

Dacotah Prairie Museum needs more space

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The Dacotah Prairie Museum is a gem for Aberdeen, Brown County and visitors worldwide - and now it needs more space.

Here's the scoop: Dacotah Prairie Museum Director Sue Gates said that without expanding, the museum's collection will include history only through 1930 or so. There's just not enough room for the current exhibits - much less new ones. Gates' goal is to pursue a fundraising campaign, as well as grants to acquire the dollars needed to complete the project, which would double the museum's size and cost in the neighborhood of \$4 million to \$5 million. The majority of these dollars will come from private sources.

Gates is currently seeking to find out if the public is supportive enough to sustain a fund drive.

We certainly hope so.

We've said before - many times - how fortunate we are to have the Dacotah Prairie Museum here in Aberdeen.

Still, if you are a local person and haven't yet visited the museum, you are - sadly - not alone.

"The tourists always come," Gates said earlier this year. "We want to make more of an effort to attract the local people. It continues to surprise me that some people have lived in Aberdeen all their lives and don't know we're here."

And come they do. During 2006, 76,024 people visited the museum or attended museum events. That's an increase of almost 7,000 people from 2005. People from each of the 50 states except Alabama, Hawaii, Mississippi and Rhode Island passed through the museum's exhibits. There were even global visitors from Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, South Korea and Tajikistan.

Given this sort of traffic, it just seems a shame to think that the museum's collection would end in 1930. For example, kids these days have no idea what a camera flashbulb is, an eight-track tape, even records. Gates said, "We don't have anything that kids today would say, 'I remember my mom talking about this.'"

There are also major historical events - like the Vietnam and Korean wars - that happened after 1930.

All of these items merit inclusion and there's just no room.

We hope the museum pursues its fund drive, that the public supports it and that the Dacotah

Prairie Museum is able to double both its size and its attendance.

If you have any doubts about the worthiness of this project, a visit to the museum might just be the ticket to make you a museum supporter.

The Dacotah Prairie Museum is located at 21 S. Main St. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

Go check it out.