

THE POPULATION ISSUE

Dakotafire

SPRING 2012

PREMIER ISSUE
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WHAT IS DAKOTAFIRE?

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Learn, then Return?

SEVEN WAYS TO HELP RURAL YOUTH SEE A FUTURE BACK HOME

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Leola High School's Senior Class of 2012



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Cover photo: *The 2012 graduating class at Leola knows they face a questionable job market if they want to return home after college. But some of them plan to return, and almost all of them said they would return if they could. They're a tight-knit class—all 10 of them. From left: Heidi Spears, Andrew Hoffman, Royce Erdmann, Josh Waltman, Amber Weig, Reid Erdmann, Ashley Feickert, Ty Kessler, Whitney Heupel and Mitch Waltman. See story on page 6. Cover Photo by Troy McQuillen.*



What is Dakotafire?

Sparking rural revival is our goal,
and we intend to do it by igniting the power within you.

Dakotafire is a new journalism project that pools the resources of community newspapers and rural experts to report on issues of importance to rural communities in the James River watershed area of North and South Dakota.

The project is intended to give you, the people of this region, a “big picture” view of the challenges you face—from the way past generations have addressed similar problems to the insights of experts who study these issues to the way others in the region and beyond are finding solutions—so you are better informed when you make decisions about the issues that affect your lives.

Dakotafire’s alliance of reporters and editors work together to produce in-depth, regionwide coverage of issues vital to the sustainability of the area’s rural communities. This alliance, which connects these journalists online, allows them to cover topics that they could not address as successfully alone.

The results of this reporting are published online at Dakotafire.net and in a quarterly magazine distributed in the newspapers. As the project progresses, reporting will be done in a variety of formats, including traditional story forms, photo essays, interactive infographics and video.

The “common voice” of Dakotafire is intended to help all the people of the region, which is similar in topography and population demographics but stretches over 22,000 square miles and crosses a state border, see one another as allies in facing common challenges and opportunities. The information Dakotafire provides is

Dakotafire coverage area by 2014.

Counties in Phase 1 (2012) include Brown, Dickey, McPherson, Edmunds, Marshall, Day, Faulk, Clark, and Spink.

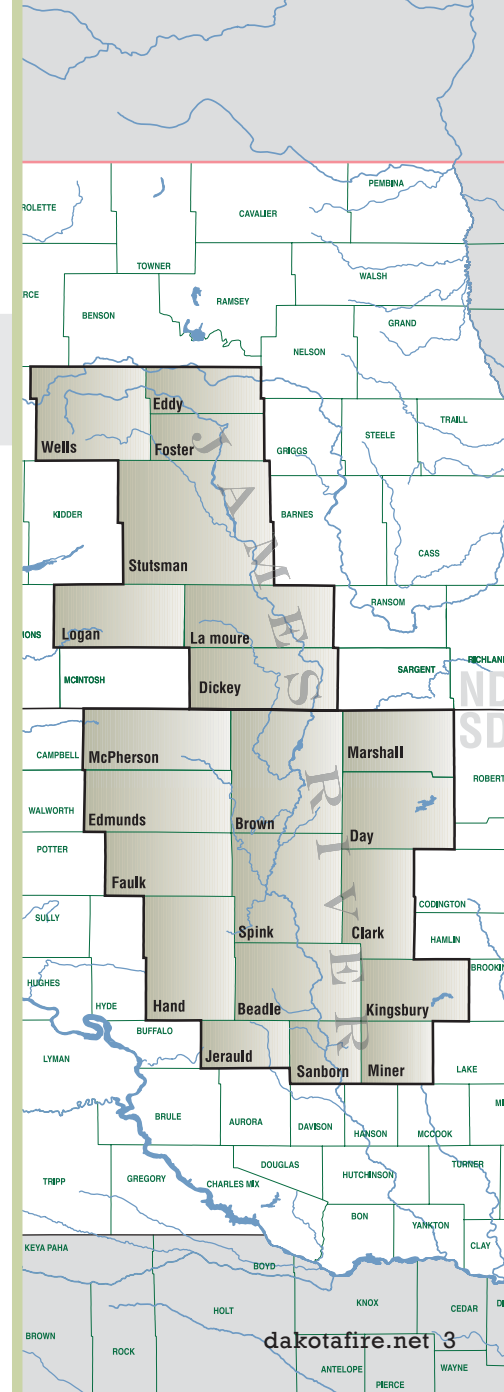
designed to spark discussion, to challenge conventional thinking and to get people to consider alternative possibilities. Dakotafire.net as well as its presence on Facebook (search for Dakotafire Media) and Twitter (@DakotafireMedia) will serve as a conversation space for the region’s people.

As part of the Knight Community Information Challenge, the three-year project has received \$240,000 in support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and \$60,000 from the South Dakota Community Foundation, with additional support coming from Dacotah Bank, other foundations, and corporate and individual sponsors. The project will be implemented by Dakotafire Media, LLC, a media company based in Frederick, S.D., owned by Heidi Marttala-Losure and Troy McQuillen. ✨

Next Issue

Is there a future in farming?
Coming July 2012

Turn to page 25 to
get a taste of what
dakotafire.net has to
offer.



Belonging

In this inaugural issue of *Dakotafire*, our editor shares her story of homecoming

By Heidi Marttila-Losure, Editor

When I was growing up on this farm in Savo Township, rural Frederick, South Dakota, I was quite certain I was going off to college and not coming back.

I knew, at least, that I didn't want to come back here to farm life. Farming seemed stressful—

money was often tight, and it seemed like we were always “making do” in ways some of my friends didn't have to. I have clear memories of choice words drifting across the farmyard when the combine that should have been in the field was instead parked and in pieces. I wanted a life that was easier than all that.

Then I actually left.

I loved college—the new friends, and the ideas and the wide world it opened

up to me. But I also remember how good and somehow right it felt to be home for weekends. When I searched for topics to write about in my English classes, stories about my family's connection to this piece of land came to mind most easily.

But I made plans that led in other directions—when I graduated, I followed my future husband to North Carolina, where he was getting his undergraduate degree, and then to Iowa, where

he was born and where he pursued his master's degree. I was validated in my choice of a career in those years, as I found I loved journalism. But, as much as I loved aspects of both North Carolina and Iowa, I did not plant my roots very deep in either place. When I started thinking about serving in my community, I had a feeling that though there were a number of things that would be *good* for me to do, none of them were the *right*

My husband got a job in his field, right down the road in Ellendale, North Dakota. Two months later, we packed up and hit the road, about 11 and a half years after I'd first left.

We were happy, though also more than a little nervous. We were trying to sell a house in Iowa, converting a granary into a house in South Dakota, and living with my parents in the meantime, and I was expecting our second child



Heidi Marttila-Losure
Editor, *Dakotafire*

“There are, then, two great themes in rural writing: the theme of *departure* and the theme of *return*.”

— David R. Pichaske, introduction to *Late Harvest: Rural American Writing*

things for me to do. The actions were right, but the setting was not.

My husband (a country kid at heart) and I discussed the possibility of moving to my homeplace many times and always seemed to get stuck on the same issues: How would we make a living? How would we afford health insurance? From the security of two incomes with benefits, moving to the country seemed very risky. It also seemed like giving up on success for ourselves—we would no longer be climbing the career ladder.

Then the scales tipped in South Dakota's favor:

—all stressful events for us personally. And as we got involved with the community (in a way that I hadn't as a high school student), I saw that the community was under stress as well. The local grocery store was balancing on a knife's edge between black and red. The gas station and restaurant were both closed for a while. All volunteer organizations struggled to find enough people to fill their boards and committees. My home church voted to drop the number of council members from seven to five, and then to four. The closest farms in any direction are either abandoned or lived in only seasonally.

We want to hear from you!

Do you have a response to something you've read here?

Do you have an idea for a future story? Share it with Dakotafire!

Go to dakotafire.net and click on "Contact Us,"

or write to Dakotafire Media, P.O. Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441.

You can also contact Editor Heidi Marttila-Losure directly at heidi@dakotafire.net or 605-290-3335.

One day when I went to a bigger town, I was suddenly envious of these people who just lived their lives and drove home, participating in community life if they cared to, or not if they didn't. Community responsibilities didn't seem to sit as heavily on them as they do on those in our struggling small towns and countryside.

And yet, there is a rightness in my being here that is very satisfying, despite the challenges of rural life. I remember going to hear Wendell Berry (one of my favorite authors) speak in Iowa the year before we moved, and one quote from him stayed with me. He was discussing the "unadapted people" that resulted when so many people moved from farms to cities and the problems that caused for society. "Not only don't they belong where they are, they don't belong anywhere," he said. "That's not a snide remark. I take the term 'belong' very seriously."

It occurred to me then that where I belonged was back in rural South Dakota. That's where my fight, my purpose, my meaning lay. Dakotafire is for me an extension of that sense of fighting the right fight—the worlds of both journalism and rural America are being shaken now, but I am pleased to be able to do work that might in some way help them both.

As I look out the window from our new granary home, I see lots of work to be done, both in our farmyard (where we are, despite my earlier sentiments, doing some farming) and far beyond it. An "easier life" it isn't. But I also feel a great sense of peace that I am right where I belong. ✨

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Dakotafire Creative Director, **Troy McQuillen**

at troy@dakotafire.net or 605-226-3481.

**Dakotafire**
SPARKING RURAL REVIVAL

GO. LEARN. TH



Leola Class of 2012, and their future plans (from left)

Amber Weig: NSU, to become a special education teacher. **Ashley Feickert:** SDSU, to become a neonatal nurse. **Royce Erdmann:** SDSU, to become a physical therapist. **Andrew Hoffman:** Lake Area Tech to study welding, then return to family farm. **Mitch Waltman:** Lake Area Tech to study agriculture, then come back to family farm. **Reid Erdmann:** Southeast Tech to study auto mechanics and auto body; would like to stay close to help on family farm. **Whitney Heupel:** NSU to become a special education teacher. **Heidi Spears:** unsure about future plans, but would like to go back to a city. **Josh Waltman:** Southeast Tech to study landscape design. **Ty Kessler (apparently still getting his lunch tray):** attend college for business management and entrepreneurship.

WHEN RETURN?

Can young people who want to settle down in their hometowns find a path back to them?

BY HEIDI MARTILA-LOSURE

It's not hard to tell that most of the seniors at Leola High School have a deep connection to their hometown.

On a Thursday in early March, the town had an aura of optimism—the Ten-45 Café, named after the intersection of highways 10 and 45 where it is located, had just opened the evening before. Before that, Leola had gone several months with just a bar and a convenience store. The new restaurant is in a new building, and some in town took that investment as a sign of confidence in the Leola's future.

Several girls in the senior class are waitressing there, and some boys in the class had gone to support them (and, perhaps, give them a little grief) on their first night.

"I wanted to give them some friendly experience before they get a family of seven and everybody's like, 'You got this wrong—I wanted no pickles,'" explained Royce Erdmann.

Ashley Feickert, Erdmann's classmate and one of the new waitresses, seemed used to his teasing. Nine of the 10 seniors grew up together. They've

visited one another's houses and have hundreds of shared memories between them.

"We're pretty much like a family," Feickert said. (In two cases, they actually are family—the Erdmann twins and the Waltman cousins.)

Their time as a family is nearing an end, however, with graduation less than two months away.

Ask the seniors what they are planning to do after high school and almost all of them have a plan: Become an auto mechanic. A physical therapist. A special education teacher. A farmer.

All of the seniors who grew up in Leola (that's nine of the 10) say they'd like to live there if they could. For some of them, this is part of the plan—there are places waiting for them on their families' farms, though in the near term they are going to vocational schools so they can bring a secondary skill such as business management or welding with them with they return.

For others, the path is more tentative—Whitney Heupel said she'd be happy to come back as a teacher if she could get a job at the school, and Amber Weig, who plans to study accounting, said she might live in Leola and commute to a job in Aberdeen.

Other seniors know that coming back to Leola after furthering their education is not likely. There's no way to be a neonatal nurse or physical therapist in Leola, and being a landscape designer or auto mechanic would be difficult.

Although they'd like to stay, if they want to pursue their chosen careers, they'll have to leave.

As young people plot their futures in the rural areas of the Dakotas, they make decisions that inevitably affect the futures of the places they are from—more so than they probably know. A look at population statistics of the region brings this into sharp focus: The departure of young people makes up most of the population loss in rural Great Plains counties since 1950.

Of the counties in the Dakotafire region, the loss of young people is most dramatic in McPherson County, which has lost 57 percent of its total population since 1950. Years of young people leaving have resulted in a county with an average age higher than any other county in South Dakota: 50.8, compared with, for example, 34.5 in Minnehaha County.

It's not likely that even the most ardent economic development supporters would want to force these young people to stay in their hometowns if they didn't want to—to give up on their dreams or potential for the sake of boosting population numbers. But as adults hear these young people's plans, they may assume that the young people are eager to leave.

What if, as the Leola senior class indicates, at least some of them clearly want to stay? Is there something these communities can do to help the students who want to settle down in their hometowns find a way to do so?

We'll get to that. First, a dive into Dakota demography—get ready for some ugly numbers.

Decades of Graduation Goodbyes

A walk down the hall of Leola High School—or, really, of most rural high schools in the region that haven't gone through consolidations—shows the population trend line of the region in pictures. Framed smiling faces from each graduating class are hung high above the lockers, showing the changes over the years—from black and white to full color, from smooth bobs to feathered bangs, from cat's-eye glasses to (apparently) contact lenses.

Another change is apparent: With the exception of the baby boomers' graduation years, fewer photos fill the frames as class sizes shrink, reflecting the declining population of the wider community.

The downward trend started more than 80 years ago, according to Michael McCurry, South Dakota state demographer.

"In the James River watershed, most county populations peaked with the 1920 or 1930 Census," McCurry said. "A combination of the

demographics, the Dustbowl and the Great Depression left 40 percent of South Dakotans on relief for the Christmas of 1935—and the outmigration sped up."

While McPherson County's decline since 1950 is most dramatic in the Dakotafire region (57 percent), other counties have been hit hard as well—Clark, Hand, Jerauld and Sanborn counties all lost about 48 percent of their populations.

The trend of people moving from rural areas

to urban areas is a national one, so that now 17 percent of the nation's population lives in 75 percent of the land area, according to a 2006 Carsey Institute report titled "Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America." Looking at the Great Plains region, stretching from North Dakota to Texas, only 12 percent of the population lives in the 278 farm counties of the region, according to a policy brief by demographers Kenneth M. Johnson and Richard Rathge.



Leola Class of 1942

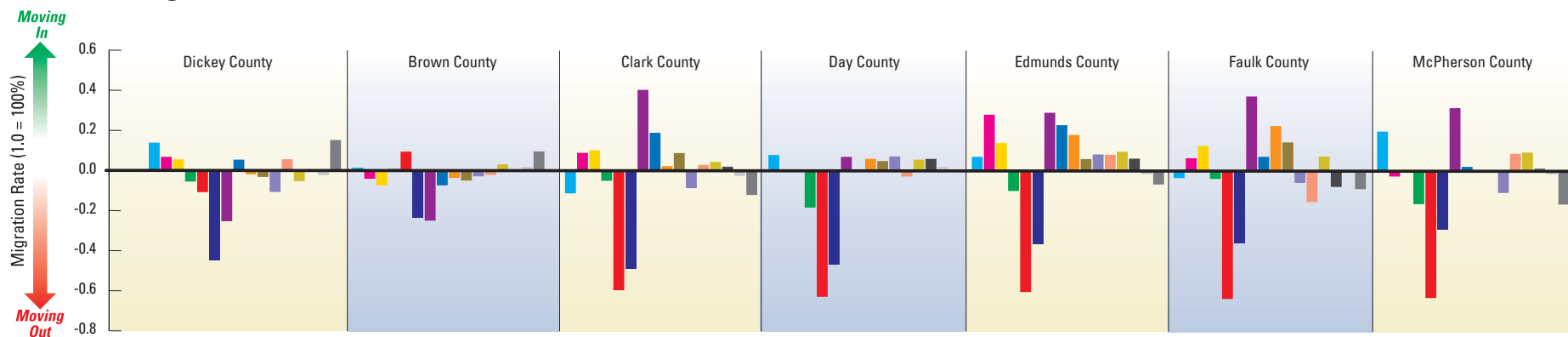


Leola Class of 1962



Leola Class of 1992

Net Migration of Dakotafire Counties



Young People Leave and Always Have

This population loss is not evenly distributed among all ages. A look the population loss in Dakotafire counties from the years 1990 to 2000 shows that the people from the ages of 20 to 29 are the most likely to leave.

This is not a new trend, according to the “Demographic Trends” report: Young people have been leaving rural areas throughout the 20th century. They are typically motivated by several factors, according to McCurry:

Education. Most schools of higher education are not in rural areas.

Opportunity. A greater variety of work possibilities and higher wages are typically found in urban areas.

Changes in farming. Mechanization in agriculture has resulted in far fewer people being needed to do the same amount of work.

But until recent decades, the changes were not dramatic—the populations of many rural communities actually slowly increased, as the number of births in rural areas (especially during the baby boom) made up for the number of people leaving.

Wells County fared worst, losing 17.5 percent of its population in one decade.

As the young adults leave, the population is left dominated by what some demographers have termed “bookend generations”—the very young and the very old. This places a strain

NEARLY HALF OF GREAT PLAINS COUNTIES NOW HAVE MORE DEATHS THAN BIRTHS.

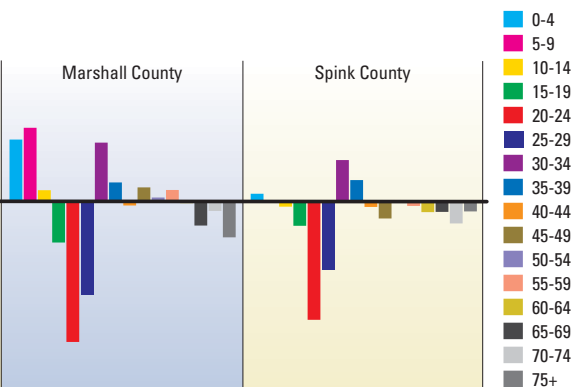
But as family sizes got smaller, the region started to see the “echo effect” that the baby boom had been hiding: The young adults who had left in a previous generation had children—but not in the rural Dakotas. And, later, those children weren’t there to have grandchildren.

Thus, in recent decades, the population decline has sped up. All counties in the Dakotafire region have lost population since 2000—that is, with the exceptions of Brown and Beadle, which have the Aberdeen and Huron “micro areas,” as the U.S. Census refers to them. Of 21 counties, 12 lost more than 10 percent of their populations since 2000.

on rural communities, according to a census brief published by the Center for Rural Affairs, because those two demographics are the ones that generally require the most community resources in areas such as health care and education. There are few people left in those communities of the ages most able to do that service work—the young to middle-aged adults.

The overall population decline in rural areas is not likely to stop anytime soon in any of the Great Plains states: According to the Johnson and Rathge report, nearly half of Great Plains counties now have more deaths than births.

(continued on page 13)



Who is leaving and who is moving in?

Net migration is the difference between the number of people who left a population during a certain period of time, and the number of people who moved to that population during that time.

This graphic shows the net migration between 1990-2000 for age groups in Dakotafire counties. A rate of -.500 would indicate that the county had only 50% as many in that age group as one would have expected had there been no migration. You will note the substantial loss of young adults in their early 20s from many of the counties. This would reflect young people leaving the county to attend college, join the military or move to a place where there is more social and economic activity.

— Kenneth M. Johnson, Senior Demographer, Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire

Look at the red columns, which depict the movements of those ages 20-24. Brown does OK, and Dickey does less badly than other counties—both have colleges. Otherwise, young adults of this age group leave every other county.

That’s probably not surprising, since young people do go off to school, the military or other adventures at that age. Do they return later? Take a look at the blue columns, for ages 25-29. More people move out than move in at that age, from every county.

Surprisingly, in Clark, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson and Marshall, there is a fairly strong in-migration rate for those ages 30-34, which is indicated by the purple columns—but note that it would not come even close to making up for those that left from ages 20-29.

A Different Kind of Healthy Pyramid

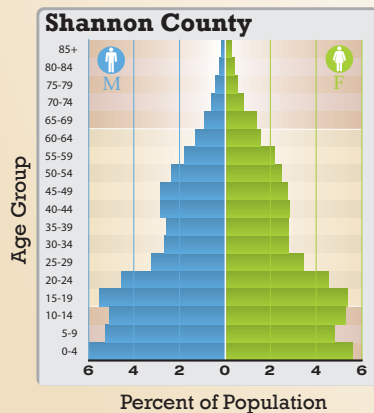
By Michael McCurry, South Dakota State Demographer

We're all time travelers, traveling at the same speed—one hour per hour. We age at the same rate, and then look with surprise at an old person staring back from the mirror.

Much of our region is, in a way, getting older as well. Because of the continued outmigration of young people, in many rural James River communities the largest component of the population is now the elderly. This shows up clearly in the counties' population pyramids, which are a way of showing age distribution in the community.

A century ago, before medical and sanitation advances, these graphs for most of society actually looked like pyramids, with a lot of young people and few older people.

An example of a young county



Shannon County, South Dakota's youngest county, still has a traditional-looking pyramid.

None of the counties in the James River area have population pyramids that look much like pyramids. (Demographers still use that term, no matter what they look like.) They are instead much more uneven—if they were stacked blocks, some of them seem as if they would be too top-heavy to stay upright. They have what demographers call a wasp-waisted display—a segment of the population in the middle of the very old and the very young is under-represented.

So what would a "healthy" population pyramid look like?

One way to consider the health of these populations is to look at *dependency ratios*. Both the young and the old are dependent on the age groups in the middle to support the needs of the whole community, and a dependency ratio shows how well the community can do that. With dependents defined as those 14 and under and 65 and over, we can calculate a general dependency ratio fairly simply: the number of dependents divided by the number of people aged 15-64, multiplied by 100.

Defining the "healthiest" dependency ratio, and the best shape for a population pyramid, is a difficult

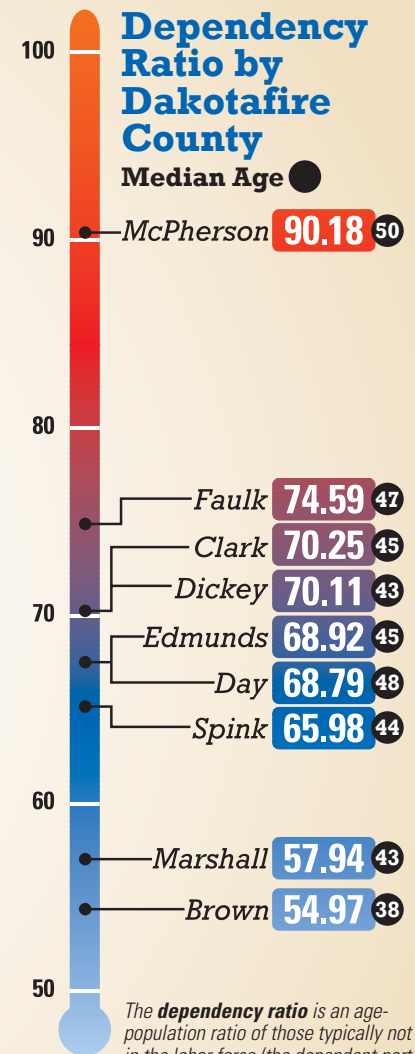
task—in part because the population age distribution will change as the population gets older, and what is healthy in one generation may have problems in the next. But there are some general guidelines.

A dependency ratio of around 50, where there are two working-age people for every dependent, is a fairly balanced population. A dependency ratio of 100, with only one working-age person for each dependent, is a community under strain.

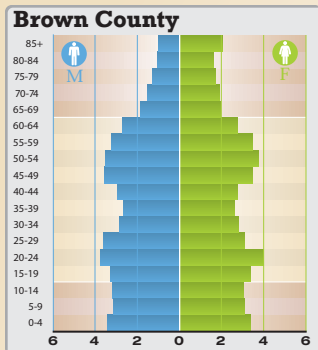
A population pyramid that gradually slopes inward, so that the bottom bars are not much wider than the top bars, is generally healthier than a pyramid that is greatly uneven in any way. This likely won't exist anywhere in real life—the baby boom shows up in every Dakotafire pyramid, for example.

Today, the dependency ratios in the Dakotas vary greatly. In the James River Valley, Brown County has the lowest dependency ratio, with 54.97. There's not a great difference in the general dependency ratio of South Dakota's youngest county, Shannon (62.41), and our more typical counties like Brown—but both are far removed from our region's oldest counties. McPherson County has a general dependency ratio of 90.18—and 56.69 of that consists of people over 65. Communities with dependency ratios this high typically have more problems.

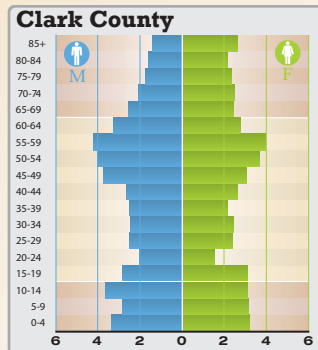
So far we don't have any inverted pyramids, or dependency ratios over 100—but if we did, those would be even worse. ✨



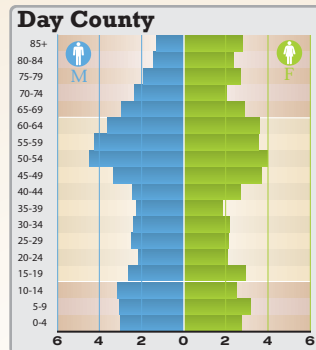
The **dependency ratio** is an age-population ratio of those typically not in the labor force (the dependent part) and those typically in the labor force (the productive part). It is used to measure the pressure on productive population. The higher the ratio, the more people there are in a region who depend on others for care.



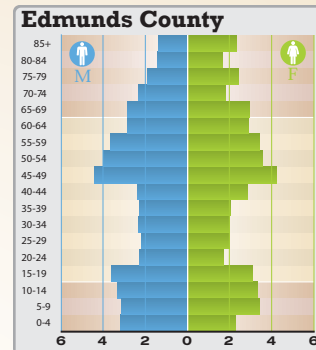
Baby boomers and college students show up in Brown's pyramid, but otherwise the differences between different ages are less dramatic than other counties' pyramids. Its dependency ratio (54.97) is the lowest of the counties in the Dakotafire region.



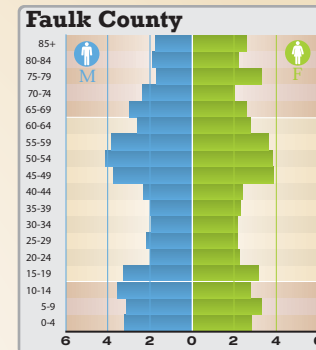
The percentage of people ages 20-24 is noticeably smaller than any other group. This might actually be a positive statement on Clark—the fact that the numbers rebound somewhat in the 25-29 age group means that at least some of those students are likely coming back to Clark after completing their education or military experience elsewhere.



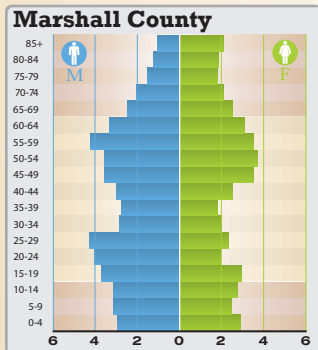
Like several other Dakotafire counties, Day will have problems when the baby boom generation retires in a few years. There is a significant group of women in the 75 and older category; in farming communities, this may mean that widows are making decisions about land management long past retirement age.



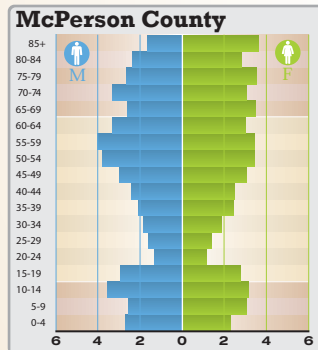
The 45-49 age group is the largest, with the 50-59 age group not far behind. Edmunds might have some problems in coming years when these baby boomers are ready to retire and there aren't people coming in to replace them.



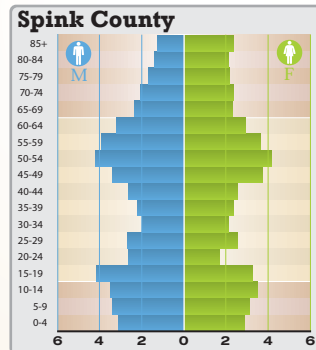
The ratio of men to women is evenly balanced in most age groups, with the exception of significantly more women in the 75-79 age group. The baby boom is clearly defined in the ages of 45-59, suggesting that it started a little later in Faulk than it did in Day, which has a larger 60-64 age group in addition to those ages 45-59.



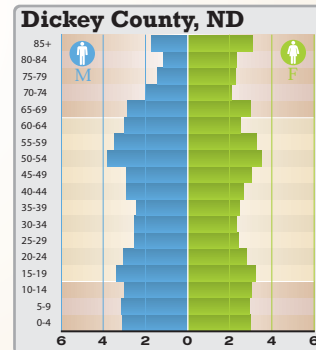
Marshall has the biggest difference in the percentage of men (54.12%) to women (45.88%), perhaps the result of lots of manufacturing work in the county. It shows up most clearly in the 15-29 age group—they may well have to go out of the county to find dates. (They could try Brown, which has a few extra females ages 20-24, but if they can't find dates there, they might have to go out of the region altogether.)



McPherson has the most top-heavy pyramid of the Dakotafire counties, suggesting that the retirement age in McPherson is likely far above 65. Much of the community work (local government, for example, or civic and religious groups) is done by people 45 and older, and they probably have trouble finding replacements if they want to leave that service.



The number of females in the 15-24 age group is much lower than the number of males, suggesting that young women leave the county for higher education at a greater rate than young men. The ratio of women to men evens out by the 25-29 age group, suggesting that a good number of those women return (or that a significant number of young men have attracted wives from outside of the county).



The presence of Trinity Bible College helps hold up the number of people in the 15-24 age group in Dickey, but they are not all staying in the county when they finish their schooling. Dickey has a significant number of women over the age of 85—that group is almost as large as the biggest baby boomer group.

Who Will Care for the Dependents?

The ratio of working-age people to dependents (ages 14 and younger or 65 and older) is fairly dramatic already in Dakotafire counties—and the situation is going to get worse. Look at these population pyramids, and project them into the future: In your mind's eye, shift the age groups up two bars to go 10 years into the future, or shift them up four bars to go 20 years into the future. By 2030, all of the baby boomers will be in the dependent category, and the dependency ratios—and, likely, the strain on these communities—is going to increase significantly.

Family Motivates Some Britton-Hecla Seniors to Plan Return

By **Caitlin Hill**, Britton Journal

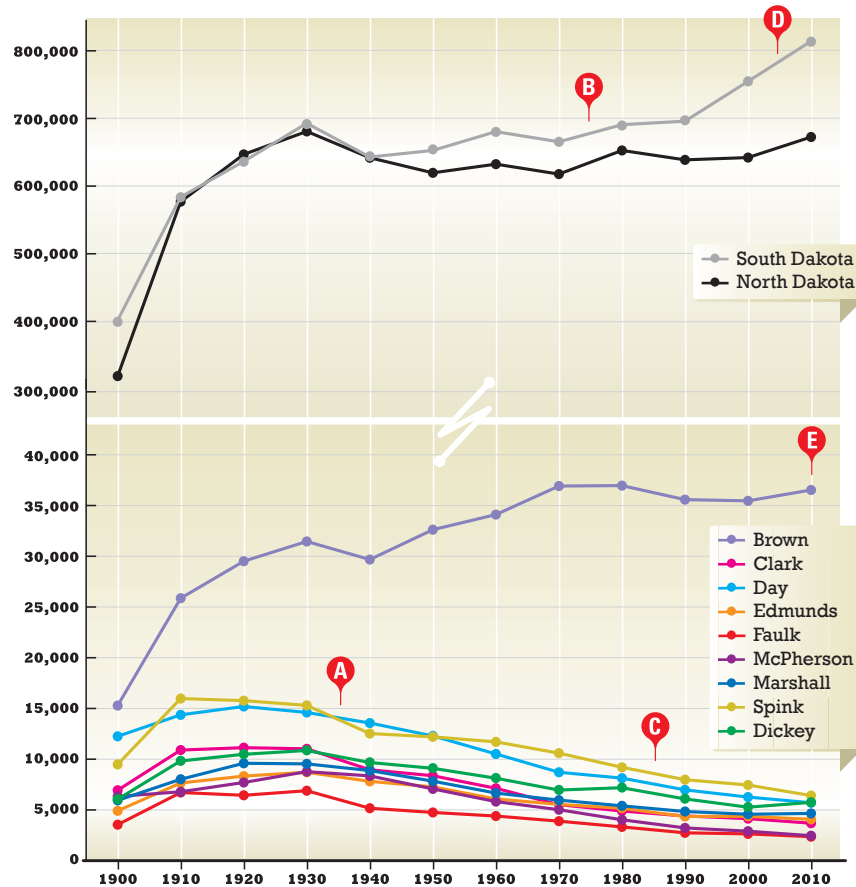
Caitlin Hill, Britton-Hecla senior and intern at the Britton Journal, asked her classmates about their plans after high school:

“Out of our class of 37 kids, I was able to survey 29 of them—30 counting me.

- Twelve of them said they would come back to the area.
- Fourteen said they would not.
- Four said they weren't sure.

“It seemed that the ones who were going to return were going to do so because they like the small community feel and to stay close to family. The ones who were going to leave believed that the careers they seek weren't supported in a small town such as Britton, and that they will have to live in a larger place.”

Dakotafire County Population Trends Compared to State Population



A. Great Depression: Thousands of Dakotans lost their farms and moved away; rural towns also suffered.

B. Rural Rebound: Nationwide, rural areas gain population faster than urban areas, and it was mostly due to people moving to rural areas, which is virtually unprecedented in U.S. history. It didn't reach everywhere, however: In most Dakotafire counties, that only translated into slower population loss.

C. Recessions affect rural industry, and monetary policies to deal with recessions bring on a farm crisis.

D. Dramatic growth in Sioux Falls (24%), Brookings (19%) and Rapid City (14%) fuels South Dakota's population jump. Despite West Fargo's 73% population growth, and Fargo's 17% rise, losses in the rest of the state kept North Dakota's overall gain rather modest.

E. Aberdeen makes Brown County an atypical Dakotafire county in terms of population trends.

Source: U.S. Census; "Reports on America: The Rural Rebound," Population Reference Bureau, 1999; <http://history.nd.gov/ndhistory/depression.html>

How to Create More Happy Homecomings

There is probably not one big way to increase the number of young adults in rural communities by a grand amount. But a look at news stories and other publications suggests that there might be many smaller ways to increase the number of young people by a little bit. Here are seven ideas—they may serve as starting points for discussion in your communities.

1 Invest resources in all the students—the ones who are planning to stay, as well as the ones who are planning to leave.

This was the conclusion of researchers Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas, who looked at the dynamics of an Iowa town that contributed to its population loss and thereafter wrote the book *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*. They saw that the town gave a lot of its support and attention to the “high fliers”—the students who were likely to “make it big” but who were also most likely to leave the community. This meant that the community saw almost no return on its investment in these young people. On the other hand, the “stayers”—the people who would eventually be the ones serving on town council and otherwise guiding the future of the town—received comparatively few resources from the community. Carr and Kefalas argued that the town would be better off overall if it spread its resources more evenly.

2 Support the businesses that are here.

Some communities focus on “hunting elephants,” or bringing in a big business that will provide a big boost immediately. Joel Price, superintendent

of the Faulkton Area Schools and also the chairman of the Faulkton Area Development Corporation Board, thinks another approach would work better. “The big key to true economic development,” said Price, “is supporting the growth of the business that we already have. If we can increase the amount of business they get, if every business in Faulk County grew significantly enough that they had to hire an additional full time employee, those people would bring in or create their own families, add to the school numbers, and generally increase our economic growth. Investing in local businesses that are already established is the key because they have already made a long-term commitment to the community.”

3 Find a niche.

Some of the relatively few rural communities in the U.S. that are growing have found an unusual or quirky way to become known.

A group of energetic women in **Water Valley, Miss.**, has rebuilt their downtown by renovating their downtown and creating a haven for artists. Studios and galleries now line what used to be a dying downtown, according to a March 7 *New York Times* story.

The town of **Hardwick, Vt.**, has found new life with the growth of a local food economy, according to the book *The Town that Food Saved* by Ben Hewitt. Idealistic young people who knew

very little about agriculture were able to connect with a generation of experienced farmers who wanted to pass on their knowledge before they retired, but who didn’t see any interest from their own children. The unexpected collaborations yielded a variety of new businesses.

The down-and-out town of **Leavenworth, Wash.**, turned itself into a beautiful Bavarian village—despite the fact that it had no Bavarian heritage. As the timber and rail industries that had supported the town faded, the town decided to try to find a place in the tourism industry by renovating its downtown in Bavarian style. According to Leavenworth’s website, the plan worked: “Since the change to a Bavarian motif, Leavenworth has become a pillar of the tourism industry in the Pacific Northwest. Today, more than a million tourists come to Leavenworth each year, with each visitor finding an individual love affair with the community.”

4 Make it a good place to live.

If you ask teenagers what the community could do to improve, they are likely to say something like, “There’s nothing to do.” According to Gary Aguair, South Dakota State University associate professor of political science, this is really a kind of code. “What young people want at that age is a town square—a place where they can hang out and watch each other,” he said. He suspects the “nothing to do” argument really doesn’t have much to do with the activities a place offers—he said he saw a study about 16-year-olds in San Francisco who said their No. 1 complaint about San Francisco was “There’s nothing to do.” “My guess is they haven’t found that place where they want to hang out,” he said. College campuses have figured this out with student unions that offer a variety of nooks in which to study, eat or talk. Replicating this kind of place in a rural setting may not be easy; Aguair suggests getting young

people involved in the process, “because if adults create it, it won’t be cool.”

This kind of project is more important than it might appear at face value, because how a person feels about a community when he or she is growing up there has a big influence on if he or she wants to come back there later in life, according to Aguair.

5 Consider alternative ways of farming.

As the number of mid-sized farms decreases nationwide, the number of small farms is increasing, bringing up the farm count overall. “Nearly 300,000 new farms have begun operation since the last census in 2002,” according to a USDA press release about the 2007 Census of Agriculture. “Compared to all farms nationwide, these new farms tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower sales and younger operators who also work off-farm.” This is in part because anyone who wants to go into farming without the support of a family business likely wouldn’t be able to get enough land to be considered anything other than a small farm. The growing local food movement is another factor. According to a November USDA report, locally grown food is now a \$4.8 billion business. Focusing on ways of farming that require less land and more labor might allow more young people to become involved in the business of farming.

6 “Bust the myth that coming home translates as failure.”

This quote is from a story in the *Salinas Journal* about the town of Courtland, Kans., that is having a revitalization through returning young people. More than 20 people who graduated from college within five years of 2005 have moved back to the community of 300, resulting in more strollers



being pushed along its streets and new businesses on Main Street. “We find that people hesitate about moving back because they think they’ll be seen as a loser,” said Marci Penner, the founder of an organization to promote small-town living. “When they see others moving back, it erases that stigma. At some point, the memory kicks in about why you loved growing up in a small town.” Celebrating or raising the profile of the people who have returned to the area may be one way to dispel the failure myth.

7 Ask them to come back.

Would people really come back just because you asked them to? Well, maybe not on the basis of that alone. But asking the question might get someone who is looking for a change in lifestyle to consider the move back to his or her hometown. Lifestyle is a significant motivating factor in how younger generations want to live their lives, according to the book *Life First, Work Second* by Rebecca Ryan. “Regardless of their zip code, their native language, or their vocation, members of the

Creative Class place as much emphasis on where and how they live as where they work,” writes Richard Florida in the book’s foreword.

Living where you want regardless of the work you do is not the pipe dream it would have been two or three decades ago. Ubiquitous access to high-speed Internet has made it possible to telecommute much more effectively than was possible even five years ago. An IBM employee featured in the March Center for Rural Affairs newsletter moved to rural Nebraska because of the quality of life: “I didn’t know places still existed in the United States where children didn’t need to lock a bike,” he said. He works for IBM as part of their “distributed workforce”—other employees are also working from home elsewhere in the country, and they communicate mostly through instant messages throughout the workday. And he does it while sitting in his home office, where he has a view of the birds visiting the feeders in the pear trees outside his window.

Asking those who have left to come back is really a way to encourage people who might be somewhat interested to focus seriously on the possibility of a homecoming. A survey of people who have left rural places found that those who return are most often motivated by family or lifestyle factors—not by potential employment. “If their family and lifestyle goals are consistent with rural life, outmigrants make substantial efforts to locate employment, exercise patience until job opportunities open up, accept career sacrifices, or become creative and entrepreneurial in order to move back,” according to the report “Returning Home and Making a Living,” published in the *Journal of Rural and Community Development*.

In other words, if people really want to come back, they most often can find a way to make it happen—which means more kids like Leola’s class of 2012 might find their way back home someday. ✨

Groton is Growing, and Support of Youth is One Factor

Reporting by Kathy Sundermeyer, Groton Dakota Press, and Char Telkamp, Groton Independent



One of the new houses going up in the Olson Development in Groton.
Photo by Char Telkamp

Not all communities in rural America are losing population, and Groton is one of those exceptions.

The population of the city of Groton grew 7.5 percent in the last decade, according to Census 2010 results, to 1,458 people. This is much better than Brown County overall, which grew by 3 percent during the same period. Groton's growth from 2000-2010 was actually down from the growth rate from 1990-2000, when the town grew by 13.2 percent.

Construction of new houses is ongoing in Groton, with a few more going up each year. The town added infrastructure to support three new housing developments, and a housing commission built and then sold 16 apartment units.

"Many Americans prefer to live in smaller places that are near an urban area, but not in them," according to the Carsey Institute report "Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America." Although Aberdeen is micropolitan and not urban, the proximity to Aberdeen is likely a big reason for Groton's growth—it's close enough to Aberdeen to work there, but not be a part of it.

Schools closing on two sides of the Groton School District (in Bristol and Conde) also played a role, add-

ing to school enrollment numbers. That's not the whole story, however: Groton has worked in many ways to make the town a good place to live, which has helped to bring back some of the young people who left to go to college.

While there is no ongoing movement to bring people back to town, the positive experience many of them have in growing up here leads them to wanting to return to family and give their children the same positive experience that they had.

Groton is strong supporter of youth activities—everything from 4-H, scouting and sports to martial arts and music lessons. And the town supports these activities with infrastructure as well—a golf course, a three-field baseball complex, a soccer field and a swimming pool have been constructed and/or improved the last 15 years.

According to Anita Lowary, Groton's city finance officer, other factors that have fueled Groton's growth are more jobs (at the Poet ethanol plant, James Valley Telecommunications, the school, and in construction), a positive attitude toward diversity, and a reasonable cost of living.

"Business growth is encouraged, but the main actions have been expansions of existing businesses," Lowary wrote in an e-mail. "An active downtown has moved to be more highway locations with traffic patterns declining on Main Street. Several service businesses and recreation opportunities have developed to further the 'bedroom community' image Groton has developed." ✨

No Time to Lose For Faulk County

By **Garrick Moritz**, Faulk County Record

The population numbers for Faulk County haven't been good for almost the whole of the last century.

"The numbers I've seen since the 1930 census tell me that the population has steadily decreased since then," said Joel Price, superintendent of the Faulkton Area Schools and also the Chairman of the Faulkton Area Development Corporation Board. "Back then the population was at about 5,500, and at the next census, and almost every census after that, the numbers went down about 10 percent each ten-year period. That means (the school has) lost about two major family groups or so every decade."

Faulk County's current population, according to the 2010 Census, is 2,364 and the town of Faulkton's is 736.

"If things continue this way, and factoring in the deaths of the current aging population, we could have 2,000 or less total population countywide and less than 700 people in town by 2020," he said.

Price said that though population figures for school-age children are more or less steady for now, they too have been in steady decline.

"Then we have what I and many others call the brain drain," he said. "We work hard to educate these wonderful young people, people who enrich our lives on a daily basis, and then they leave."

According to the census data, people from the age of 20 to 44 years of age are the smallest population minority in Faulk County. The median age of the county is 46.9 years old. That means, generally, that most people in the county are over 45

years in age and that there aren't enough younger people to fill their shoes as they get older.

"Certainly the young people leave for many reasons," Price said. "Some of it is that they want to sow their wild oats and get out and do other things in other places, and sometimes when they discover that they don't like the bustle of the traffic or the crime of the big city they'll come back. But many leave simply because they can't stay. The simple fact is that inviting our young people to come back isn't enough when we don't have something for them to do. They can't eat the scenery. To get students to stay we need to provide them with employment options that fit their interests and skill sets and can pay them for their work. And that means strong economic development at a local level."

Price said that there are good indications of that happening at a local level, and that there certainly are examples of younger people taking positions of authority and responsibility in the community.

Husband and wife Jerod and Lisa Raethz, both in their 30s, are the city maintenance and finance officer, respectively. City council members Slade Roseland and David Hadrick are also in their 30s. David Hadrick's spouse, pharmacist Trish Hadrick, took over as the chief pharmacist for Faulkton Drug in November 2008. Down the street, Sonny Law took over as owner and renamed Vogels Auto Service to Sonny's Auto in June 2010. Jim and Maggie Bauer of Bauer's Super

Valu handed over their business to son Randy and wife Trintje Bauer in January 2011.

"The big key to true economic development," said Price, "is supporting the growth of the businesses that we already have. If we can increase the amount of business they get, if every business in Faulk County grew significantly enough that they had to hire an additional full-time employee, those people would bring in or create their own families, add to the school numbers, and generally increase our economic growth. Investing in local businesses that are already established is the key because they have already made a long-term commitment to the community. It sounds real simple, but the devil is in the details here."

Recent improvements to the Faulkton's infrastructure such as the new hospital's construction and a major city water project to improve service are good indicators that growth in Faulkton is possible, but Price said more needs to happen countywide, and that even a part-time county economic development staff member would help a great deal, as a volunteer economic development organization can only do so much.

"The iron is red hot right now, and we need to strike it or in a decade we'll wish we had," he said. ✨



Randy and Trintje Bauer took over Faulkton's Super Valu in January 2011.

PLAN YOUR DAKOTA HOMECOMING

A practical guide to making a successful return to your Dakota hometown. Written by Dakotafire staff.

DAKOTAFIRE READERS: Do you have family members who would like to move home but who don't know where to start to make that happen? Send them this guide!

You CAN Go Home Again. Really.

If you'd like to make your way back to the place where you grew up, you are not alone. While it doesn't make up for the numbers of people leaving rural areas, some people are going back to the places where they grew up.

According to a survey of participants in Dakota Roots, a program that helps people find work in South Dakota, three main reasons are bringing them here: They want to be closer to family

and friends; they appreciate the beauty of the state; and they want a slower, more authentic way of life. Brian Hoey, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Marshall University in West Virginia, has called some of those making the transition from urban to rural places "lifestyle migrants" because they are using "relocation as a way of redefining their relationships to work and family through changes in lifestyle, the patterns of everyday life."

If you are one of those who wants to make the return journey, where do you begin? How will you make a living? Where will you live?

Will you find a way to belong in the community again?

All of these questions can be answered. Get ready: It's time to make a plan.

1 Find A Way To Make A Living.

When a team of researchers from the University of Montana asked more than 300 people who had grown up in rural places in the United States what would keep them from moving home, "There wouldn't be a job" was the most common answer. But they also found that many of the people who wanted to move back to rural places for non-work-related reasons were able to find work when they made the effort. In fact, in his State of the State address, Gov. Dennis Daugaard said South Dakota has shortages in fields such as engineering, information technology and health care. The oil boom in western North Dakota has created a labor shortage throughout the state in many fields.

Consider these strategies for getting your career going in your hometown:

Bring your job with you. This option has several advantages: You would be able to continue working in your chosen field (assuming that's where you're working now); your salary would likely stay the same; and it would keep one part of your life fairly consistent, which may be

appreciated when so much else is changing with your move. It also has the effect of creating a job in your hometown, which will be appreciated by the economic development folks there.

If you own your own business, you could relocate the whole business when you move, or if you work for an employer that offers flexible working arrangements, you can telecommute.

The number of workers who telecommute is steadily increasing. Employers are recognizing that it can save money and increase employee satisfaction. Telecommuting has clear appeal for workers in the Dakotas, who can skip a long commute, avoid winter driving and save on increasingly expensive gas.

Become a freelancer. Companies are increasingly outsourcing some of their labor, which means that there is an opening for people with certain skills to pick up this contract work. Online sites such as Elance and Guru have made it much easier for companies and workers to find one another. Elance announced in early March that \$500 million in work has been done on its site since it started in 1999.



PLAN YOUR DAKOTA HOMECOMING

Start a business. While it can be risky to move based on a business you have yet to start, careful planning can make the business more likely to succeed.

First, talk to the folks in your hometown. Is there a niche you can fill? If a much-loved restaurant closed because of a retirement, you could step in to serve the restaurant's regular customers. Also consider businesses that can support an industry that is already established—hunting and guiding, for example, or machinery repair to support the ag industry.

Whatever you choose, make it something you get excited about, according to Andrew LaPointe, author of *Small Town Dream: The Guide for Moving to Small Town America*. "It may be cliché, but it's true: Do what you love and success will follow," he writes.

Find a job in your hometown. If you start your job search in the most obvious place to start looking in cities, you will likely be discouraged—Monster.com is probably not the place to find work in the rural Dakotas. That doesn't mean there aren't any jobs, however. You'll just have to use other means to find them.

If you have family or friends still in the area, ask them about possible jobs, and ask them to make some inquiries for you.

The departments of labor in both North and South Dakota have programs to connect job seekers and

employers. They may not have as many connections in very rural areas as they do in bigger towns, but they will do whatever they can for you. Check their online job searches first (<http://dlr.sd.gov/> and <http://jobsnd.com/>), then make an appointment to talk to someone.

If you know of a business where you'd like to work, contact them directly. While they may not have something for you immediately, they may contact you a few months down the road.

Consider commuting to a bigger town. This provides the advantage of potentially finding work that in your chosen field. The disadvantages are that you will spend a significant part of your time on the road (Tip: Find some good audio books or learn-a-language CDs), gas isn't cheap, and winter driving in the Dakotas is regularly unpleasant.

② Find a place to live.

Making sure there is adequate housing is one of the biggest challenges in building up in our communities. Most will tell you there is not enough affordable housing in the region. You may need to get creative.

Find a house for sale. Check the listings online or contact real estate agents in your community. Houses in small towns in the Dakotas are very reasonably priced (if you are from a high-housing-cost region such as California, you may think



Tips for a Smoother Return

Build a financial cushion before you move. While it's true that the cost of living in rural areas is typically lower than in urban areas, wages also tend to be lower. Moreover, you may find yourself spending money on things you didn't expect—a four-wheel-drive vehicle, for example. Three strategies to make financial life less stressful:

- Reduce debt—especially your credit card debt.
- Set aside six months' worth of income for emergencies. (Depending on what you have set up when you move, more might be better.)
- Do the cash flow numbers. Pencil out how your income and expenses may or will change with the move and adjust as needed to make it balance.

Find a mentor. Many business people in your hometown are very eager to talk to people interested in moving back. Find an established business person and ask if they will help you with the transition. Remember, you probably left as a kid, yet you're returning as a business person or a professional.

If you are starting a business, one good place to start is SCORE, a nonprofit organization "dedicated to helping small businesses get off the ground, grow and achieve their goals through education and mentorship." Since the help is provided by volunteers (experienced business people who want to help people just starting out), advice is provided for free or at low cost. For more information, go to www.score.org.

Starting on the Road to Financial Security

Reaching a point of financial security is a process that takes time, effort and perhaps some sacrifices. However, the results are worth it. By starting early, you can put time on your side. By doing a few things right from the beginning, you can make that process easier and minimize the sacrifices you may be forced to make later.

Consider reaching financial security to be a project like building a house. You start with a foundation, you add the floors as time goes on, you put on a roof, you finish the inside and then you move in. Fortunately, you have a long time to build your financial future, you can learn the skills it takes and it is easier than building a house.

What is financial security?

Financial security consists of several things:

- Being able to afford your current needs.
- Having confidence you will be able to afford what you may need in the future.
- Being able to enjoy some things you want now, but may not truly need.
- Being able to provide the type of financial lifestyle for your family you want.
- Having a peace of mind knowing you are taking the right steps to reach financial security.

Why is a solid financial foundation important?

You, and you alone, are ultimately responsible for your financial well being. Your decisions will affect how you live on a day-to-day basis and in the long term. Handling the financial issues associated with starting out, establishing a household and assuming more responsibilities can be stressful. A solid financial foundation can help you spend less time and effort worrying about your finances so you can devote your time and energy to other important matters like your job, your family and your future.



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Building a solid financial foundation.

First identify a few very broad goals:

- I want handling my finances to be easy.
- I want to be able to enjoy my current financial lifestyle.
- I want to know that I am making progress toward achieving financial security.
- I want to be confident that I am doing the right things and not doing the wrong things.

Components of a solid financial foundation.

- Not spending beyond your means.
- Building some financial net worth.
- Establishing a good credit record.
- Establishing some good financial habits.

Monitor and control your spending

While this task may sound ominous, it does not have to be. Consider breaking it into pieces. First, you need to know how much you have coming in each month. While you may be earning interest and dividends on savings accounts or investments, let's just focus on income from your job. Every pay period (weekly, semi-monthly or monthly), you earn a certain amount. However, the check you receive is reduced by taxes that are withheld, your share of employee benefits (primarily health insurance), amounts you contribute to your company's retirement plan and any other deductions you may have. The amount you have left is your monthly disposable income. That is how much you have to pay your bills and hopefully there will be some left over you can save.

Next, break your expenses into those that are fixed and those you can control. Fixed expenses include rent, parking, other insurance (probably renter's and auto insurance), utilities and recurring medical costs. You probably have some level of control over most of your other expenses.

Finally, subtract your fixed expenses from your disposable income. That is how much you have to cover your other living expenses and any other spending. To not overspend your income, just make sure you manage your other living expenses and other spending to have something left over each month.

Building some net worth

Accumulating net worth takes time and some discipline. Here are three ideas that can help:

- Contribute to your employer's retirement plan. If you are eligible for a 401(k) plan, be sure to participate and contribute something. Most plans have some type of employer matching provision where the company contributes money equal to all or some portion of what you contribute. Be sure to understand how your plan works and, if you can, contribute enough so you get the maximum contribution from your employer.
- Set up an automatic savings plan. Many employers will automatically deduct a certain amount and send it directly into a savings account at your financial institution. Choose an amount you are comfortable with and let it happen automatically each pay period. If your employer does not offer this, set up a plan with your financial institution so they move that amount from your checking account to your savings account each month.
- Save what you do not spend. After you have paid your bills each month, move what is left over to your savings account. You will probably want to keep some funds in your checking account to cover unexpected expenses, but by moving excess funds to your savings account, you will be accumulating assets and probably earning more than what you would have earned if you left your excess funds in your checking account.

Establishing a good credit record

Three large companies compile information on the borrowing history of almost everyone. They get their information from credit card companies, utilities, financial institutions and other companies. Every time you apply for credit, whether it is completing a credit card application, getting an auto loan or signing a lease for an apartment, the company you are working with will probably request a credit report on you.

Lenders will use those credit reports to make decisions on whether to grant you credit, make a loan and in many cases what interest rates to charge.

Therefore, it is important to have a good credit report. While there are many factors that go into your credit report, the most important ones include timeliness of payments, how much do you owe in total and how many companies you owe money to. Here are some guidelines to help you build and maintain a solid credit rating:

- Be sure to pay every bill before the due date. Promptness counts and you want to avoid any late payment fees.
- Pay more than the minimum on all credit card accounts if you can.
- Do not have too many credit cards. Every time you apply, it is noted in your credit record.
- At least once a year, order a credit report on yourself. That way you can see what lenders see. If you notice an error in your report, be sure to contact the credit agency and have it corrected.

Establishing good financial habits

Here is a list of a dozen things that can put you on the road to financial security.

1. Make sure your financial information and records are organized.
2. Use direct deposit for your paycheck.
3. Participate in your employer's retirement plan and contribute as much as you can.
4. Set up an automatic savings program.
5. Prepare a household spending worksheet.
6. Periodically prepare a personal balance sheet.
7. Use as few credit cards as possible.
8. Reconcile your checking account monthly.
9. Review all your bills and statements as soon as you receive them.
10. Make credit card payments promptly and pay more than the minimum.
11. Be sensitive to fees and interest rates.
12. Learn more about handling your finances by reading personal finance columns online, in newspapers and personal finance magazines. ✨

Considerations When Starting a Business

Starting a business and being your own boss can be exciting and for many it is the professional goal of a lifetime. Thousands of new businesses are started every day, yet history shows that a majority of them fail because of a flawed business concept, inadequate financing or poor management. Starting a new business can be risky and here are some issues to consider before taking that big step.

Do you have the psychological make-up to start a business?

Starting a new business is risky and you need to be sure you can handle the risks.

- Risk of failure - Starting a business is risky, both from a financial and mental point of view. Do not let the excitement and thoughts of success blind you to the facts that you may lose money or your business may fail despite a lot of hard work. If you cannot accept these risks, you will probably be better off continuing to work for someone else.
- Risk of rejection - Every business must generate sales and during that sales process, it is inevitable that some (or most) potential customers will not buy your product or service. You must be able to deal with others not wanting what you are offering. If rejection will cause extreme mental anxiety or deter you from making the next sales call, working for yourself may not be right for you.
- Risk to your lifestyle - Starting a business involves long hours, constant distractions, choices of how you focus your attention and sacrifices. These things will affect you and those around you. Be sure to consider the impact of your actions on your family and others.

What type of business makes sense for you?

Hundreds of thousands of ventures are started each year in all lines of business. Starting a business from scratch, buying an existing business or entering into

a franchise arrangement all present opportunities and potential pitfalls.

Be sure to do your homework. Consider the current and potential markets for whatever business you are considering. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of competitors. The Internet and trade associations can be great sources of valuable information. You may be surprised what you can find readily available.

Find a line of business that matches your skills, experience and interests. If you are considering starting a personal service business, it can be nice to start off with at least one existing customer. Whatever type of business it is, be sure you like it. If you are successful, you may spend many years or several decades in that business. There are few things worse than not liking your job.

If you are considering purchasing an existing business investigate it thoroughly. While it may be attractive to step into a business that already has existing operations, learn why the current owner wants to sell. Buying someone else's failing business is significantly different than buying a successful business from an owner that is retiring. Have a professional look at the financial statements and any contracts you may be signing.

Are you starting alone or should you have a partner?

This can be one of the most challenging issues you face. Running the business yourself gives you the opportunity to make all the decisions, but you must live with the results. A partner can bring skills, experience and capital, however, you should be confident that you can work with that person for an extended period of time.

If you choose to have a partner, be sure to define the responsibilities and authorities of each party. How will decisions be made regarding capital contributions, spending, operations, hiring of personnel and all the hundreds of other issues that will arise. The more you can structure the decision making process, the more you reduce the risk of having major operational problems as the business faces difficulties or grows.

If you choose to have a partner, you may also want to discuss how your relationship can be ended. While everyone has good intentions at the beginning, things can and often do change. Having a buy/sell agreement or a contractual agreement may avoid difficulties and hard feelings later.

Where will you get the financing you need?

Starting and growing a business takes money. Consider the funds you may need for office space, equipment, inventory, marketing and working capital. You will need funds for your normal living expenses as well and remember that not all customers pay quickly. One of the most common causes of business failures is inadequate capital. Create a spending plan that covers everything you think you may need and then build in a contingency amount.

Arranging that needed capital should be undertaken early in the start-up process. Once the business is operational, you will probably want to focus on running it and not have to constantly be looking for funds. Be sure to speak with your financial institution about what they may be looking for before they would be willing to lend to a new business. You may also want to explore a loan through the Small Business Administration. The SBA programs offer a number of types of loans, but can be time consuming.

The final observation on needed capital is to consider setting a limit on how much you are willing to risk or lose before shutting the business down and accepting failure. While this may be difficult to consider when starting out, having a contingency plan for failure is prudent.

What are some of the other legal, financial and tax issues to consider?

After addressing all the other aspects, these will probably seem easy. You need to choose a business form (sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, sub-chapter S corporation, limited liability company). Here is a chart that provides some details on various types of business structures.

Sole Proprietorship

Ownership rules	One owner.
Liability of owners	Unlimited liability for obligations of the business.
Tax treatment	Entity is not taxed, all income and losses passed through to owner.
Control and management	Sole proprietor manages the business
Capital contributions	Sole proprietor makes capital contributions as needed. Easiest.
Ease of establishing	Easiest.

C Corporation (Regular corporation)

Ownership rules	Unlimited number of shareholders with no limit on the classes of stock.
Liability of owners	Generally, no personal liability for obligations of the corporation.
Tax treatment	Corporation is taxed at the corporation level. Shareholders are taxed on any dividends received.
Control and management	Board of Directors has overall management responsibility with officers having day-to-day responsibility.
Capital contributions	Shareholders usually by stock in corporation. Corporation can issue common and preferred stock.
Ease of establishing	Must file Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State.

S Corporation (Subchapter S corporation)

Ownership rules	Up to 75 shareholders are allowed. Only one class of stock is allowed.
Liability of owners	Generally, no personal liability for the obligations of the corporation.
Tax treatment	Entity is not taxed; profits and losses are passed through to the shareholders.
Control and management	Board of Directors has overall management responsibility with officers having day-to-day responsibility.
Capital contributions	Shareholders usually buy stock in the one class of stock issued by the corporation.
Ease of establishing	Must file Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State.

General partnership

Ownership rules	Unlimited number of general partners.
Liability of owners	All general partners are fully liable for the obligations of the business.
Tax treatment	Entity is not taxed, all income and losses passed through to the partners.
Control and management	General partners have equal management rights unless they decide otherwise.
Capital contributions	General partners contribute money or services to the business and receive interests in income and losses.
Ease of establishing	No filing; but a partnership agreement is needed.

Limited partnership

Ownership rules	Unlimited number of general and limited partners are allowed.
Liability of owners	Unlimited liability for general partners and no personal liability for the limited partners.
Tax treatment	Entity is not taxed, all income and losses passed through to general and limited partners.
Control and management	General partner manages the business subject to the Limited Partnership Agreement.
Capital contributions	Both general and limited partners contribute money or services and receive interests in profits and losses.
Ease of establishing	File an application with the Secretary of State.

Limited-liability company (LLC)

Ownership rules	Unlimited number of "members" are allowed.
Liability of owners	Generally, no personal liability for obligations of the entity.
Tax treatment	Entity is not taxed, all income and losses passed through to the members.
Control and management	The Operating Agreement describes how it is to be managed. A manager is usually designated to manage the business.
Capital contributions	The members typically contribute money or services to the LLC and receive an interest in the profits and losses.
Ease of establishing	File Articles of Organization with the Secretary of State.

Each business form has attractions and drawbacks. Your attorney can be very helpful in evaluating the options and drafting any documents you need.

Your personal financial and tax situations may also change when you become a business owner. You may lose the predictability of a monthly paycheck and the other benefits found with a larger company. You may have to pay for your medical insurance and fund your retirement account.

Summary

The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in America. As you consider your future, remember that being in business for yourself can be risky as well as rewarding. Taking some key steps early in the process, hard work, a good idea, using sound business practices and maybe a little luck can make all the difference. ★

someone forgot a zero on the price), but be alert for older houses that may require more maintenance.

Find a place to rent. People still use newspapers for advertising available rentals in the Dakotas, but the use of Craigslist is growing. If you don't find the perfect place listed for rent in your hometown, ask your family or friends there to ask around, or make some inquiries yourself—it's likely that some vacant places are not listed. A lot of business is simply handled by word-of-mouth in small towns. You may be surprised what is available if you let it be known that you're looking.

Build a house. This is not a fast solution to a housing need, but it may fit what you're looking for as a "lifestyle migrant." Construction companies are quite busy in northeast South Dakota (Aberdeen is booming), but you'll likely be able to find someone who is able to build your dream house for far less than you'd be able to build in more urban areas of the country. If you aren't in a hurry and have some aptitude for the work, you could also do at least some of the construction yourself.

If you are moving close to where your parents live, there is one more option:

Move in with your parents. During the recent recession, this was not at all uncommon, and it still may be the most practical solution for you—and perhaps also for your parents, if they are of the age where they may need some help. It can at the very least serve as a temporary solution as you search for work, other housing, or both.

If you decide to live with your parents for an extended length of time, it may be good to set some ground rules:

- *Decide who will pay for what while you stay there.*
- *Discuss how many meals you will eat together.*
- *Discuss how to divide chores such as dishes and cleaning.*

③ Have a life.

If you've been away for some time, be prepared for a readjustment period. In Thomas Wolfe's novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, the main character finds that while he has changed after going to the city, his hometown has stayed the same. In real life both you and the community are likely to be different than they were when you left. Here are things to keep in mind as you find your social and cultural bearings:

The friends you knew when you lived here before may not be the people you will be friends with now. First, those old friends may have moved away. Second, if you last lived in a small town in high school, you will now be free of the constraints that high school puts on your social circle—you will be freer to be friends with people who are not your age, for example.

You may make friends who are far different from you. A recent study by a Wellesley College professor found that people in small towns tend to have much more diversity in their friendships than people in more urban areas. It's counterintuitive, but the more choice you have, the more likely you are to be friends with people who are like yourself.

Neighborliness trumps political affiliation. People in small towns tend to be a little wary about talking politics—not because they don't have opinions, but because people are connected in ways that are more important: The ardent Democrat and the feisty Republican may serve on the church council together, for example. And if you drive into the ditch, your political adversary might be the one to drive by in a pickup. It may be wise to keep your opinions under your hat.

Culture is not missing, but you may need to work harder to find it. While you may be able to find good music every night of the week in the city, for example, in rural areas it may be only once a month, and you may have to drive some distance to see it. But there are great cultural events—film festivals, plays, concerts, conventions, lectures, and more. And if there is some aspect of culture that you miss dearly, bring it with you. People will likely appreciate your contribution.

The same goes for restaurants—good food beyond the typical fast food chains can be found here, but you may not always know where to look. Ask a local for advice. Yelp.com is also becoming a popular resource for finding whatever type of business you're looking for, including restaurants.

High school sports are for everyone. If you want to see where everyone is on a Friday night, go to the football field or the gymnasium. Even if it's not really your thing, this is where you'll make social connections. You'll probably find yourself getting into the game, too.



PLAN YOUR DAKOTA HOMECOMING

What You Will Find Here (That You May Not Expect):

- **High-speed internet.** Even most very rural areas are now served by speedy internet (though you should check with local internet providers about a specific area).
- **Cell phone service.** Though there are still areas where service is spotty, this has improved markedly in recent years.
- **Parcel delivery.** The major carriers will find you even here.
- **Good healthcare within driving distance.** Just like anywhere, you'll need to do your own homework in finding healthcare providers that work for you, but you'll find nearly any specialty you need within fairly reasonable driving distance. It's not perfect in rural areas, especially in emergencies, but you'll probably find it's better than the national discussions about rural healthcare make it out to be.

What You May Not Find Here:

- **TV stations (without a device or cable, that is).** Analog stations reached farther out into the country than digital stations do. If you want more than public television, you may need to get satellite TV.
- **A cleared road after a storm, or good roads in the spring.** Budget cuts and several snowy/wet seasons have led to reduced services in many rural areas. There is some optimism that the recent mild, winter may offer some relief.
- **Pizza delivery.** Most places have a mileage limit, and many rural areas lie beyond it.
- **Garbage and/or recycling service.** You may need to haul these items yourself.
- **Specialty shopping options.** You can find many things in regional shopping centers, but you may find that something you'd like to purchase is missing. You can of course shop online (remember that the parcel delivery people are fine with country deliveries), or you can also shop consignment stores—there are a surprising number of them in the region, and they have an impressive variety of items.

Still have questions? Want to connect with others who have either made the move back home or are thinking about it? Visit the Dakotafire Homecoming Forum at Dakotafire.net/homecoming. Find links to more resources there as well.

Some Final Suggestions for Finding Happiness in the Rural Dakotas:

Do something that gets you outside. Hunting is one way; even just dog-walking will work. You won't see the Dakotas' beauty if you're parked in front of the television, and you won't be able to talk about the weather as effectively either. (Weather makes up a significant part of Dakota conversations.)

Plant a garden. Not only will this get you outside, it will connect you to the reason people moved to the Dakotas in the first place—good farmland. There are people in cities who would be very envious of the amount of land we have here. We might as well appreciate it.

Learn the history of the area, if you don't know it already. The story of the Dakotas is an interesting one, and knowing it may help you feel more ready to write your own story here.

Find a way to make a difference. There are many ways to contribute in rural areas, and there's not a lot of bureaucracy to wade through—it is easy to see the results of your efforts. School boards, city and county commissions always need new ideas, especially from young, optimistic newcomers. Run for an elected office; it's a great way to acclimate yourself to the pulse of your community. Take action, and make your move back to your hometown a meaningful one. ✨

These stories are the result of a collaborative effort of weekly newspapers in the James River watershed area. Read the full stories at www.dakotafire.net and watch the site for a new feature story about the region every two weeks!

USPS Changes Would Likely Affect Delivery of Weekly Newspapers



Weekly newspaper publishers in the Dakotas are concerned about the sweeping changes proposed for the U.S. Postal Service, especially since they say the situation is close to terrible for their out-of-county subscribers already.

“We don’t get any complaints when subscribers get their paper, but we hear plenty of complaints when they don’t get it,” Garrick Moritz, reporter at the Faulk County Record, wrote in an e-mail.

For out-of-area subscribers who don’t have access to the Internet, or who don’t want to get their news online, postal delivery could get even worse with the proposed USPS changes.

“(It would be) just totally unreliable as far as being able to give any kind of service to distant mail,” said Max Heath, postal committee chair of the National Newspaper Association. “It’s more or less forcing the post office to be only a provider of what’s commonly called last-mile delivery. We’re very concerned that if this goes through that it’ll be ‘Postalgeddon.’ There won’t be any decent delivery of mail outside our trade market.” ✨

One Job That Could Lead to More: Hiring Economic Development Staff

At a meeting in November, leaders in the Clark community decided they needed to take their economic development game to a higher level.

Clark School Superintendent Brian Heupel had initiated the meeting, which pulled together the members of six organizations in the community to talk about how they might work together to help the community grow.

“It seems as if at some point, we as a community need a development director to try and move the community forward,” Heupel said.

Many other communities in the Dakotas have also decided having staff dedicated to economic

development is a priority. Hiring an economic development director can bring definite benefits to the community, according to several economic development leaders in North and South Dakota. But they stressed that it’s not a silver bullet, and communities should realize that this step needs to be part of a larger strategic process if it’s to be successful. ✨



Can Subtracting a Day Make the School Week Better?

Schools in South Dakota and around the country are facing some difficult arithmetic:

Start with the usual mix of students — some quick to learn, some slower, some busy with activities, some not, some well-behaved, others troublemakers. Add higher expectations. Add more paperwork. Subtract funding.

What does that equal? Getting these parts to add up to a quality education is not easy, but an increasing number of school districts in South Dakota have found a little trick that helps their math problem resolve a little more favorably: the four-day school week.

Forty school districts in South Dakota, out of 152 total, have now moved to the four-day week or a modified version of it, including seven in



the Dakotafire region: Clark, Doland, Edmunds Central, Frederick Area, Hitchcock-Tulare, Webster and Willow Lake. Britton-Hecla is considering it. School superintendents cite a variety of ways the schedule improves the job they can do for students, including more time for teacher preparation and professional development, more individual time with students, less distraction from extracurricular activities, and of course, cost savings. ✨

FILLING in the MAP

A look at maps of the Dakota region from the 1850s to the 1930s shows how quickly the land was populated by European settlers. →

IMAGE SOURCES: Howell ad: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ziemer/HEINRICH/DAKOTA/dakota.html>.
Land of Golden Grain: North Dakota Historical Society.
1883 Dakota land poster: Library of Congress.
All others: David Rumsey Map Collection of Cartography Associates, www.davidrumsey.com.

MINNESOTA

1855

Minnesota. Published By J.H. Colton & Co., No. 172 William St., New York.

In 1855, the James River Valley, as well as all of what is now the eastern part of north and South Dakota, was part of Minnesota Territory, with the area west of the Missouri River part of Nebraska Territory. Most of the landmarks in the region were still known by their Native American names. A caption on the map reads

"This vast region of Prairies from Red River of the North and Mini Wakan Lake to about the Gr. Bend of the Missouri R. is the great Hunting and Fighting Ground of Kdakotah, Odjibwe, Assiniboin, Arikara, Minitarree and other Nations."

In 1858, Minnesota became a state, and the western part of what was Minnesota Territory was renamed Dakota Territory.



1866

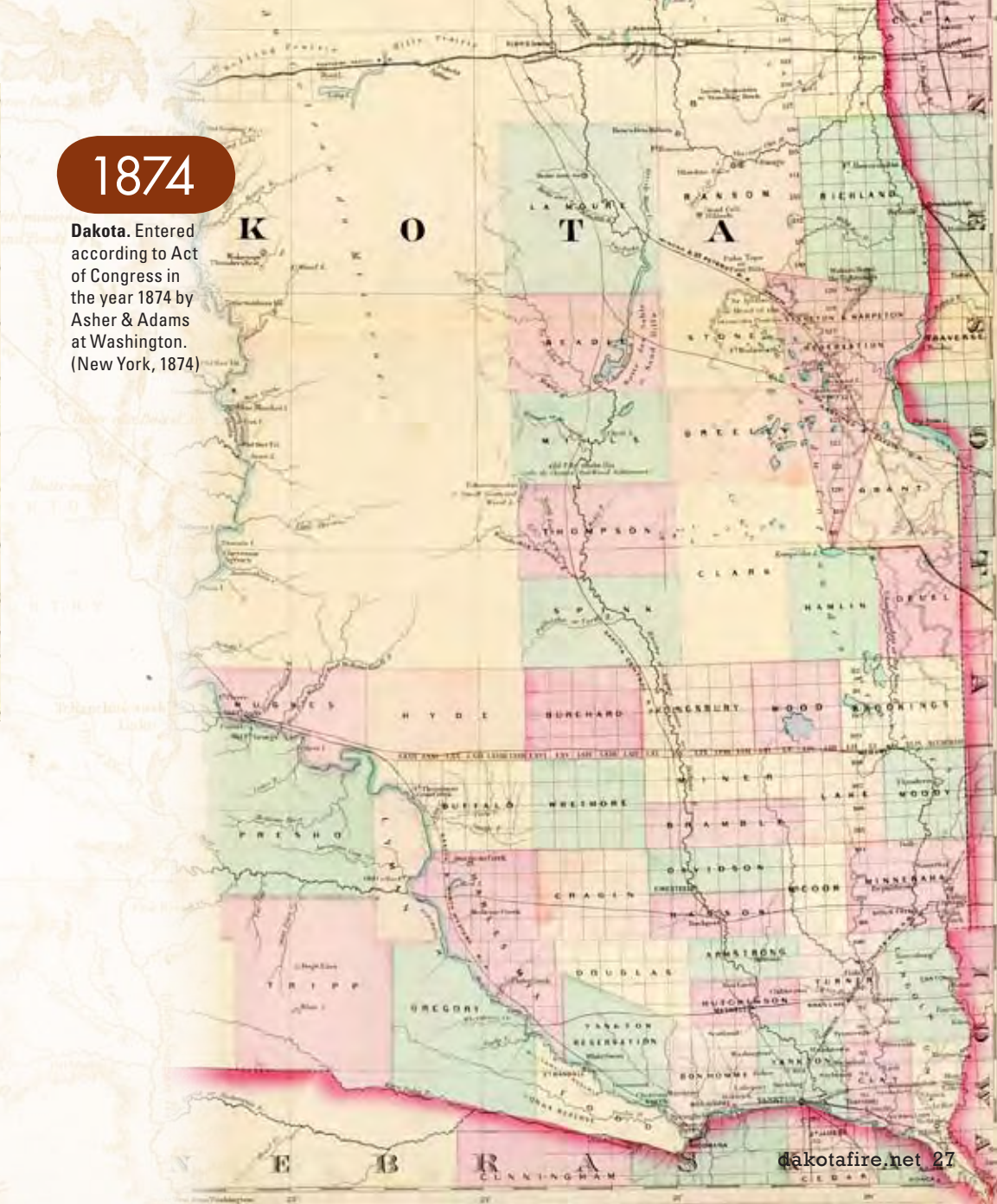
Dakota Territory. Department of the Interior, General Land Office, October 2nd 1866. Jo. S. Wilson, Commissioner. The Major & Knapp Eng. Mfg. & Lith. Co. 71 Broadway, N.Y.

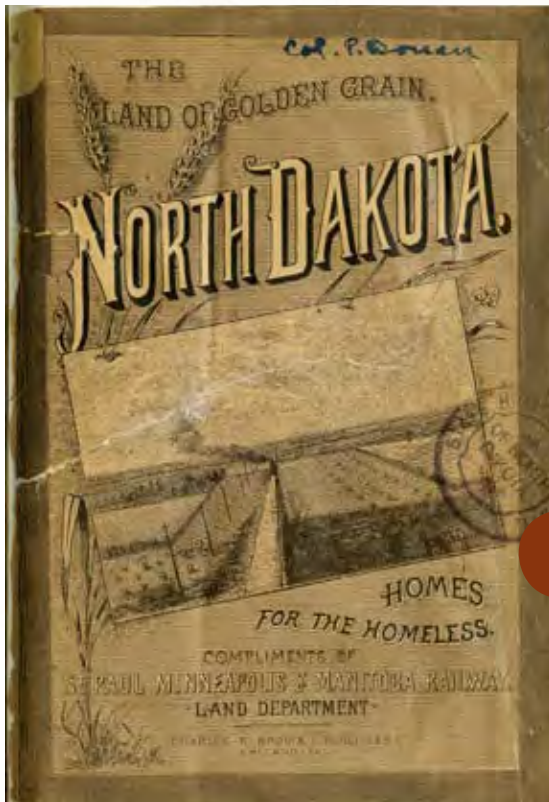
The “squaring off” of the land that had once been defined by rivers and hills started in the southeastern corner of Dakota Territory and spread northwest.

By 1874, settlement had reached the counties along the James River, where the Dakota Central railroad ran roughly parallel to the meandering waterway. The counties in 1874 do not match up exactly with the counties of today.

1874

Dakota. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1874 by Asher & Adams at Washington. (New York, 1874)





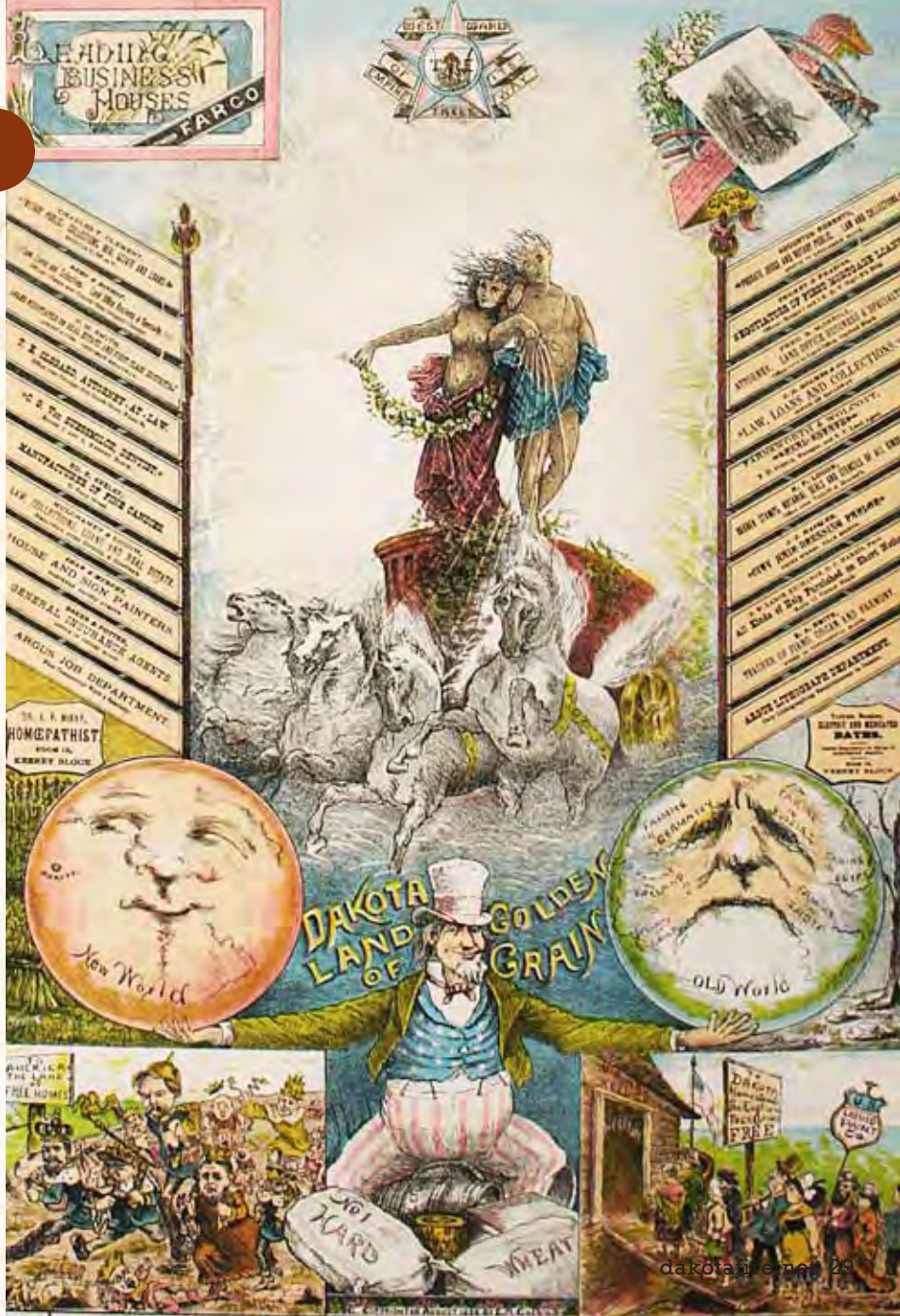
1883

"Dakota: Land of Golden Grain"
Published by
E.A. Colby.

1883

"The land of golden grain: North Dakota. The lake-gemmed, breeze-swept empire of the new Northwest. Homes for the homeless." Published by the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company.

The promotional posters promised nearly everything a settler could desire—a home for the homeless (above), a life free from hunger (notice the roundness of the man in the bottom center, in poster at right), as well as wealth and love (if the couple in the center is any indication). The Old World is a shriveled old man with "famine" written all over his face, while the New World is young and smiling, with "Dakota" like a dimple on its cheek. (Note that North Dakota was not yet a state when the above pamphlet was made; it was likely referring to the northern part of Dakota Territory.)





1880

Territory of Dakota.
(By S. Augustus Mitchell. 1880)



1884

County and township map of
Dakota. Copyright by Wm. M.
Bradley & Bro.



1887

County and township map of
Dakota. Copyright 1887 by Wm.
M. Bradley & Bro. (1890)

The map of Dakota Territory filled in rapidly in the 1880s.

In 1880, the counties along the James still were not settled; note Beadle and Mill where Brown County would be, and “La Moure” County where La Moure and Dickey counties are today. The forty- and fifty-mile limits outside of railroad lines were also still indicated—as the railroads were being built, Congress gave the railroad companies massive amounts of land, though whether all of the land indicated on this map was given outright to the railroads is uncertain.

By 1884, towns in Brown County had appeared on the map, as had Bristol and Webster to the east and Faulkton to the west, and more counties are designated as they are today.

By 1887, a rail line had been added between Bismarck and what would become Aberdeen, beginning its reputation as the “Hub City,” but the name of Aberdeen is not yet listed on the map. Marshall County does not yet exist, and the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indian Reservation is still clearly marked.

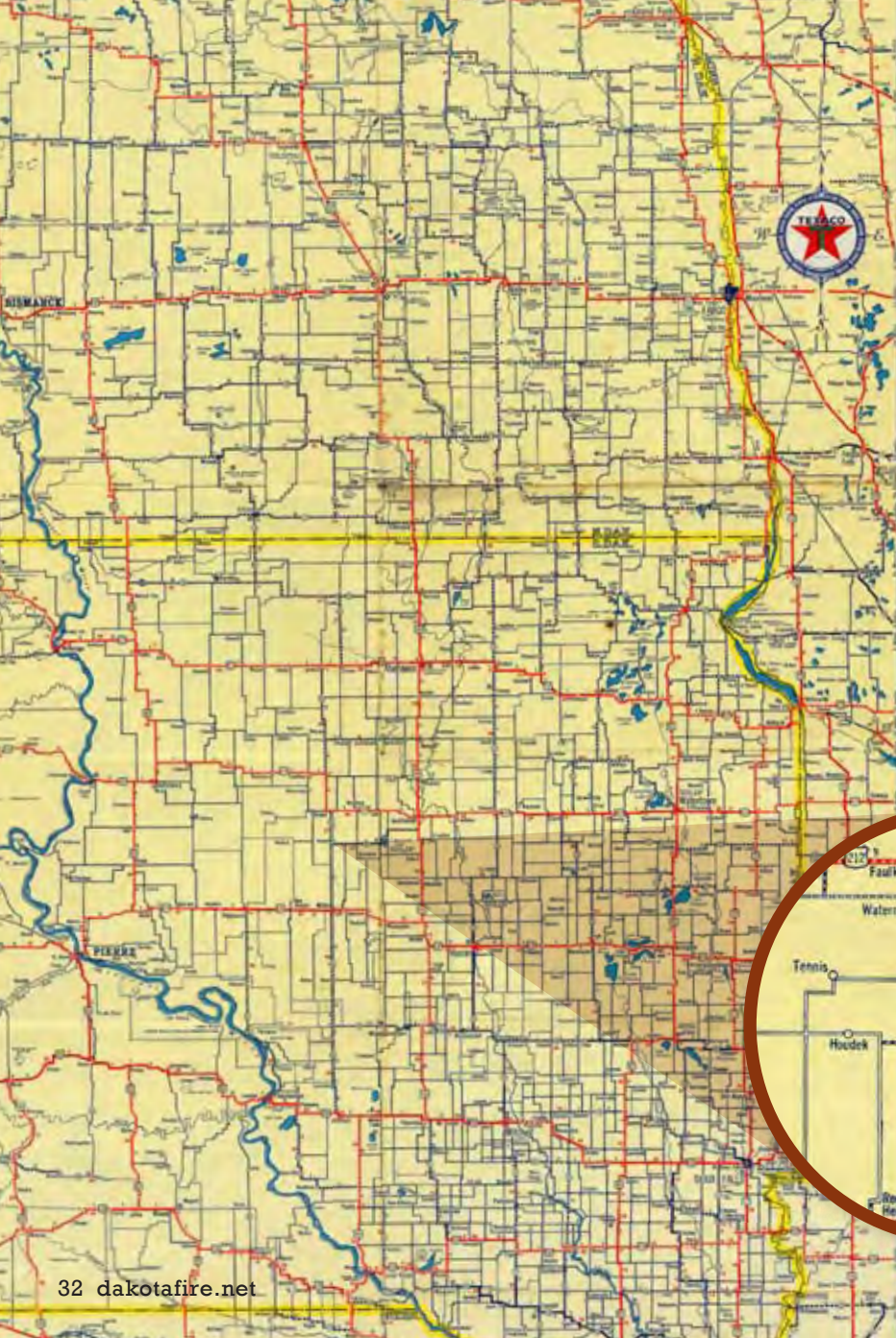


1895

(Covers to) Map showing surveyed portion of land grant of Northern Pacific Railroad Company from Jamestown, North Dakota, to Montana boundary line

The advertisements didn't stop after statehood. The reverse side of this map distributed by the Northern Pacific Railroad was filled with 12 pages of small print describing North Dakota's many virtues, including this effusive praise:

A WORD TO SETTLERS.
Remember, that North Dakota has one great and paramount advantage, that it contains immense areas of easily tilled soil ready for the plow. No clearing of trees or removing of stumps is necessary. The land lies open in broad fertile expanses awaiting cultivation. The settler can, the first year, raise potatoes, oats, wheat, corn and vegetables enough for his home consumption. Remember, also, that there is much less snow in North Dakota than in Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota or in States farther east in the same latitude. The upland prairie roads to market towns are seldom muddy or heavy. Remember, that the climate of North Dakota is exceptionally healthful, being free from all malarial diseases, and all pulmonary ailments and fevers among residents are extremely rare. Remember, too, that North Dakota is not a remote wilderness country, far from markets and centers of civilization. It has railroads, and is dotted with active, progressive towns. The settler in North Dakota finds liberal provision made for schools, finds churches of all denominations, finds newspapers and stores and shops of all kinds, and discovers that he can command all the comforts and conveniences of life.



1937

Texaco road map
North Dakota, South
Dakota. Copyright
by Rand McNally &
Company

HOWELL!
Howell! Howell!

HOWELL is the new town of HAND COUNTY, D. T., and the most favorably located of any town in the county; was laid out and platted May 31st, 1883. It is situated in the central part of the north half of the county and surrounded on all sides with the very

Richest and Best Quality of FARM LAND

To be found anywhere in southeastern Dakota. It is also located on the line of the

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R.R. Survey

From Mitchell to Bismark. Howell is abundantly supplied with the purest and very best quality of

WELL WATER,
Free from all mineral substances, at depths of from ten to twenty-five feet. **SPLENDID OPENINGS FOR ALL KINDS OF HONORABLE BUSINESS** A fine large

\$5,000.00 HOTEL!

Is being erected and will be completed ready for occupancy within 100 days from June 21. Parties looking for location for business are especially invited to come and see our country, our people and our town. For further particulars call on or address

EDWIN RAKER,
JNO. H. BALDWIN,
G. W. SAYLES,
Howell, D. T.

281f

CHRISTIAN HALBIG
Makes wagons and does a general

Horseshoeing & Blacksmithing Business,
REPAIRING OF ALL KINDS

1880s

Howell ad —
mid-1880s.

Good advertising didn't, of course, ensure successful settlement. Despite the "richest and best quality farmland" nearby, Howell only received a small dot on the 1937 Texaco map of the Dakotas, which was created not to serve the interests of settlement and railroad travel, but car trips. (At least Howell made it on the map—Ordway did not even merit a mention by 1937.) This map was printed at the high point of settlement in the Dakotas' rural areas; populations steadily dropped thereafter. A search for Howell on Google Maps today brings up just one location: the Howell Cemetery. ✨



Bo Fries was double teamed by Willie Colson and Conner Uhler, but he managed to sink the game winning shot with 2.3 seconds left in the game. Photo by Paul Kosel

Langford Takes Third Place in State Bs

Thirteen was an unlucky number for the Lions.

In the game to determine the third-place State B winner on March 17, Langford watched a 13-point lead disintegrate as Sully Buttes went on a 15-point run to take a 51-48 lead with 3:27 left in the game. The fans were on their feet in the closing seconds, and the Langford crowd in the Barnett Center erupted when freshman Bo Fries hit a shot with 2.3 seconds left in the game. He was fouled and made the free throw to give Langford a 55-52 win.

"I was supposed to be set up in the corner to shoot a three," Fries

said. The Charger defense drew around Kyle Johnson and that left Fries open. "I had the baseline open and I pulled up for a jumper and hit it," Fries said. "It felt great."

Langford lost to Viborg/Hurley by a point, 37-36, on March 16, which kept them out of the championship game. White River won that game, 52-43.

Langford has made it to the state tournament three times in the last four years under Coach Paul Raasch's leadership. Before that, the team had had a 68-year drought of no state tournament appearances.

—*Groton Daily Independent and Langford Bugle* ✨

Clark-Willow Lake Boys Finish Sixth, Girls Finish Seventh at State As

Clark-Willow Lake basketball fans had some busy weekends in March, with both the girls and boys squads heading to their respective State A tournaments.

The girls fell in the opening game to Elkton-Lake Benton, 60-40, but outlasted Vermillion through two overtime periods to win, 50-47, in the seventh-place game.

"The last three years we've finished at state. It really gives our girls next year something to shoot for, with high expectations," coach Wade Stobbs said.

Despite a fourth-quarter rally, the boys fell to Dakota Valley, 52-50, in the opening round, but then were led by junior Skyler Flatten to a win over Chamberlain, 50-42. They fell in overtime to Tri-Valley, 70-63, to keep the sixth-place title.

—*Clark County Courier* ✨

Links to All Dakotafire's Partnering Newspapers at dakotafire.net

'Teen Teachers' Give Health Lessons to Younger Students in Redfield, Clark

Teens in Redfield and Clark are among 65 "teen teachers" who have been trained through a new South Dakota State Extension program called Strong Bodies, Strong Futures, Teens as Teachers.

The teens will have opportunities to make a difference in their school and community by creating lesson plans for grades 3-5 on topics relevant to S.D. Health Education Standards.

The project addresses state

statistics that indicate 85 percent of youth eat less than five servings of fruit daily and 81 percent do not participate in a daily physical education class. The result — the percentage of South Dakota youth who are overweight and obese is higher than the national average.

Teens who complete the program receive a \$500 scholarship to the school of their choice.

—*Redfield Press and Clark County Courier* ✨

Britton Considers Country Market

The Britton Council will provide support to establish an enhanced farmers market, which may be called the Greater Britton Country Fair. It would feature locally grown produce, flowers and plants; specialty foods' jams, jellies and baked goods; live demonstrations; music by local artists; festivals and events.

"We think this is one way to make Britton a destination to drive to and not through," Britton resident Paulette Kelsey said.

—*Britton Journal* ✨

Faulkton Library to Offer E-Books, Audio Books

The Faulkton Library is going digital. With the new system, patrons can browse e-books and audio books at overdrive.com. Patrons will need to get new digital cards even if they are not intending to use e-books so they can use the new system.

—*Faulk County Record* ✨

The 2010 spring snow goose migration at Sand Lake was upon us, but something was missing.

By **Bill Schultze**,
Wildlife Biologist, Sand Lake
National Wildlife Refuge

Send us a 'Postcard'!

In each issue of *Dakotafire* and regularly online at Dakotafire.net, we will feature a "Postcard"—a short, evocative story about an event, person or place, written as if you were telling the story to a friend. Some ideas: hunting stories, the highlight of a big basketball game, or a moment in history. The story must have a photo to accompany it. Digital images (a minimum of 1000 pixels wide) are preferred; you can also send a photo by mail. E-mail submissions to heidi@dakotafire.net, or mail to **Dakotafire Media, Postcard Submission, PO Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441**.

The arrival of a white jeep driven by the "snow goose lady" from Duluth had become as much a part of the spring migration as the snow geese themselves. But in my many ventures to the field that spring, I had not yet seen that vehicle. I made a mental note to look up her telephone number when I got back to my office, so I could give her a call to see how she was doing.

A week or so later, her phone number was on a yellow sticky note on my desk, hidden among many others when I received an email from Susan B. Williams, with the subject line "Anne Williams." My heart sank. Anne Williams is the "snow goose lady." Susan is Anne's daughter, and she was writing to let us know that Anne passed away on March 14, 2010. That was the same day that the first snow geese made their appearance at Sand Lake.

I first met Anne in the spring of 1993. Her white jeep was parked on the wrong side of the road on Highway 16, along the west side of Sand Lake. A camera lens was sticking out of the driver's side of the jeep, pointed toward the thousands of snow geese circling over the water. I startled her as I approached, as she was so intent on taking photos of the snow geese. I introduced myself as a Refuge Officer, and proceeded to tell her of the

potential dangers of parking on the left side of a county highway. She apologized, and promised it wouldn't happen again and immediately began to talk of the beauty of the snow geese. I could tell she was hooked, but I did not realize the degree of her fascination with the snow geese until years later.

Anne became a regular at Sand Lake each spring. She would stay here from three to four weeks during the migration, spending the entire day photographing and watching the thousands of snow geese moving through this area. If I saw her, I would stop and ask her where the geese were, to help with my goose number estimates. I became quite dependent on her for that information. She often stopped at the refuge office to visit with the staff and ask about our families. She became the official photographer of most of our Eagle Days. She became friends with other birders and snow goose fanatics. And she made many friends in Groton and Britton, which was where she stayed during her time here. She touched many lives during her pilgrimages to Sand Lake.

Anne's mission when she was here was to spend as much time as possible watching and photographing the snow geese. She could not get enough of it. And her love of the snow geese is documented by number of neatly labeled boxes of



slides and cassette recordings. Susan donated all of her snow goose slides to the refuge, and there are thousands.

As we look to the skies to see those first snow geese make their way north, and watch the swirling masses of white birds slowly drop to the ice on Sand Lake, we'll be thinking of you, Anne. We know you're there. ✨

At right: Alan "Al" Whitman, a friend of Anne Williams, caught this image of her while she was watching the snow geese along South Dakota Highway 10. She could watch the geese for hours. Above: One of Anne Williams' photographs.



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