

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK



NORTH DAKOTA

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HERE, AT THE NATION'S only National Memorial Park, Theodore Roosevelt's enduring contributions to the conservation of our country's resources and his part in developing the northern open range cattle industry are memorialized. Plants, animals, and the natural landscape are preserved for all time so that you and other park visitors may see them as Roosevelt saw them on his first visit to the area in 1883.

No other President of the United States has been as closely identified with the Great Plains region, and with the Dakotas in particular, as was Theodore Roosevelt during the time he lived there. His interest in the preservation of all forms of natural resources grew sharper because of his life close to those resources. The United States has become a stronger Nation, and succeeding generations have found it a better place in which to live, because of his influence in conserving our country's natural resources.

Profiting by his experience in the Little Missouri Badlands and throughout the West, Roosevelt appreciated the vital need for conservation. Before he became President, he helped organize the Boone and Crockett Club which was dedicated to preserving America's big game. He also warned that the United States was exhausting its forest supplies more rapidly than they were being produced. As President, he supported the conservation of America's scenic, natural, and historic objects. In 1906, Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act which provided that the President could set aside for public use, as National Monuments, those objects and landmarks of scientific and historic interest on federally owned land.

HISTORY OF THE NORTH DAKOTA BADLANDS

Surprisingly little is known of Indian occupation in the Little Missouri Badlands before the advent of the white man. When trappers and explorers did enter the area in



Theodore Roosevelt on the roundup, 1885. Courtesy Houghton Mifflin Co.

the 1800's, Crow, Cheyenne, Sioux, Arikara, and Gros Ventre Indians variously occupied sites along the Missouri River above Bismarck, from the mouth of the Knife River to the mouth of the Yellowstone.

Not until about 1804 did white men first view the Little Missouri Badlands. That year the Canadian "voyageur," Jean Baptiste LePage, descended the Little Missouri River and joined the Lewis and Clark Expedition at its winter camp at Fort Mandan, north of Bismarck. During the next two decades, many trapping and exploring expeditions, notably those of John Colter, Manuel Lisa, Joshua Pilcher, Alexander Henry, William Sublette, William Kipp, and Brig. Gen. Henry Atkinson, passed the mouth of the Little Missouri en route to the Yellowstone River or the Three Forks region.

Brig. Gen. Alfred Sully first brought the Little Missouri River to the attention of the American people through the campaign against the Sioux in 1864. According to legend, Sully stated that the badlands looked like "hell with the fires out." In his official report, he described the country as "grand, dismal and majestic."

While Sully campaigned across the Dakota plains, railroad interests were making plans to link the Great Lakes and Puget Sound by rail, on a route that would cross Dakota Territory. In July 1864, Congress chartered the enterprise by passing the Northern Pacific Railroad Act.

But, as hinted by Sully's campaign, the Indians of the Dakota country were uneasy. The miner with his pick and gun, en route from the East to the newly discovered gold fields in Montana, had intruded their lands. More important, the slaughter of the buffado herds, which accompanied construction and completion of the railroads farther south, was a mortal threat to the Indians' way of life. So they were determined to prevent the advance of the Northern Pacific rail line west of the Missouri River.

During the early and middle 1870's, the Sioux were still powerful enough to resist the white man's westward movements. Railroad survey parties were sometimes halted by Indian attacks. However, actual building of the rail line west of Bismarck was held up primarily because of the bankruptcy of the Northern Pacific in 1873. By 1879, the railroad had been reorganized, and, except for sporadic attacks, Indian resistance to the construction had been broken. With the red man no longer a serious threat to surveying and tracklaying crews, the Northern Pacific began laying rails west from Bismarck.

Removal of the Indians, completion of railroads connecting with eastern markets, and destruction in the early 1880's of the northern herd of buffalo opened a vista for rich profits on the plains of Dakota Territory. Many Texas cattlemen looked toward the northern ranges where the nutritious grasses fattened livestock more easily. Great cattle drives to the north were organized. By late 1883, a number of outfits, financed by Texas, eastern, or foreign capital, were operating along the Little Missouri.

Roosevelt Comes To Hunt Buffalo

Roosevelt first came to the Badlands in September 1883 to hunt buffalo and other big game. He spent several evenings during his visit discussing future prospects for the cattle industry in the Badlands with such ranchers as Gregor Lang.

At St. Paul, Minn., on September 27, 1883, Roosevelt entered into an agreement with Sylvane Ferris and William Merrifield to place some 400 cattle on the Chimney Butte Ranch, named for a nearby landmark. Later it was known as the Maltese Cross Ranch after its distinctive brand. (Today on this ranch, cattle is branded in much the same way as in Roosevelt's time.)

In the months that followed, Roosevelt decided that if his cattle wintered well in the Badlands, he would start another

ranch. Returning to New York, he was elected to the State Assembly in November 1883. However, in February 1884, personal tragedy struck. Within a single night, both his wife and mother died. Stunned by this double blow, Roosevelt nevertheless continued his reform activities as a New York legislator. But he was restless and in June he returned to the Little Missouri.

The cattle business had been a success during the winter of 1883-84, so Roosevelt took steps to establish another ranch. He selected the Elkhorn, about 35 miles north of Medora, on the left bank of the Little Missouri River. Neither the ranchhouse nor any other original buildings remain at the site today, but you can see an accurate reproduction of this historic ranch in a diorama in the visitor center at Medora.

Roosevelt's ranching operations prospered until the winter of 1886-87 when, as one writer said, "nature and economics seemed to conspire together for the entire overthrow of the (open range cattle) industry." The *Bismarck Tribune* described the winter as "in many respects the worst on record." We do not know the exact extent of Roosevelt's losses, but Hermann Hagedorn and other Roosevelt biographers believe he lost about 60 percent of his cattle.

Roosevelt spent short periods in the Badlands during the late summers or early autumns of 1887, 1888, 1890, 1892, 1893, and 1896. But his political success made it increas-

Lignite beds like this one in the South Unit are often ignited by lightning or other natural causes.



Part of the buffalo herd in Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.



ingly difficult for him to give attention to his ranching ventures. By 1897, the number of his cattle had so dwindled that he decided to sell out. Before leaving for Cuba in 1898 as lieutenant colonel of the famous "Rough Riders," Roosevelt sold his cattle interest to Sylvane Ferris.

(For a more detailed account of Roosevelt's life in Dakota, read the National Park Service's booklet, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Dakota Badlands*, available at the Medora visitor center.)

The Marquis de Mores

The Marquis de Mores, a wealthy French nobleman, was a contemporary of Roosevelt in the Badlands during the 1880's. The Marquis founded the village of Medora, naming it in honor of his wife.

De Mores attempted to establish a meat-packing industry and a cattle empire in the Badlands. He also started a stage coach line between North and South Dakota. For various reasons, these enterprises failed, and the Marquis left this region after a few years for other adventures abroad.

You can see a statue of the Marquis in the little village park in Medora. The Chateau de Mores, now an historic site maintained by the State of North Dakota, is situated on an elevated bench across the Little Missouri River from Medora. There you can see the furnishings used by this wealthy Frenchman during his brief but colorful stay on the Western frontier.

GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

The badlands landscape of the park is one of great scenic attraction, with tablelands, buttes, canyons, and rugged hills.

The geological story is primarily that of erosion by wind and water of a thick series of flat-lying sediments called the Fort Union formation. These processes of erosion are still going on. They produce spectacular scenery and curiously sculptured land forms.

In the North Unit of the park are great masses of blue bentonitic clay which, when moistened, become soft and slip downward. Also in the North Unit, about 70 miles from the Medora visitor center, are impressive tilted slump blocks, formed when huge sections of the cliffs slowly dropped as their base was eroded away.

The rock layers were generally deposited in streams, lakes, and swamps many millions of years ago during the Paleocene epoch. Dense vegetation grew in some of these areas, and was deposited in layers which in time formed beds of varying thickness of soft, impure coal, called lignite. You can see dark lignite layers on many of the eroded hillsides.

Occasionally, these lignite beds catch fire from lightning or other natural causes and burn slowly for many years. You can see one such burning coal seam on a side trip that starts near the park's east entrance. A field exhibit at the spot explains the process.

These burning layers of coal usually bake the adjacent clay layers into a red, bricklike substance—locally called "scoria," or clinker. You will find outcrops of red scoria at many places in the park.

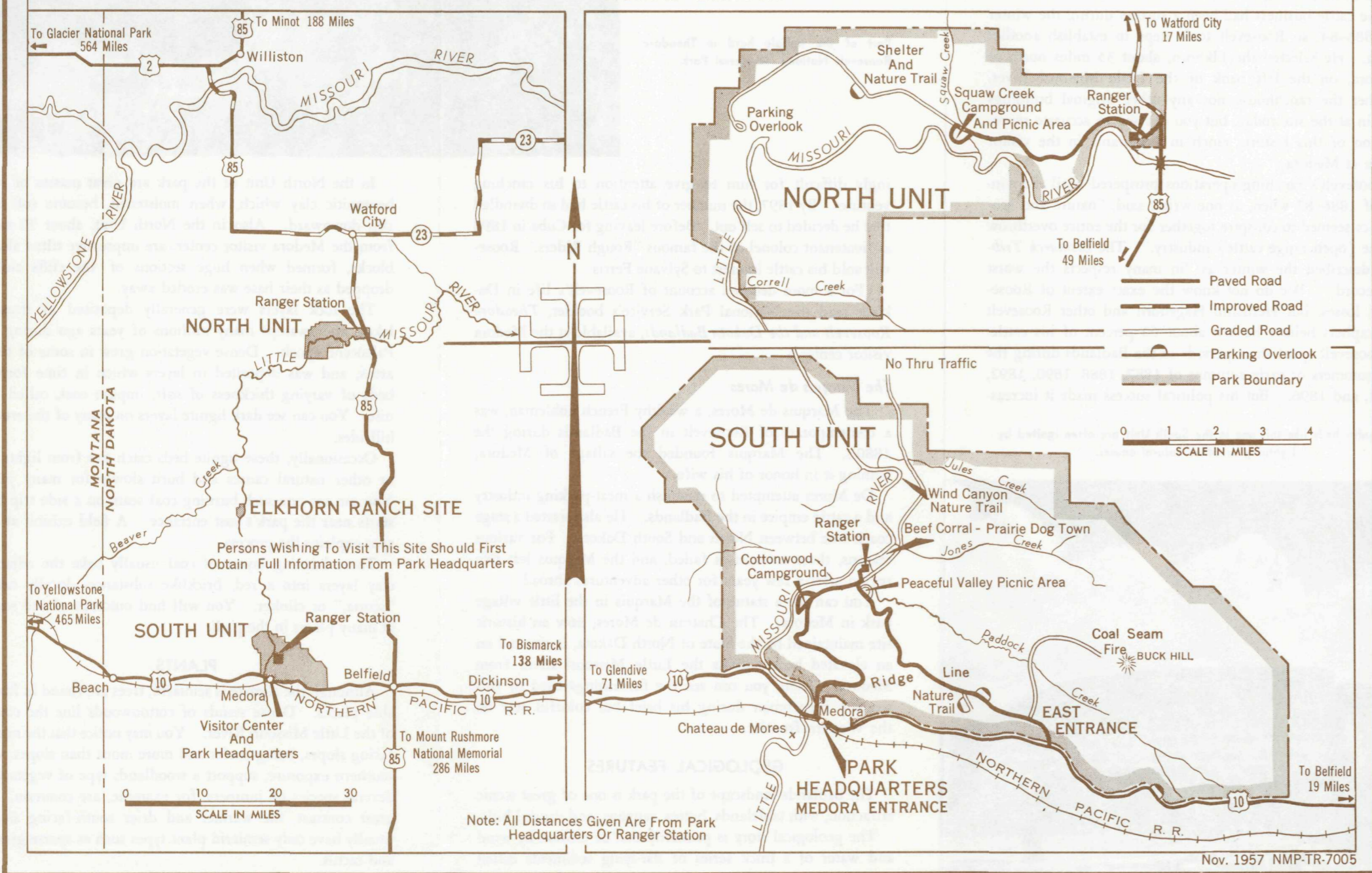
PLANTS

Although the climate is semiarid, trees are found in favorable places. Dense stands of cottonwoods line the course of the Little Missouri River. You may notice that the north-facing slopes, being cooler and more moist than slopes with southern exposure, support a woodlands type of vegetation. Several species of junipers, for example, are common. In great contrast, the warmer and drier south-facing slopes usually have only semiarid plant types such as sparse grasses and cactus.

Sagebrush and rabbitbrush are also common in the park. Other shrubs include sumac, chokeberry, wolfberry, American plum, buffaloberry, dogwood, and currant.

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.

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If you walk the trails in early summer, you can enjoy displays of prairie rose, the official State flower of North Dakota. More plentiful wildflowers include phlox, pasqueflower, redmallow, sunflower, coneflower, bluebell, blazingstar, goldenrod aster, and scoria lily.

You will learn much natural history of the park by taking the self-guiding trails. Trail leaflets are available for some of the trails.

ANIMALS

Animal life in the park is somewhat varied. Some of the native mammals have disappeared from this area since Roosevelt's time. One of the larger mammals you might see is the fleet and wary pronghorn.

A small herd of bison, or American buffalo, has been re-introduced here. Watch for them as you travel in the park.

You will pass several large prairie-dog towns along park roads. These quick-moving little animals are the black-tailed prairie dogs. They don't hibernate but may stay underground all winter, if necessary, living on fat stored up in the summer and autumn.

Be alert when you walk the trails, and be careful where you put your hands when climbing during the summer. The prairie rattlesnake is rather scarce, but it occasionally can be found in the park.

The park is rich in birdlife. Ask at the visitor center for a bird checklist. Magpies, hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, woodpeckers, flickers, sparrows, larks, swallows, wrens, flycatchers, and many other common species are found here.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARK

Under the technical direction and supervision of the National Park Service and with labor and materials supplied by various relief agencies, this area first was developed in the 1930's as the Roosevelt Recreational Demonstration Area. In 1946, it became Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge. An act of Congress on April 25, 1947, established Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. It now covers about 110 square miles 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.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

By auto. If you are traveling east-west, U.S. 2 and 10 are the best approaches to the North and South Units of the park. If traveling north-south, U.S. 85 is the best approach for either unit. It intersects U.S. 2 near Williston and U.S. 10 about 18 miles east of Medora. The Elkhorn

Ranch Site is reached only by rough dirt road. In bad weather, you should make local inquiry before driving on any secondary roads.

By bus, train, or airlines. Medora is on the main routes of the Greyhound Bus Lines and the Northern Pacific Railway. Dickinson, N. Dak., 40 miles east of Medora, is served by Frontier Airlines, and is the nearest air terminal.

WHAT TO DO

Picnicking and camping. You will find picnic areas and campgrounds in the North and South Units of the park. However, meals and lodging must be obtained in nearby towns.

Naturalist services. During the summer, park ranger-naturalists conduct field trips and evening campfire programs at various locations in the park. You may obtain schedules of these activities at the visitor center.

An outdoor drama, entitled "Old Four Eyes," describing Roosevelt's adventures in the North Dakota Badlands, is presented by the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park and Badlands Association each summer outside the park from June 29 through Labor Day in the Burning Hills Amphitheater near Medora.

ADMINISTRATION

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

MISSION 66

MISSION 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fred A. Seaton, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Conrad L. Wirth, Director



Cover: Badlands and Little Missouri River in North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.

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