

## The Marquis de Mores – Dakota Entrepreneur



Medora in 1885 State Historical Society of North Dakota 0042-071

### Introduction

The Gilded Age (1878-1889) was a time of great economic growth. Railroads stretched across the country, and cities became centers of industry. Capturing the spirit of the times, reformer and author Henry George said, *“Get money, honestly if you can, but at any rate get money!”* Robber barons, such as John D. Rockefeller (oil), Andrew Carnegie (steel), and James J. Hill (railroads), were searching for new schemes which could turn an investment into a fortune in a short time.

The cattle industry became the new “get-rich quick” scheme. Newspapers and magazine articles were telling about the huge sums of money investors were making in the ranching and beef processing industry. Books praising the high plains as the ideal place to raise cattle were sponsored by the railroads to encourage settlers to move west. Western states and territories published official guides boasting of the mild winters, abundant rainfall and bountiful grass. It was this glowing picture that attracted the young Marquis de Mores to Dakota Territory.



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The first settlement where the Northern Pacific Railroad would cross the Little Missouri River was a military camp named Cantonment Badlands. Its soldiers provided protection for the railroad building crews from raiding Indians. It was located about 3/4 mile northwest of the present town of Medora. It was officially closed in March 1883.

The town of Little Missouri was started on the west bank of the Little Missouri River. By the time the Marquis arrived in early April 1883, the town boasted nine buildings.

He chose the area at the crossing of the Northern Pacific Railroad with the Little Missouri River because it gave him everything he needed: water for the cattle, ice for the packing plant, abundant grass and shelter for the cattle and direct shipping to market.

He bought nearly nine thousand acres of land and established a new town on the east bank of the river. It was named Medora, in honor of his wife.



Little Missouri in 1880, Photograph by F. Jay Haynes  
HAYNES FOUNDATION COLLECTION MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### **Something to think about:**

If you would have had the same information, would you have gone to Dakota Territory as the Marquis did?

Why or Why not?