



Maltese Cross Cabin

At the dawn of the 20th century in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became this nation's 26th President and ultimately one of its greatest conservationists. It was here in the North Dakota Badlands in 1883 that he first arrived to hunt bison. Before he left, he had acquired primary interests in the Maltese Cross or Chimney Butte Ranch. Roosevelt thrived on the vigorous outdoor lifestyle, and at the Maltese Cross, actively participated in the life of a working cowboy.

The Maltese Cross Ranch cabin was originally located about seven miles south of Medora in the wooded bottom-lands of the Little Missouri River. At Roosevelt's request, ranch managers Sylvane Ferris and Bill Merrifield built a one and one-half story cabin complete with a shingle roof and cellar. Constructed of durable ponderosa pine logs that had been cut and floated down the Little Missouri River, the cabin was considered somewhat of a "mansion" in its day with wooden floors and three separate rooms (kitchen, living room, Roosevelt's bedroom). The steeply pitched roof, an oddity on the northern plains, created an upstairs sleeping loft for the ranch hands.

A number of items in the cabin today belonged to Theodore Roosevelt. Those that

did not are from the same time period and would be typical furnishings of the day.



A prolific writer, Roosevelt spent many lamp-lit hours laboring at the desk in the living room recording his memoirs and reminiscences of badlands life. Between 1884 and 1885 he completed Hunting Trips of a Ranchman at this desk in the Maltese Cross Cabin. The hutch in the living room doubled as a library and fold-out writing table to indulge two of Roosevelt's prime passions — reading and writing. The traditional rocking chair in the living room, in all probability Roosevelt's, was his favorite piece of furniture. A wicker-lined canvas clothing trunk belonging to T.R. sits in the bedroom.

Roosevelt actively ranched in the badlands until 1887 but maintained ranching interests in the area until 1898. He later developed a conservation program as president that deeply reflected his experiences here in the West where he had become keenly aware of the need to conserve and protect our natural resources.

During Roosevelt's presidency, the Maltese Cross cabin was exhibited in Portland, Oregon and St. Louis. It was then moved to the state capitol grounds in Bismarck. In 1959 the cabin was relocated to its present site and renovated.

His second ranch, the Elkhorn, is located about 35 miles north of Medora.



Maltese Cross Brand

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