

BIS-MAN HISTORY

A Genuine Dakota Welcome!

The original keepers of the land around Bismarck-Mandan were North Dakota's Indian people. They were the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, the Yanktonai, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Hunkpapa and other Dakotah/Lakotah (commonly known as the Sioux) tribes, along with the Pembina Chippewa, Cree and Metis.

This genuine Dakota spirit lives on in Bismarck-Mandan. Both (today's MSA population 99,346) were established with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad.

Bismarck sprang up first when the Northern Pacific Railway reached the east bank of the Missouri River in 1873. As an inducement to have German capital invested in the railroad's construction program, the Northern Pacific named Bismarck for German's "Iron Chancellor," Prince Otto Von Bismarck. Today, Bismarck is the center of government in North Dakota. Once the capital of Dakota Territory, Bismarck serves as the capital city of our state.

Mandan, named for the Mantani Indians, was founded as the center for western expansion for the iron rail. It was just south of Mandan, at Fort Abraham Lincoln, that Gen. George Custer left for the famous battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. In 1883, a railroad bridge spanning the mighty Missouri River finally linked the east and west.



Tipis offered portable housing to the Dakotah/Lakotah tribes, commonly known as the Sioux, who spent summers following the buffalo and winters along the river breaks.



Gen. George Custer and his officers take their ease on the steps of the Custer home at Fort Abraham Lincoln.



The Patterson Hotel, as much a center of early Dakota political history in some ways as the Capitol itself, stands as a landmark in downtown Bismarck.



The Bismarck Depot dates back to 1901, when trains rolled to and from the Pacific Northwest.

Lewis and Clark came through the land that would eventually become Bismarck-Mandan 200 years ago (1804-06). They were sent on a military mission by President Jefferson to find the Northwest Passage. It was near Bismarck-Mandan that they met Sakakawea, the young Indian guide in 1804. Her village was larger than the city of St. Louis at the time.

Today, the sister cities of Bismarck and Mandan continue as a trade and transportation hub. Normal services available here are comparable to cities with a population of 300,000. We have also become a thriving medical center. Energy has played an important role in the growth of Bismarck-Mandan. Many major energy companies have located here to pursue the development of oil, coal and synthetic fuels. Most recently, data processing and customer service centers have emerged in Bismarck-Mandan. North Dakota's number one industry is agriculture followed by tourism.

But what sets these two cities apart is the attitude of the residents you will encounter. North Dakota is known for its friendly people, and Bismarck-Mandan is no exception. You'll experience that famous western hospitality firsthand, from hotel staffs to store clerks to passersby you meet on the street. ■

PHOTOS FROM 'CROSS THE WIDE MISSOURI, NORTH DAKOTA CENTENNIAL SERIES, VOLUME 1

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