting and preserving critical items in the history of our area.

It was this last item which gave us our most recent accomplishment. With the prospect of items being donated, and the opportunity to receive an entire museum collection, (more on this to come in the future!) the society has prioritized the acquisition of storage space. We needed a place to store, sort and identify items being donated. Our personal closets and basements were no longer meeting our needs!

To this end, we approached the Meade County Commission, who generously (and unanimously) voted to allow the Society the use of two classrooms in the Old Primary school building in Sturgis. This is not intended to be a permanent situation, and we have asked for the space strictly for the storage and conservation of materials. We will continue to look for a permanent home for the society and its efforts to preserve and protect the history of Sturgis and Meade County. In the meantime, however, the generosity of our county commission allows us to press ahead with those goals.

Now that the space is available, we can begin receiving items, photos, documents, etc., which are relevant to the history and culture of our area. We are also developing standards and policies necessary to determine what items we will accept and how best to conserve them.

As 2019 looms, we are excited to see what the future holds. It already promises that the Society is continuing to grow and move ahead in our mission, and we are excited to have you all along as partners in this journey!

Our Society

MEMBERSHIPS

- 55 individual
- 28 family
- 1 lifetime member
- 1 founding member

SPONSORSHIPS

- 2 paid sponsors
- 14 in-kind sponsors

Your interest and monetary contributions help us move forward in preserving the history of Sturgis and Meade County.

If you are not already a member, please consider joining us!

You will find a membership form on page 5 of this newsletter.

Please note the change to our membership renewal dates ...

*Leona Schroeder
Membership Chairman*

PLEASE NOTE: As a result of a recent membership change in the by-laws of the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society by the Board of Directors, we are switching to an annual membership renewal date. All renewals are now due on June 15 each year beginning on June 15, 2019. Members who join between now and June 15, 2019 will pay \$7.50 for a student membership, \$12.50 for an individual membership, \$17.50 for a family membership or \$125 for a business sponsorship.

Winter Scoop of History

'HISTORIC SERVICE STATIONS OF STURGIS'

Kris Hubbard



Historic Service Stations of Sturgis is the topic of the Winter Scoop of History sponsored by the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society. The program, to be held from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday, December 8th, at the Knuckle Brewery in Sturgis, will be presented by Guy Edwards. There is no admission charge.



4th Annual Taste of Sturgis ... *Kris Hubbard*

The fourth annual Taste of Sturgis – a fundraiser for the Sturgis and Meade County Historical Society – will be held from 5:30-8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 11, 2019, at Sturgis City Auditorium. Admission is \$10 per person.

Serving bites of food will be Arby's, Grocery Mart, Jambonz Grill and Pub, La Risa Mexican Cuisine, Loud American Roadhouse, Papa John's, Sidehack Saloon, Subway, The Knuckle Saloon, Wanda's Kitchen and Weimer's Diner and Donuts, all of Sturgis, and Elk Creek Steakhouse, Piedmont. A cash bar by The Oasis will also be available.

Historical Society President Mark Rambow said that proceeds from the fundraiser will enable the nonprofit organization to carry out its mission of preserving, protecting and promoting Sturgis and Meade County History. "Money raised will help us purchase computer equipment and software needed in our acquisition and preservation of donated items," he said.

In addition to the businesses listed above, Historical Society sponsors also include Boulder Canyon Station Convention Center, City of Sturgis, Da Bus, Davenport Family Real Estate, First Interstate Bank, First National Bank, KBHB Radio, Sturgis Photo and Gifts, and The Home Slice Group.



Jambonz Grill and Pub served gumbo during last year's Taste of Sturgis.



More than 200 people attended last year's Taste of Sturgis including Ron and Diane Johnson who are sampling some of Jan Weimer's donuts.



'The Sturgis Mint' by *Mark Rambow*



In the pioneer years of the Black Hills, there were times when currency, particularly coinage, was scarce. At those times, the local papers would bemoan the shortage, until more would finally arrive from the banks, commercial interests, or due to a payday at Fort Meade. One such shortage seemed to have been occurring in late 1887, and early 1888. One Sturgis businessman came up with his own solution to the problem.

It was in March 1888, when news broke that John Ross, a Sturgis blacksmith, was increasing the circulation of dollar and half-dollar coins, by making and distributing them himself. Unfortunately, for him, no act of Congress had been passed authorizing him to do so. Thus came the news that Ross had been arrested for counterfeiting, and was jailed in the "Sturgis Bastille."

John Ross was already established as a Sturgis resident and member of the business community since at least April of 1884, when the *Sturgis Record* reported a fire at his blacksmith shop, where he and his family also lived in the back. There was otherwise very little mention of him, other than an occasional reference to his shop expanding, etc.

It was some surprise then, when Ross was arrested and awaited transport to Deadwood to await federal charges in the United States Court. A search was made of his forge, where the dies and other paraphernalia of his crime were discovered.

The coins were made from a base bullion, blended with lead. The belief was that Ross, whose shop was near the railroad depot, stole some bullion from the Iron Hill Mine, which was piled near the depot awaiting transportation east. Two bars of the metal had previously disappeared. It was said a person could tell by the feel of the coins that they are very poor imitations. They were rough, the edges being untrimmed and had the ring of lead when thrown on a counter. Dollars and half dollars were put in circulation.

One place Ross put them into circulation was at the post traders at Fort Meade. He would give some soldier a lead dollar, send him into the clubroom for a bottle of beer, and take the change as his profit in real coin. This worked successfully, and the trader lost twelve to fifteen dollars by it. Some coins were passed in Sturgis. Mrs. Ross went into a millinery store, bought a few items and paid for them in lead. (She was considered an innocent party, as no one could believe a Victorian woman would knowingly be involved in such a matter.). The milliner's husband took the dollar and tracked Ross down in the Exchange Saloon, demanding real money for it. Ross instantly complied, exchanged the coin for a good one, and went on his way. Reports of his coins showing up reached as far as Rapid City, where it was believed that a deserter from Fort Meade, and a probable accomplice, had spread his share.

Ross was arrested after a complaint was filed against him by H. M. Garlington, the Post Trader at Fort Meade. When U. S. Marshal Kelly made it to town, he took him to Deadwood to await trial.

The counterfeiting case brought out strange, but typical reactions from the Deadwood Press. The habit of the Deadwood papers was to take any incident which occurred in Sturgis, and make the story more about the character of the town, rather than that of the individual involved. They would often go so far as to make light of the charges leveled against individuals, and blame their behavior on Sturgis itself. In this particular case, the *Black Hills Daily Times* titled their report of the case, "Sturgis Rascalities." It seems Deadwood was attempting to get a mint built in their city. They accused Sturgis of trying to steal their opportunity from them by having these coins minted. It was reported that some in Deadwood were demanding that the dies and tools used to make these coins be turned over to them, for use in their own minting.

Ultimately, these were used as evidence when the case came to trial in the US Court. In August 1888, the Deadwood jury found John Ross "not guilty" of the crime of counterfeiting. Basing their decision on some strange instructions from the judge, the jury determined that the workmanship of the coins was so poor, that they were not capable of deceiving anyone. John Ross was therefore acquitted of counterfeiting because he was so bad at doing it.

The Last Puzzle Piece ... *Janice Lundgren*

The last piece of the Nolin Monument puzzle was put into place when the time capsule was buried Oct. 26, 2018 at the Nolin site.

The first piece of the puzzle was put into place Jan. 15, 2016, when the Charles Nolin Monument Restoration/Revitalization Committee was formed. The Committee consisted of Ross Lamphere, chairman, representing the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society; Clint Jolley representing the Society of Black Hills Pioneers; Dean Kinney of HomeSlice Media & Entertainment Group; Bill McKee of the City of Sturgis Parks Board; Terry Hermann, a lifelong Sturgis community member; Janice Lundgren representing the Sturgis Regional Advisory Council; Lee Stroschine representing Ft. Meade Museum; Mark Schulte, president, Regional Health-Sturgis Market; and Sandra Massa, executive assistant to Schulte.

After two and a half years of work, the Nolin Monument was rededicated during History Day on June 15, 2018. It took a great deal of community support to get all of these puzzle pieces to come together. The community can be very proud of the final project that came to pass and will stand for years to come.

Hopefully the time capsule will be opened in 50 years to show present-day Sturgis to the next generation.

Some of the items placed in the time capsule include a list of members and purpose of the Charles Nolin Monument Restoration/Revitalization Committee; list of donors and brochure soliciting funds; original dedication video from 1932 and CD of the 2018 rededication; special postal cancellation stamp and postcard commemorating the rededication; photos of the monument before, during and after restoration and photos of Sturgis and surrounding area; letters and annual reports from officials of Meade County, City of Sturgis and Sturgis Economic Development Corporation; books and various current and past newspaper and newsletter articles relating to Sturgis, Meade County, Fort Meade and the Nolin Monument, including the rededication brochure.



Request For Photos From Our Readers *Bob Davis*



Those of us who have an interest in downtown Sturgis are excited about plans to remodel the old Benevolent Hall into the Hotel Sturgis. We've been asked to start searching for old pictures of downtown Sturgis. It seems certain we'll need some old pictures to decorate the lobby and some of the rooms.

If you have one or more old Sturgis pictures, especially downtown, and want to help, please contact me at the store. At the moment, we're looking for pictures of the building when it was a JC Penney department store. We would only borrow your picture for a short time to make a high quality scan for later use. If requested, compensation could be provided to allow us to use your picture.

We're hoping all of Sturgis supports this improvement to Main Street. Thanks!

Bob Davis
Sturgis Photo & Gifts
605-347-6570

bob@LiveToRide.com

Calendar of Upcoming Events ... *Leona Schroeder*

Saturday, December 8, 2:00 p.m.— WINTER SCOOP OF HISTORY, Knuckle Brewery
'Historic Service Stations of Sturgis'...Guy Edwards

Tuesday, December 18, 6:30 p.m.—MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office

Friday, January 11, 2019, 5:30-8:00 p.m.—4th ANNUAL TASTE OF STURGIS, City Auditorium (\$10 admittance)

Tuesday, January 15, 6:30 p.m.—MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Chamber Office

Friday, January 18, Noon—HISTORY AT HIGH NOON, Library
'Ships of the South Dakota Navy'...Jim Holland

Friday, February 15, Noon—HISTORY AT HIGH NOON, Library
'Sulphur 1909-2019'...Larry Strumprud

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

Friday, March 15, Noon—HISTORY AT HIGH NOON, Library
'Sheriffs of Meade County'...David Super

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

MARK YOUR CALENDARS—5th ANNUAL HISTORY DAY!
Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, 2019

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: \$12.50 thru June 15 _____ Family: \$17.50 thru June 15 _____ Student: \$7.50 thru June 15
_____ Business Sponsorship: \$125.00 thru June 15 _____ 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

STURGIS & MEADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 221, Sturgis, SD 57785



Board Officers

Mark Rambow, President, mark@sturgishistory.org
Ross Lamphere, Vice President
Kris Hubbard, Secretary
Janice Lundgren, Treasurer

On Line

Website: www.sturgishistory.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/sturgishistory.org

OUR SPONSORS



BOULDER CANYON
STATION
CONVENTION CENTER



**GROCERY
MART**

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605-423-4606



Davenport Family Real Estate



Sturgis Photo & Gifts



Weimer's  Since 1949
Diner & Donuts  1120 Main



Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society

P. O. Box 221

Sturgis, SD 57785

'Study the past if you would define the future.'

Confucius