The first people in the Pembina (pronounced PEM-bih-naw) were Native peoples of the Chippewa bands. They lived along the river as hunters and ate the high bush cranberries (“anepeeminan sipi”) for which the river and community are named.

The land on which the town lay was claimed first by the French as a result of explorations of the French-Canadian Pierre de la Verendrye and his sons, who explored “Dakota Territory” as early as 1738. Verendrye is credited with naming the Red River; he writes in his journal that the Indians, in 1729, told him of a “Riviere Rouge” (Red River).

Pembina was known to be an inhabited place as early as 1780. Pembina’s first firm date in history, however, was in 1797, when a Northwest Company fur trader named Charles Baptiste Chaboillez established the first trading post.
The first Masonic lodge founded in North Dakota September 13, 1863. The first meeting was held in January 1864 at Fort Garry in a room over the trading post. The lodge closed January 13, 1870 but it laid the groundwork for Masonic lodges in North Dakota and Manitoba, Canada. The landmark was placed in 1921.
The Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railways obtained trackage rights in 1912 for 65.7 miles over the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway from Pembina, North Dakota/Emerson Junction, Manitoba, to Winnipeg, Manitoba. This connection was built by the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway companies, who leased it to the Government of Manitoba, Canada in 1901. The Government of Manitoba, in turn, subleased the line to the Canadian Northern Railway, who granted trackage rights to the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railways.
U.S. Customs House and Post Office
N48°58.002’ W97°14.650’W
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989

The building was completed in 1932. Build with red Pembina Brick laid in English bond style.

Pembina River
N48°57.994’ W97°14.628’W
The meandering Pembina River originates near Boissevain, Manitoba, flows southeast, and enters the U.S. northeast of Langdon. From the U.S. Canadian border it flows southeast to Walhalla and east to the Red River. Between the border and Walhalla the river flows through the Pembina Gorge, one of the few wilderness areas left in the state. The truss bridge over the Pembina River was built in 1929.
The battalion was organized at Fort Snelling and St. Paul, Minnesota, with Companies A, B, C, and D being mustered in from July 25, to September, 1863. Companies A, B, C, and D marched to Pembina, Dakota Territory from October 5, to November 13, 1863, and served on frontier duty there until May, 1864.

N48°57.955’ W97°14.479’W
Charles Baptiste Chaboillez established Fort Panbian on the west side of the Red River, near the mouth of the Pembina River. The Hudson Bay Company built a new post at Pembina in 1803, which was in use until 1823. In 1812, the first permanent settlement was made here by Scottish and Irish settlers sent by Lord Selkirk under the leadership of Miles MacDonnel. These settlers erected Fort Daer on the former site of Chaboillez's post.
Monument
N48°57.926’  W97°14.424’W
1797 Charles Baptiste Chaboillez built Fort Panbian
1812 Selkirk settlers erected Fort Daer
Erected by Pembina County Pioneer Daughters 1948
The total area of the Pembina River watershed is about 3,950 square, divided nearly equally between Manitoba, Canada and North Dakota. The length of the Pembina River basin from west to east is about 130 miles as the crow flies, although the winding river channel itself is about 310 miles long. Historic accounts mention major floods in 1882, 1897, 1904, 1916, 1950, 1974, 1979, 1996 and 1997.
Larry J. Wilwart 1938-2007. He grew up and attended school at Pembina. He graduated from the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. Larry taught school in Los Angeles, CA for one year and returned to Pembina to farm with his father, where he spent the rest of his life until his retirement. He was an active member of the Winnipeg Jazz Society for many years. Larry was a member of the Pembina County Water Board and the City of Pembina steering committee to renovate the city community center.
Originally Grace Episcopal Church constructed in 1886
Purchased by Pioneer United Methodist Church in 1937
N48°57.971’ W97°14.770’W
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994
The Gothic Revival style is part of the mid-19th century movement in architecture, reflecting the public’s taste for buildings inspired by medieval design.
This historical church lies in the south section of the city, between the mighty Red and Pembina Rivers. The church was built by settlers from Iceland who started a colony of their own in the area. In 1885, Sigurdur Myrdal, Olaf Thorsteinson and Jon Johnson called a meeting for the purpose of organizing a congregation.

The property for the church was purchased on May 17, 1885 and the Icelandic Lutheran Church of Pembina was erected that same year. In the following years the number of Icelandic families diminished in the area until it was a hardship to continue. On June 4, 1937, the church and 1 and 1/2 lots of property were sold to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of St. John for the sum of $450.00. This was an historic occasion for the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox as it was the third such church established in North Dakota. In 1957, the Byzantine dome was erected and the interior redecorated. By 1987 only five members remained so the St John's Ukrainian Orthodox Church disbanded. The building was donated to the Fort Pembina Historical Society. The church was flooded in 1948, 1950, and 1997.
First Masonic lodge and first school. Capt. C.W. Nash, had received a dispensation for a lodge at Pembina while he was still at Fort Abercrombie. Upon arriving at Fort Pembina, he secured the cooperation of a group of Masons in the garrison and applied to Minnesota Grand Lodge for a charter. In January, 1864, while still under dispensation, the lodge was transferred to Fort Garry, or Winnipeg, upon the recall of the garrison from Fort Pembina the same year. Northern Light Lodge continued its existence (U.D.) in Manitoba, Canada, under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Grand Lodge for some years. The Masonic building was also used as a school.
The city of Pembina was the original County Seat of Pembina County and home to the original county courthouse. During the November 8, 1910 election, 2,249 citizens voted to move the county seat to Cavalier, a more central location.