

# Fort Pierre Is A Small Town Celebrating A Big Event – A Bicentennial!

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Fort Pierre is celebrating a momentous occasion this year, although one wouldn't know it by the news coverage that came out of a recent state tourism event lamenting the lack of big events in South Dakota this summer.

Apparently, the 200th anniversary of the founding of the oldest, permanent white settlement in the Dakotas doesn't qualify as a big event. Then again, maybe folks just aren't up to speed on the role that Fort Pierre has played in American history.

It all began back in 1817, when Joseph LaFramboise built the first fort and fur trading outpost at the mouth of the Bad River. For a few decades thereafter, the fur trade came to rely on the Missouri River outpost. It's actually kind of hard to overstate the importance that Fort Pierre had in its early days.

A look at a map detailing the trails to and from the great western mountains shows a great confluence of people and events that nowhere else in South Dakota can boast. But there's more than the fur trade to consider.

More than a decade before LaFramboise, Lewis and Clark nearly saw their famous expedition come to a disastrous end near the Bad River in a clash with the Teton Sioux. Before that even, in 1743, a group of French explorers left a lead plate in the river bluffs above what became Fort Pierre, to mark the area as owned by France.

Fort Pierre even played a critical role in world history. During World War II, Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron, who grew up in Fort Pierre and had Native American ancestry, led a pivotal attack on a Japanese fleet during the Battle of Midway. That attack and the American victory for which it helped pave the way, changed the course of the war in the Pacific.

While we're bragging, Fort Pierre also is cited as the hometown of Casey Tibbs, one of the most famous bronc riders ... ever.

Given the history, it is surprising that there isn't more being made of Fort Pierre's bicentennial by our state tourism officials.

Fort Pierre was, however, named the 2017 South Dakota Small Community of the Year. The city received the honor thanks in no small part to the dedication and hard work of its citizens, Mayor Gloria Hanson recently told a Capital Journal reporter.

This will be a big year for Fort Pierre, and the rest of the state should recognize just how big the small town across the river from our Capitol is when it comes to our state and our nation's history.

## **Bicentennial Calendar September 15-17, 2017:**

### **SEPTEMBER 15**

8:30 a.m./Wagon Train Leaves Fairgrounds Arena  
3:00 p.m./Helicopter Rides  
3:30 p.m./Historic Downtown Parade  
5:00 p.m./Community Steak Feed @ Expo Center  
6:30 p.m./Official Dignitary Program @ Expo Center  
7:30 p.m./DWHF Entertainment @ Expo Center  
8:30 p.m./SD Historical Society Auction @ Expo Center

### **SEPTEMBER 16**

7:30 a.m./5K Run/Walk Registration @ Lilly Park  
8:30 a.m./5K Run/Walk Race  
10:00 a.m./Art, Food & Activities @ Lilly Park  
10:00 a.m./DWHF Vendors & Entertainment @ Expo Center  
11:30 a.m./Cowboy Poetry & Music @ Expo Center  
12:00 p.m./Helicopter Rides  
7:30 p.m./Susie Bogguss Concert @ Expo Center

### **SEPTEMBER 17**

9:00 a.m./Cowboy Church @ Expo Center  
10:00 a.m./Stirling Family Cowboy Brunch @ Fairgrounds Grandstand  
10:00 a.m./Vendors Open @ Lilly Park & Expo Center  
11:00 a.m./Stirling Ranch Rodeo Grand Entry

12:00 p.m./Helicopter Rides

3:00 p.m./Bicentennial Wrap Up @ Fairgrounds