

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

## NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK

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 and in 1906 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 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 planning to link the Great Lakes and Puget Sound by rail on a route crossing 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 bison 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.

Removal of the Indians, completion of railroads connecting with eastern markets, and destruction in the early 1880's of the northern herd of bison 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 Bison

Roosevelt first came to the Badlands in September 1883 to hunt bison and other big game. He spent several evenings during his visit discussing future prospects for the

Restored Maltese Cross cabin.



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. (The ranch cabin occupied by Roosevelt was moved to the park in 1959 from the State capitol grounds in Bismarck and is now located on a site near the Medora visitor center. It has been restored with historically authentic furniture and furnishings reflecting Roosevelt's days in the Badlands.)

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. In February 1884, however, personal tragedy struck. Within a single night, both his wife and mother died. Stunned by this blow, Roosevelt nevertheless continued his activities as a 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 increasingly 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.

### 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.

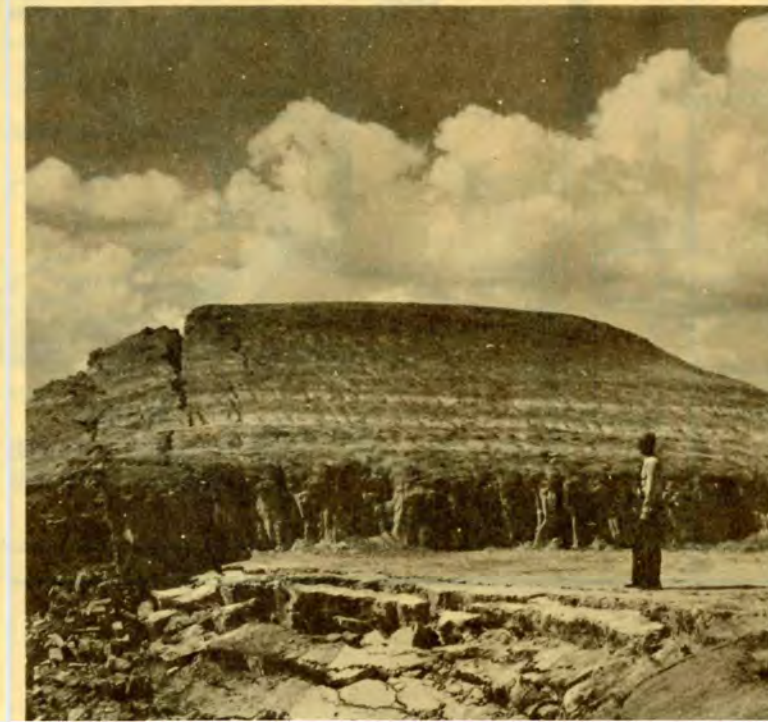
### GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

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

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



Bison roam the Badlands again.

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

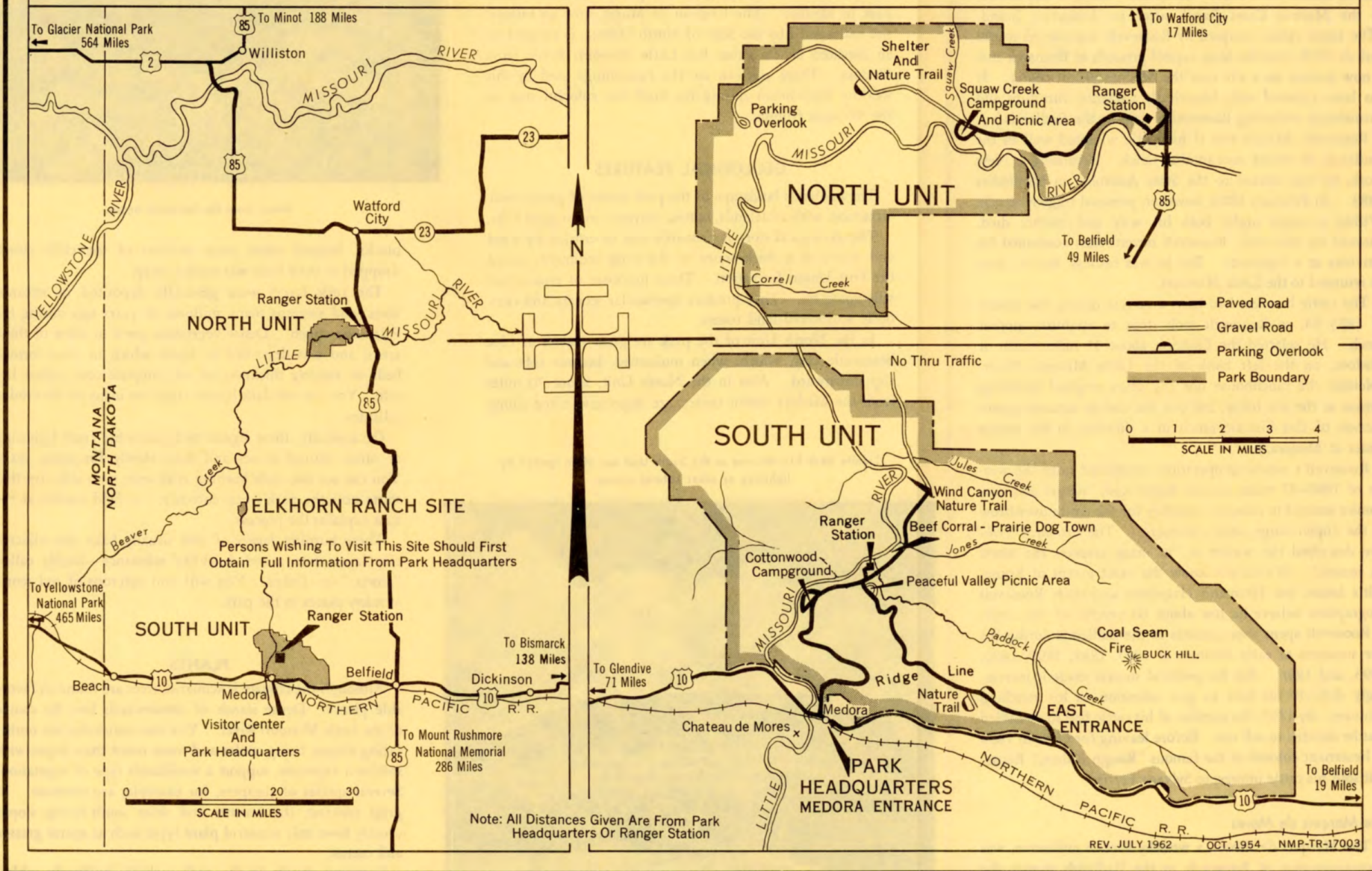
Although the climate is semiarid, trees are found in favorable places. Dense stands of cottonwoods line the course of the Little Missouri River. You may notice that the north-facing slopes, being cooler and more moist than slopes with southern exposure, support a woodlands type of vegetation. Several 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.

Common shrubs in the park include sagebrush, rabbit-brush, sumac, chokecherry, American plum, 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.*

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK

NORTH DAKOTA



By walking the trails in early summer, you can enjoy displays of prairie rose, the official State flower of North Dakota. Other plentiful wildflowers include phlox, pasqueflower, redmallow, coneflower, goldenrod, aster, and scoria lily. Much natural history is to be learned from the self-guiding trails.

## ANIMALS

Animal life in the park is diverse, though 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 reintroduced here. Watch for them as you travel about the park.

Along the park roads you will pass several "towns" of the black-tailed prairie dog. These quick-moving rodents, though they do not hibernate, sometimes stay underground all winter, living on fat stored up in the summer and autumn.

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.

Be alert on the trails, and be careful where you put your hands when climbing during the summer. The prairie rattlesnake, while scarce, can occasionally be found in the park.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

To reach the park, east-west travelers can take U.S. 2 and 10 to approach the North and South units. If traveling north-south, U.S. 85 leads to both units. This highway intersects U.S. 2 near Williston and U.S. 1 about 18 miles east of Medora. The Elkhorn Ranch site is reached only by rough dirt road. Make local inquiry before attempting this drive.

The park is open all year, with spring, summer, and autumn being the best seasons to visit. When entering the South Unit, you should use Medora entrance and make the visitor center your first stop. Here you will find exhibits that will acquaint you with the history and natural history of the park. Located here too is Theodore Roosevelt's Maltese Cross cabin.

**Camping and picnicking.** There are campgrounds and picnic grounds in both the North and South units. Campgrounds can accommodate both tents and trailers, but utility connections for trailers are not available. Firewood, water, and modern restrooms are provided. Meals, supplies, and overnight lodging are not available in the park but may be obtained in nearby towns.

**Naturalist services.** During the summer, park ranger-naturalists conduct evening programs in the campgrounds.

You can obtain information about these programs at the visitor center or at entrance stations.

For a more detailed account of Roosevelt's life in Dakota, a handbook entitled *Theodore Roosevelt and the Dakota Badlands* can be purchased at the Medora visitor center or from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C., for 25 cents.

A superintendent, whose address is Medora, N. Dak., is in immediate charge of the park.

## ADMINISTRATION

Congress in 1947 established THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK. It 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. The park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

## MISSION 66

MISSION 66, a 10-year conservation, development, and improvement program of the National Park System, is scheduled for completion in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service. At Theodore Roosevelt under the program, a visitor center has been built, a system of roadside interpretation installed, and the interpretive and protective staff increased. In addition, campgrounds have been expanded and roads improved.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



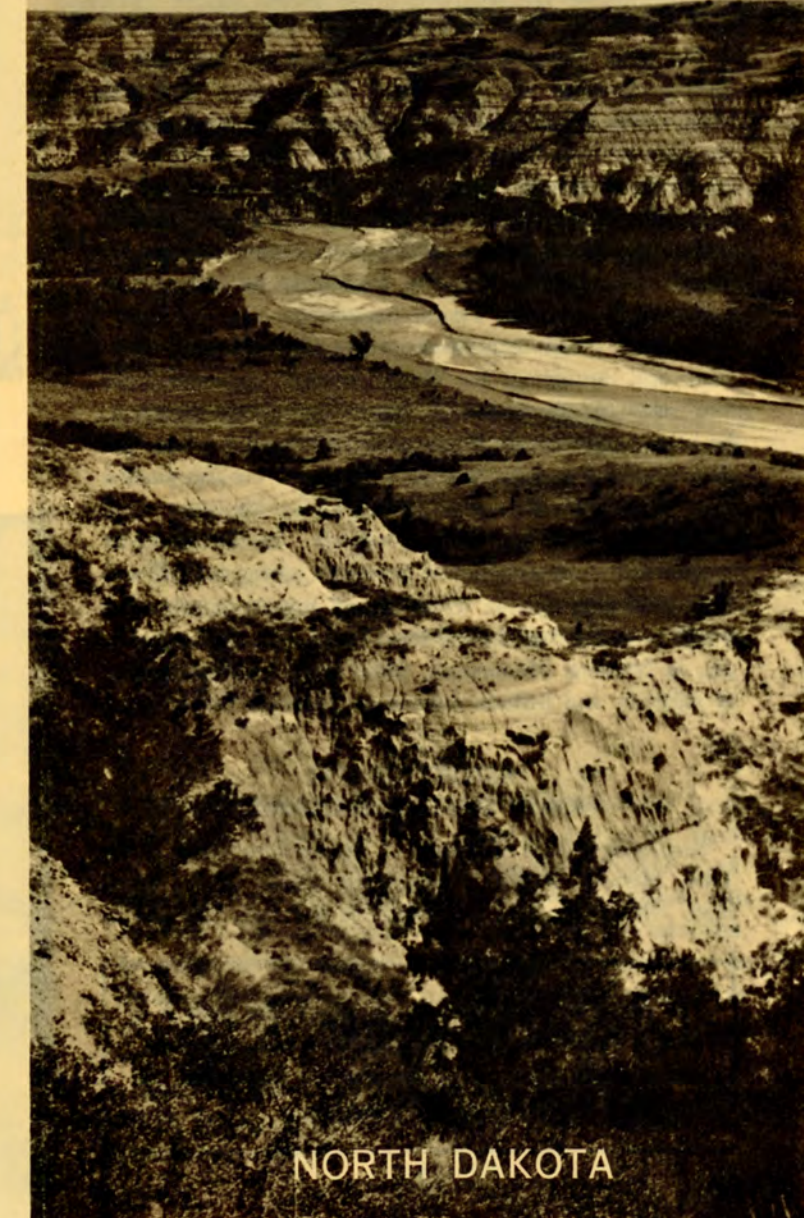
Cover: Badlands and Little Missouri River in North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.

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