

# CAPITAL PAST TIMES

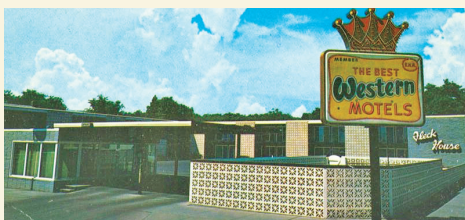
## NEWSLETTER FOR THE BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY 2024

[www.BismarckHistory.org](http://www.BismarckHistory.org)

### FROM MANSION TO MOTEL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF 122 E THAYER

BY EMILY SAKARIASSEN



Bismarck bids farewell to the old Fleck House Motel!

Developers have purchased the property and, unable to salvage the structure, will raze it and make way for a mixed-use apartment complex. Change, for better or worse, is inevitable. Some still remember that when the motel was first built in the early 1960s, one of Bismarck's first and most magnificent mansions was demolished.



The Thompson House was a Queen Anne style mansion at the northwest corner of Thayer Ave and 2nd Street. It was built in 1884 by Charles W. Thompson, son of Iowa Congressman William Thompson who had served with Col. Custer in Texas, became captain in the 7th Cavalry in 1866,

and retired in 1875 at Fort Abraham Lincoln just months before the Battle of Little Big Horn.



In this Fort Abraham Lincoln, 1876 photo, C.W. Thompson dressed in civilian clothes in the back row, center. Col. William Thompson at back, right. Lt. Col. Custer is third from left.

C.W. Thompson was a West Point graduate and civil engineer. Settling in Bismarck with his father, he opened a mine near Sims in 1879, supplying coal to the Northern Pacific Railroad. As the Railroad began building the bridge across the Missouri River, C.W. supplied riprap.

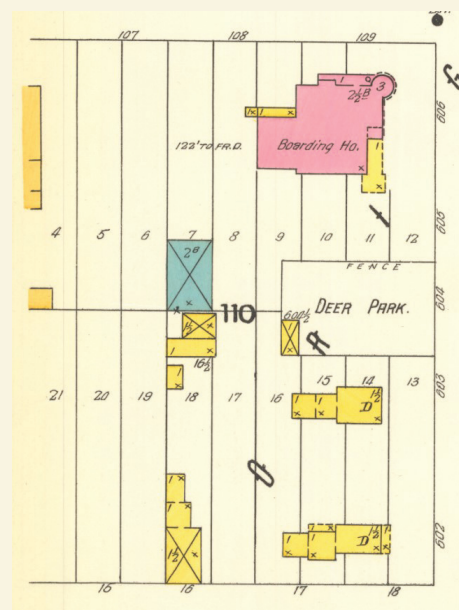
He also received the contract for construction of the state's original capital building. C.W. and his wife, Hepziah Lambert, eventually moved to Tacoma, Washington. In their absence, the stately house on Thayer became a boarding house under the management of Emery S. Beardsley, partner in the Beardsley & Finney drugstore.

Under Beardsley, the property took on a unique feature discovered in the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Note on the map: The C.W. Thompson house appears as a 2.5-story brick "boarding house." The "Deer Park" is fenced in to the west.

At 604 Thayer Ave, where the alley adjacent to Bread Poets Bakery is today, there was, briefly, a fenced-in parcel known as the "Deer Park" where Beardsley kept a small herd of deer as pets for his daughter Emma. The Bismarck Tribune reported on June 17, 1898, "Two young fawns arrived to increase the band at the Beardsley house Sunday afternoon and are the admiration of the neighborhood."

In 1904, C.W. Thompson died tragically in the "Clallam Disaster"—a shipwreck in the Strait of Juan de Fuca that claimed the lives of 56 people. By this time, the Beardsleys had moved on; T.J. Woodmansee and his family were running the boarding house on Thayer Ave. Woodmansee and his wife Sarah had relocated from Steele with their daughter, Nan, following several crop failures and a fire that burned

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The Bismarck Historical Society would like to thank these two partners for all the help they have provided:



**Bailee Bulman**

Continuing Education Manager

Serving as an intellectual connection between BSC and the community, OLLI@BSC offers adults noncredit humanities classes, learning opportunities, and events that build a sense of community and camaraderie among members.

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DMA's mission is to produce, empower, promote, and distribute local programming; provide equipment and technology services; and create collaborations that strengthen the community.



Find "Bismarck Historical Society" on Facebook

## NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### TORY JACKSON, BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT

In 1872, engineers for the Northern Pacific Railroad selected the area that is now Bismarck as the location for the eventual railroad bridge over the Missouri River. Squatters had been living in the area for at least a year before the town was established, anticipating the arrival of the railroad and the economic benefits that would follow for those who were among the first to stake a claim.

Many people assume May 14th, which we celebrate as Founders Day, is the date that Camp Hancock was established to protect the coming railroad workers. But Camp Hancock was not actually constructed and occupied until the late summer of 1872.

What Founders Day actually commemorates is a quintessential occurrence in 19th Century American – a local land rush in which competing parties began staking claims to a future townsite along a railroad. May 14, 1872 is the day that a group headed by Colonel George W. Sweet (for whom Sweet Avenue is named), an attorney for the Northern Pacific Railroad and its affiliated land company, made a claim to the site that would eventually become Bismarck. A competing party financed by James J. Hill was simultaneously claiming other land in the area.

Of course, in those days, both Bismarck and Camp Hancock were known by different names. Most of you probably know one if not both original names, but I won't give them away, just in case those are questions during our upcoming trivia night!

That's right! In celebration of this year's Founders Day, we're hosting trivia night at Laughing Sun Brewery on May 13 (call it Founders Eve). The fun will start at 6:30 p.m. Players can form teams of up to six people, so get together with friends and family and see how much you know about our city's history. We'll have great prizes for the winning team.

All the questions will focus on Bismarck's rich history. There will be 5 rounds, each with a different historical theme. One of the rounds will require that you identify images from Bismarck's past.

Aside from showing off your knowledge of Bismarck history, you'll be supporting the Bismarck Historical Society. Laughing Sun has generously agreed to donate 20% of each tab to us! All you need to do is show a flyer when you order your food and drinks. We'll be handing out flyers as you arrive, so no need to worry about printing it beforehand. And even if you don't care for trivia, stop by to support a great local business and the Bismarck Historical Society at the same time.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Laughing Sun on Founders Eve!

## WHAT'S NEW???

### BY JASON TOMANEK



The Bismarck Historical Society is pleased to announce a new radio and podcast program featuring conversations about historic topics and people that helped shape Bismarck's fascinating history and rich culture.

History Hotdish helps the Bismarck Historical Society fulfill its mission to learn, preserve and promote the history of Bismarck. Members of

our Board of Directors, Kate Waldera and Mike McCormack, facilitate conversations with local residents, business leaders, and government officials on a variety of topics from Camp Hancock and the Dakota Zoo to baseball in Bismarck and the history of the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library and information about Bismarck's first teacher, Linda Slaughter.

The program airs regularly on Radio Access 102.5FM on Wednesdays at 10am, Fridays at 4pm and Sunday evenings at 8pm. The program can also be available as a podcast on the Dakota Media Access website, or wherever you find your favorite podcast programs.

History Hotdish is produced through volunteer efforts by Bismarck Historical Society board members and our good friends at Dakota Media Access. Check out the Bismarck Historical Society Facebook page for more information and announcements for upcoming episodes and topics.

# FROM MANSION TO MOTEL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF 122 E THAYER

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his livery barn to the ground. The Woodmansees are better remembered, perhaps, for having established a new livery stable here in Bismarck at 7th Street and Broadway.

Subsequent owners of the Thompson house, Alford and Addie Welch, made numerous improvements to the property and renamed it the "Hotel Roanoke." They earned a reputation for the hotel and café as being the "finest of its kind in the state."

In 1910, the Bismarck Diocese purchased the Roanoke for the first bishop, Father Vincent Wehrle. Plans called for eventual construction of a Cathedral on the same block. However, this plan never materialized. Instead, the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit was built in the 1940s northwest of this location, on Raymond Street and Avenue B.

In 1941, the Thompson house was taken over by the Sacred Heart Benedictine Convent and Academy of Minot for use as a nursing home and named for the apostle of charity, St. Vincent. Though the house had been remodeled,

including installation of an electric elevator, it was soon cramped and inadequate. By 1956, plans were underway for a new St. Vincent's Home and the following year, the historic house stood empty for the first time.

The mansion was finally demolished when Marcus Fleck built the Fleck House Motel in 1961. In its heyday, it had a reputation similar to that of the Roanoke. Billed as the first of its kind in North Dakota, it boasted 40 lodging units downtown and was designed so that another story could be added later. The Motel was also to feature a 24 x 36-foot swimming pool which was a unique feature of the time.

In 1973, Bernie Fleland purchased the property from the Flecks and operated it as a Best Western. Soon after buying the motel, the Flelands expanded the Fleck House to include 20 efficiency apartments beside the motel. In 2000, the motel was sold again and became the Budget Inn Express. The rest is soon to be history...

## THANKS FOR THESE GREAT PROGRAMS:

MARCH 13, 2024

### *History of Zoning – Sandra Bogaczyk*

The audience was educated about the real-world reasoning for creating zoning laws. This program was based on primary document images, historical scenarios and laws passed entirely rooted in the history of Bismarck's land development even though it touches on contemporary issues nationwide. A lively question and answer time just added to this great presentation.

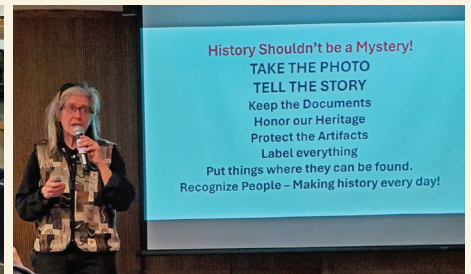
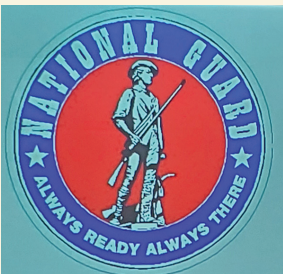


APRIL 10, 2024

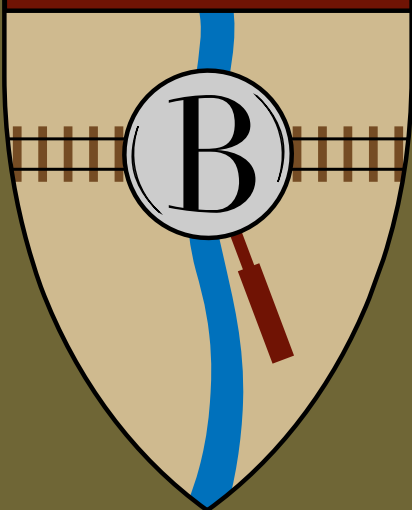
### *The history of the North Dakota National Guard in the Bismarck-Mandan area*

#### *Special guest speaker – Lt. Col. (retired) Shirley Olgeirson*

This presentation about the National Guard was very informative and covered the history of many of the Guard units over many years including information about their service during wartime. Many good questions and comments rounded out a very interesting evening.



# BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- ☐ Individual: \$30.00
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## BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024 AT 6:30PM**

### FOUNDERS DAY CELEBRATION

(see Presidents Note for details)

***Laughing Sun Brewing Company, 1023 East Front Avenue***

The Bismarck Historical Society invites you to join us in celebration of Bismarck's founding in 1872 for a fun-filled night of Bismarck Trivia!

The annual *Bismarck Historical Society's Founders Day* event will be held at the *Laughing Sun Brewing Company*. And this year we are celebrating by hosting a Bismarck History-themed trivia contest. The event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited. Prizes will be awarded to some and fun will be had by all!

**JUNE 12, 2024 AT 6:30PM**

### CHIEF LOOKING'S VILLAGE

***Northwest Burnt Boat Drive***

This program will be on-site at *Chief Looking's Village* at 6:30 PM where Erik Holland will share information about the archaeological digs and the findings that were conducted previously at the Native American village site.

**JULY, 2024 – NO PROGRAM**

**AUGUST 14, 2024 AT 6:30PM**

### HISTORY HOTDISH PODCAST / RADIO

***Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library***

This program will be a panel discussion on the *History Hotdish* podcast / radio program at 6:30 PM and will be held at the *Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library*. Panelists will likely include J. Michael McCormack, Kate Waldera, Tory Jackson, Jason Tomanek, with the possibility of asking past guests to join as well.

**SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 TENTATIVE**

### ST. MARY'S CEMETERY TOUR

St. Mary's Cemetery Tour with Paulette Bullinger...more on this later.

**OCTOBER 9, 2024 AT 6:30PM**

### DUSTY OLD BOX

***Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library***

Amy Sakaraisen is planning a "Dusty Old Box" program showcasing a box tucked away at the North Dakota State Archives from the 1930s.