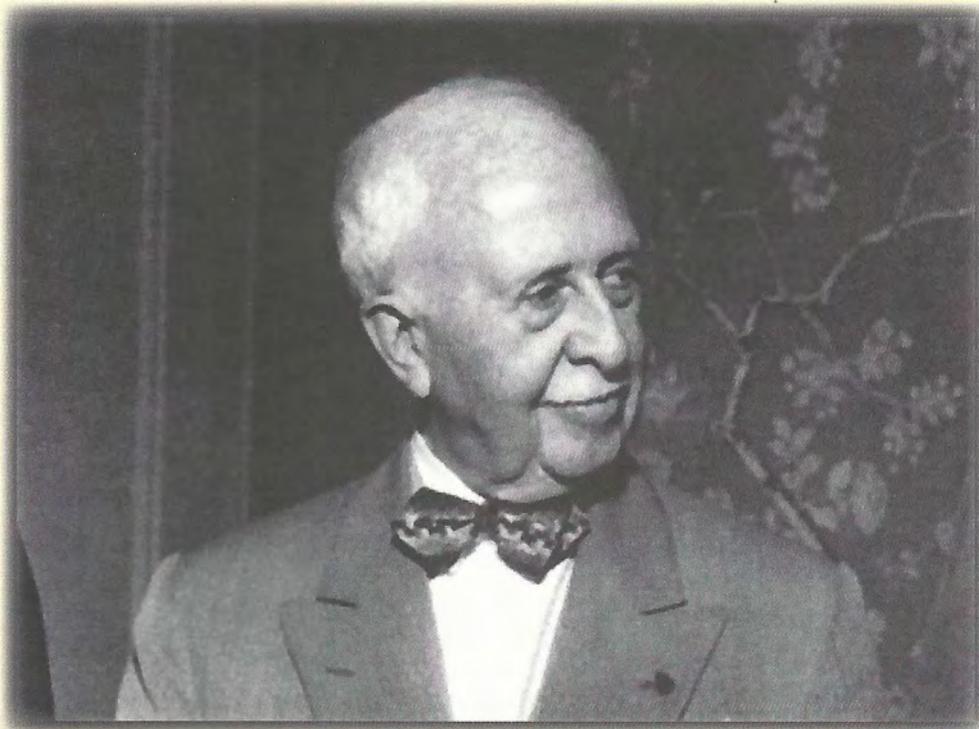


JAMES CASH PENNEY AND HIS NORTH DAKOTA STORES

by David Delbert Kruger

*"What Fifth Avenue wears today, will be rushed . . . to Hettinger tomorrow."
C.W. Samsel, manager, Hettinger J. C. Penney store, 1927*



James Cash Penney, the son of a poor Missouri farmer, was the founder of the national department store chain that still bears his name. By 1930 he had successfully established his stores in thirty-four North Dakota towns, more than any other retailer before or since.

Photographs courtesy of the DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, unless otherwise indicated.



Display at the 1961 grand opening of the new J. C. Penney store in Williston, North Dakota.

Although James Cash Penney opened his first store in 1902, at the age of twenty-six, he kept his business entirely in the western United States for the first twelve years of its existence. By 1914 he was operating about forty stores out of his Utah headquarters, but had no locations east of Montana, Wyoming, or Colorado. Not a single J. C. Penney store existed in the Midwest, and, unlike Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck, his chain had no catalog business to cover the agrarian region by mail order.¹ However, Penney was well aware of North Dakota's booming rural population, and he was eager to locate his stores in North Dakota's emerging communities. In April 1914 Penney expanded his chain eastward opening new stores in Fargo, Wahpeton, and Grand Forks. Not only were these three locations the first J. C. Penney stores in North Dakota, they were also the first J. C. Penney stores in the entire Midwest. Penney would use them as commercial seeds for what would become a very visible retail presence throughout North Dakota and the region. Within sixteen years the main streets of thirty-four North Dakota towns, many

of them communities with fewer than 1,000 residents, would be graced with a J. C. Penney mercantile, giving virtually every North Dakotan from town or country easy access to a national department store. Nearly all of James Cash Penney's North Dakota stores would remain a vital part of their communities well into the latter half of the twentieth century.

From today's perspective it seems logical that a city like Fargo would have been high on Penney's list for a new store location. By 1914 Fargo and Grand Forks were clearly the two largest cities in the state. However, selecting North Dakota's largest towns for a J. C. Penney store was an aberration for Penney and his company. With a population of roughly 14,000, Fargo was, at the time, the largest city in the nation to have a J. C. Penney store.² Salt Lake City, despite being home to the first J. C. Penney headquarters, did not have a store; neither did Seattle, Portland, Denver, Boise, Billings, or Cheyenne, the most populous cities in states where Penney operated. It was no accident that J. C. Penney stores tended to be in small towns. Penney himself was a country boy at heart, and his philosophy of

doing business emanated from his rural roots:

For me, innately, cities were places to keep away from. Small towns were where I was at home. I knew how to get close to the lives of small town people, learning their needs and preferences and serving them accordingly.³

A good example at the time was Wahpeton, with a population of just over 2,400, much more typical of the North Dakota locations Penney was seeking.⁴ From 1900 to 1910, nearly 260,000 people had moved into the state, the majority of them coming not to inhabit cities but to homestead and settle the vast lands that were still available in the region. North Dakota was attractive to the Penney company because of these emerging agricultural populations throughout the state's geography, in and around towns that had barely been established by railroads and twentieth-century homesteaders.

J. C. Penney, the Golden Rule, and 'Mother Stores'

James Cash Penney never lived in North Dakota, but he identified with its emerging agrarian culture. Growing up a poor farm boy near Hamilton, Missouri, Penney had raised and sold livestock since the age of eight, when his impoverished father had required him to buy his own clothing. To generate income, he naturally took an interest in agriculture and a subsequent interest in retail, to maximize the purchasing power of what little money he could make. As a teenager, he began farming and moonlighted at a local clothing store before health concerns forced him entirely into a retailing



Penney opened the Fargo store and the Wahpeton store on the same day in 1914, his first retail ventures into North Dakota. This Fargo J. C. Penney store went through a number of remodels and expansions until moving to West Acres Shopping Center in 1979.

career and the drier climates of the West.⁵ Penney left Missouri initially for Denver before settling in Wyoming and ultimately Utah. However, even though Penney embraced retailing as a profession, he remained attached to agriculture and the small-town, agrarian way of life. Just after opening his North Dakota stores, he moved the company headquarters from Salt Lake City, Utah, to New York City. However, Penney continued to be most comfortable in small towns and rural areas that were largely dependent upon agriculture. Penney felt that farmers and ranchers were people he could always relate to and that his J. C. Penney stores existed largely to serve them. Even a successful career in retailing did not stop him from eventually returning to ranching and farming in New York, Florida, and Missouri.

The first stores Penney opened in North Dakota were not initially identified as "J. C. Penney" locations. They were called "Golden Rule" mercantiles, and that name was utilized for the official storefront signage. Similarly, the stores James Cash Penney had opened in western states also first operated under the Golden Rule name. Penney and his first two partners, Thomas Callahan and William "Guy" Johnson, had all been part of the Golden Rule retail syndicate, a loose-knit chain of buyers and stores that kept prices low by maximizing volume purchasing and emphasizing quality merchandise and cash-only sales. Callahan had first employed Penney as a clerk at his own Golden Rule mercantile in Colorado in 1898 and was so impressed with Penney's ambition and work ethic that he began grooming him for management at a Wyoming store he jointly owned with Johnson.⁶ Within two years, Johnson and Callahan had also put up two-thirds of the capital investment needed to open Penney's first Golden Rule mercantile in Kemmerer,

Wyoming, as well as giving him ownership in two other stores. In time, Penney was able to buy out his partners completely and offer similar Golden Rule store partnerships to his own associates, allowing the retail chain to grow without acquiring debt. Growth was naturally slow for the first five years, with only three outlets in Wyoming and one in Idaho. However, by 1912, a mere ten years after opening his first store, Penney had already developed a chain of thirty-four Golden Rule stores operating predominantly in the west and northwest.⁷

One year before venturing into North Dakota, Penney made the decision to break away from the Golden Rule franchise, to better control all aspects of his retail operation.⁸ Penney personally struggled with

the idea of changing the name of his stores, as he strongly believed in what the Golden Rule stood for, as a merchandising company and as a philosophy for living. "To me," remarked Penney, "the sign on the store was much more than a trade name."⁹ Ironically, despite Penney's initial resistance, his senior partners voted to use his abbreviated name as the ultimate name for the stores.¹⁰ Almost immediately, yellow and black signs proclaiming "THE J. C. PENNEY COMPANY" began appearing above new store entrances.¹¹ The Fargo, Grand Forks, and Wahpeton locations officially became "J. C. Penney" stores within months of their openings, and all subsequent locations opened with "J. C. Penney" signage across the storefronts. Golden Rule mercantiles, however, continued to open across North Dakota under other proprietors, many of whom had been personally acquainted with Penney for several years.

J.N. McCracken opened a Golden Rule store in Bismarck, while Frank S. Jones opened Golden Rule stores in Beach, Bowman, Hettinger, and Linton.¹² Even though Penney could now rightfully compete with other Golden Rule locations, he generally refrained, out of propriety, from opening J. C. Penney stores in towns where they operated, particularly if he knew and liked the people who operated them.¹³ Despite the change in name, the Golden Rule philosophy remained a critical component of the Penney corporate culture and service model that is still utilized today.

As Penney continued using profits from existing stores to open new ones, his original store in Wyoming became known as the J. C. Penney "mother store," since its profits first contributed to the birth of other stores in Penney's chain.¹⁴ However, highly profitable stores could also function as mother stores for additional new locations. Profits from stores in Idaho and Utah supported the openings of the Fargo and Grand Forks stores. Frequently, a mother store would also provide the manager for the new location. The *Divide County Journal* in Crosby described the company's philosophy and process:

In deciding upon a city in which to locate a new store, a man who has several years of training as a merchant in another J. C. Penney Company store is chosen to manage the new enterprise. With



The early Jamestown store, photographed here in 1928, operated in the White Building until 1961, when it moved to a modern new building at 219 1st Avenue. It would remain in that location for nineteen years, until moving to the Buffalo Mall in 1980.

his family he moves to the city and becomes a permanent resident. He takes a keen interest in its affairs because it is to be his and his family's home, and it is but natural that he should do his part in helping it grow and prosper.¹⁵

It was important to Penney that all managers were good "fits" for their respective communities. Penney was personally involved in selecting them, and in many cases, his first managers remained in those stores and communities until their retirement. Ultimately, several managers in North Dakota spent more than twenty years



The Dickinson J. C. Penney on Sims Street was Penney's first store in the western half of the state. In 1954 it would move from this building to a modern downtown location on First Avenue and ultimately, the Prairie Hills Mall in 1978.

Courtesy of NDSU Institute for Regional Studies.

in the same store.

North Dakota Expansion

Within one year of entering North Dakota, an additional J. C. Penney store was opened in downtown Devils Lake. In 1916 Frank Whitney used profits from the MacKay, Idaho, store he had managed, to open a store in Dickinson, the only J. C. Penney store within a 200-mile radius.¹⁶ Whitney managed the Dickinson store from its opening in 1916 until his retirement in 1945.¹⁷

Three other new stores were also opened that year, in Minot, Valley City, and Williston. A year later, Carrington welcomed a new J. C. Penney store to its downtown business district, making it, at that time, the smallest city in the state to have one. By 1917 Penney had nine department stores operating in North Dakota, and had begun to establish J. C. Penney stores throughout the Midwest: in South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Wisconsin. In several cases, these new J. C. Penney locations were funded using profits and personnel from his North Dakota stores. Penney and Frank Whitney used profits from the Dickinson store to open new South Dakota locations in Madison and Yankton.¹⁸ The Carrington store was used to open the Watertown J. C. Penney, while the Devils Lake store was used to open the J. C. Penney in Brookings.¹⁹ The highly profitable Grand Forks store was particularly instrumental for Penney as a mother store. He used its



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was fond of Penney's value-driven pricing during the Depression. It is fitting that the Devils Lake J. C. Penney store, opened in 1915, was a backdrop during his 1934 parade through the city.

profits and associates to open Minnesota locations in Brainerd, Crookston, Thief River Falls, and Willmar, as well as Wisconsin locations in Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids.²⁰ Eventually, Penney's North Dakota stores even funded locations in Indiana, Tennessee, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.²¹

Ironically, just as the J. C. Penney name had been decided by Penney's associates, so was the decision to continue rapid expansion across the United States. "If I had insisted on keeping personal control of the Penney Company," Penney later reflected, "we would still be merely a small chain of stores scattered through the Middle West."²² Penney's preference would have been expanding through mother stores and his associate partnerships, but that process took too much time for nationwide expansion, something his partners and associates were demanding, and with good reason. Six years after entering North Dakota and moving his headquarters to New York City, Penney's chain had grown from forty-eight stores in seven states to 197 stores in twenty-five states. Accordingly, annual sales had exploded from \$2.6 million to \$28.7 million.²³ The J. C. Penney Company was, amazingly, able to find new towns for expanding its

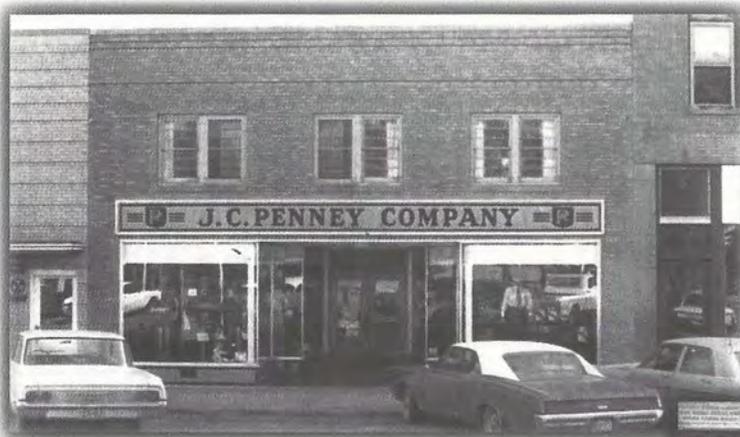
Courtesy of Lidgerwood city auditor



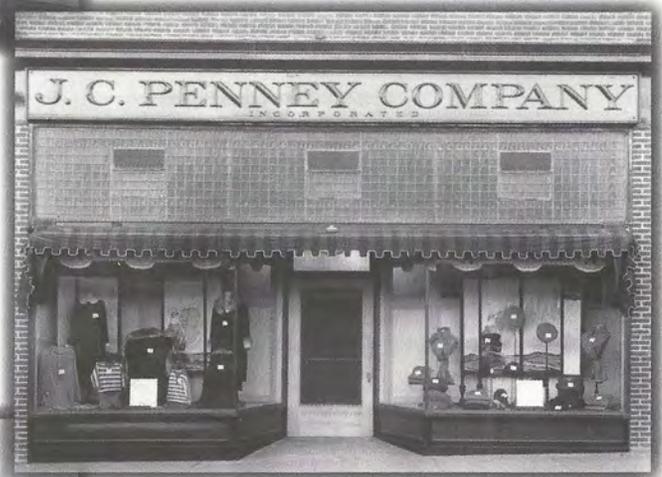
The Lidgerwood J. C. Penney's store, which opened in 1929, was next to the city hall. Closed in 1955, the building is now occupied by the American Legion Bullis Post #84.



The Rugby store began as a small and narrow “single room” store, just like J. C. Penney stores in Beach, Bowman, Hettinger, Mott, and Oakes. As sales grew, it expanded into adjacent building space, as shown in this photo. Penney referred to these stores as “double room,” since they were twice as large as his initial stores, with support columns dividing the sales floor. The Rugby J. C. Penney moved across the street to a larger, modern building in the early 1960s. That location closed in 1991.



The Kenmare J. C. Penney in 1971. The store served northwest Ward County until its closure in 1983.



The first store in Hettinger, photographed here in 1928, was typical of Penney’s narrow, “single-room” mercantiles. It moved to a larger new location in 1959 and closed in 1989.



The Langdon J. C. Penney store was located in the Boyd Block building until it closed in 1990. The Boyd building burned down in 1991.

J. C. Penney store in the Hanley block of downtown Mandan. The *Mandan Daily Pioneer* covered both the construction and the grand opening as front page news. Judge James Hanley, who owned the building, was able to complete the new J. C. Penney store—from foundation to grand opening—in less than two months, and nearly all the employees, including the new manager, were provided from the Dickinson, North Dakota, J. C. Penney store, the nearest location at the time.²⁵ When the Mandan store opened on May 7, 1920, the *Daily Pioneer* offered the following review:

The J. C. Penney Co. have reason to feel gratified at the enthusiastic reception given them today when they opened their new store in the new Hanley Block on Main Street. A steady stream of people have been pouring in and out of the store all day, and this afternoon at times the store was packed with visitors. . . . That the Penney store will enjoy a prosperous business here and will add greatly in drawing trade to Mandan is certain.²⁶

Within two years, new stores were also opened in Jamestown and Harvey. Profits from the Grand Forks store were used to open a new store in Grafton, and by 1926 three more stores had been opened in Kenmare, Langdon, and Crosby, bringing the total number of J. C. Penney stores statewide to sixteen.²⁷

James Cash Penney's expansion across North Dakota in the late 1920s saturated more cities and towns statewide than any other retailer before or since.²⁸ In some cases, the company expanded by buying out individual stores. In Cando, J. C. Penney bought out the Olsen Department Store in 1927, completely gutting the existing building to create,



The Beach store opened in 1927. The caption on the back of this photograph reads: “George F. Hubert on Fordson with double wheels. Joe Quast on grader grading streets after the flood, getting street ready for paving, 1929. Picture by Mrs. George F. Hubert.” This store closed in 1958.

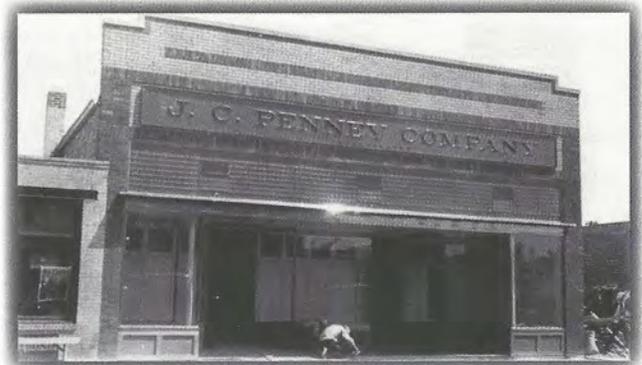


The Bowman J. C. Penney was converted from a Golden Rule store Penney bought in 1927. Penney continued to remodel the location, as shown here in 1928, including the installation of deep window display cases and glassblock panels above the entrance. Despite its narrow storefront, the Bowman store also had a balcony at the rear of the sales floor, and its high ceiling gave the impression of a much larger department store.

Photo by Mark Sundlor, SHSND



The Cooperstown store opened in 1927 and closed in 1957. The building is now occupied by K&J Flooring.



Spaces leased to new J. C. Penney stores were either entirely built for the company or modified within existing buildings. Construction workers are installing mosaic tile for the new Linton J. C. Penney, which opened in 1927 and operated out of this building until its closure in 1989.

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The Hebron store opened in 1928 and used Hebron brick in its construction. The store closed in 1958, and the building now houses the Brick City Senior Citizen Center. The interior layout still reflects its past as a J. C. Penney store.



Photo by Jerry Teplitz

Cando Pioneer Foundation and Museum



The Cando store in 1941. It closed in 1958.

at the time, one of the largest J. C. Penney stores in North Dakota. When it opened, the Cando store was fifty feet wide, with a modern arcade front and two levels of selling space, including a large rear balcony overlooking the sales floor.²⁹ Despite an April storm and bad roads, the *Cando Herald* reported that the store's grand opening brought many people into Cando and gave the town a "good Cando business day."³⁰

In the fall of that year, Penney bought out the entire Golden Rule chain of his friend Frank Jones. Jones owned several stores in Montana, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas, which included locations in Beach, Bowman, Hettinger, and Linton. The Jones chain had a total of fifty-four stores, and recorded annual sales of about three million dollars, but Penney felt he could nearly double that figure if the stores were converted to J. C. Penney locations.³¹ In Bowman and Hettinger he retained managers L. A. Busman and C. W. Samsel, sending both of them to St. Paul to select new merchandise from the J. C. Penney company lines. In contrast to the contemporary chain store practice of centralized buying, the store manager's ability to select merchandise specific to their local customer base was one of the most positive aspects of managing a J. C. Penney store. The exponential buying power of the J. C. Penney Company ultimately gave store managers an ability to offer a wide

Photo by Theresa Knott



The New Rockford J. C. Penney store, photographed in the early 1950s, is located to the left of the Rockford Hotel. The store closed in 1959.

range of quality merchandise to their local customers at volume discount prices. When interviewed by the *Adams County Record* about the transition, C. W. Samsel was particularly excited about what a J. C. Penney store meant for the Adams County seat:

Another advantage which will appeal especially to the women of Hettinger, [Samsel] says, is the quickness with which new styles are dispatched here. What Fifth Avenue wears today will be rushed by fast express to Hettinger tomorrow. A J. C. Penney company store will give the residents of Hettinger all the advantages of shopping in the large New York stores.³²

When the Hettinger location officially opened as a J. C. Penney store two months later, Samsel not only offered fashionable apparel for women, but also the company's "Pay Day" work overalls for farmers and railroaders, as well as men's suits and "Marathon" fedora hats for Sunday church services.³³

In the latter half of 1927, five additional J. C. Penney stores were opened in Beach, Bowman, Cooperstown, Linton, and Lisbon. Penney's busy new stores became symbols of progress for their respective business districts, and local newspaper coverage indicated their main-street presence was mutually beneficial for the company and the communities it served. When the Cooperstown J. C. Penney opened in the fall of 1927, the *Griggs County Sentinel Courier* printed the following editorial:

The J. C. Penney company's personnel from manager on down come to Cooperstown expecting to become an integral and important part in the city's affairs, and that they will succeed one has only to look to the precedent set by the stores in other towns where they have established branches.³⁴

When the company built a J. C. Penney store in Hebron the following year, they ensured that the new building was constructed with local materials, including Hebron's bricks.³⁵ During the store's grand opening, several Hebron

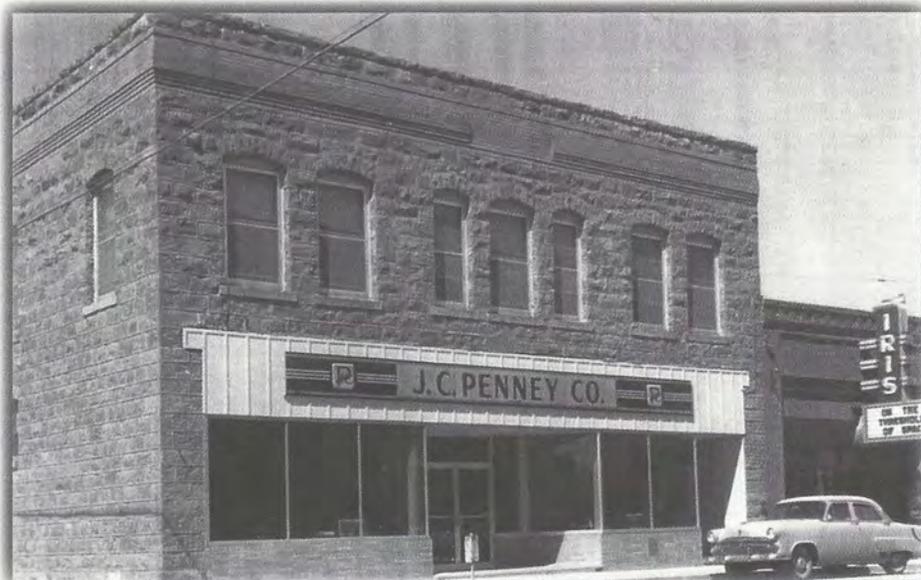
businesses took out newspaper ads welcoming J. C. Penney to the community.

As the reputation of the J. C. Penney chain grew, so did the prestige of the next small town chosen as a new J. C. Penney location. In 1929, when the company opened a store in New Rockford, the *New Rockford Transcript* welcomed the event, stating, "The opening of the Penney store in this city marks another step forward in New Rockford's march toward unquestioned supremacy as a trading center in central North Dakota."³⁶ These small but aspiring North Dakota towns felt that Penney's department stores brought a sense of style and value to the community that no other chain could—or would—provide in a town that size, and even competing businesses were welcoming. In national newsman Eric Sevareid's hometown, the Velva Civic League took out a full page ad expressing their enthusiasm and gratitude for their new J. C. Penney store:

We rejoice that men of capital have shown their confidence in Velva and its trade territory to the extent of equipping a fully modern, large, and up-to-date store, that would do credit to a larger city.³⁷

In addition to the statewide openings in Hebron, New Rockford, and Velva, three additional J. C. Penney stores were also opened that same year, in Drake and Lidgerwood and Hillsboro.

Nevertheless, despite its ubiquitous presence on so



The Velva store opened in 1929 and like most North Dakota stores, underwent an extensive remodel in the 1950s, including new display windows and a centralized entrance with stainless steel doors. Despite its proximity to Minot, the store continued to serve rural McHenry and McLean County until its closure in 1976.

Map by Tim Reed, SHSND



JAMES CASH PENNEY'S NORTH DAKOTA STORES (1914 – present)

<u>CITY</u>	<u>YEAR OPENED</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>YEAR OPENED</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Beach*	1927	(Closed 1958)	Lidgerwood	1929	(Closed 1955)
Bismarck**	1929	Kirkwood Mall since 1980	Linton*	1927	(Closed 1989)
Bowman*	1927	(Closed 1965)	Lisbon	1927	(Closed 1990)
Cando	1927	(Closed 1958)	Mandan	1920	(Closed 1985)
Carrington	1917	(Closed 1986)	Minot	1916	Dakota Square Mall since 1980
Cooperstown	1927	(Closed 1957)	Mott	1930	(Closed 1958)
Crosby	1926	(Closed 1981)	New Rockford	1929	(Closed 1959)
Devils Lake	1915	(Closed 1993)	Oakes	1930	(Closed 1968)
Dickinson	1916	Prairie Hills Mall since 1978	Rugby	1923	(Closed 1991)
Drake	1929	(Closed 1955)	Valley City	1916	(Closed 1991)
Fargo	1914	West Acres Shopping Center since 1979	Velva	1929	(Closed 1976)
Grafton	1925	(Closed 1987)	Wahpeton	1914	Downtown store still open as of this writing.
Grand Forks	1914	Columbia Mall since 1978	Walhalla	1930	(Closed 1962)
Harvey	1923	(Closed 1989)	Williston	1916	Downtown store still open as of this writing.
Hebron	1929	(Closed 1958)			
Hettinger*	1927	(Closed 1989)			
Hillsboro	1929	(Closed 1939)			
Jamestown	1922	Buffalo Mall since 1980			
Kenmare	1925	(Closed 1983)			
Langdon	1925	(Closed 1990)			

*originally an F.S. Jones Golden Rule Store
 **originally a J.N. McCracken Golden Rule Store
 Locations and dates compiled by David Delbert Kruger in 2011 using J.C.Penney Company Records at DeGolyer Library.



In 1914 the Grand Forks Golden Rule store was one of the first three stores in North Dakota opened by James Penney. In 1938 this store was moved to a temporary location when the original building was demolished and replaced. Here the movers can be seen at work.

many North Dakota main streets, a J. C. Penney store remained conspicuously absent in downtown Bismarck. As long as Penney's friend, J. N. McCracken, continued to operate his Golden Rule mercantile on Bismarck's Fourth Street, there would be no J. C. Penney store in the capital city. Consequently, from 1920 to



The Mott J. C. Penney in 1941. The Mott store opened in 1930 and closed in 1958.



The Walhalla J. C. Penney store opened in 1930 and closed in 1962. The building now houses the Walhalla drug store.

1922, Bismarck residents who wanted to shop at a J. C. Penney store had to ferry across the Missouri River to downtown Mandan.³⁸ When the Memorial Highway Bridge opened in 1922, the trip was made a little easier for the next seven years, although the distance was practically the same. By the late 1920s, however, McCracken informed Penney that he was ready to retire, clearing the way for Bismarck's first J. C. Penney store. Penney bought McCracken's



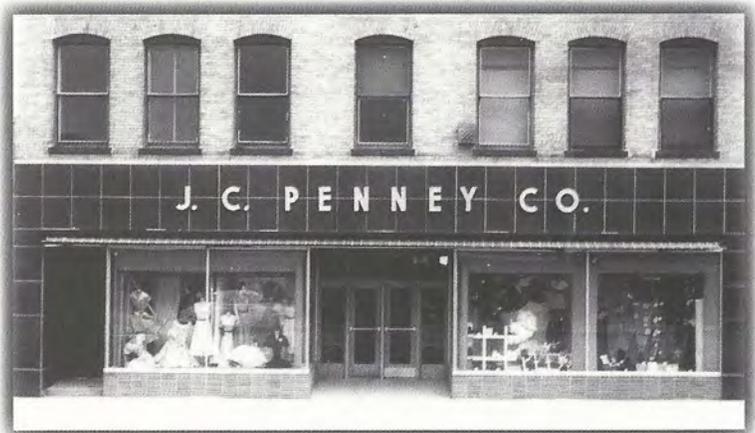
The Oakes store in 1930, the year it opened. It closed in 1959.



After Penney bought out J. N. McCracken's Golden Rule store at 121 N. Fourth Street in Bismarck, he hired local developer Robert Webb to build and lease a new location for the store, pictured here, in the larger Malloy Building, at 115 N. Fourth Street.

Golden Rule store in 1929 and converted it into one of his own. At the time the store was one of Bismarck's three largest stores, along with A. W. Lucas and a recently opened Montgomery Ward.³⁹

Across the nation, nearly 400 J. C. Penney stores were opened in 1929, giving the company at least one store in each of the forty-eight states.⁴⁰ In North Dakota alone, the J. C. Penney chain extended from Fargo to Beach, encompassing nearly thirty other towns in between. Penney wanted his stores to be as fashionable as the merchandise he offered, regardless of the size of the town or even the width of the building his store occupied. Nearly all of the North Dakota



Located in the town's tallest commercial building, the Lisbon J. C. Penney, photographed in the early 1950s, gave the impression of a "big city" department store until its closure in 1991.



Courtesy of the Traill County Historical Society

The Hillsboro J. C. Penney at 3 North Main Street, just to the right of the building on the corner, is pictured here in the 1930s. The Hillsboro store was the first in North Dakota to close, in 1939. The Hillsboro Community Partnership has worked diligently since 2006 to preserve the store building. Their efforts have been greatly assisted by Cultural Heritage Grants from the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

locations carried similar designs and interior layouts, with yellow and black metal signs and mosaic tiles framing the storefront display windows, and the letters "THE J. C. PENNEY COMPANY" typically spelled out in mosaic squares on the floor just outside the front entrance. Inside, the most distinguishing feature in many of the stores was a balcony that overlooked the sales floor.⁴¹ These balconies were initially part of the store's means for handling cash, as currency was traditionally not exchanged on the main sales floor. When customers purchased items from J. C. Penney stores with balconies—such as stores



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Customers crowd the Grafton J. C. Penney in 1952 after a store remodelling. The upper sales balcony with left side staircase is clearly visible, and the cable zip lines for remote cash transactions are still in place. The Lamson Cash Conveyor, like the one above from the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, can be seen just below the clock in the upper right of the photograph.

in Bowman, Grafton, Valley City, or Wahpeton—the sales clerk would take the customer’s money and place it with a bill of sale inside a closed container on a cable line system known as the Lamson Cash Conveyor. The container would then be “zip-lined” up the cable from the sales floor to the balcony, where another associate would retrieve the cash and make change before sending it back down. These “cash conveyors” in some stores were eventually upgraded to pneumatic tubes, until secure cash registers made both systems obsolete.⁴² As cash registers were introduced, the front balconies typically became closed offices while the rear balconies

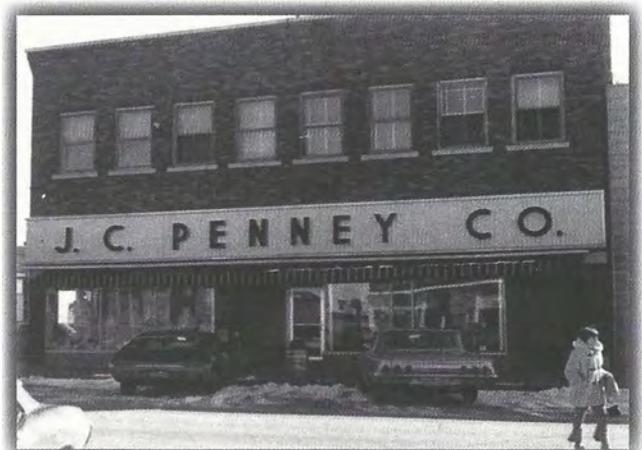
were used primarily for children’s clothing.⁴³

The Depression Years

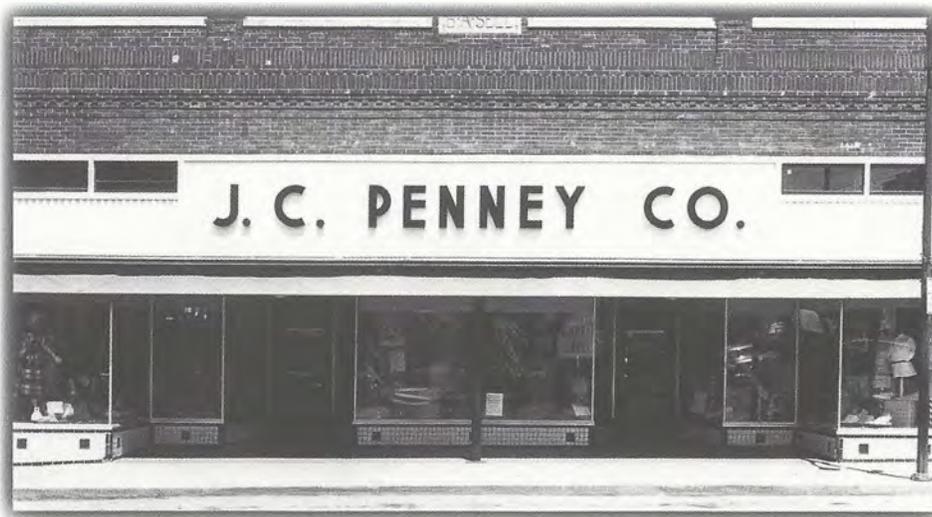
In 1929, despite the many successes of James Cash Penney and his J. C. Penney Company associates, their worst mistake came at the worst possible time. Penney and his board had chosen to take the company public on October 23. Six days later, the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began. Nationwide, J. C. Penney sales soon dropped by more than nineteen million dollars, and though the stock did not completely implode, the financial impact on Mr. Penney was catastrophic. Penney had not taken a salary from his company for two decades, and had put up his entire fortune of J. C. Penney stocks as



Williston’s new, rebuilt store illustrates the company’s traditional design of a rear sales balcony with a left-side staircase leading up to it. The J. C. Penney at 217 Main was one of the last new locations in North Dakota to open with hardwood flooring, stamped tin ceilings, non-fluorescent lighting, and a remote cash conveyor system—antiquated features that were upgraded as J. C. Penney stores modernized throughout the 1950s.



J. C. Penney remained committed to keeping a profitable department store in small towns like Crosby even as rural populations began to decline. The Crosby store at 101 S. Main, extensively remodeled in the 1950s, closed in 1981.



Despite its small-town location, profits from the Carrington J. C. Penney were initially used to open other J. C. Penney stores in much larger cities. This photo was taken in the early 1950s after an exterior remodel. The old yellow-and-black metal signage has been replaced by individual letters, but the tile around the base of the storefront remained. The store closed in 1986.

collateral for philanthropies, as well as a failed bank in Florida.⁴⁴ James Cash Penney was not just financially broken—he privately considered himself a complete failure. However, many of his associates were moved by his situation, well aware that it was largely his own generosity that had brought him to that point. Eventually, more than a thousand J. C. Penney associates donated portions of their own salaries and stock shares to help Penney recover.⁴⁵

Despite the economic hardship of the Great Depression, the J. C. Penney Company was still able to expand in North Dakota throughout the 1930s. At the beginning of the decade, additional J. C. Penney stores were opened in Mott, Oakes, and Walhalla, along with nearly 150 others nationwide. True to Mr. Penney's roots, the J. C. Penney Company had remained focused on smaller cities and agrarian towns in the region, rather than metropolitan cities like Minneapolis. However, one

year after opening the store in Mott, the company began exploring the concept of metropolitan J. C. Penney stores. In 1931 the first of these gigantic stores opened in downtown Seattle, with six levels and cash sales of \$1.5 million in its first year of operation.⁴⁶ The success of the Seattle store gave the company enough confidence to open metropolitan J. C. Penney stores in larger cities throughout the nation, including Minneapolis, Omaha, Denver, and Des Moines.

In 1933 James Cash Penney planned a business trip exclusively to visit North Dakota and his stores scattered throughout the state. Traveling by train, Penney spent two weeks in the state, passing through every North Dakota town that had a J. C. Penney store, observing agricultural and financial conditions, motivating associates, and interacting with customers.⁴⁷ No town was too small for his presence or attention, as he thoroughly walked through his stores in Mott, Hebron,



In 1957 a new Devils Lake J. C. Penney store opened. It incorporated many modernizing improvements, such as fluorescent lighting, tiled floors and ceilings, modern display fixtures, and independent cash registers.

Oakes, Drake, and Velva.⁴⁸ Penney also conducted in-depth “store meetings” with all of his associates in each of North Dakota’s larger cities, as well as Hettinger and Wahpeton.⁴⁹ Typically, these meetings would occur early in the morning before the store opened, and almost resembled a pep rally, with Penney enthusiastically firing up every manager and sales clerk. As North Dakota was undoubtedly in the midst of the Depression, Penney’s purpose for visiting was as much about improving the morale of North Dakotans—and perhaps even his own—as it was increasing J. C. Penney store sales and profits. Outside of visiting his stores, Penney took time to address students at the University of North Dakota, Jamestown College, Minot Senior High School, and the North Dakota School for the Deaf, in addition to meeting with civic groups in Bismarck, Dickinson, Fargo, Mandan, Valley City, and Williston. For those North Dakotans who could not catch him in person, Penney delivered radio broadcasts on WDAY, KFYZ, KDLR, and KFJM.⁵⁰ Although this was ostensibly a business trip for Penney, he took great pleasure in interacting with associates, customers, and people throughout the state before returning by train to New York City.

Every J. C. Penney store in North Dakota survived the lowest point of the Depression, and the Hillsboro location was the only store to close before 1940. The remaining thirty-three stores statewide continued until the later part of the twentieth century. In the 1940s the biggest threat to North Dakota’s J. C. Penney stores came more from forces of nature than economics.

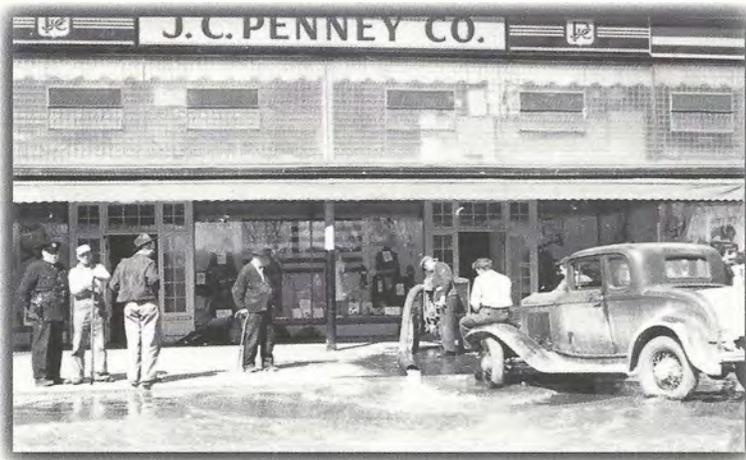
In January 1941 the Williston store caught fire.⁵¹ Even a frigid winter night in downtown Williston could not subdue the blaze, and as firetrucks doused the flames, their water turned to icy stalactites that hung off the burned-out structure the next morning. The company quickly demolished the rubble and, six months later, reopened a new J. C. Penney store in the Bruegger Building at 217 Main. In contrast to fire, water could be almost as destructive. In March 1943, a spring flood of the Missouri River spilled across downtown Mandan, inevitably filling the basement of the Mandan J. C. Penney with dirty river water. After the floodwaters receded, water still had to be



The first J. C. Penney store in Williston was destroyed by fire in 1941. Even Williston’s frigid January temperatures could not stop the store from burning. The store was a complete loss, but J.C.Penney was able to rebuild on the same site and reopen just six months later.



The clean, bisymmetrical design of the new building was an architectural feature of J. C. Penney stores opened throughout this period. The Williston store would remain in this location until 1961, when it moved to a new building at 403 Main.



The 1943 flood took its toll on the basement of the Mandan J. C. Penney. The store had to temporarily close to pump out all of the floodwater, but reopened in this location and continued to be a fixture of downtown Mandan until it closed in 1985.

pumped out of the store and onto Main Street. Through the hard work of its associates, the company was able to clean up and reopen in the same building, where it remained for over forty more years.

Modernization and Contraction

Nationwide, the J. C. Penney Company continued its rapid growth during its fiftieth anniversary in 1952, topping 1,600 stores and a one-billion-dollar sales mark.⁵² That year, the company surpassed Woolworth to become the nation's third largest department store in sales, behind Sears and Montgomery Ward.⁵³ James Cash Penney had become somewhat of a celebrity by then, and "J. C. Penney" had become a household name, with the company and its customers simply using the word "Penney's" as a reference to their stores.

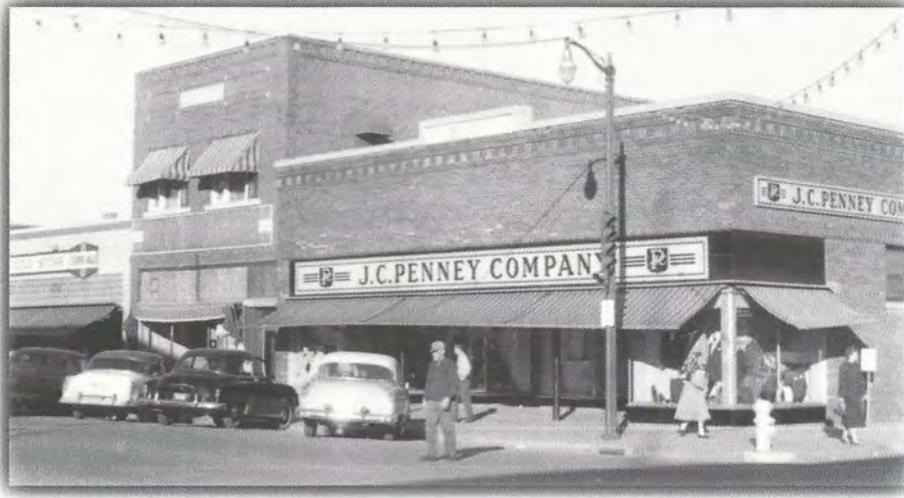
As the company entered the 1950s, national and local competition made modernizing downtown stores a priority, for North Dakota towns large and small. In Grand Forks, the store at 30 South Third was expanded upward, with the addition of a third floor to the building. In Fargo the J. C. Penney store expanded horizontally, taking over adjacent buildings until it occupied everything but the Hotel Dacotah on the 100 block of Broadway. The J. C. Penney store in Harvey more than tripled in size when it relocated to the new Pioneer Building in 1953. In downtown Bismarck, the company opened a new J. C. Penney store at Fifth and Broadway in 1956, with Governor Norman Brunsdale and Mayor Evan

Lips cutting the ribbon.⁵⁴ New, larger stores with modern furnishings were also built in Devils Lake, Dickinson, Minot, and Hettinger. Additionally, J. C. Penney stores in Crosby, Carrington, Velva, Valley City, Lisbon, Grafton, and Mandan all received complete remodels.

Population growth of rural North Dakota, particularly smaller rural towns, had typically peaked in the 1930s, and those high points were followed by significant declines in populations over the next three decades. By the mid 1950s, these declines were visibly affecting J. C. Penney store sales and profits in smaller towns. In 1955 the company determined that J. C. Penney department stores in Drake and Lidgerwood were no longer sustainable, and permanently closed those locations as their building leases expired.⁵⁵ Between 1957 and 1959 the company also made difficult decisions to close stores in Beach, Cando, Cooperstown, Mott, and New Rockford. Nevertheless, the company remained committed to the North Dakota stores it believed had a viable future, and Penney continued to take a keen interest in them. Even at the age of eighty-four, Penney flew out to Minot in 1960 to celebrate an extensive remodel of the J. C. Penney store at First and Main.⁵⁶ Penney also set aside time to visit the Harvey store, which was managed by his longtime friend Lowell Calloway.⁵⁷ Despite Penney's celebrity status, he quietly spent two days and



Downtown Bismarck featured the unusual distinction of two separate J. C. Penney stores, approximately two blocks from each other. This store, at Sixth and Main, provided automotive service and carried Penney's expanded product lines, including appliances, furniture, sporting goods, and hardware. It closed when J. C. Penney moved both stores to the Kirkwood Mall in 1980.



The Valley City J. C. Penney at 304 North Central Avenue, photographed here in 1954, was typical of stores throughout North Dakota's mid-sized communities, with a large sales floor and upper balcony. It was expanded and completely remodeled in the late 1950s before permanently closing in 1991.

two nights in Harvey as a guest in the Calloway's home before traveling on to Minneapolis via the Soo Line train.⁵⁸

Throughout the 1960s, the J. C. Penney Company continued expanding and improving its downtown locations. Buildings for the Fargo and Grand Forks stores were enlarged and extensively remodeled, with smooth, modern exterior cladding installed above their entire storefronts. In addition, three new J. C. Penney buildings were constructed in Rugby, Jamestown, and Williston. The openings of these larger, nearly identical stores were major events for their respective communities, particularly Rugby, which had a population of less than 3,000 at the time. In Bismarck the company made the unusual move of opening a *second* J. C. Penney store, downtown at Sixth and Main, to provide automotive service and additional product lines, such as appliances, hardware, and sporting goods, that were being introduced in "full-line" metropolitan J. C. Penney stores.

Nevertheless, the 1960s proved to be the swansong

of J. C. Penney's downtown ventures in North Dakota. As early as 1948 the company had already begun experimenting with shopping center prototypes in suburban St. Louis.⁵⁹ In the mid 1960s, massive, full-line J. C. Penney stores were unveiled at malls in suburban New Jersey and Pennsylvania, featuring multiple product lines and full-service automotive centers. By the end of the decade, the company was already opening mall stores in the Midwest, not just in Minneapolis and Omaha, but in smaller towns like Brainerd, Minnesota and Norfolk, Nebraska. In every case, the increased parking, pedestrian traffic, and vast selling space for new product lines meant increased sales and profits for the J. C. Penney Company.

The end of J. C. Penney department stores on many North Dakota mainstreets was foreshadowed by the end of the man behind them. By 1970 Penney was ninety-five, yet still coming to his New York office five days a week. "God willing," he wrote in his personal testimony, "I hope to live to reach the century mark. I want the remaining golden years of my life to be the best



Minot's J. C. Penney store is pictured here in 195. In 1960 James Cash Penney came to Minot to celebrate the remodeling of this location, at the corner of First and Main. The store featured two upper balconies and a full basement, and provided more than 35,000 square feet of selling space. The Minot J.C. Penney moved to Dakota Square Mall in 1980.

ed that down to \$885,364 before the state would start looking for cement

J. C. Penney Co. Inc.
Will be Closed
until 1 P.M. on
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1971
For Memorial Observance
in Honor of . . .
MR. J. C. PENNEY

The Dickinson Press ran this notice of the closing of the Dickinson store for the memorial observance for James Cash Penney.

and most useful ones of all.”⁶⁰ However, Penney’s spirit for living had outlasted his body. He fell and broke his hip the day after Christmas in 1970, and died of a heart attack in a New York City hospital just over a month later. On the morning of his New York City funeral, every J. C. Penney store across North Dakota closed in remembrance.⁶¹

With Penney’s death came a new era for the J. C. Penney Company and its stores, largely under the leadership of executives Donald Seibert and William Howell.⁶² The teal and black “Penney’s” logo of the 1960s, which had been prominently displayed on storefronts in downtown Grafton and Wahpeton, was replaced by the modern, Helvetica-scripted “JCPenney” that has been used by J. C. Penney stores ever since.⁶³ Additionally, in response to the nation’s 1973 recession, Howell began to reexamine what a future J. C. Penney department store should truly be, and where it should ultimately be located.⁶⁴ A study Howell commissioned in 1975 would, over the next fifteen years, greatly alter the J. C. Penney stores that had served and shaped North Dakota’s rural communities throughout the twentieth century.

Moving to the Mall

In 1976 more than twenty J. C. Penney department stores were still doing business in North Dakota, every one of them in their city’s downtown business district. Although indoor shopping centers had already been opened in seven North Dakota cities, J. C. Penney had resisted moving any of its downtown stores into these early malls, while national competitors Sears, Montgomery Ward, and Woolworth jumped at the opportunities. Even local department stores such as deLendrecie’s, Herbst, and A.W. Lucas, as well as Minnesota-based Herberger’s, had begun to open shopping mall locations in North Dakota cities.⁶⁵ As the decade progressed, J. C. Penney was forced to rethink its location strategy throughout the state. By 1977 commercial real estate developers were planning larger, indoor shopping malls for Grand Forks and Dickinson. Both locations were near respective interstate highways, and the company became very receptive to opening new J. C. Penney stores in shopping centers.

The downtown store in Grand Forks had been remodeled and expanded as recently as 1960, and with fellow competitors Griffith’s and Norby’s, still anchored a strong shopping district. However, the Grand Forks Sears had been benefitting from a larger shopping center location since 1964, and the design for the J. C. Penney at the new Columbia Mall would create a store with over 100,000 square feet, as well as an automotive service center. As for Dickinson, Interstate 94 and oil activity in the Williston basin had increasingly



Courtesy of Peg O'Leary

The Grand Forks J. C. Penney store relocated from a downtown location to the new Columbia Mall. Six of the eight remaining Penney stores in North Dakota are now located in malls.



The downtown J. C. Penney store shortly before it was demolished in 1980 as part of Fargo urban redevelopment efforts.

made “the Queen City” a commercial hub for western North Dakota, eastern Montana, and northwest South Dakota. Although the J. C. Penney building in downtown Dickinson was new in 1954 and featured two-and-a-half floors of selling space, Dickinson’s population had more than doubled in that time. Furthermore, the store prototype for Prairie Hills Mall offered twice as much space on one floor, with ample free parking and an indoor shopping environment, a welcome convenience during Stark County’s harsh winters and hot summers.⁶⁶

On July 29, 1978, the Grand Forks J. C. Penney became the first J. C. Penney store in North Dakota to relocate from a downtown location to a shopping center. Two months later, the Dickinson J. C. Penney closed its downtown location to become an anchor in Prairie Hills Mall, just north of Interstate 94. The following year, Fargo’s booming population and an expansion to West Acres Shopping Center justified opening the largest J. C. Penney store the state had ever seen, a two-story mall prototype with escalators, elevators, an automotive center, and nearly 150,000 square feet of selling space.⁶⁷ Within months, the downtown Fargo building that had previously housed the store was completely demolished. Before the decade was over, J. C. Penney had decided to abandon both of its downtown Bismarck locations in favor of the Kirkwood Mall. At the same time, J. C. Penney also made plans to close downtown stores in Minot and Jamestown and reopen them in malls being developed on the southern fringes of those cities.

By November 1980, when Jamestown’s Buffalo Mall opened its doors, five North Dakota cities that were large enough to support a regional indoor shopping mall had one, and J. C. Penney stores had relocated to all of them. Each of these malls undeniably replaced their city’s downtown business district as the primary

shopping destination, and the increased sales and profits that resulted from moving downtown stores to malls nationally transformed J. C. Penney from a main street department store to a shopping mall anchor. Department store retailing throughout North Dakota increasingly began to shift away from downtown business districts as well, not just in larger cities with malls, but in communities like Lisbon, Kenmare, and Hettinger, where rural residents could easily drive to much larger J. C. Penney mall stores in Fargo, Minot, or Dickinson. In early 1983 the company formally addressed this national trend with its internal publication, *The J. C. Penney Stores Positioning Statement*.⁶⁸ This document officially shifted J. C. Penney’s retailing emphasis away from rural downtown stores and toward the shopping mall prototypes of larger, suburban communities. Almost immediately, an extensive study of smaller J. C. Penney stores outside of major metropolitan markets was conducted.

The company’s actions after that study left little doubt that the era of J. C. Penney’s main-street presence in North Dakota was over.⁶⁹ From 1981 to 1991 twelve North Dakota towns permanently lost the J. C. Penney department stores that had lined their main streets for more than fifty years.⁷⁰ Even the Devils Lake store that had survived the initial closings was permanently shuttered in 1993, after nearly eighty years of business. By the end of the century, only the J. C. Penney department stores in Wahpeton and Williston were still operating in their downtown locations.⁷¹

As of this writing, just eight J. C. Penney department stores are still open for business in North Dakota.⁷² And yet no other retailer in the history of the state was ever a part of as many North Dakota communities as J. C. Penney.⁷³ Not only did James Cash Penney’s department stores augment established North



The Wahpeton J. C. Penney store, is one of two stores that remain in downtown locations in North Dakota. The other downtown store is in Williston.

Dakota cities, they often helped modernize emerging agricultural and railroad communities that, even by the early twentieth century, were truly just beginning. As North Dakota's rural populations began their decline, the man behind the company never lost his affection for small towns and his stores that had been a part of them, in places as tiny as Lidgerwood, Drake, and Mott:

We were all small-town and country boys . . . it wasn't our way to invade small towns and villages out of the blue . . . to make a quick cleanup, then disappear again into thin air, leaving people with empty pockets and nothing of value to show for their money. We were settling permanently, as small-town men born and bred, who understood our neighbors as readily as they could understand us. And in coming among them to stay, it was with an idea beneficial to all.⁷⁴

After nearly one hundred consecutive years of business, Penney's first three stores in North Dakota continue to thrive. Two of them, in Fargo and Grand Forks, have evolved into sprawling shopping mall locations that bear no resemblance to the small town mercantiles James Cash Penney personally opened in 1914.

However, the J. C. Penney store in downtown Wahpeton still operates out of its original 1914 location, as well as in four adjacent buildings it has gradually taken over. Its Dakota Avenue storefront has now become so wide that it requires three large signs to distinguish it from one end of the block to the other. Ironically, behind this modern retail façade, though the doors under the largest of these white helvetica logos, lies the building Penney selected nearly a century ago. The fashions and merchandise have certainly changed, yet the interior architecture is a virtual time machine, with its

trademark balconies still overlooking the sales floor. This was the very sales floor where Penney himself once stood, on a spring morning in 1933, inspiring his associates before opening the front doors and personally greeting his Wahpeton customers. Progress and the passage of time have now made this store the oldest J. C. Penney location in the entire chain.⁷⁵ It is, for North Dakota, the last true artifact of James Cash Penney's impact on the state and its people.

Author

David Delbert Kruger is the agricultural research librarian at the University of Wyoming. Born and raised in Baker, Montana, he has been fascinated by J. C. Penney stores since childhood, largely the result of countless shopping trips with his mother, a Bowman County native and ardent "Penney's" customer. Kruger has published several articles on the historical impact of James Cash Penney and can be contacted at tseliot@uwyo.edu.

Editor's Note

Included with this article are photographs of all but one of the J. C. Penney stores once open across North Dakota. Most came from the Penney business records, but even these records did not include all the stores. We therefore appealed to historical groups and interested individuals across the state to locate the missing images. They generously dug through their files and photo collections. In some cases they grabbed a camera and snapped an image of the building that once housed a Penney store, showing it as it exists now. We are grateful to all the people who helped us in this way, and their names are credited on the photographs they provided.

In most of the photographs that are not part of the Penney records, the inclusion of the store is only incidental to the subject of the photograph. Penney stores were so common, so much a part of everyday life, that there was no particular urge to record them. It is also interesting that in most communities, even if the J. C. Penney store is gone, the building is still in use. Although several buildings have burned (including the building in Drake, the only one where no photograph was located) and others, like the downtown store in Fargo, have been demolished as part of urban renewal, many of the buildings have found new purposes, ranging from new businesses to senior centers. These photographs of Penney stores record not only the history of J. C. Penney in North Dakota, but a sideways look at the changes in small-town North Dakota life over the past century.

Endnotes

- 1 It is a frequent misconception that J. C. Penney, like competitors Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, had also been selling by catalog in the early 1900s. In reality, the J. C. Penney Company was primarily a “cash-and-carry” store operation that did not sell on credit until 1958, and did not begin offering catalog sales until 1963.
2. *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Volume III Population 1910. Reports by states, with statistics for counties, cities, and other civil divisions. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (Washington: Government Printing Office) 1913, 338.
3. James Cash Penney, *Fifty Years With the Golden Rule* (New York: Harper, 1950), 48.
4. *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, 339.
5. The risk of consumption (tuberculosis) had necessitated Penney’s initial move to Denver. His time in Colorado was short, but significant in guiding him to his opportunities with Johnson and Callahan’s Golden Rule Stores in Wyoming. See Mary Elizabeth Curry, *Creating an American Institution: the Merchandising Genius of J. C. Penney* (New York: Garland, 1993), 49-61; Penney, *Fifty Years With the Golden Rule*, 36-43.
6. David Delbert Kruger, “J. C. Penney: Missouri Man, Wyoming Institution,” *Annals of Wyoming*, 80 (Spring 2008): 20-36.
7. Curry, *Creating an American Institution*, 141.
8. The growth of Penney’s chain was clearly outpacing the Golden Rule buying syndicate, and he needed complete direction and control of his entire operation. Years later, Sam Walton would make a similar move by breaking away from Ben Franklin franchises to create Walmart stores.
9. Penney, *Fifty Years with the Golden Rule*, 52.
10. *Ibid.*, 93.
11. *Ibid.* Earl Corder Sams, one of Penney’s senior partners, had been particularly influential in changing the store name from Golden Rule to J. C. Penney. Sams, like Penney, believed in the Golden Rule as a philosophy for business, but felt the name had increasingly been dishonored by competitors who also superficially operated under the Golden Rule banner.
12. Penney was good friends with McCracken and Jones, and would eventually buy out and take over all of their Golden Rule locations in the late 1920s.
13. Penney intentionally avoided Bismarck out of respect for the Golden Rule store already serving that city, and it is likely he never opened a store in Ellendale for the same reason.
14. The Kemmerer, Wyoming, J. C. Penney store is still in operation and referred to as “the mother store.”
15. “J. C. Penney Co. Will Open Store in Crosby Soon,” *Divide County Journal*, July 23, 1926, 1, 8.
16. Store History for J. C. Penney Store #116 – Dickinson, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. Store History for J. C. Penney Store #363 – Watertown, SD. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
20. Store History for J. C. Penney Store #58 – Grand Forks, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Penney, *Fifty Years with the Golden Rule*, 95.
23. *Ibid.*, 167.
24. Glen G. White, “Picking Sites for Penney Stores,” *Chain Store Age* 1, July 1925, 5.
25. “Crowds Greet J. C. Penney Co. Store Opening,” *Mandan Daily Pioneer*, April 21, 1920, 1.
26. *Mandan Daily Pioneer*, May 8, 1920, 1.
27. Store History for J. C. Penney Store #58 – Grand Forks, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
28. Even modern retail giant Walmart has ventured into just eight North Dakota cities as of this writing, twenty-six fewer than J. C. Penney ultimately did.
29. “New J. C. Penney Store Open Tuesday, April 12: Store Completely Equipped and Modern in Every Respect,” *Cando Herald* (Cando, North Dakota), April 7, 1927, 1.
30. *Ibid.*
31. “Jones Stores Purchased by J. C. Penney Company,” *Adams County Record*, May 12, 1927, 1.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Adams County Record*, July 28, 1922, 3.
34. “The New Store,” *Griggs County Sentinel Courier*, September 15, 1927, 2.
35. “J. C. Penney Will Open Their Beautiful Store Sept. 6,” *Hebron Herald*, August 29, 1929, 1.
36. “New Rockford to Become Still Better Center: Addition of Penney Store Will Mean Increased Prestige as a Trading Point for People,” *New Rockford Transcript*, September 20, 1929, 1.
37. *Velva Journal*, August 8, 1929, 5.
38. Prior to the opening of the Memorial Highway Bridge in 1922, Bismarck shoppers could also drive directly over the frozen Missouri River during winter months.
39. “Bismarck, the Retail Trade Center,” *Bismarck Capital*, March 29, 1929, 2.
40. *The Dynamo* 13, August 1929, 10. DeGolyer Library. *The Dynamo* was the J. C. Penney Company newsletter from 1917 to 1932.
41. This store layout was quite common in the majority of early J. C. Penney stores, whether they were built from the ground up, as in Hebron and Kenmare, or modified within existing buildings, as in Beach and Grafton.
42. Interview with Jerry Probst, J. C. Penney Corporate Archivist, July 2, 1997.

43. As of this writing, the J. C. Penney store in Wahpeton still features these balconies, as does the J. C. Penney store in Sidney, Montana. The balcony architecture is still visibly evident in the former J. C. Penney buildings of downtown Beach, Bowman, Dickinson, Grafton, Hebron, Mandan, and Valley City.
44. Curry, *Creating an American Institution*, 269.
45. *J. C. Penney: An American Legacy; A 90th Anniversary* (Plano, Texas: J. C. Penney Communications, 1992), 16.
46. Kruger, "J. C. Penney," 31.
47. Recapitulation: J. C. Penney Store Visiting Trips – 1933. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library, 1-7.
48. *Ibid.*, 2.
49. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
50. *Ibid.*, 7.
51. Store History for J.C. Penney Store #113 – Williston, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
52. *Pay Day*, April 1952, 10, 12.
53. "Penney's: King of the Soft Goods," *Fortune*, September 1950, 102.
54. "J. C. Penney Co. to Open New Store on Tuesday," *Bismarck Tribune*, October 23, 1956, 1.
55. "Penney's to Close Here After 25 Years in City," *Lidgerwood Monitor*, January 6, 1955, 1.
56. "At Penney's, \$100,000 Remodeling Completed," *Minot Daily News*, January 7, 1960, 10.
57. "J. C. Penney to be Harvey Guest," *Minot Daily News*, January 6, 1960, 11.
58. Mr. Penney's Engagement Schedule: 1960-62. J. C. Penney Papers, A2004.0006, DeGolyer Library.
59. Former J. C. Penney president William "Mil" Batten is largely credited for positioning J. C. Penney stores as modern shopping-mall anchors with credit purchasing, expanded product lines, and technological support. See Curry, *Creating an American Institution*, 305-314.
60. James Cash Penney, *Personal Testimony of J. C. Penney*, 1971. J. C. Penney Papers, A2004.0006, DeGolyer Library, 4.
61. *J. C. Penney: An American Legacy; A 90th Anniversary History*, 29.
62. Curry, *Creating an American Institution*, 321.
63. The J. C. Penney in downtown Williston is the only store in North Dakota that does not currently utilize this modern logo. The downtown Wahpeton store has featured it since being remodeled. In 2012 the company drastically changed the logo for the first time in forty years, reducing it to lowercase "jcp" letters inside of a square, though this change has had no impact so far on the appearance of any J. C. Penney store in North Dakota.
64. *J. C. Penney: An American Legacy; A 90th Anniversary History*, 29.
65. In 1972, deLendrecie's completely abandoned their downtown Fargo store in favor of West Acres Shopping Center, while Herbst opened branch locations to augment its downtown stores. A.W. Lucas abandoned its downtown Bismarck store for the Gateway Mall in 1979. A.W. Lucas' Gateway Mall store and deLendrecie's West Acres store would eventually be taken over by Herberger's, which already operated mall stores in Bismarck, Dickinson, and Minot.
66. Store History for J.C. Penney Store #116 — Dickinson, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
67. Store History for J. C. Penney Store #57 — Fargo, ND. J. C. Penney Company records, A2004.0007, DeGolyer Library.
68. *J. C. Penney: An American Legacy; A 90th Anniversary History*, 31.
69. *Ibid.*
70. During this ten-year period, J. C. Penney closed its department stores in Carrington, Crosby, Grafton, Harvey, Hettinger, Kenmare, Langdon, Linton, Lisbon, Mandan, Rugby, and Valley City.
71. As of this writing, both the Wahpeton and Williston stores remain open in their downtown locations. In 2006 the company announced it was closing the Wahpeton J. C. Penney due to building deterioration, but the city persuaded the company to keep it open by buying and repairing the building. This was one of the few cases where a small town convinced the J. C. Penney Company to reverse a store closing decision.
72. This number does not account for J. C. Penney catalog centers outside of J. C. Penney department stores, since they tend to be independently operated and do not resemble J. C. Penney department stores in form or function. Whenever a J. C. Penney department store closed, the building was always stripped of any large company signage, even if a catalog center decided to operate out of the same building, as was the case in Linton and Valley City.
73. Walmart founder Sam Walton began his retail career with the J. C. Penney Company in 1940 as a management trainee at the downtown store in Des Moines, Iowa before moving to Ben Franklin. Penney personally addressed the young Walton during a visit to the Des Moines store, showing him how to conserve wrapping paper as a cost-control measure. Walton had great respect for Mr. Penney and the J. C. Penney Company, and candidly applied several of Penney's ideas to Walmart stores. See Vance H. Trimble, *Sam Walton: The Inside Story of America's Richest Man* (New York: Dutton, 1990), 32-36.
74. Penney, *Fifty Years with the Golden Rule*, 75.
75. J. C. Penney store #1, the "mother store" in Kemmerer Wyoming, has operated out of its current location since 1929. Fewer than twenty J. C. Penney department stores nationwide still operate in downtown locations, including stores in Wahpeton and Williston; Sidney and Cut Bank, Montana; and Detroit Lakes and Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

