

History of Camp Ripley



Fort Ripley on the bank of the Mississippi River in 1862.



1931
Aerial of future solar power plant site.



2016
Aerial of solar power plant site under construction.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1636
Birth date of the National Guard ▶ 1737-1858
Dakota-Ojibwe warfare ▶ 1803
Louisiana Purchase ▶ 1805
Lt. Zebulon Pike's expedition of Upper Mississippi River | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1826-1857
Native American treaties and land cessions ▶ 1849
Fort Ripley first garrisoned by Company A of the 6th Infantry Regiment ▶ 1849
Territory of Minnesota organized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1850
Minnesota Territorial Enrolled Militia formed ▶ 1856
Morrison County established ▶ 1858
Minnesota attained statehood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1877
Fort Ripley destroyed by fire ▶ 1927
State approved construction of a National Guard training site at Camp Ripley ▶ 1931
Camp Ripley opened to troops of the Minnesota National Guard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1950s-1960s
Camp Ripley land acquisitions ▶ 2014
Minnesota National Guard and Minnesota Power signed Memorandum of Understanding regarding solar project ▶ 2016
Public Utilities Commission approved Camp Ripley solar project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 2016
10-megawatt solar power plant in partnership with Minnesota Power completed |
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Euro-Americans and Native American Peoples

Ancestors of Native American peoples, including the Dakota, Cheyenne and Iowa, first inhabited present-day Camp Ripley 1,000 – 2,000 years ago. During the 1700s, French, British and American fur traders moved into the region. Located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Crow Wing rivers, the area became a hub of Euro-American and Native American activity. By the mid-1700s, the Ojibwe, also known as the Anishinabe, migrated into the region from Lake Superior. Warfare broke out between the Dakota and Ojibwe nations around 1737. Eventually, the intertribal hostility was seen as a threat to the fur trade and a detriment to interests of the newly formed United States government.

Fort Ripley



Brig. Gen. Eleazer W. Ripley

To keep the peace between the Dakota and Ojibwe and to protect the increasing number of settlers in the region, the U.S. government dispatched Gen. M. Brooke in 1848 to locate a site for a military outpost. A fort was established on land parcels ceded by the Dakota to Lt. Zebulon Pike in 1805. The new outpost was garrisoned in 1849 and named Fort Ripley in honor of Brig. Gen. Eleazer W. Ripley, an American soldier and politician who fought in the War of 1812.

Establishing Camp Ripley

In January 1877, fire destroyed three buildings at Fort Ripley and the War Department decided to permanently close the fort rather than rebuild. By 1910, the ruins of the powder magazine, built of stone, were all that remained.

In 1927, Minnesota's adjutant general, Ellard A. Walsh, convinced the state Legislature to allow the Minnesota National Guard to obtain a new outpost six miles north of Little Falls. By October 1929, the War Department granted approval for construction of the training camp and Maj. Philip C. Bettenburg was assigned to the design and construction of the project. The new training camp was opened to troops in June 1931. By the late 1930s, Camp Ripley totaled about 13,000 acres, making the post suitable for hosting some of the largest joint training maneuvers in the country.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Camp Ripley expanded by approximately 40,000 acres through two separate land acquisitions. Present-day Camp Ripley is a 53,000-acre regional training installation that supports military and civilian training requirements. The Minnesota National Guard is dedicated to environmental stewardship of the land through numerous initiatives at Camp Ripley, one of the most noteworthy being a partnership with Minnesota Power to construct the 10-megawatt solar power plant you see before you today.

