

The Carnegie Courier

Newsletter of

The Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)
& The Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)

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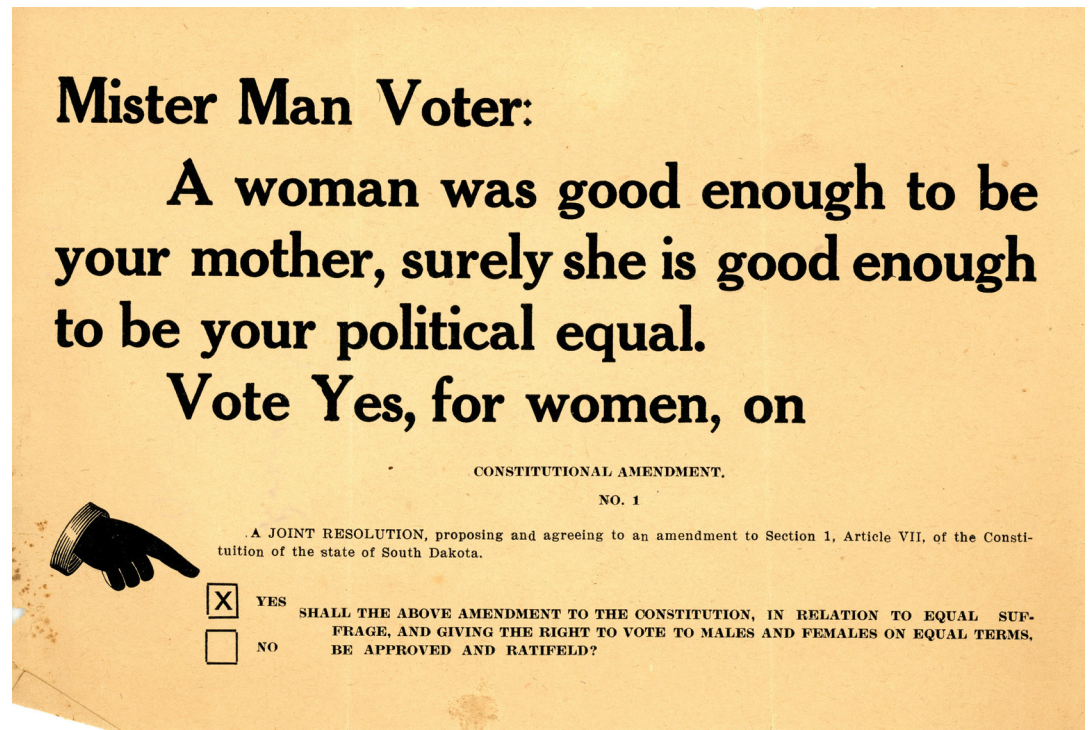
Spring 2026

Women's Suffrage Movement in South Dakota

By Carol Ragle Weller

The women's suffrage movement in the United States spanned from 1840 to 1920. During this period, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) grew to include more than 1,000 branches in 38 states. On August 16, 2020, the organization marked the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote (Argus Leader).

The first Women's Rights Convention was held in 1845 in Seneca Falls, New York. A total of 680 women and 320 men signed the Declaration of Sentiments, written by suffrage leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The document outlined 12 resolutions calling for equal treatment of women and men under the law, including voting rights. In 1850, the first National Women's Rights Convention was held in



Newspaper ad for the Women's Suffrage movement in the early 1900s

Worcester, Massachusetts, drawing more than 1,000 participants, including Frederick Douglass. Early suffragists often aligned with abolitionists, though this alliance later weakened.

Following the Civil War, the 11th Annual National Women's

Rights Convention reorganized in 1866 as the American Equal Rights Association (AERA), advocating universal suffrage regardless of race or gender. The group petitioned Congress to remove discrimination from voting laws. Although Black men gained the right

to vote through the 14th and 15th Amendments, women—both Black and white—remained disenfranchised.

The National Association of Colored Women, founded in 1896, worked alongside the suffrage

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Women's Suffrage ...

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movement under the motto "Lifting as We Climb." Black men were given the right to vote with the 14th and 15th amendments. However, by the late 19th century, Jim Crow laws in the South severely undermined Black voting rights. In 1890, suffrage organizations downplayed racial issues to reunify divided factions of the movement.

After 41 years of debate, Congress approved the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919. By the summer of 1920, 35 of the 48 states

had ratified it. Eight states rejected the amendment—six of them Southern states—while three declined to act. North Carolina and Tennessee remained undecided. Opposition often centered on fears of racial equality and loss of control over the ballot box, arguments used effectively by anti-suffrage groups founded in Boston in 1895. Tennessee ultimately became the 36th state required for ratification. Despite this victory, Black women were routinely denied the right to vote for decades, until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent court rulings outlawed poll taxes and literacy tests.

Susan B. Anthony was

arrested in 1872 for illegally voting in Battle Creek, Michigan, along with 16 other women. She and fellow suffragists pushed for a constitutional amendment beginning in 1878, repeatedly testifying before the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. Forty-one years later, the so-called "Susan B. Anthony Amendment" became the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Women's suffrage gained national political support when Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive ("Bull Moose") Party endorsed it in 1912—the first major political party to do so. In 1913, the first suffrage parade marched

down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. Two years later, tens of thousands participated in a historic march, with women dressed in white and carrying placards representing their states. In 1916, Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1917, 33 women were arrested while protesting at the White House; they endured mistreatment and were released after a hunger strike. In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson urged the Senate to pass the amendment, stating that World War I could not have been fought without the contributions of women.



The Chicago Daily Tribune newspaper piece for the Women's Suffrage movement June 7, 1916

The amendment passed Congress in 1919 and became law in 1920 after state ratification.

In South Dakota, early efforts to organize women’s suffrage began as early as 1889, including in Mitchell. South Dakota voters approved a state constitutional amendment (E) that removed the term “male” from the voting requirements and added that to vote you must be a citizen- no aliens; this constitutional amendment granted South Dakota women citizens suffrage in November 1918. The state ratified the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919. Local women in Mitchell organized a “Suffrage School of Methods,” with meetings held in the Municipal Courtroom at the Municipal Building. Mrs. Albert McMahon from Washington, D.C. served as the state chair and organizer, headquartered in Huron, South Dakota. Instruction focused on Amendment E, which aimed to enfranchise women while restricting the vote of non-citizen residents.

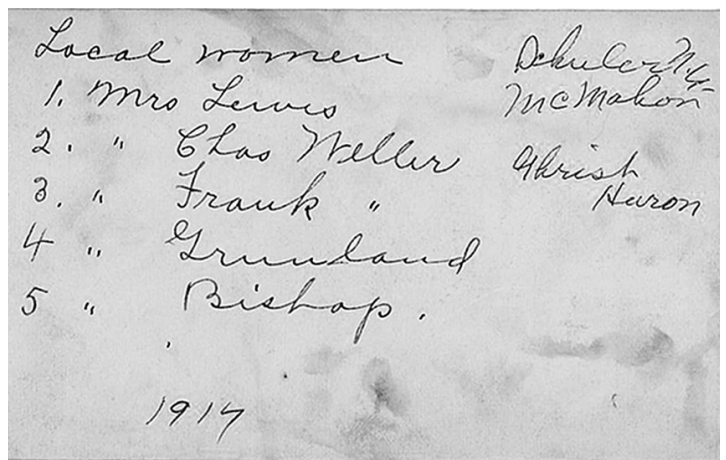
Local leaders involved in the effort included Mrs. R.H. Lewis (President), Mrs. Bessie Bishop (Vice President), Mrs. S.N. Grundland (Secretary), Mrs. Charles S. “Sadie” Weller (Treasurer), and Mrs. Frank Weller (Chair of the County Campaign Committee). Their goal was to educate both men and women across South Dakota about women’s suffrage.



Debate surrounded the amendment’s “alien clause,” which some believed was necessary for passage.

A banquet held at the Methodist Church in Mitchell drew approximately 200 attendees. City official A.E. Hitchcock welcomed delegates, and Dr. J.A. Hoagland spoke on the relationship between the church, education, and suffrage, endorsing women’s right to vote due to their interest in social welfare and moral reform.

Mrs. Charles S. (Sadie) Weller marched in the Chicago Suffrage Parade on June 7, 1916. Participants wore white dresses symbolizing purity and sashes of purple, white, and gold representing dignity, loyalty, and hope. Weller later served as a South Dakota state representative and was a member of the Executive Committee of the Progressive National



Local Mitchell, SD women pictured showing their support of the Women’s Suffrage movement in 1917.

Convention.

Local suffragists also supported civic improvements, including funding for new school facilities in 1917 to address overcrowding. Voting places were opened to women aged 21 and older, with ballots available in all four wards.

South Dakota experienced six failed suffrage attempts—in 1890, 1894, 1898, 1910,

1914, and 1916—before success was achieved by linking women’s suffrage to the disenfranchisement of non-citizen men. South Dakota became the 21st state to ratify the 19th Amendment. While women had limited voting rights in school-related matters beginning in 1879, full voting rights were not secured until the amendment became national law in 1920. ✕

FROM THE ARCHIVES

STATISTICS OF A YEAR

Births, Deaths and Marriages That Have Taken Place Within a Year in South Dakota.

The Bureau of Statistics has completed its annual report for the year ending June 30. Superintendent Robinson's report is quite interesting and in the years to come these statistics will prove very valuable, although the records will be voluminous. By means of the bureau the census population can be pretty well determined and much information can be collected.

During the year there were 9,749 births. Of these 5,066 were males and 4,703 females. The births exceeded the deaths by 6,125. The births averaged 22.4 to the thousand people; 188 out of each 1000 married women under 45 years of age gave birth to a child during the year. The families reporting births reported an average of 3.5 children to the family including children previously born to the parents.

Forty-three illegitimate children were reported. The average age of the mothers was 21 years the youngest was 14 the oldest 44; ten were below the age of consent.

There were 3644 deaths, averaging 8.3 to the thousand people against an average in the United States of 16.2. The chief fatalities were from heart disease 322, pneumonia 295, tuberculosis 270, premature birth and congenital debility 265, old age 254, cancer 130, diarrhoea and enteritis 12, apoplexy 108, typhoid 75, meningitis 73.

There were 268 deaths from violent causes; 43 drowned, 39 suicides, 5 murders, 24 gunshot, 23 killed by horses, 15 in railroad accident, 22 by burns and scalds, 7 in mines, the remainder unclassified.

The average age at death was 33 years. Those who survived infancy lived to be 55 years. Those dying from old age averaged 79 years.

Of the 295 victims of pneumonia 4 died in July, 3 in August, 5 in September, 10 in October, 18 in November, 38 in December, 29 in January, 45 in February, 42 in March, 47 in April, 27 in May, 13 in June.

Tuberculosis took 270 persons, an average of 58.6 to the hundred thousand population against 202 in the the registration area of the United States.

There were 4141 marriages, the men averaging 28.2 and the women 22.5 years. Six girls of 14, 17, of 15, and 40 of 16 years were married. One boy of 15, 2 of 16, 1 of 17, and 14 of 18 years were reported. The oldest man was 70 and the oldest woman 71 years of age.

There were 508 divorces granted, only 152 of which were known to be residents of this state.

The naturalizations numbered 1634 declarations, and 539 final citizenships. All but 226 came from North Europe and Canada

THE EVENING

Kimball Man Leads in Old Penny Race

More old pennies have turned up at The Evening Republican office. A story was published some time ago of a man who had an early 19th Century model of United States penny.

This brought forth the information that George B. Phifer of Mitchell has a penny coined in 1798.

The Phifer's penny arouses only scorn in the heart of R. V. Dusseau of Kimball. He has a penny coined in 1794, and that's just a start. He also has other antique models of the coin of the realm, including nickels and pennies.

Dr Dusseau tells of his collection as follows:

"I have a United States penny dated 1794 about the size of a half dollar. It is made of copper and has 'Liberty' on the face of it and also a side view of Washington's face with long hair and there is a bow of ribbon in the hair. (It may have been intended for a woman's head but I think it is Washington's).

"The olive branch design is much the same as the present day coins.

"I have two nickels with 13 stars in a circle and the figure 5 in the center of them and "cents" below it near the edge. It is dated 1866.

"I also have another penny dated 1851 which has 13 stars and the face of Liberty on the face of it; it is thick and a little smaller than a half dollar.

"I also have another big penny dated 1801, half dimes and other old coins. 1-19-1932 EA 3

↑ Above: Will you archive your penny? An article from the Evening Republican Jan. 19, 1932 about a Kimball man leading in a penny race.

← Left: An article from the Daily Republic Sep. 13, 1906 about yearly statistics.

Welcome Jenny to the Carnegie!

The Mitchell Area Historical and Genealogical Societies want to welcome **Jenny Phillips!** Thank you for taking on the formatting of the *Courier*. We truly appreciate your time and talents and are grateful for your support. Your skills and time will play an important role in helping us share stories, research, and news that keep our local history alive and accessible.



Jenny and her son, Thoren

Thank You From the Carnegie!

We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who supported the kitchenette project. Individuals, groups, and local businesses all played a role, and your generosity and commitment helped us secure the funding needed to move this project forward.

We offer special thanks to **Krohmer Plumbing** for their support with the plumbing portion of the project, **Muth Electric** for assistance with electrical costs, and **Patzer Woodworking** for contributing by reducing the cost of the cabinetry. We are also grateful to our two early supporters whose matching donations helped rally additional support and push the project over the top.

While the cabinets have not yet been received, we anticipate the project will be completed in late March or April. The support of these businesses and individuals plays a vital role in preserving the historic character of the Carnegie Resource Center while ensuring it remains a functional and welcoming space for the community.

One Sink at a Time is a success. ✂

Theatre Pharmacy

By Dean Randall

The Theatre Pharmacy store was in the Gale Theater building built by Lawrence O. Gale in 1906. That's where the old State Theater was later (after the fire and a new building!). The Pharmacy was in the south part of the Gale building where Charles Fowler, originally from Parker, and some others established the Theatre Pharmacy. The north part was leased to H.E. Bunker for a cigar and tobacco store.

Mr. Fowler ran the pharmacy for about 5 years. Then a J.A. Chitwood had it for a short time before selling it to Fred Scott and J.A. Larrison. Two years later that partnership dissolved with Fred Scott running the business. Four months later (Oct. 1912) Fred takes in Wilfred Gormley as a partner.

March 26, 1914, the building burned down! About \$70,000 in damages was the result. Things might not have been so bad but there was trouble contacting the fire department. When they finally got there the firemen discovered the fire hydrant was frozen. Scott and Gormley set up shop two weeks later directly across the street from the

old location and called it the "Quality" drug store.

In Oct. 1914 articles of incorporation were filed for the Theater Pharmacy company with a capital of \$25,000 by four individuals including Fred Scott. By next May 1915, the Theater Pharmacy was back in business but on the corner in the Champany building (3rd & Main - 301 N. Main) - (remember where Saterlie Drug was?

In December, 1915 Fred Scott was found not guilty of selling liquor without a prescription. Apparently, evidence in the case was not secured properly so the jury acquitted him.

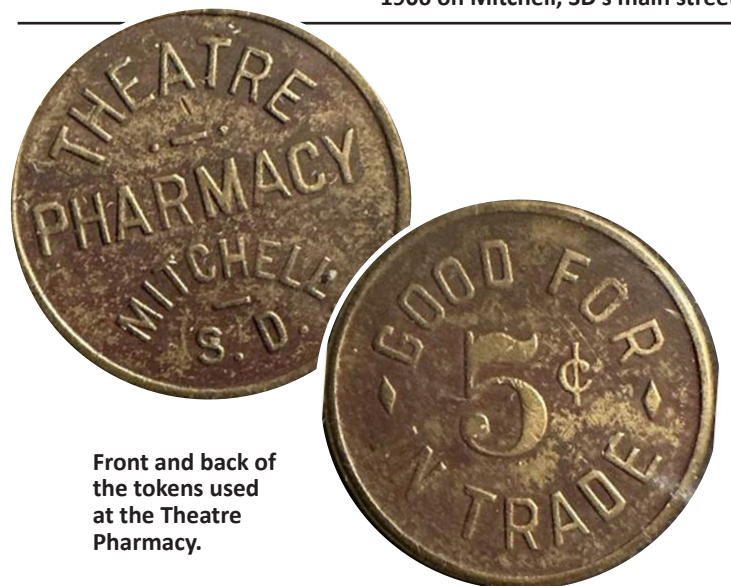
By February 1916 Charles Fowler was back on the scene by purchasing controlling interest in the Theatre Pharmacy. However, he could not run the business because he was already the county treasurer. (Getting elected county treasurer was not easy but that is a whole other story.)

Fowler sold the business in 1922 to Oscar Nicolls where it became Nicolls Drug.

The token is brass, 21 mm (13/16 in.) in diameter and good for 5¢ in trade. Whether it was made for the original location or the store on the corner is not known. ✕



Front of the Theatre Pharmacy building built in 1906 on Mitchell, SD's main street



Front and back of the tokens used at the Theatre Pharmacy.

CARNEGIE OUTREACH PROGRAM



*Available on the first Tuesday of each month
April through October*

Davison County in the 1950's!

We are offering an interactive program aimed at our older residents. We will bring photos and artifacts to your facility and share some history of the area. Audience participation and sharing is encouraged. To schedule this program in your facility, contact Carnegie at 996-3209 and leave a message. We will return your call. This is a free program but donations to the Carnegie Resource Center are always appreciated.

Thank You From the Carnegie!

A huge thank you to Jesse Stroud of A.C.T. for sponsoring a fundraiser for the Mitchell Area Historical Society, housed in the Carnegie Resource Center on Jan. 10, 2026. This generous support will help ensure that Mitchell's history remains alive and accessible to the public.

We also extend our sincere thanks to everyone who participated in a wonderful afternoon of music.

The Nolan Clark Band delighted the crowd with beloved songs from the Grand Ole Opry and memorable selections from Elvis, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, and many others. Nolan and his band truly entertained, as the rousing audience proudly saluted a hometown boy and his music.

A special thank you goes to Donna Weiland for promoting the cause to Jesse—efforts that led to fantastic results. ✂





A BOOK REVIEW

Article & Photos by Beth Walz

No Justice For Agnes

by Wayne Fanebust

Agnes Polreis is a young immigrant whose family settled in Parkston, SD.

She takes a position as a “maid/helper” to Emma Kaufman of Sioux Falls. After working for Emma a short time, Agnes dies and her body is shipped to her family in Parkston. Upon opening the coffin, the body is found to be very abused and possibly even tortured. “What happened to Agnes?” becomes the question.

This book contains the events that happened after Agnes’s body arrived in Parkston. Investigations, lawyers, trials, newspapers and guesses as to what happened all contribute to the unknown and the known. Will Agnes ever receive justice?

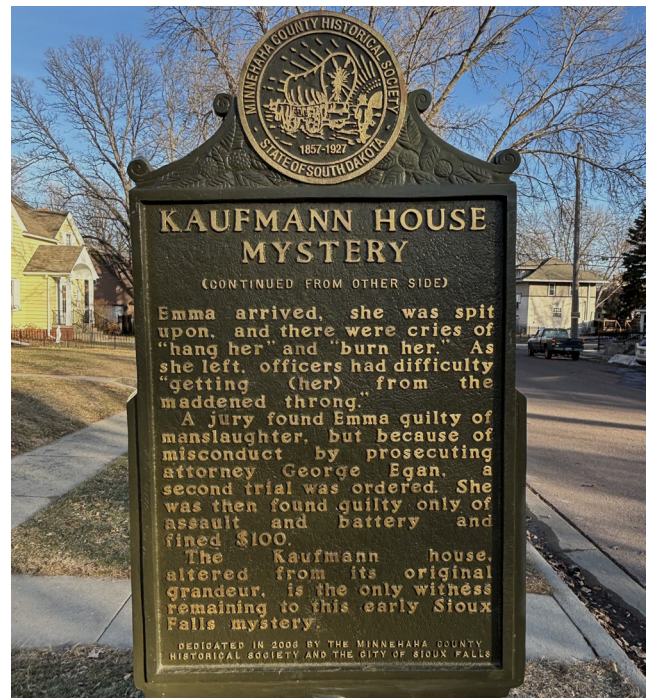
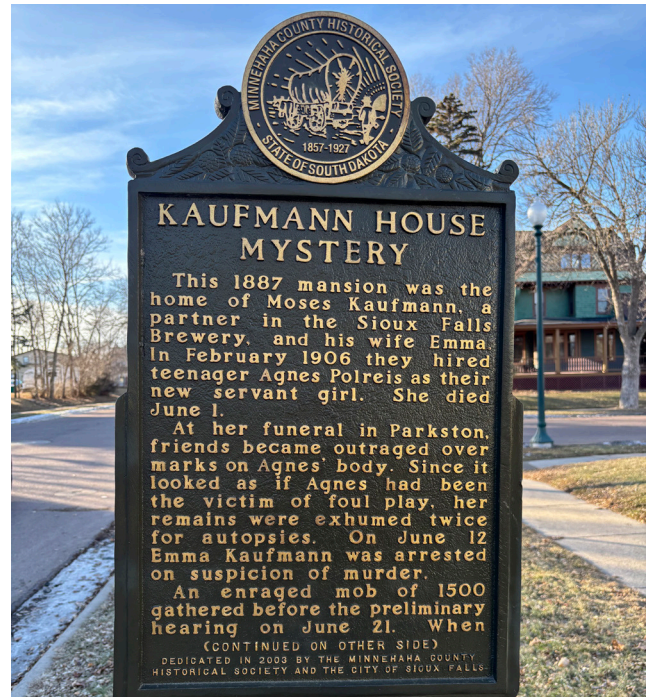
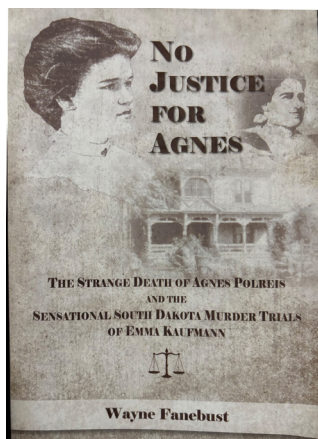
I found this story to be very interesting on several levels.

The book is based on a true South Dakota story. A friend loaned me her book and said it was good. You can see the influence of newspapers, even in the early 1900’s. The house is still standing with historical markers in front of it.

The speaker for the upcoming annual meeting on April 11th in Aberdeen of the South Dakota State Genealogical Society is Tasha Westby Tietz, the “Graveyard Girl.” She recommends this book and has pictures on her facebook page.

When last in Sioux Falls, I drove by the house on Summit & 7th.

The two photos are of the historical marker located at the house. You can see the house online or drive by as I did. The house is painted differently, but you can tell by the shape and markers it is the same house. ✂



→ Right:

Top photo is the front of the Kaufmann House Mystery historical marker located in Minnehaha County. Bottom photo is the back.

Upcoming Events 2026

Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)

And Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)

February			
16	6:00 pm MAHS Business Meeting	11	South Dakota State Genealogy Conference – Aberdeen SD Email: bethjwalz@gmail.com for a registration form
23	6:00 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting		
23	7:00 p.m. MAGS Program – Surviving the Online World of Genealogy – James Tanner	18	Mitchell Area Historical Society's Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the purchase the old Carnegie Library – watch for details
March			
07	2:00-4:00 pm Recognition Celebration for Karen Pooley as "Person of the Year"	20	6:00 pm MAHS Business Meeting
16	6:00 pm MAHS Business Meeting	27	6:00 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting
21	2:00 p.m. Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus – Jean & Bill Pattison Sharing Cruise and Santa Memories	May	
23	6:00 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting	13th	7:00 am to 6:30 p.m. Oscar Howe Murals & Heritage Bus Tour – Registration Required - see insert
23	7:00 p.m. MAGS Open Night to Explore Our Resources	18	6:00 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting
April			No MAGS Business meeting – Memorial Day –
01	7:00 p.m. Cindy Gregg – Immigration of Jewish Ancestors	June	
		15	6:00 pm MAHS Business Meeting
		22	6:00 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting

FUTURE HAPPENINGS AT THE CARNEGIE RESOURCE CENTER!

March 7 • 2:00-4:00 PM | Open House for Mitchell's Person of the year
Please join us for an open house celebrating Karen Pooley, named the Mitchell Republic's Person of the Year. This event is an opportunity to show our appreciation for the many hours Karen has generously devoted to our community through her volunteer work with the Mitchell Area Historical Society, Genealogical Society, the Food Pantry, Mitchell Main Street and Beyond, and Resurrection Lutheran Church.!

March 21 • 2:00 PM | Meet Mr. & Mrs. Santa: Behind the Beard!
Ever wondered what it's like to be a professional Santa? Mr. and Mrs. Santa, department-store Santas since 2005, are visiting to share their funniest, jolliest stories. Expect laughter, jingles, and a hearty HO, HO, HO!

April 1 • 7:00 PM (1st day of Passover)
Cindy Gregg will share her Jewish family history dating back to the early 1800s. Her family immigrated to America before Ellis Island was established as an official entry point. Dedicated to keeping the family together, they eventually all made the journey—including Grandpa. Cindy is a longtime Mitchell resident and former Director of the Prehistoric Indian Village.

April 18 | 20th anniversary of the purchase of the Carnegie Library
Join us as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Mitchell Area Historical Society's purchase of the Carnegie Library from the City of Mitchell. This milestone marks two decades of preserving and sharing our community's rich history. Watch for further details on our website and Facebook pages!

May 13 | Full-day heritage bus tour
Join us for a full-day heritage bus tour exploring the art, history, and culture of South Dakota! **The tour departs at 7:00 AM from the Carnegie** and travels to Mobridge to view the Oscar Howe murals at the Scherr Howe Arena, along with visits to the Sitting Bull and Sacagawea monuments. From there, we'll continue on to Chamberlain for a tour of the Akta Lakota Museum, followed by a stop at the iconic Dignity Statue at the I-90 rest area before beginning our return trip to Mitchell.
Cost: \$75 per person | **Seating:** Limited to 50 passengers
For additional details, see the flyer inserted in the Courier. **Space is limited—register early to secure your seat on the bus!**

Carnegie Resource
Center
119 West Third Avenue
Mitchell, S.D. 57301

