History from 1969 publication:

Potter County joins the Missouri River on the east and is about 50 miles north of Pierre. This area, too, was involved in the early explorations and the history of the state. Lewis and Clark stopped on the banks of the Missouri River and visited Medicine Rock. The Arikara Indians held a village on Steamboat Creek.

The County was created in 1873 and organized in 1883. The first white settlers were northern Civil War veterans and the early towns were given such names as Gettysburg, Lebanon, Union and Appomattox – the two latter ones have not survived. The County’s drainage is to the south and west into the Missouri River through the Okobojo Creek and some smaller branches. The topography of the county, going from west to east, is divided into several areas. A strip along the Missouri is classified as steep rough, steep slopes leading to the River. An area covering about two-thirds of the County over to Lebanon and Hoven may be classified as gently undulating to undulating, with the more level portions toward the east. The soils vary from clays to loams and silt loams. The clays are found on the rough lands along the Missouri breaks. Through the County’s middle is an area of silt loam formed largely from wind-blown material and is well suited for general farming. Toward the east, the area is more undulating and suitable for general farming and livestock production.

Potter County is an area of somewhat limited rainfall – the twenty year average being between 17 and 18 inches. About 14 inches of that comes during the growing season; that leaves the moisture a bit short of that needed for abundant production.

The early settlers found a land covered with abundant growth of good grasses, including blue grama, western wheatgrass, niggerwool, needle and thread, prairie sandgrass, and little blue stem. What trees there were could be found along the river and streams and in gullies. As the area was settled, more level areas were plowed and largely planted to wheat and other small grains; then later corn became an important crop. Before the Conservation District was organized, 58 percent of the total area was cropped. The final result was wind and water erosion. Wind erosion has been widespread and extensive. Much of the farmland is over two percent slope and erodes heavily when bare.

These conditions caused people to want to find a way to preserve these land resources. To do this, the people realized that they needed help; in 1954, a committee of farmers called upon the County Agent for help and guidance. They then began working for a soil conservation district and conducted several meetings over the county where conservation district organization and its functions were explained. Petitions requesting a hearing on the matter were circulated and signed. The hearing was held March 4, 1954, where the evidence presented indicated a desire to vote on the proposition. The referendum, which was held May 10, 1954, carried by a vote of 340 to 37. The State Committee appointed Fred Bartels and Chalmer Hottman as supervisors. William P. Hinckley, Oren Munyon and Terrance M. Williams were elected supervisors. The five supervisors met and chose as officers Fred Bartels, Chair; William Hinckley, Vice-Chair; and the county Extension Agent as Secretary. They then prepared and signed the necessary agreements with cooperating agencies and prepared their program and plan of work.

In the plan of work they specified the problems facing the Conservation District as:

- Fertility of the soil was low as the result of continuous use;
• Not enough use of crop rotations;
• More and better distribution of water supplies needed;
• Soil lost from wind and water erosion;
• Inadequate drainage in some areas;
• Need more shelterbelt and farmstead tree plantings;
• Poor wildlife protection;
• Need more water supplies for livestock and wildlife;
• Weeds are a problem.

The supervisors proposed to meet these problems by the use of:
• Improving the soil through the use of legumes, barnyard manure and fertilizers;
• The use of crop rotations with grass and legumes;
• Properly locate and build dams/dugouts for livestock water and wildlife, maintain them;
• Use proper range management – build fireguards, rotate grazing, supplemental pasture;
• Use moisture conservation practices – maintain adequate cover on cropland;
• Encourage contouring and terracing;
• Control gullies and establish grassed waterways;
• Spread run-off water over grasslands;
• Use stubble mulch farming;
• Drain pot holes;
• Establish more farmstead plantings along with some shelterbelts;
• Provide winter protection for wildlife.

Practices and amounts of each established to 1968 are:
Landowners, operators establish first commercial recreation enterprise 2
Private individuals and groups establish, expand or add to recreation developments or areas for primarily non-commercial use 1
Public recreation developments or areas established or expanded 7
Irrigation canal or lateral 689 feet
Chiseling and sub soiling 168, 01 acres
Conservation cropping system 4,368 acres
Contour farming 347 acres
Contour furrowing 920 acres
Cover and green manure crop 111,724 acres
Crop residue use 7,201 acres
Diversion 84,719 feet
Farm ponds 1,723 ponds
Farmstead feedlot windbreaks 3,467 acres
Field border plantings 15,000 feet
Field windbreak 135,287 feet
Firebreak 30,000 feet
Fishpond stocking 24
Grasses and legumes in rotations 10,000 acres
Grassed waterway or outlet 222 acres
Hedgerow planting 15,920 feet
Irrigation system sprinkler 1
Land clearing 8 acres
Drainage, main or lateral 4,631 feet
Obstruction removal 14 acres
Pasture and hay land management 4,627 acres
Pasture and hay land planting
Pipeline
Pond sealing or lining
Proper grazing use
Range seeding on converted land
Range seeding
Range rotation and deferred grazing
Recreation access road
Recreation area planting
Spring development
Strip cropping, contour
Stubble mulching
Drainage field ditch
Strip cropping, wind
Terrace level
Trough or tank
Water spreading
Wells
Wildlife habitat development or preservation
Wildlife wetland development or preservation
Wildlife water facilities
Land adequately treated
Cropland to grassland
Cropland to woodland
Cropland to wildlife – recreation
Cropland to "other"
All other use to cropland
Non-cropland to wildlife – recreation

17,002 acres
41,657 feet
1
178,702 acres
1,811 acres
46 acres
980 acres
25,000 feet
21 acres
3
3,825 acres
34,444 acres
7,920 feet
15,134 acres
1,265,758 feet
1
117 acres
31
173 acres
149 acres
2
74,326 acres
7,652 acres
453 acres
15 acres
90 acres
775 acres
17 acres

The following supervisors served to date: Fred Bartels, Gettysburg; Chalmer Hottman, Gettysburg; William P. Hinckley, Hoven; Oren W. Munyon, Lebanon; Terrance M. Williams, Gettysburg; Marvin Haag, Hoven; A. Willard Zuber, Hoven; Harold Hegerle, Gettysburg; Orlow Eidam, Gettysburg; Randall Stotz, Onaka; Arnold J. Nagel, Gettysburg, Assistant Supervisor; Loyd Keller, Tolstoy, Assistant Supervisor. Marvin Haag served as Secretary of SD Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts while Orlow Eidam has been Vice-President. 1969 supervisors were: Chair Oren Munyon, Lebanon; Vice-chair Ed Sieler, Gettysburg; Treasurer Russell Stone, Gettysburg; Marvin Haag, Hoven; Orlow Eidam, Gettysburg; Randall Stotz, Onaka; and Assistant Supervisors: Lloyd Keller, Tolstoy; Arnold Nagel, Gettysburg; A. William Zuber, Gettysburg; and Francis Buckley, Gettysburg, Secretary (County Agent).

Updated information provided in 2012:

**Original Board Members**
Oren Munyon, Fred Bartels, Chalmer Hottman, William Hinckley, Terrance Williams

**Former Board Members**
Marvin Haag, A. Willard Zuber, Harold Hegerle, Orlow K. Eidam, Leonard Nagel, Lloyd Keller, Randall Stotz, Ephraim Sieler, Finn Dahlquist, Marvin Simon

**Current Board Members**
Bill Zweber, Gary Nagel, Robert Rausch, Art Beringer, Rodney Lemler