

Side Tour 8D

Junction US 10 -- Center -- Beulah -- Halliday -- Killdeer -- Junction US 85. ND 25.

Junction with US 10 to junction with US 85, 141.5 m.

N.P. Ry. branch roughly parallels route between Stanton and Killdeer.

Graveled roadbed except 4 m. graded dirt.

Accommodation limited.

This route winds over the upper Missouri Slope, through grain farming and grazing country, where infrequent farmhouses hide in the valleys. When ranching was the chief industry here, not long ago, the rough country provided shelter not only for the herds but also for rustlers. In the region adjacent to the route are some of the largest lignite mines in the State. Along the Missouri are numerous ancient Indian village sites. The Killdeer Mountains at the northern end of the route present some of the most charming scenery in North Dakota.

ND 25 branches N. from US 10 (*see Tour 8*) 5 m. W. of Mandan.

At **12.5 m.** the highway crosses SQUARE BUTTE CREEK, named for the square-topped buttes to the E. (*see Side Tour 3B*). The stream parallels the route for several miles.

CENTER, **30.5 m.** (1,760 alt., 293 pop.), was named for its geographic position in Oliver County. Its buildings, almost all of them white, are huddled in the narrow valley of Square Butte

Creek. In the Oliver County Courthouse park is a LOG CABIN MUSEUM (*open*) erected in 1937 under the Works Progress Administration to house Indian and pioneer relics. Nearby is the MINER MEMORIAL, granite marker of Gothic style, erected by former Gov. L.B. Hanna, in commemoration of 16-year-old Hazel Miner. In 1920 Hazel and a younger brother and sister were lost in a raging March blizzard while driving home from school. When they were found the next morning, the two younger children were still alive, for Hazel had used her body to shield them and to hold down the blankets which kept them from freezing. The story of her life and death has been made part of the official records of the county.

North of Center the route encounters rougher country and turns NW. to follow the MISSOURI RIVER for a few miles.

At **40.5 m.** is the junction with an unimproved county dirt road.

Right on this road to the junction with another unimproved road, **1 m.**; L. here to FORT CLARK STATE PARK, **2 m.**, site of a trading post established by the American Fur Co. in 1829. The post was only a few feet S. of a village built by the Mandans about 1822, and later occupied by the Arikara. West of the depressions left by the earth lodges are the remains of a burial ground.

At **46 m.** is the junction with a graveled road.

Right on this road is STANTON, **1.5 m.** (1,722 alt., 358 pop.), on the first bench overlooking the Missouri, which it once served as a river port. The town was founded in 1883 and given the

name of a pioneer mother of the vicinity. Partly within the Mercer County Courthouse yard is the site of an Indian Village where excavations have revealed many artifacts.

Straight ahead from Stanton on a county road to the **SITE OF SCATTERED VILLAGE, 2.5 m.**, one of the three Hidatsa and two Mandan villages known to white traders and trappers as the Five Villages. Charbonneau, the French frontiersman, and his Shoshone wife, Sakakawea, were living here when Charbonneau was engaged by the exploring party of Lewis and Clark, in 1805, to accompany them on their hazardous journey to the Pacific coast. Sakakawea went with her husband, and proved herself invaluable to the success of the expedition (*see* BISMARCK).

Scattered Village lies on the southern bank of the **KNIFE RIVER**, which was named by various Indian tribes who procured flint for their knives from pits along the river. The area about the mouth of the Knife is rich in Indian history.

West of Stanton the route moves roughly parallel to the combined courses of the Knife River and Spring Creek.

HAZEN, 58.5 m. (1,760 alt., 689 pop.), was named for A.D. Hazen, Third Assistant Postmaster General in 1884 when postal service was established here. An **OLD SETTLERS MONUMENT**, at the E. end of Main St. in a triangular plot known as Washington Memorial Park, consists of a concrete pyramid with a buffalo skull embedded in the top. Business men of Hazen have provided a **TOURIST PARK** (*camping facilities*) in a heavily wooded area along the Knife on the southern edge of the town.

At **66 m.** (L) is the large underground LIGNITE MINE of the Knife River Coal Mining Co. (*Morning preferred for visiting; guides at mine office in BEULAH, see below.*) This mine is one of the largest in the State. The entrance is at the head of a little valley a few rods L. of the highway. It opens into a long tunnel, with a narrow-gage trolley line extending down its center. Six electric locomotives are employed to draw a fleet of 450 mine cars over almost 30 m. of track which carry coal out of the mine to the processing plant. The entry has passages branching from it, leading to the veins from which the coal is taken. As the coal is taken out, tunnels or rooms are created, extending for miles through the underground darkness, in some places as much as 140 ft. below the surface.

The coal is loosened by electric cutting machines and blasting powder, after which loading machines carry it upward to the mine cars; these are formed into trains to haul the lignite to the processing plant.

During an 8-hour shift 2,500 tons of coal are mined, enough to fill more than 60 40-ton cars. It is estimated that this particular field contains about 50,000,000 tons of lignite, enough to enable operations to continue for 50 years. Visitors to the mine are given electric lights fastened to stout fiber helmets, and get a novel ride on the underground train.

BEULAH, **68.5 m.** (1,797 alt., 913 pop.), named for the niece of an official of the town site land company, forms one main street along the Knife River just E. of its confluence with Spring

Creek. The Processing Plant of the Knife River mine, and an Electric Plant of the North Dakota Power and Light Co. are in the eastern part of town. The electric plant uses lignite to generate the power with which it serves surrounding towns.

At **69 m.** is the junction with ND 49, a graveled highway. What is believed to be the SITE OF CHARLES LE RAYE'S CAMP (L), used by the French explorer in 1803, has been marked by the Mercer County Old Settlers' Association. Le Raye, who was held captive three years (1801-4) by a band of Brule' Sioux, is said to have been the first white traveler to mention the Knife River. During his captivity he was taken through much of the area between the Mississippi and the Rockies, and was one of the first white men to become familiar with that region.

At **75 m.** (L) is the large lignite strip mine of the Zap Colliery, one of the heaviest-producing mines in the State, with an annual production of 140,000 tons.

At **76.5 m.** is the junction with a county graded dirt road.

Left on this road, a winding country trail unsuited to trailer travel, to MEDICINE HILL, **11.5 m.**, from which flowed spring waters attributed with healing powers by the Indians. Chert, a mineral rock closely allied to flint, is found in the Slope area, and near the hill is a quarry from which natives took material for arrowpoints and knives.

GOLDEN VALLEY, **83.5 m.** (1,946 alt., 294 pop.), was named for the fertility of the

surrounding region.

DODGE, **91 m.** (1,979 alt., 204 pop.), is in the valley of Spring Creek.

At **97 m.** is a junction with ND 8 which unites with ND 25 to **99 m.**, where ND 25 branches L.

Right on ND 8 at the confluence of Alkaline and Spring Creek is HALLIDAY, **0.5 m.** (2,048 alt., 305 pop.), named for one of its first settlers.

At **19 m.** is FOUR BEARS BRIDGE (*see Side Tour 3A*).

DUNN CENTER, **113 m.** (2,191 alt., 276 pop.), is so named because it is near the geographic center of Dunn County.

At **120 m.** is the junction with ND 22, a graded dirt highway.

Right on this highway is KILLDEER, **1 m.** (2,233 alt., 495 pop.), named for the nearby KILLDEER MOUNTAINS, which rise clearly into view as ND 22 proceeds NW. from the town.

The Killdeers are not mountains, but rather two lofty hills, extending NE. to SW. more than 10 m., and at their highest points rising 600 ft. above the surrounding prairie. The Sioux called them Tah-kah-o-kuty (*the place where they kill the deer*). The upper 300 to 400 ft. of the hills belong to the geologic stratum known as the White River formation. This is the youngest of the

various layers of bedrock underlying North Dakota, having been deposited by the last of the prehistoric seas which inundated this area. It is also the rarest stratum in the State, since, being at the surface, it has eroded until it is now found in only a few places. The White River formation is particularly rich in fossil remains ranging from fish and turtles to huge prehistoric mammals, although no specimens have been taken from the Killdeer Mountains.

At **4 m.** to the junction with an unimproved county road; L. here to the junction with another dirt road, **7 m.**

Directly ahead **2 m.** on the dirt road to the junction with a prairie trail leading through a pasture gate. Right on this trail are the buildings of DIAMOND C RANCH, **4 m.**, the little white ranch house, the red cattle barns, and the gray weathered wooden poles of the corrals all situated along the timbered ravine formed by FALLING SPRING, near which took place the Battle of Killdeer Mountains. The spring drops from a sandstone formation in a hillside to the rear of the ranch house, providing a steady flow of cool, clear water as it did one July day in 1864 when 5,000 Sioux were encamped along it, hunting and preparing hides for clothing and food for the coming winter. Gen. Alfred H. Sully, sent out to punish the Sioux for the Minnesota Massacre of 1862, learned that they were in the mountains. Rapidly moving his force of 2,200 men he attacked the Indians on sight the morning of July 28. The Indians offered stubborn resistance despite the surprise of the attack and the confusion caused by the shelling of their camp, but were finally forced to make a hasty retreat over the mountain through DEAD MAN'S GULCH, a steep-sided ravine leading through the mountains back of Falling Spring, into the Badlands along the Little

Missouri River. In their retreat the Sioux were forced to leave almost all of their belongings, and when 5 companies of troops set about demolishing the camp it is said they worked 5 hours destroying tipis, travois poles, cooking utensils, robes, and foods. Dried and drying meat estimated at 200 tons was destroyed. The Sioux loss was reported as 27 dead on the field in addition to many carried off by their comrades. Sully's loss in the encounter was 5 killed and 10 wounded, 2 of whom were pickets slain the second night. Two white marble slabs enclosed in a steel wire fence, a short distance S. of the Diamond C ranch house, mark their graves.

On the county road N. of junction with ranch road to a junction with a dirt road, **9 m.**; L. here to Oakdale, **9.9 m.**, part way up the eastern slope of the southern mountain. Formerly a good-sized frontier town, it now has only a residence and a store and post office. It is a very pleasant spot, however, for its trees and many springs of clear, cold water flowing down from the mountain keep it several degrees cooler in summer than the dry, shadeless prairie. Oakdale is a good point from which to make hiking trips into the mountains, but the tourist accommodations are limited.

From the store is a two-hour hike over a precipitous trail up the mountain. Past oak, box elder, poplar, and scrub cedar trees, the path leads to the base of the limestone formation. Here the trail ascends the face of a steep cliff. In the upward climb it passes through a narrow cleft in the rock ironically called ELEPHANT'S PASS, and comes at last to the level mountaintop, where there is a magnificent view of the surrounding country taking in 40 or 50 m. in three directions. To the N. and NE. lies the rough country along the Missouri and Little Missouri Rivers, while E. and S. stretches the vast pattern of cultivated fields and virgin grasslands. The table-like top of the

mountain is 3,140 ft. above sea level, highest elevation in the range. From here the trail skirts the southern rim of the Cliff to MEDICINE HOLE, from which, according to Indian tradition, the first buffalo emerged upon the earth. Today the hole is little more than an elongated three - foot-deep depression in the flat limestone surface of the mountain top. It has been closed by the lodging, on the first ledge, of a number of large rocks thrown into the aperture by curious visitors trying to sound the bottom. It had been explored to a depth of 80 ft. before it was closed, but the extreme cold encountered below that depth made further exploration difficult. In summer a cold draught of air formerly rose from the hole, and in winter a column of steam.

Just W. of Medicine Hole to SIGNAL ROCK, said to have been used as an Indian signal station.

From the cliff top here the buildings of the Diamond C Ranch and the site of the Battle of the Killdeer Mountains (*see above*) are visible to the S. Part way down the southern slope of the mountain, from E. to W. in the order named, rise the odd rock formations known the THREE SISTERS, the COLISEUM, and SOLOMON'S TEMPLE. The Three Sisters are slender spires pointing upward from a common base; the Coliseum, which belies its name, is a tall pillar of sandstone shaped like an hourglass; and the Temple is a long, narrow, gray formation.

Continuing W. along the rim of the cliff, the hike trail leads to EAGLE ROCK, so named because of the eagle nests once numerous here, and after touching the timbered edge of Dead Man's Gulch, retraces its route to Oakdale.

Few large wild animals remain in the Killdeer Mountains, but in 1848-49 John Palliser, an English sportsman, and his party killed five grizzly bears here. Deer were once plentiful also.

Pioneer cattlemen still tell of the Wolf Leader, a savage animal, half wolf and half collie, that led a pack of wolves in depredations upon the herds of the region. Conspicuous because of the white ring around his neck, the Wolf Leader was the bane of ranchers for many years before he was trapped.

West of Killdeer the route proceeds along the valley of Spring Creek through the foothills of the Killdeer Mountains to the junction with US 85 at **141.5 m.**, 24 m. S. of Watford City (*see Tour 4*).