



CAPITAL PAST TIMES

NEWSLETTER FOR THE BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2015

WWW.BISMARCKHISTORY.ORG

SNIPPETS FROM A MEMOIR

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE REV. DR. RICHARD B. TUDOR

In 2010, The Rev. Dr. Richard B. Tudor, a graduate of Bismarck High School, attended the 50th Reunion of the BHS Class of 1960. At that gathering, he was able to reconnect with ... classmates whom he had known since they were in the first grade at Roosevelt Grade School. As they reminisced, the Rev. Dr. Tudor envisioned a writing project of this nostalgia and began compiling an essay about his memories of growing up in Bismarck in the 1950's. The following are brief excerpts from the Rev. Dr.'s memoir.

For some strange reason, I remember clearly the evening of December 31, 1949. On New Year's Eve in Bismarck in those days, as the old year died and the new began, it was notated on the front of the capital building by lighting windows to spell out the new year. As midnight passed, there it was, 1950 in lights,

the beginning of a new decade. The 1940's had been dominated by World War II and its aftermath. Looking back on it, I can now see that the numbers 1950 gleaming high above the city symbolized more than just another new year. People were ready to leave the memories of the war behind and get on with their lives. The 1950's were looked forward to as a decade of great promise!

FROM JACK LYONS TO THE BIG BOY

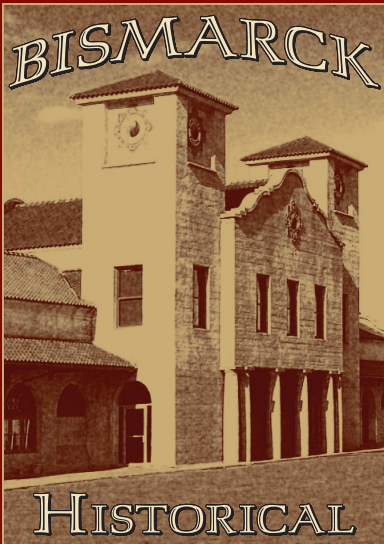
There is a picture in the North Dakota Historical Society archives of a group of men sitting in the Jack Lyon's Hamburger Stand in the 1920's. I have a framed picture of the front of the store taken in 1938. What a place! It was a Bismarck legend. It was located on the south side of Broadway between

fifth and sixth. The actual address was 515 Broadway. I was only in there a couple of times to eat. It had a right angled lunch counter facing west where most of the people sat and there were a few small tables along the west wall. It was not a big place. Bottles of pop were in a water cooled machine. You remember how those worked. You put in your dime, moved the bottle you wanted along a track to the opening where you could lift it out. People always talked about how great the hamburgers were. It was torn down in the 1960's to build a parking ramp. That's called progress.

Another legendary Bismarck eating place opened up in 1954 when Harley McDowell decided to invest in a Big Boy restaurant. It was a pretty

good investment! It was a drive-through not a drive-in. It was and still is located at the eastern end of Main Street, the perfect location for teenagers dragging Main. You pulled into a driveway lined with speakers, gave your order, pulled up to the window, paid and got your order, and then drove into the parking lot to eat it. A lot of time was spent in that back lot. How many 'Pizza Burgers Flying Style' did I eat there? It was the place to be. I can remember warm summer nights when there might be several hundred young people standing outside their cars just talking. No fights! No drug deals! In the 1960's the climate in America changed and it soon became forbidden to get out of your car in the Big Boy lot. It was the end of an era!

Capital Past Times has published these excerpts for several reasons. First, we hope you have enjoyed this brief stroll down memory lane. The memoir's manuscript is quite extensive and may recall many of the same events and activities you experienced. Secondly, our intent is to publish more of these vignettes as time and space permit. Therefore, we wanted to introduce the Rev. Dr. Tudor to you briefly by saying that he enjoyed a thirty-six year career in parish ministry as an Episcopalian priest, and, retired from the N.D. National Guard as a Lt. Col. Thirdly, we invite and encourage YOU to search your own recollections of the Bismarck you used to know and to share them with us. Your memories of similar events might have a much different perspective; or, your experiences may be totally different. Our desire is to build an archive of personal reminiscences that might provide a basis for a purely "peoples-eye view" of Bismarck as it was perceived through the decades. For more information about how you may participate in this project, please contact Walt Bailey at info@bismarckhistory.org or at wbailey@nd.gov.



CAPITAL PAST TIMES

is published by
The Bismarck
Historical Society
PO. Box 47
Bismarck, ND 58502

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*Ann Vadnie, Mary Baird,
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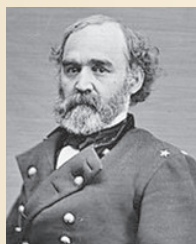
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

SIMPLE MUSINGS

Our street names are often born out of nostalgia, whimsy, a family's heritage or contribution, or an area's geographic oddity. One has only to look at a Bismarck street map from 1883...Prescott, Baker, Roy, Merrill, Bentley, Emmons, McKinney, Ingalls, Hannafin, Braman, LaForest, and the "Alphabet Avenues." Some names are still in use, others have been changed as the city grew, and the remainder simply disappeared, like the dust from those early unpaved roadways.

Rosser, Thayer, Meigs, and Main Streets were the four original platted streets of what was known as Edwinton. They ran east-west and were located north of the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks. I found the history behind Meigs Street to be the most intriguing and want to share what I have discovered.



Meigs Street was named after General Montgomery Cunningham Meigs (pictured left). He was a distinguished engineer and became Quartermaster General after the Civil War. As Quartermaster General, Meigs supervised plans for the new War

Department building (1866-1867), the National Museum (1876), the extension of the Washington Aqueduct (1876), and for a hall of records (1878). He was a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and one of the earliest members of the National Academy of Sciences. Meigs also played a critical role in developing Arlington National Cemetery, both during and after the Civil War. General Meigs was 75 years old when he died in Washington, DC on January 2, 1892. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



His son and namesake, Montgomery C. Meigs (pictured left), spent time in the area as a railroad surveyor under the supervision of General Thomas L. Rosser. Young Meigs purchased property in Edwinton (Block 50-Lot 13) from George W. Sweet

for \$150 in May 1872. The property was then leased or rented to Jack White, who set up a large tent for a saloon. After White's death in 1876, Sam Whitney ran a variety show on the lot. The property eventually was sold to three gentlemen (Wetherby, Flannery, and L. N. Griffin) who built a brick building on the land; the structure was known as Central Block and was seriously damaged by the 1898 fire.

The younger Meigs eventually married and in 1882 relocated to Keokuk, IA where he took a position as civil engineer. He had six daughters, one of them the noted Newbery Medal author, Cornelia Meigs. He was best known for his design and management of the Des Moines Rapids canal and lock system as well as the invention of the canvas cofferdam. He also pioneered the application of crude oil to dirt roads to control dust and mud. Montgomery C. Meigs was 84 years old when he died in Keokuk on December 9, 1931.

Changes were afoot in Bismarck as 1886 began and Meigs Street would soon be no more...at least as far as the City Council was concerned. The Bismarck Tribune article by W. A. Falconer in the February 11, 1938 issue stated that the first mention of the proposed name change from Meigs to Broadway appeared in the February 10, 1886 City Council minutes. A petition was presented to the council during that meeting by a group of citizens and was approved according to the March 3rd minutes. The title of Falconer's article...Bismarck Residents—You May Still Legally Be Living on Meigs Street...only serves to increase the intrigue. He closed this particular column by stating, "And here the record ends. No ordinance apparently was ever enacted or passed legally changing the name of Meigs street [sic], and no new plat of the City of Bismarck was ever filed showing Broadway." Another Bismarck Tribune article from May 25, 1938 featured Mr. and Mrs. John P. Dunn who had arrived in Edwinton on May 24, 1873. The Duns lived quietly on Meigs Street until approximately 1898. Halfway through their time on Meigs Street, however, the name was changed at the whim of 'some pinheaded alderman' to quote the late Mr. Dunn. It is interesting to note that John P. Dunn was listed as one of the citizens who had presented the petition to the council. An interesting mix of affairs indeed!

Kate Waldera

President

Bismarck Historical Society

SOURCES:

Bismarck Tribune, February 11, 1938, page 2 and May 25, 1938, page 2
Dictionary of American Biography, v.12 (1933), pages 507-508
Encyclopedia Americana, 1919 edition, pages 596-597
Map of the City of Bismarck, Burleigh County, D.T. (published by H. B. Stranahan & Co, 1883)
Who Was Who in America, v.1 (1897/1942), pages 827-828



**FIND "BISMARCK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY"
ON FACEBOOK**

THANKS FOR THESE GREAT PROGRAMS:

NOVEMBER 6, 2014

ANNUAL MEETING: Retrospective: 2014

The Bismarck Historical Society's "Annual Meeting: Retrospective: 2014" was again very successful. Attendees enjoyed a wonderful meal, sponsored by Mark and Claudia Thompson of *H.A. Thompson & Sons* and great entertainment by the *Person Family Quartet*. Jim Christianson received *The President's Award*, for his contribution to the Bismarck Historical

Society. Ann Vadnie was awarded the first annual *Myron and Marjory Atkinson Family Award*, given for making a significant contribution to preservation and sharing Bismarck history. Thank you also to our



other sponsors for the event, *ND Guaranty & Title Co.* and *The Printers, Inc.*

DEC. 3, 2014

"ND NATIONAL GUARD 164TH INFANTRY IN THE PACIFIC WORLD WAR II":

Board member Ann Vadnie, with help from her father, Harry Vadnie, presented an interesting and informative program about the ND National Guard 164th Infantry. General information was given about the 164th and Harry graciously answered questions about his time in the Pacific during World War II. Also, special thanks to (Ret.) Lt. Col. Shirley Olgeirson, editor of the *164th Infantry News*, for her part in the program.



JAN. 6, 2015:

"HELICOPTERS IN VIETNAM:

Lt. Col. Robert Robinson (retired)



Helicopters were essential to all aspects of the Vietnam. Robert Robinson showed photos and gave interesting information on many topics of this war. He told about the planes, helicopters, and weaponry used and told about the men who served in Vietnam.

FEB. 11, 2015

"THE U.S.S. NORTH DAKOTA":



Robert Wefald gave an informative, educational presentation about several seafaring vessels. First he showed photos and spoke about the original *U.S.S. North Dakota (BB-29)* (pictured right top) which was a Delaware class battleship.

Then he spoke about the new *U.S.S. North Dakota (SSN-784)* (pictured right middle), a Virginia class attack submarine. Finally Wefald spoke about the new vessel, whose construction will begin in 2016 named the *USNS Bismarck* (pictured right bottom), a Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV). Wefald's wonderful personal stories added considerably to the presentation.



PRINCE HOTEL'S BLUE BLAZER LOUNGE — TWO LEGENDARY DRINKS

BY ANN VADNIE

In the mid-1860s, a man named Jerry Thomas, author of the original cocktail book, *Bartender's Guide*, invented a drink he called the Blue Blazer.

Thomas' drink was quite a production as the guide described, "If the process is well done, it will have the appearance of a continued stream of liquid fire."

Here's how this flaming drink is made. One silver-plated mug was filled with very hot water and a teaspoon of sugar.



Another mug filled with blended whiskey was set on fire and the bartender would "toss the flaming liquor" into the other mug, and then back and forth a half-dozen times.

This drink and its name tie into the Prince Hotel (originally the Van Horn Hotel) at 113 N. 3rd Street. Housed within the Prince Hotel was the Blue Blazer Lounge (pictured top right), which got its name from Thomas' drink which, of course became the specialty of the Blue Blazer Lounge.

The second drink was invented by two oil men and the Blue Blazer bartender on a Saturday in 1952. Geologist Wendell Smith and land man James Curran

were partners in the oil business. They liked to do their drinking at the Blue Blazer.

After one especially tough night, the two men went back to the Blue Blazer to ask bartender, Shorty (Gebert) Doebber, to mix them something "soothing."

Several ideas were made and rejected until Shorty finally hit on a something good... it sort of tasted like a chocolate phosphate "with a boost."

Into a highball glass full of ice, Shorty poured a couple of ounces of the chocolate liqueur called *crème de cacao*, an ounce of sweet dairy cream, and enough soda water to top out the

glass. A quick stir and you have that "something soothing" the two men had been looking for.

So, it was in the Blue Blazer Lounge at the Prince Hotel, that they created the drink that bears their names, a "Smith and Curran."

Or, at least one name was correct. Curran's

name was sometimes heard incorrectly, so this drink is often printed as a "Smith and Kearns," or "Smith and Kern."

That covers how two legendary cocktails are forever linked with The Blue Blazer Lounge at the Prince Hotel in Bismarck, ND. Bottoms up!





Bismarck Historical Society
PO. Box 47
Bismarck, ND 58502

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COMING EVENTS:

MARCH 11, 2015

"WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN ND"
Presenter: Renee Stromme

APRIL 8, 2015

**"THE HISTORY OF BISMARCK
PUBLIC LIBRARY"**
Presenter: Kate Walders

MAY 14, 2015

"FOUNDERS DAY"
Change of Venue –
ND State Heritage Center
weather permitting-outside /
inclement weather-inside

There will be more
information in the next
newsletter.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All programs, unless noted
otherwise, will begin at 6:30
and be held in Room A at
the Bismarck Public Library.

BISMARCK TRIVIA

THE RAILROAD BRIDGE "MOVING PIER"

The original
Northern Pacific
railroad bridge was
completed to span
the Missouri River in
1882 (pictured right
top). From the very
beginning there were
endless problems with
the eastern pier of
this bridge.

Just after
completion, the east
pier began shifting
towards the river at a
rate of over 3 inches
per year. In 1898
(pictured right middle),
the pier was dug out
and moved back onto

a larger foundation.
By 1902, the pier
was already 4 inches
off center.

It was believed that
the city water reservoir
on the hill above the
railroad track was
leaking water, causing
the hillside to slide.
Many projects were
tried over many years
to try to slow down the
landslide.

Finally, after nearly
seven decades of
frustration, this slope
stability problem
was solved by one
of the most famous

civil engineers that
ever lived, Ralph B.
Peck (pictured right
bottom, second from
left). His engineering
suggestion, removal of
a large part of hillside
above the east pier,
resulted in stability of
the slope.

It is also interesting
that whenever Ralph
Peck mentioned this
project, he said the
bridge held special
meaning to him. His
father, Orwin Peck,
designed the east tail
span for the original
railroad bridge.



DO YOU REMEMBER?

THE (ORIGINAL) ELKS POOL AND BROADWAY DAIRY QUEEN

Bismarck's first
swimming pool was
built in 1932 at the
corner of Washington
Street and Broadway
Avenue. Many fond
childhood memories
can be shared about
the Bismarck Elks
Pool. Some of us, call
us the "pool rats,"
can remember days



when we were at the
pool three times...
swimming lessons in
the morning, regular
free swim in the
afternoon, and family



hour in the evening.
What great memories
of fun and play at the
Elks Pool!

And, we certainly
couldn't pass up a



trip to the nearby
Dairy Queen after a
day filled with water,
sun, and fun!