

## **YANKTON HISTORIC MARKERS**

(updated March 2025)

### **CHARLES FRANCOIS PICOTTE**

Location: NE corner of Picotte St. and 4th St.

“Born at Ft. Tecumseh (Pierre), the son of Honore Picotte, an American Fur Co. factor and Eagle Woman, he was educated at St. Louis. Marrying a Yankton woman, he became a leader in that Band and was influential in the Treaty of 1858 ceding land and setting up a Reservation. Yankton town site is a part of his 640 acres allotment. His 1860 home was 200 yards South.”

### **COMPANY A DAKOTA MILITIA**

Location: SE corner of Broadway Ave. and west 3rd St.

Those 80 names on that stone-and-bronze marker represent the earliest history of Yankton.

The able-bodied men of the territorial capital — most of them in their 20s — got together under Capt. Francis M. Ziebach, the "squatter governor," to defend the settlers of the countryside. They were a motley lot, but they were like the Minutemen of old, ready to fight the Santee Indians — who never came.

The unit was created by a proclamation issued by Gov. William Jayne on Aug. 30, 1862. That same evening, some 60 men gathered at the log church on the corner of Fourth and Linn streets to enroll in the Yankton Company.

George W. Kingsbury, whose name is on the monument, said the names were signed "as fast as they could be written down." (Twenty more were added as settlers came in from their claims.)

The next day — which was Sunday — the adjourned meeting was reconvened by the elected president, Enos Stutsman, who couldn't serve because he had been born with one leg and was on crutches. By acclamation, they approved Ziebach, the editor of the Weekly Dakotian, as captain, with David Fischer and John Lawrence as his lieutenants.

Antoine Robeart, the saloon-keeper (often spelled Robeare), and Samuel "Old Spot" Mortimer (who are both listed on the monument) were elected sergeants. Eight corporals were also chosen, including Kingsbury, Obed Foote, Horace T. Bailey, Downer T. Bramble, John Rouse, Newton Edmunds and Josiah C. Trask, the territorial printer.

Can you imagine? Edmunds, the second governor of Dakota Territory, was chosen eighth corporal! Immediately the men set about building their "fortress," a dirt-and-wood stockade whose dimensions were about 450 feet on each side and centered on Third Street and Broadway.

According to one of the militia privates — Moses K. Armstrong, who wrote anonymously for the Sioux City Register — the crude redoubt enclosed about five acres and seven buildings, including the Ash hotel, Rossteucher's meat market, Paver's store, Fisher's blacksmith shop and the Dakotian office. Some 300 people, including women and children, were packed in the stockade. Among them was a troop of cavalrymen who, as described in Kingsbury's "History of Dakota Territory," gave frequent lessons in military discipline to the raw militiamen and taught them how to use what weapons they had.

Again, according to Kingsbury, "a small three pounder iron cannon, mounted on cart wheels and loaded with powder and scraps from the blacksmith" were in the charge of privates William Borden and John Stanage, a settler on the Jim River who had helped fight off an Indian attack on his cabin. There is no indication that the troopers gave them any instructions, but it proved unnecessary because the cannon — also called bronze in another report — was never fired until the stockade was long gone.

Henry and John T. Bradley were other homesteaders who were with Stanage during the fray. John didn't have a gun, so he armed himself with a pitchfork. Another private remembered on the plaque was James B. Greenway who, with his wife, galloped to Yankton "behind foaming horses hitched to a lumber wagon loaded with furniture and a mattress." He reported an early morning onslaught at his ferry landing (near Fleeg's Riverside Road House today) during which he claimed to have killed one Indian and wounded a second.

Other names on the monument included William N. Collamer, Yankton's first mayor; and the Rev. Melancthon Hoyt, who later established the Episcopal Church on Third Street. Also among the privates was Charles Francoise Picotte, the part-Indian after whom a street was named and who was the original owner of most of the town.

Another private in the militia was John Randall Hanson, one of the first white men on the Yankton site. He was the father of author Joseph Mills Hanson and was a member of a party in 1859 who waited on the Nebraska side of the Missouri for the Indians to cede their land. Also in his group was Horace T. Bailey, an early settler of the town.

One of the corporals was the merchant Bramble, who had a store building on the levee at the foot of Walnut Street. He was joined by a partner, William Miner, who worked for Bramble without pay while he learned the business. The later firm of Bramble, Miner and Borden (all listed on the monument) eventually built the Excelsior Flouring Mill on lower Capitol Street (still standing as part of the former Gurney's complex).

There were others, of course, like Dr. Abram Van Osdel; the hotelman, Henry Ash; Charles F. Rossteucher, who became a brewer; and Joseph S. Prescho after whom a town was later named. There was also B. C. Fowler, still remembered on the city map with an addition bearing his name. Lastly on the monument there is James Eliot "Limber Jim" Witherspoon, likewise known for Witherspoon's Yankton which today is also part of the city.

"Limber Jim" claimed to have selected the town site when he visited the area in 1858. He is also known for having witnessed the exodus of Old Strike's Indians and for having walked most of the way to Washington, D. C., to get the papers which settled his ownership of the land.

But Kingsbury recalled another incident during the stockade period which was typical of Witherspoon: "On one occasion our eccentric townsman "Limber Jim," who didn't believe there would be much of a war ... took it into his head to burn the tall prairie grass around Stutsman's claim cabin which stood on the summit of a knoll just north of the present city water tanks. Hostile Indians have a code of signal fires to announce their attacks and ... Jim had apprised no one of his incendiary design.

"... the curtains of night had begun to fall when a great blaze was discovered around the cabin, and five minutes later, Picotte came thundering through the gates of the stockade, standing upright and bareheaded in a lumber wagon to which was attached a span of foaming big mules. He had seen the signal fire on the hill and knew that it meant an attack upon the town.

"The alarm was given and the garrison's defenders were preparing for the onslaught when Jim returned and soon quieted all fear by telling ... he was the innocent cause of it all.

"There was that about the incident that was so supremely ludicrous that men who had refrained from all semblance of mirth for many days relaxed and laughed until they were red in the face ..."

The courthouse monument — dedicated by the Daniel Newcomb Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in June of 1936 — lists the names of Witherspoon and Picotte and all the other members of Company "A" of the Dakota Militia. It is Yankton's earliest history in bronze.

## **DAKOTA TERRITORIAL CAPITOL**

Locations:

Original Site – NE corner of Capital St. and 4th St. Granite stone marker and historical wayside marker.

Replica in Riverside Park – SE corner of Douglas Ave. and Levee St.

The replica is patterned after the original Dakota Territorial Capitol built in 1862 and torn down in 1886. Yankton was the first capitol of the Dakota Territory from 1861-1883. Displays include photos of old Yankton, maps of the Dakota Territory, a gallery of former Territorial governors, a tribute to the local St. John's Masonic Lodge, and a quilt highlighting Yankton landmarks. The building is located in Riverside Park, which includes free Wi-Fi, trails, play structures and picnic shelters.

## **DAKOTA TERRITORIES FIRST BANK**

Location: at 225 Cedar St.

First Dakota National Bank began in 1872 when it became the first fully chartered bank in the Dakota Territory. Located in Yankton, First Dakota grew steadily as it served the needs of settlers, the river traffic, and the flourishing businesses.

## **DAKOTA'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER**

Location: SW corner of Walnut St. and 4th St.

Published since 1861, The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan is the first and oldest daily newspaper in the state.

## **D. B. Gurney**

Location: west side of entry to the lower deck of the Meridian Bridge at Walnut St. and West Riverside Dr.

Meridian Highway Bridge Company President.

## **EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE DAKOTAS**

Location: at 517 Douglas Ave.

Built in 1882, the "Mother Church of the Dakotas" has been used constantly.

## **FIRST BUILDING AT YANKTON SITE**

Location: SE corner of Mulberry St. and East 3rd St.

This site stands on the lot where the first building in Yankton was built.

## **GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC (GAR) HALL CIVIL WAR CANNON**

Location: at 508 Douglas Ave.

The 8-inch civil war cannon was manufactured in 1862 by the Fort Pitt Foundry in Pennsylvania. After being decommissioned it was placed at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall in 1887.

## **INTERSECTION OF THIRD ST. AND WALNUT ST.**

Location: SE corner of Walnut and 3rd St.

The corner of Third and Walnut has been the focal point of many historical events in Yankton.

## **JACK MCCALL HISTORICAL MARKERS**

Locations:

**Hanging** – west side of First Dakota Dr. north of 31st St.

**Trial** – NW corner of Capital St. and East 3rd St.

**Headstone** – City Cemetery north property line (Douglas Street and 25<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to cemetery)

Being the first territorial capital of the Dakotas, Yankton hosted the trial and hanging of the notorious Jack McCall for the murder of Wild Bill Hickok. The trial began on Dec. 4, 1876 in a courtroom at what is now present-day intersection of Third and Capital Streets. Two days later, the jury found McCall guilty. McCall's hanging took place on March 1, 1877 near the present day intersection of Highway 81 and Highway 50. The hanging is remembered by a historical plaque, which is located on the west side of First Dakota Dr. north of 31st St. The gravestone of Jack McCall was placed in the area of his burial site in 2017.

## **MERIDIAN BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PLAQUE**

Location: west side of entry to the lower deck of the Meridian Bridge at Walnut St. and West Riverside Dr.

The Meridian Bridge, a double-deck bridge, constructed 1920-1924, that had vehicle traffic on the top deck only when it opened in October of 1924 and it had future plans for railroad on the lower deck. The railroad never happened and the lower deck was converted to use for automobiles in 1952-1953. The bridge closed to vehicle traffic in 2008 and was opened to pedestrian traffic on both decks in 2011.

## **PIERRE DORIAN'S GRAVE**

Location: east side of intersection of Locust St., West 2<sup>nd</sup> St., & West Riverside Dr.

Pierre Dorian was the first white settler in the Yankton area. He lived among the Yankton Sioux at the time that Lewis and Clark passed through in 1804. Lewis and Clark convinced Dorian to accompany them on their expedition and to serve as an Indian interpreter. Dorian later returned to the Yankton area. His grave was located by a local historian and a memorial marker dedicated in 2002.

## **PINE STREET BRIDGE**

Location: west side of Pine St. and north of 6<sup>th</sup> St.

In February 1912, the Yankton City Council approved city engineer Hug C. Liebe's plan for a new concrete arch bridge at Pine Street. The bridge was completed in 1912. It was demolished in 2018.

## **USS SCORPION HISTORICAL MARKERS**

Location: Walnut St. and West Riverside Dr.

Presented by U.S. Submarine Veterans WWII South Dakota Chapter, this historical marker is located near the Missouri River on the West side of the Meridian Bridge. Scorpion was launched on July 20, 1942 and their first patrol was a hunting and mining mission near Honshu, Japan in April 1943. Scorpion went on three patrols that earned her a battle star. She was involved with a series of torpedo attacks and gun battles. On Jan. 5, 1944, Scorpion rendezvoused with Herring to transfer an injured man, but heavy seas prevented a safe transfer. Scorpion and 77 courageous crewmen were never seen again.

## **WILLIAM H. MCMASTER**

Location: west side of entry to the lower deck of the Meridian Bridge at Walnut St. and West Riverside Dr.

U.S. Senator and 10<sup>th</sup> Governor of South Dakota. William McMaster was a progressive Republican banker and politician. He was involved with the building of the Meridian Bridge also.

## **YANKTON COLLEGE**

Location: east of Douglas Ave. on the north side of East 10th St.

"Oldest Institution of Higher Learning in the Dakotas"

Joseph Ward, a graduate of Brown University and Andover Seminary came to Yankton, Dakota Territory as a missionary pastor in 1868. In May 1881, Yankton College was authorized by the Congregational Church Association of the Territory and it was chartered under Territorial laws, August 30, 1881.

## **YANKTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE MEMORIAL**

Location: SE corner of Broadway Ave. and west 3rd St.

The Yankton County Courthouse stood at this site from 1905 to 2003. The handsome three-story building was dedicated Nov. 1, 1905. Speakers at that event estimated it would have "a long life of 25 years." The building far exceeded those expectations and served Yankton County residents for most of a century.

## **YANKTON COUNTY VETERANS MEMORIAL**

Location: at the Yankton County Government Center on SE corner of Broadway and West 3rd St.

This memorial is dedicated to all veterans, past, present and future, whose sacrifices continue to protect our freedom. The red, white and blue memorial was designed by Luken Memorials to be uplifting and reaching to the stars with the bronze eagle taking flight. The wording on the west side, "All Gave Some, Some Gave All," refers to the sacrifices of our veterans. The five granite pedestals display laser cut scenes particular to each branch of the military. The main feature memorial contains three different colors of granite: Rubin Red – India, Sierra White – United States and Blue Pearl – Norway.

## **YANKTON'S FIRST CATHOLIC CHAPEL**

Location: west side of Capitol St. south of 9<sup>th</sup> St. Between houses 815 and 817.

## **YANKTON STOCKADE**

Locations:

North Wall- SE corner of Broadway Ave. and West 4th St.

East Wall- at 313 Cedar St.

West Wall- SW corner of Linn St. and West 3rd St.

During 1862, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in to law. The Santee Sioux of Minnesota rebelled across a 200-mile front and several hundred settlers were killed. 2,000 Indians were taken prisoner and 38 were hanged. Small bands of marauders entered Dakota Territory spreading great fear. Governor Jayne ordered all male citizens to enroll in their county defense unit. 77 responded locally and met in the Episcopal log cabin on August 31. A box-shaped fortification was then erected at the center of 3rd Street and Broadway Avenue. Each wall was 450 feet long. People from the village of Bon Homme and residents from Sioux Falls fled to the capital city for protection. For several weeks almost 300 people lived in and near the stockade, but no one in the vicinity was killed or wounded.

## **YANKTON VETERANS MEMORIAL**

Location: center of Fantle Memorial Park at 2200 Douglas Ave.

This war memorial is a tribute to veterans of all wars. The monument lists more than 50 names of Yankton County World War II veterans who have died in the fight for freedom. Fantle Memorial Park is also home to the Avenue of Flags, a presentation of the five service flags and hundreds of American flags. These flags are displayed six times a year: Loyalty Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Veterans Day. Each flag pole has a nameplate that bears the name or names of fallen soldiers.

## **HISTORIC MARKERS LOCATED AT THE MEAD MUSEUM**

Location: 82 Mickelson Dr.

- First Permanent Building in Yankton
- Historic Highway
- Lewis and Clark
- Mother City of the Dakotas
- Robert McClellan Fur Post
- Yankton County- Seat of Yankton County

**Other resources through the research at the Mead Museum. Click the link below:**

<https://www.meadbuilding.org/resources>