



DAKOTA DATEBOOK

Fargo Central High School Fire

BY STEVE STARK

April 20 -- On this date in 1966, citizens of Fargo, and especially high school students, were reeling in the aftermath of a fire that had destroyed the high school just 24 hours earlier. Fargo Central was the city's south-side public high school. The three-story school of elegant red brick was 45 years old, built after the first Central High School (built in 1882) also burned down.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary at Central on that cold April Tuesday. Snow was falling. Then around noon, the memorable events began to unfold. Unknown to the 1,017 students and personnel in the building, a fire had started in the south side of the school attic. The flames had burrowed across the floor and through the ceiling. Smoke and its accompanying pungency soon wafted down the corridors.

According to later reports, Central High Principal Otto Bernhoft heard a popping sound in the school auditorium and immediately was on the inter-

com. He notified the students to evacuate -- that this was no drill; an active fire was in progress. The students were instructed to leave without taking anything with them -- including their jackets or overcoats.

One of those students recalled the incident years later. "It was just before noon when we hit the exit doors," he said. "By then the hallway on the third floor had a strong tinge of the smoke that was clearly visible in the upper reaches of the auditorium. There were high windows separating portions of the third floor hallways from the upper reaches of the auditorium which lay in the center of the building. It wasn't long before flames were towering above the room. The scene that unfolded as I watched the demise of that grand old building from across the street will forever be etched in my mind's eye."

Students from all three floors hastened in orderly fashion to the exits. Outside the school they were all unharmed -- cold but safe.

A portion of the school's roof collapsed. Fargo's fire depart-

ment raced to the scene and even the off-duty firefighters were called. Flames were aided by the typical high winds that can race across the region.

A student from a nearby junior high also recalled the incident. He said, "Several of us were students at Agassiz then and remember throngs of Central students running into Agassiz, seeking shelter from the cold."

The building could not be recovered. Central students would share the newly constructed Fargo North High with North students. They would all share memories of the day the school burned down.

Red River Flood of 1882

BY JIM DAVIS

April 21 -- It's springtime in the Red River Valley of the North, a time when nervous crowds congregate on the riverbank to stare anxiously at the dark and sullen river. The muddy water forms eddies and swirls that quickly disappear as the river laboriously carries away the runoff of the melting snow that had formed a glacial-like carpet across the valley floor.

On this date in 1882, the people at Pembina were anxiously watching the river. Although the river was ice-free to the south, there was still major flooding -- as witnessed by those on the steamer *Selkirk*, which had braved the debris-infested waters to bring passengers and freight to the city, and with them the much anticipated news.

The Red was on a rampage, and few towns along the river, from Fort Abercrombie on the south to Winnipeg on the north, had escaped its wrath. Over 100 houses had been set afloat in Fargo and much the same happened on the east side of the river at Moorhead. Shanty Town at Grand Forks was wiped out, and flood waters lapped at the doors of businesses on Main Street. Most of the bridges on the Turtle, Forest and Park rivers had been washed away. The town of Acton in Walsh County was knee-deep in flood water. The Grand Forks stagecoach attempted the run to Pembina, but in three days got only as far as Joliette when it was forced to turn back.

So far the community of Pembina had remained dry, as the Pembina River was still ice covered, but everyone wondered what their fate would be. So they turned to the town's oldest resident for his prognosis. While he had not witnessed the catastrophic flood of 1824, Charles Cavalier had seen the floods of 1852 and 1861 and he believed the townspeople had nothing to worry about.

After decades of watching the river, he believed the Red would recede before the Pembina River could add to the threat. Reassured that the worst of the great flood of 1882 would pass them by, they could now enjoy the warming days of the season and listen to the tuneful warble of wild geese as they saluted spring in the Red River Valley.

Flying Circus in Grand Forks

BY DR. STEVE HOFFBECK

April 22 -- World War I transformed airplanes from a novelty into a deadly weapon. Pilots served as aerial scouts at first and then challenged enemy planes in airborne combat, in "dogfights" between fighter planes; and later in bombing runs against cities and troop positions.

On this date in 1919, the city of Grand Forks hosted an air show featuring the deadliest planes from the recently concluded war in Europe. Direct from France came the SPAD fighter; from England came S.E.5s; from America the colorfully painted Curtis; and rounding out the show, captured German Fokker fighters with huge black Iron Cross markings. The US government had authorized this "Flying Circus" nationwide tour of planes piloted by American and British pilots in order to sell Victory Liberty Bonds, even though the war had ended in November 1918.

The scene on a cloudy April morning was an improvised airfield at J. D. Bacon's expansive farm, the Lilac Hedge Farm. Mr. Bacon's son, Jerry Myron Bacon, had served as a pilot in the war.

The planes arrived in crates on 14 railway cars in the morning's earliest light. Mechanics scurried to assemble the planes, and pilots scrambled to get airborne for practice flights in the forenoon.

Children and adults alike were thrilled to see mechanics wind the propellers, to hear the engines as they "began their thundering whir," and to witness the fighter pilots ascend gracefully toward the clouds to swoop through the skies above Grand Forks.

Viewers marveled as the pilots put each aircraft through its repertoire of acrobatics. As a *Grand Forks Herald* reporter wrote, there were "tail spins, nose dives, the 'Immelman' [a loop and half-roll], drops, circles, loop the loops and almost every conceivable" maneuver that a "high-powered war machine of the air" was "capable of producing." And that was just the morning practices.

The real show began at 1:30, and the first flights featured simulated dogfights with ace pilots showing the spins and countermoves of war. One pilot took the first aerial photographs of Grand Forks, while another scattered Victory Bond leaflets on homes and neighborhoods.

Alas, April showers put a damper on the flights and the show's director had to call off the show, much to the disappointment of the citizens. The Flying Circus packed up and hauled the fighters and fighter pilots to the next stop at Fargo. Yet, on that April day in 1919, the technology of modern war came to Grand Forks without the agonies of that world war. The pilots flew without the spray of bullets, and the spectators watched in safety on the grounds of J. D. Bacon's farm.

Charitable Gaming Legalized

BY STEVE STARK

April 23 -- North Dakota was poised to play a game of chance and change on this date

in 1977. "Bingo -- It's legal in North Dakota" read the lead sentence of *The Forum* in Fargo. As Saturday began at the stroke of midnight, legal charity gambling began for the first time in North Dakota's history.

Gambling was certainly not new to the history of government. In 1775, America's earliest days, there was a lottery that raised money for the colonial army. Two-hundred and two years later, gambling as revenue came to North Dakota.

North Dakotans in favor of the legislation argued that gambling could serve as a new method to increase voluntary taxation as other states had done in the 1960s and 1970s.

The inauguration had not come without controversy or concessions. The new gaming laws were limited to "public-spirited organizations" that included civic, religious, educational and fraternal groups. These entities could now conduct games of chance that included raffles, tip jars, punchboards and the aforementioned bingo. No cards or video gaming machines were included. The generated net proceeds for each new enterprise were to be designated for "public-spirited, charitable causes."

The launch of gambling was not without its opposition -- even from the highest office in the state. Governor Art Link, no supporter of the bill, had allowed it to become law without his signature. The day before, Link announced his decision to let the bill slide into law.

With that news, a mass of would-be licensees headed to Bismarck the Friday before the law would take effect. Elks, Eagles and Moose stampeded to the attorney general's office at the capitol. Fifty eager organizations were granted licenses that day. The first went to Minot VFW Post 753.

Flooded with gaming license applicants, Assistant Attorney General Dale Sandstrom's office worked extended hours. The newspaper reported that "from then on, Sandstrom was a man on the run." One of his secretaries reported, "I think the phone's grown into his ear today." Sandstrom said his office had relied on the governor's word and was therefore legally secure in issuing the licenses the day before the law took effect.

In the years since, the state's gaming has had successes and taken hits. But nothing can quite compare to the excitement at its introduction in 1977.

Settling the West

BY DR. CAROLE BUTCHER

April 24 -- In the early 1800s, the government had to figure out what to do with people already claiming land in the West. On this date in 1820, Congress passed the Land Act, allowing settlers to purchase the land they had claimed. They could buy 160 acres at \$1.25 per acre. The Land Act made it possible for people of modest means to purchase land and settle down. It also marked the beginning of an organized effort to settle the West.

It was a good deal for speculators, too -- those with plenty of

money could buy low-cost land and resell it at higher prices. But it was not good for Native Americans. The act increased the confiscation of their land and raised the chances of conflict between the original inhabitants and the European-American newcomers.

The Homestead Act of 1862 is perhaps the best-known government effort to promote western settlement. The act allowed any citizen or intended citizen who had never taken up arms against the US government to claim 160 acres of land. Original filers who lived on the land for five years and improved it could claim the property for a small filing fee. The Homestead Act spurred westward expansion and helped settle the Great Plains.

But when those settlers arrived, they found that some adventurous souls had already set up housekeeping thanks to the Land Act of 1820.

Also in 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act. It gave each state a minimum of 90,000 acres of land to sell. The money was used to establish colleges focused on engineering, agriculture and military science. ND Agricultural College, now NDSU, was established in Fargo as the state's land-grant college.

Other land acts followed. The Timber Culture Act of 1874 encouraged homesteading and tree planting. Homesteaders who occupied their land for three years, with at least one acre devoted to trees, were eligible to receive a land patent. Civil War veterans could also claim 160 acres.

The United States began as a country perched on the Atlantic seaboard. But by 1840, 40 percent of the population lived in the trans-Appalachian West. The land acts passed by the federal government helped drive that continued westward movement.

"Dakota Datebook" is a radio series from *Prairie Public* in partnership with the *State Historical Society of ND* and with funding from the *ND Humanities Council*. See all the *Dakota Datebooks* at prairiepublic.org, subscribe to the "Dakota Datebook" podcast, or buy the *Dakota Datebook* book at shopprairiepublic.org.

TOPS meetings in McVille

TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), a weight-loss group, meets every Monday at the Cedar Ridge Apartments in McVille. Weigh-in time is 6 p.m. and meetings start at 6:15 p.m. Meetings take place on Hamlin Street North, just south of the school. A meeting sign will be posted on the door to use, on the west side of the apartments.

Attendees' first meeting is free. Chapter fees go to purchase TOPS supplies and awards for members.

For more information, call Kathy (701-797-7574 or 701-322-5619), Gayle (701-270-9853) or Artha (701-270-8977 or 701-322-4341).

UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING LAKOTA CITY COUNCIL

April 6, 2026

The Lakota City Council held its regular meeting on April 6, 2026 at the city hall. Mayor Bill Solberg called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. All council members were present, except Member Nelson who was absent.

Member Fahey made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2026 regular meeting, seconded by Member Matejcek. All voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Ferguson made a motion to approve the housing incentive application for Arnold and Linda Perleberg, seconded by Member Matejcek. On a roll call vote, all members voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Matejcek moved to approve the proposed revisions of the property insurance premiums with NDIRF, seconded by Member Fahey. On a roll call vote, all members voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Ferguson moved to approve transferring Lot 2 of Block One in the Second Sundeen's Addition to the CHDO for a Spark Build project, seconded by Member Haugland. On a roll call vote, all members voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Vasichek made a motion to approve the special events permit from Till House for April 18, 2026, seconded by Member Matejcek. All voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Vasichek made a motion to approve the pledge of securities, seconded by Member Fahey. Motion carried.

Member Ferguson made a motion to approve the expense to rebuild the frame of the pump that sits at the landfill and to share the cost with the township, seconded by Member Haugland. On a roll call vote, all voting in favor. Motion carried.

Member Vasichek made a motion to approve the expense of \$621 for a new gate at the landfill purchased at Lakota Feed, seconded by Member Haugland. All voting in favor, except Member Matejcek who abstained. Motion carried.

Member Fahey moved to approve Leading Edge Equipment's proposal for trading in the 2017 Bobcat S570 for \$22,500; purchasing a 320 P-Tier skid-steer loader for the balance of \$35,700 with option for an annual trade of \$3,500 with a maximum of 250 hrs., seconded by Member Haugland. On a roll call vote, all members voting in favor, except Member Matejcek and Vasichek who both abstained. Motion carried.

Member Ferguson made a motion to approve the \$60,000 purchase of the Lakota American building for the Lakota Clinic project, seconded by Member Matejcek. On a roll call vote,

all members voting in favor. Motion carried.

After reviewing the bills and vouchers, a motion was made by Member Fahey to pay all the bills presented for payment and those bills paid prior to the meeting. Member Matejcek seconded the motion. Motion carried on roll call vote of 5-0. Advanced Business

Methods	Amount
Auto Valve	16.49
BCBS	9,555.97
Bolton & Menk	2,667.50
Computer Express	300.00
City of Lakota	300.00
EFTPS	2,053.06
EFTPS	2,464.24
Elan	1,674.50
Farmers Union Oil	6,717.28
GF Utility Billing	144.00
Hawkins	2,101.26
Helms & Associates	5,000.00
Lakota American	155.64
Lakota Hardware	263.34
Lakota Municipal Utilities	370.00
Lakota Municipal Utilities	709.94
Lakota Municipal Utilities	8,205.30
Lakota Sanitation	11,628.00
Lakota Legion	1,501.25
Mattern, Jayden	1,250.00
Midwest Pump Works	3,843.77
MRES	65,953.24
MMUA	641.25
NDPERS	3,708.46
NC Recorder	50.00
NC Sheriff	3,415.00
NC Treasurer	6,023.50
Nelson Electrical	250.00
Neonlink	94.80
Nodak	859.51
ND Telephone	49.64
North-Holt	163,331.00
Ohnstad Electric	155.09
Polar	3,047.90
Quill	187.52
Renewed State	3,153.77
Rysavy Plumbing	3,380.03
Schroeder, Tara	100.00
VCI	26.30
Verizon	126.57
Vestis	74.82
Westad, Denise	60,000.00
WSI	2,660.20
City Salaries	12,069.71
City Salaries	14,898.87
Total	\$405,440.36

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 4, 2026 at 6 p.m. Tax equalization meeting is scheduled for the same day at 5:30 p.m.

Member Vasichek made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Fahey. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Amie Vasichek Auditor

Bill Solberg Mayor
*Full meeting minutes are available upon request at the Lakota City Hall.



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SEEKING BIDS

Nelson County Park Board
is seeking bids for the purchase
and/or trade of a zero-turn mower.

Bids due to the
Nelson County Auditor's office
before 4:30 p.m. on
May 4, 2026

with bid opening at 8:30 a.m. in the
Commission Room on May 5, 2026

Information on the mower
for trade is available in the
Auditor's Office.



Kosobud Cemetery Association Meeting

The Kosobud Cemetery Association will be meeting on **Sunday, May 3** at **John Shirek's home in Lankin**. A potluck meal will be served at **12 noon** before the meeting. Clean up at the cemetery will take place following the meeting.

Everyone is welcome!



Need Something Specific? Call us!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard Red Spring Wheat AP Elevate AP Gunsmoke CL AP Smith AP Iconic CP3099A CP3188 CP3530 CP3055 SY Murdock LCS Rebel LCS Buster LCS Cannon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCS Ascend AAC Concord Faller ND Stampede WB9590 WB9719 WB9606 WB9641 WB9642 WB9645 WB4540 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flax Marvelous Peas Orchestra CP5244 Forage Crops Lavina Forage Barley Baler Forage Oats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canola Corn Soybeans Sunflowers Forage/Cover Crops Seed Treatments Inoculants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durum Stronghold Dely Spitfire Barley Genesis Oats Jury (Common) 	

Financing Options Available

Contact Your Trusted Seed Advisor
701-256-2599

LOOKING FOR BIDS

St. Josephs Everlasting Memorial Cemetery Brocket, ND is accepting bids for the 2026 mowing season. Mowing is to be done on an as needed basis for the amount of **\$170.00 per time**. Mowing and trimming of main cemetery, headstones, adjacent ditches and fence line are included in each mowing.

Exceptions included are mowing shortly before Memorial Day, in case of a funeral and a final mowing at end of the season.

Bids must be submitted by May 15, 2026.

We have the right to reject any or all bids.

Bids will be submitted to:
Joanne Sundeen
P.O. Box 123, Brocket, ND 58321
701-230-2009



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