

**STURGIS
&
MEADE
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Newsletter, June 2016, Vol. 1, Issue 1



Photo Courtesy of Bob Davis

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President's Report ... Mark Rambow

For any new organization, like the Sturgis and Meade County Historical Society, the initial year or two is filled with many “firsts;” our first meetings, our first donations, our first events, and so on. We are now introducing our first newsletter to our membership and the public.

THE RECORD is being issued as a report for our membership. We would like it to inform, educate and entertain the members of our organization. We also want it to serve the purpose of energizing the residents of the community and county into action, making the recording and preservation of our history a regular activity, and keeping it in the forefront of our thoughts as we come across interesting items or stories from our past.

The name, **THE RECORD**, was inspired by “The Sturgis Record,” the first permanent newspaper in Sturgis and what became Meade County. (There was another attempt to establish a newspaper earlier in the community, but that is another story for another time!) First issued in July of 1883, “The Sturgis Record” was essential in the sudden growth that oc-

curred in the community during that period. It inspired a sense of community, a sense of purpose, and a platform for the community to trumpet their pride in what they were building! We want the name to inspire that same sentiment in our members.

Sturgis and Meade County are full of history and culture! It is our mission to work with the public to document, preserve and celebrate that past, but we need your help! There are many ways that you and other residents, past and present, can help . . .

- Attend events, such as our annual “History Day,” the “Scoop of History” informational gatherings, and our periodic fundraisers, such as the very successful and enjoyable “Steak Tip Shootout.”
- Collect and donate your history. We can use your stories, photos, documents and items to build our archive. This can all go a long way towards developing a cohesive story, answering research requests, and, eventually, building a community museum.
- Get involved. We need

volunteers to serve on our Board of Directors and on our various committees, and we need help with events and tasks. We need your help!

- Continue your financial support. Whether you are renewing your membership, attending a fundraiser, or making a general donation, it helps us pay for insurance, events, this newsletter, and a variety of other things we have already begun.
- Spread the word. Tell others about what we are doing. Get them to pay membership, attend our events and donate their personal “story.”

Finally, I want to thank all of those people who have made our initial efforts so successful. While space does not allow me to name everyone individually, the support we have received from our city, county, businesses and residents, past and present, has been phenomenal! Thank you! We look forward to building a “Record” of our past to lead us into our future!

‘History is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul.’

2nd Annual
History Day
Scheduled for
June 18, 2016
Schedule on
Page 3

* * *

Booth Space Still
Available!

Contact Leona
Schroeder at
605-939-9979

or

leonags@aol.com

Historical Musings: *Why Scooptown? ... Mark Rambow*

It is an old familiar story, and an old familiar question. Any one from the area has been asked it a thousand times. “Why are you called Scoopers?” We all, of course, know the pat answer, but do we really understand what it means to be a “Scoop,” or to live in or be from “Scooptown?”

First of all, let’s get the story straight. While it may be splitting hairs, the answer most people give is not entirely accurate. Sturgis was not originally called Scooptown. When the temporary military camp, Camp J. G. Sturgis, was established next to Bear Butte in July, 1878, a small tent-camp of vendors sprang up on the adjacent ranch of John “Grasshopper Jim” Frederick. These “enterprising entrepreneurs” had the objective of “scooping” the soldiers of their pay, and the community was nicknamed Scooptown. (The term Scoop was extremely common at that time, and simply meant that you gained an edge on someone or beat them in a competition. Newspapers of the day frequently referred to baseball teams “scooping” their opponent, or a horse “scooping” another in a race. The main place the term is still used is in journalism where a reporter chasing a story will “get the scoop” or “scoop” another publication of a lead.)

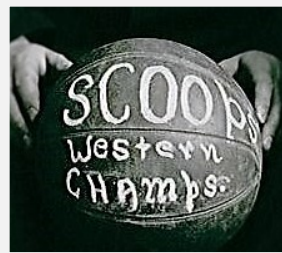
When the permanent site for the military post was designated in August, 1878, a few miles south, at what became Fort Meade, a group of speculators and army officials immediately set up the adjacent townsite of Sturgis City. Over the coming months, as facilities became available, the soldiers at Camp

J. G. Sturgis were gradually relocated to what became Fort Meade. The same movement occurred among the people of “Scooptown,” slowly relocating their activities to the saloons of Main Street, Sturgis City, bringing their nickname and reputation with them.

What was known of early Sturgis came primarily from the Deadwood papers, and it is safe to say that they were not kind to Sturgis City. While we all know the reputation of early Deadwood, by 1878 the town had labeled itself the “Metropolis of the Black Hills,” and saw the upstart community of Sturgis City as an interloper, placing itself between Deadwood and its rightful bounty – the pay of the soldiers at Fort Meade. It was also threatened by Sturgis in a number of other ways, leading Deadwood to look for ways to sully the reputation of the new community.

The Deadwood papers were quick to use Sturgis City’s nickname “Scoop” or “Scooptown” and look for any excuse to brand the community as a hellhole. Sturgis seemed fine with the nickname, but did not appreciate the reputation being associated with it. Early Sturgis City was a very rough place, but equal so to the other communities of the area, and less so than Deadwood itself. The Deadwood press, however, used any murder, act of violence, game of chance, or even accidental death or suicide, as an excuse to disparage the much smaller town.

One example would be a story in the *Deadwood Enterprise* in February of 1881. Following a fight in a Sturgis saloon, one soldier killed another, and the enterprise stated, “Sturgis City, that hell hole of iniquity, the abode of murderers and thieves, has once more come to the front with a murder case.” This story and several others spoke of “Bloody Scoop” and its reputation for lawlessness. One story even stated “the soldiers go there and get scooped – a kind of slaughtering of the innocents, as it were.”



Sturgis residents did not sit still for the slander thrown their way. To the above claim, a resident of Sturgis, writing under the name of Tom A. Toe, turned the blame back, in part, on Deadwood, stating: “The theory that our pristine city received the name of ‘Scooptown’ from the fact that soldiers were in the habit of being scooped on pay-days is not altogether correct. The first ‘Scooptown’ was at the camp established at the other side of the Butte, before Ft. Meade was built. After Sturgis became a struggling city, some of the humorous boys-in-blue, transplanted ‘scoop’ into our midst, and without any particular irrigation on the part of our citizens, it flourished and grew. All great cities have a *nom de patois* and if wealth and greatness fails to cluster about us, it is not because we lack the great essential – a nickname. One fact has developed to the everlasting credit of Sturgis: it has been demonstrated that the boss criminals

are from the great metropolis, and their aiders and abettors from Fort Meade and Crook City. Not a single one of our citizens has been implicated in this business. And as to the scooping of soldiers, we are equally innocent. At the approach of every pay day we are flooded with Deadwood’s worst vagabonds. They come among us for the purpose of robbing the soldiers, and if gambling is not available for the purpose, the slingshot or revolver is resorted to.”

While these claims and counter-claims continued for years, Sturgis embraced its nickname, if not the reputation which came with it. When Sturgis finally got its own newspaper, *The Sturgis Record*, in July 1883, a regular weekly column was titled “Sturgis Scoopings,” and while the nickname probably existed earlier, the first time a person from Sturgis was called a “Scoop” in print seems to be in a Kinsley, Kansas, newspaper in 1884, that stated a local man received a visit from his brother, who was a “Scoop from Scooptown.”

The Black Hills Weekly Times of Feb 28, 1885, in a story critical of Sturgis’ efforts to separate itself from Lawrence County, referred to its residents as Scoopers, and suggested bribery was in play.

It was also in the mid-1880s that the nickname became associated with the sports teams from Sturgis. A baseball craze swept the area and the entire country during this time, and every community had at least one team. The newspapers reported the games, including

Continued on page 4

2015 St. Martins Academy



HIGHLIGHTS

Bus tours:

**Historical Sturgis
Homes**

And

Ft. Meade

**Come Early To Claim A
Spot**

**Tours were popular
and filled up FAST last
year!**



Photo by Joan Bachmeier

Booth Space Still Available!

Contact Leona Schroeder

at

605-939-9979

or

leonags@aol.com

Second Annual History Day Schedule

Sturgis Community Center

Saturday, June 18, 2016

8:00 am to 3:00 pm

*

8:00 a.m.

Annual Meeting of Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society

All present and prospective members are encouraged to attend!

*

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Historical Display Booths Open

Booths will include some of last year's favorites plus:

The Fruth Hotel—Haley Family of Meade County—The Egge Collection—130 Year Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church—Alkali Community Hall

and many others!

*

9:30 a.m.

Bus Tours: Historic Homes of Sturgis or Ft. Meade

*

11:00 a.m.

Speaker: Brenda Shierts, Bureau of Land Management

"Soap Suds Row at Ft. Meade"

*

11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Lunch available ... Courtesy of Sturgis Regional Hospital Auxiliary

*

1:00 p.m.

Presentation of Martin C. Beug History Award

*

1:30 p.m.

Bus Tours: Historic Homes of Sturgis or Ft. Meade

The Charles Nolin Monument ... Ross Lamphere

Photo Courtesy of Ross Lamphere



This little known stone monument located in south Sturgis along Junction Avenue and Harmon Street has been in the news lately. Sturgis Regional Hospital recently announced an expansion project that appeared to take up the Nolin monument site. That announcement caused much citizen concern.

Upon review by Regional Health, the decision was made that giving up a few parking spaces in order to preserve a piece of history was the right move. Sturgis Regional Hospital CEO, Mark Schulte, suggested forming a committee to 'revitalize' the monument and keep this scoop of history alive. After several months of meetings and presentations by committee members Clint Jolley and Ross Lamphere, the plans have taken shape.

The Nolin Monument will remain where it has always been after first being fully repaired and the surrounding area upgraded. Part of the plan involves actually removing the entire structure so land preparation can begin along with the hospital construction. Once

the foundation has been built, the monument will reappear just like it was, only completely restored and revitalized. Several additions will also be made to the monument to tell the full story behind the pony mail carrier, Charles Nolin, and what events led to his demise.

The committee members are Ross Lamphere (Chair and Sturgis/Meade County Historical Society Representative), Clint Jolley (Society of Black Hills Pioneers and original monument construction), Bill McKee (Sturgis Park Board), Terry Hermann (local resident), Dean Kinney (local resident and businessman), Lee Stroschein (Ft Meade Museum), Janice Lundgren (Sturgis Regional Hospital Advisory Council), and Mark Schulte

(President, Sturgis Regional Hospital).

Fund raising and sponsorship opportunities will be underway soon with all donations going to the Sturgis/Meade County Historical Society Nolin Monument Fund. The Historical Society is a 501- C3 with all donations tax deductible.

Contributions can be made to:

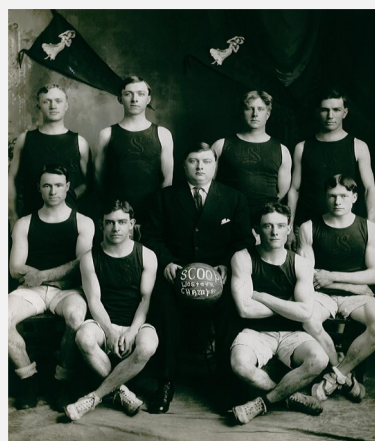
Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society
PO Box 221
Sturgis, SD 57785

Please put Nolin Monument on your donation.

Why Scooptown? ... continued from page 2

those of the "Scooptown Nine," or "the ball club from Scoop." Bowling teams also were prevalent and were named in a similar fashion.

I have still not determined exactly when the school began to use the name. However, the photo of the basketball team from about 1908 (shown at right), indicates "Scoops" on the basketball. (See close up in article on page 2.) It is also interesting that the "Sturgis" banner hanging behind the players has the image of what might be a dance hall girl on it!



As the years progressed, the name became more and more affiliated with the school and its sports teams, and less recognized for the hurly-burly early days of the town, to the point where most people do not realize that Sturgis once carried such a reputation.

After more than a century, many forget the tent-vendors that would periodically locate themselves on the Sturgis Main Street, looking to find a way to draw away the pay from the soldiers from the Fort.

Make no mistake, Scooptown was a rough and dangerous place in its first decade or two. But Sturgis managed to overcome this period and the reputation of "Bloody Scoop." It has retained and taken pride in its nickname, even if many don't remember why we have it.

Out and About in Meade County

In 1911, Faith students went to school in the Federated Church while the school building was being built. It opened in 1912 and is the white building in the back in this picture. In 1923, the brick building was built. Both buildings were used for a time, but when an addition was built onto the brick building, the older, white one was torn down. Now,



the brick building is gone too. The students have a new building that is connect-

ed with the Faith Public Library, and the gym, and school kitchen. At present time, an addition is being built that will expand the kitchen and cafeteria area.

(Post shared online on March 15, 2016, by Cindy Escott at [History of Sturgis & Meade County, SD](#), Facebook page.)

Trending on Facebook

(Shared on April 21, 2016 by Jennifer Bonga)

"Freeman Steele, Sr., was the father of four SHS graduates; William, '24, Freeman, Jr. '25, Joseph, '30, and Margaret, '41. Also, he was proprietor of the Chase Store and an ardent booster for Sturgis and the Chamber of Commerce. In 1940, he promoted his belief that the Verendrye brothers

traveled west after burying a lead plate near the future site of Fort Pierre. He believed they would have buried a similar plate on a promontory such as Bear Butte."

Mr. Steele wanted to reenact this event from 1743, so they all hiked up Bear Butte with a very large and heavy camera.

"In the photograph, the brothers George Norris, SHS '30, (left) and Neil Grams, SHS '41 (right) with Indian companion Andy Mallory, SHS '40 (center) reenact the event on top of Bear Butte near the site of the present observation platform."



Plans for Fall & Winter ... Leona Schroeder

We have had some fun events during the past year, some of which we will continue offering. These events will be directed at preserving, protecting, and promoting the history of Sturgis and Meade County.

We are continuing to sponsor History Day with our 2nd Annual History Day to be held at the Sturgis Community Center on Saturday June 18. With the tours, booths, speakers, and presentation of the Beug Friends of History award, it has become a great way to honor Sturgis & Meade County history. If you missed this event last year, be sure to attend this year and enjoy learning more about the history of our area.

We also have plans to continue the quarterly membership gatherings we call 'Scoop of History' by showcasing topics of interest, such as the Nolin Monument presentation that was presented last April. We have several ideas for future Scoops, including—visiting several local churches that have survived and improved over the last century or more; persuading Mark Rambow to present his Main Street walking tour again and hearing all the wild stories of murders and mayhem on our own Main Street; being entertained by Judge Eckrich and his tales about life in the Old Court House; and more. Let us know if there is something you would like to see highlighted as a 'Scoop of History.' We encourage your ideas!

And, of course, we cannot forget the Steak Tip Shoot Out. This well-attended and much enjoyed event was held last January and was presented with the help of all the local eating establishments who serve steak tips. We had great support for this from the public and the restaurants. Attendees left asking when the next one will be held. So watch for this to become an annual event as well and be sure to come and support the Historical Society and vote on your favorite steak tips.

Watch for specific dates and topics in our upcoming newsletters as the Board continues to sponsor events of historical interest for you!

STURGIS & MEADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Mark Rambow, President mark@sturgishistory.org
Ross Lamphere, Vice Pres.
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Mary Fossen, Treasurer
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Katherine Martel
Kathi Schnieder

Find us on the web at:

sturgishistory.org

And on Facebook at:

The History of Sturgis & Meade County, SD

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In-Kind Donors: City of Sturgis, Da Bus (Steve Barry), Sturgis Area Arts Council, Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, Inc., Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Charities Foundation, Broken Arrow Trading Company.

Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society

P. O. Box 221

Sturgis, SD 57785

*"If you want to understand today, you
have to search yesterday."*