

Moorhead History Tour

Compiled by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

Your Home

Walk outside your door. If you were here 75 million years ago, you'd be swimming with sharks and dinosaurs in a shallow ocean called the Western Interior Seaway. Twenty-five million years ago you'd be looking across a savanna at ancient rhinos, camels, and sabre-toothed cats. Twenty-five thousand years ago you'd be encased in the Laurentide Ice Sheet, a glacial mountain of ice thousands of feet high. Ten thousand years ago you'd be 300 feet under water because that big glacier melted into Lake Agassiz, a giant glacial lake bigger than Lake Superior is today. Woolly mammoths roamed the shoreline about where Hawley is today. By the time Lake Agassiz drained away into the oceans, we were left with a small river and a vast grassland filled with giant bison, elk, and beaver. Soon early Americans joined them, following their trail.

Buffalo River State Park - 18 miles east of Moorhead on Highway 10, between Glyndon and Hawley

Buffalo River State Park is one of the few places on this planet where you can still see natural tallgrass prairie. The reason for this is because wherever tallgrass prairie grows, that's some of the best farmland in the world, so almost all of it got tilled up when the settlers came. Take a look around - this is what Moorhead and much of the Red River Valley looked like before the settlers came in the 1870s.

In the early 1800s, the Buffalo River was the border between two gigantic nations of people: the Dakota and the Ojibwe. Leaders of these Native nations agreed on the Buffalo River and Sheyenne River as their border in an 1825 treaty, but this was a border that both sides crossed all the time. Sometimes the Dakota and Ojibwe people fought wars against each other, sometimes they hunted and traded together as friends, and a lot of times they married each other.

South of the river is the land of the Dakota. The Dakota who lived here were the Sisseton Dakota, Wahpeton Dakota, and Yanktonai Nakota. They had villages where they farmed and spent winters south of here, but they also rode horses all across the plains. When they were on the move hunting buffalo, they lived in teepees made of tree limbs and buffalo hide. They made wonderful movable homes. Moorhead is on land that came into the USA through the 1851 Traverse des Sioux (pronounced "Trav-urss de SOO") with the Wahpeton Dakota and Sisseton Dakota.

North of the Buffalo River was Ojibwe country. This was a culture that grew out of the forests and rivers and lakes of the North Woods and Great Lakes region and they came west to the Red River Valley hundreds of years ago. The Ojibwe perfected the birch bark canoe to travel all through the waterways of our region. They were expert hunters

and trappers. In the spring Ojibwe people make maple sugar from tree sap and in the fall they get in their canoes and harvest wild rice from the lakes.

Many Ojibwe and Dakota people live in Moorhead today.

The Red River Trails - Oakport Road/11th Street North

In the 1800s the Red River Valley was famous for the Red River Trails. The Métis people (pronounced “may-TEE”) carved out these roads through the prairies and forests of Minnesota, North Dakota and Manitoba, from Winnipeg to Saint Paul. Oakport Road, which is called 11th Street North in town, was a part of the Red River Trails before Moorhead existed.

The Métis were a fascinating culture of people that emerged in the Red River Valley because of the fur trade. European fur traders - usually from France or Scotland - married local women - usually Ojibwe, Cree, or Assiniboine - and their kids formed a new culture that mixed Native American and European culture into something new and unique - they were the Métis. Their language, called Michif, was a mix of European and Native languages. They might wear Ojibwe moccasins and a European top hat. They were famous for their fiddle music and their dance called the Red River Jig. The Métis were great buffalo hunters, and they invented the Red River Cart to haul buffalo furs from the prairie to St. Paul, where they would trade the furs for anything made in a factory - clothes or stoves or shovels, you name it. These carts were made completely 100% out of wood because metal was scarce on the frontier, and since they were often powered by oxen, people called them ox carts. They would make a deafening screeching noise as the wooden wheel axels rubbed against the wooden cart frames. Hundreds or even thousands of carts would travel together down this road between here and Saint Paul.

Many of the roads and highways we drive on today began as Red River Trails. Most of the population of Clay County was Métis in 1870. Today, the heart of Métis culture in the USA is Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation on North Dakota’s border with Canada, and many Métis people also live in Moorhead.

Probstfield Farm - 4626 Oakport Street North

You can park on the east side of the road near the red and white “Old Trail Market” and then walk across the street and around the gate to visit the historic farmstead.

This is the farm of Randolph and Catherine Probstfield, known on their gravestone in Prairie Home Cemetery as “Moorhead’s First Family.” Randolph was one of the earliest pioneers in the valley, an immigrant from Germany, an experimental farmer, a community leader, and a radical politician who fought for the common people. In fall of 1868, after almost a decade of living and raising a family a few miles from here, Randolph and Catherine Probstfield started a new farm on a spot of land they knew

never flooded. Randolph built a house that year and, as you can see, it's still standing. It is one of the oldest existing buildings in the Red River Valley. Maybe someday you will be able to go inside, but people are working now to protect this historic building and restore it to what it looked like 150 years ago when Randolph, Catherine, and their 10 kids lived here. The house sometimes served a hotel for steamboat travelers and many early Moorhead residents walked six miles round trip to pay for Catherine's home cooking. Randolph and Catherine's children and grandchildren ran this farm after them and built the other buildings you see around the farm. In 1995, the Probstfield family donated the buildings and 118 acres of land to be a Living History Farm - a working farm that preserves history.

Walking around the farm you will see historic tractors that are being restored by the Tractor Guys who hang out at the farm. Some of the land is rented by farmers to grow crops the modern way. Some of the land grows vegetables to sell at the farmers markets and grocery stores. Some of the land is the Probstfield Organic Community Garden, which people in town rent out so they can have their own vegetable garden space. Have a look around.

Bergquist Cabin - 1008 7th Street North

In the spring of 1871, Swedish pioneer John Bergquist built this cabin in the middle of nowhere. By the end of that year, a new city called Moorhead appeared just south of his house. John Bergquist built this house as part of the Homestead Act. This was a law passed by congress to get people to move out to the western frontier by offering them 160 acres of free land (an acre is about the size of a football field) if they live and work on the land for at least five years.

Three different families lived in this house over the next hundred years. These families added more rooms and white wooden siding on to the house. It didn't look like a log cabin at all. In the 1970s, John Bergquist's grandson, WDAY TV weatherman Dewey Bergquist, took off all the added rooms to bring it back to what it looked like in the 1870s. It is now taken care of by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

The Northern Pacific Railway Bridge - the Red River between Main and Center Avenue

This bridge is the reason Moorhead is here. In 1870, the Northern Pacific Railway started building railroad tracks west from Duluth, Minnesota, with the goal of reaching the Pacific Ocean near Seattle, Washington. Since boats in Duluth can reach the Atlantic Ocean through the Great Lakes, this "transcontinental railroad" would link the country from ocean to ocean. The Northern Pacific built cities on their railroad all along the way, and everyone knew that the next great city of the west would be built in 1871 wherever they crossed the Red River.

About 500 people flocked to the Red River hoping to snatch up the best land in the new city but no one knew where exactly the bridge would be built. Many guessed it would cross at Probstfield Farm, so they built a tent town three miles north of this site around Randolph and Catherine Probstfield's house. Meanwhile, the railroad secretly bought the land you are standing on from a pioneer farmer named Job Smith. On September 8, 1871, the Northern Pacific Railway announced the site where they would build the bridge. Everyone camped at Probstfield Farm packed up right away and moved there. The railroad named the new towns on either side of the river for high-ranking railroad officials William G. Moorhead and William Fargo. The first Moorhead residents also gave a funny name to the failed tent town that briefly existed around Probstfield Farm - they called it "Bogusville."

The Gunfight that Created Clay County's Government - Center Mall Parking Lot, corner of Center Ave and 4th Street North

Moorhead was born a lawless Wild West town. Many gunfighters and gamblers were attracted to the new town at the end of the tracks because there were no police officers or judges or jails yet. "A shooting match before and after breakfast was not an unusual occurrence," recalled Moorhead pioneer Jim Sharp. One day, violent gunfighter Dan "Slim Jim" Shumway got into an argument with a gambler named Charlie "Shang" Stanton near this parking lot where the Center Mall now sits. Shang shot Slim Jim in the stomach and ran away down the street. Slim Jim fired back wildly, hitting a bystander named Thompson, before he collapsed in the dirt.

The people of Moorhead were fed up with all the shootings and they finally did something about it. They chose a merchant named Jim Blanchard to be the first Clay County Sheriff so he could arrest the gunmen. To put them on trial, they chose Solomon Comstock, a railroad laborer who happened to have a law degree, to be the first Clay County Attorney. David Grant was chosen as the first Justice of the Peace as well as Clay County Auditor to keep track of how the money was spent. This is how the government of Clay County was born in a Wild West gunfight.

The Steamboat Landing - on the bike trail just north of Center Ave Bridge

Can you imagine a boat 130 feet long with a tower three stories tall belching smoke into the air as it chugs along the Red River? In the 1870-80s, Moorhead was a center for steamboat traffic, and this spot was the site of the Alsop Brothers steamboat dock.

The first steamboat reached the Red River in 1859. Through the 1860s, most steamboats carried furs south from Canada on their way to St. Paul. When the steamboats unloaded their furs, they would load up with anything made in a factory on its way back to the Red River Frontier - nails, shovels, plows, cloth, and even candy. Steamboats were one of the best, fastest and cheapest ways to transport lots of cargo in the 1800s, but there was one better way: trains. As more and more tracks were laid, steamboats had less to do. By the 1880s, Red River steamboats were mostly used to

move grain. Farmers would gather their grain in storage elevators along the river, the steamboats would take that grain into Moorhead, where the grain would be put on trains and taken to Minneapolis to be made into flour. That's what the Alsop Brothers used their steamboats for, and the Grandin Brothers did the same thing with their docks right across the river from here. Eventually, though, railroads expanded all over the countryside and there was no more need for steamboats on the Red. The last steamboat left Moorhead in 1888.

The Hjemkomst Viking Ship and the Hopperstad Stave Church - 202 1st Ave N

The Hjemkomst Center is home to the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County. This is the museum where we tell people about our history and who we are today. The museum has rooms and rooms full of historic artifacts - everything from old furniture to photographs to wedding dresses and army uniforms. Some of it is on display for people to see but most of it is being protected and preserved in storage rooms. This museum is also home to the Hjemkomst Viking Ship and the Hopperstad Stave Church.

Both the ship and the church are examples of the Norwegian heritage of this town. When our town was young, about 80% of the people who lived in this county were either immigrants born in another country, or they were the children of immigrants. The most common country for people to come from in the 1800s was Norway, and many people take a lot of pride in their Scandinavian Heritage around here.

A Moorhead School teacher named Robert Asp was so proud of his Scandinavian Heritage that he built a Viking Ship so he could sail from Minnesota to Norway. Unfortunately, he passed away before he could sail his ship across the ocean, but a crew of his children, his friends, and some Norwegian sailors sailed this ship from Duluth to Norway in 1982. Some years later, in 1997, an animal scientist and wood carver named Guy Paulson led his team to build a copy of the Hopperstad Stave Church - a beautiful wooden Norwegian church from the end of the Viking Age. Thousands of people from all over the country and all over the world come to see the Hjemkomst Center every year.

The Point - Viking Ship Park, 202 1st Ave N

This park around the Hjemkomst Center used to be one of the oldest residential neighborhoods in Moorhead. People who lived here called this neighborhood "The Point" because the sharp bend in the Red River creates a point of land. People lived here from the birth of our town in the 1870s until the 1960s.

The neighborhood always had a problem: it flooded a lot. During floods, people used to move all their furniture to the top floor of their house or into a moving truck parked on a hill. Then they had to live with family or friends on higher ground until the water went down and they could mop out their house again. In really bad floods, some people's houses even floated away! More and more people moved away from The Point and

eventually the city decided many of the buildings were no longer safe to live in. In 1971, all of the houses in the neighborhood were torn down as part of an Urban Renewal Project to remake the city. If you walk around the park along the trails, you can still see some old fire hydrants in the grass. Today The Point is called Viking Ship Park in honor of the Hjemkomst Viking Ship.

The Comstock House - 506 8th St S

This was the house of Solomon and Sarah Comstock, and their children Ada, Jesse and George. The Comstocks were the wealthiest and most influential family of Moorhead's founding generation, but they did not start off that way. Solomon trained to be a lawyer and moved west to get a job, but the only job he could find was working as a laborer for the railroad. In 1871, the railroad reached the Red River, started a town called Moorhead, and the workers stopped construction for the winter. Solomon later said "There was no road going west. I had no money to go east. So I stayed." But he was smart and hard-working, so the young lawyer quickly became an important person in the Wild West town. In 1874, he married a teacher named Sarah Ball.

Solomon became a wealthy businessman and also an important politician. Whether Solomon was serving as a senator in Saint Paul or a congressman in Washington, D.C., he always thought of how he could help Moorhead. The Comstocks believed education was of utmost importance and they used their influence to make Moorhead a college town. Sarah and Solomon donated the land for both Minnesota State University Moorhead and Concordia College, and both colleges have buildings named for their family. Sarah was the queen of the social scene, and she helped establish the Moorhead Public Library and the Moorhead Women's Club, which encouraged women to study intellectual subjects together. Their daughter Ada was famous across the USA for being a pioneer in educating women in college, and their children Jesse and George were community leaders in Moorhead.

Solomon and Sarah built this house in 1883. They made the builders promise that everything that went into the house would be of the highest quality. The family gave the house and everything in it to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1965 so visitors can see what life was like in the past. Stop inside for a tour sometime!

Wells Fargo Bank, formerly Felix Battles' Barber Shop - 730 Center Ave

In the late 1800s, this was the site of the Jay Cooke House, one of Moorhead's finest hotels. In that hotel was a barber shop owned by an African American Moorhead pioneer named Felix Battles. Felix was born in the 1840s near Memphis, Tennessee. He spent his childhood enslaved on a cotton plantation. Sometime before 1860, when he was in his late teens, Felix escaped slavery and made his way north to freedom. He worked on Mississippi River Steamboats in Minnesota until he decided to join the Union Army during the Civil War. As an American soldier, Felix risked his life to free other

people from slavery. He fought in the Battle of Nashville, where he helped destroy the last Confederate Army of the West.

After the war he got married and moved to a brand new town called Moorhead. He became a successful and well-liked barber in town. Many family members of his wife Kate moved to Moorhead and Fargo to join them. When he died as an old man, the newspaper said Felix Battles was “respected by all who knew him” and called him “the pioneer barber of the Red River Valley.”

Park School Apartments - 121 6th Ave S

This apartment building used to be an elementary school. It was built in 1900 and continued to be a public elementary school until the mid-1970s. It served as a private school for some years before being converted into apartment buildings.

Brothers Olaus and Adolph Murie grew up a block away from here when this school was new. Both of them loved playing in the woods along the Red River with other Moorhead kids. They fell in love with nature. As they grew up, the Murie brothers wanted to understand nature better by studying the science of plants and animals in the wild. Olaus was an arctic explorer who helped establish wildlife refuges and made important laws to protect America's wild places. Adolph changed people's minds about predators like wolves and bears, proving that they played a positive role in keeping nature healthy. The Murie brothers became two of the most important “naturalists” (people who study nature) America has ever produced, and their education began in the schools and woods of Moorhead.

The Townsite Center - 810 4th Ave S

This building used to be Moorhead High School. If you walk around the outside you can see the cornerstone with the date it was built - 1920 - and some fancy carved initials near the roof - MHS for Moorhead High School. Inside there are two big painted murals in the stairwells that show scenes from Moorhead's early history. The murals painted by Minnesota artists show a winter trading post scene and a Métis camp along the Red River Trails. Both were painted in the 1930s as part of a government program to give jobs to artists during the Great Depression.

This building served as our High School until 1967, when the current Moorhead High School building was finished. Today, the building is called the Townsite Center. The classrooms have been converted into business offices and luxury apartments.

St. John the Divine - 120 8th St S

This church was designed by a Minnesota architect named Cass Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert was considered the greatest American architect of the early 1900s. He designed many

famous buildings, including houses, museums, libraries, churches, government buildings, and more. Some buildings he made around here include the Minnesota State Capitol Building in St. Paul, the old Fargo train depot on Main Avenue and 7th Street, and this church in Moorhead.

This beautiful church was completed in 1899. It is an Episcopal Church, which is what Americans call the Church of England. But the church has always had a problem: there were never very many Episcopalians in Moorhead. By the 1990s, the congregation was getting so small that they thought they would have to close down. Then the Sudanese came to the rescue.

Sudan is a country in Africa that has had a sad and scary history lately. In the 1990s and early 2000s, about 600 people moved from Sudan to Fargo-Moorhead so they could escape hunger and war. When they got here, they looked for a church to go to. Because the country of Sudan used to be an English colony, most of the Sudanese immigrants here grew up going to the Church of England, or as we call it here in America, the Episcopal Church. Just when the congregation of St. John the Divine was about to close, the church was suddenly filled with Sudanese families. Today, the congregation of Moorhead's historic Cass Gilbert masterpiece is almost all Sudanese.

Moorhead Public Library - 118 5th St S

In 1903, the Moorhead Women's Club gathered at Sarah Comstock's house and decided the town needed a public library. They got money to build the library from Andrew Carnaegie, a millionaire who paid for public libraries to be built all across America. Members of the Moorhead Women's Club filled the building with books from their own homes at first, and the Moorhead Public Library opened in 1906.

1961 was a big year for the Moorhead Library. That year they built the new and bigger modern-style building you see here, and they joined together with libraries from seven Minnesota counties to share books and resources. They called this library group the Lake Agassiz Regional Library, or LARL for short. LARL headquarters is in this building and the Moorhead Public Library is the biggest library in the system.

Libraries have changed a lot since 1906. You can still check out books, but public libraries are also places where people can use computers, read magazines, get movies and music, access ebooks and audiobooks, see presentations, and go to fun events - all for free! Do YOU have a library card?

The Rourke Art Museum and Gallery - 521 Main Ave

This beautiful old building is one of the most important art museums in our region. Inside you'll see the best local art from our area, modern art from around the world, and a really cool old building. It is both an art museum - which means it is a place where

people go to see art - and an art gallery - which means you can buy some of the art on the walls.

The building was constructed in 1915 to be Moorhead's post office. In 1959, we built a bigger post office a block away (the one we use today) and this building was empty for a while. In 1966, a young artist named James O'Rourke decided the building would be perfect for his new art museum. Mr. O'Rourke had just started Fargo-Moorhead's first art gallery six years before in a big old house that he lived in on 4th Street in Moorhead, but he wanted a bigger and fancier art museum in the old post office. The museum that he and other art friends started here was called The Plains Art Museum. After a few years, some from the Plains Art Museum decided to move to Fargo (where it still is today) and Mr. O'Rourke chose to stay here and run this museum himself. Ever since James O'Rourke founded his museum, this building has been a place where the region's best painters, sculptors, printmakers, authors and poets get together.

RiverHaven Events Center, or the old American Legion building - 700 1st Ave N

In 1919, a large group of American soldiers met in Paris, France. They had just won World War I and were on their way home, but they wanted to form a club so they could hang out with other veterans once they got back to America. They called this club The American Legion. When they got home, veterans formed local chapters, called Posts, of the American Legion in their hometowns. Each Post has a number and is named after someone from that town who died in the war. Our post in Moorhead is the Melvin E. Hearl Post #21. Moorhead soldier Melvin Hearl died in France just seven days before the war ended in 1918.

In 1929, the world was plunged into the Great Depression. A lot of people had no jobs and no money. Americans elected a new president named Franklin Delano Roosevelt because he had an idea he called the "New Deal" - the government would hire lots of people to make things Americans needed. In Moorhead, the New Deal paved roads, laid sidewalks, built the orange Center Avenue Bridge over the Red River, and even painted murals in the old high school. In 1936, the government hired Moorhead architects George Carter and Alan H. Meinecke to design a new building for the American Legion club that would also be a place where the people of Moorhead could hold events. The architects were told to put as many local people to work as they could. The building is made of rocks local farmers dug out of their fields near Sabin. If you look above the front doors you'll see a concrete relief sculpture with the initials A, L, M, H. They stand for American Legion Melvin Hearl. In the 1990s, the Moorhead American Legion moved to the east edge of town on Highway 10, and this building was turned into a series of nightclubs and restaurants. Today it is a venue for weddings and special events.

The Log Cabin, or Burbank Station - Memorial Park/W.H. Davy Park, near 700 1st Ave N

This log cabin was built in 1932 with logs from the oldest building in Moorhead. It has a long and complicated history.

The story starts in 1860, before Moorhead existed, when the Burbank Stage Company built a stagecoach station to help their fast horse-drawn carriages run from St. Paul to the Canadian border at Pembina. After a few years, though, the building was abandoned. By the 1880s, the city of Moorhead grew up around the building, and a man named Charles Whitcomb bought the cabin, moved it to 225 10th Street North, and made it his home. Over the years, the cabin was covered in brick and had rooms added to it to make it bigger. Half a century later, the old house was rotting and falling apart, so the owner tore it down in 1930. As the building was being demolished, though, the people of Moorhead became very interested in the history of the building and they saved the building's old logs, hoping they could figure out something neat to do with them later.

In 1932, the Moorhead Garden Club asked if they could build a cabin from the old logs to use as their clubhouse and as a "pioneer shrine" to honor the town's original settlers. The city thought that was a good idea, and the garden club made a new building with the old logs and covered it with the round brown wood siding you see today. For a long time this cabin sat at Bowman Park near 4th Street and 4th Avenue South on a hill overlooking Woodlawn Park. By 2010, though, years of flooding eroded the hill underneath the cabin. To save the cabin from falling into Woodlawn Park, the city moved this building once again to where you see it now. Interestingly, the original Burbank Station building was built very near this spot, probably about where the driveway into the parking lot of the old American Legion is today.

Minnesota State University Moorhead - 11th Street and 7th Ave S

In 1885, Minnesota State Senator Solomon Comstock convinced our state government to build a college in Moorhead. The college would be a "Normal School," which meant it trained students to be teachers. The school changed a lot over the years, and it changed its name several times! In 1921 Moorhead Normal School became Moorhead State Teachers College, then changed to Moorhead State College in 1957, Moorhead State University in 1975, and in 1995 it became what it is today: Minnesota State University Moorhead. Whatever the name of the college, you can just call them the Dragons.

This campus has seen a lot of excitement in the last 135 years. In 1930, a fire burned down the main building and they had to rebuild during the Great Depression. During World War II the college also became an army training camp where 1,650 soldiers learned to fly and fix airplanes. During the Vietnam War in the 1960-70s, this college was a center for anti-war peace protests. And from the 1970-90s, the college had to build a lot more buildings because so many students wanted to go here. Even all these years later, training teachers is one of the things this college does best.

Concordia College - 6th Street and 7th Ave S

In 1882, Solomon and Sarah Comstock donated land to the Episcopal Church so they could build the Bishop Whipple School. The school built a big building that looks kind of like a castle but they went bankrupt and closed in 1887. A few years later, a group of Lutheran Pastors wanted to build a college for Norwegians in Minnesota. They chose Moorhead because so many Norwegians lived here and because there was that nice, big, empty school building with a bunch of land available. They called their school Concordia College and that old building is now called Bishop Whipple Hall.

The students were called the Cobbers because the campus used to be where the city of Moorhead ended and the fields of corn began. The college is still linked to the Lutheran Church, but you certainly don't have to be Lutheran or Norwegian to go here - the school prides itself on teaching their students about all cultures in the world. Concordia is known throughout the world for its wonderful choir and music programs, and it is also a great place to learn about languages, religion, theater, and more.

World War II German Prisoner of War Camp - 324 21st St N

Believe it or not, this big white shed used to be full of German Prisoners of War during World War II. Back then, farming took a LOT of muscle power, but all of our young men were away fighting in the war. Who would work the fields? Well, we had an awful lot of enemy soldiers we captured in battles overseas, and we put them to work on our farms. In 1944, two local farmers, Hank Peterson and Paul Horn, received permission from the government to have 150 German prisoners work on their farms. Six days a week, the farmers would drive their trucks into town, pick up the prisoners and their guards, drop them off to work on their farms all day, and then drive them back to this building. This building was originally an onion storage barn, but the German prisoners installed plumbing and electricity so they could live and sleep here.

Although there were a few mean Nazis in the bunch, people in Moorhead discovered that most of the Germans were decent young guys who were forced to join the army because their country was at war. The German prisoners found that even though they were from an enemy army, people here were fair, respectful, and even nice to them. After the war several prisoners wrote letters to the Peterson and Horn families thanking them for their kindness. A few families of prisoners have even come here from Germany to visit Moorhead.

Kassenborg Block - 315 Main Avenue

Moorhead is one of the oldest towns in the Red River Valley, but it sure doesn't look old. Almost all of the buildings that made up Moorhead's old downtown were torn down and replaced with new buildings. They called rebuilding old downtowns "Urban Renewal," and it happened in cities all over the USA, but few (if any) cities tore down a greater

percentage of their historic buildings than our hometown of Moorhead, Minnesota. In the 1960-70s and again in 2005, Moorhead demolished all but a few of our old buildings.

But some old buildings survived. The most noticeable is the Kassenborg Block. The building is named for Andreas Kassenborg, the man who had it built and has his name at the top of the building along with the year it was built: 1898. Mr. Kassenborg rented the top floor as apartments and the bottom floor was split into two or three stores that he rented out to businesses. Over the years, this building has been home to a grocery store, a pool hall, dressmakers, a shoemaker, an architecture firm, a doctor's office, hairdressers, an artist studio, lots of bars and restaurants, and more.

Prairie Home Cemetery - 9th Street and 8th Ave S

This was Moorhead's first cemetery. It was founded in 1875, just four years after our town was founded. Don't be afraid to walk around and look at the headstones. You'll find many names of people you've met on this history tour, including Solomon and Sarah Comstock, the Probstfield family, and the sculpture of a knight that kneels on top of the grave of artist James O'Rourke. Many other early Moorhead residents are laid to rest in Riverside Cemetery and St. Joseph Cemetery in North Moorhead by the beet plant.

This cemetery also has a world-wide claim to fame. In 1971, a Minnesota writer named Garrison Keillor had a great time visiting teachers and students at Moorhead State College - now called Minnesota State University Moorhead. The name of the cemetery he saw next to campus stuck with him. Three years later, he started a public radio show about music and life in Minnesota, and the name of his show was inspired by this cemetery. "A Prairie Home Companion" aired from 1974 to 2016 and became famous around the world.