

# THE NORTH DAKOTA PRESERVATIONIST

News from the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office

Winter 2021



# National Register of Historic Places Listings (2020)

Coordination of the National Register of Historic Places program in North Dakota is one of many important tasks carried out by the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is housed within the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register, according to the National Park Service (NPS), the federal agency that oversees it, “is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archeological resources.” Once they are vetted by the SHPO, National Register nominations are reviewed by the North Dakota

Historic Preservation Review Board, the majority of whose members specialize in a related field: prehistoric archaeology, historical architecture, history, architectural history, or historic archaeology (one or two citizen members round out the six-to-seven-member board). If the State Review Board recommends approval, the nomination is then sent to the NPS for final consideration, and if approved, listing in the National Register.

In 2020, nine North Dakota buildings were added to the National Register. Collectively, they demonstrate both the variety and vitality of the state’s historic built landscape.

---

## The Harvey Power Plant

(listed June 5) is located on the southeastern edge of Harvey (Wells County). Completed in 1930, the facility was the first and only substantial electric power generation facility in the city. For nearly a quarter century, before the days of rural electrification, this plant provided Harvey and much of the rest of Wells County with electricity; it closed in 1954. Two outfits, Central Light & Power Company—which built the facility at considerable expense—and Otter Tail Power Company, controlled the plant at various times during its years of operation. The facility stands as a reminder of these companies’ dominance over the local electricity production market, as well as the early growth and evolution of electric service in Harvey, at a time when the city was becoming more developed. The World War II years (1941-1945) brought additional upgrades to the power plant and augmented its utility to the locality. The building served the Harvey area for over two decades until the consolidation of



Photo by Rosin Preservation

electricity production facilities and the construction of larger power plants nearby made the Harvey Power Plant obsolete. “By restoring this building,” its current owners say they wish “to not only provide a

facility” that addresses the need for mental health services in the area, “but [also] to restore the hope in the region for those who may have felt cast aside, abandoned, and run down.”

---

Finished in 1963, **Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel at Annunciation Priory** (listed June 16) sits on the University of Mary campus on the southern outskirts of Bismarck (Burleigh County). The chapel's significance lies in its innovative design by the world-renowned Hungarian-born architect Marcel Breuer, an acolyte of the German Bauhaus school and a master of modernist architecture. (Hamilton Smith, Breuer's longtime

partner, provided assistance.) Breuer designed, often in collaboration with Smith or others, approximately 100 buildings during his career, including the UNESCO Headquarters building in Paris. He called Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel one of his favorites, dubbing it his "jewel on the prairie." The chapel's stunning appearance bears many of the signatures of Breuer's philosophy of design: varied materials to create texture, windows for light and

shade, and colored glass to infuse the building with assorted colors. Breuer also linked the chapel to its location—the North Dakota prairie—by using locally sourced fieldstone in the building's construction. The architect worked closely with the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Priory (today the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery) to ensure that his design honored their wishes and represented their values.

Photo by Cray Kennedy



**Ben Franklin Elementary School, Lewis and Clark Elementary School, Viking Elementary School, West Elementary School, Wilder Elementary School, and Valley Junior High School** (listed July 17) were constructed in Grand Forks (Grand Forks County) in the mid-20th century. They embody several central themes of this era of U.S. history, including post-World War II prosperity, a huge population increase, and a robust building program around the country. The postwar baby boom, along with many rural Americans' relocation to towns and cities, quickly led to overcrowding in urban schools. Like other cities around the nation, Grand Forks responded by building new schools from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s to relieve overcrowded classrooms. Constructed between 1949 and 1965, at a time of unparalleled economic growth in the nation, these schools are good examples of the modern movement, which dominated mid-20th-century U.S. public architecture. The designs of these one-story, flat-roofed brick structures broke sharply with the multi-story school building designs of the early 20th century. With this new efficiency-minded approach to public school building design and construction came changing ideas about education itself. A commitment to creating a more conducive environment for student learning and physical health lay at the center of this innovative philosophy of education. The new-style school buildings' sprawling, low-elevation designs included long banks of windows to allow in plenty of natural light. Augmenting the effort to connect students and teachers with the outdoors, designers installed landscaped gardens and playgrounds or ensured that students had views of nearby public parks outside of their classroom windows. At first glance, the six mid-century schools in Grand Forks may appear ordinary, but behind their seeming mundaneness is a critical series of architectural and educational innovations that are characteristic of post-World War II America.

Photos by Susan Caraher, listed in order of mention





Photo by Agatha Frisbee

---

The **Administration Building for the City of Grand Forks at the Grand Forks Airport** (listed Dec. 3) is located approximately two-and-a-half miles northwest of the city's downtown. Built between 1941 and 1943, with an addition constructed in 1949, the Administration Building functioned as the airport's terminal. It is an illustrative example of WPA (Work Projects Administration) Modern and Streamline Moderne architecture. This WPA-built airport

terminal facilitated air travel that modernized and connected the community regionally and beyond. The Grand Forks airport's role in military aviation training contributed to national defense and war efforts. Although airport services were eventually transferred to a new location, and the Administration Building repurposed, the building stands as a reminder of Grand Forks' early aviation history at the site of the city's original airport. The

terminal, with its modest design indicative of New Deal architecture, is a symbolic reminder of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's economic relief and jobs-building programs, which, in part, helped to transform American air transportation as the United States strived to dig itself out of the Great Depression and defeat fascism abroad during World War II.

# Spotlight on North Dakota State Historic Sites: Stutsman County Courthouse in Jamestown

The Stutsman County Courthouse in Jamestown, a treasure among the state's historic sites, is North Dakota's oldest surviving courthouse. Finished in 1883, it is one of a small number of buildings that bridges both the territorial and statehood periods of North Dakota history. It stands as an imposing, yet elegant, reminder of the roots of modern North Dakota. The courthouse hosted meetings in 1885 in which participants considered the question of how Dakota Territory should be divided. Four years later, it served as the selection site for delegates to the state's constitutional convention.

More locally, the courthouse is intimately connected to Jamestown's growth in the late 19th century. The city was founded in 1872, 11 years after the formation of Dakota Territory. It was designated as the seat of Stutsman County a year later. Because Jamestown sat at the junction of where the Northern Pacific Railway crossed the James River, it became a prized location. It began attracting legions of settlers, who were drawn by a land speculation boom in the James River Valley that lasted from 1878 to 1883. More than an impressive feat of architecture, the Stutsman County Courthouse embodied the spirit of the people whose recent settlement made its construction both necessary and possible. In a November 1882 issue of the *Jamestown Weekly Alert*, a contributor captured—with a dose of hyperbole—the excitement surrounding the proposed building project:

The new court house will be one of the most substantial structures in the northwest. Its foundation of imperishable granite and massive walls of brick will stand the devastating storms of time and seasons for ages. The building of such a structure for public purposes by a town five years old is a compliment to the taste



Photo by SHSND

and public spirit of our citizens and will stand [as] a monument to their enterprise tha[t] will not be lost in its influence and impression upon our visitors.

An enterprising Jamestown resident named Anton Klaus, known as the "Father of Jamestown," was tasked with finding an architect to design the new courthouse. Originally from Germany, Klaus moved to Jamestown from Green Bay, Wisconsin, in 1879. He selected a fellow German, Henry C. Koch, a Union veteran who ran a successful firm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to design the building. Over the course of his career, Koch would also design Milwaukee's city hall and several buildings on the campus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, in addition to more



View of the courtroom inside the Stutsman County Courthouse. Photo by SHSND

than a hundred schools and more than two dozen courthouses. For the two-story Stutsman County Courthouse, Koch drew on the Gothic Revival style. The building has an ashlar granite foundation, exterior masonry walls, stone sills and lintels, and wooden floors inside. A tower and gables bisecting the building's roof on all four sides are the most striking aspects of the courthouse's exterior. The most prominent feature inside is the stamped metal sheathing on the walls, installed in stages between 1905 and 1909. In 1905, a new jail and sheriff's residence next to the courthouse were finished. A tunnel joined the sheriff's house and the basement of the courthouse (the tunnel was filled in when the Law Enforcement Center was built in 1986). An addition to the rear of the courthouse was made in 1926.

For approximately 100 years, Stutsman County used the courthouse as its center of government. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, at a time when the future of the building was uncertain. Several years later, the county moved its governmental services elsewhere and made plans to demolish the old courthouse and convert the

site into a parking lot. A protracted battle over the building ensued, with many locals banding together to save the courthouse. The State Historical Society took over administration of the building in 1991. A multiyear restoration effort followed, fueled by an infusion of \$2 million over the next two-and-a-half decades. In 2017, the State Historical Society opened the building to the public as a state historic site. In August 2020, the county began using the 1883 courthouse again for trials, the first time since the early 1980s. Unlike the newer courthouse (opened in 1982), it allows for the social distancing required during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The 1883 courthouse is open to visitors between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day. A new permanent exhibit inside the courthouse teaches visitors about American civics. The project was funded in part by a \$24,000 grant from Jamestown Tourism. Historic Sites Manager Rob Hanna of the State Historical Society calls the exhibit "one of the first of its kind—a historic courthouse filled with objects and activities that illustrate multiple aspects of American citizenship." More information can be found on the [State Historical Society's blog](#).

## A Conversation with Agency Director Dr. Bill Peterson

*After Claudia Berg's retirement at the end of June 2020, Dr. Peterson became the new director of the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer. Historic Preservation Specialist (Historian) Zachary Lechner spoke with Peterson to learn about his interest in history and preservation as well as his hopes and vision for the State Historical Society.*



Photo by SHSND

*How did you become interested in history and historic preservation?*

My family had a summer place on the eastern shore of Lake Superior. If historians had origin stories like Marvel comic characters, that would be mine. As a kid, I spent hours with a neighbor woman there named Janice Gerred, a local shipwreck historian. She knew the story of every shipwreck on that part of the lake, which turns out is a very dangerous place for ships. I pestered Janice incessantly for her knowledge of local shipwrecks. She also patiently recounted stories about her father, a U.S. Life Saver at a nearby Life-Saving Station of the U.S. Life-Saving Service (after 1915, the U.S. Coast Guard). In the spring of 1976, I found wreckage from the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, which further cemented my interest in the regional maritime history. In graduate school, I turned Janice's stories and those childhood experiences into my dissertation about the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

My first real history job was with the then-Michigan Bureau of History at Fayette Historic Townsite. Since then, I have had the distinct pleasure of working in archaeology, museums, archives, historic preservation, and generally learning the history business in its various forms from the ground up.

*Prior to becoming director of the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the State Historic Preservation Officer, you served as vice president of collections and education at the Arizona Historical Society. Can you talk about what you did and learned in that position?*

I spent nearly seven years with the Arizona Historical Society, first as the Northern Division director and then, as you point out, the VP of collections and education. In the first instance, I managed the Northern Division, which operated the Pioneer Museum and Riordan Mansion State Historic Park. I guess the most important thing I learned in Arizona was how important it is for everyone to see themselves in the historical narrative and how important it is for people to understand that everyone experienced the past differently. On the collections side of things, I learned that in Arizona, we had spent decades collecting objects with the goal to amass objects for material culture studies and future researchers who would study those objects in comparison to other similar objects. For the most part, those researchers never really materialized. Having a collection of something is only as important as your ability to utilize it to reveal the past in meaningful ways. As far as what I did, I think I made some



positive changes in the institutional thinking as to what we collected and retained, and how we engaged students and teachers in and with their communities.

*How would you describe your philosophy of historic preservation?*

Eclectic! I don't want to sound cliché, but preservation of our historic resources, whether they are archaeological, structural, or landscapes, is good for our economy, environment, and social structures. Preservation of these resources will make this state more successful over time. I really like old buildings, as they generally seem to have a great deal of character. If you have the chance to learn from the past while preserving it, well, then why wouldn't you?

*What are your major short-term and long-term goals for the State Historical Society and North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)?*

Short-term goals all have to do with COVID-19—how the agency and its various departments continue to provide service, access, and programming through our resources. Making sure that the staff teams are all adjusting to the situation so that no one is left behind has been taking up a lot of my time. Ensuring that the workplace culture, which is one of our strongest assets, remains intact, as so many of the teams work in remote isolation, is something I think a lot about. As for the long-term goals, finding ways the agency can deepen our relationships with the stakeholders throughout North Dakota by using our various programmatic areas—SHPO, Archives, Historic Sites, Audience Engagement & Museum—is very important to me. I believe that by employing our various resources, we can have meaningful relationships with every community in North Dakota.

*You brought up the coronavirus pandemic. How else has it affected the work of the agency?*

In general, it has reduced visitation and revenue at the Heritage Center and many of our locations around the state. During the closure, our direct

service to cultural resources contractors in the SHPO was affected somewhat. Researchers in our Archives were also disrupted. I am very proud of the staff teams at the State Historical Society, who all have risen to the challenge, and I don't think we could be doing a better job of serving North Dakota and its people during this strange time.

*What are you most excited about living in North Dakota?*

This job and so much more! My wife, Susan, and I love this part of the world, and we were very excited to relocate to Bismarck. I think one of the things that I am most excited about is the historic landscapes here. They are so visible. If you just use a little imagination, it is not hard to step back in time at some of our sites. Whether it is the Welk Homestead, the Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile site, Huff Indian Village, or any number of other historic sites, the historic landscape is largely intact. That is somewhat unique to North Dakota and very precious. The outdoor activities available in North Dakota are really something to be excited about as well.

*What do you like to do in your spare time?*

I tend to keep pretty busy. I enjoy cooking, brewing, woodworking, hunting/fishing, reading, and have aspirations of gardening. I am in the process of restoring a 1959 Chevrolet pickup truck and have previously restored a car I have owned since I was 16. I love music and movies, and generally anything I can tinker with in the shop—particularly if it is old. I was partly raised by Labrador retrievers. As a result, I am never very far away from a furred advisor of joy and optimism. Current advisors are Theodore and Angus. I am passionate about history and its value to our society. I also like spending time on that stretch of Lake Superior I mentioned looking for agates to put in the tumbler.

# Preservation Grants in Action: Ingersoll School

Each biennium, the North Dakota Legislative Assembly approves funding for the Cultural Heritage Grant program. Nonprofit organizations, including local museums, historical societies, and city, county, and tribal governments, can apply to receive these competitive grants. Eligible projects range from capital improvements to exhibits, special projects or events, educational activities, and historical collections. For the 2019-2020 biennium, the State Historical Society of North Dakota distributed a \$4,796 Cultural Heritage Grant to reroof the historic Ingersoll School (built in 1885) in rural McLean County in west-central North Dakota.

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010, Ingersoll School is significant because of its connection to the history of American public education and the social history of Swedish immigration, farming life, and homesteading in North Dakota. The schoolhouse is a modest building, consisting of a single room with a gable roof. It served as Veeder Township's first school and was constructed on open prairie land donated by one of the area's early homesteaders, Frank G. Nordquist. (He, along with other early Euro-American settlers, is buried in a cemetery located east of the school.) Funded by a \$1,000 bond (valued at nearly \$30,000 in today's dollars), the schoolhouse was built by Olof A. Anderson with lumber and other supplies shipped in from Bismarck. The school was named for Col. Robert Green Ingersoll, a fierce advocate of free thought and humanism. He was a nationally known writer and orator nicknamed "the Great Agnostic." Like many one-room North Dakota schoolhouses, Ingersoll School features a wooden roof and walls and a stone and mortar foundation. The 12-foot-tall building originally measured 20 feet by 30 feet.

Ingersoll School's first instructional session was held in spring 1886 with 13 students enrolled. The next school term, starting in August, included courses in composition, physiology, history, grammar,



Photo by SHSND

arithmetic, spelling, writing, and reading. By 1900, the school's enrollment had swelled to 22 students, with enrollment doubling just three years later. To accommodate the robust growth, in 1903, an addition measuring 10 feet by 12 feet was attached to the west side of Ingersoll School. Population growth in the area prompted a spike in school construction, which resulted, by the early 1910s, in the completion of four new schoolhouses. These new schools made Ingersoll School obsolete; its last classes were held in 1911. Locals repurposed the former schoolhouse as a community center, holding such events as debates and PTA and basket meetings there until 1940. Electricity was never installed in the building, and as a result, over time, it became less useful to the members of the community. During the next several decades, the Ingersoll School building deteriorated, but because of restoration efforts in the mid-1980s in preparation for the schoolhouse's centennial, the roof was resingled, siding was nailed back down and repainted, and the windows were refurbished.

Today, the old schoolhouse largely retains its historic appearance and original physical setting. The reroofing project made possible by the Cultural Heritage Grant from the State Historical Society was completed in September 2020. The State Historical Society is proud to assist in the preservation of Ingersoll School, just one of many fine examples of the state's rich immigration and educational history.



Home in Highland Acres neighborhood, Bismarck. Photo by SHSND

## Preservation News Brief: Highland Acres Neighborhood Survey

In summer 2020, employees of the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) assisted in a survey of several homes in Bismarck's Highland Acres neighborhood. Highland Acres is a post-World War II development that was designed to address a nationwide housing shortage and to cater to veterans and their families. The SHPO assisted the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission (BHPC) by approving the commission's receipt of a \$40,400 grant from the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund to assist in carrying out the survey. Eventually, the BHPC plans to nominate more than 300 homes in the neighborhood for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. In July, Bismarck city commissioners approved the hiring of Metcalf Archaeological Consultants to complete a full

project survey. A Metcalf report, approved with revisions by the SHPO in October, provided a preliminary analysis of 15 architectural sites in Highland Acres. The report deemed these sites, as well as several landscape features, as historically significant and maintaining "key aspects of integrity." If the Highland Acres neighborhood were to become a National Register historic district, it would join two others in Bismarck: the Downtown Bismarck Historic District and the Cathedral Area Historic District. A Highland Acres historic district would not only encourage the preservation of the homes and landscape of the neighborhood, it would also stand as a powerful reminder of the history of post-World War II suburban-style development and community building.



HISTORY FOR *everyone.*

612 East Boulevard Ave.  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0830

history.nd.gov | 701.328.2666



A feature of the civics exhibit at the Stutsman County Courthouse State Historic Site is the Vault Library, where visitors can see both original courthouse ledgers and a growing collection of books about American civics and citizenship.