

## Side Tour 3B

Junction US 83 -- Junction US 10. County dirt and graveled roads, "The River Road."

Junction with US 83 to junction with US 10, 35 m.

Dry-weather dirt road except for 6 m. gravel between 29 m. and US 10.

Drive carefully as route is hilly with many curves. Route parallels Missouri River.

The River Road between Washburn and Bismarck approximates the overland freighter trail established in the early 1870's between the end of the Northern Pacific Railway at Bismarck and Fort Buford near the mouth of the Yellowstone.

Lewis and Clark, when they came up the Missouri River on their history-making expedition in 1804-5, sent outriders along this side of the river. Along much the same route the freighter trail was established in 1873 when the Northern Pacific brought to Bismarck goods destined for Forts Stevenson, Berthold, and Buford, and this soon became the main-traveled highway for soldiers, traders, and later for ranchers and settlers. Today ruts cut into the prairie by heavily laden wagons, plodding ox teams, and flying hoofs of couriers' horses are still visible in many places along the road.

The route is one of the most attractive in the State as it follows the winding, wooded course of the Missouri where the high hills and buttes along the river's edge contrast with the green meadows and wooded lowlands of the river bottom. This region was once the home of three

Missouri Valley Indian tribes--Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara--and the route passes three Mandan village sites.

The route branches W. from US 83 (*see Tour 3*) 10 m. N. of Wilton on a county dirt road.

At **2 m.** is the junction with a dirt road.

Right on this road to WILDWOOD LAKE, **1 m.**, in an old channel of the Missouri. The permanent summer camp of the Missouri Valley Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, is on the eastern shore of the lake.

At **13 m.** a large farmhouse and a decrepit log hut with a sod roof (L) mark the site of Painted Woods Post Office, one of the early Missouri River settlements. Between the old post office and the river are the PAINTED WOODS, so named by the Indians. According to legend, the woods were a neutral ground between hostile tribes until a Mandan girl fell in love with a Yanktonai Sioux warrior. She planned to leave her people and go with him, but her kinsmen slew him in her embrace; as she knelt by his bier, avenging Yanktonai arrows pierced her. The two tribes began a bitter warfare. The bodies of the lovers were placed in the branches of a tree in the woods, and the tree soon withered and became white and bleached, like the bones in its branches. Yanktonai warriors, coming to the woods to paint their faces and prepare for battle, boastfully portrayed their victories on the tree, and in retaliation the Mandans painted the surrounding trees with war paint to mock their enemy.

At **19 m** is the junction with a dirt road.

Right on this road to HALF MOON MANDAN INDIAN VILLAGE SITE (also known as the Larson site), **1 m.**, unusual in that a ditch, still visible, apparently divided the site in two parts and yet offered no means of defense. A sunken area in the site may have been the village square, and the circular hollows of the earth lodges are still visible in some places despite cultivation of the vicinity.

SQUARE BUTTES, early landmarks, raise their flat-topped heights across the river near the Larson site, and dominate the landscape for the next 10 m. Their odd beauty, contrasting with the graceful slopes of surrounding hills, has appealed to both red men and white. George Catlin, the artist and explorer who spent eight years in this region more than a century ago, painted a good oil of the Square Buttes. At **22 m.** is the junction with a trail (L).

Up the steep bluffs here here to DOUBLE DITCH INDIAN VILLAGE PARK. Archeologically designated as the Burgois site, it is also known to the Indians as the ancient Village of Yellow Clay. The inner ditch of the two from which the site receives its name is still traceable in its entire course. The journals of the early French explorer, Verendrye, tell that the village was surrounded by a rampart and protected by an 18-foot palisade and a ditch 18 ft. wide and 15 ft. deep. The cup-shaped depressions of the earth lodges, still visible, are as large as 40 ft. in diameter. Excavations made here by the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, disclosed fine

specimens of agricultural implements, religious pieces, and artifacts of warfare. Positions of human skeletons found in the excavations indicate that shallow burial was the custom of the Mandans occupying the site.

At **33 m.** the River Road passes through PIONEER PARK. On the flood plain of the Missouri, between BURNT CREEK and the road, a picnic and camp ground (*rustic shelters, tables, benches, chairs*) has been built among the towering cottonwood trees.

At **33 m.** is a junction with a winding gravel road.

Left on this road to the top of the sheer bluffs to LOOKING VILLAGE, **0.5 m.**, Mandan site named for Chief Looking. Now part of Pioneer Park, the village is known as the Ward site, and several of the earth lodges have been reconstructed under a CCC project. The natural defenses of this village were exceptional. On a level, circular summit almost completely cut off from the surrounding benchland, its eastern side was well protected by a ditch, still visible, and a wall. To the N., where the hill is less steep, a ditch and wall were also means of protection.

Built-in log steps and a graded path lead up to a round knoll overlooking the river. On the western slope of this formation is a large granite boulder believed to be a petroglyph, or picture rock, of some religious significance. Close observation of the rock will reveal many small, round impressions that may be a form of rock-writing known as cup sculpture. From this point, and from the parking spaces near the Indian village site, is a beautiful view up and down the

Missouri.

**At 34 m.**, almost in the long shadows of the railroad bridge, Burnt Creek drains into the Missouri. A story related by Joseph Henry Taylor in his writings tells that, in the summer of 1863, 24 white people, including a woman, a small girl, and a baby, were killed here by the Sioux, and nearly \$90,000 in gold dust strewn on the banks of the river. The white people had spent the winter mining at Bannock, Mont., and were returning east with their gold carried in belts and hidden in holes drilled in their flat-bottomed mackinaw boat. Stopping at Fort Berthold on their journey down the Missouri, they were warned by the trader, F.F. Gerard, that it was unsafe to continue until a large group was ready to make the trip through the territory occupied by the hostile Sioux. Thinking Gerard only wished to sell them supplies at high prices, the party disregarded his advice. This was shortly after General Sibley had pursued the Sioux across the Missouri. The Indians, however, following the departure of the military forces, had returned to the east side of the river, as game was more plentiful there, and a party was camped on Burnt Creek. The ever changing Missouri had cut a long sand bar near the creek mouth, forming a narrow, shallow channel between the shore and midriver. On this bar an old Sisseton was fishing as the white men's boat floated into sight. In a gesture of friendliness the old man waved the boat away from the shallow channel, but his motion was mistaken for a signal, and the white men shot him. Indian women bathing at the river's edge ran screaming to their camp, bringing the warriors. The party of whites had a small cannon on board, and with it killed many of the Indians. The recoil of the cannon fire, however, sank the boat in the shallow water, and after the leader of the white party had been shot the Sioux swarmed on board and disposed of the others.

They found the gold dust, but, thinking it only yellow clay, scattered it on the sands. It was several days later that Gerard heard of the massacre and sent a party of 10 Mandans, headed by his brother-in-law Whistling Bear, to recover the gold. They scooped up approximately \$70,000 worth in a coffeepot found in the boat, for which Gerard gave a fine horse and a few small presents to Whistling Bear, and a feast to his helpers. The gold thought to be hidden in the hull of the boat was never recovered, although several attempts were made by fortune hunters in later years.

At **35 m.** is the junction with US 10 (*see Tour 8*) just L. of Liberty Memorial Bridge, 1 m. W. of Bismarck (*see BISMARCK*).