

Verendrye Museum Renovations To Be Completed by June 2020 –

By Sunny Hannum

Fort Pierre's historic Verendrye Museum has been under renovation since the fall of 2018. The museum is located in the old American Legion Hall, a 1930's vintage building that was placed on the National Historic Register July 31, 2017 and which is owned by the city of Fort Pierre. The Historical Society of Old Stanley County had a vision of establishing a museum, which was realized in 1968 with the opening of the Verendrye Museum as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The museum houses a collection of South Dakota and regional artifacts documenting the early history of the area.

Over the past year and a half, the building has been tuck pointed giving the building's exterior a fresh new look. The American Legion structure on the south side of the museum has been removed providing an extra outside exhibit area. A large door was added on that side to provide an entrance for larger items into the museum. The door in back has been closed in and new windows installed; walls have been furred and electrical and plumbing redone with HVAC to be in place by June.

Over the summer, the Verendrye Museum Board will work to redo all the museum displays and put them back in place. Many items have been placed in storage and all others have been moved to the center of the museum and covered with plastic. The museum \$400,000 renovation project is funded by the City of Fort Pierre, Verendrye Museum, Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission, and private donors, Carl & Eileen Fischer.

At their annual meeting in January, Verendrye Museum elected two new board members, Wyatt Johnson and Sandy Cronin. Other members on the ten member board are: Randy Seiler (President), Deb Schiefelbein (Vice President), Connie Carlisle (Treasurer), Dena Gabriel (Secretary), Lynn Fravel, Darby Nutter, Brian Scott, and Dana Iversen.

Attendees at the annual meeting January 25th were treated to a presentation by Ryan and Tessa Krueger describing the renovation of another historic building in Fort Pierre, the old meat market. Museum members received a budget report and heard about the board activities for the year including winning "Best of Show" in the 4th of July parade with a float featuring the Orton School bell, followed by a dedication of the bell next to the Sansarc School. The Backyard Barbecue was a huge success raising much need funds.

In 2019, the Museum board also hired Cindy Bahe as their marketing person and acquired a new web site and Facebook page which already has 2,800 followers. Craft shows were attended in outlying communities with plans to attend more in 2020. Gift shop items have brought in \$1,061 in sales. Sansarc School received two coats of paint and the Stanley County Jail received new curb and gutter, roof repair and walls scraped. The Depot received outside security, roof work, additional railroad memorabilia and HVAC repair. Doors were refinished at the Log Cabin.

Several awards were given at the annual meeting including a "Friend of History" award to the Madsen Family Ranch near Midland, GNN Construction and Carl & Eileen Fischer. Zay Norman was given an award for his years of service to Verendrye Museum