

Bismarck, North Dakota: Capitol City and the Capitol Building

In 1883, Dakota Territory's legislature moved the capitol from Yankton to the more centrally-located area of Bismarck, a status the city retained after statehood in 1889. Several times, campaigns were lodged to move the capitol elsewhere, including after the original capitol building burned down in 1930. These campaigns did not succeed. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the significance of Bismarck, the Capitol City.

Archival Collections

10266 Old State Capitol Cornerstone Records

Contents of the cornerstone in the 1883 State Capitol, including a program of the dedication ceremony, calling cards, North Dakota newspapers, a speech by Governor Nehemiah Ordway, and letters.

10317 State Capitol Cornerstone Records

Consists of correspondence concerning selection of contents of the cornerstone; copies of the dedication speeches, printed materials, programs, invitations, reports, tickets, and ribbons that were placed in the cornerstone; an original and photocopy of the souvenir dedication program for the capitol cornerstone ceremony; an inventory of contents of the cornerstone; and newspapers containing articles about building of the North Dakota capitol.

10553 Frank E. Vyzralek Collection

Box 51, Folder 18; Box 61, Folder 7

The collection includes the research files, personal papers, photographs and audiovisual materials of lifelong researcher and former North Dakota State Archivist Frank Edward Vyzralek. The research files include original work and information compiled about agriculture, arts and entertainment, business and industry, city and town life, education, ethnicity, Indians of North America, history, military, people, places, politics and government, religion and transportation.

10691 Roy Johnson and Louis Pfaller Collection

Box 16, Folder 49

Newspaper clippings, articles, photographs, maps, pamphlets, and correspondence documenting the research of two historians, Johnson and Pfaller.

11088 Janet Beltran Research Collection

Papers consist of Beltran's research files on Alexander McKenzie, the histories of Bismarck (N.D.), and of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- Territorial Capitol—Dakota Territory
- North Dakota State Capitol
- Yankton
- Bismarck
- Capitol fire—North Dakota

People

- Alexander McKenzie, 1851-1922
- Nehemiah Ordway, 1828-1907
- Gilbert A. Pierce, 1839-1901

Locations

- Bismarck, North Dakota
- Steele, North Dakota
- Odessa, North Dakota
- Yankton, South Dakota
- New Rockford, North Dakota
- Jamestown, North Dakota

Journal Articles

The North Dakota Capital Fight

Merle Potter – *North Dakota History* Vol. 7 Issue 1

James Blunt

Robert Carlson – *North Dakota History* Vol. 43 Issue 2

The Omnibus Bill: Statehood for Dakota Territory

Julie Marvyl Andresen Koch – *North Dakota History* Vol. 49 Issue 3

21531 Doris Aide Capitol Fire Film

Donor Mark Aide believes this might be the "original" Capitol fire film shot by filmmaker Russell Reid (unconfirmed by archivist).

30055 Capitol Commissioners, Board of. Correspondence.

Consists of correspondence and contracts concerning the construction and operation of the Capitol Trolley Line.

30056 Capitol Commissioners, Board of. Capitol Line Daily Reports.

Series consists of Capitol Line daily reports.

30077 Dakota Territory. Governor. Correspondence Concerning the Capitol.

North Dakota State Capitol.

30131 Dakota Territory. Secretary, Insurance Policies on the Capitol

Dakota Territory. Secretary, Insurance Policies on the Capitol, 1889. 6 items.

30270 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Minutes

Series documents planning and construction of the Capitol.

30271 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, General Correspondence

Series contains proposals, specifications, and correspondence relating to planning, design, personnel, supplies, construction of the State Capitol, insurance, and investigations.

30272 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, President's Outgoing Letters

Series contains correspondence, contracts, financial reports, and daily memos from the President of the Board, R.M. Rishworth.

30273 Institutions, Director of (OMB Facilities Management). Board of Capitol Commissioners, Auditor's Files

Series contains correspondence, original contracts, and financial reports

30274 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Building Superintendent's Files

Correspondence; North Dakota State Capitol

30275 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Daily Procedure Memoranda

Series contains the daily activities reports of the Secretary of the Board of State Capitol Commissioners.

30276 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Subcontractors' Files

Series contains the correspondence of the following subcontractors - T.P. Riley, heating and ventilation; J.W. Darragh, plumbing, drainage and gasfitting; John E. Nuss, hardware; Haggart Construction, sewer and water; S.F. Lambert, debris removal; Dearborn Electrical Construction Co., electrical wiring; W.O. Olson Furniture Co., carpets; Eddy Furniture Co.; Bismarck Tribune Co.; Office Specialties Co., fixed furniture; B.K. Skeels, typical lighting fixtures; Otis Elevator Co., elevators; Fargo Linoleum Co., floor covering; Webb Brothers, window shades; Carl Scott, gravel hauling; Remington Rand Co., Inc., library book stacks; Bismarck Lumber Co., window screens; and William Naggle, paving.

30277 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Architect's Correspondence

Series consists of correspondence of the architectural firm DeRemer, Kurke, Holabird and Root, filed alphabetically by subjects.

30278 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Architect Selection Files

Series contains the correspondence and rating sheets of the architectural firms interested in designing the State Capitol.

30279 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Vouchers
Vouchers

30280 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Lundoff-Bicknell Files

Series consists of correspondence of the Lundoff-Bicknell Construction Co. relating to construction of the State Capitol.

30281 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Transcript of Testimony

Series contains the transcript of testimony from the 1933 investigation of misappropriated funds.

30282 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Contracts

Series consists of copies of contracts awarded to construction firms.

30283 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Appraisal

Series consists of appraisals conducted by the Lloyd Thomas Co. to determine the replacement value for equipment in the State Capitol.

30284 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Financial Reports

30286 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Account Ledger

Series contains accounts of the various capitol building funds, including sale of old building materials, special and general fund, redemption fund, interest and income fund, permanent fund, Commissioners' travel expenses, and the salaries, insurance, and equipment funds.

30287 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Daily Progress Reports

Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Daily Progress Reports

30288 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Expenditures Journal

30289 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Contract & Voucher Payment Ledger

Series contains payment record of contractors and the Lundoff-Bicknell subcontractors.

30291 Institutions, Director of. Board of Capitol Commissioners, Payee Ledger

Series contains the record of payment to contractors.

30449 Secretary of State. Board of Capitol Commissioners. Records 1893-1894.

Secretary of State Board of Capitol Commissioners Records of the Board of Capitol Commissioners, 1893-1894. .5 ft. Series consists of correspondence, bids, contracts, and specifications concerning the construction of the south wing of the State Capitol.

30769 Institutions, Director of. Administration. Capitol Trolley Line Collection Register.

31046 Capitol Commissioners, Board of. Minutes.

Capitol Commissioners, Board of. Minutes, 1905. 1 vol. Series documents administration of the Board, acquisition of real estate, and planning and reconstruction of the State Capitol.

31097 Institutions, Director of (OMB Facilities Management). Administration. Drawings of the State Capitol

Institutions, Director of Administration Drawings of the State Capitol, 1957. Consists of floor plans.

31286 Institutions, Director of. Administration. Architectural Drawings of the State Capitol

Series consists of architectural drawings of the 1932 North Dakota State Capitol.

31849 Management and Budget, Office of. Facility Management, Capitol Maintenance Reference File.

Management and Budget, Office. Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Capitol Maintenance Reference File, 1930-1963. 1.25 ft and oversize

32355 Legislative Research Committee, Capitol Office Space Questionnaire

Legislative Research Committee, Capitol Office Space Questionnaire, 1957. Consists of Questionnaire on Capitol Office Space, Summary of Questionnaires for present space requirements and 1967 space requirements, and questionnaire results by agency. Also includes floor plans for every office in the Capitol Building.

Books

Alexander McKenzie, Boss of North Dakota 1883-1906
1949 - Kenneth J. Carey
Call Number: 978.4 C188a

The Complete History of Bismarck, North Dakota: Frontier to Metropolis
2021 – Randy Hoffman
Follow the comprehensive historical journey of Bismarck-Mandan, North Dakota from an isolated frontier town on the edge of civilization, to its seemingly unlikely assumption as capital, to its role as a pivotal city that encompasses government, education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, and commerce.
Call Number: 978.477 B6229c 2021

Bismarck, Capital of North Dakota
1923 – published under the patronage of the Bismarck Commercial Club; re-issued by the Association of Commerce, Bismarck, North Dakota
Digital copy is stored in State Archives Digital Repository (SADR). Contact Reference staff to view these files.
Call Number: 917.84 B542cu 1923

Map of the City of Bismarck, Capital of Dakota
1883 – H.B. Stranahan
Call Number: 978.477 S897 1883

Bismarck Capital
Began in Oct. 1894.
Call Number: NWSP 08 B622 002

The Bismarck Capital
Call Number: NWSP 08 B622 003

"Let the People Vote on It:" A History of the New Rockford-Bismarck Capital Removal Fight, 1914-1931
1966—Donald James Berg
Call Number: 711.45 B452

Online Resources

[Nehemiah G. Ordway](#)
State Historical Society of North Dakota website

[SHSND Photobook](#)
State Historical Society of North Dakota's Online Search Portal for all digitized photographs

[Digital Horizons](#)
Online consortium of historic photographs from the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota

[WorldCat](#)
State Historical Society of North Dakota's publication search portal

External Resources

[Alexander McKenzie](#)
Dakota Datebook article on Prairie Public Newsroom written by Sarah Walker

[Capitol Complex History](#)
Page on the North Dakota Management and Budget website

State Archives

For more information related to the collections and resources available at the North Dakota State Archives, please email archives@nd.gov or call (701) 328-2668.



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