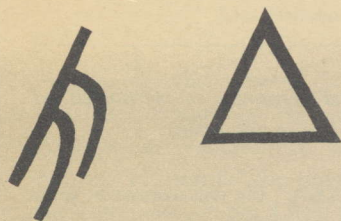


Theodore Roosevelt

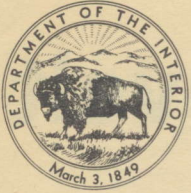


NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK



NORTH DAKOTA





Theodore Roosevelt

NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK

United States Department of the Interior, *Douglas McKay, Secretary*

National Park Service, *Conrad L. Wirth, Director*

Theodore Roosevelt's service to his nation in conserving its natural resources is memorialized here, where, for a period in his youth, he lived a never-forgotten life in the open.

IN THIS region of the Dakota frontier, Theodore Roosevelt shared pioneer experiences which helped him understand the problems of the West. No other President of the United States has been so closely identified with a region of the Trans-Mississippi West, and with the Dakotas in particular, as was Theodore Roosevelt during the time he lived here.

Here, in the Little Missouri country, he developed to a heightened degree a natural love of life in the open. His instinct for the preservation of all forms of natural resources grew sharper because of his life close to those resources. In the end, one of his great passions found expression when he became a public champion of conservation. The United States has become a stronger nation, and succeeding generations have found it a better place to live in, because of his influence in perpetuating our country's natural endowments.

Roosevelt in the Badlands

At the small depot of Little Missouri on the west bank of the river of the same name, Theodore Roosevelt stepped from a Northern Pacific train in the early morning darkness

of September 7, 1883. He was almost 25 years old when he thus made his first appearance in North Dakota. Roosevelt came to hunt buffalo; and in the days that followed, he persisted until he finally got one, despite his many failings in marksmanship and lack of skill as a hunter.

Of more permanent importance than the acquisition of a buffalo robe by his own hand was the decision he made while engaged in the hunt to go into the cattle business in that region. Only 20 days after he stepped to the ground at Little Missouri from that west-bound train, Roosevelt bought the Maltese Cross cattle brand in a contract made out at St. Paul. The Maltese Cross, or Chimney Butte, Ranch headquarters was about 7 miles south of Medora.

During the winter of 1883-84, after he had hunted buffalo along the Little Missouri, both his mother and his wife died within hours of each other. This terrible double blow caused young Roosevelt to abandon temporarily his political career in Albany as a State legislator. In June 1884, he went to the Little Missouri where his recently bought herds had wintered. There, all that he now owned were cattle and a brand. The land was not surveyed and it was hardly feasible to establish



Roosevelt in 1883.

a legal claim to any given tract. But Roosevelt wanted a ranch of his own. He found a site about 35 miles north of Medora that appealed to him. There on the bank of the Little Missouri in a clump of cottonwoods, he built his ranch home. He called it "Elkhorn" after a pair of locked antlers found nearby.

In the fall and winter of 1884-85, his ranch hands erected there a cabin of hewn logs cut from the cottonwood grove. Later in 1885 other buildings went up, including stables and corrals. These structures were undoubtedly typical of those in the region. But the cabin differed from others in the Little Missouri country by affording more comforts than were usual in that rangeland. Among these comforts were a large fireplace, a private room, a small bookshelf, and a rocking chair.

Even though he was now leading a life in the open, young Roosevelt wanted to read and write. In this cabin he wrote some articles and much of his book entitled *Life of Thomas Hart Benton*. Later, in writing *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt must have drawn extensively upon his experiences while at Elk-

CHIMNEY BUTTE RANCH.
THEODORE ROOSEVELT, Proprietor.
FERRIS & MERRIFIELD, Managers.



P. O. address,
Little Missouri,
D. T. Range,
Little Missouri,
8 miles south
of railroad.

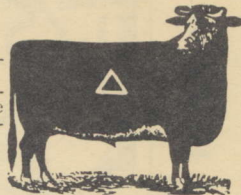
as in cut
on left
hip and
right
side, both or
either, and

down cut dewlap.
Horse brand, on left hip.



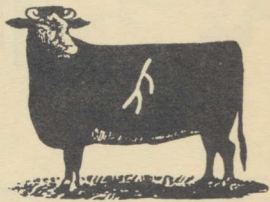
ELKHORN RANCH.
THEODORE ROOSEVELT, Proprietor.
SEAWALL & DOW, Managers.

P. O. address, Little
Missouri, D. T.
Range, Little Mis-
souri, twenty-five
miles north of rail-
road.



as in cut, on
left side, on
right, or the
reverse.

Horse brand,
on right or
left shoulder.



Theodore Roosevelt's cattle brands. (Courtesy, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library).

horn. Life on this western frontier gave him a background against which to judge and evaluate the events and scenes he wrote about in his account of American frontier experiences and westward expansion.

But reading and writing was little more than a pastime. Roosevelt was interested in the actual operations of ranching and he took a part in them. He gave a strong hand to supervising affairs of the ranch. His activities extended much farther afield than just this, however, and included taking part in the hard work of the roundup. Despite his intense desire to develop skill in these matters, Roosevelt never claimed any marked ability as a marksman, rider, or roper. His qualities

of leadership did, however, enable him to organize a local stockmen's association—the Little Missouri River Stock Association—of which he became president. In this capacity he represented the local ranchers at the meetings of the Montana Stockgrowers' Association.

In the early 1880's the Little Missouri country was a lawless region, and controversies were settled in the manner of the frontier, often with gunplay. Marshals, sheriffs, and courts were far away. Even so, Roosevelt succeeded in capturing three thieves who stole his boat, and brought them to justice before a regular court. In speeches and talks, he spread the gospel of responsible government and the duties of citizens in a republic.

Roosevelt lived in the "short grass" region of the North Dakota badlands when it was one of the last of many successive frontiers in the settling of the United States. He saw the last phase of the grab for the country's natural resources. And he was in the forefront of those who realized that those resources were not inexhaustible. He could see that even the free grass of the ranges on the public domain would perish if not protected from excessive exploitation and selfish use.

Hermann Hagedorn in his book, *Roosevelt in the Badlands*, has given a full account of Roosevelt's life in Dakota. He shows that Roosevelt loved the life of the cattle frontier and that he later considered this phase of his life as a kind of idyll. Roosevelt admired the virtues of the rough men he met and whose way of life he shared; he forgave them their faults. On the Little Missouri, he later said, "the romance of my life began."

Altogether, Roosevelt invested about \$50,000 during the next few years in his ranching ventures, but eventually lost most of it.

The cattle industry had a peak year in 1885. This led to continued overstocking of the northern range the next summer. That winter of 1886-87 was one of the worst in the history of the West. Cattle perished by the thousands. Roosevelt's cattle losses were somewhere between 75 and 90 percent.

The Marquis de Mores

There were many cultivated and wealthy Europeans who came to the American West at this time to engage in the cattle business or to invest large sums of money in it. Indeed, some of these investments still return profits to Scottish and English owners. It was not an Englishman, however, but a

Elkhorn Ranch site, across Little Missouri River.





East Entrance to Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.

Frenchman who came to the Little Missouri and left his mark on the country. He was Antoine de Vallombrosa, the Marquis de Mores. He started the town of Medora on the east bank of the Little Missouri only 6 months before Roosevelt got off the train across the river to hunt for buffalo.

This colorful French nobleman spent large sums of money in an effort to outdo the Armour's and to make Medora, instead of Chicago, the meat packing and marketing center of the country. Roosevelt became acquainted with De Mores and paid social calls on him. Of the several structures in Medora dating back to De Mores' time, the most interesting is the Chateau de Mores, now a State historic site. There, you can see the furnishings used by the wealthy Frenchman during his life in the raw West.

From his experiences in Dakota and his knowledge of the type of men to be found in the West came Roosevelt's inspiration to help organize the "Rough Riders" during the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt was second to Leonard Wood in command of this organization and gained much glory and prestige from its exploits in the war. Roosevelt used this effectively in his rise to be Governor of New York, and Vice President and, later, the President of the United States. In 1918 he wrote, "I have always said I never would have been President if it had not been for my experience in North Dakota."

Natural History

The tableland, buttes, and conical hills of the Little Missouri River country make it one of great scenic attractions. It is a badlands area and one of nature's paintboxes. Sands, shales, and clays are of many colors—blues, yellows, buffs, and grays. And there are black veins of coal, and red and brown iron-stained strata of sand and clay. Red, baked shales heighten the color effect of all the multihued scene.

Geology

The surface rocks are known as the Fort Union formation. They were formed in the early part of the Cenozoic era, millions of years ago. The Rocky Mountains were then new. From their slopes, streams deposited sediment in lakes, lagoons, and deltas. In the course of time and geologic changes, these sedimentary deposits became the rock you see here today. Similar formations extend over a large part of western North Dakota and eastern Montana.

In earlier geologic times, climatic conditions favored a lush vegetation here, and forest litter accumulated in lagoons and swamps. This often attained considerable thickness. Sediment subsequently covered this forest and swamp debris and it changed into coal. The coal found in the park is soft and is known as lignite.

The coal beds vary from 1 inch to 7 feet in thickness. They also vary in degree of quality—some are of fair quality, but most of them are thin and interlaid with bands of sand and clay. The coal slakes and breaks into small fragments when exposed to air. This lignite coal has a coarse, woody texture, and the outline of leaves and tree branches can often be seen in it.

Petrified wood is found at several places in the park. It was formed by mineral-laden waters which penetrated buried trees and gradually filled the cavities in the wood with silica. Erosion later exposed these petrified trees. Parts of the trunks of some still stand, but most lie on the ground, broken into fragments.

Scoria is the name given locally to a hard, reddish, brick-like rock that overlays much of the park lands. Its origin is a matter of speculation. It has been suggested that lightning, or some other natural cause, set fire to exposed lignite beds which burned and baked overlying clay into the brick-like material. Because

of its hardness, scoria is more resistant to erosion than other surrounding materials. Many buttes and spires are capped by it.

Trees and Flowers

Although the park area is too arid for many varieties, trees are found in favorable places. The moist river bottoms, for instance, support fine groves of cottonwoods, that most comforting of all trees in the plains area. Juniper, ash, and elm grow here in some localities. Sagebrush, of course, is common. Other shrubs include sumac, chokeberry, wolfberry, American plum, buffaloberry, dogwood, wildrose, and currant. Yucca and cactus are also present.

In the spring and early summer, wildflowers bloom in abundance, with certain varieties lasting through the summer and into the early fall. The more common flowers are pasqueflower, larkspur, arnica, sunflower, cowparsnip, bluebell, goldenrod, aster, and phlox.

A self-guiding nature trail is adjacent to the East Road; and an observation point at the end of the trail affords a 360° view of the badlands.

Wildlife

Wildlife was once abundant here. The rich grasslands and wooded gulches in earlier time provided food for thousands of bison, mountain sheep, elk, muledeer, whitetail deer, and antelope. Grizzly bear and wolf were also present. But this wildlife, once so common, has now become scarce. Some species, such as the Audubon bighorn, have disappeared entirely. Since the time of Roosevelt's ranch life, the larger forms of wildlife have all but disappeared and only the deer are frequently seen.

Smaller animals are still abundant. Among the more common are porcupines, chipmunks, prairie dogs, coyotes, badgers, beaver, wildcats, cottontails, and jackrabbits. The black-

Wind Canyon, South Unit.



footed ferret, once the scourge of the prairie dog, is very scarce. The harmless short-nosed horned lizards, also known as horned toads, are often seen. Bullsnares, blue racers, and prairie rattlesnakes are native to the park. Only the rattlesnake is venomous. While walking in the park, it is well to look where you step and to be careful about putting your hands on ledges or in crevices.

The park is rich in bird life. Hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, woodpeckers, flickers, sparrows, larks, swallows, buntings, wrens, orioles, and many other common species are found.

The Park

An act of Congress, April 25, 1947, established Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. In 1948, Congress acted to extend the boundaries of the park to 65,648.50 acres of Federal lands. These holdings are in three separate units: one near Medora; a second near Watford City; and the third, the Elkhorn Ranch site, along the Little Missouri River about midway between the other two.

About Your Visit

The park is still in its initial stages of development and all facilities for public use are not yet provided. Picnic areas and campgrounds are available, however. As there are no tourist cabins or meal services at the park, they must be obtained in nearby towns.

Those who plan to visit in a group may receive special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

Our desire is to preserve the area of this park in as near a natural condition as possible.

You can help us in doing this by observing the following:

Be careful with fire. Be sure all fires are out before leaving them.

The park is a sanctuary for all types of wildlife—they must not be disturbed.

Please leave the wildflowers for others to enjoy.

Please do not collect specimens.

The use of firearms is not allowed.

Please do not deface signs or structures.

Please keep the park clean. Place papers and other litter in containers.

Travel Routes to Park

You can reach park headquarters at Peaceful Valley Ranch, 6 miles from Medora, over a surfaced road which connects with U. S. 10, as shown on the map. Medora is on the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The nearest air transportation connection is at Dickinson, N. Dak.

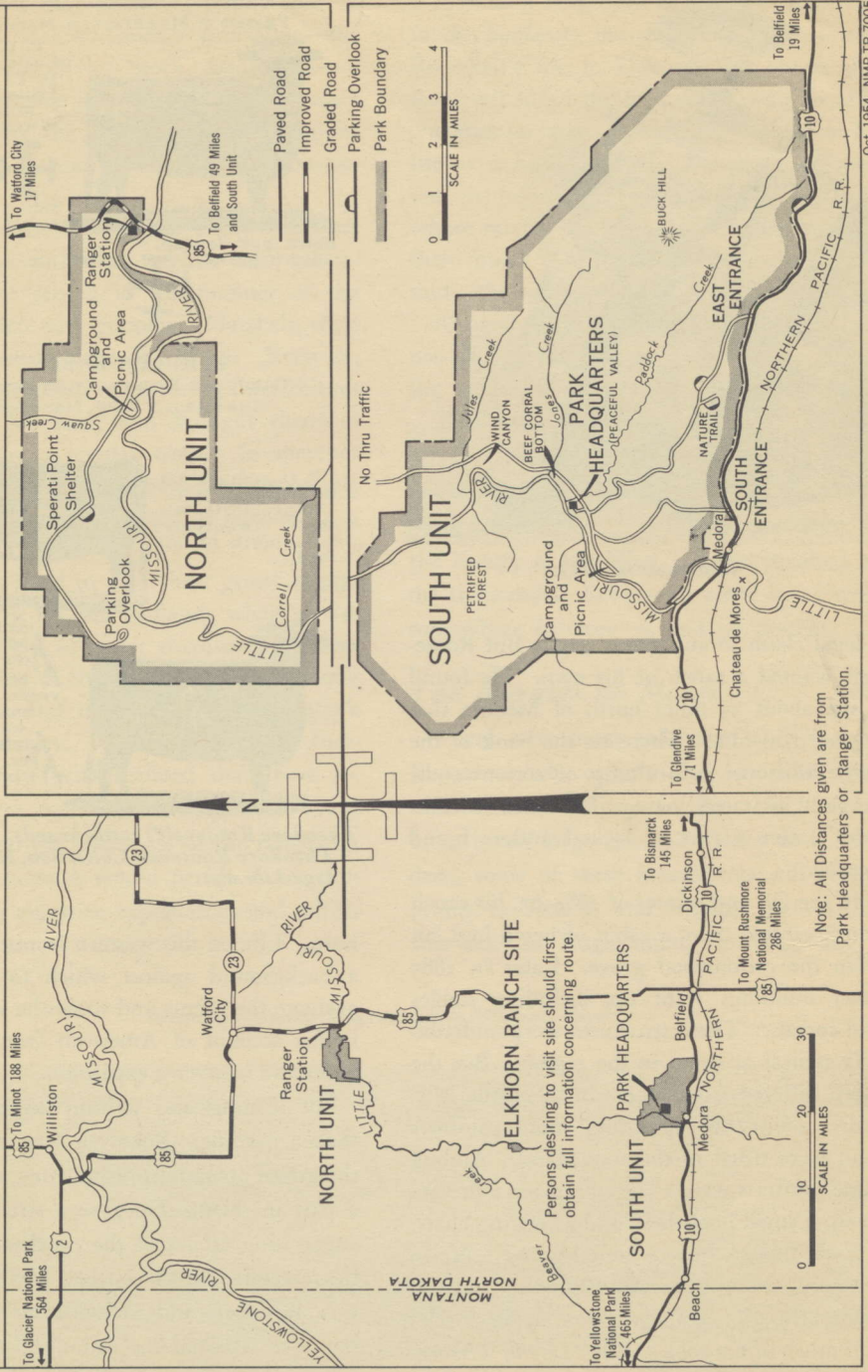
If you are traveling east-west, U. S. 10 and 2 are the best approaches to the park. If traveling north-south, U. S. 85 is the best approach, intersecting U. S. 2 near Williston and U. S. 10 about 18 miles east of Medora. In bad weather you should make local inquiry before driving on secondary roads.

Administration

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Medora, N. Dak., is in immediate charge.

The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK NORTH DAKOTA



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Cover: Typical badlands scene in North Unit; and Theodore Roosevelt cattle brands.