Historical study of beef bonanza ranching in Billings County, Dakota Territory

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A HISTORICAL STUDY
of
BEEF BONANZA RANCHING IN BILLINGS COUNTY, DAKOTA TERRITORY

by

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B. A., State Teachers College
Minot, North Dakota, 1940

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CHAPTER I

EARLY EXPEDITIONS THROUGH THE LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, was the first white man known to have entered the region of the Missouri River Valley. Verendrye, a French-Canadian was in search of the westward route to India.¹ Although he did not succeed in reaching the Little Missouri River Valley in 1742,² two of his sons later explored this country.³ They reached either the Black Hills or the Big Horn mountains. It is, however, fairly definitely established that they did visit the Little Missouri region.⁴

Wilson Hunt, a partner of the Pacific Fur Company, together with Donald McKenzie, another partner were given charge of John Jacob Astor's overland expedition. This expedition left St. Joseph, Missouri in the spring of 1811.⁵ Their route crossed the southern part of the

² Ibid., pp. 89-92.
³ Ibid., pp. 194-195.
⁴ Ibid., p. 241.
Little Missouri River Valley, as they proceeded just north of the Black Hills and continued westward, crossing the Powder River near Pumkin Creek. This expedition roughly paralleled what was later known as the Oregon Trail, except for its deviation to the north into the Powder River and Little Missouri River territory.6

It was fully fifty years after the Astor Expedition that the next expedition travelled the Little Missouri country. The general route of explorers, fur traders, and military expeditions traversing from eastern Dakota into Montana and the west coast followed either the more accessible Missouri-Yellowstone route or took the established trails to the southward. This un-explored territory in western Dakota and eastern Montana remained, until 1864, untraversed by any large party of white men.

It was after the Sioux outbreak in Minnesota in 1862 that General Alfred H. Sully was sent to punish the Indians. In 1864 after establishing Fort Rice, which was located on the Missouri River south of present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, he proceeded west-

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ward to the Killdeer Mountain. Here an engagement
was fought in which the Indians were severely punished.
It afterwards developed that few of them were Minne-
nesota Sioux. Sully continued his march and entered
the Bad Lands near the present site of Pryburg, North
Dakota. Here with great difficulty he was forced to
cross twenty miles of buttes and gullies, continually
harassed by the Indians along the route. Following
this encounter Sully reached the Yellowstone and
returned to Fort Rice by way of the Missouri River.

Upon reaching Fort Rice, General Sully was
informed that Captain James L. Fisk, with a party of
immigrants, was in danger. Fisk had made a previous
expedition through Dakota in 1862, but his route was
north of the Little Missouri River. In 1864, however,
Fisk was following Sully's trail, when he was attacked

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7 Lieutenant D. L. Kingsbury, "Sully's Expedition
Against the Sioux in 1864", Collections of the Minne-
nesota Historical Society, Vol. III (St. Paul: Minnesota

8 Remains of Sully's fortifications may be seen
on the west side of the Little Missouri River on a
bluff overlooking Modern, North Dakota.

9 Kingsbury, op. cit., p. 462.

10 Idib., p. 461.
by Indians near the present village of Marmarth, North Dakota. Messengers were sent to Sully for aid, and fortifications were thrown up.\textsuperscript{11} After several days aid from Fort Rice arrived and relieved the besieged immigrants, most of whom returned to their homes.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1864 the Northern Pacific Railway received its charter from the government and efforts were made to find a feasible route to the Pacific.\textsuperscript{13} The Whistler expedition of 1871 went up the Little Missouri River and into Montana in search of the most practical route for the impending railroad.\textsuperscript{14} Another expedition left Fort Rice in 1872 under the command of General Stanley with the same purpose of finding a route for the Northern Pacific.\textsuperscript{15} This expedition is sometimes


\textsuperscript{12} Kingsbury, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 462.

\textsuperscript{13} Eugene V. Smalley, History of the Northern Pacific Railroad (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883), p. 117.


termed the Rosser Survey, and was especially distinguished because of the men that accompanied it. The survey was abandoned by the Northern Pacific, but the Milwaukee Railroad in Montana takes up the identical route.

On the last day of the year 1871 the Northern Pacific Railroad was completed to the eastern boundary of Dakota Territory and by 1873 the line had been extended to the Missouri River. Bismarck, Dakota Territory, remained the western terminus of the line until 1879. During the next two years rails were laid to the Montana border, completing the railroad across the entire Territory.

The railroads linked Dakota and Montana with the east and civilization, but to the West lay the frontier. Here the Sioux had become resentful because of the encroaching whites and the appropriation of their hunting grounds. Many of the Indians had left the

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17 On this expedition were General Custer, Lieutenant-Colonel Fred Grant, Major Ludlow, Charlie Reynolds, a scout, and William B. Curtiss, a newspaper correspondent.

reservations, which the government had provided for them, because they wanted to hunt, or because the practices of dishonest agents had made life on the reservations unbearable.

The campaign of 1876 was planned to force the Indians onto reservations, in order to obtain the relinquishment of the Black Hills. Generals Custer and Gibbon with their forces were to meet Generals Terry and Custer with their troops near the Rosebud River in Montana and from there they would all move southward against the Indians who were in the hills along the Little Big Horn River.

On the morning of May 17, 1876, the eastern division of the expedition started out from Fort Abraham Lincoln located at Bismarck, Dakota Territory, with General Terry in command, and with General Custer at the head of the Seventh Cavalry. This expedition followed very closely the present route of the

---

19 The American Journal of Education, XVIII, "Dakota Territory Statistics of 1869", p. 469., states: In 1860 the population of Dakota Territory was 4,837, including 2,881 civilized Indians. By 1867 there were 30,000 uncivilized Indians in the Territory, owing to unrest on the reservations.

Northern Pacific Railroad. 21

After Custer's defeat 22 the Indians were forced to return to the reservations, and to make sure that they would stay there, the authorities took horses, saddles, and arms from both hostile and peaceful Sioux. 23

The culmination of the railroad's entrance into this last frontier in the Northwest, and the removal of the Indians to reservations allowed the big cattle ranchers to quickly drive their herds into this virgin country.

Since the County of Billings in Dakota Territory from 1870 to 1890 included at times the great majority of the ranches of the Little Missouri River Valley, the investigator will, for practicability, limit this thesis to a history of Billings County.

It is the purpose of this study (1) to substantiate some of the stories concerning the early history of cattle ranching in Billings County; (2) to add to the already published history of this territory; and

21 Associated Press dispatch, The Bismarck Tribune, July 6, 1876.
22 Ibid., This "Bismarck Tribune Extra", gives a full page account of the Custer Massacre and gives a full list of the men killed.
(3) to write a more complete history of the part that the ranchers played in the development of the Little Missouri River Valley.

The region of the Little Missouri River Valley was one of the last frontiers of the open range system and represents the customs and practices that accompany the livestock industry. The country was so favorable to ranching that many men of prominence and wealth were influenced to locate ranches here. In spite of the importance of cattle ranching to this territory, and the fact that some notable men in history were instrumental in shaping the industry of this region, no attempt has been made to show the relationship between the two.

Cattle ranching in the Little Missouri River Valley was woven around several men of international prominence, while the history of Billings County revolved around the small county seat, Medora. In this study an attempt is made to complete a transition between these men and the local history of Billings County during the Territorial days from the beginning of the cattle industry in 1870 to the end of the open range, about 1890.
CHAPTER II

TOPOGRAPHY AND FORMATION OF THE BAD LANDS

Situated largely in western Dakota and eastern Montana, lying mainly in the huge depression drained by the Little Missouri River, the Northern Bad Lands fringe the eastern line of Montana from the Missouri River southward to Wyoming, a distance of approximately two hundred twenty-five miles, with an average width of fifty miles. 24

For the greater part of its course, in the form of a comparatively shallow canyon some three quarters of a mile in width, the valley proper of the Little Missouri windingly cleaves its way through the heart of the disrupted country. Simously across its floor, the river doubles back and forth upon itself, forming a continuous series of circles to oxbows, the whole constituting a very crooked river. This, like most other plains rivers has a broad, shallow bed, through which in times of freshets runs a muddy torrent; at other seasons of the year it is very shallow, spreading out into pools, between which the water may be

24 North Dakota Guidebook, Works Progress Administration, Sponsored by the State Historical Society of North Dakota (Fargo, North Dakota: Knight Printing Co., 1938), p. 175.
but a few inches deep. Even then it is not always
easy to cross, for the river bed is filled with quick-
sand and mud-holes.

Contained within the sigmoid curves are the river
bottoms; the amount of land enclosed by a single bend
is a bottom. They range in extent anywhere from a
few acres to several hundred. In earlier days these
were always to be found well grassed and more or less
thickly dotted with various species of sage and other
forms of plant life. 25 Cottonwood trees fringe the
river, and in turn these are underlaid with tangled
thickets mainly of bull-berry, diamond willow, green
ash, and buckbrush.

From the edges of the valley the land rises
abruptly in steep high hills whose crests are sharp
and jagged. This broken country, which extends back
from the river for many miles, has been called by its
inhabitants the Bad Lands. The name is derived from
the French explorers who named this region "mauvaises
terres a traverser", or "bad lands to travel through". 26

Entering the river from either side at frequent

25 Theodore Roosevelt, Hunting Trips of a Ranch-

26 D. E. Willard, The Story of the Prairies (New
intervals are the major creeks draining the adjacent country. With few exceptions these are miniature reproductions of the Little Missouri River and valley; their numerous rebranching heads spring fanwise from the distant paralleling main divides. Abutting against the latter and extending to the river between these creeks are the cross, or partitioning divides. So far, the whole approximates the average natural draining system except for the unusual number of converging major creeks as compared to the drained area. But here the comparison stops, for from these cross or partitioning divides spring vast numbers of deeply eroded branching and rebranching minor arteries, shading to the major creeks. Between them are what might be termed quaternary partitioning divides, abutting against the cross divides. Again the slopes of these are slashed by countless converging ravines, gullies, and draws separated by octuple divides, abutting against the quaternaries. In turn, these are cut up by innumerable reforking coulees and veinlets. Their bottoms contain patches of brush which lead back into the heart of the Bad Lands. Thus, the subdivision is systematically carried down to the finest degree in natural drainage, and results in a complicated drainage system, out of proportion to the area drained;
the subdivision becoming more and more pronounced as
the river is approached until at length the areas
lying between the major creeks become cut up into
fantastic shapes called buttes.

Some of these buttes spread out into level pla-
teaus, many miles in extent; others form chains, or
rise as steep isolated masses. Some are overgrown
with gnarled, stunted cedars or small pines, and they
are all cleft through and riven in every direction
by deep, narrow ravines, or by canyons with perpen-
dicular sides.

In the early spring when the young grass first
sprouts the land looks green and bright; but during
the rest of the year there is no such appearance of
freshness, for the short bunch grass is almost brown,
and the gray-green sage brush, bitter and withered
looking, abounds everywhere, and gives a peculiarly
barren aspect to the landscape.

The ground in many places is further depressed
through another action than the erosion of water and
weather. This is a country of great lignite coal
deposits. Natural causes from time immemorial have
set the lignite on fire, so that the land has settled
wherever there have been fires. Many burning veins
were reported by early explorers and a few may be
seen today.

The nature of this process and the effects created can best be explained by the soil which is sometimes a yellow and sometimes a blue clay which tends to run in horizontal layers. Through the clay run other layers of soft sandstone and black lignite, the former thin, the latter anywhere from one to thirty-five feet thick. Where the lignite has burned, it has turned the overlying materials into a hard slag or to a powder of brilliant pink, locally called "scoria". Thus fires have taken the form of scoria deposits. Scoria, which is in fact tile, formed through the calcination of clay by burning coal which underlaid it.

It is a well known fact to those who have resided in the Bad Lands that a mere wheel rut or a crack in the sod, where situated on an incline, is practically certain to develop into a creeping washout. With each successive heavy rain it crawls its way up-grade to develop in time into a tentacled, crooked, and more or less deeply eroded waterway. 28

Despite the general absence of trees, vegetation is a large feature. Reference has been made to the

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27 Roosevelt, Hunting Trips, op. cit., p. 15
28 Willard, op. cit., p. 146.
cottonwoods which follow the river banks and the thick-
et of green ash in the coulee bottoms. Dense masses
of dwarfed red cedar are abundant and their dark greens
in contrast with the warmer colors of the slopes enhance
the color scheme. Thick masses of gray foliaged buck-
berry are common and so is one of dwarf roses. Sage-
brush, greasebush, yucca, and other gray foliaged
herbs are abundant. Grass is everywhere, and except
on the steeper slopes, vegetation of some kind covers
the larger proportion of the area. However, the un-
clothed steeper slopes are so evident that they seem
to occupy a larger area than the grassed draws and
ravines.

The effect in spots is grotesque and even fright-
ful, but in almost all portions of the Bad Lands the
grassy buttes put the forms into compositions of great
beauty. The range, with its domical forms, appears
as the massing of great architecture. It is a suc-
cession of disintegrating ranges, apparently and lit-
erally extending for miles, that seem to stretch to
infinity.

The effect in many parts is intensified by color.
No matter how much weathering, the color layers remain.
The broad streaks of yellow and blue broken by the
narrow pink and black are fairly prevalent; and in
the regions where scoria occurs, a peak or ridge will be capped with the faintest pink, heavy at the top but diminishing in strength as the washed-down material grows thinner.

Petrified stumps and trunks of trees are a common sight throughout the valley of the Little Missouri, suggesting that at one time it might have been heavily forested. When the originals of these stone trees died, their trunks, either standing or fallen, soaked up soil water holding mineral matter in solution. As the water evaporated, the mineral was left behind, filling the pores of the wood and the tiny cavities produced by decomposition. In time decay removed all the wood and the tree became stone, popularly, petrified wood.

Some of the logs are as much as thirty-five feet in length and two feet in diameter. In some places the soil has been washed and blown away from beneath the stumps, leaving odd formations shaped like toadstools.

On either side of the Bad Lands are long shallow

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draws which extend to the broken plains country. This country is a high, nearly treeless region, of light rainfall, crossed by streams which contain water only after rains. In places it stretches out into almost deserts of alkali and sagebrush, or into nearly level prairies of short grass, extending for miles without a break. *

* The investigator has relied largely upon Lincoln Lang's "Ranching With Roosevelt", D. E. Willard's "The Story of the Prairies", and interviews with Dr. J. Selke, Professor of Geology, State Teachers College, Dickinson, North Dakota for a more vivid description of the Bad Lands.
CHAPTER III

EARLY CATTLE RAISING IN THE BADLANDS

In the early 1880's these lands were won from the Indians. These were their only remaining hunting grounds, and toward the end of the 1870's the northern tribes had desperately tried to preserve them. They were defeated and the country was thrown open to the white settlers. The opening of Northern Pacific Railroad gave immigration an immense impetus. There were great quantities of game, and the hunters, who pursued the herds of buffalo were the forerunners of civilization in this territory. No longer fearing the Indians, and having the railroad to transport their meat and skins, they followed the buffalo in season and out, until in 1883 the herds were practically destroyed.

In the meanwhile cattlemen were beginning to form the vanguard of the white settlers. By 1881, the instant the danger from the Indians had been removed, Southern stockmen had pressed into eastern Montana and western Dakota. Some Eastern men,

30 Supra, p. 7


seeing the extent of the grazing country, brought stock out on the railroad.

In spite of their lack of savage desolation, the Bad Lands made a good cattle country, for the draws contained plenty of nourishing grass, and excellent shelter from the winter storms. The cattle kept close to the river and the depths of the Bad Lands in the cold months, while in the summer they wandered out on the broad prairies. The cattle were allowed to rove free over the Bad Lands and the prairies, picking up their own living even in the winter.

All the animals of each herd had certain distinctive brands. No attempt was made to keep them within definite bounds, except that the ranchmen generally combined to keep some of their cowboys riding lines to prevent the cattle from straying away altogether. The missing ones were recovered in the annual round-ups, when the calves were branded. These round-ups, in which many outfits joined together and covered hundreds of miles of territory, were the busiest periods of the year for the stockmen. In winter


34 Wilkeson, op. cit., p. 790.
little riding was done except a certain amount of line
riding.

From 1868 until as late as 1890 large herds of year-
ing steers were driven from the breeding ranches of
the South to this Northern range, there to be fattened,
usually for three years, before selling.

In the Little Missouri basin the ranches varied
greatly in size; on some there were but a few hundred
head of cattle, on others there were tens of thousands.
The land was in great part unsurveyed, and no fences were
in evidence. The small ranches were quite close to one
another, usually within several miles; but the home ranch
of a big outfit was twenty or thirty miles from another
building.

The chances for profits in cattle ranching here were
great, but the chances for losses were equally great. Whenever a winter of unusual severity occurred,
a great number of the young cattle, especially the
heifers, perished. The climate was one of interme-
diate periods during the spring and fall that were

35 Theodore Roosevelt, Hunting Trips of a Ranch-

36 Theodore Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt. An Aut-

37 Interviews with Mrs. George Pelissier, and
Dr. J. P. Hedges.
comfortable, but it was subject to extremes of temperature in summer and winter. Due to the absence of humidity however these extremes could be endured by the inhabitants. Much loss was also incurred when animals strayed and were not recovered. In the fall, the grass was like a mass of dry and brittle tinder, and fires did much damage. They were capable of reducing the prairies to blackened deserts as far as the eye could see, and destroying feed which was imperative during the winter.38

In later years a great abhorrence was held toward the homesteader who came to till the land, and toward the sheep owner who drove his flocks over it. The ranchers knew that the former would gradually fill the country to their own exclusion, while the latter's sheep would nibble the grass so close to the ground as to starve all other animals.39

The early cattlemen, after exploring this region carefully, believed that the advantages far overshadowed the disadvantages, and soon they were followed by great numbers hoping to capitalize on the open range of the Little Missouri River Valley.

38 Wilkeson, op. cit., p. 791.
39 Interviews with Dr. J. P. Hedges, and General Marion Sweeney.
CHAPTER IV
BILLINGS COUNTY AS A POLITICAL UNIT
I. BOUNDARY CHANGES

The requirements of the very rapidly developing territory of Dakota called for much shifting of boundary lines in organizing its civic groups, but the extreme southwest corner of the state remained a land practically untouched from the date of the general organization of counties, 1872-1873, until February 10, 1879 when the last unorganized territory became Stark and Billings counties. 40

Billings County was named in honor of the President of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Honorable Frederick Billings. 41 From the date of its creation in 1879 until North Dakota came into the union, Billings County had three important changes of boundary.

40 Laws of Dakota, 1879, Chap. XI, Sec. 4, p. 15
The county of Billings shall be bounded as follows: Beginning at a point on the west boundary of the Territory of Dakota where the forty-seventh degree of latitude intersects said boundary line; thence east to the northwest corner of Stark county; thence south to the southwest corner of said county; thence west to the west boundary line of the Territory of Dakota; thence north to the place of beginning. Maps 1, 2.

On March 8, 1883, it was cut up into three counties of equal size: Billings, Villard, and Bowman. On March 10, 1885 the counties of Billings and Villard were divided by a line running north and south, instead of their original east and west boundaries. On March 10, 1887 the county of Villard disappeared and the territory was divided between Billings and Stark with

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43 Laws of Dakota, 1885, Chap. III, Sec. 3, p. 226. The boundaries of the county of Billings are hereby designated and established as follows, to wit: Beginning at the point where the line between townships 144 and 145 north, intersects the boundary line between the boundaries of Montana and Dakota; thence south along said boundary line to the line between township 132 and 133 north; thence east along said township line to the line between ranges 101 and 102 west; thence north along said range line to the line between township 144 and 145 north; thence west along said township line to the place of beginning. . . . Map 4.

44 Laws of Dakota, 1887, Chap. CLXXIX, Sec. 1, pp. 374-375. Beginning at the point where the line between townships 144 and 145 intersects the boundary between the Territories of Dakota and Montana; thence south along said boundary to the line between township 132 and 133 north; thence east along said township line to the line between ranges 97 and 98 west; thence north along said range line to the line between township 136 and 137 north; thence west along said township line to the line between range 99 and 100 west; thence north along said range line to the line between township 140 and 141 north; thence east along said township line to the line between ranges 97 and 98 west; thence north on said range line to the line between township 144 and 145 north; thence west along said township line to the place of beginning. . . . Map 5.
the greater area going to Billings, and thus came Billings in with statehood, when North Dakota brought in her fifty-three counties, all named in her constitution. Statehood meant additional expense. Taxes for the proper launching of the new state must be procured.

and the great ranches across the Missouri, running mares and herds of cattle offered an excellent source of new revenue. Larger counties would be desirable so the number of counties south and west of the Missouri River reduced to five; Billings, Stark, Mercer, Oliver, and Morton, under the laws of the state legislature of 1893-1894, "to increase the revenues of the state by changing and increasing the boundaries." In 1895 Billings and Stark counties extended from the South constitutional boundaries of North Dakota.

45 Laws of North Dakota, Article IV, Sec. 105, p. 98.

46 Laws of North Dakota, 1891, Chap. 59, Sec. 7, Constitution of North Dakota. Article IV, Sec. 105, p. 98.

P. 131. Billings County shall be bounded as follows, viz: commencing at the southwest corner of the state, its intersection with the line between range 99 and 100, thence north and along the main channel of the Missouri River to the point of beginning; then along the line between range 99 and 100 to the center of the main channel of the state; and then to the center of the main channel of the Missouri River.
Dakota boundary to the Missouri River on the north.  

Here was the first instance of a county boundary change being tested in the State Supreme Court. The law was declared unconstitutional on May 18, 1899, and the counties of Billings, Stark, and Mercer were restored to the boundaries of 1890.  

(Wilson Richards vs Stark County) 

In 1910 Golden Valley county was segregated from Billings and officially organized in 1912 after two

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47 Laws of North Dakota, 1895, Chap. XXV, Sec. 1, pp. 21-22. Billings county shall be bounded as follows, viz: Beginning at the southwest corner of the state, thence north and along the west boundary of the state to the center of the main channel of the Missouri River to the line between range 100 and 101 west, thence south and along the line between ranges 100 and 101 west to the twelfth standard parallel to the northeast corner of township 148 north, of range 98 west, thence south and along the line between range 97 and 98 west, to the tenth standard parallel, thence west along the tenth standard parallel to the fifteenth guide meridian to the ninth standard parallel, thence east along the ninth standard parallel to the northeast corner of township 136 north, of range 98 west, thence south along the line between range 97 and 98 west, to the eighth standard parallel, thence west along the eighth standard parallel to the northwest corner of township 132 north, of range 98, and 99 west, to the south boundary line of the state, thence west along the south boundary line of the state to the southwest corner of the state, and the place of beginning. Map 6.

years litigation.\textsuperscript{49} Slope county was taken off Billings area in November of 1914 leaving its present thirty-two townships.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 246. Map 8

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 248.
II. COUNTY ORGANIZATION

Although the boundaries of Billings County were defined in 1879, no attempt was made to organize a government until 1883. The man behind this early proposal was E. G. Paddock, who was the leader of the lawless element of Medora. Joe Ferris and William Merrifield along with the honest business men of the community were also anxious to secure some form of organized government, but they were wise enough to realize that the aim of Paddock and his followers in organizing the county was not the establishment of law and order, but the creation of machinery for taxation, on which they could wax fat. 51

/ A. T. Packard, a recent graduate from the University of Michigan, the managing editor of the Bismarck Tribune, became fascinated with the tales that he heard of Little Missouri and Medora. Not being destined to stay in Bismarck, he arrived in Medora late in November of 1883. He envisioned a prosperous newspaper in the rapidly growing town of Medora and approached the Marquis de Mores, who thinking the organ might

prove of value to his company offered to finance the undertaking. Packard refused to have the Marquis become a partner in the business, but did rent a building from him. He obtained his materials and in January, 1884, the first issue of the Badlands Cowboy appeared.

It was greeted with interest even by so mighty a contemporary as the New York Herald, which printed the following article:

We hail with pleasure the birth of a new Dakota paper, the Badlands Cowboy. The Cowboy is really a neat little journal, with lots to read in it, and the American press has every reason to be proud of its new baby. The Cowboy evidently means business. It says in the introductory notice to its first number that it intends to be the leading cattle paper of the Northwest, and adds that it is not published for fun, but for $2.00 a year.

Packard first brought the idea of democratic government to Medora. He exerted an influence on the people of this territory second to none. He was responsible for anything he wrote in his paper and when it ruffled anyone that person knew whom to reproach.

52 Infra, p. 22 Marquis de Mores had come to Medora in April, 1883, and had started a packing plant.

53 An announcement in the Badlands Cowboy, on Jan. 29, 1885 said, "The Cowboy is one year old today."

54 Hagedorn, op. cit., pp. 73-76.

55 Ibid., pp. 75-77.
Packard worked hard through the columns of the Badlands Cowboy for county organization. In the November 27, 1884 issue he says:

It has been found that no petition for the organization of the county is on file, and no further move can be made until this preliminary is arranged. . . . We have drawn up the petition and have it in the Cowboy office . . . . Those desiring a speedy organization will come in and sign.

Thus the law abiding ranchmen along the Little Missouri River found a spokesman in the editor of the Cowboy, and they recognized that what the Bad Lands needed was a form of government to control this territory. During the years before organization, Packard with the help of the Cowboy's rival paper, the Dickinson Press, fought vigorously for county government. The Dickinson Press of March 22, 1884 contained the following article:

Medora is clamoring for a county organization in Billings County. We hope they will get it. If there is any place along the line that needs a criminal court and a jail it is Medora. Four-fifths of the business before our justice of the peace comes from Billings County.

A week later the Press reported the county about to organize, but nothing ever came of this first attempt to obtain organized government. 56

56 The Dickinson Press, March 29, 1884.
During the early spring of 1886, Packard again, through the columns of the Badlands Cowboy, agitated for the organization of the county. The lawless element had not disappeared, but it was no longer in the majority. For a short time, however, a new and somewhat different argument was heard against the organization of county government; namely, that if the county were organized, the citizens would be taxed. The Mandan Pioneer was quick to point out that, according to the laws of Dakota Territory, the nearest organized county was authorized to tax all the cattle and other stock in Billings County, and that "the only possible difference that could result in organization would be to keep the taxes at home, and allow them to be expended for home improvements." It was plain that a board of county commissioners and a tax assessor sitting in Medora would have a far less difficult time than a similar group sitting one hundred fifty miles east in Mandan in following the mysterious movements of herds of cattle during the season when assessments were made.

If the county had had an active agent, he would have discovered that the herds could generally be found

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57 The Mandan Pioneer, April 6, 1886.
in Fallon County, Montana, when Billings County was making its assessments. But when Fallon County was making its assessments, the cattle were all grazing in Billings County. Especially were the big outfits guilty of tax evasion, and among these, the most offensive was Pierre Wibaux. The County Commissioner's Records are full of notations of his attempt to evade taxes and to obtain tax abatements. He had discovered that southern Billings County constituted one of the finest stretches of winter range in the entire Northwest. So his plan was to drive the herds into Billings County in the late fall and early winter, rounding them up and returning them to his home range in Montana in the early spring. This scheme of the big ranchers succeeded until the Billings County officials of 1890-1891 put an end to it. Upon Gregor Lang, Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, and Sylvane Ferris, County Treasurer, fell the burden of stopping this evasion of taxes. Lincoln Lang was elected assessor because of his knowledge of the terrain. These three cattlemen eventually put an end to the grazing of Montana cattle in Billings County,

59 Ibid., November 18, 1891, p. 72.
60 Ibid., June 8, 1891, p. 67.
Dakota Territory, without the payment of taxes.⁶¹

On April 12, 1886, Billings County, with Medora as the county seat, was finally organized. A convention had been held and a ticket nominated, as follows: For commissioners: John Goodall, Dan McKenzie, and J. L. Truscott; assessor: Willis Eaton; Treasurer: William Van Driesche; superintendent of schools: William Dantz; sheriff: Fred Willard; register of deeds: J. C. Williamson.⁶² Election, soon after April 1, was practically unanimous as there was only one ticket in the field.⁶³

The county problems were neglected for a space of time during 1886 and 1887, since there was the immediate business of county organization. The first county commissioner's meeting was held on May 4, 1886, in the office of Dan McKenzie who was a blacksmith at that time.⁶⁴

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⁶² The Bismarck Tribune, March 12, 1886.
⁶³ Ibid., April 6, 1886.
CHAPTER V

THE MARQUIS DE MORES

Little Missouri was astonished to find that in April, 1883, it had a real dignitary as one of its new citizens. In that month M. De Vallombrosa, the Marquis de Mores, a tall man of military bearing, citizen of France, with his secretary William Van Driesche, came to Little Missouri direct from France. The Marquis was twenty-five years of age, and a graduate of the military school of St. Cyr. After graduating he served two years in the French army.

In 1882 he was married to the daughter of the famous banker, Baron L. A. Von Hoffman, of New York. After their marriage the restless Marquis was easily prevailed upon to pay a visit to the United States.

For several months after his arrival he was employed in Von Hoffman's bank. This soon proved tedious. A cousin of de Mores, Count Fitz James, who had hunted in the solitudes of Dakota, returned with stories that inflamed the imagination of de Mores.

The winter of 1882-1883 he passed in mulling over the

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65 The Bismarck Tribune, September 25, 1885.

project of an establishment in the Far West.67

The Marquis's intention was to start a cattle ranch somewhere in western Dakota or Montana, and he was seeking a location when he came to the small village of Little Missouri.68 The great buttes, deep barren ravines, the meandering Little Missouri River, its deep valley carving its way through the maze of depressions and round topped hills, seemed to draw him close to this region. De Mores wrote to a friend: "I like this country because there is room to turn around without stepping on the feet of others".69

It was here that he conceived the plan of erecting a huge packing house in the very center of the cattle country. He reasoned that if he could drive the cattle from the range and slaughter them at Little Missouri, he could afford to sell much cheaper than the great packers of Chicago, St. Paul, and St. Louis.70 At current meat prices he envisioned a fortune, and for Little Missouri, the beginning of a great metropolis surrounded by this vast cattle range.71

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67 Ibid., p. 6.
70 Ibid., p. 18.
71 Lang, op. cit., p. 263.
With the coming of the railroad the station on the west side of the Little Missouri River was called Pyramid Park. It was already more than just a railroad station as it had been an infantry post known as the "The Cantonment of the West". Major Coomba and a detachment of soldiers had been stationed there. For several months the post office address had been Coomba. While the railroad was building westward, the Cantonment had been useful in protecting the surveyors and the workmen laying the rails against frequent Indian attacks. But now that the road was completed to the coast and Sitting Bull, one of the last insurgent Indian chiefs, had surrendered, the Cantonment was deemed no longer necessary and the soldiers had been withdrawn.

In this way Pyramid Park passed from its boom to a small way station, and about this time the name was changed to Little Missouri. It was here that

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73 Will, op. cit., p. 7.


75 Will, op. cit., p. 8.
The Redlands Company, November 12, 1869.

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About Pepper "The J"nsmen's, D. O.: Indian Pies, 1879.

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from his quick temper. Johnny Goodall, the Marquis's range foreman was once involved in a gun fight with Paddock. The latter never used abusive language, although it is said that it was not because his conscience troubled him, but he could use the word, "Golly" in many different ways. He was always in trouble; once when a lawyer was questioning this shrewd and clever man, Paddock was told, "Mr. Paddock, you know that you stole these new railroad ties". Paddock replied, "Golly, but you don't". He became very intimate with De Morez, and became his confidential advisor.

In 1868 the Cantowment had been purchased in partnership by Sir John Fender and Commodore Gering of the United States Navy. The venture collapsed when the Commodore's money ran out. The partners were, no doubt, looking for someone upon whom they could unload their ill-fated venture. The Commodore had told the Marquis de Morez that the Cantowment was an ideal nucleus for a ranch.

One of the first men the Marquis met when he

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80 Interview with Mrs. George Pellissier.
81 Trinko, op. cit., p. 39.
82 Lounsberry, op. cit., p. 859.
83 Lang, op. cit., pp. 71-72.
arrived at Little Missouri was Howard Eaton, with whom he became quite friendly. Mr. Eaton convinced him that the cantonment was no bargain, and was unsuitable for ranch headquarters.

De Nore hired a guide and traveled extensively in the Bad Lands. After this trip he was satisfied that the draws and valleys offered the best feed and shelter to be found in the ranching section of the Northwest. He noted the extensive amount of thriving game, and was convinced that cattle would do equally well.

He wrote to his wife and her family in New York telling them of the feasibility of his plan, and that he was proceeding to Bismarck, the Territorial capital, where the United States land office was maintained.

He learned from the land office officials that

84 Trinka, op. cit., p. 25. Infra, pp. 83-84
85 Will, op. cit., p. 7.
86 Several years later Baron Von Hoffman spent some time in Billings County and owned some cattle. Billings County Commissioner's Records, November 4, 1886, state that "L. A. Von Hoffman's cattle assessment was considered and that it was decided that he did not owe a school tax".
87 Trinka, op. cit., p. 28.
Cantonment was not only an unsuitable ranch site, but that the land on which it stood had never been purchased. He was also informed that a strip of twenty acres taken on each side of the Little Missouri River was free from all legal entanglements, and that the strip extended as far north as he cared to go. The river was, with exception of the above mentioned twenty-five acre strip, hemmed in by a range of buttes which rose to the height of nearly three hundred feet. Thus he could control practically the whole hinterland with a twenty mile strip up and down the river from Little Missouri. The Marquis purchased this for the sum of thirty two thousand dollars.

The first thing necessary to the success of his plan, in his opinion, was to fence his acres with barbed wire. The fencing proceeded rapidly until several hunters began to make trouble because of the hunters' and cattlemen's traditional hatred of fences. The

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28 The Bismarck Tribune, July 11, 1883, stated: "De Mere's concluded that the only valuable lands in a stock country are those which are bordered by a stream. He bought strip which he applied for 8,000 acres, that effectively controlled some 45,000 more."

Billings County Records show that the Marquis owned sections 1, 3, 5, 11, 13, 15, 25, 26, 27, 33, and 35 of range 140, township 142; and section 3 of range 159, township 102.
acquisition by De Mores of the lands bordering the
Little Missouri River and especially of the water rights
provoked a lively feeling of dissatisfaction among the
residents. 89

Many of the people of the valley did not like De
Mores from the beginning. Perhaps his greatest critic
was Gregor Lang, a Scotchman, who had a ranch some
fifty miles up the river. 90 People doubted De Mores's
claim to peerage, and, if they did believe it, regarded
it as an affront to their almost belligerent democracy.
Such things as his special car on the Northern Pacific
Railway, and his trips east and abroad irked them. Worst
of all, his program of fencing his land was a glaring
infraction of the wide open range etiquette. 91 In one
instance he fenced off a right-of-way constituting the
only practicable route downstream, this having been
long in use by the hunters as they came and went with
their pack-trains. Naturally the first comer cut the
wires. Quickly the fence was restored by De Mores's
men; again it was cut, and again restored. Stories were
carried to the Marquis of threats against his life. 92

89 Will, op. cit., p. 8.
90 Lang, op. cit., p. 71.
91 Ibid., p. 72.
92 Will, op. cit., p. 9.
The Lawrence Tribune, September 20, 1862

Messengers to be more and be had informed to be more that
town, for O'Donnel had intercepted the sheriff's return
thought that he would guard the treaty reading out of

Knowing the character of O'Donnel, be more

By some men that were down the treaty
merchants rescued in some lands that were occupied
merchants, the affair and the trouble were that the
men with that home section in the
help is not needed immediately. It
the treaty was been short with of horses and

A German of desperadoes

the treaty on the town was in the hands of
the treaty their saw the matter go to do little measure in
for an armed posse to go to do little measure in
was rescued from the merchants de boro, calling

At an early hour the morning, a telegraph

the following item captured by large headed news:

Pioneer, under the date of June 26, 1862, came out with
Dakota Territory, when the morning issue of the

Excitement can high in the little town of Kandahar

arrest of the three

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repeat at once to Kandahar and send out warrants for the

repeat to this newspaper in Des Moines, instating the men to
sent to night at the east, where a messengers was
stationed, seven miles to the east, where a messengers was
him. De more sent a man to bring dispatch, a railroad

teres who seemed to be the leaders of the statement and

arrest of O'Donnel, arrested, and hangmen, three hun-

Finally be appeared to the sheriff at Kandahar for the
any sheriff who tried to arrest him would be met with a very warm reception. When the sheriff arrived in Little Missouri and attempted to arrest the hunters, they surprised him, held him up, and then quickly rode out of town. They proceeded up the trail that the Marquis, with several of his men including Paddock, was guarding. When they tried to stop the hunters, Duffusley was killed, and O'Donnel and Wannegan surrendered.  

The Marquis was forced to appear before a justice of peace in Mandan. On that day the Mandan Pioneer carried the following item:

The Pioneer may as well say now as anytime, that its sympathy in the Little Missouri trouble is with the Marquis de Mores. We have here a spectacle of a gentleman of capital endeavoring in a legal fashion to bring a vast and fertile country under cultivation. He has a large amount of capital at command. He has seen fit to come out to a region that especially needs capital, and he is welcome. The Bad Lands have for years been the rendezvous of a lot of desperados, and they are causing a good deal of bother. All decent people agree that the desperados must go. As surely as civilization must prevail over barbarism, so surely must this desparate element be put down. The Marquis may rest assured that all decent people are with him.

The justice of peace acquitted him but the matter was not allowed to die, for during the next two years he had trials before several justices of the peace, in

94 Ibid., September 25, 1885.
95 The Mandan Pioneer, July 3, 1885.
fact before all there were that had jurisdiction over this matter; and in each case he was acquitted. 96

However, most of the citizens of Little Missouri and vicinity had an entirely different version of the whole affair. They thought that the Marquis believed that O'Donnel, Luffley, and Mannegan exemplified the strongest feeling against him, and that by removing these men he would be able to control the country without difficulty. The majority of Billings County people was convinced that the Marquis had deliberately ambushed these men. 97

After these several acquittals De Mores proceeded to build a new home on a grand scale. It was located on a picturesque plateau overlooking the Little Missouri River from the west side above an especially wooded bottom land. The Chateau was a twenty-eight room two-story frame structure with a wide veranda, and windows guarded by old-fashioned shutters. 98 It was painted a dark green, and many varieties of shrubs and grasses were planted on the long sloping lawn. Under the brow of the hill in the dense woodland bottom of the Little Missouri River the stables were built along with the

96 The Bismarck Tribune, August 28, 1885.
97 Lang, op. cit., pp. 71-75.
98 The Chateau is now preserved by the State of North Dakota as a House Museum.
In the fall of 1883 De Mores had decided that his slaughter house and packing plant would be built on the east side of the river, just across from the town of Little Missouri, and construction was begun immediately. Back of the plant and further to the east a new city was constructed. It was located on a plain about one mile square, shut in on three sides by hills and gigantic buttes. As an impetus to the new city, he constructed a store, a club house, and lent money for the construction of a hotel.

On the eastern edge of the city a brick house was built for the Von Hoffmans to be used whenever they wished to visit the De Mores. This was quite often as the Marquis obtained much of the money that he invested in his business enterprises from his father-in-law.

99 Trinka, op. cit., p. 37.

100 Will, op. cit., p. 18.

101 The Mandan Pioneer, April 30, 1885, describes the town which the Marquis has built. "Medora is distinctly a cattle town, and it is ambitious to be the cattle market of the Northwest. In two years it has grown from absolutely nothing to be a town which possesses a number of fine buildings. A number of brick buildings have been built during the last year, including a very neat and attractive Catholic church and a large hotel."

102 Trinka, op. cit., p. 37

103 Ibid., p. 38
The house was two-stories in height, composed of eight rooms, and arranged in southern style with a hall passing through the entire lower floor. Not far to the west of the house a chapel was erected in which his wife could worship, and which he named after his daughter, Athenais. The rapidly growing city was called Medora, in honor of his wife.

By 1884 the abattoir was in partial operation. It had been organized the year earlier as the Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company with a capital of two hundred thousand dollars, divided into shares of one hundred dollars each. At first the venture seemed to be working very well, but it soon proved to be a failure, for it was in operation only two and one half years, and was losing steadily as time went on.

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104 Will, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

105 In 1906 the plant in which the machinery still stood, as it had been twenty-two years before, was burned to the ground. All that remains today is a two-hundred foot brick chimney, which stands as a monument to a glorious venture. The Von Hoffman house is now owned by Mr. Davis, a relative of James W. Feoley, while Athenais Chapel is still used by Medora citizens as a place of worship.

106 Will, op. cit., p. 15.

107 The losses of the company amounted to approximately $1,500,000.
Another ill-starred experiment of this was the

the cattle that were not on the strictly beef type

was attention to bear cattle extensively, said all of

In the fall of 1908 there were more than in controlling

what was in operation only half of the year

as a consequence the herbage was left with an unexpressed

which and for some reason they could not be located

was the propagation rates were too low

Finally, the propagation rates were too low

not have as well an eastern cattle under the plan of

were proven that cattle reared on the open prairie did

for it to return cattle by rearing cattle primarily

was abundant and the cattle in good condition. A plan

The cattle only six months old of the year then the grass

records were reared on grass, which does not make as

good meat as corn-fed stock. Another on the problem

the cattle that were unexpressed in

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Medora-Deadwood stage line, officially called the Medora-Black Hills Stage and Forwarding Company, begun in the fall of 1884 with the idea of securing some of the passenger and freight traffic going to the Black Hills gold fields by the way of Dickinson, Dakota Territory.

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills region increased the desire of the whites to occupy it, not withstanding the treaty obligations which guaranteed the rights of the Sioux Indians thereto.

The United States far too frequently treated their solemn obligations with the Indians as mere "scraps of paper". When cupidity of citizens demanded the opening or cession of Indian lands, these lands were ceded by the Indians practically under duress regardless of their desires in the matter.

The Government enacted a law providing that no subsistence be provided for the Sioux until they relin-

111 The Dickinson Press, September 22, 1884, October 18, 1884.
112 Act of Congress, April 29, 1868, United States Statutes at Large, Vol. XV, p. 635.
113 Act of Congress, August 15, 1874, United States Statutes at Large, Vol. XIX, p. 192.
quished all claims to the Black Hills region. Reluctantly the Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapahoes, on September 26, 1877, signed an agreement ceding all territory guaranteed them by the treaty of 1868. Thus the Black Hills were opened.

There were no established trails, much less roads, leading to the gold fields of the Black Hills. Deadwood, which was the scene of the most activity, was over two hundred miles from the nearest railroad point, and the connecting trails, being without bridges and ungraded, were next to impassable during half the year from mud, snow, and swollen rivers.

As soon as the Northern Pacific Railway crossed the Missouri river and headed westward, people naturally sought a shorter, more feasible route from the gold fields to the railroad. The government sent out surveying and reconnaissance parties from Fort Abraham Lincoln to look up a feasible route from the Black Hills to some town on the Northern Pacific extension, west of Bismarck.

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115 United States Statutes at Large, Vol. XIX, p. 254.
116 Interview with Dr. J. P. Hedges.
In the meantime several towns, all of which were small, were bidding for the freight and passenger service to the Hills. The most serious contenders were Dickinson, Belfield, and Medora. It would seem, by looking at the map and knowing the topography of the north end of the route, that the contest would lie between Dickinson and Belfield with the advantage in favor of Belfield, assuming that this town could handle the business as well as Dickinson could. Dickinson in a bitter contest won the county seat from its rivals and also won the railroad division point. The Northern Pacific designated Dickinson as the forwarding point for Deadwood freight and express in the spring of 1884.

Dickinson, however, could only ask individuals engaging in the Black Hills trade to do their freighting from that point, while Medora had a man in the person of the Marquis de Mores, who could establish his own line and invite the public to patronize it, without courting the sanction of anyone.

De Mores was determined to organize a stage line to the Black Hills and in the fall of 1883 he took steps

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to that end. The distance from Medora to Deadwood was two hundred fifteen miles. Throughout this course stage stations were erected about every ten to fifteen miles.\footnote{119 Will, op. cit., p. 18.}

The route out of Medora led south and east up Sully Creek, leaving this creek at a point where the old George Pelissier ranch was later located,\footnote{120 The George Pelissier Ranch, Section 14, Range 159, Township 101.} and crossing to Davis Creek, the first station;\footnote{121 Custer Trail Ranch, Section 22, Range 159, Township 101.} thence up the divide and southward to Rocky Ridge, the second station. From this point the trail went southward by the Robert’s springs and continued to Cedar Creek or south fork of the Cannonball, the dinnering place; thence south to Cold Turkey Creek, a branch of the North Grand River, on to Crooked Creek near the North Dakota–South Dakota line.\footnote{122 Robert’s Springs, Section 7, Range 154, Township 100.} Continuing southward the next stop was at O’Deil where Alex. Connell’s ranch was later established; thence in a southerly direction to Bull Creek, South Moreau, Bell Fourche, Spearfish, and Dead-
wood, with stations at convenient intermediate points as required. 123

A complete file of the Badlands Cowboy would reveal the exact date when the line was set in operation; it was probably about the second week in October, 1884, before the initial trip was taken. A short time later the Medora Stage and Forwarding Company was formally incorporated. Lloyd Roberts accompanied the first coach and served as messenger at the request of De Mores. 125

There are enough copies of the Badlands Cowboy in existence to show its enmity towards Dickinson. There is a complete file of the Dickinson Press, however, which tells of a bitter fight between the two towns. The two papers sparred at each other continually. De

123 Crawford, op. cit., p. 313.

124 The Medora Stage and Forwarding Company of Medora Dakota Territory, was incorporated and articles were filed December 8, 1884, in the Secretary of State's office, at Bismarck. The capital stock was $50,000, divided into 300 shares of $100 each with the following stockholders:
Marquis de Mores 290
William Van Drissche 5
Frank B. Allen 5

125 Interview with Mrs. George Pelissier.

126 The Dickinson Press, March 1, 1884, March 8, 1884, March 15, 1884.
Mores had the financial backing and it made little
difference to those who drew a monthly paycheck whether
his venture seemed visionary. As long as his money
was forthcoming it gave a large number of people em-
ployment and produced the appearance of rapid develop-
ment and prosperity even though the prosperity proved
short lived. It is hardly possible that De Mores be-
lieved Medora a better point from which to reach Dead-
wood than was Dickinson, but he had started the pack-
ing plant in Medora the season before, and Medora was
his home, hence the stage line must run from Medora.

The stage line had four coaches and each was
christened respectively, "Kittie", "Medora", "Dakota",
and "Deadwood". They were all Concord coaches of the
sort and pattern in general use throughout the west.
Mail, express, and light baggage were carried on top,
while the heavier baggage and express packages were
carried in the rear boot. These coaches often carried
a two-ton burden and stood up under the weight while
going at a gait of from six to ten miles an hour.127
A coach left Medora every other morning and the whole
distance of two hundred fifteen miles was covered in
thirty six hours; the coach leaving Medora one morning,

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127 Crawford, op. cit., p. 313.
and reaching Deadwood on the following evening. A passenger ticket from Medora to Deadwood cost $21.50, or ten cents a mile. The carrying charge on express was ten cents a pound.

Medora's location did not give the stage company a monopoly on the business by any means, for the establishment of Dickinson as the terminus for the Black Hills freight by the Northern Pacific led many teams that had been freighting on the Bismarck and Pierre routes to go to Dickinson to haul from that point, owing to its being the shorter route. Lieutenant Varnum of the United States army, who had made three surveys from Fort Meade to points on the Northern Pacific, reported that the route to Dickinson was the most practicable. In order to give some idea of the magnitude of the Black Hills freight business the Dickinson Press tells that on April 15, 1884, 222,890 pounds of freight destined to the gold fields were received at Dickinson.

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128 The Badlands Cowboy, November 15, 1884, November 27, 1884. The Medora stage line made a record run from Deadwood in 32 hours and 5 minutes.

129 Crawford, op. cit., p. 317.

130 Ibid., p. 318.

131 The Dickinson Press, April 19, 1884.
but this was delayed partly intentionally. The steers, which
were used to compete with the modern, U.S. milk.

off in business.

consequence, the steers times suffered a great falling
off whereas normal prices were more maintained. The
warmth of the steers has not been unexpected due to
them, and the steers have not been quite as strong as
the steer men and the steer men and the steer men of
our experience, even more apparent in the case of the

these

loss of the freight came the loss of the express bus-
ness, the freight business that the carriers with, at the
time, had a large share of the freight business, and

time it will be seen that the modern never, at any

could be made from publication in the West.

It took nearly three weeks to make the trip, and I
the one trip by that route. Not only was it round, but
of their cattle to modern, but disconnected after the
few of the freight companies made partings

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never had been on a paying basis, had incurred its
development at great expense, with the anticipation
of a continuance of heavy passenger business, and with
a hope, that amounted in De Mores's opinion, to an
assurance, that he would get the mail contract to
Deadwood at the 1884 bidding. Failing to do this
there was nothing to do but to increase the business
or quit. A. T. Packard, the editor of the Badlands
Cowboy, who had been the inactive manager of the line,
took active charge with an energy tinctured with des-
pair in an effort to keep going. It soon was apparent
that they could no longer continue. 135

In closing out the Stage Company, Packard re-
ceived the help of Johnny Goodall, then ranch foreman
for the Marquis. Goodall went to Deadwood and sold all
the equipment that he could, bringing the rest back
with him to Medora. Thus, one more of the visionary
ideas of De Mores had proved a failure. 136

De Mores had tried hard to erase the feeling of
resentment against him in the Little Missouri valley,
but he never really accomplished his desire. He held

135 Ibid., p. 320.
136 Ibid., p. 322.
himself completely aloof from the people of the community, and his wife's social life was much the same.\textsuperscript{137} They did, however, receive many visitors from the east and abroad.

Both De Mores and his wife were fond of hunting and they spent much of their time in this manner. The Marquise was an accomplished rider and hunter. They often took extended trips in search of game that was not available in their home vicinity.\textsuperscript{138}

While the Marquis was developing his project, the Marquise returned to New York where a daughter was born. Later came a son who was baptised Louis. The installation of the family at Medora contributed somewhat in dispelling the prejudices which had been felt toward

\textsuperscript{137} Mrs George Pelissier recalls a time when the Marquise, who always rode side-saddle, rode up to the Roberts Ranch and sent her attendant in to ask for something to eat. The attendant was told to invite her in, but she refused the invitation. She sat on her horse with her back turned toward the house, and ate her lunch. She turned her horse when she had finished and thanked Mrs. Roberts, just as she was leaving. However, when she returned to Medora in 1903, she visited Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Pelissier.

\textsuperscript{138} The Bismarck Tribune, September 4, 1885, carried an article headed, "SHE KILLED THREE BEARS". It said, "The Marquise, wife of the Marquis de Mores, has returned from her hunt in the Rocky Mountains, where she killed two cinnamon bears and one large grizzly bear. The accomplished lady, who was a few years ago one of New York City's popular society belles, is now the queen of the Rocky Mountains and the champion huntress of the great Northwest."
the foreigners since their first arrival at the Chateau.

Twice dismissed by lower courts, the murder charges against De Mores and Paddock were finally brought into district court in Mandan; and De Mores was ordered to stand trial in September, 1885. The trial began September 3, and lasted for twenty-six days. The Marquis considered it a blackmailing scheme to get him away from his packing plant just at its most critical stage. He applied for a change of venue, which was granted, as the judge was convinced that the jury panel was prejudiced against him. The trial was then held in Bismarck.

F. B. Allen was the attorney for De Mores, while T. K. Long represented the Territory. Howard Eaton, E. G. Paddock, and the Marquis were the chief witnesses for the defense; Wannegan, James McShane, and Deputy Sheriff Harmon of Morton County were the main witnesses for the prosecution. The jury, after being out but ten minutes, brought in a verdict of not guilty. After the verdict had been brought in, District Attorney Long, who had been judged in contempt of court during the trial for maintaining that the court was prejudiced,

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140 The Bismarck Tribune, August 28, 1885.
141 Ibid., September 4, 1885.
142 Ibid., September 18, 1885.
moved that the case of The Territory against E. C. Paddock be dismissed as it was evident, in line of the above decision, that the Territory did not have a case against him. 143

The influential citizens of Dakota Territory, especially those that did not have their homes in Billings County, sympathized with the Marquis, and were convinced that the jury had decided correctly. The Bismarck Tribune carried the following item:

*The Marquis is now free again, and will enter into his business pursuits with increased energy to make up for lost time. The affair has cost him a vast amount of time, anxiety, and money, and given to him recollections which are not the pleasantest.* 144

The year of 1885 was the golden age, the height of prosperity for the town of Medora. The De Mores's enterprises had expanded to their fullest degree. The Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company published this financial report in the Bismarck Tribune:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital invested</td>
<td>$395,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of material used</td>
<td>$375,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of product</td>
<td>$475,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands employed</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages paid during year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ending June 1, 1885</td>
<td>$65,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The public was favorably disposed towards the

143 Ibid., September 25, 1885.
144 The Bismarck Tribune, September 25, 1885.
145 The Bismarck Tribune, November 6, 1885.
Marquis's ventures. On January 8, 1885, A. T. Packard, the editor of the Badlands Cowboy, received this communication from a citizen of Bismarck.

Will you kindly allow a few facts in your valuable paper, regarding the vast amount of good and general benefit that the Marquis de Mores and the (N.P.R.C.Co.) has done for the general public, the working people especially?

Now that the N.P.R.C.Co. has established storage and sale rooms in many towns and accommodate the people with low prices, the enmity of retail dealers is roused against them.

The consumers in many districts should request of the Company to establish retail markets and give the Company patronage and show the few combined dealers that they must keep pace with the progress of civilization.

Let thinking people stop and consider the number of men this company gives employment to, summer and winter. The Company, will, at some near future day, reap the benefits of its good work by a liberal patronage of the people. 146

The need for a market was now becoming imperative so De Mores sought to devise a system of distribution whereby the producer and consumer both might realize a saving. He decided that he would cut the middle-man right out of the picture. He would ship meat direct from his abattoir in Medora, to Central Market in New York City. From Central Market it would be distributed to retail markets. In the winter of 1886 he went to

146 The Badlands Cowboy, January 8, 1885.
New York to make the necessary arrangements. He tried to form a company to act as an agent in distribution of the meat. It was given the title of the National Consumers Company, with a capital of ten million dollars divided into shares of ten dollars each, payable within three months.

The stockholders had the privilege of purchasing meat according to their requirements at the lowest prices in certain stores opened by the company in the more populous sections of New York. The middleman, if not entirely eliminated, were at least reduced to the lowest possible participation in the business, the most meat being delivered direct from the growers. "From the Ranch to the Table" was the slogan designed to attract the consumers.

De Mores actually opened, in New York, three large retail butcher shops where he sold large quantities of meat at prices much below those generally charged. He painted his stores bright red, and employed a large number of men to deliver his products. However, capital

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147 The Bismarck Tribune, April 2, 1886.
149 Ibid., pp. 22-24.
ization of the company failed to realize the amount of money needed to carry the project through. He indemnified the people with whom he had made contracts and reimbursed all the stockholders. 150

From 1883 to 1886 the Marquis had business dealings with most of the large cattle outfits in western Dakota and eastern Montana and Wyoming. He could not raise cattle fast enough for his packing plant so, as a consequence, he made large purchases of stock. Among the companies that he bought from were: The Continental Land and Cattle Co., The Niobrara Co., W. H. Holland of Buffalo, Wyoming, Berry-Boice Cattle Company, Towers and Judgell, and Hughes and Simpson's Hash Knife Company. 151

In most of the Marquis's cattle dealings he was quite successful. However, most of the credit is due Johnny Goodall, the manager and foreman of the De Mores cattle holdings. 152 Goodall came to Dakota in 1883 from Wyoming with a herd of cattle that De Mores had purchased. He was engaged to drive them to Dakota and then to remain as foreman of the Marquis's extensive ranch property. He proved to be a very efficient manager. De Mores tells

150 Loc. cit.
151 Interview with Dr. J. P. Hedges.
152 Johnny Goodall became commissioner of Billings County on May 13, 1886; County Commissioner's Records, Vol. 1, p. 3, May 13, 1886.
that of the fifteen thousand head of cattle purchased for packing before the plant closed, only sixteen head were unaccounted for. 153 Goodall remained with De Mores until 1887, when he moved to Dickinson becoming, for several terms, the sheriff of Stark County.

In addition to his cattle, De Mores, partly to overcome the ill feeling toward him, purchased sheep and rented them out on shares to almost anyone that cared to accept his offer. 155 This too, proved to be unsuccessful as the sheep that he had bought were all old. The contract with his purchaser called for a specified number of sheep, all females, but did not mention the age. The buyer took advantage of this loophole in the contract and De Mores's knowledge of sheep and provided him with ewes that were so old and rundown that the majority failed to survive the winter.

153 The Bismarck Tribune, Johnny Goodall's obituary, February 24, 1931.
154 Loc. cit.
155 The Bismarck Tribune, September 25, 1885.
156 Interview with Dr. J. P. Hedges.
One of De Mores's best known neighbors was a Frenchman from Roubaix, Pierre Wibaux, of the same age as the Marquis. While De Mores was a Mediterranean, Wibaux was a man from northern France.

The W-Bar ranch, owned by Pierre Wibaux, was one of the most typical of this period. Wibaux was a wealthy foreigner who saw the possibilities of the New West that was opened to settlement. He came to America early in the ranching period and was able to choose a good location. This he found on Beaver Creek, about fifteen miles northwest of the present site of Beach, North Dakota.

Locating was a simple matter. He was able to take advantage of the squatter's right, but in 1903, after the land was surveyed, he purchased from the Northern Pacific Railroad about thirty-six thousand acres. This strip, approximately six miles wide and thirty miles long, extended along Beaver Creek to within four miles of the present town of Wibaux, Montana, and cost $34,396.

157 Will, op. cit., p. 20.


159 Ibid., pp. 155-157.
Wibaux continued ranching on a small scale until 1886, having only about eight hundred cattle. During this hard winter he lost heavily and his business was ruined. In order to get a new start he secured a half-million dollars in France. Thereafter, the W bar was considered one of the largest ranches and its proprietor became known as a cattle king.

About 1890, in the midst of his prosperity, the White House, or The Place as it was called, was built. The unique position of such a building, situated on the prairie fifteen miles from even a small station, is indicative of the character of Pierre Wibaux, as well as the condition of his business. The house of the colonial type gave the impression of having been planned and built primarily for a home. The position of the White House was such that in the spring the water often rose high enough to flood it, and consequently was soon abandoned. Soon after 1900, as big ranching was no longer profitable and because other interests demanded much of his time, Wibaux sold the W bar to the Calvin Investment Company of Miles City.

160 Ibid., pp. 158-160.
161 Ibid., pp. 162-163.
162 Ibid., p. 166.
Wibaux became president of the State National Bank of Miles City, which position he held eighteen years until his death in 1913. He left an estate valued at five hundred thirty nine thousand dollars, an example of a successful big rancher. The city of Wibaux is located thirty-six miles west of Medora on the Northern Pacific line. This railroad company built great stockyards and marketing facilities in Wibaux.

The favor of the Northern Pacific seems to have been denied to the Marquis. He made a contract with the railroad for the transport of his cattle, but he learned that his competitors, the packers of Chicago, were benefiting by a secret rebate which gave them a considerable advantage. The packers, therefore, were able to cut prices in order to get rid of a rival. On the other hand, the consumers displayed a growing dislike for the Medora cold storage meat.

These were the conditions when the winter of 1886-1887 abruptly wiped out most of the cattle in the Little Missouri River Valley. De Mores described this winter as the most severe that he had ever exper-

163 Ibid., p. 166.
164 Ill. op. cit., p. 20.
165 Loc. cit.
enced. The thermometer went down to twenty degrees below zero by December or January and fluctuated during the next six weeks between twenty and forty-six below zero. The cattle drifted with the blizzards in some sixteen inches of snow on the level. Many of the cattlemen lost their entire herds. The Marquis's losses were comparatively small, but, as mentioned, his sheep losses were enormous.

When the first news of the Marquis's ventures became known throughout the United States, men came from many localities to get a job at Medora. When they arrived, there was no employment for them. Although De Mores told of plans to slaughter five hundred cattle per day, these plans were never realized, because they were not practical, being actuated more by enthusiasm than knowledge.

Before the failure of the packing plant Medora experienced a building boom. Men who procured positions with De Mores had little means, but they immediately went into debt building homes. The majority of these houses, after the failure, were put on flat cars and moved to Dickinson.

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166 Personal Correspondence of the Author, letter from Mr. William Eaton, son of Alden Eaton, dated April 30, 1941.
167 Interviews with General Marian Sweeney.
168 Interview with Mrs. George Pelissier.
The men, who had been waiting because of the promise that the packing plant would soon be in full operation, were boarded by George Fitzgerald. He had borrowed money to construct a large hotel and boarding house, but was forced to abandon it with the coming of the crash. It is standing in Medora today and is known as the Rough Riders Hotel.

In 1886, convinced that he was fighting a losing battle, forced to desert his business at its most critical period to close his chain stores along the railroad one by one, De Mores became disheartened by his many failures and closed his packing plant. It is estimated that he expended over one million five hundred thousand dollars. He left the plant and his large land interests surrounding Medora in the care of a manager, J. W. Foley, who retained the trust for thirty years until his death in 1917. The De Mores family continued to pay taxes in Billings County until the last of their property was given to the State Historical Society in 1938. De Mores never again visited the United States.

169 The Badlands Cowboy, November 27, 1884.


171 Interview with Paul Lebo, son of Norman Lebo, who is now Billings County Register of Deeds.

172 Personal Correspondence of the Author, letter from Mr. Russell Reid, Superintendent of the North Dakota Historical Society, May 19, 1941.
Marquis de Noros was trained in the French army, every inch a gentleman, energetic but visionary, master of himself, but ready to fight at any affront. He was an adventurer, not hesitating in the least in backing his visions with his money. He was a man of intense practicality in carrying out plans that he made, and had an unlimited imagination and ambition.

It was the two latter characteristics which were responsible for the failure of many of his plans. These plans were sometimes given careful forethought and ample time was given for study of the conditions involved in executing them. However, as soon as they clearly settled in the mind of the Marquis, than he began to add to and embroider them so fast that there was no opportunity of getting the original plan into working order before it was swamped in a mass of new ideas. While most of his ideas were impractical, yet his business investments were honorable; in fact their very boldness won, if not the approval, at least the admiration of the frontier, open-handed type of men. Neither the nature of his business nor the location was favorable to successful outcome. His ventures were doomed from the beginning. Honest and confiding he trusted others to his financial and social hurt. The very men that he associated with and allowed to advise
him in his affairs in the Little Missouri River Valley immediately secured for him the enmity of most of the ranchers and hunters. Had it fallen to his lot to have settled in some other place and engaged in a business offering a fair show of success, his financial resources might have made him successful as the world counts success. No one lost on the Marquis's ventures but himself; however, these losses amounted to such a large sum that he had reached the end of his resources.

"It is necessary for me to make some money," he wrote, "for I cannot let my house fall. Unfortunately, for five hundred years we have been soldiers. It is hard to change the old instincts of the race. I am profoundly worried by these financial losses; I blame myself for believing that I was stronger and better than the others, but patience. Every lane has its turning. A man without ambition is good for nothing. There must be an aim in life, always higher. I am twenty eight years old, strong as a horse. I want to play a real part, I am ready to start again." 173

After leaving this country and returning to France he was soon spending some months tiger hunting in

173 Will, op. cit., p. 32
French-India. A little later he was found promoting a railroad in French Indo-China, and his venture there would undoubtedly have been successful had it not been for his political enemies in France. This was even more true of his ambitious plans for acquiring all of North Africa for the French Empire, and it is almost a certainty that his death in the desert was definitely due to his differences with members of the French Cabinet, and his continued attacks on the government, on the Jews, and the Masonic bodies, all of which he felt were combining to destroy free France and attach France as a second class power to England. 174

He was killed in a battle with one of the desert tribes, in which his wife suspected that there had been some sort of treachery. By offering large rewards and keeping everlastingly at the authorities, the Marquise succeeded in tracing the murderers and having them punished. 175

In 1903 the Marquise again crossed the Atlantic and came to Medora to take care of her property. She asked James W. Foley to continue as custodian of the

174 Will, op. cit., p. 5.
175 Trinka, op. cit., p. 254.
In the brief space of his lifetime the Marquis de Mores probably lived many times more completely than most men do through a long span of years, and his death was exactly the sort which he, himself, might have desired.

In September 1903, after an absence of seventeen years, Madame De Mores with her oldest son, Louis, and her daughter, Athenais, returned to the United States. On the evening of October 1, 1903, the Marquise gave a ball and reception at Medora in honor of the residents of Billings County. The entertainment did much to erase the bitter feeling that still existed toward the De Mores family.

Mrs. Pelissier of Belfield, North Dakota attended the ball, and has informed the investigator that the Marquise was not a beautiful woman, and did not dance; but that her daughter did, and made friends with everyone.

The Marquise and her family remained at Medora several days making trips to ranches in the Bad Lands under the guidance of J. W. Foley.
tourists and sportsmen into the heart of the service
were experts who charged enormous rates to escort
numerous guides and hunters. In the heart of the Bad Lands and the headquarters of
hunt, he chose to locate a small fort to be named
there were not many places suitable for starting a
the meet if he was interested in hunting buffaloes
suggested to Roosevelt that he go to this section of
referred to as the Little Missouri, Dakota Territory

were some real estates at the

and adequate

resulted from the fact that both

roosevelt's friendship with

were in favor of a large and adequate

indicated that to commodore cochrane of the

he was originally attracted to the bad lands by a letter

in the territory of the Little Missouri River Valley

in the bad lands had attracted his interest

1883 at the age of twenty-four. Theodore Roosevelt came to Medicine in September of

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

CHAPTER VI
country. 179

His first night was spent in the Pyramid Park Hotel, which was in Little Missouri on the west side of the river. 180 On the following morning he made inquiries as to where he could find a guide to take him buffalo hunting. Joe Ferris, of the Maltese Cross Ranch was in town, and, in spite of some misgivings concerning the man's ability to endure the difficulties of a long hunting trip, agreed to act as a guide. 181

Joe Ferris and his two partners, Sylvane Ferris and William Merrifield, were Canadians who had drifted west from their home in New Brunswick and had come to Little Missouri in 1881. 182 They were very industrious fellows who proceeded to work at anything they could obtain to do. The first year the partners spent as section hands on the railroad. 183 Merrifield, a skilled


181 Lang, op. cit., p. 100.

182 Ibid., p. 77.

hunter, soon found enough work in that line to keep him occupied. The men saved their money and in a small way turned bankers for many of the men that resided near the Cantonment at Little Missouri. Sylvan Ferris and Merrifield bought a few head of cattle, and when the opportunity presented itself they took, on shares, a hundred and fifty more head belonging to the Wadsworth brothers. They located their ranch seven miles south of Little Missouri and used the Maltese Cross as their brand. It was at this time that Roosevelt arrived in the Bad Lands.

Buffalo were becoming scarce and hunting them involved a long trip south of Little Missouri. Ferris took Roosevelt to the Maltese Cross Ranch, a log structure with a roof of poles and dirt. Its one room served as the home of the three Canadians. The next step in their hunting trip was to find a base from which they could start each morning. Joe Ferris decided that Gregor Lang's ranch, located about forty-five miles south of the Maltese Cross in the

185 Hagedorn, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
neighborhood of the Pretty Buttes, would be ideal for that purpose.

During the trip, while staying at Gregor Lang's, Roosevelt and Lang often spent most of the night in various discussions, the chief topic of which was politics. Lang was a Democrat and Roosevelt a Republican, and, although Lang would never admit the righteousness of the Republican cause he often declared that Roosevelt argued his side better than any man he had ever encountered.

Gregor Lang had come to Dakota Territory in the spring of 1883 to start a cattle ranch. The ranch was financed by Sir John Pender, a Scotchman, who had toured the United States and had become interested in the possibilities of western cattle ranching. Commodore Gorringe owned the Cantonment at Little Missouri and was anxious to sell it to Pender. For this reason Gregor Lang and his son Lincoln were sent here from Ireland, where they had immigrated from Scotland, to

187 Lang, op. cit., p. 103.
188 Ibid., pp. 105-110.
189 Ibid., p. 13.
190 Ibid., p. 14.
inspect the proposed transaction.

Lang reported to Sir John Pender that the Cantonment was not a suitable location for starting a ranch and that, furthermore, the manager of Goringe's enterprise was evasive in his business transactions. He, also, included in his report a detailed account of the De Mores activities. Pender promptly ordered Lang to locate an independent ranch, preferably well back from the railroad and Little Missouri.

The ranch, after some explorations, was located at the mouth of the Little Cannon Ball Creek, about fifty miles up the Little Missouri River from the village of Little Missouri, in the Pretty Butte country. On their way to build a house on the new location, they discovered that a new outfit, known as the Berry-Boice Cattle Company, had located a short distance from their proposed ranch site. After residing in the chosen location about a month, the Langs became favorably impressed with another location about seven miles down

191 Ibid., p. 17.
192 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
193 Ibid., p. 81
194 Ibid., p. 92.
the river from the original site, and here they built
their home.195

Before his hunting trip, Roosevelt had heard of
Gregor Lang from Commodore Carriage and, when Roosevelt
arrived at Lang's house with Joe Ferris, he carried a
letter of introduction. It was during his stay at Lang's
home that he became intimately acquainted with Lincoln
Lang, who later wrote the book, Ranching With Roosevelt.196

The hunting trip was filled with many obstacles.
Among these was a blinding snow storm which, for a time,
seemed serious enough, but soon gave way to a steady
rain. Strangely enough, it was Joe Ferris, rather than
the persistent Roosevelt, who was ready to quit before
the first buffalo was killed. The hunt took them as
far south as the present site of Bismarck, North Dakota,
which is almost seventy miles south of Little Missouri.197

On their return, they again stopped at Gregor
Lang's ranch, where Roosevelt revealed that he was
greatly impressed with the topography of the country

195 Ibid., p. 90.

196 Ibid., p. 106, "But no introduction was needed
beyond the man himself. A good judge of men, father
had taken an instant liking to Roosevelt. Furthermore,
he was invited to make our camp his headquarters dur-
ing the period of his hunt."

which lent itself to bonanza ranching. He asked Gregor Lang's opinion as to the practicability of starting a ranch, and the answer Roosevelt received was his final decision for he offered Lang the management of a ranch, which offer was reluctantly declined because of previous commitments.

After Lang's refusal to his offer, Roosevelt turned to the Ferris brothers and William Merifield. They agreed to manage his ranch, providing that they could abrogate their contract with M. L. Wadsworth, for whom they were running one hundred fifty head of cattle.

Marcus Wadsworth was perhaps the first rancher to locate in the vicinity of Little Missouri. His partnership with M. L. Hawley of Lake Crystal, Minnesota, was known as the Badlands Cattle Company.

In June of 1882, this company shipped 2300 head of "Minnesota Dogies" to the station at Little Missouri; these were driven to the company's ranch, known as the "Bellows Ranch", located fifteen miles north of the railroad. Here the "dogies" were branded and turned

198 Lang, op. cit., pp. 115-117.
199 Lang, op. cit., pp. 117-118.
out to shift for themselves. This is the first record of bonanza ranching being carried on this far north.

Upon being informed of the Ferris brothers and Merrifield's tentative agreement to manage his cattle ranch, Roosevelt gave them a check large enough to purchase Wadsworth's cattle and to build up the herd to a nucleus of five hundred head.

The Maltese Cross Ranch and a few head of cattle which belonged to the Ferris brothers and Merrifield were, also, purchased by Roosevelt. These cattle were branded with an eight pointed cross. The transfer, also, included all their implied range, their brand, but no land was included in the transaction, for at this date there were no surveyed lines, titles, or deeds recorded in this territory. Sylvane Ferris and William Merrifield became managers and were instructed to build up the herd as fast as possible.

The range claimed by the Maltese Cross extended to the river-crossing above the Eaton's Custer Trail Ranch which was three miles to the north, and southward to the crossing which was known as Sleeping Bottom.

201 loc. cit.
202 Lang., op. cit., p. 118.
about two miles up the river. It covered a territory that had a frontage of about five miles on both sides of the Little Missouri River and extended back, on each side of the river, for twenty miles to the sources of the creeks which empty into the main channel.

Roosevelt remained in the village of Little Missouri to wait for final word from Merrifield and Ferris, who had immediately left for Minnesota to try to procure a release from their previous contract. It was at this time that Roosevelt received his first real insight into the type of country to which he had become attached.

Little Missouri was the harbor of many so-called bad men. The best of these who had come to this section of the west to seek adventure were men who cared very little for their own personal safety. They had stayed because of the complete lack of restraints; here they were crowding into a sage brush country where the chief recreation was the drinking of quantities of whiskey. Here, too, for the time being, they were safe from any officer of the law, for the nearest resemblance of a government was the sheriff at Mandan,

204 Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 92.
205 Lang, op. cit., p. 118.
206 Ibid., p. 78.
Dakota Territory, which was more than one hundred fifty miles to the eastward. Neither Little Missouri nor Medora, the town established across the Little Missouri River by the Marquis de Mores, had any representative of a law-enforcing body in 1883. The troubles that arose were settled in the manner of survival of the fittest.

The village of Little Missouri consisted of a group of small huts, scattered about a slightly bigger shack that served as the Northern Pacific depot. North of the tracks stood the Pyramid Park Hotel, and beside it, the town's most pretentious saloons. South of the track, Johnny Nelson kept a store and directly east was the home of Fitzgerald, the railroad section foreman. Directly across the tracks from the section foreman's house were several shacks which supplied a roof for numerous transients.

Roosevelt learned a great deal about the individuals in the town of Little Missouri and the new booming town,

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207 Interview with Mrs. George Pelissier.

208 Billings County's first law officers were elected April 13, 1886. Billings County Commissioner's Records, May 4, 1886.

209 Interview with Mrs. George Pelissier.
Medora, during the week of waiting for word from Merrifield and Sylvane Ferris. When at last news from them reached him, he was delighted to know that N. L. Wadsworth had given them a release and that they were ready to enter into the new organization. Immediately after the details were arranged, Roosevelt left for the east, arriving in New York the last week in September, 1883.

The winter months of 1883-1884 Roosevelt spent in campaigning for a third term in the New York legislature. He won his reelection to the assembly and became noted for his leadership of the progressive elements. It was during this winter that Roosevelt faced one of his hardest trials, for, within forty-eight hours, a daughter was born to his wife, his mother died, and his wife died. He was stunned, but he refused to let the tragedy keep him away from his desk in the assembly. He attended the Republican National Convention in Chicago, and after Blaine's nomination he repaired to the Bad

210 Lang, op. cit., p. 118.


212 Ibid., p. 70.
Lands, arriving in Medora on June 9, 1884. 213

Upon reaching the Maltese Cross Ranch, which he renamed the Chimney Butte Ranch because of its proximity to that butte, 214 he found that the old stockade, with the dirt floor, had been converted into a stable, and a simple log cabin had been built to serve as the new ranch home. 215 The buildings did not belong to him, for he had bought only the livestock and the implied range. The range was actually owned by the government and the Northern Pacific Railroad. 216

Roosevelt became well acquainted, during the summer of 1884, with the neighboring ranchers. Three miles to the north were the Eaton brothers, who, in conjunction with their original backer, A. C. Huidikoper, were among the most notable pioneer ranchers connected with the history and development of the region.


214 The Stock Grower's Journal, Miles City, Montana, November 12, 1887.

215 The cabin now stands on the Capitol grounds at Bismarck, North Dakota.

216 It was the custom for ranchers to claim, for grazing purposes, a stretch of land north, east, south, and west of the bottom on which the home ranch stood.
First to go west had been Mr. Huidikoper, when in 1879 he made a hunting trip to the Bad Lands. Becoming very favorably impressed with the region, its teeming wild life, and its apparent possibilities from the ranching standpoint, Huidikoper decided to put in a small experimental herd of cattle on a share basis with the Eaton brothers.

The Eaton brothers and Huidikoper located their ranch in 1881 on the well-timbered Little Missouri River bottom at the mouth of Davis Creek, about four miles south of Medora and called it the Custer Trail Ranch.

Howard, Willis, Alden, and Charles Eaton came to Dakota Territory from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. All four boys were well educated. Soon finding their range overcrowded, they located several other ranches. One of these was the Logging Camp which was several

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217 Lang, op. cit., p. 164.

218 A. C. Huidikoper, My Experiences and Investments in the Bad Lands of North Dakota and Some of the Men That I Met There, A manuscript presented to the State Historical Society of North Dakota by Mr. Huidikoper.

Letter from Mr. Bill Eaton, Wolf, Wyoming, April 30, 1941. He informs the investigator that Howard Eaton came in 1879 and his brothers joined him in 1881.

219 It was named Custer Trail Ranch because it was located on the route which Custer took in 1876.

220 Letter from Mr. Bill Eaton, April 30, 1941.
miles down the Little Missouri River from the Gregor Lang ranch. Another was the V-eye at the mouth of Big Beaver Creek, about fifty miles north of Medora on the Little Missouri River. 221

The brothers managed their ranches, with Huidikoper's financial backing, until the severe winter of 1886-1887. 222

Huidikoper, in addition to owning the above ranches, bought Tarbell and Bond's Little Missouri Horse Company Ranch, which was located in the valley of Deep Creek about twelve miles east of Gregor Lang's ranch. Huidikoper renamed the place "Shackford", and used the H-T as his brand. 223

During the summer and fall of 1884 Roosevelt's own record of his reactions to his experiences as a ranchman was filled with optimism. In a letter written to his sister Anna, he states:

> Well, I have been having a glorious time here, and am well hardened now...I regard the outlook for making the business a success very hopeful...In the autumn I shall bring out Sewall and Dow and put them on a ranch with very few cattle to start with, and in the course of a couple of years give them quite a little herd...I have never been in better health than on this trip. I am in the saddle all day

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221 Lang, op. cit., p. 165.

222 Ibid., p. 261.

223 Huidikoper, My Experiences, A manuscript, op. cit.
long either taking part in the round-up of
the cattle, or else hunting antelope. I am
really attached to my two factors, Ferris and
Merrifield; they are very fine men.

The country is growing on me, more and
more; it has a curious beauty of its own...

I intend to take a two months trip in the
fall, hunting, and may, as politics look now,
stay away over election day. 225

After the death of Roosevelt's wife his old home
in the East was closed. In the summer of 1884 he de-
cided to build a new home in the Bad Lands where he
hoped to erase some bitter memories and start anew.

Finally, after a few exploration trips, he chose as
his new site a place forty miles north of the Chimney
Butte Ranch, where the Little Missouri River takes a
long swing to the westward. 225

When Roosevelt returned to the East in the summer
of 1884 he had determined to bring two of his Maine
acquaintances, Bill Sewall and Will Dow, out to his
new ranch location. They accepted his invitation and
in August the three returned to Medora together. 226

Sewall and Dow, who were woodsmen, were to build
the new ranch house at the Elkhorn site. It was one

224 Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 105.

225 Bertha Kuhn, "The W-Bar Ranch on the Missouri
Slope", Collections of the State Historical Society of
North Dakota (Grand Forks: Normandien Publishing Co.,

226 The Stock Grower's Journal, Miles City, Mont-
tana, September 12, 1884.
of the first structures in the country that gave any evidences of being planned. The building was one story high, with a covered porch facing the river. It had many rooms, divided by a corridor running straight through from north to south; and a huge fireplace, the andirons of which are still doing service at the ranch of Howard Eaton's son, Bill Eaton, at Wolf, Wyoming.228

In the fall of 1884, Roosevelt decided to go on his proposed hunting trip to the Big Horn Mountains, but found that he did not have enough horses with which to make the trip. After some delay he obtained some from Belle Fourche, Dakota Territory. 230

He started about August 18, 1884, with William Merrifield as a guide and a colorful French-Canadian, Norman Lebo, as a cook. Lebo was generally known around Medora as "Grandpa Lebo", especially to the children.

227 Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 240.
228 Personal Correspondence of the Investigator, letter from Mr. Bill Eaton, Wolf, Wyoming, April 30, 1941.
229 Roosevelt, Hunting Trips, op. cit., p. 297.
230 Roosevelt's letter to his sister Anna, August 17, 1884, Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 172.
He came to Little Missouri about the time of the railroad, and was employed as a blacksmith. However, much of his time was spent in trapping, as he loved to trap beaver. He was noted for his stories concerning his experiences as a soldier in the Civil War.

Roosevelt's costume for the trip was very colorful and in his book, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, he describes it very vividly; he was, no doubt, well pleased with it. In a letter to his sister, telling of his departure, he informs her of his fascination for the Bad Lands. "I grow very fond of this place, and it certainly has a desolate, grim beauty of its own, that has a curious fascination for me."

The route of Roosevelt's trip to the Big Horn Mountains went south from his Chimney Butte Ranch until

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231 Interview with Paul Lebo, son of Norman Lebo.

232 On June 25, 1883, Norman Lebo, while holding the office of County Judge, married Kate Roberts to George Pellisier. Mrs. Pellisier, who has been extremely helpful in furnishing information to the investigator, tells that on the occasion of her marriage, it was Lebo's first experience. After the ceremony he shook the hand of the bride and, intending to say, "May God bless you", he exclaimed, "And may God help you, Kate!"


234 Roosevelt's letter to his sister Anna, August 17, 1884, Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 172.
it hit the old Keogh Trail, then turned west and continued along it for about fifty miles, then turned southwest preceding between Box Elder Creek and the Powder River. 235 Needless to say, the expedition was entirely successful and Roosevelt began his trip back to the Bad Lands early in September. On the return trip he encountered several severe snow storms, one which forced the party to camp in the vicinity of the Medicine Rocks, north of the present site of Ekalaka, Montana. Roosevelt describes them as "very peculiar formations of sandstone." 236

Leaving Medicine Rocks he continued homeward. The last night out from his Chimney Butte ranch, he made his camp near the junction of the old Keogh Trail and Box Elder Creek. Here his night camp was visited by Dr. J. P. Hedges, now of Ekalaka, Montana, who had a ranch in that region at that time. Roosevelt and Hedges spent the evening discussing the coming election. 237

When Roosevelt returned to the Chimney Butte Ranch, he stayed but a few days, leaving as soon as

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235 Roosevelt's letter to his sister Anna, August 27, 1884, Hagerman, op. cit., p. 180.

236 Roosevelt, Hunting Trips, op. cit., p. 234.

237 Dr. J. P. Hedges informed the investigator that Roosevelt had many fine hides and heads for his collection in his wagon on that return trip.
possible for his Elkhorn Ranch site. Here he found Bill Sewall and Will Dow just putting up the sides of the house. While they worked on the house, Roosevelt spent the fall breaking horses.

By this time Sewall was convinced that the country was not adapted to cattle ranching and he tried to persuade Roosevelt to his way of thinking. He had had several conversations with a foreman of one of the big cattle companies, and had been told that the industry was still so new to the Bad Lands that no one knew whether or not it would pay. This foreman had been in the industry three years, and sometimes thought that there was not much in the cattle game. "In Medora", Sewall writes, "they blow it up, want to get everybody at it they can. We shall see in time. Can tell better in the spring after we see how they come in with their cattle". 239

In the fall of 1884 many of the ranchers found that they were losing considerable numbers of cattle. The losses were too large to be due to natural reasons, and, as there was no organization to enforce certain sorely needed laws for the regulation of the cattle

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238 Letter written by Sewall to his brother in Maine, October 19, 1884, Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 206.

239 Loc. cit.
industry, the reform idea began to make itself known through Roosevelt. While many of the ranchers were behind the idea, it was Roosevelt who voiced their opinion. /Montana had a Stock Grower's Association, but it had no authority in Dakota Territory, and if ever an industry needed regulation for the benefit of the honest men engaged in it, it was the cattle industry in Dakota in the fall of 1886. 241

Roosevelt tried to organize an association and make it popular with the cattle men. The Bismarck Tribune carried an editorial on December 12, 1886, telling how Roosevelt, who had been a great reformer in the New York Legislature, but who now was a cowboy, had called a meeting of the stockmen of the west Dakota region to meet at Medora, December 19, 1886, to discuss topics of interest, become better acquainted, and provide for more efficient organization. The editorial ends with the abrupt statement, "Mr. Roosevelt likes the west".

240 *Bismarck Tribune*, p. 32.
241 Interview with General Marian Sweeney of Kelchim, Montana, who worked as a cow-boy for the Enchanted outfit in 1886.
The complete notice of the meeting was carried in The Badlands Cowboy of December 10, 1884. In a letter to his sister dated November 23, 1884, Roosevelt tells her, "I am now trying to get up a stockman's Association, and in a day or two, unless the weather is too bad, I shall start up the river with Sewall to see about it."

By December of 1884, the Marquis de Mores's abattoir was closed for the winter. Everyone who could afford it had gone east for the winter, but many of the workmen spent the winter in Medora. So, when the stockmen's meeting took place in Medora on December 19, 1884, it found that town a very busy place, the saloons and

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242 NOTICE: At the request of Messrs. Baidikoper, Wadsworth, Truscott, the N.P.R.C. Co., and several other stockmen having ranges on the Little Missouri River and Beaver Creek, a meeting of the stockmen of this river and its tributaries is hereby called to be held in Roberta Hall, Medora, at 11 a.m., Friday, December 19. The object is to bring together the cattle men of this vicinity in order that they may discuss certain questions of immediate and pressing interest to them, and in order that they may take measures to provide for more efficient organization of the stockmen of this vicinity in the future, both so that they may be able to act as a unit more than has been the case in the past, and so that they can combine to protect their interests against unjust interference from the outside.

All gentlemen interested in stock-raising, both those on the Little Missouri and those on the neighboring waters are urgently requested to attend.

(by request) Theodore Roosevelt

243 Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 223.
gambling houses being especially busy. 244

Roosevelt acted as presiding officer at the meeting and was elected chairman of the association, although he was one of the youngest men present. 245 The whole matter attracted little attention, but it meant the beginning of the end of lawlessness in the Bad Lands.

Roosevelt spent most of the winter of 1884-1885, with the exception of the months of January and February, at his Elkhorn Ranch. During the winter months he was busily engaged in writing his book, Hunting Trips of a Ranchman. 246

During the spring of 1885 Roosevelt bought an additional herd of cattle, which was shipped into Little Missouri, and from there trailed to his Elkhorn Ranch. 247 With the coming of warmer days Roosevelt's recently acquired horsemanship was put to a severe test, for he was determined not only to be at the general spring round-up but, also, to take an active part in it. 248

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244 The Badlands Cowboy, December 18, 1884.
245 Lang, op. cit., p. 168.
246 ibid.
247 Roosevelt's letter to Lodge, May 18, 1886, Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 270.
248 The Mandan Pioneer, May 22, 1885.
The round-up was scheduled to start late in May from the mouth of Box Elder Creek which is a tributary of the Little Missouri River and enters the main river at the southern tip of the Little Missouri River valley, southeast of the present site of Ekalaka, Montana. The plan was to begin here and work down the river to the north to about the location of the V-eye ranch which is some fifty miles north of Ekalaka. Altogether the distance covered from south to north was about one hundred fifty miles. 249

The Hashknife Ranch, owned by Hughes and Simpson and located on Box Elder Creek, was the southernmost ranch to take part in the Little Missouri Round-up. This was one of the first Texas cattle outfits that drove their cattle to the northern range. They drove a herd into eastern Montana in 1888. 250

Going down the Little Missouri from that point, the next ranch belonged to J. R. Tower and J. Gudgell and was known as the 8-X Ranch. This ranch was located on the present site of Marnorth, North Dakota, where

249 The Dickinson Press, "Bill Pollis Recounts Tales of North Dakota Ranch Days", February 20, 1941.

250 Interview with General Marian Sweeney, Ekalaka, Montana, who worked for the Hash Knife from 1883 until 1902.
they ran from twenty to thirty thousand head of cattle. 281

About seven miles to the north, on the Little Missouri River were the headquarters of the Three-Sevens (7-7-7) Ranch, operated by the Berry-Boice Cattle Company of New Mexico. 282 This outfit owned a minimum of thirty thousand head of cattle. Their foreman was a Texan by the name of William Pollis. Bill Pollis was born in Texas in 1868; at the age of seven he moved to Colorado. He soon obtained a job working on a large ranch. Although he was only eighteen years of age when he came to western Dakota, he secured a job with the Three Sevens outfit. He became foreman in a few years and held that position for fourteen years. His first job with the Three Sevens paid him $55.00 per month, which was typical of the wage paid at this time. After working a few months, he went to work for the Marquis de Noree as a representative for his outfit at a round-up in Montana. Coming back to the Three Sevens Ranch, managed by the Berry-Boice Cattle Company, he was made foreman at $100.00 per month. 283

282 The Stock Grower's Journal, Miles City, Montana, November 27, 1897.
283 Interview with Bill Pollis, Dickinson, North Dakota.
In the 20s of July, the beach became a favorite in the immediate vicinity.

The next morning, we awoke in the houseboat.

And I drove over to the beach before breakfast.

Diamond Bay was a beach liked at first glance.

A glass of lemonade, a few minutes in the sun, and we were ready to start.

We left the beach at 9:30, and thec house was still asleep.

The next ranch to the north of the second house was a good mixer and milking to.

I never heard any noise after breakfast.

I never saw him take a drink, but he mixed much more.

I never left the house, just the work so heavy men.

I left with the men at all the work. Most complete.

I am the only one here, but I still speak.

I have the good mixer and milkings to.

They found that it cost about ninety cents per head to

When this company kept an account of expenses.
to the Custer Trail Ranch where he worked for the Eaton brothers. The family became very well acquainted with the Eatoes; in fact it was Mrs. Roberts's children who coined the title of "Uncle" for all of the Eaton boys, a name which was used for the rest of their lives. 257

In 1884 Mr. Roberts built a ranch home on Sloping Bottom, which was located about five miles south of the Custer Trail Ranch. 258 Roberts was considered one of the best judges of cattle in the country, and because of this was often employed to purchase stock for those who wished to stock ranches or buy more cattle. 259

Continuing down the river from the Roberts ranch the next ranch in order was Roosevelt's Chimney Butte, and three miles farther down was the Custer Trail Ranch. The last one located on the Little Missouri south of Medora was that of Pete Pelissier, on the mouth of Sully

257 Interview with Mrs. George Pelissier, daughter of Lloyd Roberts.

258 Loc. cit.

259 In September, 1896, Lloyd Roberts left Medora for St. Cloud, Minnesota, to purchase cattle for his own ranch. He was never heard of again, excepting when he wrote his wife telling her to write him at Denver, Colorado. His family became convinced that he had been murdered after an exhaustive search; no trace was ever found of him. Mrs. Roberts maintained her ranch home for several years and then moved into Medora. Mrs. George Pelissier is one of the five Roberts children.
Creek. Going down the Little Missouri north of Medora, the ranches of any size were: R. C. Paddack's Circle Dot, E. L. Wadsworth's Bellows Ranch, Theodore Roosevelt's Elk horn Ranch, and Howard Eaton's Y-eye, located near the mouth of Big Beaver Creek.

All of the above named ranches had representatives at the spring round-up of 1885 and the Marquis de Kerse was, also, represented. Wall Asterhant acted as round-up captain. 260

Roosevelt, in one of his letters, states, "I have been three weeks on the round-up and have worked as hard as any of the cowboys; but I have enjoyed it greatly." He remained with the round-up until it disbanded not far from the Elk horn bottom. 269

During the summer of 1885 Roosevelt was completely occupied with his ranch life, and the summer passed uneventfully. Meanwhile the town of Medora was growing and becoming very pleased with itself. Like other small growing towns it had ideas of grandeur. Even the Mandan Pioneer, one hundred fifty miles to the east, thought it worth while to boast a little about it.

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260 The Stock Grower's Journal, November 27, 1884.
261 Long CY., cit., p. 177.
262 Interview with Mr. Bill Follis. He says that Roosevelt was a "good mixer and willing to learn".
Medora is distinctly a cattle town, and it is ambitious to be the cattle market of the Northwest. In two years it has grown from absolutely nothing to be a town which possesses a number of fine buildings and represents a great many dollars of capital.

The cattle association of which Roosevelt was the president voted to employ a stock inspector in Medora to examine the brands of cattle shipped to market, but this was effected by the appointment of a man who was neither efficient nor trustworthy. The man was later dismissed by Roosevelt, and the tongue-lashing Roosevelt administered to him was revered by men who were experts at choosing effective phrases.

Roosevelt's leadership of the forces of order, meanwhile, had brought him into rather strained relations with the Marquis de Roses. Here were two important men in a country that was too small to keep them entirely apart. Their ideas and views were at times directly the opposite and were bound to come into conflict. It seems that the Marquis had been virtually forced into a position where he was the seeming protector of the lawless element. He had bought some cattle from Roosevelt, once, at a contracted price,
but this time it was managed on a more systematic basis than it had been the year before. The Little Missouri Cattle Men's Association had sent a representative to the Montana Stock Grower's Association, and they provided for the delineation of the various round-up districts. 271 District Number Six, which included the valley of the Little Missouri River, commenced at Medora and followed down the Little Missouri to the mouth of Big Boxer Creek; thence up the Big Beaver to its head (The Big Beaver's source is near Baker, Montana); thence across to the Little Beaver at the crossing of the Rough Trail and down it to its mouth; thence across to the northern medicine camp of the Little Missouri, and down the Little Missouri to Medora. Johnny Goodall was foreman of the 1886 spring round-up.

Roosevelt took part in the 1886 round-up, but not as extensively as the one the year before. 273 The summer of 1886 passed uneventfully except for the Fourth of July, when Roosevelt was the main speaker

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272 Medora, op. cit., p. 402.
273 Roosevelt's letter to his sister Anna, June 24, 1886, quoted in Medora, op. cit., p. 402.
at a celebration at Dickinson, Dakota Territory. The Dickinson Press published his speech along with the statement that it was a big day.

The spring and summer of 1886 were very dry. The creeks that, in the earlier days, had held water were dry all summer, partially due to the absence of the beavers that had dammed the streams up along their courses. There were many prairie fires which burned off a considerable portion of the range.

Because of the seriousness of conditions, Sewall and Dew, who had never thought highly of the country's possibilities, decided to quit the ranching industry. Ferris and Merrifield took over the complete management of all of Roosevelt's cattle.

At a meeting of the Little Missouri Cattlemen's Association in September 1886, it was decided that the Little Missouri range was overstocked, and that they would refuse to aid or assist any new outfits running

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275 *The Stock Grower's Journal*, July 26, 1886. Interview with General Marian Sweeney and Dr. J. P. Hodges.

276 Lang, op. cit., p. 240.
cattle or horses. 277

Roosevelt's losses in the severe winter of 1886-1887 were quite extensive. 278 When he returned to his ranches in the spring of 1887, he was astonished to find such a number of dead cattle. He wrote to Sewall, "In one of Monroe's draws I counted in a single patch of brush-wood twenty-three dead cows and calves. You boys were lucky to get out when you did". 279 He, also, wrote his sister saying that he was very blue and that he was planning to get out of the cattle game. 280

Roosevelt came out to the Bad Lands several times.

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277 The Stock Grower's Journal, November 12, 1887, carried this notice:

Notice is hereby given that at the fall meeting of the Little Missouri River Stock Grower's Association, September, 1886, it was decided that as the ranges on the Little Missouri River and Beaver Creek and their tributaries are fully stocked with cattle and horses, and that as any additional herds placed upon such ranges will entail severe losses, not only to the present occupant, but also to any new herds which may be upon said ranges, the members of the association, therefore, would refuse to aid or assist in any manner any party who may place cattle or horses upon said ranges after said meeting.

J. L. Truscott, Secretary
Medora, Dakota

278 Roosevelt, The Wilderness Hunter, op. cit., p. 121. He says it was "the worst winter we ever witnessed on the plains".

279 Roosevelt's letter to Sewall, quoted in Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 441.

280 Roosevelt's letter to his sister Corrine, Hagedorn op. cit., p. 441.
during the summer of 1887, but spent very little time there. He was, as he said, very busy with his books, for at this time he thought that his goal in life was to be an author. Among the books that he was working on were *Ranch Life and Hunting Trails* and the *Life of Gouverneur Morris.* He came out to his ranch again in 1888, but stayed only a few days to inspect the cattle that he still owned.

In 1890 he was again at the ranch and this time he brought his wife with him. A year later he hunted elk with an Englishman named Ferguson from his Elkhorn Ranch. He continued his cattle ranching in a small way until 1896. The Elkhorn Ranch gradually fell into dilapidation and in a year or two the waters of the Little Missouri River rose to flood level and car-

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282 Ibid., p. 126.

Between September, 1884, and July, 1886, Roosevelt invested $82,500 in his ranching venture. By 1891 his books showed a flat loss of $28,500, at which time he invested $10,000 more in the enterprise. Between 1891 and when he closed out he made a profit of $5,364. His loss for the whole period, not counting interest, was a little more than $80,000.
ried away the buildings. It did not, however, carry away the great impression that he had made on this country, and, today, upon reaching the town of Medora one can still feel an atmosphere of awe, after reading the big road sign, "Theodore Roosevelt once ranched near here."

On September 19, 1900, Roosevelt returned to the Bad Lands and Medora in his speech making tour for the office of Vice-President of the United States. He took this opportunity to greet his old friends, and to climb the huge butte behind Medora and renew his memory of the country. In 1903, he came back to Medora as the President of the United States. The entire population was out to meet him. Mrs. Follisier has, in her scrap book, a picture of the reception given in his honor at this time. She writes, "It was the last time I ever saw that truly great man."
CHAPTER VII

THE END OF THE OPEN RANGE

By the end of September 1886 the feed available on the range was sufficient to sustain but a small part of the cattle located in the Little Missouri River Valley. It was clear that the range was overstocked, and that the cattle industry was controlled by large interests with company officers residing in eastern cities.286 Although the small rancher had not disappeared, it was difficult for him to remain in business.

The open range system, which had always been recognized as hazardous, was still in use. This system, a gamble under normal conditions, was a much greater risk with the throwing of hundreds of thousands of young eastern stock on an already overstocked range. These cattle were not able to shift for themselves as well as the southern and western cattle.287

To make matters worse the price of cattle was very

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286 supra., p. 106

287 As early as 1886 the eastern cattle were considered a problem on the range. The Badlands Cowboy, November 15, 1886 says that "western stockmen who buy young eastern stock cattle must be prepared to shelter them the first winter from the severe storms. No greater mistake can be made than to compel unacclimated calves and ill-conditioned yearlings to rustle for themselves in winter storms."
low in the fall of 1886. Although many cattle were shipped to market there was a considerable decrease in the number that would have been shipped out under normal conditions, thus making conditions even worse on the crowded range.

The winter of 1886-1887 was terribly severe. It closed down fully six weeks early. The first snow

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The Paducah Cowboy, November 25, 1886, gives cattle quotations in the Chicago market.

- Prime beefers: $5.00 to $5.25
- Choice to fancy shipping: 4.00 to 4.25
- Good to choice shipping: 3.00 to 3.25
- Common to good shipping: 2.50 to 2.75
- Poor to medium steers: 1.60 to 1.80
- Grass-fed native steers: 1.25 to 1.50
- Grass-fed Texas: 2.00 to 2.25
- Northern ranges: 1.25 to 1.50
- Fair to choice native cows: 1.00 to 1.25
- Inferior to medium cows: 0.75 to 0.95

The editorial comment in this paper is, "Low prices at which range cattle are selling this season is causing some study of the question. . . . Cattle should be sent to market earlier and later. . . . This can be done, however, by providing some supplemental feed."

The Bismarck Tribune, February 11, 1887, states: "There is serious apprehension that there will be an appalling loss of human lives in Montana and Western Dakota. Snow began falling early in November and there is more on the ground than for ten years. Most of the stage roads are entirely closed up and trains are running at irregular intervals, some being four or five days apart and the supply of fuel is becoming almost exhausted. The snow is drifted to enormous depths. . . . The cold has been intense. Reports are coming in, . . . of the large losses of cattle owing to the scarcity of feed and insufficient protection from the severe weather. Losses already reach eight to twenty percent and it is not evading it to say that in event of the snow lying on the ground for four weeks longer the loss will reach from fifty to seventy-five percent."
fall turned into a sleet that froze on the ground. Blizzards followed upon blizzard until the entire range was covered under drifts that were four to five feet deep and the coulees were packed with dry snow. Following the blizzards the temperature dropped abnormally and remained that way through the entire winter months.

Under these conditions the unacclimated Texas and eastern cattle crowded into sheltered places and froze to death. Even the western cattle perished in great numbers as the snow was too deep to forage grass. When the spring chincucks came the ranchers were able to ascertain their losses, and as reports came in the stockmen of the Little Missouri River Valley who had been running cattle on the open range saw that their holdings were gone.

The cattle losses were enormous. The Lange lost between 80 and 85% of their entire herd. Gregor Lang told that as the result of five years residence in the Bad Lands they had a few head of cattle and horses as the sole result of their labor.

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the Water's Edge, report on June 6, 1944.

In July, I took off some notes, and noted the following:

1) The Water's Edge, report on June 6, 1944.

The Water's Edge, report on June 6, 1944.

According to the note, the Water's Edge had about 16,000 head of cattle, and they had a few about 16,000 head of cattle.

A Few Notes about the Water's Edge, report on June 6, 1944.
restocking by degrees if they could find the means to do so. But they were no longer taking chances. Thereafter, the large majority did their ranching on a close herding basis, limiting their holdings to the number they could provide with hay and shelter during the winter months.

Thus the larger outfits were gradually forced out and the Bad Lands developed into a country of small ranchers. This was partially aided by the Territory of Dakota's statute that required western stockmen to fence their range and keep their livestock under control. Any damage inflicted by their herds could be collected by the injured party in court. As early as 1887 the stockmen were beginning to feel the pinch of wire fences.

As a country of small ranchers the Bad Lands continued for a short time with the nearest approach to

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297 *Briggs, op. cit.,* p. 244.


299 The first herd law in Dakota Territory was passed in 1870-71. It was amended in 1872, and again in 1880 to make it more effective. The region west of the Missouri River was exempt from such laws until 1889, when a strict herd law was passed which included the western counties.

Session Laws of the Territory of Dakota, 1870-71, pp. 63-68; 1872, p. 60; 1881, p. 68; 1885, pp. 303-40.
commercial prosperity that the region ever knew.

Bill Fellis of the "Three Sevens" has told the investigator that the Bad Lands never were a breeding country. "In the 1880's, those who tried to raise cattle here lost money. Two year olds would do all-right; if they lived through the winter nothing would kill them. To raise cattle in this section a rancher has to expect to feed his cattle during the winter, and it requires much more care than down in the southern states."

By the year 1890, with the range no longer over-stocked, the region was showing a strong tendency toward complete recovery. With this improving range condition sheep began to make their appearance in large numbers. As a consequence conditions quickly became worse than before. As time went on the range was recognized to intensive erosion, and became weed-grown and devoid of its natural foliage.

By completion of the first general survey, it was not long before land speculators began to make their appearance in this territory. Encouraged by a complacent National Government, and by a still more complacent State Legislature, and by the Northern Pac-
The Illinois Railroad Company, they proceeded to represent the Bad Lands as a veritable land of Canaan, where everything and anything would grow. In this manner the Bad Lands were colonized by the homesteader.

Although ranching on any sizable scale has passed from the Bad Lands, there still remains the very small scale rancher with his herd of usually less than one hundred head. He eats hay in the summer, and feeds his cattle in the winter. He provides a shelter for them, and his range is completely fenced in. More often than not, he raises some type of cash crop. Ranching, even though done in a small way compared to the bonanza days, is still an important industry in the Little Missouri River Valley.

The beef bonanza period in the Little Missouri River Valley may be bounded by the dates 1880, when the railroad reached this territory, and 1900, when the land was surveyed and agriculture began.

Billings County in 1879
MAP V

BILLINGS COUNTY IN 1887
MAP VI

BILLINGS COUNTY IN 1895
MAP VIII

BILLINGS COUNTY IN 1915

1 Luella J. Hall, "History of the Formation of Counties in North Dakota", Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota (Grand Forks: Normanden Publishing Co., 1923) Vol. V. Maps I-VIII were taken from this source, pp. 126-248.
## Number and Valuation of Cattle, Horses, and Sheep in Billings County

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<th>HORSES</th>
<th>SHEEP</th>
<th>TOTAL VALUATION</th>
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<td>498</td>
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<td>23,641</td>
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<td>4,617</td>
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<td>5,050</td>
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### Notes
- Bismarck Tribune, November 6, 1885.
- Resources of Dakota, 1897, Vol. 15, p. 28.
- Public Documents of South Dakota for 1896.
- Sioux City, June 30, 1896.
## TABLE II

### POPULATION OF BILLINGS COUNTY

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<td>1900</td>
<td>975</td>
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2. Resources of Dakota, 1887, p. 325.
4. Loc. cit.
### TABLE III

CATTLE BRANDS OF THE LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

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<td><strong>ROOSEVELT'S ELKHORN RANCH</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Towers and Gudgell's Ranch</td>
<td>OX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soho Cattle Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. N. Thompson and Company</td>
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<td>Spring Creek Ranch</td>
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<td>Badger Cattle Company</td>
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TABLE III (CONTINUED)

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<th>Brand Mark</th>
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<tr>
<td>MEDORA STAGE AND FORWARDING COMPANY</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. G. PADDOCK'S RANCH</td>
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<td>WIBAUX'S W-BAR RANCH</td>
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<td>LLOYD ROBERTS'S SLOPING BOTTOM RANCH</td>
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1 These brands were printed in *The Bad Lands Cowboy*, November 13, 1884, and in *The Stock Grower's Journal*, November 12, 1887.
PLATE V
STATUE OF MARQUIS DE Mores
MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA

PLATE VI
DEPOT
LITTLE MISSOURI, NORTH DAKOTA

PLATE VII
LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER
NEAR MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA

PLATE VIII
VIEW OF THE BAD LANDS
NEAR MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA
PLATE IX
MEDICINE ROCKS
NEAR EKALAKA, MONTANA

PLATE X
GRAZING LAND
NEAR EKALAKA, MONTANA
THE LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY
An Aerial Photograph of the Medora of Today
And The Surrounding Bad Lands
1. Little Missouri River
2. A river bottom
3. Chimney stack of De Mores's abattoir
4. De Mores's chateau
5. Buttes overlooking the river
6. Athenais Chapel
7. Von Hoffman's house
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