
2025 Dakota Conference grant request

From Harry Thompson <harry.thompson@augie.edu>

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To Kevin Kuchenbecker <kevin@cityofdeadwood.com>

Dear Kevin and the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission,

Once again, the Center for Western Studies is offering history-minded South Dakota citizens the opportunity to share their stories at the annual Dakota Conference, held here in Sioux Falls at Augustana University. For the 57th conference, we are looking for stories of settlement and resettlement in South Dakota and the surrounding plains region.

The Northern Plains region was settled and resettled numerous times over millennia by various Paleo-Indian, historical Indigenous, Euro-American, and Black people. More recently, people from Guatemala, the Philippines, Ethiopia and Sudan have made their home on the plains.

2025 marks the centennial of the publication of the iconic novel about Euro-American settlement of the plains in the 1870s, O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. Based on historical accounts, the novel is set just to the north of Sioux Falls, along Slip-Up Creek.

In celebration of the centennial, the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra will perform the Pulitzer-prize-winning opera by Douglas Moore inspired by the novel on April 26-27, 2025. The SDSO invited Augustana University's Center for Western Studies to partner with them to provide unique educational programming.

2025 also marks the bicentennial of Norwegian emigration to America, beginning in 1825. Norway, itself, will be celebrating Norwegian-American relations with a National Jubilee in 2025.

To commemorate the novel's publication, the opera's performance and Norwegian emigration—and as a prelude to CWS's observance of America's 250th Anniversary in 2026—CWS is dedicating the 2025 Dakota Conference, April 24-25, to the major themes explored in the novel—settlement, homesteading, immigration, and migration in the Northern Plains.

Conference attendees are invited to visit the northern Minnesota cabin in which Rolvaag wrote *Giants in the Earth*, which is located on the Augustana campus. Exhibits featuring objects and documents from the Rolvaag and Berdahl families, on deposit at CWS, will be on display during the conference. Beginning in June, CWS will sponsor a juried art exhibit on historical and cultural themes explored in *Giants on the Earth*.

A grant in the amount of \$750 would be much appreciated. We will be delighted to publicize the grant award in our conference program and at the conference, itself, using the DHPC logo. Thank you.

Harry

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