

Dakota Datebook

Churchs Ferry By Michelle Holien

March 10, 2025 – Located along U.S. Highway 2 west of Devils Lake, the town of Churchs Ferry has struggled to remain intact. To passersby, at first glance, Churchs Ferry appears to be abandoned.

Those who live nearby have witnessed the rising waters of Devils Lake creeping into Churchs Ferry, threatening, and eventually engulfing many of the town’s houses and buildings.

On this date in 1888, the Devils Lake Inter-Ocean reported on the town’s namesake, Irvine Church. He lay deathly ill in his home, but would thankfully go on to make a miraculous recovery.

Arriving in 1883, Irvine Church was among the first settlers in the area near the Mauvais Coulee, a streambed where furious waters flowed. French fur-trappers found this deep ravine difficult to cross. Irvine Church established a ferry, allowing settlers to cross the barrier to make their way to Devils Lake, the nearest town. A little community arose near the coulee and it took the name of Church’s business.

But the ferryboat enterprise did not last long, for the Mauvais Coulee dried up altogether in the late 1890s. History lost track of Mr. Church, but it is known that he left his little town and pursued life in California, where he died in 1925.

Today, little of Churchs Ferry still stands. Only five residents live there, a major decline from 110 in 1999. Almost all the people accepted federal funds to move their houses into nearby towns. As the water kept rising,

several buildings were destroyed, including Zion Lutheran Church. Eventually the water receded, and now only the building on higher ground remains.

As drivers pass by Churchs Ferry and glance over a sea of cattails, it is unnerving to realize that the water Irvine Church’s ferryboat once navigated had risen to decimate his little town.

Spring has Sprung By Carole Butcher

March 11, 2025 – On this date in 1935, the high temperature for Fargo was predicted to be 26 degrees with 25 mile an hour winds. But even though it was more than a month until Easter, spring was on the minds of North Dakotans. Across the state in Williston, the high was 30 with a warming trend. The weather report anticipated only a trace of snow with increasingly mild temperatures. Streets and roads in many places in the state were icy after a period of thawing and freezing, but no serious traffic problems were anticipated. Spring was in the air.

Shops were also in the mood for spring. The ads reflected the improving weather. Fargo’s Sears Roebuck and Company advertised “smart spring dresses.” The ad boasted that “Every little lady can have gobs of fresh, cleverly styled washable frocks.” The dresses were 49 cents each for size 7 to 14 years. Other styles were 69 cents each. Mothers were urged to buy lots of the dresses for school and dress-up. Winter coats were on clearance for \$1.99.

A.L. Moody’s was also in a spring mood. Their ad noted that “March may be a lion or a lamb.” The store offered lady’s

knit dresses which could be worn under a coat “when March winds roar” or worn on their own “when spring is in the air.” Pastels and two-color combinations were offered for \$7.95 each.

Herbst Department store focused on spring cleaning. Spring was the time for new sheets at 84 cents each, ordinarily offered at \$1.39. It was noted that the taped edge was 25% stronger than ordinary sheets. Ruffled curtains were sure to brighten the home for spring. Half-length curtains had to be “seen to be appreciated.” Daintily ruffled and in a large selection of colors, the curtains, a \$1.00 value, were 15 cents each. The store also advertised their spring fashion show, coming up the following week and featuring suits, dresses and sweaters for spring, displayed by live models.

North Dakotans seem to take pride in an ability to withstand harsh winters. There is a tendency to laugh off below zero temperatures and gale-force winds. But spring is just around the corner, and that is not a bad thing.

Town Criers By Sarah Walker

March 12, 2025 – It’s a “flock” of geese and a “murder” of crows,

but what do you call a large group of town criers? On this date in 1929, the Park Hotel in Killdeer was full of them!

They had gathered in Killdeer for their regular Town Criers meeting. The Killdeer Herald reported that it “was a capacity affair. Thirty-five persons were recorded in attendance.”

The town criers enjoyed a meal, after which the chairman called the meeting to order. Part of the order of business was to discuss what they had accomplished. The newspaper reported, “As the last word, Haakon Weydahl, in his usual vivid way, portrayed their activities in military parlance, which took in every maneuver from the breakfast bugle of the morning after to the zero hour of the night before. As a climax, he decorated them with a specially prepared ribbon from each of which was suspended a five dollar gold piece.”

After the business of the meeting was over, the town criers went to the Odd Fellow Hall in the Killdeer Hotel building, where they played whist, sang, and enjoyed themselves. Their number increased as people around town, including “many who were weather-bound in town overnight”—at

least that was their excuse.

The newspaper stated, “Somewhere, long ago, a sad-faced poet who never ‘convined’ with his friends and acquaintances uttered the following: ‘Backward, turn backward, O time in thy flight, and make me a child again just for tonight.’ That gem of thought confessing the accumulated stagnation of years gone by and expressing a yearning for things that were forever gone, would have never graced the crown of literature if the discouraged old poet had ever attended a party with the Killdeer town Criers.”

There are official town crier positions in some cities today, though none in North Dakota. Still, one can imagine the echo of the group of men, cheering each other, and perhaps even exclaiming out loud, “Hear ye, Hear ye!”

“Dakota Datebook” is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council. See all the Dakota Datebooks at prairiepublic.org, subscribe to the “Dakota Datebook” podcast, or buy the Dakota Datebook book at shop-prairiepublic.org.



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NOW TAKING
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Birthday Celebration
Saturday, March 15
11:00-5:00
Steele Veterans Club

**Come wish Donald Schnabel
a Happy 95th Birthday!!!!**

The  **stops here!**

Kidder County Public Transit
Handicap Accessible 12 Passenger Bus
\$8.00 Fare

Bismarck:
Tuesdays and Thursdays arrives at 10:30am

Jamestown:
Third Wednesday of each Month arrives at 10:30

Masks are recommended but not required.
For more information check out our
website at www.kiddertransit.com

For Reservations call
Jan Hetletved @ 701-392-8351
with a 24 hour advance and leave a message.

SENIOR CENTER SPECIAL EVENTS

Kidder County Council on Aging is a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization that accepts donations and memorials to offset the cost of expenses for our home delivered and congregate meal services. The Kidder County Council on Aging Board meets the third Thursday of each month at 2:00 p.m. at the Steele Senior Center.

The Kidder County Senior Services Nutrition Program offers a variety of meal options for older adults. Congregate meals, Drive-Thru/Take Out meals, Home Delivered meals and Frozen meals are all options for you to choose from.

FLASH FROZEN MEALS – Kidder County Senior Services frozen meals are prepared at Steele and Tuttle sites and are available for evenings, weekends and winter weather closings. May be heated in the oven or microwave.

Under the Older Americans Act, every meal served must provide at least one third of

the daily nutrition needs for older adults. They must include a food item from every food group. Each meal includes 3 ounces of protein, 2 servings of vegetables, 1 serving of fruit, 2 servings of whole grains and 1 serving of dairy. Call 475-2708 for more information.

ND Aging and Disability Resource link: carechoice.nd.assistguide.net, provides a list of all available services and providers in ND and contact info for each.

Boxes of Cards - Sympathy, birthday and assorted cards are for sale at the Steele Center. This is a fund raiser for Trinity Lutheran Church.

BINGO WEDNESDAY – STEELE CENTER – 12:45 after the noon meal. Free to play, welcome to stay!

Steele Center 475-2708 Served at Noon. Thursday, March 13 – Braised Pork Chop, Baked Sweet Potato, Herbed Green Beans, Cranberry Peaches Friday, March 14 – Garlic Shrimp, Angel Hair Pasta, Capri Blend Vegetables, Broccoli Salad, Peach Applesauce Monday, March 17 – Sloppy Joe, Baked Beans, Oven Baked Fries, Orange Tuesday, March 18 – Parmesan Chicken, Herbed Penne Pasta, Marinara Sauce, Italian Blend Vegetables, Spiced Peaches Wednesday March 19 – Turkey a la King, Fluffy Rice, Pacific Blend Vegetables, Fresh Grapes

coli Salad, Peach Applesauce Monday, March 17 – Sloppy Joe, Baked Beans, Oven Baked Fries, Orange Tuesday, March 18 – Parmesan Chicken, Herbed Penne Pasta, Marinara Sauce, Italian Blend Vegetables, Spiced Peaches Wednesday March 19 – Turkey a la King, Fluffy Rice, Pacific Blend Vegetables, Fresh Grapes

Tuttle Center 867-2761 Served at Noon. Thursday, March 13 – Braised Pork Chop, Baked Sweet Potato, Herbed Green Beans, Cranberry Peaches Friday, March 14 – Garlic Shrimp, Angel Hair Pasta, Capri Blend Vegetables, Broccoli Salad, Peach Applesauce Monday, March 17 – Sloppy Joe, Baked Beans, Oven Baked Fries, Orange Tuesday, March 18 – Parmesan Chicken, Herbed Penne Pasta, Marinara Sauce, Italian Blend Vegetables, Spiced Peaches Wednesday March 19 – Turkey a la King, Fluffy Rice, Pacific Blend Vegetables, Fresh Grapes