



# **SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

## **IN THE BEGINNING**

The history of corrections in South Dakota stretches farther back than statehood.

On February 8, 1881, Territorial Governor Nehemiah Ordway approved a bill passed by the fourteenth session of the Territorial Legislative Assembly providing for the location and government of a territorial penitentiary. The bill provided that the institution would be located on a track of land not less than 80 acres within the corporate limits of the village of Sioux Falls, Minnehaha County, Dakota Territory. If a suitable tract of land could not be obtained within the limits of Sioux Falls, then the penitentiary was to be located on a tract of land within a one-mile radius of Sioux Falls.



**Dakota  
Territorial  
Governor  
Nehemiah  
Ordway.**

Ordway appointed Thomas H. Brown and Richard H. Booth, both of Sioux Falls, and Wallace L. Dow of Pierre, to serve as the Board of Directors for selecting a site.

The directors were to proceed to contract for the erection of a suitable building for a penitentiary of such dimensions to accommodate 125-150 people, at a cost of land and building not to exceed \$50,000. The cost of the land was not to exceed \$500.

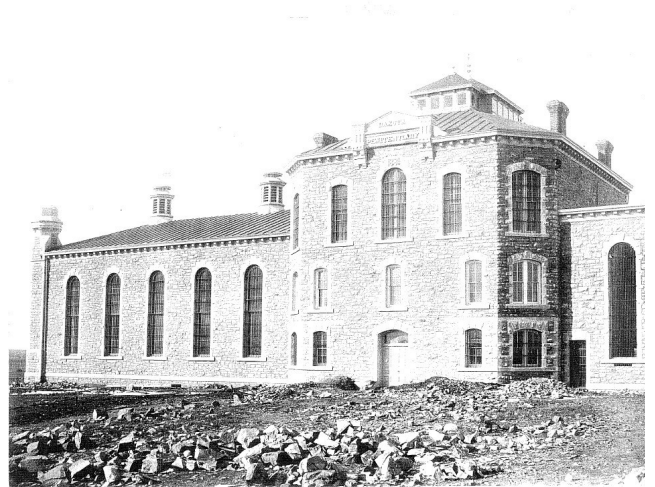
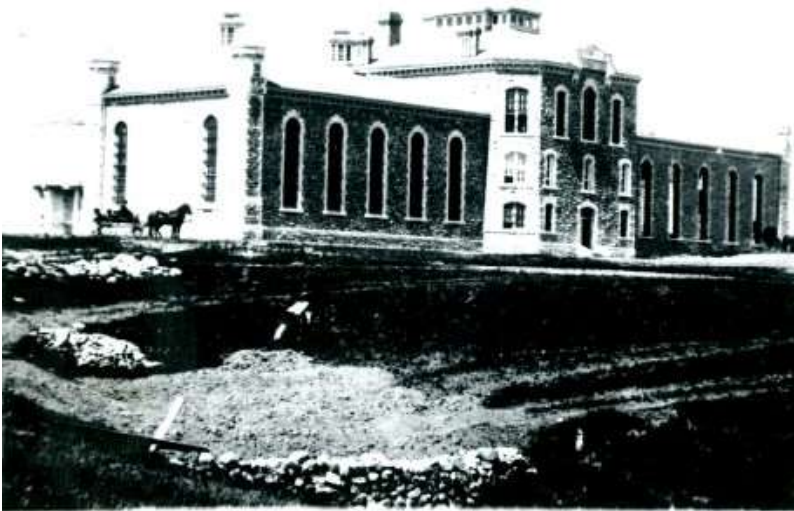
Because of the impassable condition of roads during the spring of 1881, the Board was unable to meet until June. Dow was elected chairman and Brown as secretary.

Two suitable sites were found. One was located near the Omaha Railroad, the other near the Milwaukee railroad line. However, the sum of \$500 appropriated to pay for the required amount of land for a site was insufficient. When the company securing the site offered to pay any deficiency, a site was finally selected. The United States government had also made an appropriation of \$30,000 for a territorial penitentiary at Sioux Falls. By the provisions of Chapter 23 of the Session Laws of 1881, (an act passed to provide for raising funds to build the penitentiary) the Board of Directors was given authority to receive this sum from the federal government. The Board was to credit these monies to the penitentiary fund.

But the Board soon learned that the \$30,000 appropriated by the United States government could not be used in the construction of the contemplated buildings. Upon consultation with the proper officials, 85 acres of land was purchased. Eighty-one acres were deeded to the Dakota

Territory and four additional acres to the federal government. It was agreed that the federal government would erect one wing of the proposed building and pay \$500 for the four acres, this being the amount the Board was permitted to pay for the site.

When the location was settled and the plans and specifications made, sealed proposals for the construction of the buildings were requested. R.H. Booth was appointed as superintendent of construction. On August 30, 1881, the masonry and carpentry work were let to R.D. Silver of Lincoln, Nebraska for the sum of \$34,813.80. On October 27, 1881, the contract for the ironwork was let to Martin and Anderson of Yankton for the sum of \$6,550.



**Two early views of the exterior of the Dakota Territorial Penitentiary.**

On September 30, 1882, a final settlement was made with Silver. On November 22, 1882, a final settlement was made with Martin and Anderson. Their work was complete.

The final bill, including the cost of the land, buildings, water supply, heating and cooking apparatus, pay for the Board of Directors and other miscellaneous items came to \$59,612.90. Territorial bonds in the sum of \$50,000 were issued for twenty years at six percent interest to cover the building costs.

The institution consisted of the central administration unit and two cell block wings on either side.

On December 13, 1882, approximately 30 prisoners were transferred from Detroit, Michigan.

In 1883, the Territorial Legislature directed the Treasury to issue bonds in the sum of \$30,000 for the construction of a boiler house, laundry, hospital, housing for female offenders, steam heating and a Warden's Residence. It cost \$4,500 to construct the Warden's Residence.

Up until 1989, state law required that the warden live on the Penitentiary grounds.

That building is now used as offices for the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Central Records, Classification and Transfers.



**A view of the Warden's House from North Drive.**

When South Dakota was granted statehood in 1889, the institution became a state prison. Federal prisoners continued to be sent here.