



# Mitchell

SOUTH DAKOTA

— *Outside expectations*

Historic District Walking Tour



MITCHELL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



## History of Mitchell

Mitchell was established in 1879 when it became obvious to the Milwaukee Railroad engineers that Firesteel, located just east of Mitchell in the river bottom was subject to severe flooding problems. It was named after the president of the Milwaukee Railroad, Alexander Mitchell. By the end of 1880, Mitchell had two railroads and was the county seat for Davison County. In 1881, Mitchell was incorporated and began to grow. By 1890, the population was over 2,000 and by 1900 had grown to over 4,000. Since 1882, Mitchell has grown steadily with constant development. The main street was a dirt road until 1912 when it was paved.

With its location in the center of rich farmland and at the intersection of two railroads, Mitchell quickly became an agricultural center as well as a retail and wholesale center for the area. From the beginning, the Corn Palace brought in area residents and tourists alike. When Mt. Rushmore was completed and paved highways stretched across the state, Mitchell became a popular tourist destination on the way to the Black Hills and Yellowstone National Park.

In 1939, during World War Two, the present Mitchell Municipal Airport was purchased and built. When the U.S. got involved, the military came in and used the airport as a satellite base for training bomber pilots. The 6,000-foot runway was built to handle B-17 and B-24 bombers. Both John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy landed their campaign jets at the Mitchell airport for rallies in town during their presidential campaigns. The airbase was decommissioned after the war ended and became the current airport. Only the water tower and a few other buildings remain from its military origins.

Dakota Wesleyan University has provided a quality, Christian based education since its founding in 1885. Among its distinguished alumni are former U.S. Senator, 1972 Democratic Presidential Candidate and Food for Peace Director, George McGovern.

Mitchell Technical Institute is one of the Midwest's leading technical schools offering programs in such high-tech fields as Energy Production and Transmission, Health Sciences, Automation controls, Accounting, Business Management, Culinary Arts, Construction, and Manufacturing, among others.

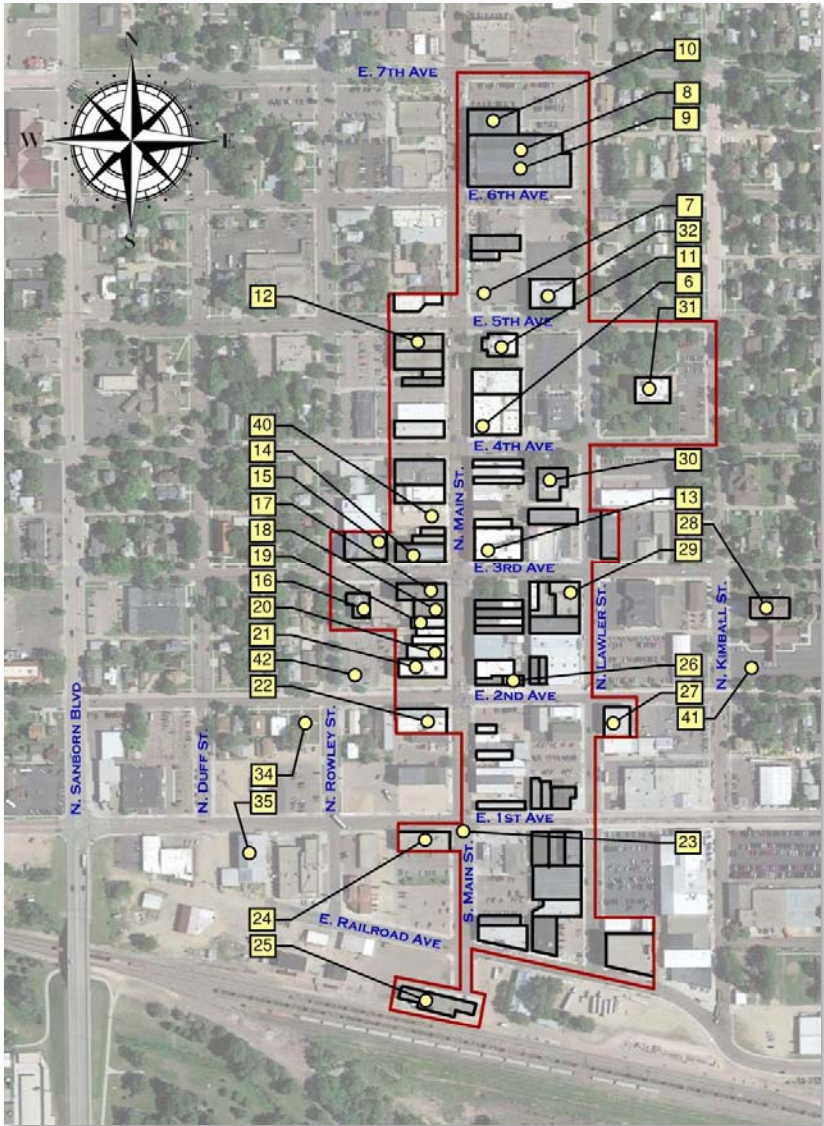
Today, Mitchell has a diversified economy which has expanded to include several manufacturers and high tech computer and communication firms. Mitchell is completely 100% wired with fiber optic cable and was awarded one of the world's top 21 intelligent cities in 2016. Mitchell is the smallest city to achieve this award.

Lake Mitchell, located just north of town, was created by damming Firesteel Creek which branches off and back into the James River (which is a tributary of the Missouri River). The lake covers over 2580 acres providing swimming, water, skiing, boating and fishing opportunities in the summer. In the winter, it's a popular spot for ice fishing. The lake is ringed by several public beaches and access points as well as many beautiful homes. The Lake Mitchell Campground is open for public camping on the south end of the lake.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

In Mitchell, two historic districts and several individual properties have been nominated to and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The two districts are the Mitchell Historic Commercial District and the Mitchell West Central Historic District (a residential area west of downtown). In 1985, the City of Mitchell became a Certified Local Government under the National Historic Preservation Act. The Mitchell Historic Preservation Commission continues to be a key local government resource for historic places in Mitchell.

# Map of Mitchell Commercial Historic District and tour buildings



## Walking Tour

(Approx. 45-60 min. walking time)

(Red Line denotes the SD Historic District)

Tour begins and ends at the Corn Palace.

## List of Historic Properties

### Main Street Walking Tour

#### Corn Palace

6. Former Corn Palace site - 1892
7. Former Corn Palace site - 1905
8. Former Corn Palace - 1921
9. Corn Palace - 2015
10. City Hall - Current
11. Christian Ministries Building
12. 5<sup>th</sup> & Main Office Building
13. Realty Building
14. Champney Building
15. Methodist Church
16. Carnegie Resource Center
17. Western Bank Building
18. Mitchell National Bank Building
19. VFW
20. Geyerman's Building
21. Medical Arts Building
22. First National Bank
23. South Main Street
24. Navin Apartments / Roberts Hotel
25. The Depot
26. Branson Bank Building
27. Mitchell Steam Laundry
28. Holy Family Church
29. Johnson Furniture
30. Former Post Office Building
31. Davison County Courthouse
32. Masonic Temple

### Buildings Around Town

34. Koch Flats
35. Mitchell Iron
36. Dakota Wesleyan Campus Buildings (not located on map)
37. St. Joseph's Hospital (not located on map)

### Residential Houses

38. Timon Spangler Residence (not located on map)
39. Lustron Houses (not located on map)

### Building that are no longer standing

40. Gale / Metropolitan / Paramount / State Theater
41. Holy Family School
42. City Hall

\*\* Numbers indicate which page the building is on.

## **MAIN STREET TOUR:**



### ***CORN PALACE SITE (1892 - 1904)*** ***Northeast corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street***

Beginning in the 1880's at least 58 communities throughout the Midwest tried various ideas such as a Grain Palace, Corn Palace, Coal Palace and Alfalfa Palace to name a few. It was a form of industrial development to attract new farmers to move to the area and homestead as well as provide a venue for entertainment. In 1892, the Corn Belt Real Estate Association, an organization comprised of agents from 16 counties in the surrounding area saw that Sioux City was no longer able to continue their Corn Palace tradition after five years due to serious flooding in 1891. The organization sent two representatives, L.O. Gale and Louis Beckwith to Sioux City to investigate the possibilities involved. While there they met with Mr. Rohe of Lawrence, Kansas who had been designing the Palaces in Sioux City and prevailed upon him to undertake the work in Mitchell. Upon their return to Mitchell they convinced the group to proceed with the idea and in one day the community prescribed \$3,700 to pay for this 66' x 100' new building.

In 1904, the last year in this building, the committee contracted with John Philip Sousa, The March King, to provide the weeks' entertainment at a cost of \$7,000, a huge sum of money at the time. To add to the story, Mitchell was in a fight of their life, to secure Mitchell as the state capitol! The fight had been brewing for several years and the Committee felt that Sousa might be enough to get the vote for Mitchell. It did not work as Pierre won the fight and still serves today as our capital city. After 125 years of Corn Palace history, Mitchell continues to have and cherish what is now the World's Only Corn Palace.



***CORN PALACE SITE (1905 - 1920)***  
***Northeast corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main Street***

The second location of the Corn Palace, a new 125' x142' structure was built for a cost of \$15,000 to accommodate larger audiences. The style was very similar to the first, it had a dirt floor like the first one, fronted onto 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and was just one block north of the first one. Like the first one it was only used during the summer months but brought many musicians and entertainers to Mitchell that provided much needed entertainment to the area prior to the days of radio and television. Trains set up special schedules bringing folks from miles away into see the shows and returning them late the same day.



1986 Corn Palace

***CORN PALACE (1921 - 2015)***  
***604 North Main Street***

The current site of the Corn Palace is the third location since the first Corn Belt Exposition structure was erected in 1892. While the first two Corn Palace structures were wood, fire insurance codes forced the issue for a larger fire-resistant brick and cement building. When first built, it would seat 5,000 which made it one of the largest event facilities in the state. Today it only seats approximately 3,500 with modern wider seats spaced to provide more leg room. The smaller capacity limits our ability to host large events.

The Committee hired renowned Chicago architects George and C.W. Rapp to design the new building. They were the leading theatre architects of their day having also designed the Paramount Theatre on Times Square, Loews' Kings in Brooklyn; the Chicago, Oriental, Palace, Riviera and Uptown Theatres in Chicago; the Paramount in Denver; the Uptown in Milwaukee along with over 400 other movie palaces around the world.





***CORN PALACE (2015 - PRESENT)***  
***604 North Main Street***

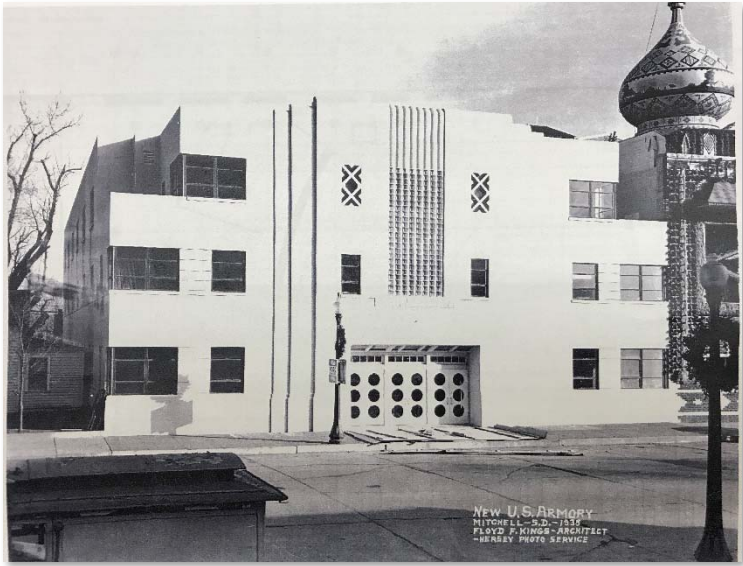
The current Corn Palace is literally the heart of Mitchell with any and every kind of entertainment from basketball games on both the high school and college levels to professional bull riding contests being performed there. During the tourist season the Palace floor is transformed into a tourist shop serving thousands of tourists each day. Each spring the Shrine circus moves in with three rings of entertainment for three days.

Many high school, college and community functions also make use of the facilities so it is truly a facility for everyone at one time or another. Over the past 125 years of Corn Palace history, many attempts to copy the idea have been tried elsewhere but Mitchell still has bragging rights to the "World's Only Corn Palace"!

Today it hosts concerts, basketball games, wrestling tournaments, home shows and other events. It seats approximately 3,500 depending on the type of event being held. The first major act to perform in the first Corn Palace was John Phillip Sousa and the U.S. Marine Band starting a tradition of leading performers and politicians throughout the years who came to Mitchell to "play the Palace."

The list includes Willie Nelson, Wayne Newton, Kenny Chesney, Jim Nabors, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, The Village People, Three Dog Night, Trisha Yearwood, Lawrence Welk Show, The Oakridge Boys, Tanya Tucker, Tammy Wynette, Lee Greenwood, Ronnie Milsap, Crystal Gale, Gatlin Brothers, Lennon Sisters, Bobby Vinton, Louie Anderson, Red Skelton, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Rich Little, Victor Borge, Jack Benny The Three Stooges, The Mills Brothers, Duke Ellington, Guy Lombardo, Tommy Dorsey, Paul Whiteman, William Jennings Bryan.

***Additional pictures of the Corn Palace for every year built, are located inside the current Corn Palace along with the original paintings of Oscar Howe.***



***Originally built as: Mitchell based U.S. National Guard Armory (1937)***  
***CITY HALL - CURRENT***  
***612 North Main Street***

In 1937 voters first approved \$40,000 of municipal bonds to finance the building of an addition to the Corn Palace which was to be called the U.S. Armory to serve for the National Guard detachments stationed in Mitchell. The proposed Art Deco style building was to be built with all fireproof construction reinforced with poured concrete. The cost in 1937 was estimated to be approximately \$90,000.

The building was to be 75' wide x 142' long and attached to the north side of the Corn Palace by connecting arches with the main floor of the Palace. Local Architect Floyd F. Kings was the architect for the project. On the first floor the artillery units would be housed with connecting doors to the Palace. The second floor would be available for drilling and offices while the basement was used to store approximately 25 National Guard vehicles and weapon vaults as well as shower and locker rooms. A large elevator at the rear of the building allowed all vehicles to be moved to any of the three floors. Prior to moving out the first floor was also used as a youth recreation center for several years with the guard using the basement and second floors only. Over the years, the second floor was also used for local basketball games and dances. By 1960, the building had become too small for the National Guard and a new larger facility was built at the Mitchell Airport.

At the same time, the city council was faced with serious problems with their current city hall so made the decision to remodel the armory into the city hall. Over time it has been remodeled for city uses several times and it still serves the city very well. The second floor currently serves as auxiliary space for the Corn Palace.



*Originally built as: Elks Lodge #1059 BPOE (1911)*  
**CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES BUILDING**  
**422 North Main Street**

This Neo-Classical style building was erected in 1911 as the Mitchell Elks Lodge No. 1059 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (B.P.O.E.). The huge porch measuring 80 by 14 feet supported by four large columns of Bedford stone greeted all visitors and was used quite often for speakers at special gatherings requiring space for large crowds. The basement housed a kitchen, a short order restaurant, a two-lane bowling alley, a gymnasium, two showers, two bathtubs and a Turkish bath. On the second floor was a dining room seating 240 guests with a dumb waiter connecting to the kitchen in the basement, a reading room, a smoking room, a card room, and a billiard hall with four tables. Also on the second floor is another card room for non-smokers, anti-rooms, and a large lodge room measuring 50 x 64 feet.

In 1981, the Elks moved out as they had constructed a new lodge on 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Since the Elks left the building has been used as a health spa and currently the Christian Ministries.

The interior still has much of the original ornate woodwork and details.



*Originally built as: Pence Buick Dealership (1914)*  
**5<sup>TH</sup> & MAIN OFFICE BUILDING**  
**423 North Main Street**

This Chicago Style building was first erected as the Pence Buick dealership and later Western Chevrolet Co. It housed the largest elevator in the city and hoisted automobiles to the roof for storage. Each fall when the new model cars came out the dealers would hide them until opening day and the roof parking worked well for hiding from the public.

In 1951, Montgomery Ward and Company occupied the building and built an addition to the South of the original building. The new addition replaced the structure to the left (south) shown in the photo, known as the Dreamland Ballroom where dances were held several times a week. Bowery dancing was featured at times where each dance cost ten cents and the floor was cleared after each dance. Well known bands from all over the country played often.

Later the building was occupied by retail clothing businesses and housed the American Legion Club rooms for a short time on the second floor. It currently houses offices, some apartments as well as Crazy about Cup Cakes.



*Originally built as: Realty Building (1920)*

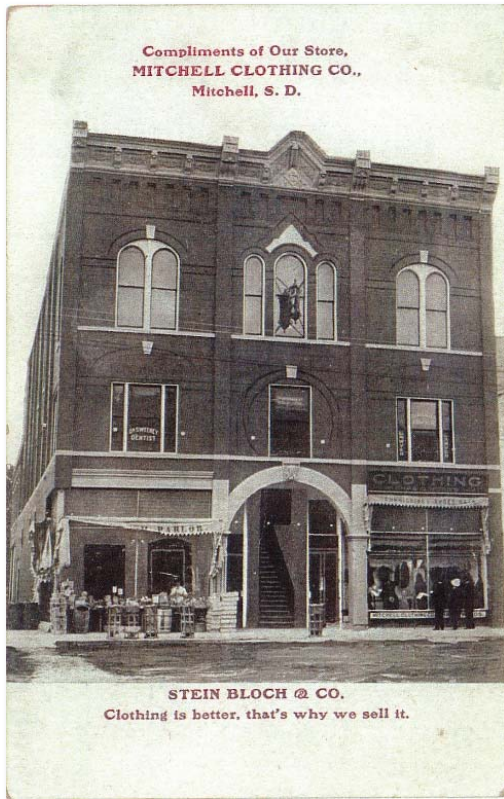
***REALTY BUILDING***

***300 North Main Street (Corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Main Street)***

This large 3 story, office building was built by the Baron Brothers in 1920 on the site of the former Alexander Mitchell Hotel which had burned in 1914.

Although the building is 100' wide, occupying 4 lots, the Architect wanted to blend in with the smaller neighboring buildings and not overwhelm them. His solution was to design setbacks in the third floor that actually make the top of the building look like three smaller buildings. This idea is also practical as it provided additional windows and cross ventilation for the apartments on the third floor in those days before air conditioning.

Baron's occupied half of the first floor and Woolworth's on the other half until 1959 when Baron's built a new building a block north for themselves and Woolworth's took over the entire first floor until they closed in 1994. The second floor was occupied by offices for doctors, lawyers, and other businesses until the 1990's when those spaces were converted into apartments. The building has a passenger elevator that is no longer in use. It was never automated and required an attendant to operate the electric controls manually.



*Originally built as: Champney Building (1887)*  
**CHAMPNEY BUILDING**  
**301 North Main Street**

Built in 1887, this three-story building is one of the oldest building in downtown Mitchell. When it was built, the Masonic Lodge occupied the entire third floor. The Masonic square and compass symbol can still be seen at the top of the building along with the 1887 date. When the Masons built their own lodge in 1924 at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Lawler, the second and third floors were converted to high end apartments.

The first-floor housed space for two businesses. Saterlie Drug occupied the corner space for many years before moving across the street to the Western Bank Building. The north space was the home of the Maynard Theatre from 1910 to 1914. The 25' wide space was later divided into two smaller shops for many years and has only recently been converted back into one larger space. Currently a western wear store occupies the south space on the corner. The apartments were unfortunately allowed to deteriorate over the years and were closed in 1980.

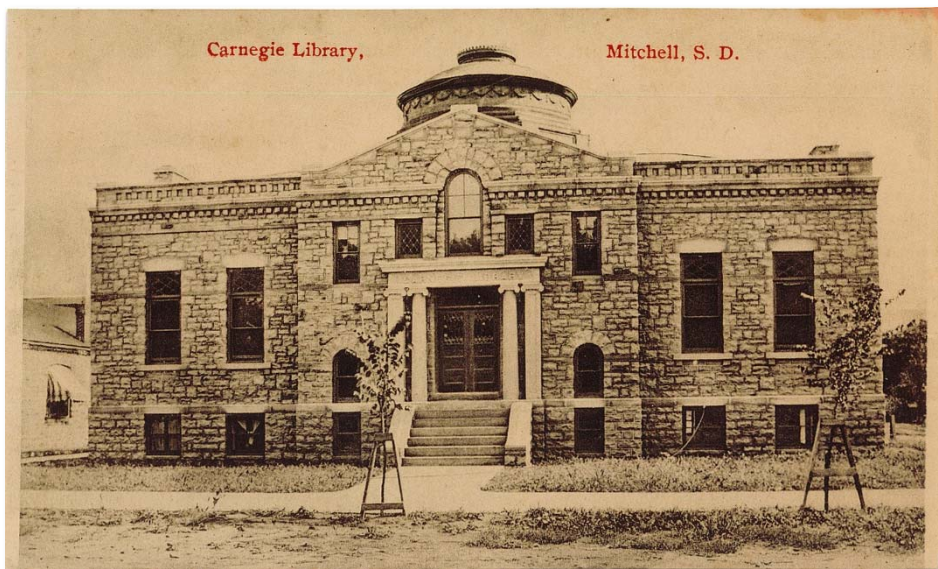
Initially the second floor had elaborate bay windows on the east and south sides starting at the north end and alternating every other window onto the south side. These were removed for unknown reasons in the early 1900's.



*Originally built as: Methodist Episcopal Church (1908)*  
***FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH***  
*310 North Rowley Street*

Dedicated on January 26, 1906, the church was the largest protestant church in Mitchell at that time and built for \$55,000. The large stained-glass windows throughout the building are now all going through restoration as is the sanctuary. The 1911 Austin organ has been restored and is still in use. In 1960 a brick educational/office wing was added to the north side of the building and is still used for those purposes. The current church bell was moved from the original church and is still in use.

Sunday morning radio broadcasts began in 1947 with KORN AM Radio when they first signed on and 70 years later they are still broadcasting Sunday morning services.



*Originally built as: Carnegie Library (1903)*  
**CARNEGIE RESOURCE CENTER**  
**119 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue**

In 1902, E.S. Johnson, editor of the Mitchell Gazette collaborated with Andrew Carnegie for the development of a library. Carnegie donated to the City of Mitchell, a total of \$12,000 for the library construction. The general contractor was A.J. Kings who built many of the buildings throughout the Mitchell area.

By 1930 the Library outgrew its original space and an addition was added to the south end of the building. In 1960 the city again added to the east side for more space and in 1970 a larger and more modern library was constructed one block west.

In 1971 the building was converted to the Mitchell Art Center and in 1974 it became the Oscar Howe Cultural Center. Oscar Howe was a local Native American Indian artist who designed the Corn Palace murals from 1948 - 1971. The building also housed the YWCA for a time.

In 2006 the building was sold to the Mitchell Area Historical Society and now houses the Carnegie Resource Center along with the Mitchell Genealogical Society. Historic records of Mitchell and the surrounding area can be found there.

The Oscar Howe Museum has been moved to the Dakota Discovery Museum on the Dakota Wesleyan University campus.

Make sure you take some time to step inside the building and view the dome by Oscar Howe and the many Corn Palace artifacts.



*Western National-Bank. Mitchell S. D.*



***Originally built as: Western National Bank (1907)***  
***WESTERN BANK BUILDING***  
***219 North Main Street***

This 4-story office building was built in the commercial/Chicago style, popularized by Louis Sullivan and other Chicago Architects in early skyscrapers. Look at the building diagonally across the street from the NE corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Main and you'll note the sleek vertical lines formed by the columns on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side of the building.

The Western Bank built the building in 1907 and occupied the northeast corner while a shoe store and a music store filled out the first floor. The bank went into receivership in 1924. J.C. Penny's occupied the building until 1960 when they built a new store two blocks north. The White Drug chain became the next tenant followed by Saterlie Drug. A local Arts & Crafts store is the current owner and business. The upper three floors housed lawyers, doctors, and dentists as well as various other offices.

The offices have been closed since the 1970's and await revitalization. The space is ideal for loft apartments. The building includes a passenger elevator that was never automated.



Mitchell National  
Bank, Mitchell,  
S. D.

1888 Published by Southwestern, State Artists, Mitchell, S. D.

*Originally built as: Mitchell National Bank (1907)*  
**MITCHELL NATIONAL BANK BUILDING**  
*217 North Main Street*

This beautiful bank building was built in 1907 in the Neoclassical revival style, sometimes called Beaux Arts Classical style, with four large Ionic Columns topped by a pediment.

The building is constructed of reinforced pressed concrete with a façade of white marble. The locally owned bank built a new building in 1999 at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> & Lawler Street, moving out of their long-time home. Several tenants have occupied this building since. The interior of the building is equally impressive highlighted by a two-story lobby with marble wainscoting. The studios of KORN radio were located on the second floor from 1949 to 1960. The current owner and tenant is Tickled Pink, a women's clothing store.

As you stroll by, take a little time to visit the interior and bring yourself back into to time when the large 2 story lobby would be a buzz with patrons of the bank.



*Originally built as: a retail store of unknown occupant (ca 1890)*  
**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS**  
*215 North Main Street*

The original Sioux Quartzite façade of this 1890's building can be seen on the second floor. When Dahle Jewelry put the Art Deco façade on the first floor in the 1940's, the Architect tastefully choose a polished pink granite that complimented the original construction that would still be visible on the second floor. The curved glass windows made stylish displays for the jewelry store which was the tenant until the late 1980's.

The current owner, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Club has been able to preserve much of the beautiful mahogany wood of the interior and it serves as their clubrooms today. Currently they are remodeling the second floor with an elevator planned for a museum and banquet use.



*Originally built as: S.S. Kresge Company, 5 and Dime store (1931)*  
**GEYERMAN'S BUILDING**  
**213 North Main Street**

The Kresge Company (predecessor to K-Mart) built this handsome two story building as a dime store in 1931. When Kresge closed in 1961, the local Geyerman's store purchased the building and it has been the home of a leading women's ready-to-wear store ever since. Store offices are located on the second floor. The full basement is warehouse, shipping, and receiving for the store.

Stand across the street and look at the brickwork on the second floor. After a little while, you'll start to notice the subtle herringbone pattern of the bricks. The pattern is a testament to the artistry of the Architect and skill of the bricklayers. This kind of detail is rarely seen in today's world of high labor cost and "build it fast" construction. The facade also has elements of Art Deco design.



*Originally built as: Medical Arts Building (1936)*

***MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING***

***203 – 207 North Main Street***

This 3-story building is one of the few privately built buildings in SD built in the Art Deco style of Architecture. Note how the vertical columns in the stone façade and alignment of the windows give it a tall, sleek, and modern look. Local businessmen and real estate developers, the Baron Brothers, built the building in 1936 on the site of the former Butterfield department store which had burned the previous year.

The aluminum sign above the entrance in the center of the building to the elevator lobby leading to the upper floors offices is impressive at night when rear lit through the window behind. The main floor houses two store rentals. The upper floors housed a number of Dentists, Doctors and Lawyer offices. When it was built, the south side of the building was occupied by the Time Theatre, operated by the Paramount chain. The theatre seated 400 with two sections of seats on each side of a single center aisle. Restrooms were located off a lounge on the basement level. The ultra-modern, but smallish theatre was the little sister to the company's "A" theatre in town, the 900 seat Paramount. After the invention of the television hurt the movie business, Paramount decided it was cheaper to close the theatre than to operate it. They closed it in May of 1955 but continued to pay rent until the 25 year lease finally ran out in 1961 when the floor was leveled and it was converted to a beauty shop and later retail space.

The north half of the building originally housed a drug store and is the current home to Dr. Lucky's Bar and Grille.



*Originally built as: First National Bank (1906)*  
**FIRST NATIONAL BANK**  
**123 North Main Street**

This Sullivanesque style building was originally constructed as a bank with commercial office space on the upper two floors and the basement.

Developed by one of Mitchell's prominent business leaders, O.L. Branson, the building was home to two banking operations simultaneously, The First Trust and Savings Bank and the First National Bank. Branson was also president of the O.L. Branson & Co. Inc., a farm loan and insurance company.

Branson later sold the building to the First National Bank and moved his insurance company to a new building on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue which is also featured on this tour.

In 1926, the First National Bank sold the building to H.E. Hitchcock. In 1929, the upper two floors were converted into some offices and apartments and served that purpose for many years.

The building currently is the office and home of Architect, Larry Jirsa.



## ***SOUTH MAIN STREET (CA 1910)***

### ***100 block***

Contained on this block were three major hotels of “Hotel Row”, the Widmann Hotel located on the southeast corner of First and Main and the Merchants Hotel (later known as the Mitchell Hotel) located in the middle of the block just south of the Widman. Across the street to the west was the Navin Hotel.

In 1902, the construction of the Widmann Hotel by Fred Widman was begun. It started with a 70’ frontage on Main street and went 142’ deep to the alley. It was a four-story building with a full basement with its own light plant, steam heat and a elevator to all floors. It was considered one of the finest hotels in the state, and because of its size, many community activities were held there. In April of 1950, the Widmann was destroyed by fire. In the 1977, the Mitchell Hotel was also lost to a fire. The corner property is now a gas station.

Across the street to the west was the Navin Hotel on the southwest corner of the intersection. It was advertised as “absolutely fireproof”! It was built in 1913 as a three-story building with hot and cold running water, electric lights, steam heat and a telephone in each room. It also had a lunch room and a Grill room. Room rates were advertised as \$1.00 and up. After the hotel closed it became a nursing home for several years and now houses the Navin apartments.

A tunnel was constructed under Main Street between the Widman and Navin Hotels and was always rumored that during prohibition it was used for moving illegal “booze” between the two. It was closed off and filled in later years.

Numerous other hotels/rooming houses were located in a three-block area near the depot. Horse drawn taxi cabs could be seen daily serving the needs of all the hotels. See additional photos on the next page.

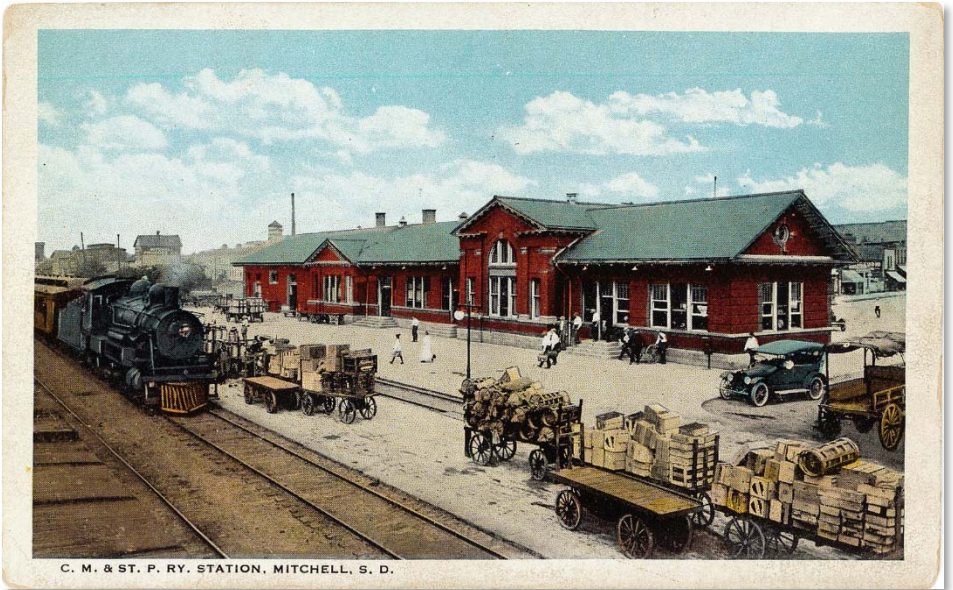


*Originally built as: Navin Hotel / Hotel Roberts (1955)*  
**NAVIN APARTMENTS**



**WIDMANN HOTEL (1902)**





*Originally built as: Chicago Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railway Station (1909)*  
***THE DEPOT PUB & GRILLE***  
***210 South Main Street***

The above hand-colored photo, taken around 1920, shows the 1909 Milwaukee Railroad Depot designed by Chicago Architect, J.A. Linstrand. The structure is 214'6" long by 38' wide at its widest point. Construction cost for the building was \$40,000 with additional cost for the site work and landscaping.

During the early days, the depot was considered the most significant structure on Main Street and the hub of passenger activity. Porters often carried guest luggage down the street to the three nearby hotels. During World War II many GI's passing through Mitchell on the train were served food by volunteers trying to make their day a bit brighter.

In 1954, the railway terminated passenger service operations and then freight service in 1981. The building has been converted into The Depot Pub and Grill. Much of the original interior décor was maintained including the freight room which served as the Railway Express quarters for many years. Freight train activity can be viewed throughout the day from the restaurant as they move through Mitchell.

If you time your visit right, you can stop to catch a bite and take in the original woodwork and many Railroad items and decorations.



*Originally built as: O.L. Branson & Company Bankers (1916)*  
**BRANSON BANK BUILDING**  
**110 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue**

Called the most architecturally significant building in Mitchell, the Branson Bank building is a prime example of the Prairie School of Architecture and is pictured in books and textbooks on the Prairie School of Architecture. This style, first made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan in the early 1900's, was modern and advocated form, function, and harmony with nature. It was an American style that shunned the artificial fanciness and high peaked roofs of Europe and the Victorian Era.

Local developer George Logan commissioned leading Minneapolis Architects and proponents of the Prairie School style Purcell & Elmslie to design the building in 1916 for banker O.L. Branson. The terra cotta ornamentation over the entrances contains Mitchell's only gargoyles. The 8' x 36' stained glass transom over the entrance on the south exposure allows natural sunlight to fill the building with warm, natural light. Frank Lloyd Wright himself visited the building while on a train stopover in the 1930's.

The Branson Bank closed after the crash of 1929 and was then occupied for the next 40 years by the Mitchell Abstract Company. A number of other professional tenants have occupied the building since.

The interior is a very spacious open interior flooded by natural sunlight through the stained-glass transom on the south exposure of the front. Many original counter tops and furnishings are still used. The building was restored in 2012 with the help of a Deadwood Grant.



*Originally built as: Mitchell Steam Laundry (1910)*  
***STEAM LAUNDRY***  
***203 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue***

The Mitchell Steam Laundry was founded in 1894 by J.K. Fox and J.D. Johnson and the plant had every new piece of equipment that became available to serve the public laundry needs. By 1929 they were employing 38 people and had 70 agents scattered throughout South Dakota and Iowa. Mr. and Mrs. Fox had three sons who all were involved in the business until closing in 1959. After the laundry closed, the ground floor has been used by various retail stores including S&H Green stamps. The second floor still houses apartments.

Until its closing, the laundry still used the original washers and dryers which were run by overhead drive shafts suspended from the ceiling. Wide flat leather belts ran from one large electric motor to a pulley on the drive shaft to turn the shaft. Pulleys and belts then ran down to each piece of equipment.



*Originally built as: Holy Family Church (1906)*

***HOLY FAMILY CHURCH***

***200 North Kimball Street***

This Late Gothic Revival Style Church was built in 1906 of Sioux Quartzite measured 62' wide and 132' long and was the only Catholic Church in Mitchell until the 1962. The windows are large Gothic stained glass. This type of stone construction marked the beginning of an era of similar structures in the city of Mitchell in which A.J. Kings was the leading contractor.

The steeple, tallest one in Mitchell, tops off at 172' including the stainless-steel cross on top. In 1908 Estey pipe organ #586 was installed with 1215 pipes by the Estey Organ Co. of Brattleboro, VT at a cost of \$4,500 and efforts are underway to rebuild it back to its former glory.

Ongoing restoration projects are restoring the sanctuary to its original beauty along with adding modern conveniences such as air conditioning and handicap access.



*Originally built as: Johnson Furniture (1922)*  
***JOHNSON FURNITURE***  
***123 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (Corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Lawler)***

This 4-story brick building was constructed in 1922 as a two-story structure with the ability to add 5 more stories. Two upper floors were added in 1928–29 to house offices and apartments. The Architect for the project was Walter J. Dixon, one of Mitchell’s local Architects. Johnson Furniture was one of Mitchell’s oldest and largest retail businesses, established in 1907 and served the Mitchell area until 1992.

Various offices have occupied the second floor over the years such as KMIT Radio station; IRS; Tinan, Carlson & Padrnos, Attorneys at Law; U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Drs. Tobin & Tobin, and the Selective Service Office.

The building currently houses the Cornerstone Coffee House and Bonnie’s Décor, a gift shop on the main floor with apartments on the upper floors.

U. S. Post Office,  
Mitchell, South Dakota.



*Originally built as: Federal Building / Post Office (1907)*  
***FORMER POST OFFICE BUILDING***  
***117 East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue***

This Neo-Classical style building was originally built as a Federal Building and United States Post Office at a cost of \$90,000 in 1907. It measured 85' fronting onto West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 53' on Lawler Street. It had a high basement with two upper floors serving as federal government offices and rental office space. In the early 1960's the postal service moved to a new facility and this building was converted to the Mitchell School District Administration Offices and later it was sold to a private business as office space and still serves that purpose today.



*Originally built as: Davison County Courthouse (1937)*  
**DAVISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE**  
**200 East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

The Art Deco style four story building was designed by Mitchell Architects Kings & Dixon, and was constructed at a cost of \$235,000 as a WPA (Works Progress Administration under President Franklin Roosevelt) project and measured 79 x 114 feet fronting onto East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Mr. Kings died during construction and Walt Dixon finished the project in his place. The concrete skeleton has an exterior of Minnesota cut stone, steel windows, cast aluminum spandrels and entrance doors. The interior has all stairways, corridors and walls marble lined from floor to ceiling while the floors are all terrazzo with all steel office doors with walnut finish. An automatic elevator serves all floors. Stainless steel handrails are used on all stairways.

The marvelous interior lobby details the Art Deco style and murals of the early settlement of Firesteel, our first county seat, are worthy of viewing. The structure houses two courtrooms, judges' chambers, and a law library along with the various county offices.

The county jail was located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. It could house 18 men and 2 women. When it was built, it was thought to be "escape proof". They put a solid rod inside of a hollow rod in the attempt to keep prisoners from sawing through the window bars. It was the most updated construction in the area and as a result, the jail housed the worst criminals from the surrounding counties.

The interior has many murals and the hallways have many art deco decorative details.



*Originally built as: Masonic Temple (1924)*

***MASONIC TEMPLE***

***112 East 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue***

After 6 years of planning and fund raising, the present Masonic Temple moved from its location on 3<sup>rd</sup> & Main and opened its doors for the first meeting on December 9, 1924. It had a large kitchen and dining space which could seat approximately 200. Other than the Corn Palace it had the largest dining space so many large meetings and banquets were held there.

In April 1947, fifty-one lifetime memberships were sold for \$200 each to immediately raise money and prevent foreclosure. The temple was saved when \$14,480 was raised.

The buildings architecturally ornate interior remains virtually intact since its completion. Exquisite detail demonstrates the craftsmanship of the period. An elevator was installed in recent years to accommodate accessibility throughout the building.





## **BUILDINGS AROUND TOWN:**



*Originally built as: Koch Apartments (1903)*

### ***KOCH FLATS***

***North Rowley & West 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue***

Constructed in 1903, 1907, and 1917, the Koch Flats were named after prominent Mitchell businessman, William Koch. These buildings were some of Mitchell's earliest apartment complexes and were rented by many railroad workers.

The westernmost structure, shown on the right in this photo, was originally the Whittier School building, Mitchell's first school and erected in 1880. In the mid 30's the structure was moved from 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sanborn to its present location and was renovated into an Art Deco style apartment building, designed by a local Architect, Floyd Kings. Kings (1893 to 1936) was one of Mitchell's leading architects and was the son of Mitchell contractor A.J. Kings. Kings also designed the Davison County Courthouse and Roxy Theatre. The Queen Anne style house located on the corner of the property originally served as the residence for William Koch.

Currently all three of the buildings still serve as apartments. On the chimney, there is a cross in the brickwork. It is unknown as to the reason and continues to stir up theories and questions.



*Originally built as: Mitchell Iron Supply Company (1884)*

**MITCHELL IRON**

**217 West 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

Mitchell Iron & Supply was founded in 1884 by George H. Summers, a civil war veteran from Wisconsin. It has always been located at 217 West 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Though the building has been rebuilt, renovated, and added on to over the years it is still in the same location. Summers constructed the building with lumber hauled by ox cart from Yankton. Mitchell Iron & Supply began as a machine shop, foundry, boiler works and farm machinery repair business and still serves the areas needs along those lines. The Summers family, now in their sixth generation of operations is the oldest family run business in Mitchell.



***Originally built as: Dakota Wesleyan University (1883)***  
***DWU CAMPUS***  
***1200 West University Avenue***

In 1883, a small band of Methodist settlers meeting in Dakota Territory secured a charter to found the college that would become Dakota Wesleyan University. These hardy pioneers were driven to "build a college of stone while living in houses of sod."

DWU is known for academic excellence and a commitment to service. A curriculum focused on innovative thinking and the development of individual strengths ensures that DWU students are prepared to lead in a regional and global workforce.

The Kelley Center for Entrepreneurship and the McGovern Center for Leadership and Public Service are two centers of excellence on campus. The Kelley Center is committed to fostering a commitment to innovative thinking and providing experiential and entrepreneurial learning opportunities unlike any in the region.

The McGovern Center for Leadership and Public Service is named for George and Eleanor McGovern, Wesleyan's most recognized alumni. Students who participate in the McGovern Center are exposed to practical leadership at all levels, as well as the world of public service.

With robust performing arts programs, a variety of conference and lecture series, as well as 15 intercollegiate athletic teams, DWU provides cultural, educational and entertainment opportunities for all interests. The compact, beautifully maintained campus and new facilities for student and community use make Dakota Wesleyan University the envy of peer institutions.

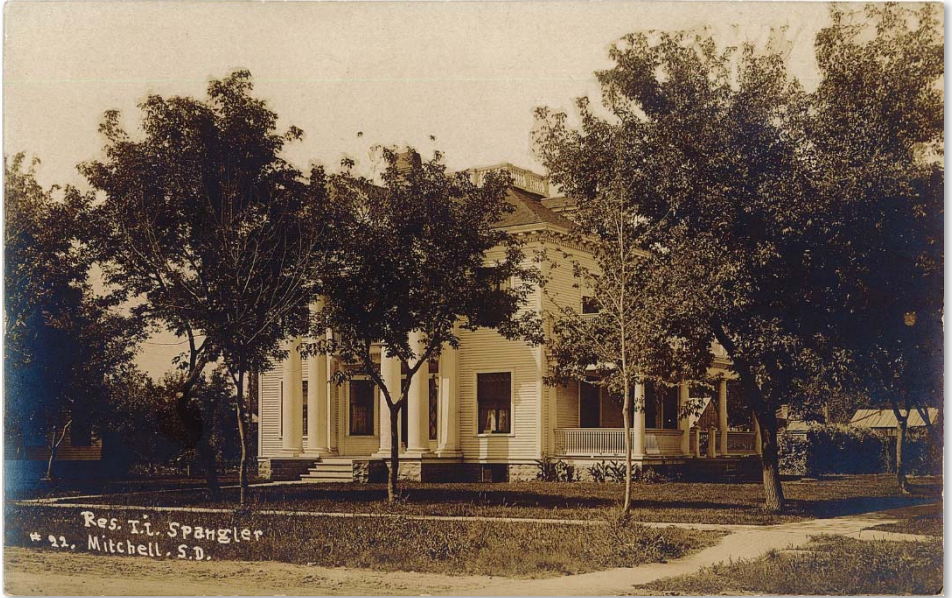


*Originally built as: St. Joseph's Hospital and Nurse's Home (1921)*  
***AVERA QUEEN OF PEACE HOSPITAL***  
***1200 East 5th Avenue***

St. Joseph's Hospital had been crowded for several years. So, in 1921, when the annual census reached 1000, the Sisters decided to borrow \$175,000 to build a new 85 bed Hospital. The new St. Joseph Hospital, a red brick modified colonial structure, opened in September 1922. It featured all outside rooms, large sun porches and the latest technology – an x-ray machine and darkroom, a laboratory for urinalysis and simple blood test, and diathermy (heat treatment) equipment.

Their 1921 structure is now a part of the Avera Queen of Peace Hospital and provides space for the cafeteria, Pharmacy, information technology, and administrative services.

## **RESIDENTIAL HOUSES:**



### ***TIMON J. SPANGLER RESIDENCE (CA 1904)*** ***220 East 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue***

From an edition of "WHO'S WHO IN SOUTH DAKOTA", Timon J. Spangler was one of six students in the second graduating class of Mitchell High School in 1887. He later enrolled in the law school at Ann Arbor, MI and graduated in 1893. He returned to Mitchell and practiced law for 19 years. He served as Davison County State's Attorney from 1905 to 1908. In 1902, he also was appointed judge advocate-general of the South Dakota National Guard, with the rank of Colonel.

The Who's Who listing also indicates he "lives in one of the most magnificent homes in the state, fronting onto the court yard square in the city of Mitchell. Its stately porch colonnades, and massive Grecian appearance from without, are but surpassed by its Mosaic designs, spacious halls and classic finish within."

In 1904 during the capital city fight, the city of Mitchell offered the state free use of the newly built city hall, not in use yet for the capitol building until it could decide what and where it wanted to build. From that story, a rumor was started that the Spangler residence was going to be the Governor's residence if the move was made. After the story was told a few times, it became fact in some minds and the story still persists!



## ***LUSTRON HOUSES (CA 1950's)***

***510 S. Montana***

***720 Mitchell Blvd***

***813 Vincent Place***

***819 Vincent Place***

***824 Vincent Place***

After WWII, veterans came home in large numbers, eager to pursue the American dream of family and home ownership. There was a critical shortage of affordable housing with few immediate answers. In an effort to build as many homes as quickly as possible, Congress provided funds in 1946 for research into prefabricated housing and production subsidies. One of the companies entering the field, Lustron Corporation of New Jersey promoted its porcelain, steel-paneled houses as the "new standard of living." The Lustron homes were designed as a single-story, gabled-roof, ranch style buildings enclosing approximately one thousand square feet. All construction –from the wall framing to roof trusses- was done in steel, and all surfaces except the asphalt-tile floors and the concrete slab on which the house rested were porcelain steel. The porcelain enameling provided a glasslike, maintenance-free finish to the two by two-foot square exterior panels, and the four by four ceiling panels. After the panels were enameled and shaped, plastic gaskets were added to seal the joints, and insulation was automatically cemented to the inside. Although Lustron fell far short of their yearly goal of 30,000 homes, the press proclaimed the company a success. Such accolades were short lived, however. By 1950 they were bankrupt and had shipped fewer than 2,500 homes.

Approximately forty of them came to South Dakota and of that number, five were built in Mitchell and still in use.

***These are private residences, please respect their privacy and property.***

## **BUILDING THAT ARE NO LONGER STANDING:**



*Originally built as: Gale Theatre (1906)*

***GALE / METROPOLITAN / PARAMOUNT / STATE THEATRE***  
***313 North Main Street***

The Gale Theatre was constructed at 311-315 North Main Street in 1906. It boasted over 1,000 seats, two balconies and 8 boxes. It was destroyed by fire in March of 1914.

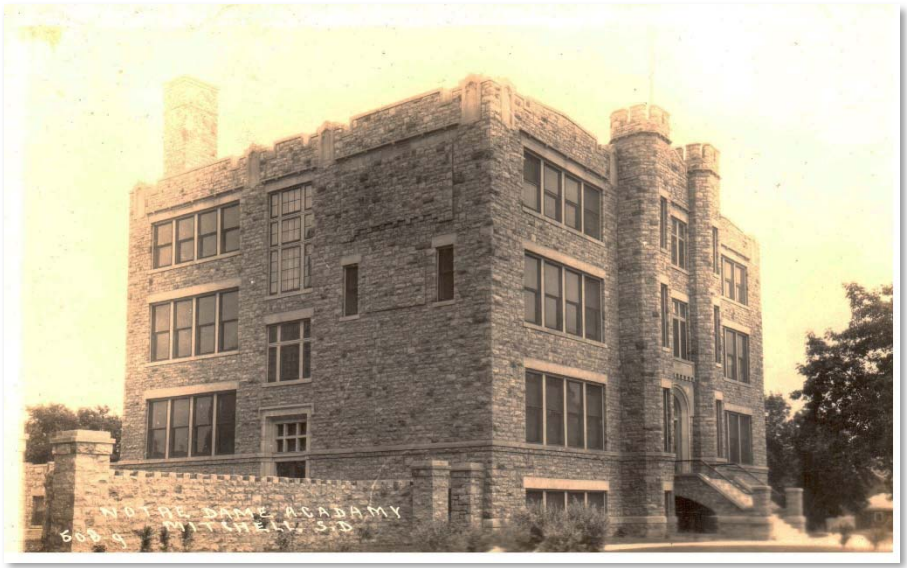
In 1915, the theater was rebuilt and opened as the Metropolitan Opera House, a stage and vaudeville theater. Gradually movies took over as Vaudeville passed into history. Paramount studios acquired the theatre in 1929 and added it to their chain of 1,400 theatres, the largest in the nation.

In 1932, the theater was remodeled and the name changed to the Paramount Theater to reflect its affiliation with the chain. The theatre was modernized in the art deco style. A washed-air evaporative cooling system was installed, this was the first air conditioning system in Mitchell.

In 1952, the theater was again remodeled and renamed the State Theatre. It was the second largest movie theater in SD with a seating capacity of 901. In 1972, it was acquired by Mitchell based Logan Luxury Theatres Corp.

In 2001, it was sold to the Area Community Theater, a local theater group for the live performing arts. After extensive remodeling in 2004, a fire destroyed the building and is now a parking lot.



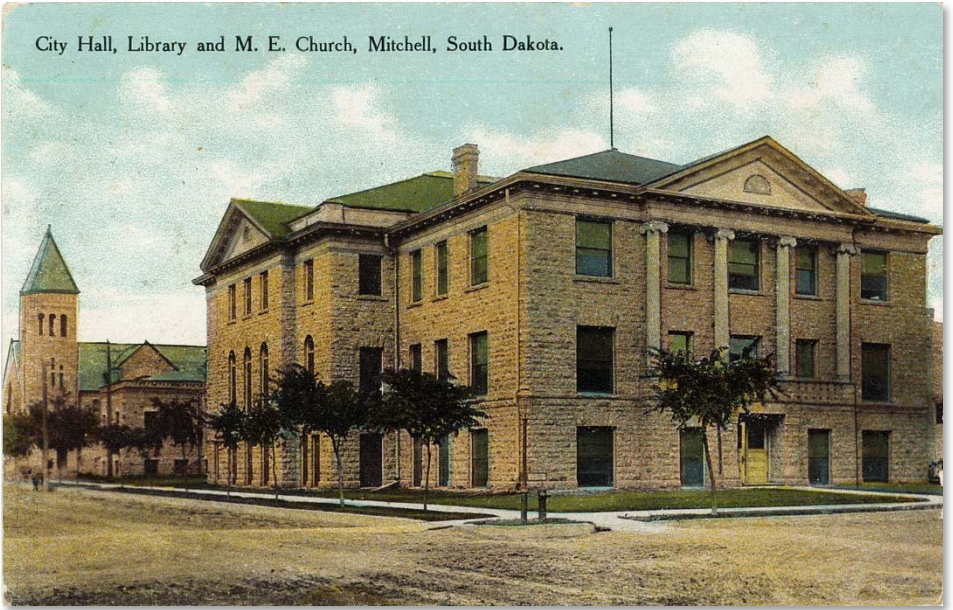


*Originally built as: Holy Family Grade School (1912)*  
**HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL**  
**200 North Kimball Street (Corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Kimball)**

In 1885, Holy Family grade school opened and in 1912 Notre Dame high school started. The first graduation was held in 1914. In 1922 an addition was built to the east (left in this photo) of this original building to house more classrooms to serve the growing city.

The high school closed in 1970, and the grade school was relocated in 2000. The building was torn down in 2006. In 2008 an additional Gathering Space to the church was added to the south side of the Sanctuary building which also provides handicap access ability along with parking.

City Hall, Library and M. E. Church, Mitchell, South Dakota.



***CITY HALL (1903)***  
***(Corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Rowley)***

In September of 1902 building plans for a new city hall were presented to the city council by W.L. Dow of Sioux Falls and on September 22, 1903 the cornerstone was laid at the northeast corner of West Second Avenue and North Rowley Street. In attendance were the Governor Herried and his wife as well as many city dignitaries. Built of jasper granite at a cost of \$55,000. it measured 86' x 112' in size; three full stories in height; contained twenty-one large office rooms, fourteen ample vaults, two legislative halls each 66'x90' and six large committee rooms.

At the rear of the picture can be seen the Carnegie Library which had just been completed. In 1955, the city hall was remodeled and in 1960 the building was torn down due to ground settling issues. It was made into a city parking lot and remains as such today,

In 1904, the city of Mitchell was in a capitol city fight throughout the state and the city of Mitchell made an offer to the state that if chosen as the capitol city they would allow the state free use of the building until the state could erect facilities to house state government. The city signed a perpetual lease for the state to use the building and had it on file but of course that did not happen as the voters selected Pierre, which is more centrally located in the state, for the permanent state capitol. Several cities had made several attempts to get the capitol in previous years and in the end, it came down to Mitchell and Pierre who both made many promises they could not keep but Pierre won.



## ***ADDITIONAL NOTES:***

### Sioux Quartzite:

This unique pink granite, sometimes also called Sioux Falls granite, is primarily quarried in Sioux Falls and Dell Rapids, SD. Stonemasons from Italy and Scotland were recruited to cut this stone which was used on many of South Dakota's prominent buildings. In Mitchell, you'll find several buildings utilizing this durable material including two buildings at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Rowley Streets, just one block west of Main; the 1904 Carnegie Library Building and the 1904 United Methodist Church across the street. Other buildings include: Holy Family Catholic Church at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Rowley Street, Science Hall on the Dakota Wesleyan campus.

After the 1920's brick took over as a construction material as it was no longer cost effective to cut the stone into usable blocks. Instead of quarrying veins of the hard granite, the quarries shifted to softer veins of the rock that is still used today primarily as paving material by mixing with asphalt. Many South Dakota streets and highways are pink colored because of the Sioux quartzite used in their construction.

### Art Deco Architecture:

Art Deco was a modern, streamlined design that was popular in the 1920's and 30's. It celebrated progress, machines, and new materials. In those decades preceding the atomic bomb, the style reflected man's confidence in his ability to conquer all challenges with modern technology. The style was especially popular for skyscrapers and theatres. New York City's Chrysler Building and Radio City Music Hall are prime examples. However, once the depression hit, few developers could afford any extra expense. The style did get an extended life in the rural Midwest being used in many court houses and government building that were government funded WPA projects.

## Firesteel City:

History shows that H.C. Greene and John Head came to this area from Rochester, MN in 1872 by way of Bon Homme, a small village west of Yankton, Dakota Territory, where they left their families and came north following the James river. After locating what later became Firesteel, approximately two miles east of the present location of Mitchell where the Firesteel Creek & the James River meets, they returned to pick up their families and return them to the townsite they called Firesteel. Colton's Map of Dakota, entered by an act of Congress in 1873, showed Firesteel and Davison County. The county was then two sections wide north and south and six long. At one time, there were 32 buildings located there. During those early days the home of H.C. Greene was not only their residence but also served many other purposes such as the school, post office, meeting hall as well as a dance hall to name a few. Much of the supplies used in the town arrived via the river and/or through Marion Junction by wagon trains pulled by oxen.

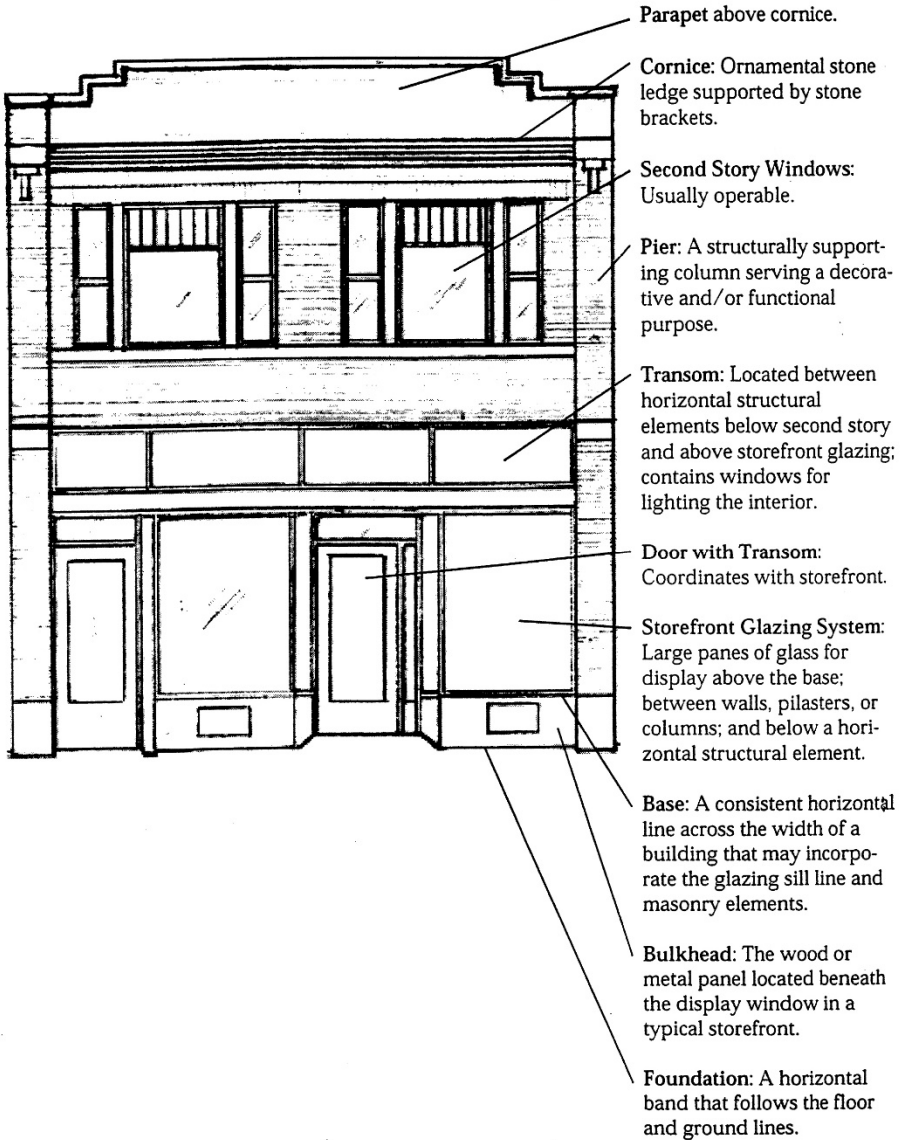
Firesteel had a short, but exciting life of six years. It was on the "wagon route" from Yankton to Ft. Pierre, via Ft. Thompson and also a Yankton-Firesteel Stage Line. The town boasted of two newspapers, the first being The Jim River Advocate and the other was The Mail which later became the Mitchell Mail.

The coming of the railroad was Firesteel's doom and savior. When surveyors for the railroad said the townsite was too low and flooding would be a problem, Mitchell was born. In short order, many of the buildings were moved to higher ground in what's now Mitchell. The town was named in honor of Alexander Mitchell, the then president of the Milwaukee RR. The county seat was moved to Mitchell and the 1881 legislature rebounded Hanson and Davison Counties as they exist today.

Today there is nothing marked to show where the town was located but when you travel east on highway 38 and cross over the bridge over Firesteel creek, a few hundred feet north is the location of the town's site. It does rest in peace except when the tributaries send their swollen floods into the sluggish Jim and then the waters swirl over the long-gone village and the knowing say, "it's just as well –the location was against them."

Commercial Facade:

**Basic Parts of a Commercial Building Front Elevation**



Sponsors:

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**As you stroll down Mitchell’s historic Main Street, notice the street light bases with ears of corn cast in the concrete. The ear of corn motif also appears on the street signs in the downtown area.**

This brochure is published by the Mitchell Historic Preservation Commission, 2017.

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