

Discussion Questions

1. “No single factor has been more important to the rise and fall of small towns than the historical development of differing forms of transportation.” Discuss.
2. How does the way in which the people of Brookings celebrated and commemorated their town’s history compare with that of your own?
3. Theodore Schultz viewed with equanimity what happened to community in and around the towns that he and his wife grew up in. How do you view the changes that have come to community and personal relationships during recent decades?
4. Why do you think Laura Ingalls Wilder’s books have remained so popular over time, and what do you think they have to teach us about local history?
5. Harvey Dunn painted and illustrated a version of local history. Do you have similar examples in your community of visual artists who have helped provide an understanding of the past?
6. Is there any equivalent in your community of the photographs on the wall of Velma Leichtenberg’s Countryside Café in Iroquois? Why do you think storeowners, schools, and others are so interested in such displays?
7. Why do you think Huron never quite emerged as the large and important town that it hoped from the beginning to become?
8. Do you know guardians of local history like George Niederauer? What do you think motivates them? What can their fellow citizens do to assist them?
9. Did your county have a courthouse fight? What difference do these courthouses make in local communities?
10. Was your town a “Saturday night town”? What were those evenings like? Are we better off or worse off for not having them anymore? Or is it, in fact, fair to say that they no longer exist?
11. How important were small-town entrepreneurs, investors, and go-getters like Charles Leavitt Hyde to the development of their communities? Do you think he got a bum rap? Do we have equivalents of Hyde today?
12. Is Fort Pierre, in your opinion, “the most historic spot in South Dakota”? If not, what is?

13. Is it worthwhile to preserve old railroad depots (and other structures) as historical artifacts and museums? Should they be financed by taxpayer dollars or voluntary contributions?
14. With the development of camera technology, videocams, and digital cameras, photography has become more and more popular as a recording device. What historical importance do photographs have?
15. Do you think the author exaggerates when he extols Wall Drug Store for its efforts to preserve history?
16. Were you surprised to discover the historical connotations of Mount Rushmore? Why do you think most people are unaware of these connections?

Note: Information was attained from one of the South Dakota Book Bag Study Guides (a project supported with funding from the South Dakota Humanities Council).

<http://library.sd.gov/PROG/sdbookbag/index.aspx>