

## Tour 4

(Moosejaw, Sask., Can.) -- Ambrose -- Belfield -- Amidon -- Bowman -- (Belle Fourche, S. Dak.). US 85.

Canadian boundary to South Dakota Line, 264.5 m.

G.N. Ry. branch line roughly parallels route between Alexander and Watford City.

Graveled roadbed except for 7 m. bituminous surface, 40 m. graded dirt highway, and 16 m. unimproved dirt road.

Accommodations in principal towns.

US 85, a direct route through western North Dakota between Saskatchewan and the South Dakota Line, traverses the Coteau du Plateau du Missouri, crosses the Missouri River, and enters the severe, majestically beautiful region of the Missouri Slope with its expansive range country and scenic Badlands. Between the Canadian border and the Missouri, boulder-strewn smoothly rounded hills are evidence of glaciation. In the rough country along the Missouri and Little Missouri Rivers, the high, mesa-like buttes, flat-topped and capped with thick layers of rock, mark the level of the land before it was worn by ages of erosion.

It has been said that men have been equal at only three times since creation--once in the Garden of Eden, once in the Declaration of Independence, and once in the "cow country" before the fence. When white settlers were just beginning to invade these wide plains and rough Badlands, cattle were being driven here from the Texas Panhandle. The famous Chisholm Trail that ran north from Texas to Abilene, Kans., had many branching trails, one of which ran through the

area now traversed by US 85. In 1934, when P.P. Ackley of Elk City, Okla., an old southwestern cattleman, marked the Chisholm Trail he included this northern branch.

US 85 crosses the Canadian boundary 11 m. S. of Torquay, Sask., Canada.

At **0.0 m** are clustered the small buildings of the customs office and the border patrol.

AMBROSE, **3 m.** (2,060 alt., 334 pop.), named for a Soo Line right-of-way employee, in its early history was one of the greatest primary grain markets in the Northwest. With five elevators, and many hawkers buying on the track, as many as 300 grain wagons often crowded the streets, sometimes remaining several days before they could deliver their loads. Before the railway was extended W. of Ambrose, the town was a shipping point for horses, sheep, and cattle from the ranch country of eastern Montana and western North Dakota. Ambrose has two parks and a swimming pool.

At **6.5 m** is a junction with ND 5, a graveled highway (*see Tour 5*), which unites with US 85 between this point and **16.5 m.** where US 85 branches L.

In the vicinity of ZAHL, **39.5 m.** (2,000 alt., 153 pop.), are many small underground lignite mines that supply local markets and truckers. The town is named for F. R. Zahl, who came to this region in the early 1870's and became an outstanding buffalo hunter. The first post office here was at his ranch, E. of the present town. ND 50, a graveled highway (*see Side Tour 4A*),

unites with US 85 between Zahl and **43.5 m**, where US 85 branches R.

South of Zahl the route parallels the wide, flat-bottomed trough formed by LITTLE MUDDY CREEK. At **63 m**. is the junction with US 2 (*see Tour 6*), and the two highways are one route to **77.5 m**, where US 85 branches L.

At **79 m**. the route crosses the MISSOURI RIVER on the LEWIS AND CLARK BRIDGE, built in 1927, the second bridge in the State to span the Big Muddy. Natural gas from the Baker, Mont. field is piped into the Williston territory through lines that cross the bridge.

South of the bridge the highway winds through the draws and ravines of the Little Badlands, a small area showing the results of severe erosion. At **96.5 m**. is the junction with a county improved road.

Right on this road is CARTWRIGHT, **13.5 m**. (1,896 alt., 75 pop.) named for Samuel George Cartwright, the hunter-trapper who was its first settler. At **17 m**. is the YELLOWSTONE RIVER, the largest tributary of the Missouri, and an important factor in the history of exploration, settlement, and development of trade in Montana. Here, where the river joins the Missouri just within the North Dakota border, the valley once was a hunting paradise for the upper Missouri Indians, but fur traders, trappers, hunters, and settlers gave little thought to conservation, and the big game is now extinct. The three-million-dollar irrigation project completed in 1909 by the Federal Bureau of Reclamation has brought the region the title of

Prosperous Valley. Sugar beets form the principal crop, although grains, vegetables, and forage crops are raised successfully, and there is some small-scale fruit farming. Center of the sugar industry is the refining plant at Sidney, Mont. (*see Mont. Tour 9*). The entire irrigated area contains 58,561 acres, of which 19,500 are in North Dakota. Sugar-beet acreage in the Yellowstone Valley in this State is approximately 1,800. Mexican labor is used in the beet fields; most of the Mexicans make their homes in the Sidney and Fairview, Mont. (*see below*) areas.

The Yellowstone can be crossed here on the G.N. Ry. bridge, on which timber planking has been placed over the ties to permit automobile traffic. In one span of the bridge is a vertical lift to allow passage of river boats, although these are much more scarce than they were when the bridge was built in 1913.

Just E. of the bridge is the only railroad tunnel in the State, a 1,456-foot timber-supported excavation piercing the soft earth hills bordering the Yellowstone. It serves a single track on a curved alignment of three degrees.

At **21.5 m.** the road crosses the Montana Line at the city limits of Fairview, Mont. (*see Mont. Tour 9*).

ALEXANDER, **98.5 m.** (2,146 alt., 386 pop.), was platted in 1905 shortly after organization of McKenzie County by special legislative act, and was designated temporary county seat by proc-

lamation of Governor Sarles. Alexander McKenzie, political dictator of the early Dakota scene, was one of the town site incorporators, and both the town and county are named for him. Still standing is the old log building that served as the first county courthouse.

ARNEGARD, **110.5 m.** (2,237 alt., 254 pop.), was named for Evan Arnegard, an early settler. The community is predominantly Scandinavian. Certified potatoes, both for southern markets and foundation stock for growers in the eastern part of the State, form one of the leading products of the surrounding agricultural area. Turkeys are also raised here.

1. Left from Arnegard on a graded road 2 m.; L. here to LAKE PESHECK, **3 m.**, formed by impounded creek waters. It is surrounded by fine trees, and is fast becoming a summer recreation point. The lake was recently stocked with 1,500 trout.

2. Right from Arnegard on a dirt road to the northern entrance of the NORTH ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK, **14 m.** (*see* NORTH ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK).

WATFORD CITY, **117.5 m.** (2,082 alt., 769 pop.), was named for a town in Canada. Because of lack of facilities at Schafer, the neighboring county seat, Watford City is actually, if not legally, the seat of the county government. Many of the county officers and employees live here, and county and Federal agencies have offices in the city.

The town is the terminus of a G.N. Ry. branch line, and the trade center of the "Island Empire"

county, so called because the Missouri on the N. and E., the Yellowstone on the W., and the Little Missouri on the S. almost surround it with water. At the W. A. Jacobson law office is a private MUSEUM (*open weekdays 9-5*), a collection of stones, gems, fossils, Indian artifacts, coins, woods, and other articles of interest, including a Bible printed in 1535. A tourist camp is one-half mile E. on ND 23, a graveled highway.

Left from Watford City on ND 23 is SCHAFER, **4 m.** (1,950 alt., 100 pop.), seat of McKenzie County, in the little Cherry Creek valley (*see Tour 10*). Its white frame buildings and dingy log huts cluster about the frame courthouse which is an object of long-standing contention with Watford City. The town is named for Charles Shafer (1850-1930), an early rancher of the region, whose son George Shafer (1888- ) served as Governor of the State from 1929-32. On the Shafer homestead S. of the town along the creek are the Schafer Springs, near which are excellent camping grounds. The springs have a flow of nearly 6,000 gal. per hour, a flow which has not diminished during recent years of subnormal rainfall.

A slight curve at **130.5 m.** reveals a spectacular view. The grassy plateau ends abruptly, and below, as though a huge, careless knife had slashed into the prairie, lies a confusion of endless gray-, ocher-, slate-, and red-layered buttes, through which winds a maze of ragged ravines and coulees. In the distance the meandering LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER looks hardly capable of producing the strange BADLANDS which it and its tributaries have carved out of the earth. The red of the scoria-topped buttes, the myriad hues of the strata laid down ages ago by successive prehistoric seas, and the brilliant green of the spruce and cedar trees clinging to the steep

hillsides form a startling, almost weird, picture.

Like miniatures at the bottom of the valley are the silvery steel of the ROOSEVELT BRIDGE and the drab, squat, frame buildings of a permanent CCC camp. In 3 m. the tortuous, twisting highway drops 600 ft. (*drive carefully*) to reach the CCC camp and the main entrance to the North Roosevelt Regional State Park at **133.5 m.** (*see NORTH ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK*).

After crossing the river and its wide flood plain the highway climbs through the Badlands to emerge upon the prairie at **137 m.** In the distance (L) at **143 m.** are the Killdeer Mountains (*see Side Tour 8D*).

At **151 m.** the highway rounds a grass-covered prominence to enter GRASSY BUTTE (2,300 alt., 40 pop.), a little town founded in 1913 and named for the neighboring butte, which has long been a landmark in the region. Although there are many similarly shaped elevations in the vicinity, Grassy Butte is the only one not bare of vegetation. Ten Russian laborers first homesteaded in the Grassy Butte region, forming the nucleus of the present-day farming population. The old post office building still stands, a typical frontier log structure. In the early days of the town, when there were buildings on only one side of the main street, it was a local jest that Grassy Butte had the widest main street in the country, "from McKenzie County to the Atlantic seaboard."

The people who inhabit the area surrounding Grassy Butte are Little Russians or Ukrainians. They preserve many of their Old Country customs, and retain their Greek Catholic religious allegiance, though a difference of opinion has resulted in a schism.

A wedding custom of these people requires that the bride and bridegroom return to their respective homes after the marriage ceremony. At midnight a delegation representing the bridegroom abducts the bride and brings her to her husband's home. Wedding celebrations often last two or three days.

At **155.5 m.** is the junction with ND 25 (*see Side Tour 8D*).

At BELFIELD, **190 m.**, is the junction with US 10 (*see Tour 8*).

At **213.5 m.** is the junction with ND 21 (*see Side Tour 4B*).

At **222.5 m.** is the junction with a graded dirt road, not suitable for trailers.

Left on this road to CHALKY BUTTE, also known as White Butte, **6 m.**, a long high butte topped with one of the few White River limestone formations in the State. On its steep talus-covered slopes fossilized teeth and bones of prehistoric animals have been found. Outcroppings of large bones are plainly visible in the limestone cliff. The complete skull and other bones of an oreodon (small prehistoric hoofed animal) have been taken from this fossil bed.

In early days of white settlement it was believed that a treasure was buried somewhere on Chalky Butte because an Indian chief often went there and returned with gold. Although he was followed, he always managed to elude his pursuers; his cache, if it existed, has never been found. According to another story, a small party of soldiers once left Fort Meade, in the Black Hills, to take the pay roll to Fort Keogh, Mont. The pay roll never reached Fort Keogh, and no trace was found of the men, unless the three revolvers marked "U.S." and several Army wagon irons with charred pieces of wood clinging to them, found about 1900 near Sunset Butte S. of here, were the remains of their luckless expedition. Whether or not there is any connection between these two stories is a matter of conjecture.

AMIDON, **223.5 m.** (2,800 alt., 141 pop.), named for a U.S. district judge, Charles F. Amidon (1856-1937), was organized in 1915 and shortly thereafter was selected Slope County seat. In an enclosure near one of the filling stations in the town is an 8-ton petrified stump almost 6 ft. in diameter, which was uncovered on the county fairgrounds N. of Amidon. The town commands a good view of the surrounding country, with Chalky Butte to the SE., the angular outlines of the Badlands to the N. and W., and Black Butte (*see below*), highest point in the State, to the SW.

At **225 m.** is the junction with a graded dirt road with sharp curves and abrupt hills (*unsuited for trailers*).

Right on this road **2 m.**; then L. across rolling range land, gradually descending into the

Badlands to the junction with a little-used trail, **11 m.**

Right on this trail 1 m. at the end of a small valley are the BURNING COAL MINE and the COLUMNAR CEDARS. Across the ravine on a hillside sloping to the W. is the burning mine, which at dusk casts a carmine glow over the hill, and a heavy odor of coal gas hangs in the little valley. How long the lignite bed has been burning underground is not known. The Indians have legends telling of the burning ground, and old settlers in the region say that the burned area has not advanced more than a few hundred feet in the 50 years since the region was first settled by white men. The cause of the combustion is not known. As the coal burns underneath, the earth overburden crumbles and falls, taking with it all rocks, trees, and vegetation on the surface, leaving in its wake red scoria and other less brightly colored clays. The burned area succumbs easily to weathering and erosion. From large crevices in the earth intense heat pours, but with care one can peer into the flaming underground pits. (*Approach from the downhill side where there is no danger of the earth crumbling underfoot.*)

In the bottom of the tiny valley, and on its western slope, grow the columnar cedars, bright green conical trees averaging 15 ft. in height. These trees, found in North Dakota only in this small area adjacent to the burning mine, taper from a large base to a narrow tip. Their brilliant green forms a decided contrast with the dull grays and tans of the hills surrounding them.

On the main side road beyond the junction with the trail, the dirt graded road winds down to the Little Missouri and upstream to the SITE OF A LOGGING CAMP, **15 m.** When the N.P. Ry.

was being built W. of the Missouri a wood cutters' camp was maintained here. The camp bunkhouse is said to have been equipped with loopholes to shoot through in event of Indian attack. The cedar ties and pilings cut at the camp were floated down the Little Missouri, but many became snagged in sand bars or scattered over the river flood plain, and few reached their destination. Across the river from the site are the two peaks known as the RABBIT'S EARS.

US 85 at **229 m.** passes directly between Chalky Butte (L) and Black Butte (R).

At **230.5 m.** is a junction with a dirt road.

Right on this road **1 m.** to an advantageous point from which to hike to the top of BLACK BUTTE (3,468 alt.), highest elevation in the State. The butte is some 8 m. in circumference, and near the top solid rock cliffs rise perpendicularly 50 to 100 ft. above its grassy slopes. At its base lie huge boulders, broken from the sides by the action of weather. Springs form numerous creeks on the northern side, and their tree- and brush-lined banks are a favorite ground for berry-picking parties. At the northern corner of the butte is a hole about 3 ft. wide, from which a slight draught of air can be felt. When a pebble is dropped into this opening a dull thud can be heard, as though the stone had not struck solid bottom. On the S. side of the butte is SNOW CAVE, where the deep winter snows often remain until August. There is a fine view from the top of the butte. At the western edge of the mesa are two rock-lined EAGLE PITS, about 4 ft. wide and 3 ft. deep, from which hidden Indians caught eagles and plucked out their tail feathers for their war bonnets. These quills were very valuable, often worth a pony in trade.

Black Butte is also known as H. T. Butte, since it was part of the H.T. ranch, which in the 1880's and 1890's was the largest horse ranch in the State. The surrounding country in those days was given over to the ranging of cattle, sheep, and horses, and it was not until the coming of the "honyocks", as the stockmen called the homesteaders, and the cultivation of former range lands, that the ranching of this section was curtailed.

Concerning H.T. Butte old-timers of this section tell a story of a cowhand named Bob Pierce who because of his merciless riding was known to his fellow workers as "Crazy Loon" as well as by numerous other uncomplimentary titles. He rode his mount at any speed anywhere, and it was hard to "keep him in horses." It chanced that at one time Bob was paired, on the circuit, with talkative old Colonel Sullers. Thinking to harry the colonel Bob began to spur his horse to breakneck speed. Sullers kept beside him, holding up both ends of a political conversation and trying to pretend not to notice the speed. His horse, unfortunately, stepped into a hole, and the rider went sprawling. Stopping at a nearby creek to wash the dirt and blood from his head and face, he reviled his tormentor, declaring, "When you're dead your ghost will ride the tops of the hills and howl like a gray wolf." In the course of time Bob Pierce died, or he may have been killed on one of his wild rides. Since then, it is said, a horseman is seen, on dark nights, riding at breakneck speed up the steep, inaccessible sides of H.T. Butte, and sometimes the howl of a gray wolf is heard.

**BOWMAN, 248.5 m.** (2,958 alt., 888 pop.), seat of Bowman County, lies at the base of flat-

topped, sandstone-capped TWIN BUTTES. Known successively as Lowden Post Office and Twin Buttes, the town won the county seat election in a bitter fight with Atkinson (later Griffin) in 1907, and in January 1908 was given its present name. Both town and county are named for E.W. Bowman, a prominent Territorial legislator.

The junction with US 12 (*see Tour 9*) is in Bowman, and the two routes unite to **250 m.** where US 85 turns L. and reaches the South Dakota Line at **264.5 m.**, 103 m. N. of Belle Fourche, S. Dak. (*see S. Dak. Tour 13*).