

This Day in History... November 2, 1889

North Dakota Admitted to the Union

On November 2, 1889, North Dakota was admitted to the Union as the 39th state.

Before the first European explorers arrived, several Native American tribes lived in what is now North Dakota. In the Missouri River Valley, the Arikara, Cheyenne, Hidatsa, and Mandan lived in peaceful farming communities. Their settlements were fortified to protect them from the war-like tribes that lived in the area – the Assiniboine, Chippewa, and Sioux. These tribes existed through hunting and lived mainly in the northeastern portion of the state.

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, claimed all the land drained by the Mississippi River for France in 1682. This included the southwestern half of today's North Dakota. France had also claimed the northeastern half of North Dakota as part of the large area south of the Hudson Bay. France gave the Hudson Bay territory to Great Britain. French-Canadian explorer Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, was the first European to explore North Dakota. In 1738, he reached the Mandan Native American villages near today's Bismarck. France sold the Louisiana region to the United States in 1803.



Adopted in 1911, North Dakota's flag is largely based on the state troop's flag from the Philippine-American War.

Americans eventually fled the territory. The government signed treaties and established reservations, but often broke these treaties. Peace did not come to the area until 1881, when Sioux Chief Sitting Bull surrendered to US forces.

In 1875, large-scale farming became a profitable business in the Dakota Territory. Eastern corporations and wealthy families established huge wheat farms ranging in size from 3,000 to 65,000 acres. These wheat farms earned so much money they became known as bonanza farms. Improved machinery and orderly methods of planting, harvesting, and marketing were the keys to success.

During the 1870s, the people of the Dakota Territory began asking Congress to divide their territory into two parts. The main population centers in the territory were in the northeast and southeast and had little contact. Travel between the two was difficult, as the railroads had been laid out in an east-to-west direction. Each group had separate interests and therefore wanted separate government. The border between North and South Dakota was established in February 1889. On November 2, 1889, North Dakota achieved statehood.



Stamp features artwork based on photos of badlands, rock formations, and horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

during World War II, breaking all previous records for food production. After the war, food surpluses and lower prices, coupled with new farm machinery, meant changes for the economy. In 1951, oil was discovered near Tioga. Oil became North Dakota's most valuable resource. By 1970, there were oil wells operating in 14 counties in the western half of the state. Since the 1970s, the efforts of North Dakota's government to broaden its economy by bringing new industries to the state have met with some success.

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Issued for North Dakota's 100th anniversary, stamp pictures a grain elevator, buckboard, and prairie.

Canadians of Scotch and Irish descent were the first Europeans to attempt a permanent settlement in North Dakota. They settled in Pembina in 1812. In 1818, the US gained control of the northeastern portion of the state through a treaty with Great Britain. This treaty made all of today's North Dakota US territory. Most of the settlers at Pembina left soon after the treaty was signed, as they wished to remain in British territory.

Congress created the Dakota Territory in 1861. It included the modern states of North and South Dakota, as well as large parts of Montana and Wyoming. In 1863, the Dakota Territory was opened for homesteading. Settlers received free land to live on and improve. Even with the incentive of free land, the territory developed slowly due to poor transportation and fear of Indian attacks.

In 1862, the Sioux killed hundreds of settlers in 1862. The US government sent troops to punish the natives who took part in the massacre. During the 1860s and '70s, several battles were fought in the Dakota Territory. Most of these Native



Features a watercolor picturing a Western Meadowlark and a Wild Prairie Rose, North Dakota's state bird and flower.

people. The state's farm production also grew rapidly. However, the farmers disliked the power of banks, grain companies, and railroad interests from Minnesota. They also felt these out-of-state businesses had too much influence on North Dakota's politics. As a result, the Nonpartisan League was founded. This farmer-led organization called for state ownership of grain elevators, flour mills, packing houses, and cold storage plants. It also asked for bank loan reforms. Thousands of farmers joined the league and many laws were enacted that helped the farmers gain control of the economy in North Dakota. These state-owned businesses are still in operation today.

After becoming a state, North Dakota's population grew quickly. In 1890, it had 190,893 people. By 1910, it had 577,056 people. The state's farm production also grew rapidly. However, the farmers disliked the power of banks, grain companies, and railroad interests from Minnesota. They also felt these out-of-state businesses had too much influence on North Dakota's politics. As a result, the Nonpartisan League was founded. This farmer-led organization called for state ownership of grain elevators, flour mills, packing houses, and cold storage plants. It also asked for bank loan reforms. Thousands of farmers joined the league and many laws were enacted that helped the farmers gain control of the economy in North Dakota. These state-owned businesses are still in operation today.

North Dakota's farms suffered a drought during the Depression, but the state bounced back



Stamp picturing North Dakota's flag and elk.

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