

July 10, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The cities of Deadwood, Lead, and Spearfish, South Dakota, are committed to supporting “Images of the American West: Maximizing the Impact of Fassbender’s Iconic Black Hills Photo Collection,” a project that will preserve and make accessible the historically important Fassbender Photographic Collection.

The Fassbender Photographic Collection was purchased by the cities of Deadwood, Lead, and Spearfish, South Dakota in 2010. Prior to that, the original owner of the collection, George Fassbender, bequeathed it to two of his friends: Ed Furois and Johnny Sumners. The two gentlemen retained ownership of the collection for 12 years, from 1998 to 2010.

In 2010, Furois and Sumners realized that owning the collection had become more of a burden than anticipated. It was then that they approached the three cities about the possibility of purchasing the collection. Recognizing the historic value of the collection and the need for more environmentally safe and secure storage arrangements, the cities reached an agreement with Furois and Sumners to purchase the collection. Since that time, the collection has been housed and cared for in Deadwood at the Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, a modern archives repository and research center.

Commitment to the collection from the purchasing cities did not stop once the agreement was signed. All three communities have continued to provide annual financial support for the collection. Financial support assists with collection housing, processing, preservation, and providing accessibility to the public.

The collection of nearly 800,000 photographic images, film material, and artifacts is significant for the number of humanities-related themes it contains: religion, art, politics, geography, and history, to name a few. Up until the 1980s, a Fassbender Studio was located in one or more of the purchase cities, giving the collection a strong regional connection that lasted for many years.

Due to the overwhelming size and scope of the collection, processing did not begin in earnest until 2012, and that consisted of only basic needs being addressed. In 2016, a full-time position was created, a small core of dedicated volunteers was established, and more in-depth attention was given to the collection. That work revealed an amazing, one-of-a-kind, and historically irreplaceable collection that visually documents the growth and development of a culturally significant area of the United States, the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The owner cities are committed to continue providing annual funding for the care, preservation, access, and interpretation of the Fassbender Photographic Collection. They recognize the collection's importance as a valuable resources for people across the county. In the words of Marcus Garvey, *"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots."*

In addition, commitment to this project has also been pledged by Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota, and from Deadwood History, Inc., Deadwood, South Dakota. The project truly is a collaborative effort between a number of stakeholders in the regional area who are dedicated to ensuring that the images in this remarkable collection are properly preserved and made accessible to the public for years to come.

Respectfully,



David Ruth, Jr., Mayor
Deadwood, South Dakota



Dana Boke, Mayor
Spearfish, South Dakota



Ron Everett, Mayor
Lead, South Dakota