



Manchester Monument Fund

103 Joliet Avenue, S.E., P.O. Box 29
De Smet, South Dakota 57231

June 21, 2017

For Immediate Release and for use in announcements, articles, and features at any time

Further information, contact: Gary Marx, 703-938-8725, Lynn or Dianne Perry, 605-546-2190

Tenth Anniversary of Manchester Monument, June 23, 2017 Video of 2007 Dedication and Storytelling Programs Now Online

The town of Manchester, South Dakota, is the home community for Harvey Dunn, Grace Ingalls Dow, and the 1961 Dakota Territory Centennial Celebration. On June 24, 2003, Manchester was struck by a massive F-4 Tornado that destroyed the town's buildings, but not its spirit.

Ten years ago, June 23, 2007, nearly 500 people gathered in a big tent centered on the main street of Manchester, South Dakota. Friends of the small but lively community, just eight miles west of De Smet on Highway 14 in east-central South Dakota, were there to dedicate the newly completed Manchester Monument. A theme that resounded during that historic dedication was, "That storm could take away our buildings, destroy our possessions, and injure our people, but it could not destroy the Spirit of Manchester. The Spirit of Manchester is alive and well in each of us, wherever we are."

To commemorate the tenth anniversary, two spirited videos are being released, one devoted to the morning dedication ceremony and another to afternoon storytelling. Both were recorded during the June 23, 2007, festivities and were, for a few years, offered for purchase to help offset costs. Now they are available for everyone to enjoy by googling *Manchester Monument Dedication Program* and/or *Manchester Monument Dedication Storytelling*. Both are on YouTube. The programs, plus a copy of the dedication brochure, are also available at <http://garymarxcpo.com/manchester-monument-dedication/>. (Others might also want to link the programs to their web sites or distribute links to friends and neighbors.)

While no event is scheduled for June 23, everyone has a standing invitation to visit and be inspired by the Manchester Monument, often claimed to feature some of the world's most magnificent sunrises and sunsets. A possible event at the site is being considered for June of 2018, which will mark the 15th anniversary of the devastating tornado.

The Monument, built on the site of the old Town Hall and including a fabled Town Pump, displays plaques that colorfully explain Manchester History; the 1961 Dakota Territory Centennial Gold Rush Celebration that brought 150,000 people to the town, plus personages

such as Lawrence Welk and Clint Eastwood; tributes to famed pioneer painter Harvey Dunn, who was born just south of town, and Grace Ingalls Dow, “Baby Grace” in her sister Laura Ingalls Wilder’s book, who lived in Manchester most of her life; and the devastating F-4

Manchester Tornado, which destroyed the town and two nearby farms just after supper on June 24, 2003. Etched into a large central stone are the names of families who lived in Manchester Township since Homesteading. The monument also pays homage to “those who came before us, whose names we might never know.”

The Manchester Monument was constructed by the late Harold Yost. He and his family lost their farm in the in the June 24, 2003, tornado. His wife, Loretta Yost, wrote a classic item titled, “Phlox Blooming in Manchester,” the evening before the tornado struck. Members of the original Manchester Monument Advisory Council included: Jim and Jan Bowes, Harold and Loretta Yost, Loren Moore, Gail Marx Eberlein, and Gary Marx.

Manchester, a prime example of a pioneering community that sprung to life in the late 1870s along the Chicago & Northwestern Railway and the Black & Yellow Trail (now Highway 14), boasted numerous homes and businesses, a newspaper, two grocery stores, a pool hall, two churches, a post office, a restaurant, a lumber yard, a cream station, a hotel, and two stately grain elevators. It was home base of the Manchester Township School District, with a town school, including a high school, and a network of country schools.

Thank you. Those who led the effort to establish the Monument and those who have been involved during the past ten years join in appreciation to the De Smet Development Council, which has made the site one of the numerous features of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little Town on the Prairie*; the South Dakota Art Museum in Brookings which is home to a treasured Harvey Dunn collection of paintings; the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society for keeping our history alive; the South Dakota Highway Department for installing directional signage; Kevin and the late Jan Wallum Muilenburg for lighting the Monument; Lynn and Dianne Perry, the late Loren Moore, and others who have kept watch over flags flying; and Robin Wallum who also support monument lighting and others who have brought flowers to the site; Dave and Desiré Jennings for keeping the site in trim and joining others in watering some new tree plantings; the Wilkinson & Wilkinson Law Firm for its continued counsel and assistance; the Manchester Township Board for its maintenance of surrounding roads; the many who have supported the integrity of and upkeep of the Monument and contributed to the project; Rausch Brothers Granite for its services; Tom Tornow and the Harvey Dunn Grasslands Project; those who have shared history and personal stories about the community; tornado researcher Tim Samaras who was in Manchester at the time of the tornado and later lost his life in an Oklahoma storm; *National Geographic* for its insightful research and feature articles; the news media for their attention to this prairie community and its contributions; and the thousands who have visited and been inspired by the Spirit of Manchester. The site has become a natural addition to the Laura Ingalls Wilder and Harvey Dunn Trails.

Attachments: News Release

Photo: Herman Blote, Jr., cutting the ribbon to officially open the Manchester Monument during the June 23, 2007, dedication celebration. Also shown are Gary Marx, emcee for the event, and longtime residents Jim and Jan Bowes.

Photo: Members of the Manchester Monument Advisory Council on opening day in 2007: Gary and Judy Marx, Loretta and the late Harold Yost, who constructed the Monument, Jan and the late Jim Bowes, and Loren Moore.

Photo: Hundreds gathered under a big tent in the middle of the main street to join in dedicating the Manchester Monument on June 23, 2007. **Photo:** 1970 School and Community Reunion and Potluck at the old Town Hall, site of the Manchester Monument. The Town Hall was destroyed in the 2003 tornado.

Where the Purple Phlox Blooms

Written by Loretta Yost the night before the June 24, 2003, Manchester Tornado Destroyed Their Farm. She presented this inspiring piece as part of the Manchester Monument Dedication Program, June 23, 2007. Her Husband Harold Yost constructed the Manchester Monument.

June 2003

Manchester is a little village two miles south of us. From our house, we see its trees, dark against the skyline.

The glory days of the little town are long past. The business places of years gone by are only memories in the hearts of those who remember them.

And most of the old memories lie asleep under the prairie sky as seasons come and go.

Where the church used to be, the wild grasses grow. Cattle range on the old school yard.

Among the empty lots, there are a few houses where families still live. For them it's home.

They see Manchester for what it is but also what it used to be.

However many the changes over the years, one thing remains constant. Each June, the wild phlox blooms. The beautiful purple color dazzles the eyes. You see the blossoms under ancient trees, around the shadowed remains of weathered buildings, near the street as it passes the old town pump, and along the fence rows.

Manchester has seen many changes. But one thing will never change. Each year in June the purple phlox will bloom once again.