



North Dakota

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Teddy

Theodore Roosevelt was born and raised in New York. He was small and sickly as a child but he did not let that hold him back. He was always interested in nature, collecting scientific samples at an early age. Roosevelt was homeschooled as a child and later attended Harvard College where he studied biology. After college he showed an interest in history, naval matters and government.

Roosevelt married Alice Lee and together they had a daughter. Two days after the birth of their daughter, Roosevelt's wife and mother died within hours of each other on Valentine's Day 1884. Roosevelt was so distraught by his loss, he knew he needed to leave New York and get a fresh perspective on his life.

Exploring the Frontier

Roosevelt first came to what is now North Dakota for a hunting trip. He arrived in the badlands in the fall of 1883 to hunt buffalo. He was so captivated by the beauty and wonder of the Little Missouri River Valley, he returned and decided to join the ranching boom that was taking place around the town of Medora in the western part of the state. He invested in two cattle ranches; the Maltese Cross Ranch and the Elkhorn Ranch.

Roosevelt was determined to show the cowboys of North Dakota that he wasn't a frail city slicker from New York. He worked side by side with other cowboys doing cattle roundups, stopping stampedes and helped organize the region's first stockmen's association. Roosevelt's time in North Dakota was transforming, if brief. He lost much of his cattle herd during the unusually severe winter of 1886-1887 and was forced to move back east.

Presidency

In the early 1890's, Roosevelt became the New York City police commissioner. By the end of the 1890's, he was running the Navy Department and helped the Rough Riders fight in the Spanish-American War. He returned to New York and was elected governor. In 1901, Roosevelt became the 25th Vice President of the United States. He became the 26th President of the United States six months later after President McKinley was assassinated.

Roosevelt did a number of notable things during his two terms as President of the United States. One of those notable things was helping preserve the frontier and establish untouchable land for animals. During his term he signed legislation establishing five national parks, one of those being Sully's Hill located in North Dakota near Devils Lake. He made his last visit to North Dakota in 1918, a few months before his death.

Following Roosevelt's death in 1919, the Little Missouri Badlands area where he spent his time in North Dakota ranching, was established as a campground. In 1947, President Truman established this area as the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.

The content above came from North Dakota State Library items, ND Studies materials, and the State Archives.

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