



The Wickedest City in the West

Between 1872 - 1876 Bismarck's reputation as the Wickedest City in the Wild West grew rapidly.

Between 1871 and 1872 a ramshackle town reminiscent of the gold rush camps established itself a mile east of Burleigh Town. The settlement, an eyesore to the higher military command, was nevertheless very popular with the common soldier. Carleton City sprouted across from Fort McKean at the popular river crossing and earned various names, such as Point Pleasant, Whiskey Point, and others that are unprintable. It sported 15 saloons, two stores, two livery stables and various houses of ill repute. It was said Wild Bill lived in Bismarck for a short time but moved on because Bismarck was too dangerous.

Rebuilding Bismarck

The city of Bismarck has been rebuilt a number of times. One of Bismarck's first devastations was a spring ice break in 1874. What was once Sin City, was now obliterated by the river. The town rebuilt itself but it was one of the reasons that Bismarck started to turn from the "Wickedest City in the West" into the Bismarck we know today.

Another travesty hit Bismarck in 1898, when a large fire burned most of the city to the ground. On April 6, 1952, the Missouri River crested at 27.9 feet, resulting in the city's worst flood in forty-two years. Nearly everything south of the railroad was underwater. Two hundred homes were destroyed. The Flood of 1952 remains the largest recent flooding for the city.

A Decade ahead of the Game

Bismarck was once home to one of the greatest pitchers in baseball history, Satchel Paige. During the Great Depression a local car dealer, Neil Churchill, put together a baseball team that would soon make history. Churchill's philosophy was to find the best player regardless of race. Years ahead of his time, Churchill added stars from the Negro Leagues, including Quincy Troupe, Hilton Smith, Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe, and the biggest star of them all, Satchel Paige. In the 1935 season, Paige led Bismarck in winning the first National Semipro Tournament in Wichita, Kansas.

Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota 0276-03



Bismarck

Est. 1872

THE CAPITAL CITY

Becoming Bismarck

Edwinton, present day Bismarck, was founded in 1872 when the North Pacific Railway reached the Missouri River. The town was founded nine years after President Buchanan signed a law creating the Dakota Territory, in 1861. Just one year after the establishment of Edwinton, the name was changed to Bismarck in honor of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. It was that same year that Burleigh County was created and Bismarck transformed into a bustling city. A school, courthouse, hotel, stores, bars and the Bismarck Tribune started popping up around town. Most of the town was made up military men who made a troublesome and unruly time for Bismarck.

From 1873 to 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his wife lived at Fort Abraham Lincoln in Mandan. By 1874, Fort Lincoln was the largest and most significant fort in the Dakota Territory. The fort housed over 650 soldiers and was also the starting point for the Black Hills Gold Expedition. Soldiers and prospective gold miners would often take boats in summer or walk across the Missouri River in the winter to have a little fun in Bismarck. With a number of bars and brothels, Bismarck sure kept the troops entertained during long winter nights.

Yankton, which is located in present day South Dakota, was the Territory capital until 1883 when it was moved to Bismarck, North Dakota. Six years later, President Benjamin Harrison signed North Dakota into the Union. Bismarck remained the capital of North Dakota and Pierre became the capital of South Dakota.

In the early years of Bismarck, the railroad played a large part in keeping the city alive. Up until 1882 Bismarck was the last stop on the railroad. Once the North Pacific Railway finished its \$1 million bridge project to expand the railway across the river, Bismarck started to see its first passenger trains cross through town, changing Bismarck into the town we know today.

The town continued to grow and evolve out of the rough Wild West persona into a more civilized town.

The content above came from North Dakota State Library, NDSU Extension, Family Management Division and the State Archives. Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota 0370-048



State Capital Grounds

North Dakota has enjoyed two statehouses, the first constructed during the territorial period (1883-4) five years before statehood in 1889. Fire consumed the Capitol on the night of December 28, 1930.

In 1919, the Legislative Assembly responded to an increase in the number of governmental agencies and authorized construction of the Liberty Memorial Building. In 1924 the building cost \$350,000. The building is the oldest facility on the Capitol grounds and currently houses the North Dakota State Library.

The second and present Capitol was completed in 1934, in the depths of the Great Depression. Because of the depression, much was eliminated off of the exterior ornament from Holabird and Root's design. That simplification links the building with the International Style, an architectural order which dominated commercial construction after World War II. North Dakota's Capitol was slightly under its \$2 million dollar limit, has 80 percent usable space, and it cost merely 46 cents per cubic foot! The Capitol Building is 241 feet and 8 inches in height.

The State Office Building was built in 1955. During the 1991-1993 biennium the building was totally remodeled and re-faced with an exterior that blended with other Capitol Complex Buildings. The State Office Building is the smallest facility housing state agencies on the Capitol Grounds. It contains 28,838 square feet.

Completed in 1960, the Governor's residence allowed the state's first family to move from the old residence on Fourth Street onto the Capitol Grounds. Construction started June 1959. It was completed and the Davis family moved into the residence on March 18, 1960. The residence has over 10,000 square feet of floor space and consists of eighteen rooms.

In 1963, planning for the North Dakota Heritage Center began. In 1981, the State Historical Society moved from the Liberty Memorial Building into its new Heritage Center quarters.

The Department of Transportation was located in various buildings, until it moved into its own building in 1968.

The design for the Judicial Wing of the State Capitol began in May 1977, agencies started moving in on December of 1980, and total occupancy began October 1981. The size of the Judicial Wing is 168,400 square feet and the cost of this addition was \$10,500,000. The building dedication was held on November 15, 1981. Governor Allen Olson and Former Governor Arthur A. Link were both part of the ceremony.

In 1985 the Capitol Arboretum Trail was completed around the Capitol grounds. This trail takes walkers past the 60 million year old petrified tree stump from the Amidon area, plus approximately 75 different species of trees and shrubs. The trail also passes statues and memorials which symbolize our state's history and heritage. The North Dakota Capitol Grounds Native Prairie was dedicated in June 1987.

Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota 10174-00

