

## Side Tour 4A

Junction US 85 -- Hanks -- Grenora -- Sodium Lakes -- Writing Rock. ND 50 and unnumbered county roads.

Junction with US 85 to Writing Rock, 30.3 m.

G.N. Ry. parallels route between junction with US 85 and Grenora.

Graveled roadbed 12 m., graded dirt roads and prairie trail remainder of route.

Accommodations in principal towns.

This short route passes through a region of boulder-strewn, smoothly rounded hills left by glacial action, and leads to extensive but undeveloped sodium sulphate beds and the archeologically important Writing Rock State Park. The populations of both towns on the route are chiefly Scandinavian; they were settled by immigrants who arrived with or shortly after the railroad.

ND 50 branches W. from US 85 (*see Tour 4*) at Zahl.

HANKS, **5 m.** (2,114 alt., 213 pop.), named for W.F. Hanks, a Powers Lake rancher and banker who was connected with the town site company, begins its history with the arrival of the G.N. branch line in 1916. In the 1890's the N-N (N Bar N) Cattle Co. of St. Louis, which ran herds of livestock S. of the Missouri River in central Montana, refused to ship their stock over the G. N. because of a disagreement with that line. As a result they had to trail their large herds many weary miles to the nearest Soo Line points, which were at Bowbells and Kenmare, N. Dak. (*see*

*Tour 7*). As many as 30,000 of these Chicago-bound cattle passed through Hanks in a single season on their way to the railroad, herded by dust-caked cowboys of the authentic, original, Wild West variety.

Ranching was the chief industry of this section when it was first settled, and there is still some small-scale ranching in the vicinity.

GRENORA, **11 m.** (2,105 alt., 487 pop.), has a name derived from the first three letters of the words Great Northern, and as terminus of that railroad enjoyed a brief boom in 1916.

West of Grenora ND 50 is a graded dirt road. At **14 m.** is the junction with a county dirt road (R) which is now the route.

At **17 m.** is the junction with a prairie trail.

Left on this trail to FERTILE VALLEY LAKE NO. 2, **1 m.**, largest of the several shallow lakes in this vicinity which contain millions of tons of sodium sulphate, a valuable mineral resource.

These lakes and sloughs, with no drainage outlets, are part of a linear series lying NW. to SE. along a preglacial stream course. The beds range from a few inches to as much as 80 ft. in depth.

Because of the low rainfall in recent years many of the lakes glisten white in the sunlight.

Literally, a wild goose chase led to the discovery of these sodium sulphate deposits. A Grenora

hunter waded into a shallow lake to recover a goose which had fallen into the water, and found the lake bottom covered with a hard crystal formation resembling salt deposits he had seen in Canada, which he knew to be commercially valuable. He directed attention to the lake, and as a result an FERA survey was undertaken in 1934, and a large amount of the mineral was found here. Fertile Valley Lake No. 2 was estimated to contain 11,000,000 tons, and two other lakes in the vicinity 5,000,000 and 1,750,000 tons each.

Sodium sulphate is also known as Glauber's salt. Commercially it has a value of about \$20 a ton, and is used medicinally, in paper manufacture, as salt for cattle, and in manufacturing soap and munitions. In 1937 the University of North Dakota, in cooperation with the State Highway Department, was conducting experiments to determine the value of sodium sulphate in highway construction. At present there is little demand for North Dakota sodium sulphate because of the accessibility of sources nearer the points of consumption.

At **21 m.** is the junction with another county dirt road; R. on this road to the junction with a county highway, the Grenora-Alkabo route, at **23 m.**; R. on this road; at **30 m** the route turns L. and proceeds up a hill to WRITING ROCK STATE PARK, **30.3 m.** Of gray granite, Writing Rock stands in a slight hollow on the crest of a hill, commanding a wide view of the surrounding country. The top and two sides of the rock are covered with hieroglyphs, consisting of lines, dots, circles containing dots, and, near the top, a flying bird. Many attempts have been made to decipher the writing, which apparently was carved into the rock at several different periods. Whatever the meaning of the inscriptions, the rock is regarded as sacred by Indians who, even

after the settlement of the State, made pilgrimages here from the Fort Peck (Mont.) Reservation and other distant points. The site, because of its elevation, served advantageously for smoke signals.

Several graves have been found in the vicinity, and excavations have revealed hammers, hatchets, arrowheads, sea shells, elk teeth, and beads of many shapes and colors. One grave is said to have yielded beads that measured 52 ft. when strung.

The Indians have many legends associated with the rock. The one most often heard is that told by Joe Lagweise and Tawiyaka, two old Sioux Indians of the Qu'Appelle Agency in Saskatchewan, Canada, who as young men visited Writing Rock and heard the story from an old man camped there. Many years ago a party of eight warriors stopped for the night near this rock, and just as they were falling asleep they heard a voice calling in the distance. Fearful of an enemy attack, they investigated but found nothing. The next morning they heard a woman's voice calling, but still they found no one. In their search, however, they saw this large rock with a picture on it, showing eight Indians--themselves--with their packs lying on the ground. Unable to understand this mystery, the warriors went on their way. On their return they again passed the rock, and noticed that the inscription had changed, and appeared to hold a picture of the future. When they reached home they told their people of the mysterious rock, and the entire village moved near it, only to find that the picture had again changed, this time showing the village with its tipis. From that time on the rock was believed to foretell the future until white men moved it; whereupon it lost its power. An old Indian chief once pointed out that the three lines on the rock

indicated three graves near the stone, one of which he said was that of a white child. It has been suggested that the inscriptions may be the work of some race which lived in this region before the Indian known to history.

Writing Rock is approximately 5 ft. high and 4 ft. thick, and weighs an estimated 10 tons. A smaller rock, weighing about a ton, which stood near a spring about a mile below Writing Rock, also contains inscriptions, and has been moved to New Merrifield Hall at the University of North Dakota for study.

Ten acres of land surrounding Writing Rock were acquired in 1936 by the State Historical Society of North Dakota and will be developed as a State park.