

# The United Tribes Educational Technical Center: Historical Perspective

*Editors Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles on the history and projections of the United Tribes Educational Technical Center.*

## *The Historical Significance of Fort Lincoln, ND*

The end of the war left Fort Lincoln in a state of suspended animation. The Army had no desire to re-establish itself in the facility and the internment program was obviously finished. The Municipal Housing Committee of Bismarck investigated it as a place for veteran's housing. (Bismarck Daily Tribune, January 10, 1946.) A skeleton maintenance crew stayed to keep the place in condition, but that was all. In February, it was suggested that the fort become a national cemetery. (Morton County News, February 28,



is estimated that from 600 to 700 people would eventually be employed on the dam and

Department set June of 1955 as the deadline for the disposal of installation. The state expressed a certain interest in purchasing the site and a study group was appointed. (Grand Forks Herald, April 24, 1964.)

The city of Bismarck and the state of North Dakota reacted to the proposed closing of the fort. It obviously was an economic asset to the community, but more than it had become a matter of civic pride and a source of fondness to the local citizens. City officials and local residents, while not ready to fight a last-ditch fight to keep the

lional cemetery. (Morton County News, February 28, 1946.) It was also suggested that the post be the headquarters of the Army engineers during the construction of the Garrison Dam in North Dakota--the first of the big post-war Missouri dams to be built. Yet, this was still uncertain. The fort was used as housing for delegates to the state American Legion convention in 1946 and the veterans stayed on Army cots which must have thrilled them to no end. (Morton County News, May 30, 1946.)

During the same year the fort became the headquarters for the Army engineers building the Garrison Dam. By October, 250 people were employed by the Garrison District Engineer's office. The majority of them were civilians, but a few Army officers were also serving. The fort served as the center for letting contracts, acquiring land, and designing the dam from July 1, when the Garrison District was created. It

700 people would eventually be employed on the dam and in the Fort Lincoln offices and the Army did some work in bringing the living quarters up to standard and attempting to get prefabricated dwellings onto the post. (Morton County News, October 3, 1946.) By the summer of 1948 there was a strong move to shift the headquarters to Riverdale on the Garrison Damsite. Even when much of the actual work and some of the operations were transferred to Riverdale, the headquarters remained at Fort Lincoln and the fort was labeled the "permanent" headquarters for the Garrison District. It was estimated that the dam itself would not be finished until 1954 at the earliest and even then, a sizeable administrative force would be required. It was not known whether this force would be maintained at Fort Lincoln or at Riverdale. (Bismarck Daily Tribune, December 27, 1948.)

By 1955, some of the

were declared surplus and were sold at bids. These buildings included dwellings, garages, warehouses, and a mess hall. The buildings were required to be moved from the site of the fort. None were the old permanent brick structures that had comprised the original post. (Ward County Independent, December 15, 1955.) This plan was later scrapped as the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare expressed a desire for the buildings. In the 1960's, the Defense Department announced that it would dispose of Fort Lincoln. By this time, it was serving essentially as a United States Army Reserve training command and housed twenty-three military men and their families in addition to employing some civilians. There were offices for four Army and Air Force reserve units and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, State Highway Department, and other state agencies rented space in some of the buildings. The Defense

while not ready to fight a last-ditch fight to keep the military installation, wanted it to be maintained and used and suggested that rentals on the fort would more than compensate the government for the expenses involved. Senator Milton Young suggested that the Defense Department turn it over to the General Services Administration for disposition. The State again expressed an interest in acquiring it. The city of Bismarck had already acquired the 200 acres of the original post for airport purposes and more land was made available for this reason as late as 1964. The adjutant general of North Dakota pointed out, in a rather optimistic way, that the fort had been on the verge of abandonment several times but had been always saved by emergencies. This seemed to suggest that what Bismarck and Fort Lincoln needed was a national emergency. Unfortunately, none of sufficient magnitude came along. (Fargo forum, May 3, 1964.)