



# TRNHA NEWSLETTER

February 2012

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT THE RANCHER

### The Investment

Theodore Roosevelt originally came to Dakota Territory to hunt a buffalo. To do so, he solicited the help of Joe Ferris, a 25-year-old Canadian, to serve as a hunting guide. Ferris showed little interest in helping the bespectacled dude at first, but Roosevelt and his cash incentives proved persuasive. Once Roosevelt found someone willing to loan him a horse, Ferris found he hardly had the energy to keep up with the dynamo from New York that had hired him. Undeterred by nasty weather or bad luck, Roosevelt pressed on, much to the exasperation of his



hunting guide. Finding a buffalo to shoot proved difficult; most of the bison in the area had been killed mercilessly in recent years by commercial hunters. Unknown to Roosevelt, a herd of 10,000 had been killed nearby just a week before his arrival. Each evening at Gregor Lang's ranch, an exhausted Ferris often left Roosevelt squeezing Lang for every drop of conversation he could provide. During their conversations, and maybe as a result of them, Roosevelt expressed interest in cattle ranching in the badlands.

A cattle ranching investment in Dakota seemed reasonably sound. Cattle raised in the Dakota Territory reaped the nutritional benefits of a variety of grasses Texas cattle did not enjoy, plus they could be shipped directly to market without enduring long drives that reduced the quality of the meat. That meant higher profits for Dakota ranchers. The Marquis de Morès

sought to connect the markets of the East with the grazing lands of Dakota by building a slaughterhouse and shipping the dressed beef in refrigerated rail cars from Medora, the burgeoning town he founded in 1883.

Roosevelt quickly arranged to purchase a herd of cattle tended by Sylvane Ferris and Bill Merrifield for \$14,000 – significantly more than Roosevelt's annual salary. The two surprised cowboys agreed to tend the cattle for Roosevelt when they were released from their existing contract. That winter, following Roosevelt's request, Ferris and Merrifield constructed the Maltese Cross Cabin. Roosevelt probably did not see his investment in strictly monetary terms, but as a binding connection to the wide open spaces for which he had quickly become quite enamored. As biographer Edmund Morris noted, "Fourteen thousand dollars was a small price to pay for so much freedom."

### Return to New York

After finally bagging a bull bison in Dakota, which he mounted on the wall of his home at Sagamore Hill, Roosevelt returned to New York. He showed characteristic vigor and force as he resumed his legislative duties in Albany, attacking corruption in city government and making newspaper headlines in the process. He was earning greater approval and backing than ever before, and his political career was gaining traction. On February 12, 1884, his wife Alice gave birth to a baby girl in New York City. Just at this

moment of joy, tragedy fell upon Theodore Roosevelt.

A telegram arrived in Albany beseeching Roosevelt to quickly return to New York; his wife Alice and mother Mittie were both dying in the Roosevelt home. On Valentine's Day 1884, Theodore Roosevelt watched in horror as his mother died, then his wife, only hours apart.



Devastated, Roosevelt recorded in his diary a large "X" and wrote only a single sentence: "The light has gone out of my life." Roosevelt dealt with his immense grief by immersing himself in work, laboring with almost superhuman fervor. He began to erase the memory of his beloved wife, destroying any correspondence that made reference to her, and never spoke of her again, even to their daughter. Roosevelt never looked back.

*Continued on Page 3*

### Theodore Roosevelt National Park South Unit

8:00 am - 4:30 pm MT 7 days a week

### North Unit

9:00 am - 5:30 pm CT Fri, Sat & Sun. only

Loop drive closures are subject to change based on weather conditions.

### Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site

8:00 am - 4:30 pm CT

### Upper Souris NWR

8:00 am - 4:30 pm CT Monday-Friday

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 11, 2012

Heritage Outbound Winter Adventure at Knife River Indian Villages.



# CAUSE & EFFECT

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF KNIFE RIVER INDIAN VILLAGES NHS

Everyday North Dakota's National Parks face challenges or changes that directly effect the parks and their visitors. However those who support, visit, and work in or near the parks might not realize the effects, both positive and negative, these events have on the park. We have decided to dedicate this section of our newsletter to focus on these "Causes and Effects". Please feel free to share your comments or concerns with North Dakota's parks and the TRNHA staff by sending an e-mail to: [info@trnha.org](mailto:info@trnha.org).

## Storing Fracking Sand and Pipeline Material

One of the issues facing the town of Stanton (the park's gateway community) is a storage facility at the southwest end of town for fracking sand and pipeline material. Boyco Incorporated bought the 15 acres for the storage facility. Plans call for the sand and pipe to arrive on-site via rail and the sand will be delivered by truck to oil rigs in the Killdeer and Hebron area. The pipe will also be delivered by truck throughout northwestern North Dakota. One-fourth to one-third of the operation will involve ceramic frac sand shipped to the site from China. Natural sand will be delivered by rail from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. Grain bin-type structures will be built to store the frac sand and they estimate approximately 15 trucks will enter and leave the site per day dur-

ing a 10 hour work shift. These trucks will use State Highway 31, which runs through Stanton, for entering and exiting the facility. Two new rail spurs will be constructed to supply the facility with approximately 40-60 rail cars per week. The construction is expected to be completed by mid-June or July.

### How is the Park Responding?

Staff is keeping informed by reading local news media and attending public meetings. The storage facility is located approximately one mile south of the park on private lands. Much of the infrastructure has not been planned at this time. Local residents have voiced concerns about noise, dust, road maintenance, and hazardous materials. Stanton city officials have stated that noise, smell and dust is-

issues are already restricted by a nuisance ordinance. The city of Stanton is in the process of amending the industrial zoning ordinance to prevent the storage of hazardous and toxic materials.

### Current Status

Documents are being drafted to rezone the newly acquired property from agricultural to industrial. Sand is currently being transported by truck which is increasing the amount of traffic on Highway 200A and Highway 31 through Stanton. Large white storage bags filled with sand can be seen stacked in the storage area. The area has been cleared of vegetation. The facility will employ up to 30 individuals by the end of 2012.

## RANGER RECOMMENDS



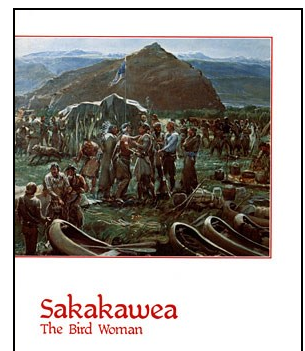
February's featured ranger is Dorothy Cook, an interpretive ranger at Knife River Indian Villages NHS. Dorothy is a North Dakota native but her accent has Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Arkansas in it. She is starting her 13th year at Knife River

Indian Villages. Dorothy has worked at the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Kingsley Plantation, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. She likes to spend time reading and with her cat, Toto.

Dorothy says, "I recommend *Sakakawea The Bird Woman* by Russell Reid. It is a very quick and easy read. Reid gives an overview of the life of Sakakawea and her time with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He goes into the various spellings of her name. In addition, he gives the theories of how long she lived and where she is buried. The book is great for travelers because it easily fits into a suitcase. "

If you are interested in purchasing this book, please visit one of our Theodore

Roosevelt Nature and History bookstores or visit our online store at [www.trnha.org](http://www.trnha.org)



### Sakakawea: The Bird Woman

Regular Price: \$2.50  
Members Price: \$2.13

[www.trnha.org](http://www.trnha.org)

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT THE RANCHER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

## Renewal

In June 1884, Roosevelt put his thoughts and energy to ranching at the Maltese Cross Ranch. He sunk another \$26,000 into new cattle. Later that summer, Roosevelt brought two trusted friends and woodsmen from Maine, Bill Sewall and Wilmot Dow, to help start a new, larger ranch down river, the Elkhorn Ranch. While Sewall and Dow constructed the ranch house (Roosevelt, for his energy, did not prove a useful assistant), Roosevelt went on numerous hunting expeditions, including a 6-week excursion to the Big-horn Mountains. Distracted by his other activities, Roosevelt slipped behind on his planned writing project for the summer, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, which he finished upon his return to New York in December. In the book,



Roosevelt wrote about his hunting exploits and shared a prophetic view that overgrazing in the badlands could spell trouble in the future.

The next summer, Roosevelt found himself further entwined in Medora. Despite his forebodings about overgrazing in the Badlands, he spent another \$39,000 adding cattle to his already sizable herd, and spent significant time in local politics as chairman of the Stockmen's Association. In September 1885, Roosevelt received a somewhat threatening letter from the Marquis de Morès, who was in jail on charges of murder. The Marquis claimed that Joe Ferris, Roosevelt's employee, had been rounding up witnesses against him, which he saw as an attack. This situation made Roosevelt nervous, for the Marquis was well known for his quick temper and itchy trigger finger. Roosevelt shot a

letter back, "Most emphatically I am not your enemy; if I were you would know it..." Roosevelt's openness satisfied the Marquis and tensions cooled between Medora's two titanic personalities.

In the spring of 1886, thieves cut Roosevelt's boat from its mooring at the Elkhorn Ranch. Roosevelt, Sewall, and Dow quickly assembled a makeshift boat to chase after them down the ice-clogged Little Missouri. Several days downriver, Roosevelt and his men caught up to the thieves and captured them. After a rough multi-day hike, Roosevelt singlehandedly delivered his prisoners to Dickinson and collected a \$50 reward. Two of the thieves were sentenced to jail time; the third Roosevelt deemed too unintelligent to have had a hand in the crime. Locals wondered why Roosevelt had not killed the thieves on sight.

## Disaster Strikes

The late spring thaw of 1886 gave way to a disastrous season for the Badlands cattle industry. Scorching summer conditions with temperatures reaching 125° F prohibited plant growth. Few crops were harvested, and little useful grazing land was left by the time winter set in. Worse, ranchers had packed the badlands with unsustainable numbers of cattle. Overgrazing and an extremely poor growing season took their toll as ranchers were unable to store any hay for the winter. An ominous haze, probably caused by dust in the air and distant wildfires, loomed over the area throughout the autumn, which some took to be a bad omen.

The winter of 1886-87 proved to be extraordinarily harsh, compounding the already difficult circumstances created by the vicious summer. Unable to feed their cattle, ranchers were forced

to let them fend for themselves. One blizzard after another quickly buried what was left of the grazing land, and cattle were found "frozen to death where they stood" in temperatures as low as -41° F. Hardier cattle survived long enough to eat the tar-paper off the houses in Medora before succumbing to the elements. Others were found dead in trees after the snow melted, having climbed massive snowdrifts to reach the edible twigs before expiring amid the branches. Tens of thousands of cattle died in the Badlands in the winter of 1886-1887, around 80% of the total population. Gregor Lang, who in 1884 had convinced Roosevelt that cattle ranching in the Badlands was a safe investment, lost 85% of his herd of 3,000. In the spring, the Little Missouri swelled onto its floodplain, surging with melt water and ice. The carcasses of innumerable cattle bobbed down the icy river.

Roosevelt had been abroad during the devastating winter with his new wife, Edith, and was unaware of the horrors until he returned to the U.S. in late March of 1887. Upon his return to Medora, Roosevelt found he had lost over half his herd. The blow proved disastrous for Roosevelt, who lost over half of his \$80,000 investment, the equivalent of approximately \$1.7 million today. As for the future of the Elkhorn and Maltese Cross Ranches, Roosevelt wrote his sister Bamie, "I am planning to get out of it." The tragedy proved fatal for Medora. The Marquis de Morès, was unable to pump life back into Medora, although he pumped a fortune into it. In 1887, the Pyramid Park Hotel where Roosevelt spent his first night in the Badlands was loaded onto a flatbed car and shipped to Dickinson. Medora was a ghost town within two years.

## Legacy

Although the ranching venture had spelled financial disaster for Roosevelt, the physically and psychologically transformative experience proved priceless. Roosevelt had sought to test his mettle and his manhood in an exceptionally rough part of the West, and had excelled in every degree possible. He had transformed from a scrawny asthmatic to a burly, barrel-chested, bull-necked man with a dark suntan and tireless riding ability. Not only was he physically more mature and larger in stature, he had grown immensely in the minds of the local Medora people and, later, in the eyes of the nation.

A man who was largely sneered at upon his arrival in 1883, Roosevelt had grown to prominence, respect, and even admiration in the

hearts and minds of local people for his manner and conduct. Roosevelt carried with him an enthusiasm and genuineness that common people connected with, and this rapport was the foundation of Roosevelt's later political success. His enthusiasm for cowboy life spurred him to form the Rough Riders, the notable cavalry unit that brought Roosevelt national recognition during the Spanish-American War. Importantly, the cattle ranching collapse and his experiences in the wilderness began to solidify in his mind the need for conservation, which he pursued notably in his Presidential years. The experience in Dakota had left an indelible mark on Roosevelt's heart, though he would not return often or for long periods after 1887. To Roosevelt, the place where "the romance of my life began" became as much a beloved part of his

past as it was a stepping stone for his future.

Visitors to the park today can experience the badlands in many of the same ways Roosevelt did in his time here, for the landscape is preserved as Roosevelt would have seen it. Whether one rides vigorously on horseback through the Badlands or relaxes in the shade of a cottonwood tree, he or she enjoys pastimes that registered deep in Roosevelt's heart. The same sights, sounds, and smells are all to be experienced just as Roosevelt wrote about them. Most of the animals that Roosevelt saw and hunted still inhabit this unique landscape. It was here that the need for conservation was born in Theodore Roosevelt's heart and mind, and the land here is preserved in his honor.

# PRESIDENT'S DAY WORD FIND

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Abraham Lincoln	Franklin Pierce	James Carter	Lyndon B. Johnson	Warren G. Harding
Andrew Jackson	George H. W. Bush	James Garfield	Martin Van Buren	William Henry Harrison
Andrew Johnson	George W. Bush	James K. Polk	Millard Fillmore	William Howard Taft
Barack Obama	George Washington	James Madison	Richard M. Nixon	William J. Clinton
Benjamin Harrison	Gerald R. Ford	James Monroe	Ronald Reagan	William McKinley
Calvin Coolidge	Grover Cleveland	John Adams	Rutherford B. Hayes	Woodrow Wilson
Chester A. Arthur	Harry S. Truman	John F. Kennedy	Theodore Roosevelt	Zachary Taylor
Dwight D. Eisenhower	Herbert Hoover	John Quincy Adams	Thomas Jefferson	
Franklin D. Roosevelt	James Buchanan	John Tyler	Ulysses S. Grant	

## MEMBER ONLY SPECIAL

FEBRUARY'S MEMBER ONLY COUPON IS FOR....

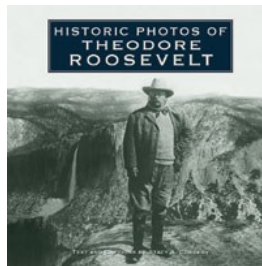
### Historic Photos of Theodore Roosevelt

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**TRNHA at (701) 623-4884  
EXPIRES: February 29, 2012**



### Historic Photos of Theodore Roosevelt by Stacy A. Cordery

From his earliest days as a youth in New York City to his declining years during World War I, Historic Photos of Theodore Roosevelt captures the greatest exploits of one of the nation's greatest Americans. As soldier and explorer, as conservationist and big game hunter, as governor, vice-president, and president, as scientist and writer, and as family man, TR's life in pictures blazes a path sure to enthrall every reader, from the student of history to the history buff.

# SUPPORT YOUR PARKS BY BECOMING A MEMBER

## Membership Donations are used to help fund:

- The publishing of free trail guides, informational brochures, plant and animal checklist, junior ranger activity books, and the park newspaper.
- Support Volunteers and Student Conservation Resource Assistants.
- Acquiring publications for reference libraries at three park sites.
- Money for scientific research and oral history projects. TRNHA had recently helped fund an ongoing Mountain Lion study in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.
- Funding for interpretive training, materials, and supplies.
- Sponsoring special interpretive programs and events such as the Northern Plains Culture Fest and birding festivals.
- Provide Support Staff in the Visitor Centers.



## Reasons to become a member of TRNHA

1. 15% Discount on sales items at our five bookstore locations: Painted Canyon, South Unit, & North Unit (All in Theodore Roosevelt National Park); Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, and Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge.
2. TRNHA membership is honored by most National Park Cooperating Associations with a reciprocal discount.
3. Monthly e-newsletters and association updates.
4. Receive newsletters and program announcements on the activities of the Association and the areas it serves.
5. Special member only offers. *(Please check our website for monthly specials [www.trnha.org](http://www.trnha.org))*
6. All members are entitled to vote for TRNHA Board of Directors.
7. The pleasures of knowing that your membership contributes to the support of National park and refuge sites in North Dakota.

Yes! I would like to become a member of  
**Theodore Roosevelt  
Nature & History Association!**

## Are you a new or renewing member?

New       Renewal

## What type of membership?

- |                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual   | \$20.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family       | \$30.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing | \$75.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting   | \$250.00 |

## Tell Us About Yourself

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## New & Renewing Member Offer

With your purchase of a new or renewing membership you can buy our Theodore Roosevelt National Park tote bag for just:  
**\$9.95 (reg. \$19.95)**

I want to take advantage of the tote bag offer. I have enclosed a payment of \$11.95. (*\$9.95 + \$2.00 Shipping*)



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