



The Heritage Journal

DELL RAPIDS SOCIETY FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
SPRING/SUMMER 2026

Mailing Address: PO Box 143
Dell Rapids SD 57022

Location: 407 E 4th St., Dell Rapids, SD

Phone: (605)428-4821

Website: dellrapidsmuseum.org or check us
out on Facebook

Email: dellrapidsmuseum@goldenwest.net

Board Meetings: Noon, 2nd Tuesday
of each month, Dell Rapids Museum

Summer Hours (May 15-September 15):
Tues-Fri 1-4; Sat 10-4 or by appointment
call Rhonda @ (605)351-3831 or
Kim @ (307)699-4755

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rhonda Schildhauer, President
Tammy McKillip, Vice President
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GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

A message from Rhonda Schildhauer

I'm sure all of you are looking forward to spring and summer as much as we are at the Museum! We're getting ready for our 2026 summer opening on May 15th and looking forward to seeing everyone again. We don't like being closed in the winter but we do need the time to get the museum exhibits ready for summer. We're very proud of how it looks and can't wait to share it with you. We have special events planned this summer and they are highlighted in the newsletter. The new scavenger hunts are also ready to go! We especially enjoy the students who get excited about the town's history. Our little town has a rich past.

While you're visiting the museum, don't forget to stop into our unique restaurants and businesses here in town. It's a great place to grab some lunch, a coffee or beverage, and browse through our locally owned shops. The museum also has 2 new styles of t-shirts and a new cap for 2026. Dell Rapids also has a lot of outdoor opportunities to offer in the summer. The Sioux River Red Rock Trail for hiking and biking, soccer, softball, and baseball games and, of course, the swimming pool and golf course. We offer a lot of outdoor activities for residents of all ages. That's part of what makes Dell Rapids such a great community for families in all stages of life!

SUMMER 1924 IN DELL RAPIDS PARK

Back row: Baby Paul Jackson, Mrs. Johanson, Olga Johanson, Essie Durcher, Rena Durcher, Della Harvey, Margaret Merry, Robert Merry
Seated: Lyman Merry, Thurber Harvey, Aura Durcher, Eunice Jackson, Clark Jackson



Donated by Ellen Jean (Merry) Bennett in 1998. BW photo belonged to Genevieve Gollesch. Colorized in 2026.

Join us for a raucous good time!
The Dell Rapids Museum Speakeasy
Saturday, May 9th, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Live Jazz by the Al Berven Trio
1920s Costume Contest
Hooch & Nibbles

For early ticket purchase, follow the QR code
or stop at the Museum during special hours
(to be posted on our Facebook page)



<https://square.link/u/4wMeyVFI>

Admission is \$20 in
advance/\$25 at the door
Cash Bar - Must be 21 or older

Celebrate the
Start of Summer!

Stop by the Museum with
the kids May 26-30th for
Student Week!

We'll have new history
scavenger hunts, table
games, and treats. Sign
up for youth drawings to
be held May 30th!

/history nerd/: someone who is very knowledgeable
and enthusiastic about history

From the Archives:

Ever wonder why roads east of Dell Rapids aren't straight? We found a letter explaining those odd jags

In 2017, Robert C. DeVaney wrote the following to local historian, Craig Kumerfield explaining the role the Homestead Act of 1860 played in platting the local area and theorizing about discrepancies east of town.

“With the granting of 160 acres of land to a homesteader, that meant the federal government had to survey the land, and very quickly. Here the U.S. was in the middle of a civil war, and men were sent out to survey vast tracts. For many, I would imagine it was an interesting job—wide open spaces, living off the land, shooting wild game to make a meal, etc., and not in the war.

“Those survey stakes are permanent, put in place in the mid-1860s. Now with GPS, and sophisticated technology, they can check the accuracy of the original stakes. The accuracy is truly amazing. If they are off a bit, the original stakes are the official markings, not what GPS shows.

“East of Dell Rapids, some of the sections are not square, which were mistakes, but those mistakes are permanent. Three theories on how the mistakes were made:

1. Surveyors were drunk.
2. A surveyor(s) being lazy (sometimes a small number) calculated the circumference of their buggy wheels and so many revolutions of the buggy wheel equated to so many rods (320 rods=1 statute mile), so by sitting in his buggy counting revolutions of his buggy wheel he could determine a mile—much easier than walking with his tape (actually chain links) and doing it the correct way. Counting revolutions of a buggy wheel sounds easy, but if one loses track of the revolutions, there will be a mistake(s).
3. A homesteader, wanting more land, that is, a few more acres than the 160 acres he filed for, pulled up the surveyor's survey pin (a steel rod) and relocated it a few rods. With that stake then being in the wrong place, and the surveyor not knowing this, he then bases his subsequent measurements on an incorrectly placed stake. The end result are the kinks in some of the roads east of Dell Rapids, partly in Dell Rapids Township and partly in Logan Township. Some of those quarter sections of land are more than 160 acres and some are smaller than 160 acres.”

Calendar of Events

- May 9 - Prohibition Party at the Museum
- May 15 - Summer Hours Begin
- May 26-30 - Student Week (Prize Drawing May 30th)
- June 12-14 - Cootie Days Weekend
- June 26-28 - Quarry Days Weekend
- August 29 - Muu Muus & Mixed Drinks - Downtown Chamber of Commerce Event
- August 8, 5:00 p.m. - Project: Constellation - Live Scandinavian Folk Music at the Museum
- September 15 - Summer Hours End
- September 18 - Homecoming

Watch our Facebook page for more information

This 1886 home of Anne Haugen and family was located seven miles southwest of Dell Rapids. The style was typical of early area farm houses.



OUR MUSEUM COMMUNITY



Paving Downtown Dell Rapids (c. 1929)

The donation of action photographs from Dells' early years always stirs excitement among the museum volunteers. This one, from the Huss family, was a scene witnessed by Dan's grandparents.

A huge thank you to the following donors and their families for sharing their Dell Rapids' memorabilia and historic items since the last newsletter. (Our apologies if we missed anyone!) Your contributions keep our exhibits fresh and history alive!

Dennis & Linda Daugaard

Maureen Eide

George & Violette (Wilds) Harden via Schwartz Family

Bette & Dan Huss

Alice Majeres

Dean & Karen Skatvold

Kelly Sward

The Museum can't thrive without your help! *Thank you* to everyone who donates time and talent to put on events, welcome visitors, repair exhibits and track down information...plus a hundred other tasks.

Also a huge thanks to all who drop money in the donation jar, pay for a membership, send us memorial or donation checks, make a purchase at our gift shop, and donate to our Christmas festival.

It takes a lot of funding to take care of a 124-year-old building. We can only do it with an extra financial boost from our great supporters like you!

Membership 2026

To join or renew a membership, mail the following information and payment to:

Dell Rapids Museum – PO Box 143, Dell Rapids SD 57022.

Date _____

Name/s _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email* _____

New Membership Renewing Member Gift \$ _____

Senior (60+) \$10 Individual \$15 Family \$25

*Please include your email to receive future newsletters.

You can also renew on-line with a credit card by following these QR codes:



Senior Membership



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