

The Marquis de Mores – Dakota Entrepreneur



The Chateau de Mores

The Chateau de Mores was built as a hunting lodge for the Marquis's family and his guests. It was much larger and more elegant than anything else in the area. In 1883, it cost \$5,000 to build. Most people who had settled in Dakota Territory at that time lived in log or sod houses, often with only one or two rooms. In cities such as Bismarck, there were some very nice homes; but not out in the Badlands.

They entertained often with visitors coming from Europe and the east coast. Wealthy ranchers such as Theodore Roosevelt were also guests. The family stayed from spring until late fall. They would travel back to New York or to Europe for the cold winter months. They left in December 1886 and never returned as a family.

The Marquis made two trips back to the area in 1887 and 1889. Medora returned to the Chateau only once, in 1903, after the Marquis's death. She brought her older two children and stayed about six weeks. After that the house was taken care of by the caretakers, who got it ready every summer, but she never returned.

The Boarding House

After her death in 1921, the caretakers were given permission to use the house as a summer boarding house by the eldest son, Louis. They rented rooms, served meals and gave tours. A newspaper journalist wrote an article called, "A Real Chateau in the Badlands" and the name is still used today. No record has been found that it was ever



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called a chateau before Medora's death. The caretakers operated the boarding house for about twelve years. It fell into disrepair and many items were either sold, stolen or broken.

Louis closed the boarding house in 1934 because it had developed into a regular trade for the benefit of the caretakers. He felt that the house was losing much of its original character. In 1936 he deeded the house and 125 acres of land to the state of North Dakota. This included the packing plant ruins. The agreement stated that the properties were to be developed and preserved for park and museum purposes. The first restoration was done by the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1937 - 1941. The house was opened to the public on August 7, 1941.

Other Medora Buildings

Madame de Mores had the small brick church in town built in 1884 as a gift to the community. The home built for Medora's parents is now operated as The Medora Dollhouse. These are not part of the state historic site.

The Chateau de Mores State Historic Site

Today the Chateau is owned by the state of North Dakota and managed by the State Historical Society as an historic house museum. The historic site also includes the park in Medora named De Mores Park. The statue of the Marquis was donated to the township of Medora in 1926 by Louis and Paul. The township donated the statue and park to the State of North Dakota in 1937.

The generosity of Louis de Vallombrosa in granting these historic sites to the state made possible their development and preservation. Because of their location next to Interstate 94 and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, these areas are enjoyed not only by the people of North Dakota but by great numbers of tourists from all over the world.



Something to think about:

What was the impact of Medora's founding family on the western Dakota Territory?