

## Dakota Datebook: The Fargo Theatre Turns 100

By **Jayme L. Job**

The finishing touches were being put onto the brand-new Fargo Theatre on March 13, 1926, before its much-anticipated opening on March 15. Isaac Ruben, co-owner of Finkelstein and Ruben Theatres Company, arrived in town to direct last-minute installations.

No theatre of this scale or finery had ever been seen in the state. The Bijou, Fargo's first theater to feature moving pictures, opened in 1906, but it didn't rival the grand theaters of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Enter Moses Finkelstein and Isaac Ruben, two men who had been building theaters in the Upper Midwest since the turn of the century. By 1925, they were operating over a hundred theaters in four states, including the famous Capitol Theater in St. Paul and the State Theater in Minneapolis. The men decided to expand their business into North Dakota and hired the local firm T. F. Powers and Company to construct the new theater. Built on the former site of Idlekope's Fruit Store, the theater was constructed at a cost of \$350,000, a small fortune in 1926.

Ruben and Finkelstein broke ground for their new enterprise on September 15, 1925, and after six months of construction, the state-of-the-art theater was ready for its grand opening. With its landmark 36-foot-tall Fargo marquee, fine Italian leather seating for 1,300, and 5,000 light bulbs, the theater was indeed monumental.

The theater's first patrons entered for a 2 p.m. showing of Syd Chaplin's film, "The Man on the Box," which chronicled the comedic antics of a wealthy bachelor turned taxi driver. They were also treated to music performed on the theater's \$25,000 organ, the Mighty Wurlitzer.

Despite the popularity of the theater, it eventually fell into disrepair. In the 1980s, local residents raised funds to restore the theater to its original glory, and in 2001, the first Fargo Film Festival was held in the restored venue.

Today, as the Theatre celebrates 100 years, patrons can attend a variety of shows in the art-deco building, and can still hear the music of the Mighty Wurlitzer.

## Dakota Datebook: Church's Ferry

By **Michelle Holien and Dr. Steve Hoffbeck**

Located along U.S. Highway 2 west of Devils Lake, the town of Church's Ferry has struggled to remain intact. To passersby, at first glance, Church's Ferry appears to be abandoned.

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

On March 10, 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. The word "mauvais" means "bad," and "coulee" means "flow" or "ravine."

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 Church's Ferry still stands. Only twelve 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 Church's 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.

## Prairie Fare: Sweet Truths - What To Know About Artificial Sweeteners

By **Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist, NDSU Extension**

"What's the difference between these packets?" my husband asked me after he picked up his cup of coffee.

"These are different non-nutritive sweeteners," I replied as I read the ingredient statement. "Some are sweeter than others."

"Could you pick out a packet for me?" he added.

I selected a pink packet for him because it caught my eye. I think I used a blue packet.

I don't know why we sweeten our coffee at restaurants. We probably just don't like the flavor of the coffee, because we don't add anything to our coffee at home.

I'm not too worried about the minor amount of these sweeteners we use. These substances are so sweet that most of the powder in the packet is actually bulk filler, such as maltodextrin.

Non-nutritive, or artificial, sweeteners include aspartame, acesulfame-K, neotame, saccharin and sucralose. Stevia, for example, is a type of herbal sweetener.

Artificial sweeteners provide virtually no calories and no nutrients. Aspartame is about 200 times sweeter than sugar, while sucralose is 600 times sweeter than sugar.

The common sweetener aspartame comprises two amino acids: aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Foods and beverages containing aspartame must carry a warning for those who have phenylketonuria.

People with the disorder cannot break down phenylalanine, so they must follow a strict low-protein diet for life. The disorder can cause seizures and intellectual disability. Newborns are screened for this rare genetic condition.

Many years ago, I used to have one can of diet cola every day at work. My colleagues thought I drank pop all day, but I was actually just filling the empty can with water and sipping that. Since I no longer drink pop regularly, it tastes extremely sweet to me now.

Diet pop, like sweetened pop, is

not good for our teeth. Phosphoric acid and citric acid in beverages can erode tooth enamel.

The Food and Drug Administration sets limits on the "Acceptable Daily Intake" of various artificial sweeteners. It's usually set at one-hundredth the level considered toxic in animals.

People thought that if they simply cut out sugar calories from their diets, any excess pounds on their bodies would disappear. Unfortunately, despite the introduction of many artificial sweeteners, the overweight and obesity rates have increased.

Researchers continue to explore why this has occurred. People tend to overcompensate for the missed calories by eating other high-calorie foods, or they develop a "super-sweet tooth."

On the other hand, some studies have shown that artificial sweeteners allow people with diabetes or obesity to occasionally enjoy something sweet.

However, some research suggests associations between frequent consumption of certain artificial sweeteners and conditions such as fatty liver disease, insulin resistance and gastrointestinal issues.

Some recent studies link artificial sweeteners with disrupting our gut microbiome, the large group of microorganisms that live in our gut and help keep us healthy.

What about cancer risk? Cyclamates and saccharine increased bladder cancer risk in large doses in 1970s-era animal studies, but these findings have not been confirmed in humans at typical intake levels. FDA scientists "do not have safety concerns about aspartame when used under the approved conditions."

Nutrition experts recommend avoiding non-nutritive sweeteners in toddlers' diets and greatly limiting them in children. Pregnant women are advised to minimize or completely avoid them.

If anyone is sipping a diet pop as you read this, I do not mean to alarm you. If you are drinking many bottles or cans of diet soda a day, you are not doing your body a favor.

What's a person to do?

- Think about your own beverage consumption. Quench your thirst with water.

- Enjoy milk or a calcium-rich substitute with meals for the calcium and protein it provides.

- If you like real sugar in your coffee, enjoy it in moderation. A teaspoon of sugar has about 15 calories.

- Be sure to keep sugar-free gum containing xylitol away from your pets, because it can be toxic to them.
- Train your taste buds to enjoy less sweetness overall.

Consider a natural sweetener such as honey, but remember it is still an added sugar. Honey contains antioxidants and some trace minerals. Cinnamon, an antioxidant-rich spice, enhances the natural sweetness of food such as this dip.

### Honey Yogurt Fruit Dip

- 1 cup low-fat or nonfat plain yogurt
  - 1 teaspoon vanilla
  - ½ teaspoon cinnamon
  - 2 tablespoons honey (to taste)
  - Red and green apple slices
- Mix ingredients for dip. Rinse and slice apples right before serving.

Makes four servings. With non-fat yogurt, each serving of dip has 70 calories, 0 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 13 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 45 milligrams sodium.

**CAN THEY DO THAT?**

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## Proceedings Of The Board Of County Commissioners

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE MOUNTRAIL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

#### 1. OPENING & ROLL CALL

The Board met in regular session on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. in the Emergency/Community Room, Mountrail County Courthouse, Stanley ND with Commissioners Trudy Ruland, Wayne Olson, Joan Hollekim, John DeGroot and Jason Rice present. State's Attorney, Wade Enget was present.

Chairman Ruland called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### 2. BUSINESS

##### A. AGENDA

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to review and approve the agenda as corrected. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

##### B. MINUTES

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2026 meeting as corrected. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

##### C. FEES

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the September, October & November 2025 Fees for Planning & Zoning & October, November & December 2025 Fees for Recorder and January Fees for Clerk of Court & Sheriff. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Olson, Ruland, DeGroot and Rice voted yes. Motion carried.

##### D. PAYROLL

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the appointed officials time off requests for January. Upon roll call, Rice, Hollekim, Olson, Ruland and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the Regular Part time Employee Classification for Eli Rushing as a Correctional Officer I with Corrections in the amount of \$28.61 per hour not to exceed 32 hrs. per week and no more than 1664 hrs. per year. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Hollekim, Rice, Olson and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Hollekim, to approve the Regular Part time Employee Classification for Joshua Rushing as a Correctional Officer I with Corrections in the amount of \$28.61 per hour not to exceed 20 hrs. per week and no more than 1040 hrs. per year. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, DeGroot, Hollekim and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the Regular Full time Employee Classification for Gisel Guerrero as a Correctional Officer I with Corrections in the amount of \$28.61 per hour/\$59,500 per year. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, DeGroot and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Hollekim, to approve the Regular Full time Employee Classification for Lillian McFadden as a Weed Control Technician/GIS Specialist with the County Agency/Weed Control in the amount of \$28.99 per hour/\$60,300 per year. Upon roll call, Olson, Ruland, Rice, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the Regular Full time Employee Classification for Steven Kukowski as a Roadworker I with the R&B in the amount of \$32.21 per hour/\$67,000 per year. Upon roll call, Hollekim, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the signing of the appointed official's evaluations for the 2025 year. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

#### E. BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the 2026 Budget Amendments from the General Fund under Social Security, Retirement, & Medicare to breakdown under each Department under Social Security, Retirement & Medicare (with no increase or change in the budget amount). Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, DeGroot and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

#### F. TRANSFER

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the transfer from the Capital Projects (Memorial Building Fund) to the General Fund totaling \$1,110,664.70. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Hollekim, Ruland, Rice and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

#### G. CLERK OF COURT

Madison Rodgers, Clerk of Court stated would like to stay contracted with the State of ND for Clerk of Court Services.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the letter of contracting for funding with the State of ND to receive reimbursement for Clerk of Court Services. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, Hollekim, DeGroot and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

#### H. STOP PAYMENT

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the stop payment and reissue of check #121309 to Thomas Y Pickett, Inc totaling \$28,800. Upon roll call, Olson, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

#### I. MINERAL LEASE

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by

Comm. DeGroot, to approve the signing of the Hess lease for section 36, Lots 2-4 in Block 1 of Comfords Fifth Addition in the City of White Earth in Township 157 North, Range 94 West. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

#### J. BILLS

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the bills totaling \$421,503.57 & January 18 through January 31 payroll, checks #20187-20192 and direct deposits #1-162 totaling \$591,804.95. Upon roll call, Olson, DeGroot, Hollekim, Ruland and Rice voted yes. Motion carried. (A complete list of bills is posted on a regular basis on the Mountrail County website @ www.co.mountrail.nd.us under the County Commissioner heading and/or are available for review in the Auditor's Office during normal business hours.)

#### K. BOARD CONCERNS

Discussion was held on the Employee Handbook and the changes. More discussion will be held at the next commissioner meeting.

#### 3. APPOINTMENTS SCHEDULED

9:15 A.M.

Jessica Niemitalo, Treasurer met with the board to discuss the renewal of certificate of deposits (CD's) of three for \$5 million, one for \$3,821,552.87 and one for \$10 million.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Hollekim, to approve the renewal of certificate of deposits (CD's) for 3 for \$5 million, one for \$3,821,552.87 and one for \$10 million with Cornerstone Bank at 3 months. Upon roll call, Hollekim, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

9:20 A.M.  
Lisa Lapica, Veterans Service Officer discussed the Wall of Honor in the Memorial Building.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the purchase of the TV for the Wall of Honor in the Memorial Building totaling \$1,500 out of the Commissioner Contingency Fund. Upon roll call, Hollekim, DeGroot, Rice, Ruland and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

9:30 A.M.  
Jana Hennessy, Road & Bridge (R&B) Engineer with Mary Omar, Road & Bridge (R&B) Accountant met to discuss Road & Bridge.

#### 1. BR11408 COTTONWOOD LAKE STRUCTURE REPLACEMENT

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the balancing change order #2 for Martin Construction Inc with a decrease totaling \$3,178.50 for Cottonwood Lake Structure Replacement Project No. BR11408. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the final pay application for Martin Construction Inc. totaling \$17,396.67 for Cottonwood Lake Structure Replacement Project No. BR11408. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Rice, Hollekim, Ruland and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

#### 2. BNSF REQUEST

Engineer Hennessy discussed the request from BNSF for cost sharing on 81st Ave NW, 3rd St W and 93rd Ave NW to replace the tracks. Engineer Hennessy discussed the historical aspects of upgrading the roads that affect BNSF railroads and we are to pay 100% of the project for the road upgrades.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Olson, to deny the request from BNSF for cost sharing on 81st Ave NW, 3rd St W and 93rd Ave NW projects. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, DeGroot, Ruland and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

3. 2026 FROST LAW  
Accountant Omar discussed the 2026 frost law recommendations.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded

by Comm. Rice, to approve the 2026 Frost law as recommended by Engineer Hennessy with Agriculture exemptions for all paved roads within the County. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

Comm. Ruland along with Accountant Omar discussed the new policies with the Load Pass Permits.

#### 4. WESTERN NDDOT LIASON

Matt Johnson, Western NDDOT Liaison with Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) and North Dakota Local Technical Assistance Program (NDLTAP) discussed the Road Scholars Program. Matt Johnson presented the road scholars program for level three Road Pro award to Jana Hennessy, Engineer, level one Trail Blazer award to Kevin Blank, Roadworker & level two Voyager award was presented to Jessie Olson, Roadworker at the Road Conference in Grand Forks. Western NDDOT Liaison Johnson discussed the save the date for the Western ND Energy Roundtable discussion at Roughrider Center on Thursday, May 7, 2026 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

#### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one had any comments.

#### 5. ADJOURN

The Board adjourned at 10:22 A.M. to meet in regular session on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. Accepted and approved this 3rd day of March, 2026.

Trudy Ruland, Chairman  
Mountrail County Commissioner  
Stephanie A. Pappa  
Mountrail County Auditor

**PUBLIC NOTICES**  
"BECAUSE THE PEOPLE MUST KNOW"

**NOTICE TO PUBLIC**  
Mountrail County is informing the public of the 2026 Frost Law Restrictions. The County GRAVEL ROADS will be 6 ton per axle/80,000 lbs max, unless otherwise posted. EMERGENCY VEHICLES ARE EXEMPT AND DO NOT NEED TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL PERMITS.

Paved roads are as listed:

#### 6 ton Gross Vehicle Weight:

- \* 100th Ave NW - from 1 mile north of White Earth Bay Park fish station to boat ramp.

- \* 37th Street - within the Van Hook Park, from the east park entrance, 1 mile west, to 83rd Ave.

#### 6 ton axle/80,000 lbs max:

- \* 37th Street NW - County Rd 14 - from Parshall City west 9.5 miles to Lake Sakakawea (a.k.a. Parshall Bay Road).

#### 7 ton axle/105,500 lbs max:

- \* 61st Ave. NW - County Rd 1 - from US2 north 2 miles to CR2 (a.k.a. Tagus Spur).

- \* 62nd Ave. NW - County Rd 1 - from Plaza City north 3 miles to 45th Street (a.k.a. Plaza North).

- \* 64th Ave. NW - County Rd 1 - from ND23 north 3 miles to Plaza City (a.k.a. Plaza South).

- \* Old Highway 2 - County Rd 2 - from 4th Street in Stanley west to US2.

- \* Old Highway 2 - County Rd 2 - from Stanley east 8 miles to Palermo.

- \* Old Highway 2 - County Rd 2 - from CR11 east 8 miles to Ward County Line.

- \* 72nd Ave NW - County Rd 3 (Dairy Road) - 3 miles north to 42nd St NW.

- \* 74th Ave NW - County Rd 3 - from CR2 south to 42nd St NW to Dairy Road.

- \* 76th Ave NW - County Rd 3 - from ND23, 3 miles south to 36th St NW.

- \* 74th Street NW - County Rd 4 - from ND8 west 11 miles to CR7 (a.k.a. Manitou Road).

- \* 89th Ave. NW - County Rd 5 - from US2 north 1 mile.

- \* 90th Ave NW - County Rd 5 - from US2 south 7 miles, 2 miles west on 55th St NW to ND1804 (a.k.a. Ross South).

- \* 68th Street NW - County Rd 6 - from White Earth City west 6 miles to Williams County.

- \* 93rd Ave NW - County Rd 7 - US2 north to Burke County line (a.k.a. Manitou Road).

- \* 99th Ave. NW - County Rd 9 - from US2 north to White Earth City.

- \* 101st Ave NW - County Rd 9 - from US2 south 9 miles to ND1804.

- \* 101st Ave. NW - County Rd 9 - from ND1804 south through Unorganized Twps 155-94 & 154-94. Includes 54th Street from 101st Ave to 100th Ave and 100th Ave south to White Earth Bay.

- \* 51st St NW - County Rd 10 - from ND8 east 6 miles to 74th Ave NW (a.k.a. Belden Road).

- \* 53rd Street NW - County Rd 10 - from ND8 west 12 miles to ND1804.

- \* 67th Ave NW - County Rd 11 - from CR2 south 5 miles to 59th Street.

- \* 42nd Street NW - County Rd 12 - from Plaza City west 7.5 miles to CR3 (Dairy Barn Road).

- \* 81st Ave NW and 63rd St NW - County Rd 13 - Stanley Truck Bypass (North) from ND8 to ND8.

- \* 82nd Ave NW - County Rd 15 - from ND23 south 2 miles to Van Hook Park.

- \* 88th Ave NW - County Rd 17 (S & L Road) - from ND23, 7 miles south, 2 miles east on 32nd St. NW and 2 miles south on 86th Ave NW.

- \* 61st St NW - County Rd 18 - ND8 west 2 miles and 1 mile north on 84th St to US2.

- \* 89th Avenue - County Rd 19 - from ND23 south 3 miles to 36th Street.

- \* 92nd Ave NW - County Rd 21 (Sanish Road) - from ND23, 9 miles south to 30th Street NW.

- \* 36th Street - from CR17 west 4 miles to CR21.

- \* 41st Street NW - from ND1804 west 2.25 miles to end of Bluebird Lane.

#### TOWNSHIP ROADWAYS:

As for the township roads, they are all restricted to 80,000lbs Gross max (by ND Century Code 39-12-05.3 #2) UNLESS the township board of supervisors has passed a resolution to change the weight limit AND posted a new weight limit (this could be either raising or lowering the roadway limits).

A map of Mountrail County townships which belong to LoadPass Permitting is provided. For overweight or oversized travel on these roads, a permit is REQUIRED.

For oversize or overweight travel on township roadways that do not belong to LoadPass Permitting, CONTACT TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS.

#### PERMITS:

Mountrail County is on a DAY BY DAY basis. It will be decided each day if the roads can be traveled on and what hours they may be traveled on. The decision for the weekend will be made on Friday afternoons.

Mountrail County is NOT PERMITTING DIVISIBLE LOADS for travel in excess of the weight restrictions.

For NON-DIVISIBLE oversize / overweight travel: Mountrail County is requiring a RESTRICTED ROAD / SINGLE TRIP PERMIT for ALL travel in excess of the above weight restrictions.

#### RESTRICTED ROAD PERMITS:

- \* Purchase a permit for EACH Trip (a trip is ONE pick-up and ONE delivery).

- \* Purchase on www.loadpasspermits.com.