



# NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HISTORY

## CAMP HANCOCK STATE HISTORIC SITE

The National Weather Service we know today started on February 9, 1870, when President Ulysses S. Grant signed a joint resolution of Congress requiring the Secretary of War

*. . . to provide for taking meteorological observations at the military stations in the interior of the continent and at other points in the States and Territories . . . and for giving notice on the northern (Great) Lakes and on the seacoast by magnetic telegraph and marine signals, of the approach and force of storms.*

On September 9, 1874, Sergeant James H. Smith of the Signal Corps arrived in Bismarck to begin observing and recording the weather. The first station, located on Third Street between Main and Miegs (Broadway), was described by Sergeant Smith in his diary as:

*. . . a small frame house, containing two rooms, very strongly and neatly built, and detached from all other buildings, the north and south exposure being perfectly unobstructed.*

Over the next few years the weather station was moved on a regular basis. In 1877 the station was housed in room 70 of the Sheridan House Hotel; in December 1878 it was moved to the U.S. military telegraph office at 213 First Street, and in 1881 to Raymond's Brick Block Building at Main and Third Streets. In late 1887 the station was moved to Camp Hancock, but would only stay a few years. In 1891 the Weather Bureau was created as a civilian service. That same year, the Bismarck office was moved to the First National Bank building at Main and Fourth Streets, where it remained until 1894, when the Signal Corps abandoned Camp Hancock and the Weather Bureau took over the site. Over the next 45 years Camp Hancock would be the home of the Weather Bureau in Bismarck.

In response to increasing air traffic in the region, a separate weather station was opened at the Bismarck airport on January 3, 1939. Weather observations at Camp Hancock were gradually cut back, and; on January 1, 1940, the last observation was taken, and all equipment was moved to the airport office.

Shortly after the Weather Bureau left Camp Hancock and moved to the Bismarck Airport, the United States entered World War II. Many of the men with the bureau left to join the military. To fill this vacancy, women were hired to observe and record the weather. Eleven days after the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) the army requested that all weather broadcasts be discontinued. The fear was that the enemy would intercept this information and use it to plan an attack on the United States.

In 1970 the Weather Bureau was renamed the United States Weather Service and was moved from the Department of Agriculture to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In 1973 the Weather Service moved from the Bismarck Airport terminal to its current location south of the airport terminal.

