

Missouri River Railroad Bridge Commemoration

On Oct. 26, 2007, the Dakota Minnesota & Eastern Railroad, along with the [South Dakota State Historical Society](#), the Cities of Pierre and Fort Pierre, and the [Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce](#), commemorated the 100 year anniversary of the completion of the railroad bridge spanning the Missouri River at Pierre and Fort Pierre.

A morning ceremony dedicated an interpretive marker explaining the historical significance of the railroad bridge. The marker is the pilot marker for a Preserve America Grant to develop and implement an interpretive and educational plan for historic tourism resources, focusing on the Pierre and Fort Pierre region. Multiple interpretive markers are planned to highlight Pierre and Fort Pierre's significant historic resources.

Announced in 2003, Preserve America is a White House initiative to support the preservation and enjoyment of our historic, cultural and natural resources administered by the National Park Services, Department of Interior. A donation from the DM&E, combined with state funds, provided the match for this grant.

The bridge's anniversary was also celebrated with four community train rides through Pierre, across the historic bridge and into Fort Pierre.

Learn more about the bridge's history by visiting the [South Dakota State Historical Society](#) and [Oahe TV](#)'s "City Limits" websites.

[Click to view the event program.](#)



(Left to right) Fort Pierre Mayor Sam Tidball, Pierre Mayor Dennis Eisnach, SDSHS Director Jay Vogt, and DM&E President and CEO Kevin Schieffer.

History of the Chicago & North Western Rail Bridge

The Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW) project to cross the Missouri River began in 1905. Construction was completed on the swing bridge in 1907, with the first passenger train crossing on October 14 of that year. As the first permanent Missouri River crossing in Central South Dakota, the vital railroad bridge linked the west river region to eastern South Dakota and the upper Midwest.

Prior to 1907, pontoon bridges, steamboats, and the frozen river were the primary modes of transportation connecting Pierre and Ft. Pierre. Those crossing the river were subject to rapid currents, ice jams, floating debris and other natural hazards.

The 1,862.5 foot bridge's design is a "multi-span pin-connected Pennsylvania through truss with steel superstructure" set atop granite-faced piers. The second span from the east end once swung open to allow boats to pass underneath.

The railroad bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its association with the development and expansion of the C&NW in South Dakota. It is also important as a well-preserved example of early 20th Century railroad bridge engineering and movable bridge design. The DM&E became owners and stewards of the railroad bridge in 1986.

