

■ BRIDGE

From Page 20

The top deck handled two-lane traffic at first because a railroad was intended for the lower deck. The railroad never came, and the lower deck was eventually opened to regular traffic.

Originally, operators could also raise the portion of the bridge between the two piers to allow boats to pass under it.

In those early years, a toll was imposed on motorists to pay for the structure. On Sept. 8, 1953 — after more than 5 million vehicles had paid the toll to cross the Meridian Bridge — the City of Yankton declared that it would pay off the bridge and turn its title over to the highway departments of Nebraska and South Dakota. A few weeks later, the “Free in ‘53 Days” campaign began as the city expected to make the bridge toll-free on or around Dec. 1, 1953.

With the construction of the Discovery Bridge to the west in 2008, plans were solidified to convert the historic Meridian Bridge into a walking and bicycling structure.

PCI Roads of St. Michael, Minn., was awarded the project in January 2010. The South Dakota Department of Transportation was the lead agency overseeing the conversion, and the Nebraska Department of Roads provided support. Once the conversion was complete, the City of Yankton took over day-to-day maintenance on the structure.

Plans are under way to build a recreational trail on the Nebraska side that would connect the bridge to Gavins Point Dam and the Corps of Discovery Visitors Center along Highway 81. A segment of that trail from the dam to Aten, Neb., is already complete.

A primitive trail has also been carved into the wooded area on the Nebraska side of the Meridian Bridge that allows users to reach the shore of the Missouri River. On the north side, the trail ties in with the miles of Auld-Brokaw Trail that weave throughout Yankton.

Officials anticipate the work done during the conversion will allow the Meridian Bridge to provide at least 25 more years of service to the Yankton area without the need for any major maintenance.



Yankton Trails

BY KELLY HERTZ

The Press & Dakotan

OK, not all trails lead to Yankton.

But the Meridian Trails System in the Yankton area is among the best around — and it's only getting better.

There are more than 30 miles of trails in the local system, providing hikers and bicyclists plenty of room to roam and plenty of places to go if you want to ditch your car for something simpler and self-propelled.

And the system is only getting bigger.

The newest addition includes, most prominently, the opening of the Meridian Bridge to pedestrian traffic. The two-year conversion project was completed in the fall of 2011, allowing the bridge — which served as a main automotive artery across the Missouri River for more than eight decades — to continue to serve the region for many more years to come. Planning and work are under way for the establishment of a park on the south end of the bridge as well as a trail on the Nebraska side that will extend out to Gavins Point Dam. This should bolster the bridge's new role as a must-see (and must-experience) link in Yankton's trail system.

Another new trail section is set to open along Deer Boulevard west of Yankton along Highway 52. This will add a two-mile section to the trail system and will create a loop when hooked up with a trail connecting with the Chief White Crane Campground along the tailwaters below Gavins Point Dam.

These two additions make an outstanding trail system even better.

The Meridian Trails System runs

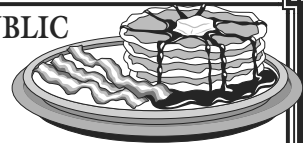
■ TRAILS, Page 22

VFW

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Post 791

209 Cedar, Yankton



All You Can Eat Breakfast

Pancakes, Eggs, Bacon, Sausage, French Toast & Biscuits & Gravy
first Sunday of every month • 8am-12:30pm

\$7 Adults • \$4 Children 6-10 • 5 & Under FREE

Party/Gathering Room for Rent

- Wedding Receptions • Birthdays
- Anniversaries • Reunions - etc....

Kitchen open Fri. & Sat. 5:30-8pm

Full Menu Available

Thursdays 5-7:30pm

Hamburger or
Pizza Burger + Fries \$5.00

Thursday 5-7pm

Domestic \$1.50
Beers

Sunday & Wednesday
5-7 Cooks Choice

BINGO

43	22	72	36	4
29	18	63	52	7
70	8	FREE	24	5
6	27	16	30	4
31	12	39	57	28

Bingo Sunday
& Wednesday 7pm

Early Bird
Sunday 6:30pm

Chislic the
Last Wednesday
of each month

Bucket of Beer \$10 Anytime

Mon-Fri Happy Hour 4:30 -7:30

Bar Open
at 3 pm
Daily



Picker's Paradise Thrift Shop

Finds of
All Kinds

From old to new

Collectibles, Disney, Coca-Cola, John Deere, Budweiser;
Household, Furniture, Depression Glassware, Angels, Crosses

401 East 4th St., Yankton, SD 57078 • 605-660-9100

Open 7 days a week! Hours: Monday - Saturday: 10am - 7pm Sunday: 1pm - 5pm