



CAPITAL PAST TIMES

NEWSLETTER FOR THE BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AUGUST 2014

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BISMARCK FLOUR MILL

BY TOM ATKINSON (BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBER)



Flour and gristmills were very important commercial business throughout North Dakota history. Although the terms flour mill or gristmill could refer to any mill that grinds grain, the terms were used historically for a local mill where farmers brought their own grain and received back flour or ground meal, minus a percentage called the "miller's toll." The miller received the miller's toll in lieu of wages. A mill was a tough business to sustain and the Bismarck Flour Mill would experience several ownership changes over the years.

The Bismarck Flour Mill was started in 1878. The building was located at the intersection of 7th Street and Front Ave, on the site of the current Bismarck Tribune.

The mill used steam to turn the millstones. By 1884, the mill was sold to Arthur Miller of Valley City. Arthur Miller formed a partnership with his farther-in-law John Russell to form the Russell-Miller Company. The Russell-Miller Company, which also owned mills in Valley City and Jamestown, assigned M. W. Leahy to be the head miller.

In 1891, the mill was sold to the ND Millers' Association, a group of North Dakota based banks. The Association re-opened the mill, but by 1897, lawsuits by previous owners for non-payment of loans drove the association into bankruptcy. The Bismarck Tribune reported on Aug. 10, 1898 that the mill suffered minor damage during the great city

fire that occurred on Aug. 9, but the mill did not reopen, and M. W. Leahy moved to Hebron to operate the mill there.

In 1899, the mill was sold to the Missouri Valley Milling Company. The MVM Company, which also owned mills in Mandan and Dickinson, produced "Lyon's Best" and "Climax" brand flour. Their flour was so popular that it took the grand prize at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. But the Bismarck Mill was in such poor condition that it was closed that same year.

On Oct. 19, 1906, the Bismarck Tribune reported that a new mill was going to be built on Front Avenue between 9th and 10th street. At the same time, the Russell-Miller Company started negotiations to purchase the MVM Company. M.W. Leahy was recalled from Hebron, and the new mill opened in 1909.

The Russell-Miller Company would go on to become the country's fourth largest flour milling operation, with 140 elevators, terminals and flour mills in 10 states. The Company was renamed the Peavey Company in 1962, and was purchased by ConAgra, Inc. in 1982.

The Bismarck Mill did not enjoy the success of the Russell-Miller Company. Plagued by mechanical problems, the mill was closed in 1924 and was converted to a seed house plant. It sold "Dacotah Chief" seed. The building was ultimately demolished in about 1975.

There was another company that attempted to build a flour mill in Bismarck. In 1906, Captain I.P. Baker formed the Bismarck Elevator and Investment Company. He wanted to convert the old Bismarck Brewery, located on the Missouri River banks near the intersection of Fraine Barack Road and Memorial Highway, into a mill using the Missouri River for water and power. His plan was to ship grain down the Missouri River to Bismarck, where it would be milled and then shipped downstream to market. But the continued expansion of the railroad to the smaller towns in North Dakota made his plans financially obsolete.



BISMARCK



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

SIMPLE MUSINGS

Our hardworking Program Committee continues the momentum with a superb slate of speakers and programs scheduled for the remaining months of this year. Dates and times will be included in the *Capital Past Times* newsletter.

- **August:** Be sure to mark the All Member Picnic on your calendar! We promise a great time complete with excellent entertainment and delicious food. According to the Farmers Almanac, hot and sunny weather will be provided by Mother Nature. (I hope she doesn't change her mind!)
- **September:** Marilyn Snyder will share her research on the history of the Bismarck Police Department. Her program will include little known facts and stories.
- **October:** Mike Heyd will lead an on-site tour of the North Dakota Heritage Center expansion. Don't miss this opportunity to view North Dakota's showcase!
- **November:** BHS Annual Meeting... entertainment, great food, silent auction, and a presentation on

the events of the past year are on the agenda.

- **December:** Military history buffs will enjoy Ann Vadnie's presentation on North Dakota's 164th Infantry Division in World War II.

The military focus continues into 2015 with presentations by Robert Robinson (Viet Nam Gun Ship Pilot) and Robert Wefald (new U.S.S. North Dakota). Rene Stromme's "Women Get the Vote" follows in March. "History of the Bismarck Public Library" by yours truly is scheduled for April. The popular Founders Day event in May will continue to delight and entertain.

The Bismarck Historical Society is proud to offer these opportunities to our membership and the general public. Spread the word among your friends and share the rich history of Bismarck!

Kate Waldera

President

Bismarck Historical Society

DO YOU REMEMBER?

JACK LYONS "HAMBURGER STAND"

Jack Lyons opened his downtown "Hamburger Stand" in the early 1920s.



Lyons started cooking for the steamboat crews.

At the age of 25, he married Kitty McPhee and gave up the river life to settle in Bismarck's predominately Irish area of town called "Kerry Patch."



Over the years, Jack Lyons owned two "cafes" and his last venture, what he called his "hamburger joint" located on Broadway Avenue between 5th and 6th Streets.

Space was very small, mostly counter, but it did a large "take-out" trade. And, oh, those hamburgers were great!

BISMARCK TRIVIA

WHEEL-A-WHILE

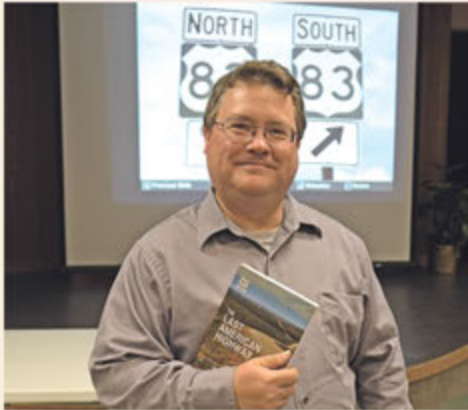
Wheel-A-While was an indoor roller skating rink located near Century High School in Bismarck, North Dakota at 1030 Weiss Avenue, where users would skate along to the biggest hit songs of the era.

It was a popular hangout, especially for high school-aged students. Wheel-A-While also featured a concession stand and other entertainment such as foosball. The business opened in 1975 and closed around 1986. Some consider Wheel-A-While to have been the last safe-place hangout for youths within the city.



THANKS FOR THESE GREAT PROGRAMS:

AUTHOR STEW MAGNUSON



In April, Stew Magnuson stopped in Bismarck to promote his book, *The Last American Highway: A Journey Through Time Down U.S. Route 83: The Dakotas*.

This book is part one of his Highway 83 Chronicles. Magnuson spoke about the months he spent traveling from

town to town collecting stories which profile people and towns along the old highway.

He told the audience how he always loved the old highways and back roads. And, he said that not only did almost every person have a story to tell, but each town was unique.

While sharing pictures and stories, Magnuson stressed that his goal with the book was to open people's eyes about this road (US Route 83) because there is a lot there to see and enjoy.

FOUNDERS DAY

On May 14, the annual birthday celebration for our fair city called "Founders Day" was held at Camp Hancock. Miller Elementary Kindergarten students opened the evening with a wonderful song and the Elks Choir continued the music with several patriot songs. A tree was

dedicated to honor former Bismarck Historical Society Board member, Frank E. Vyzralek. Birthday cake and ice cream was served while the audience was entertained by local favorite musicians in the band named, "Jamaican Me Crazy." A good time was had by all.



LET'S SUPPORT THE NORTH DAKOTA 125TH CELEBRATION

TWO STATEWIDE SIGNATURE EVENTS



The Bismarck Historical Society would like to remind you about two upcoming dates highlighting North Dakota's celebration of statehood.

There are two statewide signature events:

- **Saturday, Aug. 16** will be held on the Capitol grounds and will showcase the best of North Dakota with home-grown entertainment, food, fine arts, and games.
- **Sunday, Nov. 2**, is North Dakota's official 125th birthday which will be held along with the grand opening of the new North Dakota Heritage Center.

There will be entertainment, special programs, and the opening of two new museum galleries.

Visit this website for more information:
<http://history.nd.gov/northdakota125.html>



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HISTORICAL SOCIETY"
ON FACEBOOK**

BISMARCK



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bismarck Historical Society
PO. Box 47
Bismarck, ND 58502

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Student — \$10.00
- Individual — \$25.00
- Family — \$40.00
- Patron — \$100.00
- 3-year Patron
(with web page)

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Make checks payable to:
Bismarck Historical Society
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COMING EVENTS:

AUGUST 13, 2014

"BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY ALL MEMBER PICNIC"

5:30 p.m. at Jaycee Park
E Century Avenue, Bismarck

You are invited to an
"OLD FASHIONED PICNIC."

Members are free; guests
accompanied by a member
are \$10.00 each.

Food will be provided,
but bring your own beverage.

**Please, RSVP as soon as
possible to:
Mike Heyd • 222-1308 or
mcheyd@bis.midco.net**

Special entertainment
will be provided.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

"HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORY OF
THE BISMARCK POLICE DEPARTMENT"
by Marilyn Snyder

OCTOBER 8, 2014

"TOUR OF THE HERITAGE CENTER"
by Mike Heyd

NOVEMBER 6, 2014

"ANNUAL MEETING FOR THE
BISMARCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY"
6:00 p.m. at the Elks

DECEMBER 3, 2014

"THE ND NATIONAL GUARD 164TH
INFANTRY--WORLD WAR II IN THE
PACIFIC" by Ann Vadnie

IMPORTANT NOTE:

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

