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## Downtown landmark: Stockgrowers building receives historic designation

**Tanya Manus**

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Rosenbaum Signs of Rapid City created the historic neon sign that sits atop the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association building. In 1958, the SDSGA adopted a trademark consisting of a cowboy on a horse. In 1959, Rosenbaum Signs created the sign that's become a landmark in downtown Rapid City. The sign also is featured in the 2020 book "Neon Road Trip" by photographer John Barnes, which chronicles the history of the nation's commercial neon signs.

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The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association is celebrating a landmark achievement. Its 68-year-old downtown Rapid City building has been nominated to the South Dakota State Register of Historic Places.

The announcement was made during a press conference May 9, when SDSGA executive director Doris Lauing also said the SDSGA has received an Outside of Deadwood Historic Grant to pay for replacing the SDSGA building's roof.

Lauing said the SDSGA applied to have the building placed on the state register of historic places because of the significance of the livestock industry in South Dakota, the SDSGA's role in the livestock industry, and the fact that the SDSGA office is in a historic downtown Rapid City building.

"It's a brick building but it's also the organization, the history of our organization, and the sign that sits on our roof," Lauing said.

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“Preserving history and educating others of our long-time and importance of our organization is part of my job. For almost 150 years, the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association has been operating as a membership-based and membership-driven organization working to protect and advocate for agriculture and livestock owners,” Lauing said in a press release.

“It is an honor to be placed on this Historic Register and we are very grateful to receive these funds to preserve the building. This really isn’t about the building, but the organization as a whole. Today, SDSGA continues providing a unified voice for livestock producers confronted with both State and National mandates,” she said.

The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association was officially registered with the state in 1893. Lauing said it’s the largest cattle organization in South Dakota.

“The Stockgrowers have been around long before Rapid City was even formed. We were protecting brands and we have continued on,” Lauing said. “We still today fight for those same rights for those property owners and those brand owners.”



The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association building has been part of downtown Rapid City since it was constructed in the 1950s.

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Participating in a May 9 presentation of \$10,000 in Outside of Deadwood grant funds to the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association are, from left: Tom Costello, vice president, SDSGA; Chuck Willard, president, SDSGA; Kevin Kuchenbecker, Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Deadwood; Doris Lauing, executive director, SDSGA; and Beverly Posey, chair of the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission.

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Lauing said during the press conference that the SDSGA building sits on land that was originally given to the SDSGA by the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout its history, the SDSGA operated out of several locations in Rapid City, including the First National Bank, American National Bank and the Bellamy Building. Lauing said in a press release that around 1955, local banker H.R. Browning transferred a lot downtown to the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber in turn offered SDSGA the lot on St. Joseph Street, valued at \$11,000, with the caveat that the SDSGA construct a building within one year.

The SDSGA planned to build a one-story building with a full basement – until the Chamber asked for a second story to be added that could house its offices. The two-story building was dedicated in August 1956.

The Rapid City Chamber of Commerce rented the second floor of the SDSGA building until about 1974, when the chamber moved its offices to the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, which is now The Monument. The chamber, Economic Development Partnership and Economic Development Foundation (Ascent Innovation) merged in 2019 to become Elevate Rapid City.

Meanwhile, the basement of the SDSGA building has been the home of the Black Hills Railway Society since 1995. A unique attraction there is a complete train set that replicates the Black Hills' early railway system. The Black Hills Railway Society periodically offers tours to the

public.

According to Duncan Trau, historic preservation restoration specialist with the State Historic Preservation Office, the SDSGA building is significant for its association with agriculture, the state's leading industry.

"The building represents one of the oldest and most influential ag organizations in the state. The building and association represent an important chapter in state history and it remains an iconic landmark in downtown Rapid City," Trau said during the press conference.

The SDSGA anticipates that in June, it will receive confirmation that its building has also been accepted to the National Register of Historic Places. Designation on the National Register honors building sites, structures and objects that are at least 50 years old and possess historic significance.

Also during the press conference, Lauing accepted a check for \$10,000 from the Outside of Deadwood Grant. The funds are available by application and are used to preserve historic locations. The SDSGA building currently still has its original roof, which needs to be replaced.

Since 2002, the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission has helped promote the preservation and interpretation of historic sites, buildings and properties throughout the state with the Outside of Deadwood Grant program.

The SDSGA is currently raffling a commemorative engraved Henry Repeating Arms Golden Boy rifle to match the \$10,000 grant to cover the cost of a new roof. There are 375 tickets available for \$30 each; tickets can be purchased at SDSGA events.



Doris Lauing, executive director of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, holds a plaque that will be hung in the SDSGA offices in honor of the \$10,000 Outside of Deadwood grant that will help fund a new roof for the SDSGA building. The plaque and grant funds were presented to Lauing during a May 9 press conference.

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