

Dakota Datebook cont.

movie travelled across the state before making its way to a film festival in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Receiving European exposure, the filmmakers were invited to the Cannes Film Festival in 1979. Much to everyone's surprise, "Northern Lights" won the Golden Camera Award for Best First Feature. The movie soon made the rounds on European television, but it would take several more years before Americans nationwide were treated to the fictional film made by and about the people of North Dakota.

A birthday for the CCC

by Sarah Walker

March 31, 2026 – It's no secret that the 1930s were a difficult time. As people watched their crops fail and their lives became struggles, there was a general outcry for improved conditions.

FDR was inaugurated as President on March 3, 1933, and by the end of the month, on this date, he signed into law an emergency employment act. A few days later, under this act, the Emergency Conservation Work agency was established. Its goal was to relieve unemployment and to aid in restoring the natural resources of the land. This eventually became the Civilian Conservation Corp.

In 1937, North Dakota was designated as a district of the CCC program. The year prior to that, North Dakota was considered to be a sub-district of Minnesota and was placed under the supervision of Fort Snelling. Under this new designation, fifteen officers and 12 civilians were stationed at Fort Lincoln, supervising their new district.

At this time, there were 6,500 North Dakota boys enrolled in the CCC, with two "veteran" programs in Fargo and Mandan, and nine "junior" companies, at Kensal, Foxholm, Kenmare, Mohall, Kramer, Kelvin, Larimore, Watford City, and Medora, all which now fell under the new headquarters of Fort Lincoln. Coincidentally, the company out of Sidney, Montana, also fell under the newly-created North Dakota district.

So in 1937, the North Dakota companies of the CCC had plans underway to celebrate their fourth birthday. The twelve camps in the North Dakota district were set to show a variety of programs to the general public. It was estimated that 20,000 people from North Dakota and parts of Montana would attend these various shows.

The litany of events included special programs, tours, open houses, and more. In Mohall, the orchestra of Company 765 was set to play music throughout the day of the celebration. In Kramer, there was free cake and ice cream with the promise of a free movie. Foxholm planned on hosting a free lunch. So did Medora – along with an athletic tournament. Kenmare's company got special permission to delay their celebration, since bad roads and conflicting dates caused some problems. They planned a dance and special program for later in the month.

The CCC provided many families with opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have had, and so it was a sweet birthday for all involved.

Bismarck's Longest Winter

by Lacey Garrison and Dr. Steve Hoffbeck

April 1, 2026 – In the harsh winter of 1880, the Northern Pacific Railroad experienced its longest and most strenuous blockade of snow on its tracks. The winter was "exceedingly blizzardy," as one storm after another piled deep snow on Dakota Territory, causing the railway to be blocked much of the time from Christmas of 1879 into March of 1880.

Railway snowplows tried to keep trains running, but the snow constantly drifted over the tracks. A crew of 112 men with snow shovels tried valiantly to open trouble zones, but the snow was piled as high as the windows on passenger cars and sometimes as high as the locomotive's smokestack. Some drifts were solid walls of snow – eight to ten miles long. The snowplow piled hardened snow ever higher, but the "almost continuous winds" rebuilt the colossal drifts.

No trains arrived in Bismarck from February 15 through March 14, with four passenger trains stuck; and 1,000 loaded railway cars sidetracked at stations between Fargo and Bismarck. A group of "eight prominent Eastern businessmen tired of waiting for a train" traveled 200 miles from Bismarck to Fargo on a sleigh in late February.

When a train finally broke the blockade on March 14, Bismarck rejoiced. The train had 121 mailbags and many weary passengers, happy to have arrived.

The snow blockade was disastrous for the railway and created negative publicity for Bismarck as an icy, isolated outpost of civilization.

The summer before, the railway supervisor, Mr. H.A. Towne, had urged the company to disburse \$60,000 for raising the railroad grade and for repairing snow fences. The money the company lost because of the blockade, reportedly \$200,000, would have paid for a lot of snow fences and grade-work.

On this date, a newspaper reported that H.E. Sargent, the Northern Pacific general manager, had arrived in Bismarck and was contemplating how to best solve the problem. In the following year, Mr. Sargent and Mr. Towne fixed it all. The railway put up snow fences and upgraded the lowest tracks.

Bismarck's leaders wanted the longest winter of 1880 to be forgotten, but it became legendary for its icy, whirling snows and the isolating blockade.

American Farmer

by Dr. Carole Butcher

April 2, 2026 – North Dakota Agricultural College opened on January 3, 1892, with 123 students. Farmers were initially skeptical that "college boys" could help them improve their farms. However, they were pleasantly surprised as professors took students out into the field to consult with farmers through the extension service, offering in-person courses and consultations.

Even before the college's extension service, farmers were receiving help from another source. On this date in 1819, American Farmer magazine published its first issue. This was followed by other publications, including Power Farming, Farm Mechanization Magazine, and Farmer and Stock Breeder. These magazines were once essential resources for farmers, offering advice on mechanizing farms, new planting techniques, breeding tips, and products that would revolutionize farming. They kept rural farmers connected with the latest agricultural developments happening around the world.

The idea of farming magazines also caught the attention of manufacturers. In 1895, John Deere began publishing The Furrow, which is now considered legendary in publishing circles. It started as an advertisement for John Deere products, focusing on quality over price with the slogan, "Not the Cheapest, But the Best." By the early 1900s, The Furrow began to include informational articles, and by 1912, it had a circulation of 4 million subscribers.

Early farmers in North Dakota faced many challenges. Breaking ground and planting crops was hard work, with threats posed by grasshoppers, hail, frost, too much rain, or not enough. Over time, the soil quality declined. Farms were often isolated, and farm families had to rely on themselves. Farming magazines helped keep farmers connected with the outside world and informed about the latest farming innovations. Magazines also featured articles for farm wives, including recipes, new home appliance advancements, and tips for making their work easier.

Farming magazines remain popular today, with many available online. Agriculture has undergone massive changes since American Farmer was first published, but vintage farming magazines are still available for collectors. They offer a fascinating glimpse into the world of farming and the evolving landscape of agriculture.



A construction project was in progress on March 1, 2024 on the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks. (Photo by Jeff Beach / North Dakota Monitor)

North Dakota government efficiency task force targets state building maintenance



Brian Larson, director of construction management at the University of North Dakota. (Photo courtesy of UND)

By Jeff Beach, ND Monitor

A North Dakota task force on government efficiency will take a swing at cutting maintenance and construction costs on state-owned buildings.

Brian Larson, director of construction management at the University of North Dakota, on Wednesday outlined several steps the state could consider to lower building costs — most notably eliminating the need for architects or engineers to

consult on some maintenance projects.

Brian Larson, director of construction management at the University of North Dakota. (Photo courtesy of UND)

Larson said the state has a requirement that any project estimated to cost more than \$250,000 include hiring an architecture or engineering firm. He said some maintenance projects, such as replacing a roof, resurfacing a parking lot or upgrading heating and cooling equipment can exceed that threshold, but don't necessarily need a consultant's expertise.

Larson said the requirement can easily inflate the cost of a project by 10% North Dakota's Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency voted to have Larson work with Legislative Council and the state's new construction manager on drafting a bill to address the consultant guidelines and other suggestions from Larson, which include trying to make the bidding process for construction projects more competitive.

The Office of Management Budget recently added a construction manager, Lindsey Ashley, to oversee state building projects that include the State Hospital, a State Laboratory and a Military Gallery.

Legislative Council is the research arm of the Legislature.

While raising the

\$250,000 threshold would help, more clearly defining which projects should require a consultant would be a better solution, task force members said.

"Changing the number doesn't really address the issue," said Rep. Robin Weisz, R-Hurdsfield.

Weisz noted that local governments could benefit from a policy change, as well as state agencies.

Larson's presentation was one of several heard by the efficiency task force Wednesday, including from the Office of Management and Budget, Auditor's Office and from the Governor's Office on information technology.

The task force reviewed a state agency survey listing more than 70 potential changes to state statutes to make state government more efficient.

Reach North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach at jbeach@northdakotamonitor.com.



Early spring tasks

Start your spring clean-up with the largest tasks first, such as clearing off the roof, cleaning gutters and clearing away any tree branch problems. Spruce up the front door, porchlights, kickplates and other entryway items, and inspect your windows for maintenance needs. Gently remove matted leaves to uncover emerging spring bulbs, but wait until *after* several 50-degree-Fahrenheit spring days to clean up all leaf litter. Some beneficial insects spend the winter in such dead material and need a few warmer days to get moving. —Brenda Weaver

Sources: awaytogarden.com
budmathews.com/

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Public Notices

Notice of Annual Meeting: Chaseley Township

Chaseley Township Meeting is rescheduled for April 13th at 2:30 PM at the Roller residence. Followed by Equalization Meeting at 4 PM. (March 28, 2026)

Notice of Annual Meeting: Crystal Lake Township

Crystal Lake Township's annual meeting is going to be Monday, March 30 at 6 pm. The location is the Henne household 946 28th Ave NE Hurdsfield, ND 58451 Sarah Henne. (March 21 & 28, 2026)

Notice of Annual Meeting: Valhalla Township

Valhalla Township Annual meeting and Election will be held Tuesday March 31st 7PM at the Don Ystaas Home. Kyle Alfstad Valhalla Township Chairman (March 21 & 28, 2026)

NOTICE TO ALL TAXPAYERS OF WELLS COUNTY

NOTICE IS HERBY GIVEN THAT proceedings for the equalization of assessments will be taken by the several local equalization boards during the month of April, at the Office of the Clerk or Auditor of the Township or City as the case may be, and that each taxpayer has the right to appear before such boards of review or

equalization and petition for correction of their assessments.

Notice is further given that the Wells County Board of Equalization will meet on Tuesday, June 4, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., in the KTL Building Meeting Room in Fessenden, ND. Any persons or City or Township Boards wishing to meet with the Board on that day should make an appointment for a specific time with the Wells County Auditor.

If auxiliary aids or services are required, please contact the Wells County Auditor: 700 Railway ST N #37; Fessenden ND 58438: 701-547-3521, at least five days prior to the meeting.

Below is a listing of local equalization locations and times:

Monday April 6, 2026
Fessenden City - Fessenden City Hall: 7:00 PM

Tuesday April 7, 2026
Cathay City - Cathay Fire Hall: 7:00 PM

Wednesday April 8, 2026
Harvey City - City Hall: 5:30 PM

Monday April 13, 2026
Silver Lake Township - Corey Hart Shop: 2:00 PM

Chaseley Township - Lynda Roller Residence: 4:00 PM

Bull Moose Township - Jeff Mertz Shop: 7:00 PM

Lynn Township - Carol Rask Residence: 8:00 PM

Tuesday April 14, 2026
Cathay Township - Cathay City Firehall: 1:00 PM

Bilodeau Township - Dave Richter Shop: 2:45 PM

Hawksnest Township - Larry Larson Shop:

4:15 PM
Sykeston City - Sykeston Fire Hall: 7:00 PM

Monday April 20, 2026
Bowdon City - Community Center: 7:00 PM

Tuesday April 21, 2026
Hurdsfield - Community Hall: 7:00 PM

Monday April 27, 2026
Germantown Township - Kurt Bollinger's Office: 8:00 AM

Monday April 27, 2026
Location: Hamberg Elevator
Fairville Township: 8:30 AM
Hairberg City: 9:30 AM
Bremen Township: 10:30 AM
Norway Lake Township: 12:30 PM
Hamborg Township: 1:30 PM
Valhalla Township: 6:30 PM

Tuesday April 28, 2026
Location: KTL Meeting Room, Fessenden

Progress Township: 7:30 AM
South Cottonwood Township: 8:30 AM
West Ontario Township: 9:30 AM
Speedwell Township: 10:30 AM
Delger Township: 11:30 AM
Rusland Township: 12:30 PM
Oshkosh Township: 1:30 PM
West Norway Township: 4:30 PM
Haaland Township: 5:30 PM
Manfred Township: 7:30 PM
St. Anna Township: 8:30 PM

Wednesday April 29, 2026
Location: Harvey City Hall, Kiwanis Room

Western Township: 8:30 AM

Fram Township: 9:30 AM

Heimdal Township: 10:30 AM

Wells Township: 12:00 PM
Forward Township: 1:00 PM
Crystal Lake: 6:00 PM
Pony Gulch: 6:30 PM
Hillsdale Township: 7:30 PM

Thursday April 30, 2026
Location: Sykeston Fire Hall
Woodward Township: 1:30 PM
Berlin Township: 4:30 PM
Johnson Township: 6:30 PM
Sykeston Township: 8:30 PM
(March 21 & 28, 2026)

The Fessenden Fire Protection District will be holding an informational meeting for a tax mill levy increase, on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 - 7pm at Fessenden City Hall. Residents living in the Fessenden Fire District are encouraged to attend.