

SONGS OF THE BUNCH GRASS ACRES

& "A SHORT ACCOUNT OF A ROWBOAT JOURNEY
FROM MEDORA TO BISMARCK"



WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY
CLELL GOEBEL GANNON

FOREWORD BY TOM ISERN & A NEW INTRODUCTION BY AARON BARTH

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by
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With a Foreword by
Tom Isern

and

A New Introduction by
Aaron Barth



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Max Patzner created this cover. It is informed by the Missouri River, the Clell Gannon, George Will and Russell Reid boat float from Medora to Bismarck, a photo Russell Reid took of Clell Gannon and George Will in the flat bottom Hugh Glass boat, and Clell Gannon's historic residence, which is a contributing element in Bismarck's National Register of Historic Places Cathedral District.

Of the cover, Patzner said: "[I] was going for that vintage western paperback look, mixed with old western movie poster - with a hint of the National Parks [1930s lithograph] look... I also tried to get the style of illustration Clell is into (which I love very much) - AND tried to just make it contemporary... It's digital mixed with physical media."

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The Magic of the Plains

Foreword to 2025 edition of *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*

In 1918 a farm boy from McLean County, North Dakota, Clell Gannon, entered the Art Institute of Chicago, full of hope. Two or three years later, disillusioned and debilitated by diphtheria and influenza, he was back in Bismarck. In 1924 he published (with a pay-to-play publisher, Gotham Press of Boston) his book of poems, *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*. Wherein he declares,

The city has its features but I like the prairie best
They're wanting me to listen to them now.

As Gannon listened to the prairie, the cries of the coyote and curlew, I think we should listen to Gannon now, a century later. Happily, we have ready opportunity to do so with the centennial reprint of his book. Having been asked to provide an appreciative foreword, I have two thoughts, two good reasons we should listen to Clell Gannon. First, because he is significant. Second, because he is delightful.

The significant part first, take your medicine. Gannon is an exemplar of his generation of Great Plains regionalists, the people who brought the Great Plains, as an intellectual construct and cultural commonplace, into existence. For a long time we thought this was the work of a literary and scholarly elite, the people profiled in Robert L. Dorman's fine (1993) book, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (University of North Carolina Press). The

time between the two world wars, as Dorman chronicles, saw artists and intellectuals deploy the proposition of *region* as a foil to the modern and cosmopolitan tendencies that were sapping America. The “provincial cities” and “college towns” must rally a “regionally differentiated nation” in order to save it. Willa Cather and Walter Prescott Webb commanded the cohorts of the Great Plains. As a measure of their success, try running an N-gram search for “the Great Plains” to check its currency in print through the years. You may come away convinced that Webb, with his 1931 master work *The Great Plains*, invented the Great Plains as a region.

This was, indeed, the problem with thinking about Great Plains regionalism purely in the fashion of Dorman. We were left to wonder, is there any substantial, experiential underpinning to regional identity, or is it just a device? For the answer, we had to hold our breath until the appearance of the 2021 book by Molly P. Rozum, *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies* (University of Nebraska Press). Rozum describes the process by which boys and girls from the prairies absorbed their sense of place from the very soil. She makes a big deal out of the sensual experience of going barefoot, an observation that resonates with both this writer and Clell Gannon. In *Bunch Grass Acres* Gannon writes,

For my callused feet have known the treat
Of the trails the bison trod.

Such boys and girls went out into the larger world—as Gannon went to Chicago—saw things, connected with other prairie boys and girls, and got to talking about what they had in common. Their individual and local senses of place articulated and reinforced one another. From this emerged, as we see by connecting Dorman to Rozum, a larger “regionalist sensibility” in the arts and sciences and letters—what I have been calling lately “the regional project.” Region as a concept, a Great Plains identity, emerges from prairie as a place, as experienced at the grass roots, then voiced by Cather, Webb, and—Clell Gannon.

So Gannon, back home in Bismarck, commenced writing about the opportunity for an architectural renaissance on the Great Plains, to make use of the rock carried here as glacial till and laid up permanent walls under sweeping rooflines, with grand windows to let in the sunlight. This rustic ideal he built into his own Bismarck residence, *The Cairn*. He float-tripped the Missouri River with his kindred regionalists, Russell Reid and George F. Will, to get grounded in flora and fauna and indigenous cultures. And he painted—including his murals in the Burleigh County courthouse, a commission secured for him by friend and county commissioner, George Will. Chaps like Reid, Will, and Gannon are hardly known south of Ellendale. People might think that the regional project ends somewhere around Pine Ridge. They should read *Bunch Grass Acres*.

But the poetry, back to the poetry in *Bunch Grass Acres*. The better-known North Dakota poet of Gannon's generation was James W. Foley, who was both more sophisticated and more hokey (deployment of dialect, that sort of thing) than was Gannon, but Gannon just has more to say, and he says it with heart. Many of his poems treat iconic features—the pasque flower, the prairie rose, the magpie, the upland plover—but most touching, I think, is “To a Captive Coyote.” (And Gannon insists that in this part of the plains, we must say it ki’-ot, two syllables, not ki-o’-te.) Here Gannon reflects metaphorically on the future of a Great Plains fenced and confined, “gazing with a sad and empty longing to the level prairies where the west wind plays.”

The nostalgia is not empty, however. Gannon conveys a sense of homage—heck, he outright confesses it, dedicating his book “with love” to “my father and mother and to their fathers and mothers / Pioneers of the Great Plains and Builders of the West.” He does not, however, succumb to the “our-best-days-are-behind-us” syndrome. Rather, he declares (in present tense), “The author, who has spent a lifetime on the Plains, has always believed—and still believes—that the people and the prairies of the West are as well suited to art and poetry as any other people or portion of God’s great earth.”

Gannon lacks the ego of Webb and other, more renowned regionalists—"The Poems contained in this little volume were written for the love of it," avows the boy from Bismarck—but he is consciously laying up a legacy.

Gannon values virtue, in the society of the plains and in himself, as evident in "A Westerner's Prayer."

Lord, teach me humble lessons from the magic of the
plains,

And make my soul as beautiful as are the sunset stains.

The reward for such virtue will be possession of the land—a trope that today makes us uncomfortable, because it ignores the dispossession of indigenous peoples by settler occupation, but a theme stated baldly by Gannon in "This Land Is Mine."

This land is mine, yea the sun and shine. . . .

It is wide and grand and makes demand

Of a man to do his best.

The land demands, too, loyalty to a sometimes tense, but ultimately irrevocable, relationship—the "Law of Dakota."

For the long, long trail leads to Dakota

And every known trail has an end.

As does this foreword. Welcome to the bunch grass acres of Clell Gannon, and to the magic of the plains.

Thomas D. Isern
North Dakota State University

Clell Gannon and the Northern Plains¹

Aaron Barth

Lone comrade of the sun,
The wind, the rain, the stars,
What Architect designed
Its simple classic lines?
And why am I, earthborn
So lost with it—in love?

Clell Gannon, *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*, 33.

More than a century after the original 1924 publication of *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*, Clell Gannon's artistic footprint persists on the Northern Plains. He impressed his art — architecture, poetry, history — into the landscape. Gannon understood that history and art allowed readers and viewers to feel they were a part of something bigger than themselves. Gannon's 1924 book of poetry reflects his life experiences, values, and visions. This introduction reviews his history, from his days in the Boy Scouts, to his formal education at the Art Institute of Chicago, to his voyage on the Missouri River. While he shaped his art and his life experiences, his art and life experiences also shaped him.

Understanding Gannon requires a reading beyond Gannon. He must be contextualized with his times. Like many other Euro-Americans, Gannon was a student and practitioner of regional mythmaking. Historians Molly Rozum and Robert Dorman have contributed much to the mythmaking taking place during this period between the two World Wars on the Great Plains and American West. Rozum, author of the 2021

Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies, refers to this period as post-settlement regionalism. Individual historical actors such as Gannon made contributions to this period. An analysis of Gannon allows us to see how he invented his own regional myths as he came to terms with the Northern Plains and “real western places.”² The phrase “real western places” is also a myth. A writer, or a group of writers, draw boundaries around places or geographies, which creates for readers the idea of an authentic region; something Gannon created with his art.

In 1993, Robert Dorman unpacked an intellectual history of regionalism in his *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*. As Dorman said, “artists and intellectuals across the United States awakened to cultural and political possibilities that they believed to be inherent in the regional diversity of America.”³ This tradition emerged from the second and third generation of Euro-Americans who had immigrated to the Great Plains and American West. They created and produced new settlements and local governments and had great ideals for what they could become. Some political philosophers believed that these new settlements offered an escape from the East Coast establishment and Europe. Opportunities existed to create new societies. For regionalists on the Great Plains and American West, artists could help lead this charge, and art would be an important vehicle.

The new possibilities present on the Northern Plains did not always include indigenous populations. Gannon and his Euro-American contemporaries should not be considered a window into understanding Native American communities who had lived in the region for centuries and millennia. Of this period in the 1920s and 1930s, Philip Deloria, writing in 2004, has said a “significant cohort of Native people engaged in the same forces of modernization that were making non-Indians reevaluate their own expectations of themselves and their society.”⁴ In his 2019 work titled *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract*, Deloria also said “many Indian people... staked a claim to modernism – and did so through the medium of visual art.”⁵ Deloria is one sample

of many who continue to carve out important and needed scholarship for this period. What Gannon and his Euro-American contemporaries say is more of a window into their own value system, thoughts and beliefs, and their eagerness to start anew. This came at the expense of groups who had long made their region home.

Prologue to the 1922 Architectural Manifesto:
Boy Scouts and the Art Institute of Chicago

According to Clell Gannon's son, Grael, the key to understanding Gannon's broad affinity toward the Great Plains starts in his early life.⁶ In "The Strange Victory of Clell Gannon," Grael opens with a place on the Great Plains. He says his father was born near Wisner, Nebraska, on January 10, 1900, and Gannon's parents relocated in 1908 to a farm near Underwood in McLean County, North Dakota. Through interaction with the Northern Plains, Gannon developed a love toward nature, landscapes of the plains, and wildlife.⁶ Other parts of Gannon's life emerge in Northern Plains newspapers.

At sixteen years of age, a day after Valentine's Day, 1916, the *Bismarck Daily Tribune* published a poem of his buried on page 5, "The Romance of the Prairies." This was one of his first efforts to publish Northern Plains regionalist romanticism. This romanticism expressed love of place as love of nature. The full poem is worth repeating here; otherwise readers are forced to dig for it in the archives. As early as 1916, nostalgia runs through his poetry.

"The Romance of the Prairies"

There's romance in the prairies from
the dawn to setting sun,
The badgers quite contrary and the
gophers on the run.
The sun at noon is burning hot and
hotter on the plains,
It's then my fancy's turning from the
waving fields of grain.

The huntsman fire is dying for the
olden west has passed,
The noble redman's vanished and the
game is going fast.
They have wrote it in story, they have
sang it into song,
They gloated o'er its glory 'till its
romance all is gone.

The merry birds are singing just as
free as you can please,
The joys of nature ringing like the
buzzing of the bees.
The tender breeze is blowing and my
heart is beating slow,
The grass is greener growing where
my fancy loves to go.

The cattle are a going down the trail
that's winding on
Where buffalo were lowing in the
days that's long and gone.
My memory in a vision and the music
of a dream,
Like a brooklet that arisen murmurs
off into a stream.

'Till far across the prairies the sink-
ing sun is going,
Down the stream like a fairy my
dream boat's ever rowing.
The clouds are fringed with golden
that is blended with the red,
Again like days of olden, soft as cov-
ers on my bed.

The lonely coyotes howling on the
hills that fringe the west,
And my shepherd dog's a growling
from his little cozy nest.
The moonlight o'er the prairies fills
the evening atmosphere,
As dainty as a fairy in a world of love
and cheer.

In the darkness of the evening when
the lonely world is still,
The joy that I'm receiving meets the
moonlight o'er the hill.
The stars are all a shining like a
jewel from God's throne,
Kind of starts my heart pining for the
grand celestial home.

Within this poem, Gannon spoke of the temporal change of the Great Plains from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. This is captured in the phrase the "huntsman fire is dying for the / olden west has passed," and the "noble redman's vanished and the / game is going fast."⁷ By the 1910s, land throughout the Great Plains had been brought into agricultural production. This resulted from the previous century's protracted dispossession of Native American lands, a subject that has received, and continues to receive, deliberate and needed study. Of these thoughts and this period, Dorman has described this as "imaginative and theoretical groping."⁸ Industrialization continued to ramp up in the urban and the rural. Through this published piece of poetry, Gannon's printed words allowed him and readers to feel a sense of ownership of how they imagined the landscape of the present and past.

Images of land being tilled and brought into production evokes the work of Willa Cather on the central plains. In 1923, Cather wrote that it is "the pasture lands that look little and lonely, crowded in among so much wheat and corn," and that it "is scarcely an exaggeration to say that every farmer owns an automobile," with a ratio of one automobile for every six inhabitants.⁹ Gannon saw and felt this. In his poem, he turned attention to livestock as the present and future, the "cattle... going down the trail that's winding on," this once "where buffalo were lowing in the days... long and gone."¹⁰ Articulating and advocating for a sense of longing, remembrance, and loss are themes of romanticism. In this, Gannon perceived and poetically wrote about the evolutionary passing of the Northern Plains.

Gannon's experience with the landscape had institutional foundation with the earliest troops of Boy Scouts on the Northern Plains. Just existing in nature was not enough for Gannon. He took up with institutions, such as the Boy Scouts, to draw more structured interaction with experiencing the natural world. During the summer of 1918, the local chapter charged Gannon with leadership and operational management of the camp. In the "Underwood Scouts Camp at Painted Woods Lake" announcement in the June 28, 1918, issue of the *Washburn Leader*, Gannon said the Boy Scouts would camp for a week at Painted Woods Lake, leaving "early Saturday morning, June 29." Each day was structured and regimented. It began with a 6:45AM reveille and a "morning dip" five minutes later. Breakfast was at 7:15AM, with morning council at 8:15AM and inspection at 9:00AM. Another dip in the lake was scheduled at 11:45AM, with lunch at 12:30PM and rest hour starting a half hour after.¹¹

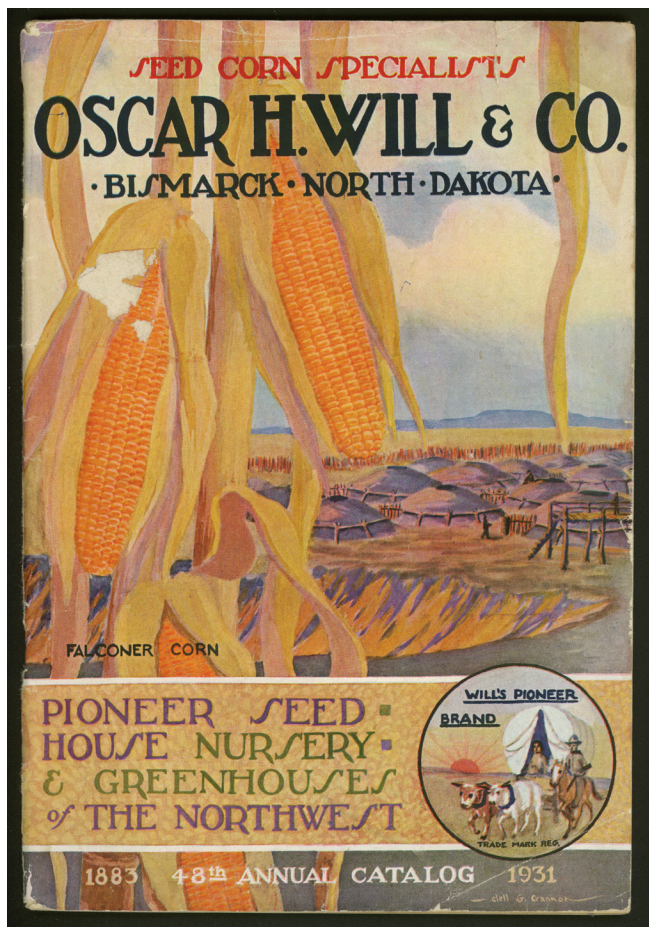
The rest of the afternoon was dedicated to "signaling, drilling, biking, boating, nature study," supper at 6:15PM, and evening council fire and star study. This detailed list is worth mentioning, as it comes through in the titles of prose of his later 1924 book of poetry and his 1925 *Hugh Glass* boat-float: "Sky Poems," "The Stars," and "Beyond the Stars." Back at the Painted Woods camp, Gannon noted, "No firearms of any kind will be allowed in camp, and as the boys will be under good clean leadership, they will be well cared for and return well and happy." A public invitation was extended "to all to come and inspect camp," and to engage with some naturalist patriotism by spending "their Fourth [of July] at the lake."¹² After Gannon's leadership and experiences at the summer camp at the Painted Woods Lake, a couple months later he looked toward the start of his professional training in art.

Gannon's teenage interests in art eventually led him to apply to the Art Institute of Chicago. He would refine his technical abilities that would allow him more future expressions of Northern Plains poetry, history, and art. As the summer months gave way to early autumn, the Art Institute accepted Gannon for enrollment. On Monday, September 23, 1918, the *Bismarck Tribune* reported that Gannon "passed through the city last evening enroute to Chicago where he will take up the study of art in the Chicago

art institute.”¹³ In addition to studying art, Gannon told the *Bismarck Tribune* that he expected “to gain admittance to the students’ army training corps.”¹⁴ While Gannon’s earlier experiences with the Boy Scouts allowed him interaction with the natural world, it also gave him training that would be of use in the army training corps.¹⁵ By 1917, America had entered the Great War. Army training was the norm at institutions of higher education. Euro-Americans viewed Europe as being in complete chaos and upheaval. This was another reason why artists and intellectuals viewed their regions of the Great Plains and American West as having possibilities for new beginnings.

In Chicago, Gannon’s training was both formal and inspirational. When he arrived, he took up coursework in classical drawing and painting. He absorbed indirect and direct inspiration from other romantic artists within and beyond the Art Institute. Gannon’s “greatest idol” was Newell Convers Wyeth (1882-1945). A painter, illustrator, commercial artist, and muralist, Wyeth, as Adam Gopnik recounted in a 1998 *New York Times Book Review*, “could make painted things look like real ones.” In 1908, Wyeth found “commercial success as a cow-punching illustrator of westerns.”¹⁶ Within the Art Institute, Gannon’s roommate was Holling Clancy Holling (1900-1973), who graduated in 1923. Holling made a career as an author and illustrator of children’s books. In 1935 and 1948, Holling’s *The Book of Indians* (1935) and *Seabird* (1948) attracted the attention of the *New York Times Book Review*.¹⁷ While in Chicago, Wyeth and Hollings seeded artistic inspirations within Gannon. He depicted recognizable objects such as people and animals situated in landscapes. This became the format he used in the murals in the Burleigh County Courthouse, heritage commercial art for the Oscar Will Seed Company, commercial art for the Provident Life Insurance Company, and heritage illustrations within Bismarck High School, the Bismarck Carnegie Library, and the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Gannon’s economic situation meant that his time in Chicago could not exclusively be devoted to the study and practice of art. Stitching a variety of jobs together to make ends meet and function as an artist was something he did throughout his entire life. It became a kind of practice, or his



The cover page Clell Gannon painted for the 1931 Oscar H. Will & Company (Bismarck, North Dakota) seed catalog. Gannon's friendship with Russell Reid and George Will informed much of his art. Each cover of the seed catalog situated the viewer in space and time, and how and why they were situated on the northern plains. Information included the company's founding year of 1883, and how many years had passed between then and the present ("48th Annual Catalog"). After grounding the viewer in time, Gannon helped viewers understand what took place in this space. To do this he placed a stalk of corn/maize on the left half of the cover page. On the right half of the page, he illustrated the circular earth lodges of a Mandan-Hidatsa village, complete with a drying rack for the garden produce, and a palisade fortification wall in the distance. On the horizon he painted a horizontal butte, perhaps to look like Square Butte. Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota.

art of life. He earned money by working evenings as a cafeteria server. He also worked as an usher at the Chicago Opera in the Auditorium Building on the northwest corner of South Michigan Avenue and Congress Parkway (formerly Congress Street). Through all of this in Chicago, Gannon could not shake his longing for the Northern Plains. Grael Gannon said he had a commercial art job lined up in Chicago, but he “was so homesick for North Dakota that he threw it up and came back.”¹⁸ His professional training was in Chicago, but true to the essence of romanticism, his heart pulled him back to the Northern Plains.

Railroad Disruptions on the Northern Plains

At some point in 1920 or 1921, Gannon returned to North Dakota. He accepted a position as a secretary to the district superintendent of the Soo Line Railroad. This and the Northern Pacific were two dominant industrial railroads operating in Bismarck and Mandan. He stayed at a boarding house run by Mrs. Peter Reid, wife of the warden of the state penitentiary. His circle of acquaintances had personal interest and professional training in matters of history, archaeology, and heritage. Gannon and the Reid family soon formed a friendship. It was during this time that he befriended Mrs. Reid’s son, Russell, who in 1919 had taken a position with the State Historical Society of North Dakota.¹⁹ Russell Reid, in turn, was a friend of George F. Will. Will’s father, Oscar, successfully ran the Oscar Will Seed Company. Will graduated from Harvard with a degree in anthropology and archaeology.²⁰

Through his connection with the State Historical Society of North Dakota Gannon became acquainted with its secretary, Dr. Orin Libby. Libby was North Dakota’s first professional historian, trained under Frederick Jackson Turner, the “Father of American History.”²¹ Libby’s full-time job was professor of history at the University of North Dakota, but he had several related and ancillary interests. Libby took over an early iteration of the Bismarck Historical Society, reorganizing and rebranding it as the State Historical Society. Libby encouraged staff to locate primary sources and artifacts throughout North



Six years after publication of *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*, Gannon published his *Historical and Pictorial Map of North Dakota* in 1930. It is filled with historical, cultural and natural illustrations along with Gannon's hand-written narratives. Gannon also identified the future heritage site of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Dakota to build up the early state archival collection. Libby also understood the power illustrations had in making the past relevant for the present. Gannon's statewide illustrated map of North Dakota heritage and history reflected this.

Developing and building an architecturally identifiable and romantic sense of place necessitated an ethos. Gannon proposed this to the public, a narrative that articulated the need for a regionally identifiable architecture. On May 1, 1922, the *Bismarck Tribune* published Gannon's call for the development of a Northern Plains architecture. Gannon called it "The Prairie Home."²² In a way, his sentiments reflected the architectural movement that started six years prior in 1916 throughout the National Parks. Linda McClelland, in her 1997 work, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*, notes that from 1916 to 1942, "prominent landscape architects proclaimed their stewardship of significant natural areas" and "set forth naturalistic theories for park development."²³ Gannon's assertions and call for The Prairie Home held thematic continuity with the architectural direction of the recently established National Park Service. It also laid the groundwork for the architectural style of state historic sites. It is important to note that Gannon's call for the Prairie Home expanded the scope of the movement sometimes understood as Midwestern Modernism.²⁴ Gannon's regionalist world was born west of the Mississippi River, along the banks of the Missouri River on the northern Great Plains.

Buried within the third paragraph of an article from the *Bismarck Tribune*, Gannon unpacked his manifesto, writing, "What we need is a renaissance in our plains architecture." He followed this with a rhetorical question to the reader:

Can you imagine anything more appropriate or beautiful than a stone house, made of rough stone, full of windows to gather in the western sunshine, with low gabled roofs and sweeping outlines, nestled among the native hills?²⁵

Through his "western sunshine" phrase, Gannon pulled the reader to look for and feel a part of a defined region in the larger American West. The regional approach to the prairie house utilized granite stones deposited across the landscape from previous glacial epochs. This style, said Gannon,

responded to what Hugh Miller in his 1973 work, *The Chicago School of Architecture*, called the “physical needs and social wellbeing,” fusing residents with the natural geology of the landscape.²⁶ This, as Gannon’s theory went, would perpetuate a sense of place for residents and the social wellbeing spoke to local political philosophy.

As a foil to launch the regional renaissance, Gannon used eastern architecture. He asked readers to join in breaking from those material imports. Gannon couched it in the terms of heritage from the view of a traveler or tourist, asking the reader to imagine how such an architectural style would impress upon visitors. Before planted trees had a chance to grow into large canopies in urban areas and shelterbelts, Gannon said:

The casual visitor to our treeless, rock-strewn plains must no doubt wonder why the natural stone should not form a more economical and consistent building material for the majority of people who there reside; it is apparent at least that it would be more picturesque and be more in harmony with the environment of which it is a part.²⁷

Gannon asked readers to consider this style because, as in the words of Robert Dorman, he sought a culture with a distinct regional style that would transform “the immigrant into the indigenous.”²⁸ He noted that “most of the people responsible for the form of [Victorian] architecture now in vogue were born and reared in the traditions of another community.” This settler colonizing architecture was aesthetically foreign. The “immigrants and pioneers and their sons” brought “with them the customs of their grandfathers and more so on view of the fact that the railroad followed the tracks of their prairie schooners and ox-carts, ready to bring them the [eastern, non-local] lumber that they needed” to build the styles from which they came. Gannon noted it was important to have this regionally identifiable architectural style, and it also abandoned non-local customs.

Even though he worked for a railroad, Gannon was not convinced the railroad always arrived with progress. Northern Plains regionalism would coalesce, regardless. The limitations of railroads, he argued, would prompt a regional architectural style. Railcars would not be able to bring non-Northern Plains materials such as bunks of milled, eastern lumber in

sufficient abundance to allow residents of the Northern Plains to construct eastern-style homes and buildings. Therefore, the “story of prairie architecture would have been vastly different,” as they would have been “[f]orced by necessity” to build from native materials such as “either rock or earth.” This would ensure that the style would be “harmonious with that landscape” and “fit in as a part of the whole.” It would “strike a true note and... not jar with their surroundings.”²⁹ The style would look organic rather than like a vertical settler colonizing structure on the horizontal prairie. This type of architecture “would seem as if it had dropped out of the sky, or had been there since creation so far as natural harmony would be concerned.”³⁰

Following in the tradition of Frank Lloyd Wright’s prairie style architecture, Gannon said “prairie structure must be low,” harmonious with the already horizontal plains. Within, the “interior of the stone house” could be made of “wood... without loss of the architectural principal.” Natural light was essential. It is central to “make plenty of windows in the prairie home — make it nearly all windows.” The western sky, he said, “is flooded with golden sunshine” which may be had for the taking. True to progressive architectural philosophy, he also mentioned the physiological effects. With the wide-open windows, sunshine would pour in. This sunshine would be “conducive to health, humor and happiness — therefore let us not shut it out of our homes, where we need it most.”³¹

He remarked on a sample already built, and another not yet built. Pointing to the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot built in 1901 in downtown Bismarck, Gannon said even the “use of stucco sounds... a little nearer to the prairie home beautiful.” The design specifications for the Bismarck Depot called out concrete formed walls “faced with crushed marble,” the marble chips leftovers from the Minnesota State Capitol. A December 4, 1901, *Bismarck Daily Tribune* front page article stated that the “building is unique in northwestern architecture.”³² Gannon saw the Bismarck Depot as “an admirable adaptation to a given environment as well as an architectural triumph.”

Writing in 1922, several years before the Territorial and State Capitol burned to the ground, Gannon continued in the *Bismarck Tribune* with his architectural manifesto. Looking to the future, he proposed the idea that a new state



Photo of the east elevation of 912 N. Mandan Street, taken on July 1, 2024. This is the historic residence of Clell Gannon. Gannon articulated this architectural style in a 1922 *Bismarck Tribune* article called, “The Prairie Home,” one of his many contributions to his northern plains’ regionalist portfolio. He worked for the next 13 years to complete this vision in 1935. Photo credit: Aaron Barth.

capitol should be “built of North Dakota boulders – and... it [would] be another triumph of national architecture.”³³ Gannon’s architectural advice did not take hold for the North Dakota statehouse. His regionalist style was not unrealistic, though. At the time, from 1922 to 1932, Nebraska’s statehouse on the central plains emerged, described at the time as an architectural style that depicted “nothing less than the history and symbolism of political freedom.”³⁴

To support his vision for prairie architecture Gannon advocated for the training of local stonemasons to carry forward the new architectural style. A regional renaissance necessitated a locally trained workforce. In his *Bismarck Tribune* article, he said we “have lumber yards everywhere at our service and carpenters who know the most intricate phases of wood-working – but alas how few are the stonemasons.” The carpenters and architects “are eastern trained men working for people essentially eastern bred.” The treeless plains had no regional identity when colonized with wood stick buildings and residences. The architectural renaissance Gannon proposed would have a “demand” that would “create a supply” of masons trained in the affordances of local stone. This supply would drive costs down for others and make professional labor more sensibly priced. It was up to the “wealthier class to lead the way, to build supremely beautiful houses even if at an advance in price.” The wealthier class commissioning the new stone architectural style would encourage more masons to work in local materials. This growth would lower labor prices, making it more affordable.

Gannon also pointed to how work on this architectural style was already underway in rural areas. Farmers had removed granite stones from their fields, stacking them in mounds to make way for plowing. The prairie stone is “placed in piles to make way for the plowshare, awaiting the dawn of the new day when a generation born closer to the soil from which they sprang... shall discover their usefulness, and then the stone” will “literally become the head of the corner.”³⁵

Gannon foreshadowing a near or distant “generation born closer to the soil” indicated the direction he desired for the offspring of the earlier waves of settler colonists. In the 1930s, he ultimately completed “The Cairn” house articulated in his manifesto on North Mandan Street in Bismarck. He indicated

a closeness to the local soil, or earth, and this closeness meant one was more in tune with the necessary foundations of local culture. Getting closer to the soil also required one to get in tune with what happened in the past on that soil. While time moved, and events transpired, the spatial, or the soil, remained a constant witness to the engines of history.

Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres Emerges in 1924

Gannon's 1922 "The Prairie Home" manifesto is the prologue to the 1924 publication of *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*. To publish it, Gannon himself paid and contracted through the Gorham Press of Boston. Bismarck Public Library's Florence Harriet Davis edited his work. That the author invested in its publication, and that he intentionally took the time to seek out such editorial assistance, is another indication of his love for place.³⁶

Gannon's individual poems sometimes hit their mark. Other times, they fall flat. The latter is a broader reflection of how Euro-Americans, the children of settler colonizers, struggled for ways to define and interpret the landscape. The Canadian west novelist Robert Kroetsch has asked the question, "How do you write in new country?"³⁷ The children of settler colonizers, such as Gannon, were still settling into the landscape, urban and rural, and struggled with this question.

Gannon's *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres* is tied together with a general theme linked to the Missouri River. In his brief introduction, he expresses this as a closing sign off, "Clell G. Gannon," adding the date and specific place, "August 1924, Bismarck-by-the-river, North Dakota," thus tying his literature to a political geography and the landscape of Bismarck and the Missouri River. His introduction also speaks to establishing a settler colonial memory, the poetry dedicated to his "father and mother, and to their fathers and mothers," who were "pioneers of the Great Plains and builders of the west." Of them, he said this "volume is dedicated in love." From there, a short introduction flows. He re-establishes his love of regional place. Not nationalistic love, but of the region where he lives, with importance to him in this order: the Northern Plains, the Great Plains and, broadly, the American West.

His second paragraph is about poetic structure and meter, with an example of how a westerner pronounces the word “coyote.” Gannon instructs the reader to say it “ki’ ot,” with two syllables and resist the temptation to get overly sophisticated with the three syllable “ki’ o’ tee.” He integrated the two-syllable pronunciation in the cadence of his poems. For cadence of the poems to flow correctly, one had to use the two-syllable pronunciation. Through this, Gannon forced the reader to comply with the appropriate western pronunciation, and in a way, he perpetuated the building up the place myth through this phonetic structure. In 1965, Clell Gannon’s other son, Craig Gannon, spoke of this technical structure and style of his father’s poems in *Ever and Always I Shall Love the Land*. Of the Northern Plains, Craig said the “beauty of the region is unique – at once gigantic and subtle, raw and delicate.” Thus, the “wild landscape” required “a free and unrefined kind of verse.”³⁸ Therefore, Gannon almost always selected a “prose rhythm of iambic feet,” a unit of poetry that consists of one un-stressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Gannon intimates a need to physically visit the places he writes about. An eastern reader in an eastern setting will only understand the poems in a limited, finite way. Gannon’s poems challenge readers to use their historical imaginations to situate themselves in 1924, and what their memories would be leading up to it. The American Civil War ended less than 60 years prior (1865). Custer and his 7th cavalry command had fallen less than 50 years prior (1876). The Northern Pacific Railroad only spanned a bridge across the Missouri River 40 years prior (1883), signaling an industrial boom throughout Dakota Territory and the northern inter-mountain American West. The great cattle boom had come and gone (1886), and Dakota Territory transitioned to statehood (1889).

West of the Mississippi River, Gannon saw infinite understandings abound. We know this through his dedication: the Northern Plains is as good a place as any for a culture of poetry. Of the Missouri River, it is always the Northern Plains Missouri River. It is not the Missouri River of Montana, or of South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, or Missouri. He does not

immerse in the river. It is something to watch. “O Winds of the West you have heard my song as I sang to the sun-scorched grass.” Gannon prods readers to embrace and love the wind that, at times, seems to never cease.

His poem “The Stars” proposes a question asked when alone in nature, first opening with the assertion that “I am alone beneath the stars tonight,” with the second stanza countering it with a conversational question. “Alone, I said? — and yet / A million comrades drip their quivering light / Into the abyss of the silent night.” The stars, continued Gannon, have seen everything that has transpired on earth since the beginning of time. While on the Northern Plains, he encourages the reader to imagine the intersection of both local history and world history. In part two of “The Stars,” Gannon writes:

The hanging stars I see have paled and shown
Above the ancient towers of Babylon,
On Sparta, Thebes and Troy.
These stars I see, this sky empyreal
Hung over Bethlehem,
Shone over lovers since love first began
In Eden-land, amid the perfumed musk
Of tropic bloom, where streams Elysian ran;
Which now shine on
My own loved ones away
In distant lands beneath this star-strewn dusk.

The 1925 *Hugh Glass Boat Float*

Three years after Gannon called for a regional architectural renaissance, and one year after the publication of *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*, he partnered with George Will and Russell Reid to execute a thirteen-day river-float. In June 1925, they put their flat-bottom boat in the Little Missouri River at Medora, and navigated days and camped nights until they arrived at Bismarck on the main channel of the Missouri River. Not long after the trip, *North Dakota History* published his “A Short Account of a Rowboat Journey from Medora to Bismarck,” in the rebranded first volume. A couple segments of that journey are worth revisiting here in the introduction, at least showing how his early writings laid the foundation for sites and locations still important today.

The article gives details of the methods of travel. The article also unpacked the historical knowledge they had of and impressions they tied to the landscape. When reading this, a question emerges: what is Gannon trying to accomplish for the reader in his narrative that is fusing memory and history with the Northern Plains landscape? Gannon, alongside *North Dakota History*, was trying to popularize historical landmarks with this narrative. In 1989, Robert Thacker remarked on this process that had taken place from the sixteenth century to the present as “the creation of landmarks in a [Great Plains] region that seemed – at least to Europeans – to be without them.”³⁹

First, Gannon ties together a historical timeline for the reader. He later does this in his public mural in the south entrance of the 1931 Burleigh County Courthouse: from left to right, the viewer can see the march of time in each illustration of the mural, suggesting a type of temporal and inevitable march of progress. On the boat-float, they named their vessel *Hugh Glass*, yet another mythical figure whose stories had been recounted for generations along the Missouri River, “whose adventurous career,” noted Gannon, had “become one of the classics of western frontier life.”⁴⁰

Inspiration from the trip was camaraderie and “a passionate love for the Bad Lands and the Missouri River, and an intense interest in ornithology, geology, archeology, and the historic associations with which the region is especially rich.” From the editorial standpoint of *North Dakota History*, this narrative would connect readers with historic landscapes through the eyes of Gannon, Reid, and Will. At the time of publication, the State Historical Society of North Dakota had a total of 201 members. The board of directors listed the following: judges, attorneys, private secretaries for the well-to-do, elected officials, professional historians, professional private insurance agents, and so on.⁴¹ Their modern interaction with the historic sites would engage readers and inspire an interest in heritage, and this interest meant the reader would start having a sense of connection to the landscape. George Will’s Northern Plains archaeology and anthropology, and Russell Reid’s Northern Plains history, also informed the article.



In 1925, photographer Russell Reid took this image of George Will and Clell Gannon in Hugh Glass during their float down the Little Missouri River and Missouri River. Notes that Gannon recorded during this float informed the article published in *North Dakota History*. Photo credit: State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Gannon focused on the European and Euro-American perspective, starting with Baptiste Le Page, the “first white man to ever make the voyage” from the Black Hills to the Little Missouri River and “down the Missouri as far as the Indian villages on the Knife River.”⁴² Gannon noted Lt. William Clark’s April 12, 1805 journal entry “that Le Page’s voyage [from the Black Hills to the present day Knife River Indian Village National Historic Site] was accomplished in 45 days.” Le Page remarked “the Little Missouri flows through broken country along its entire course.” With subtlety, Gannon informed readers, “We who know the rugged character... would consider that the latter part of” Le Page’s statement “puts it mildly.”⁴³

After recounting the history from 1804, Gannon advanced the readers eighty years forward at Medora. Long before Medora became the center of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and was commercialized into a heritage tourism destination, the main remnants were a “chateau on the west bank of the river and the smokestack of the packing plant on the Medora side” which remained “sadly reminiscent of the Frenchman’s visions.”⁴⁴ Gannon noted that the Badlands, after the start of a hard rain, were prone to “take on a weird beauty” where “hard lines are suffused and obliterated, distances are clothed in a mystery and indefinable beauty and the colors” that “seem to be intensified and lightened.”⁴⁵

Within their *Hugh Glass* boat, Gannon, Reid, and Will floated by “Olson’s Peaceful Valley Ranch,” the Wadsworth Ranch, the historic Theodore Roosevelt Elkhorn Ranch house site, and the historic Howard Eaton ranching headquarters site. The next day they reached north of the Killdeer Mountains and climbed the high river bluffs, taking in the panoramic view. Of this, Gannon said:

The view from the top overlooking a canyon-like reach of the Little Missouri was of the kind that gains little and suffers much from the inadequacy of a written description. To the south the breaks of the Bad Lands faded into a rolling plain which reached away to the Killdeers, looming blue against the sky. To the east the river stretched in serpentine curves for miles, bordered by a fringe of cottonwoods. To the north and west the

Bad Lands toppled and rolled, seemingly without order or design until lost in the blue haze that melted into the horizon. Large, white cumulus clouds floated motionless in the deep blue above, casting intricate patterns of sun and shadow across a vast expanse of land dripping with color.⁴⁶

On June 9, the team “lunched at Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch house site... about 40 miles by river below, or north of Medora.” By 1925, four decades had passed since Theodore Roosevelt was at the site. Gannon said all “that remained of the old house was a few log sills and foundation stones, as well as a flat doorstone still in position.”⁴⁷ The next day, on June 10, they passed Magpie and Beicegal creeks, and on June 11 reached Redwing Creek at noon. They made camp a little further along the Missouri.⁴⁸ On June 12, Gannon, Reid, and Will “attempted to climb the high buttes” of Killdeer Mountains, but a thunderstorm dissuaded the attempt.

The next day, on June 13, at noon, they “reached a point directly north of the Killdeer Mountains and climbed the high river bluffs.” It was a slog. They pushed “through heavy thickets of black birch, aspen, and oak.” Of the Killdeer Mountains, Gannon recalled what happened 61 years prior, a larger part of the U.S. Dakota Wars (1862-1865) that he included into the 1931 mural in the Burleigh County Courthouse. In the *North Dakota History* article, Gannon said:

Gazing away to the Killdeers brought to our minds Sully’s battle with the Sioux which was fought at the foot of these interesting mesas in July, 1864. It was into the very Bad Lands around us that the Indians took flight and Sully, unable to follow, abandoned the pursuit.⁴⁹

By the time the Little Missouri merged with the Missouri River on the afternoon of June 15, “In fancy we could see it peopled with the explorers, fur traders, and adventurers of other days in mackinaw or keel, or Indians in their bull boats of skin.” Such explorers and fur traders included “Lewis and Clark, Maximilian, Catlin, Ashley, Lisa, Colter, Glass and scores of others” who passed their historical imaginations in the river landscape “in pageant fashion.”⁵⁰

Recounting a Mandan story attached to General Custer and 1876, Gannon said once they reached Fort Berthold they “called at the Hall Mission.” The Reverend C. L. Hall started work at Fort Berthold in 1876 when he came “up from Yankton on a boat which also carried supplies for General Custer then stationed at Fort Abraham Lincoln near Bismarck.” Still at Fort Berthold, Gannon said Hall “in 1926 celebrated the 50th anniversary of his arrival.”⁵¹ Gannon mentioned several historic sites that were later brought into the state historic and state Parks & Recreation system, and the National Park Service. Of the latter, Gannon helped lay the 1920s groundwork that, generations later, would lead to the 1974 establishment of Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site. In his *North Dakota History* article, Gannon said that on June 18:

Early in the morning we began an inspection of the Indian villages formerly located here, and at which place the Indians were living when visited by Lewis and Clark, Maximilian, Catlin, Henry, and others at that time. A short distance up river we came to the lower Hidatsa village. It was here that Charbonneau and Sakakawea lived when Lewis and Clark secured them to accompany the expedition to the coast. Maximilian, who spent the winter of 1833-34 near these villages (at Ft. Clark), found Charbonneau still living here and he records that he had then resided among these villages for 37 years.⁵²

The three heritage adventurers “slipped back down the Knife [River] and out into the Missouri [River], dropping down to old Fort Clark about seven miles by river below Stanton,” the county seat of Mercer. As they passed a modern elevator at the city of Deapolis, Gannon said one “of the Mandan villages was located at the present river elevator,” and another “immediately north of old Fort Clark.” At Fort Clark, “one of the most important fur-trading posts on the Missouri River... established in 1831 by the American Fur Company,” the remains in 1925, 90 years later, consisted “of the stone fireplaces, slight excavations and the scars of the stockade wall... still plainly in evidence.”⁵³

By the evening of June 18, Gannon and company tied up everything because of the high winds near Washburn, County Seat of McLean County. Once the high winds subsided, they resumed the journey, passing Sanger and having set up camp on the east side of the Missouri in Burleigh County a few miles below Sanger, the former and historic county seat of Oliver County.⁵⁴ This would be their last campsite.

On June 19, the group passed Double-Ditch Indian village where George Will excavated two decades prior in 1906 to complete his Bachelor of Archaeology and Anthropology at Harvard University.⁵⁵ “At noon,” said Gannon, the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge “at Bismarck appeared in sight and shortly after” they landed at the water plant, ending the 350-mile river voyage.⁵⁶

In the closing paragraphs of his article, Gannon recapped the ornithology viewed along the journey. As the historian Dr. Orin G. Libby was editor of *North Dakota History*, and considering Libby’s intense hobby of birdwatching, it is imaginable that in earlier drafts Libby and Gannon worked out the way he would document the birds viewed along the journey. Of it all Gannon said:

The bird life was varied and interesting. The most common birds among the Little Missouri were the black headed grosbeaks, oven birds, mourning doves, red headed woodpeckers, whip-poorwills, long tailed chats, great blue herons, spotted sandpipers, and towhees. A number of golden eagles, great horned owls, and turkey buzzards were seen; and one cinnamon teal, quite rare in North Dakota, was observed on a sandbar.⁵⁷

Gannon also gave impressions of the bird songs. Of the grosbeaks, he noted they “are matchless singers and entertained us at every camp.” The grosbeaks “chats were always on the job,” and they sang, “day and night, rain and shine.” The ovenbirds were “persistent in their song than on the Little Missouri,” and the blue heron also gave voice.

Final Thoughts

Gannon's genesis idea in 1922 that called for a regional renaissance in Northern Plains architecture eventually transitioned a decade later to the development and construction of Works Progress Administration Rustic style. Local granite also emerged in the architecture and signage of state and county parks and historic sites in subsequent decades.⁵⁸ This architecture was installed in the 1930s through the 1960s. Sites included Double Ditch State Historic Site, Fort Rice State Historic Site, General Sibley Park, Whitestone Hill State Historic Site, Fort Clark State Historic Site, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, Huff Hills Indian Village State Historic Site, Molander Indian Village State Historic Site, Fort Mandan Overlook, Killdeer Mountain State Historic Site, and Steamboat Park State Historic Site at Bismarck, near the approximate location where Gannon, Will and Reid ended their heritage adventure.

Today, and moving forward, why should a reader return to Gannon's 1924 *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*? It is worth revisiting for at least three reasons. The first is that while Gannon's 1924 publication is fixed, we need to revisit his poetry and art, and the poetry of others, as our present continues to incrementally evolve. It is not that he has changed. It is that we continue to evolve. Each time we revisit works of the past such as this, we find something new. The second reason, as known and hinted at by Gannon: art — whether poetry, architecture, painting, or landscape history — allows viewers to feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Gannon understood the power of art as a cultural binder through collective experience, either through reading history or landscape history, viewed through illustration such as painting, or intentionally built and lived through architecture. A third, and by no means final reason, is that Gannon inspires us today in the twenty-first century, to find ways and means to create our own art — history, painting, poetry, landscape history, architecture — by and for the Northern Plains. Gannon, in his 1924 foreword to *Songs of*

the Bunch Grass Acres, “has always believed – and still believes – that the people and the prairies of the West are as well suited to art and poetry as any other people or portion of God’s great earth.”⁵⁹

Endnotes

- 1 This introduction is born out of a dissertation chapter from Aaron L. Barth, "Settler Colonizers' Sense of History on the Northern Plains Before and After the Turn of the Nineteenth Century." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2022. Link: https://ndsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?context=PC&vid=01ODIN_NDSU:ndsuh&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&docid=cdi_proquest_journals_2768124814. For additional and modern scholarship that explores the contributions by Clell Gannon and others, see Molly P. Rozum, *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2021).
- 2 Molly P. Rozum, *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 11.
- 3 Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. xi.
- 4 Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (University Press of Kansas, 2004), 6.
- 5 Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 5.
- 6 Grael Gannon, "The Strange Victory of Clell Gannon," in Clell Goebel Gannon, *Ever and Always I Shall Love the Land* (New York: Vantage Press, 1965), 11-15.
- 7 For an exegesis on Anglo-Americans in world history, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 8 Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 66.
- 9 Willa Cather, "NEBRASKA: The End of the First Cycle," *The Nation*, 117 (September 5, 1923): 236-238.
- 10 Clell Gannon, "The Romance of the Prairies," February 15, 1916, *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, 5.
- 11 With the post-WWII creation of Lake Tschida, a reservoir installed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Boy Scout camp was relocated from Painted Woods Lake to the Lake Tschida reservoir.
- 12 *The Washburn Leader*, "Underwood Scouts Camp at Painted Woods Lake," June 28, 1918, 7.
- 13 *The Bismarck Daily Tribune*, "In Student Army Corps," September 23, 1918, 2.
- 14 *The Bismarck Daily Tribune*, "In Student Army Corps," September 23, 1918, 2.
- 15 August 26, 2018, text message correspondence between Aaron Barth and Richard Rothaus. Rothaus noted that Isaac, his son, once during a Cub Scout meeting said, "Wait a minute! You're training us to be soldiers. I don't want to be a soldier."
- 16 Remembrance of Clell by his son, Grael Gannon. Adam Gopnik, "'Pictures Great,' His Publisher Told Him," review of David Michaelis, *N. C. Wyeth*, in *The New York Times Book Review*, November 15, 1998, 113-114.
- 17 Anne E. Eaton, "New Books for Boys and Girls" in *The New York Times Book Review*, May 26, 1935, 41. E. L. B., "For Younger Readers" in *The New York Times*

Book Review, August 22, 1948, 85.

18 Grael Gannon, "The Strange Victory of Clell Gannon," in Clell Goebel Gannon, *Ever and Always I Shall Love the Land* (New York: Vantage Press, 1965).

19 Robert Cory, "Russell Reid: A Friend's Recollection," *North Dakota History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 284.

20 Cory, "Russell Reid: A Friend's Recollection," 286.

21 Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 176; Gordon Iseminger, "Dr. Orin G. Libby: A Centennial Commemoration of the Father of North Dakota History" *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 2001: 2-25.

22 Clell Gannon, "The Prairie Home," *Bismarck Tribune*, May 1, 1922.

23 Linda McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xx.

24 Gannon is incorrectly described as "a pioneer of 'Midwestern Modernism'" by some unknown writer in *North Dakota Quarterly*, Vol. 91, Numbers 3/4, Fall/Winter 2024, 163.

25 Clell Gannon, "The Prairie Home," *Bismarck Tribune*, May 1, 1922, 2.

26 Hugh C. Miller, *The Chicago School of Architecture* (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973), p. v.

27 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

28 Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 3.

29 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

30 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

31 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

32 *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, "New Depot Is Completed," December 4, 1901, 1.

33 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

34 Dorman, 1993, 55; *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, "New Depot Is Completed," December 4, 1901, 1.

35 Gannon, "The Prairie Home," 2.

36 The repository for the correspondence of Gorham Press, with Richard G. Badger, proprietor, and his assistant, Ruth Hill, is with Harvard. Link: <https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/24/resources/1289>.

37 Robert Kroetsch quoted in Robert Thacker, *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 3.

38 Craig Gannon, "About the Poems" in Clell Gannon, *Ever and Always I Shall Love the Land* (1965), 17.

39 Thacker, *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination* (1989), 2.

40 For the evolving mythmaking of Hugh Glass, see Jon T. Coleman, *Here Lies Hugh Glass: A Mountain Man, a Bear, and the Rise of the American Nation*. (New York: Hill & Wang, 2013). For a larger conversation on mythmaking, see foundational works of Henry

Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Harvard University Press, 1950; 1957; 1970), and Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford University Press, 1964).

41 See State Historical Society of North Dakota Board Meeting Minutes, January 18, 1929, on file with the SHSND, Bismarck.

42 Gannon, "A Short Account of a Rowboat Journey from Medora to Bismarck," *North Dakota History*, 15.

43 Gannon, "A Short Account," 17.

44 Gannon, "A Short Account," 17.

45 Gannon, "A Short Account," 18-19.

46 Gannon, "A Short Account," 17.

47 Gannon, "A Short Account," 17.

48 Gannon, "A Short Account," 18.

49 Gannon, "A Short Account," 19.

50 Gannon, "A Short Account," 20.

51 Gannon, "A Short Account," 20-21.

52 Gannon, "A Short Account," 20-21.

53 Gannon, "A Short Account," 22.

54 Gannon, "A Short Account," 22.

55 See George F. Will and H. J. Spinden, "The Mandans: A Study of Their Culture, Archaeology and Language" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, 1906).

56 Gannon, "A Short Account," 22.

57 Gannon, "A Short Account," 22-23.

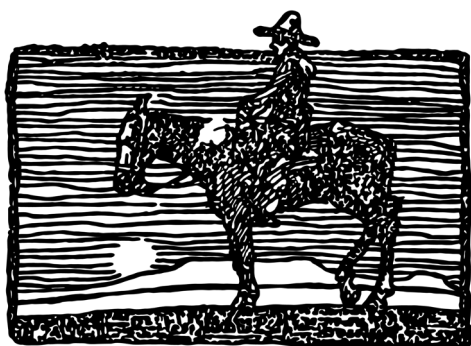
58 Steve C. Martens, "Federal Relief Construction in North Dakota, 1931-1943," National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form. (Bismarck, North Dakota: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2010).

59 Gannon, *Songs of the Bunch Grass Acres*, 5. Of a life creatively and intentionally lived, David Duchemin has phrased it as "the principals of an intentionally nurtured creative process mirror those of a life lived intentionally and creatively." See Duchemin, *A Beautiful Anarchy: When the Life Creative Becomes the Life Created* (San Rafael, California: Rocky Nook, Inc., 2020 & 2017), 31.

With this 1924 republication, Clell Gannon's language has remained intact. Some of the 1924 words may, today, cause a reader to understandably flinch or take offense. We felt it was important to preserve the original language as it was written and not to sanitize the past. In reproducing these works as they were written we can provide whoever reads it with a clearest possible window into Gannon's language, attitude, and world.

SONGS OF THE BUNCH GRASS ACRES

Written and Illustrated
by
Clell Goebel Gannon





Photograph by Clell G. Gannon

THE CALL OF THE WEST

To My Father and Mother
and to
Their Fathers and Mothers
Pioneers of the Great Plains
and Builders of the West

This volume is dedicated
in love.





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Foreword

The poems contained in this little volume were written for the love of it, and no other excuse is offered for their being. The author, who has spent a lifetime on the Plains, has always believed—and still believes—that the people and the prairies of the West are as well suited to art and poetry as any other people or portion of God's great earth. If, therefore, in the simplicity of these verses someone, were it only one, might be inspired to a deeper love of the lore of the Great Plains; or if those who live and love and die upon the prairies may see in them a truthful presentation of the beauty of their environment and of their traditions, then the mission of this volume shall have been twofold and its existence more than the realization of a personal desire.

The reader's attention is called to the use of the word "coyote." The author has preferred to use the two-syllable form *ki'ot* rather than the three-syllable which might be better usage, and the reader should so pronounce it in order to produce proper meter. The two-syllable form has been chosen because it is the form most in use among the Westerners of the real Plains; and it is from their lips and hearts these words are taken rather than from the dictionary.

The author wishes to express his thanks to Florence Harriet Davis, librarian of the Bismarck Public Library for the suggestions, constructive criticism and encouragement given the author in the preparation of this volume.

Envoi, the final poem of this collection, was written by the author's sister, Hazel Dell, at the age of fifteen at Grand Valley, South Dakota. In the same month, two years after, she was called on

“... to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm ...

She is now singing her songs in the Land Beyond The Stars.

To the people who have known the prairies best and longest, the future of this volume is respectfully submitted.

Clell G. Gannon
August 1924.
Bismarck-by-the-river North Dakota.

Proem

Oh Winds of the West you have heard my song
As I sang to the sun-scorched grass,
Through the long hot day as I journeyed on
From the low-run hills to the pass.
You have heard me whistle a saddle-tune
From the back of a pinto horse
And fling it away to the Muse of
June For the love of the thing—of course.

Lone hills of the West you have heard my song
From the bunchgrass plains to the pine,
In the twilight hush or the painted dawn,
In the slanting rain—or the shine.
You have heard my song on your topmost crest, By
the shore of your laughing rills,
You shall hear it, aye, till the singer rests
In the arms of your heart, *dear hills*.

Ho Plains of the West I have loved you long,
You have nestled my baby-talk,
Full many a moon you have heard my song
Since the day that I learned to walk.
Full many a moon you have waxed and waned
O'er the plains and the purple hill,
But my love it shall never wax and wane
Till the day when the heart grows still.

Old pals of the West you are mine—are mine,
Come And give me a calloused hand,
The wind and the sun and the stars that shine—
Oh I think that you understand.
And beyond the reach of your hand, dear pals
I may wander away; but then
Your love would go with me for aye, old pals
And would carry me home again!

Spring-Blood

The Spring-Blood runs in the greening grass
And the prairie hills are wet with rain.
The free wind sings from the cedar pass
And calls my name.

The new Spring kisses the waiting view
With its many tints till, far and faint,
the world is colored so fresh and new
It smells of paint.

The snowbanks cling to the shady draws
And waste away till the first bloom springs
above the sod and the snowbank thaws
In perfumed things.

The whole world throbs with the blood of Spring
For Nature thinks in the cosmic whole,
And Life obeys to that urging thing
Within the soul.

And even I must obey the call,
My pony waits at the pasture bars,
The trail leads into the evenfall
And meets the stars.

And after my fourscore years and ten
Are counted out and my say is said,
When Spring-Blood throbs in my heart, why men
Will call me dead.

But what of me and the starry trail,
In that rebirth—in the Spring of Man
When a blade of grass is not too frail
For Winter's span?



A Westerner's Prayer

Dear Lord, I pray make me as free as is the
summer breeze,
That wanders thru the prairie grass and hunts
the scattered trees.
Make me as common as the dirt that suns be-
neath my feet,
And democratic as the air, and banish all conceit
And vanity and snobbishness; yea march them in
retreat.

Make me as honest as the birds that sing the
prairie lays,
As reverent unto my God, as quick to sing His
praise.
As clean as are the wind-washed buttes, as hap-
py as the sun.
as prompt to do my given task that He may say
"Well done."

Make me as stubborn as a bronco for the thing
that's right,
As fixed in truth as are the stars that stab the
western night.
Give me the cacti thorns to ward away the temp-
ter's art
And give some fellow-man my chance—I'll take
the smaller part.

Lord, teach me humble lessons from the magic
of the plains,
And make my soul as beautiful as are the sun-
set stains.
Let all men know me as a friend and stop awhile
to chat,
For all the kingly titles they are not as good as
that.

Lord, let me know I'm just a part of this big
world of thine,
I'm not the entire story I am just a little line.
But make me every inch a man along the trail,
and when
The sun drops down behind the buttes that rims
the world why then
I won't need to apologize to God or man ! Amen.





The Finish

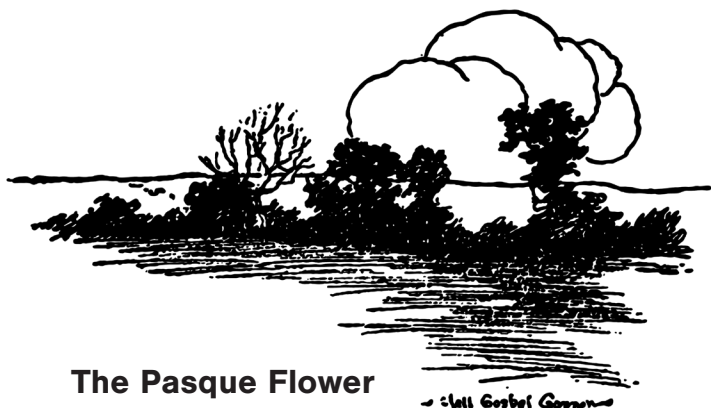
When the final page is written in the hist'ry of
the west.
And the cowboy and the Redmen all have gone
beyond the crest
Of the hills that rim the skyline unto other
lands unguessed,
—Why I don't want to be there.

When the last he-man dies bravely with the
leather on his feet,
When the last coyote has hollered and has made
a fast retreat,
When the trail is strung with fences and the wreck
is all complete.
—Why I don't want to be there.

When the West is stuck with bill-boards and
the roads are slick and fine,
And when every sunny acre wears a bloomin'
keep-off sign,
When they're playing golf instead of riding
broncos—I resign,
—And, I don't want to be there.

When the signs on every corner tell you just
which way to go,
And when every man's a stranger, which he isn't
now, you know,
And the weatherman will tell you how tomorrow's
wind will blow,
—Why I don't want to be there.

When they've tamed it, and they've shamed it,
when they' put it up for sale,
And the final chapter's written, why I'll search
to find a trail
That will lead to God's great someplace where
the hungry buzzards sail.
—'Cause that's where I want to be.



The Pasque Flower

— Hall Goshel Goshel

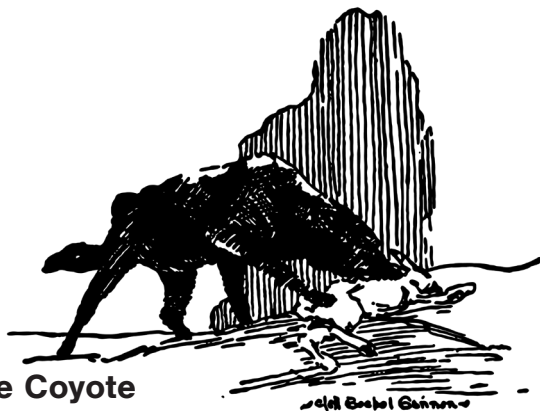
True pioneer, you love the unturned sod,
The grassy acres of the prairie sea,
You are the first to brave the winter snows;
Your love fills up the empty heart of me
And overflows.

A harbinger of Spring, I welcome you
Like some lost comrade from a distant land,
I thrill to see your face burst from the sod.
So have I seen: then why should I demand
More proof of God.

Fair prairie bloom, your feet washed in the snow
And face turned to the sky, you speak of Hope.
The zephyrs kiss your cheeks, you have no wings
Nor lengthened stem yet from the sod you grope
To higher things.

Queen of the Plains, I need not crown you so,
Since in your heart you wear the purest gold,
Framed with your wooing petals such as soak
The blue of skies, o'er many hill-tops rolled
Like prairie smoke.

Dear friendly, bloom what promises you bring,
What hope to him, who, searching through the blast
Of wintry doubts, sees your first bud appear
On April slopes, and seeing, knows at last
That Spring is here.



The Coyote

You will hear his voice complaining from the dim
dew-haunted hill,

You will hear him in the evening when the plains
are gray and still,

You will hear him in the badlands when the weird
shadows fall,

And the moon lifts in the ether, and the night
winds softly call.

You will hear him from the bunchgrass when
the sun is crawling low,

And the banjo in the ranch-house signs a-lee-a-lo-
a-oe.

You will hear him from the desert if you listen
hard and long,

Or along the voiceless canyon just before the
noise of dawn.

You may see him in the sage-brush if your eyes
are sharp and keen,

You may chase him from his hiding in the brushy-
low ravine.

You may watch him from your cover when the
wind is in the grass,

And the sun is hanging lowly up above the moun-
tain pass.

You may see him on the mesa, (and you'll like
the bracing air),

Or along the dim arroyo, you are sure to find

him there.
You will see him on the prairie, in the valley,
on the crest,
And most anywhere you venture in the vistas
of the West.

You can see him in the springtime when the
prairie flowers bloom,
And along the grassy coulee almost any after-
noon.
You can see him in the summer when the plains
are scorched and dry,
Out among the thirsty cacti on some reach
of alkali.
You can see him in the autumn when the Indian
summer comes,
You will find his wary footprint where the dried-
up river runs.
You will hear his voice resounding from the mes-
quite o'er the hill
And a-fading into silence, when the winter night
is still.

He's a brother of the mesa, he's a comrade of
the wind,
He's a lover of the twilight when the light of
day is dimmed.
He has chummed up with the open, he has trailed
the ranges through.
By the glimmer of your campfire he has tried to
speak to you.
In the reach of endless spaces when you feel the
wind go by
And you smell the tang of sagebrush and you
hear his hunting cry
Then you won't need signs to tell you in their
meager whisperings
For the Western Voice will signal, "This is where
the West begins."



This Land Is Mine

This land is mine, yea the sun and shine
Drink deep down the western sky.
The thrilling sight of the bright starlight
And the cool winds singing by,
Grip all my soul in the splendid whole
And it dwarfs the little—I!

This land is mine with its rain and shine
And its stainless skies of blue,
Its vast expanse where the shadows dance
On the hilltops sliding through,
Where the golden sun dreams down among
The reeds in the droggy slough.

I love it all—I have heard its call,
I have smelled its grass-grown sod.
I have breathed its air and liked it there
In the manly smile of God.
For my calloused feet have known the treat
Of the trails the bison trod.

The sweet perfume of the roses bloom
Dreams down on the spicy air,
With the pungent scent of peppermint
And the sage all mingled there
In one deep breath that is sweet till death
And a joy without compare.

The great far plains in the sunlight range
With a lonely butte or two,
A little shack and a wagon's track
To the waiting door—and you!
For the picture there is far more fair
Than an artist ever drew.

I love the land, do you understand
That its worth is all unguessed.
It is wife and grand and makes demand
Of a man to do his best.
Its big and free and its all to me,
It is home, and love, and West.

The Prairie Girl

She loves the prairie sea, the wash
Of wave-winds on a shore of grass,
She loves the smell of zephyrs sweet
That kiss her as they pass.
She loves the far horizon and
The bigness of the open space.
The sunshine penetrates her heart
And browns her western face.



She loves the blue transcendent light
That dreams across the cloudless skies,
Whose trailing tones of placid blue
Are mirrored in her eyes.
She loves the sunset's gorgeous fire
That dances through the golden air,
And leaves a splash of color on
The tresses of her hair.

She loves the bunting's breezy song,
The booming of the prairie hen
The wild goose calling through the deeps
Of night with echoes then.
She loves the coyote's weird yelp—
All voices of the prairie land
Whose syllables are those that she
Has learned to understand.

She loves the pasque flower's frozen bloom
The fragrance of the prairie rose,
The cactus plant to her is fair
As any flower that grows.
She loves the sweep of sun and rain
The song the creaking saddle sings,
The trails that twist through deep ravines
The horse that lends her wings.

She loves the sun-browned bunch grass land,
The pungent odor of the sage,
The tranquil beauty of the night,
The stars etched on its page.
She loves it all—the sun drenched skies,
The wind washed prairies and the sea
Of foaming stars have given her
A life-long legacy.





The Badlands Call

Land of a thousand voices
Beckoning unto me,
Land of the zig-zag valleys
Shadowed in history.
Land of a thousand coulees,
Pastures without the bars,
Land of a weird beauty
Under a million stars.

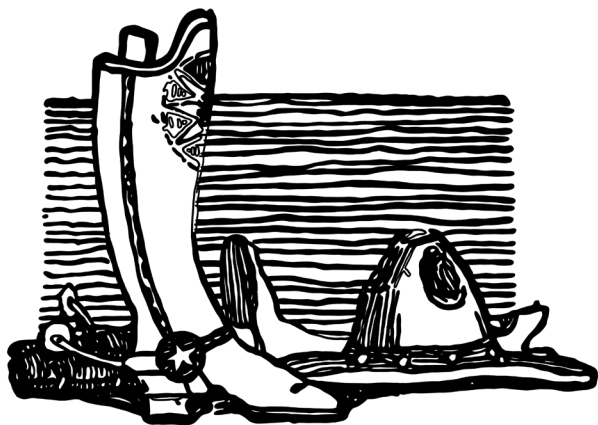
Land, I am coming, coming
The sunset shows the way,
Each morning finds a landmark
that wasn't yesterday.
I am an eager stranger
I'll find you fresh and new,
You are an open treasure—
What shall I take from you?

Sleep through the dreamless ages,
Mock at the things I say
Scoria buttes and cedars
Now that I come your way.
I shall whisper and listen
I shall look and be still
Hearing the Wind of Ages
Over the storm-swept hill.

I shall survey your canyons
Flashing the blinding heat,
Watch the Little Missouri
Flowing out in retreat.
I shall stop at Medora
Sleeping away its years
Burnt with the sun of summer
Wet in the rain-cloud's tears.

Take me and call me brother
I am in love with you,
Cut and scarred are your canyons,
And painted, of so new!
Sagebrush scent on the breezes
Cactus bloom on the sod.
I'm coming, coming, coming
I will be nearer God.

Old Hat



Oh here's to the health of your glory, old hat
You have been such a comrade to me.
You've counted the ties on the Santa Fe track,
You're gone with me down to El Paso and back
To the glorious land of the Ree.

You've cooked with me under the Mexican sun,
On the deserts of yucca and sand,
You've gone with me out where the dry rivers run
Thru ultimate acres of Kingdom May Come
In the Valley of Death, and be damned.

You're gone with me out on my little cayuse
At the Round-up of Latigo Town,
You're followed the swing of the rope, as the
noose
Closed down on the horns of the maverick loose,
And the hot branding iron came down.

You've gone with me out on the starlighted plains,
You have served for a pillow at night,
You staid with me up on the Milk River range
You drank up the sun and you drank up the rains
And you never complained of your plight.

You went with me out on the merry-go-round,
In the chase of the unconquered Ute,
And when they had circled our camp, up and down
You nerved us to stick in our blood-spattered
ground
And to load up our rifles and shoot.

And where the gaunt Rockies, rear, topple and
mass
Their huge bulks jagged-toothed to the day,
You went with me there over Swift-Current Pass
You dared me to scale Sperry Glacier, at last
In your devil-may-care sort of way.

You went with me out on the Oregon Trail
When the West was still dangerously young,
You clutched to your mission claw-tooth and toe
nail,
Endued with the spirit of "never-say-fail"
Till you knew that the last dog was hung.

You camped with me up in the wilderness, soaked
In the splendor of shadow and shine,
You served as a dipper—and that is no joke,
You smell of the savor of bacon and smoke
And the scent of the balsam and pine.

You camped on the shore of the Lake of the
Woods,
And you fanned my wet fire to burn,
You visioned the void where the silences brood
O'er desolate waste of the far solitude,
In the years that can never return.

You froze with me north of the Canada Line
On the trail from Ft. Churchill to Nome,
You slept with me under the stars pallid shine,
You shot the wild rapids in style superfine
To the turmoil of water and foam.

And now your best days they are over, old hat,
And your crown it is greasy and worn
With marks of your travel to Nowhere and back,
You've been a fine comrade, old fellow, at that
Through your brim is all tattered and torn.

But comrades are comrades, the best of them part
And the limitless trail has an end;
So somewhere away in the deeps of my heart
I'll put you, old hat, and tomorrow I'll start
On my trail to the stars with a friend.

The Butte

The butte-sphinx-like it stands
Sun-soaked, rain washed, wind kist,
A monument in clay,
Shaped through the patient years
It dreams in profound sleep
This passive Age away.

Gray sandstone crowns its top,
Black, twisted cedars cling
In death-grip to its side;
Mute sage-brush silver-blue
And cacti star its ledge
With bunch-grass in between.

Serene, alone it stands—
A pattern on the sky
Portrayed in purple paint;
A nearer view displays
Bands of bright strata dipped
In red and yellow dyes.

Lone comrade of the sun,
The wind, the rain, the stars,
What architect designed
Its simple classic lines?
And why am I, earthborn,
So lost with it—in love?

In The Badlands

I—dawn

Dawn, how the silver shadows slant through the
morning air,
And the birds sing out from the coulee the lilt
of a cadenced prayer,
When even the breezes are silent and beauty only
is there,
How the light drifts up from the canyons all rosy
tinted and faint
And the sky arched over in splendor with delicate
streaks of paint,
As soft as an artist mixes to use on the cheeks
of a saint.
The rock wren sings down the valley and the
chipmunks chirp from the ledge,
with the notes of the longspur flowing from out
of a sagebrush hedge,—
Then the buttes lift up to listen and the sun
sneaks over the edge!

II—noon

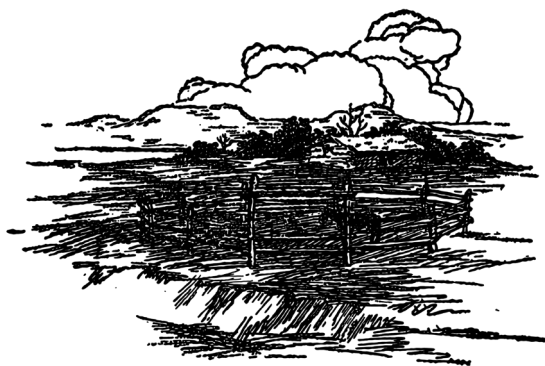
Noon with the sun-glare blinding over a heat-
scorched land,
The hot buttes tumbled and twisted as if shaped by
an angry hand,
With beauty that hovers and lingers. We only can
understand
Who have lived and loved in the badlands and
traced its labyrinth trails
To the creek of the saddle-leather, as if we were
hooked to sails,
Till the road climbs up through the canyon, then
struggles awhile and fails.
How the sky dreams down on the landscape, all
cloudless and far and blue!
And the color—the sapphire and crimson, emerald
and topaz, too,
With the sage and the cedar blended and the sun-
light filtered through!

III—evening

Dusk, with the magpies wheeling into the aspen
trees,
And the mourning doves a-cooing with the sage-
brush scent on the breeze,
While the shadows of purple linger and the eyes
reach out in quest,
A hundred miles in the vision to the golden glow
in the West
Till a lone star punctures the azure and the
breezes whisper “rest.”
Then the coyote yelps down the valley; the frogs
begin in the creek,
Till the sounds fade out in the stillness and you’re
most afraid to speak,
For the moon slips over the canyon and the moon-
light starts to leak.

IV—night

Night—how the spectral shadows glide through
the weird air,
And the cool-clean sweep of the night winds
bring visions of magic there
Till the heart is light with its music and hidden
is every care.
So the world sleeps on in the stillness and the
stars gleam one by one,
The aurora's flame in the northland a curtain of
light has spun
While the buttes in the utter cosmos await for the
rising sun.
Night—rarest of nights in the badlands, the cool
wind blown through the sage
With the voice of the starlight singing the songs
of another age,
Till the dark grows pale with the morning,
and the sunrise turns the page.



The Law of Dakota

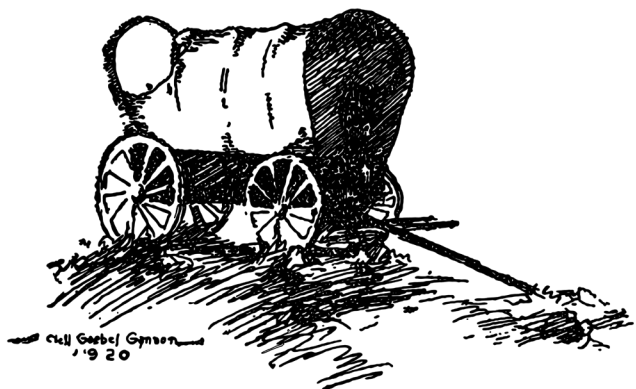
There's a law—how it reigns in Dakota
It's not on the books of the state,
But it rules every native born offspring,
That ever was born on a date.
And it rules every immigrant settler
Who ever has lived in the West.
For it won't let him go from the Westland,
If it does it will not let him rest.

It's the law of the land and the people
The law of the simple and great,
And it rules nearly all of the people
Nine times out of ten is the rate.
For it rules the rich man and the beggar,
The foolish one, yea and the wise,
It's as broad as the wind-beaten prairies,
And as big as the limitless skies.

For the law holds each son of Dakota
Who wanders away from the sod
Though he be native-born or adopted,
Disciple of Satan or God
Must return to the land of his people
Or never be happy again,
Though he travel the vampire world over
For ten million miles twice ten.

You may hate the law (perhaps good reason)
Ignore it or curse it like sin,
But like sin when it gets you it keeps you
And counts you as one of its kin.
It's the curse of the buttes and the prairies,
The curse of the sky and the sod,
It's the law of the infinite spaces
And the revelation of God.

You swear that you're done with Dakota,
Have sown your last bushel of wheat,
Have packed your last egg to the market,
Have bought brand new shoes for your feet.
You are going to leave certain by winter,
Bid farewell to cousin and aunt;
You and Winter are still in Dakota,
Each wants to get out—but it can't.
You may have been born in Havana,
In Singapore, Sitka or Rome,
But if once you have lived in Dakota,
If once you have known it as home
It has gripped you a slave to its worship,
A slave?—yes a lover, a friend,
For the long, long, trail leads to Dakota
And every known trail has an end.





I Want You So

I want you so—the wind sneaks from its cover
And shivers lonely round the outer shed;
I want you so, those words I have said over
And over though I know that you are dead.
The cabin is so silent and so lonely,
The long hours drag away the aching years,
I try to cheer myself but there is only
A silence and a stream of empty tears.

The sun sinks in a sky of faded yellow
It is not colored as it used to be,
Its funny how a loss can change a fellow
And make his eyes the eyes that do not see.
The bluffs are cold and gray along the river
I do not love them as I used to do.
They seem so barren now—who is the Giver
That made this world a Paradise with you!

I thought I loved these naked buttes and prairies,
I thought I loved the highness of the West,
Oh can it be the world was only merry
Because I had you, knowing you were best?
Why cant I find some friendship in these reaches
When most I need it now that you are gone,
Why can't I hear the sermon that it preaches
And feel the old thrill of the bunting's song?

I want you so—*I need you* so this evening,
Just one touch of your hand however light
Would bring the color to the sunset leaving
The world a vacant dreariness tonight.
Just one smile from your lips however fleeting,
Just one word from your tongue however faint
Would change the lonely world into a greeting
And make the toneless picture rich with paint.

I want you so, the coyote now is calling,
I used to like to hear it, but no more.
It makes me feel alone, a star is falling
To leave the world still darker than before.
I want you so and yet I know the morrow
Will cheer my aching heart to go its way
A little space, if I can chance to borrow
The hope that looks beyond the brief today.

Moon-Flower

The moon-flower (Mentzelia decapetala), also called scoria lily, open at night and closes during the day. It blooms in the Northwest in July and shows preference to barren clay buttes and the red burnt-clay or scoria.

Your silver light is kindred to the stars,
Too subtle for the harshness of the sun.
Your comrades are the dusk, the night, the moon,
The wind fresh from the sage it sleeps among;
A God-inspired bloom.

Child of the buttes, first cousin to the clay
You lift your lily-cup toward the skies,
You hear the dream-song of the Western night—
The coyote's hymn that fades away and dies
In swirls of starry light.

Sage musk you breathe, the badlands are your
home,
The naked buttes you love; the red-burned clay
Springs into glory in your guise and blooms.
Like some dark mirror on the earth it lay
Reflecting many moons.



The Big Muddy

Out of the picturesque Past you come flowing,
Out of the void of unthinkable Time;
Into the unmeasured years you are going,
You are the tool of some Maker's design.
Out of the Ages you come, antelucan
Cosmos and chaos combined into one.
You are a mystical spell, an illusion
Born in a distance which bludgeons us dumb.

You are a poem—an epic imprinted
Into the type of the rain and the sod.
You are a painting, a masterpiece tinted
By the firm touch of the slow hand of God.
You are a statue to stand through the weather
Spanning the Present—and lo, such a span!
Bringing the Past and the Future together—
Something too vast for the weak mind of
Man.

Here your chameleon bluffs bask in the golden
Sunlight, which falls from a far cloudless sky;
Here your vast bottomlands revel in olden
Splashes of color which baffle the eye.
There the swift current sweeps, flashing the early
Tints of the sunrise aback to the dawn,
There in the moonflood the glimpses of pearly—
Light rims the ripples and sweeps on and on.

Opulent, sapphire and topaz and ashen
Gleam incandescent from level and butte,
Carved by erosion in fantastic fashion,
Austere and dignified, errant and mute.
Now the long shadows in splendor are drifting
Over the bluff and adown the ravine,
Waning at eventide, changing and shifting
Into strange magic—unreal as a dream!

Could you but speak to me—tell of the glory
Of the vast eons asleep on your brow,
Tell me the thrill of the unwritten story
Of the lost romances, even to now.
Tell me of buffalo roaming the prairie,
Tell me of deer in the timbered ravine.
Tell me of antelope herds, and the airy
Song of the longspur inserted between.

Tell of the Indian who came to your margin,
Walked on your sandbars in winter, and then
Came the spring freshet to make you enlargen
Into a treacherous river again.
Tell of the Redmen who called you “Big Muddy”
Ere the Pale Face had replied to your call;
Tell of the teepee, the hunt and the bloody
Battles of Sitting Bull, Custer and all.



Tell of the pioneers daring your border,
Going away to the set of the sun,
Taking a new code of laws and an order
Into the West with a six-shooting gun.
Take up the Trail of Adventure, and follow
Lewis and Clark of the "Ida Stockdale:"
Travel, o'er river and prairie and hollow
Dangerous trails of the Overland Mail.

Relate the days of the little sod shanty
Housing the ones that proved up on the claim.
Tell of the long summer's drouth and the scanty
Harvest; and hardships endured for the same.
Proclaim to all how they built up a nation
Founded on justice and fear of the Lord,
Living to serve her in high or low station,
Ready, if need be, to die by the sword.

Flow on muddy river, into the gloaming
Skirting Tomorrow, and sing your old song,
Others will pause on your shore in their roaming,
Love and admire you when we are all gone.
Tell the old story, the romantic story
While the crows caw and the mourning dove's
coo,

We shall extol you for aye—and the glory
Epic of River we tender to you!



The Search

Were I to search all of the roads of earth,
And all of its bypaths, too,
In quest for a Father of better worth
Than that I have found in you,
Though I had all manner of gold and wealth,
Though I searched on every trail,
Though I had endurance, time and health
I only would fail—fail!
For I never could find in all the world
 A Father like you, no never,
Though I searched till the light of the stars were
 swirled
 In motionless dust forever.

Were I to search all the world's known
 streets,
And all of its secret trails,
Had I at my service a hundred fleets
Adrift with a thousand sails,
Had I all the money in the world
And all of its wisdom, too,
I never could find in all that world
A mother as good as you.
Though I searched and searched all the long years
 through,
 Mother dear Mother forever,
I never could find one as good as you
 No, Mother dear—never!



Missouri River Song

Where the broad Missouri River southward wends
toward the sea

And the lazy sandbar idles round the bend

Where the big butte climbs the ether with its nose
against the blue,

And the sky looms blue and purple at the end.

Its there I'm a going to live, dear lass,

Its there I'm a going to die,

Where the love holds fast to the heart, dear
lass,

And a thing is worth while to try.

Where the wild vine climbs the willow in the
murky bottomlands,

And the ferns are clustered with Dakota dew,

Where the muddy water washes up against
the yellow sand

While the hawk above is wheeling in the blue,

It's there I'm a going to be, dear lass,

When the smell of the day is new,

Where the worry is past in the world, dear lass,

And the hawk wheels out in the blue.

Where the magpies noisy clatter sounds a discord to
the day,
And the crows above the treetops scold and caw,
Where the catbird haunts the thorn-bush in the
thicket by the way,
And the towhee fills with music all the draw,
Its there I will hark to their songs, dear lass,
And I'll hear them the day I die,
When the soul is cast on its wings, dear lass,
Forever and ever to fly.

Where the swamp-rose flings its perfume out on
every passing breeze,
And the violet is blooming 'mong the ferns,
When the blossoms deck the branches of the thick
juneberry trees.
And the verdure of the summertime returns,
It's there you will find me for aye, dear lass,
When the croak of the frog is heard,
When the long dead grass turns to green,
dear lass,
And the song comes back with the birds.

Where the buckbrush fills the coulee and the
silence fills the air,
(And I like my fellows best when they are
few.)
Where the sunshine fills the valley with its glory
everywhere,
And the whitetail's track along the trail is new,
Where the sunlight falls on the heart, dear lass,
And the twilight falls on the dew,
And the love falls fast on the world, dear lass,
And the trail of the deer is new;
Where the berries stain the bushes with their
scarlet in the fall,
When the glory of the summer ebbs away,

And the breezes catch the murmur of the distant coyote's call,
And Indian summer brings the Perfect Day.
It's there I will build me a home, dear lass,
It is there I will love you true
In the splendid past of a dream, dear lass,
As the ones in the stories do.

Where the West Winds may caress me with their
kisses all the day,
And the star-folk may console me with their
eyes,
And the moon may take me with him in imagination's way,
Up to view the outer spaces of the skies.
Its there I will settle me down, dear lass,
For the call of the world is old,
And its thrill is past in my life, dear lass,
And a home is the best of gold.

Where each man that comes to see me I may greet
him as a friend,
Where the boys that hit the trail may weave
their dreams,
For each man that loves the open, (and you'll
prove it in the end)
Is all of the man you fancy that he seems.
And its me for the open life, dear lass,
And it's me for the unmarked trail,
For the heart is cast to its form, dear lass,
And the hear ends with the tale.

Where the new stars stab the azure with their
dagger pointed light,
And the Milky Way rides high above the world,
Where the moonlight stains the river with a
twinkle of delight,
As a meteor 'cross the universe is hurled.
Its there I'm a wanting to live, dear lass,
Leave the tale of the miser told,
Its silver new-cast, in the sky, dear lass,
That I want—instead of the gold.

Where a man may give the best he has to do the
thing he likes,
And can feel the thrill of life in every thew,
And can use his inspiration at the moment that
it strikes,
And when e'er he starts a thing—can see it
through.
Where a man may give up his life, dear lass,
To arise with his name—or fall,
When his work is classed with the best, dear
lass,
Or is named with the worst of all.

And where I can ever love you with a love as
sweet and pure,
As the day I took you for my chosen bride,
In the cabin by the river where the true love is
secure
Till the day we come to cross the Big Divide,
For there we will dwell in our home, dear lass,
When the best of our dream comes true,
So fill up my glass from the spring, dear lass,
And I'll drink to the health of you.

A Friend

I shall not fear the desert's reach,
The heart, the thirst, the sun-burned sand;
I shall not fear the starless night,
Nor any fog on sea or land—
Because I have a friend.

I cannot fail, I must succeed,
There is not trail too hard or long.
My best is none too good, and so
Thru heart's despair I shall be strong

Because I have a friend.

The Stars

Part One

I am alone beneath the stars tonight,
 Alone, I said?—and yet
A million comrades drip their quivering light
Into the abyss of the silent night.
All is so still—so big, I scarce can speak,
My words all seem so paltry and so weak,
 I only dare to think
Such thoughts as have no counterpart in words.
 Strange thoughts indeed I drink
Into my soul so wide awake tonight.
 The stars—the stars, so far away they seem,
So far above I can but see their light
 And I so far below,
 I wonder am I lost
 Within this quaint existence? Do I dream?
 And yet they are so near,
So very near tonight I think I hear
Their silver voices through the atmosphere
Conveying God-like messages to me.
It is so beautiful methinks to see
And fancy in my dreams the vault-like dome,
A sea of heaven flecked with starry foam.
The self-same stars I saw, when as a child
I romped among the dew-drenched grass a wild
And errant boy—so long, so long ago.
 Where are the comrades of my Youth
 tonight?

The dear loved faces that I used to know
Returned again in dreams of Perfect Light.
All else has changed but these
Mute stars which twinkle in the Void
tonight.

Part Two

I cannot sleep tonight, the stars enthrall
My soul in rhapsody.
I watch the milky way, the meteors fall,
The majesty of night o'erpowering all.
The hanging stars I see have paled and shone
Above the ancient towers of Babylon,
On Sparta, Thebes and Troy.
These stars I see, this sky empyreal
Hung over Bethlehem,
Shone over lovers since love first began
In Eden-land, amid the perfumed musk
Of tropic bloom, where streams Elysian ran;
Which even now shine on
My own loved ones away
In distant lands beneath this star-strewn dusk.
And can it be to-night,
As my itinerant eyes receive to sight
From the abyss a mere iota's light,
That it is some gigantic world or sun
Set in the center of the Void—and spun!
I wonder what are they, what lies beyond,
For man has wondered since man first looked on
These stars I see tonight in humble awe
Move in obedience to some Master Law.
And when the Soul moves out across the bar,
The Earthborn then shall know and gently
nod.
No sight on land or sea excels a star,
For in the beauty of the Lights that trod
Above this world tonight
I think I grasp a Vision of my God!

The Girl from Montana

She's the girl from old Montana and her voice is
like the laughter,
Of the zephyrs singing through the purple sage,
When the sun is slowly sinking down below the
buttes and after
All the stars are printed on the empty page.
When the low moon starts a sailing
And the northern lights go trailing
And the wind is sneaking through the scented sage.

And her voice—the music of it—have you ever
heard her singing,
Have you stood enchanted with the silver strain?
Then you've seen a flower garden with the butter-
flies a-winging,
Or the fragrant roses dripping in the rain.
Why the larks would stop to listen
And the rainbows even glisten
And the memory would evermore remain.

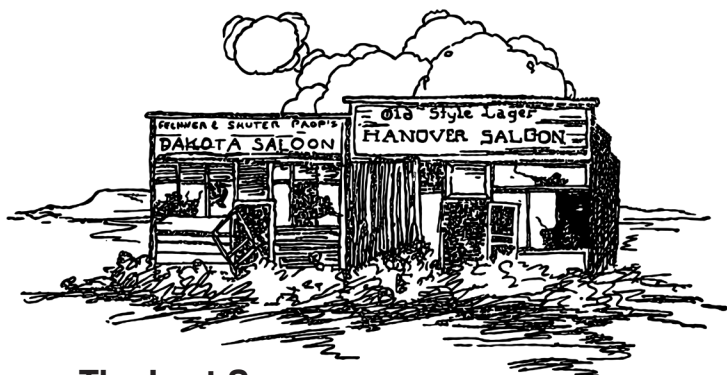
And her eyes are like the sunshine of the happy
days of summer
When the clouds are on the other side the earth,
And so blue you catch a vision of a sunny heaven
from her
That unfolds above the land that gave her birth.
And they charm you like the glory
Of an old romantic story
And a new world standard of intrinsic worth.

And you stagger blind and drunken in the beauty
of her tresses,
Auburn-brown and soft as starlight through the mist,
Set with cacti bloom and pretty as the dainty
strands one guesses
That a flock of angel wanderers had kist.
And it drowns you in its splendor
With a beauty wild, yet tender
As the dawn above the badlands in the mist.

And her cupid-lips are crimson as the painted
bison-berries,
That edge the aspen thicket by the stream,
And her cheeks are soft as shadows where the wild
deer feeds and tarries
And her face is the perfection of a dream.
And she's modest as a flower
And you'd love her every hour,
For she's sweet and always happy—never mean.

She's the girl from old Montana and she rides
the western ranges
She has saddled up a pinto at the bars,
She has smelled the spicy sagebrush and has seen
its many changes
And has curled up in a blanket 'neath the stars.
Still she's maiden-like and dainty,
Pretty, yea and even saintly
And has slept upon the ground beneath the
stars.



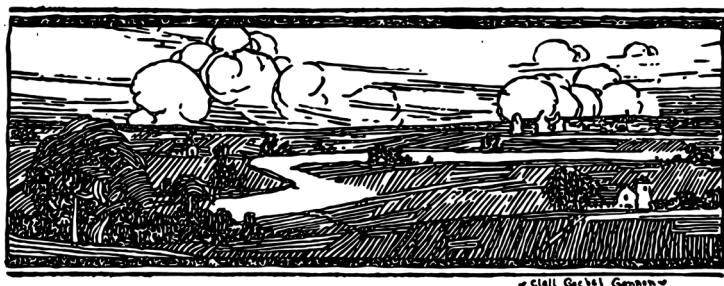


The Lost Song

Oh I left the town with its bloody fights,
The roar and the drunken men.
To the wine, the women and reeling lights
I muttered, *never again*.
When they turned the doors of their shameless town
Sure they let all hell go in.
Then I gazed back once ere the moon slid down,
In the canyon nude of sin.

And I had a song on my lips that night
Of the hell I left behind,
I would write it down at the morning's light,
How it haunted all my mind.
Of I said that the world would heed and thrill
When it heard my master-song.
But the whole wide world it is waiting still,
How long will it wait—how long?

Then I entered the canyon cool at dawn,
It was most too good to be,
And too pure for my eyes to look upon,
It was just for God to see.
I was thrilled with its beauty and I lost
My song on the canyon's rim.
But the song I lost, it was worth the cost
For I caught a sight of him.



The Red River Valley

Oh the Red River Valley how level it lays
In a vast panorama of glory, and stays
The perfume of the zephyr to tarry awhile
And to loiter in fragrance o'er each magic mile,
Where the fields are aglow in a fairy-like green
And intertwined with the roses that blossom between
Into dew-clustered pathways that prompt me to
sing
Of the marvelous charm of the Red River Spring.

Then the soft fleecy cloud of the mid-summer
days
With the sunshine above it, which tenderly plays
On the broad sweeping acres of ripening wheat
Through the long listless day which is drugged
in the heat,
Woven into the musical lilt of the bees
As they buoyantly drift on a Red River breeze;
While the meadowlark warbles a vesper refrain
Leaving all in a chaos of silence again.

And the Red River Valley asleep in the haze
That is overing there through the late autumn
 days,
With the amber and gold blended into the trees
And with one magic stroke of His brush, if you
 please.
Then the soft dreamy air of the classical fall
With the crisp pungent breath of the morning,
 and all
Of the wheat in the shock most magnificently
 rolled
Into one tumbled ocean of billowy gold.

Or the long virgin winter which comes in its
 train
With command over all in its autocrat reign,
While the blizzards beat down in a passion of
 wrath
Leaving only a desert of snow in its path:
Or the moon trailing mists through the star-
 lighted night
Where the world is a land of enchanted delight,
Into whose storied realms I might eagerly look
As an innocent child into some fairy book.

Of there's everything there to enrapture the heart
Far beyond any language of mine to impart,
For each season is graced with an exquisite charm
As distinctively fair be it city or farm.
And the marvelous beauties that there I beheld
May be equaled somewhere, yes, but never ex-
 celled—
For the Red River Valley, none else can compare
With the beautiful calm that is hovering there.

Beyond The Stars

Above these sleeping plains tonight

A little silver star is blown

Across the sky, with fading light,

And dies alone.

The crescent moon hangs like a slice

Of silver in the reach of space,

A skein of mist drifts once or twice

And hides its face.

And somewhere out beyond the last

Faint star that twinkles carelessly,

A Sister's face gleams from the past

And shines on me.

And when my little stay is o'er

And God swings back the silver bars

That hold me here, I want to soar

Beyond the stars.

A Song in the Badlands

Badlands, badlands—how I love you, bad-
lands
Tumbled like and twisted through the miles that
reach away,
With the breezes sighing and the prairie falcons
crying,
Oh, but life's worth living for I found it good
today.
Air is sweet and sappy
I am more than happy.
Buttes are all a-sunning for a hundred miles
away,

Sunshine, sunshine down the grassy coulee,
Purpled with the sagebrush aye and sleeping in
the sun
Where the trails go winding and the heat is fairly
blinding
Ask me if I love it and I'll tell you that I'm one.
Sky slips out above it,
I'm the one to love it
From the days bright morning to the sinking
of the sun.

Riding, riding through the bracing summer,
On a buck-skin pony with a brand across its
flank,

With the saddle creaking and a lazy wind
a-sneaking
Through the thorny cactus and around the
river bank.
River wind a-sneaking,
Copper sun a-creeping
Down toward the skyline where its juicy light
goes blank.

Acres, acres, not a human being,
Just the bawling cattle down around the water
hole
And an eagle soaring with the river kind of
roaring
Through the swollen washes where the muddy
waters roll,
Magpies all a-screaming,
Cottonwoods a-dreaming,
Most a hundred miles in sight but not a living
soul.

Lonesome, lonesome who could here be lone-
some
Prairie dogs to bark for you and desert larks
to sing,
Sunlight down the valley where the heat bat-
talions rally,
And rabbits in the sagebrush, who could want
a finer thing?
Here a thousand cattle
And a snake's dull rattle
And there beside the willow grove there is a
thirsty spring.

Starlight, starlight etched upon the heavens,
Badlands all are silent and the buttes are fast
asleep,
All the world is napping save a lonely coyote yapping,
And frogs a-croaking madly from the banks
of Crazy Creek.
Ranch house dark and quiet,
Starlight all ariot,
The Silence bending, listening to hear the world asleep.

Happy, happy, I'm the one that's happy,
Life is worth the living when you live it in
the West.
Landscapes freshly painted and the atmosphere's
untainted,
You can fairly taste it when you breathe it in
your chest.
Life is worth living,
Love is worth the giving
And worth the pain of getting for it savors
of the West.

His Best

His studio was littered up with scraps
Of sketches and old canvases, dust-drowned.
The best hung on the wall, rare painting all,
Rich colored, wet with mist, spread with sun-
light

And scintillating air. Gray silent buttes
And mesas patterned on a sunset sky;
Or sagebrush flats, deep canyons dreaming-like
And golden deserts; or a rider there
Cut like a statue on the skyline, with
Ranch scenes among the river bottomlands,
Sunrises o'er the badlands, misty moons—
All these were there in stark reality.

So beautiful

In fact these landscapes were, that, as friends
passed

Some could not choose which one they liked the
best.

One day a stranger thrilled beyond compare
Asked of the artist which one was his best.
The artist turned away from work well done,
Gazed on the easel where a canvas hing
Untouched, blank-white and as he studied it
Replied, "my best one is the next."

The Prairie Rose

Oh sing me the song of the prairie rose,
That sweetens the air of June,
And gladdens the heart wherever it grows
With its wealth of beauty, as I suppose
Conveyed in its rich perfume.

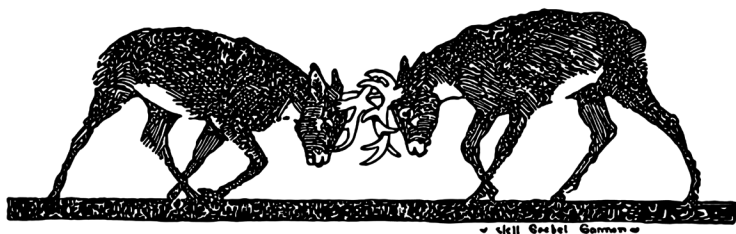
And sing of the rain as it patters down,
The bud and the thorny stalks—
Of the wind as it passes skyward bound,
And scatters perfume in the world around
To gladden our country walks.

Of a bee that came in a gentle swoom,
With pollen over its legs,
Of a bird that warbled an errie tune,
As it fashioned a nest beneath your bloom
Where it laid three speckled eggs.

Then tell me the tale of the pioneer,
Since you must have known it best.
How he came and settled the prairies here
Where the perfume graces the atmosphere
And travels across the West.

And bloom till the reach of the prairies all
 Are starred with your dainty stain
And until gods of the summer call
All the hot winds out and your petals fall
 And wither upon the plain.

And bloom on for aye in the prairie grass
 And bloom in the upturned sod.
As you were the first, you shall be the last
A sign for the Future and all the Past,
 And a message fresh from God.



Back To the Missouri

I've come back to the Missouri, full twenty years
have past
Since I camped here in the timber moons ago,
I've found the open clearing just the way I saw
it last
And the river is the same I used to know.
The wind sings through the cottonwoods the
stars are shining down
And the dipper hangs the way it did of old.
The wind-washed buttes rise near me picturesque
and silver-brown
With the full moon up above a lump of gold.

The campfire leaps and crackles with a rapture
of delight,
And it seems to bring me back the long ago,
The days we were together but I came alone
tonight
Back to visit the old camping ground, and so
I've built another campfire where the old one
used to be,
I have turned the gray-dead ashes back to red,
I've slipped away off yonder in the Land of
Memory
And have plucked the flowers that even now
are dead.

O ho I see the fellows, there they sit across the
fire,
With their faces lit and shadowed by the flame,
Throw in a stick, Kentucky, see the angry flames
leap higher,
Yes and you—have I forgotten your first name.
Its Emil (there I've got it) fishing sure was
tough today,
For we didn't even get a single bite
But bites of the mosquitoes, they were hungry
though, and say,
Ain't the moon up through those trees a pretty
sight.

The sunlight browns our faces and the starlight
gilts our dreams
And good bacon fills our stomachs to the brim,
Our drinking waters muddy with detritus from the
stream
Where the timid little muskrat dives and swims.
We lost some good equipment on the road that
leads from town,
So we split the can of sardines with an axe,
It added to their flavor and the way we got 'em
down
Is a demonstration of the given facts.

Hark—listen to those noises, say the deer are
out tonight,
We can hear them crashing through the under-
brush,
And then the silence thickens with a tremor as
in fright
And the whole wide world is quietude and hush.
The northern lights are leaping through the
temples of the north,
And a falling star drips through the milky way,
The river floats the glimmer of the moon and
takes it forth
On a ride from old Dakota to the bay.

The fire's slowly dying, now there's nothing there
but coals,
And the moon has hurried many miles on
In orbit of its travel, as the journey of our
souls
And my pals of other days where have they
gone?
Its night across the fire—stygian night and dark
and still
Till, alas, I hear a catbird in the brush,
The crows wake in the treetops and the larks
wake on the hill
As the dawn wakes in the eastward with a
blush.

* * * * *

I've come back to the Missouri, the scene is lone-
some now
And is quiet and deserted like to see,
The crows up in the tree-tops, why, they seem to
me, somehow,
To be just as lonesome-like as they can be.
The camping ground still lingers but the grass
has overgrown
And my pals have gone I doubt it God knows
where;
I hope that past the farthest star where comet
dust is blown
There'll be other camping grounds to wait us there.

If I Were There

If I were there, Old Pal—
We'd take the old maps out again,
We'd nestle by the campfire
And we'd shiver in the rain,
We'd sleep beneath the Western sky,
And bake beneath her sun
To find the world just as she
Was when all the stars were young.
We'd ride our ponies up the trails
Beyond the Outland Hills of Care,
Where all life's tears might be effaced—
If I were there.

If I were there, Old Pal—
We'd leave the city streets behind
And travel for the prairies
Where the spaces clear the Mind.
We'd loiter where the cactus blooms
And build our Little Fire
Where Nature wears no makeup
At the Camp of Heart's Desire.
We'd go and stop, and stop and go
Along the trail to Anywhere,
And each regret—we could forget
If I were there.

The Lure of the Badlands

There's land that no artist has painted,
A land that is lonesome with hush,
A land where the air is untainted
By man's sordid civilized stuff.
You'll hunt the world over but nowhere
Is land quite as empty or big.
They all told me never to go there
And visit the place—but I did!

The land is a dream—an allusion;
A mighty fine sample at best
Of what we would term a confusion
Of ruin, and chaos and mess.
The Lord needed rest when he made it
And planned in His Mind He would stop
And left the work just as He laid it
To finish sometime—but forgot!

Its hills they are empty and lonely
Its coulees unpeopled and bare,
Its buttes are for rattlesnakes only
And wolves to go wandering there.
Its made just for outlaws to wander,
A pretty good place to forget,
I've tried,—but the silence out yonder
Is pleading and calling me yet.

I've followed its bleak desolation,
The antelope's trail and the deer,
I've listened in mute hesitation
To silence I almost could hear.
I've watched the sun sink, but I look yet
And dream of the place it has gone.
To lands which have never known footstep
And air which has never been drawn.

Its masculine rivers are tawny,
Its God inspired ranges are crude,
Its big valleys mother the brawny
But don't give a hang for the dude.
Its somehow a land of damnation
Without an excuse or amend.
Its been since the first of creation
Its put there to be to the end!

Oh you of strong masculine gender,
You badlands, vast, luring and still,
No painter has painted your splendor
Its safe to say no painter will.
I've heard your last call for I'm coming
Tonight, when the long shadows steal,
I want you to know I'm not bumming,
Its not the sham living—its real!



The Round-Up

The Round-up's hit the town, boys, and there's
sure to be some fun,
The riders all have come today, daredevils every-
one.
They've brought the wildest outlaws here this
side the big divide,
But they can stick to anything that's got a hair
and hide.

There's John Bad-Finger, you may know, he's
handy with the gun,
And fighting Jack from Fond du Lac, oh he's a
wicked one.
They best bull dogger on the range is Long Horn
Texas Joe,
He's here along with all the rest, Pawnee and half
breed Crow.

And Kate O'Brien came along, no better way they
tell,
To ride the roughest bronco horse from here to
Kalispel.
In high top boots and jingling spur she'll rope
the Texas steers,
And hog-tie the in fifty-nine amid the throng-
ing cheers.

They've gathered in from out the endless acres of
the Sioux,
From up the old Milk River there is Glasgow's
"Flying U,"
And down from Miles City there's the Powder
River clan
And all fearless riders they are up from old
Cheyenne.

While others from the badlands hail from old
Medora town,
They've ridden lonely ranges, aye, for miles and
miles around,
Where the coyotes run with bounty and sage and
cactus grow
And in the winter-time its all of forty-nine below.

They've got the old stage coaches out they used
in eighty-three
And Indian tepees in a row as thick as they can
be;
While prairie schooners bear of old the words,
"In God we Trust,"
And just below it is inscribed, "Dakota or we
bust."

How sweet it is to live again the days that long
have gone
Adown the winding pathway that our sires have
trod upon,
Toward the yellow sandhills where the western
sunsets burn
Above the land which beckons and from which is
no return.

To us it is a romance to recall the older frontier
When buffalo and antelope instead of us were
here,
And Indians had dominion in the yesteryear be-
fore
The white man came and civilized the West that
is no more.

So tanned with bronze of cattleland, their rugged
cheeks aglow
They boys are in from far and wide, in chaps and
sombbrero.
You'll see them all about the town, a jolly bunch
are they,
The Roundup's here and there'll be fun tomorrow,
Hip-horay!



The Magpie

Sprite of the air, true symbol of the West,
Comrade of buttes, ravines and prairie streams,
First cousin to the winds, a citizen
Through summer's heat and winter's cold extremes,
With sunlit days and silver-plated nights
O'errun with dreams.

A noisy bird you are, with coat of black
And shining white, you wing above the trees
With rudder-tail strung out behind, and dip
Into the cottonwoods; while memories
Drift down from other years like myriads
Of falling leaves.

The copper sun sets flattened on a butte,
The cattle line the trail with smoking feet.
A rider silhouettes against the sky,
The magpies chatter from the wooded creek
And one by one the silver stars jut out,
And night-birth is complete!



A Sunset

The sun a tired traveler drops its head,
Behind the pine divide that rims the sky
Spilling its dyes of scintillating light
Upon the copper curtain of the sky.
Long trailing shafts of gold streak through the
dry
Invigorating air. The world is hushed
In prayerlike quietude, the lonely buttes
Stand silhouetted darkly on the sky.

The amber tints suffuse; the thirsty night
Drinks deep of color and the silence grows
Until a star-fire burns upon the dusk
And then, down coulees drained of any light,
The coyote yelps his welcome to the moon.
While I ride slowly down the canyon trail
Contended with the beauty of the world
And feel a little more in harmony
And Oneness with the Plan.

Nothing to Me

It is nothing to me that your eyes are blue,
 As prairie skies when the day is new,
 While the new-born winds are tripping through.
It is nothing to me that your dusk-drowned hair
 Is kissed by the sunshine unaware,
 Framing a face that is far too fair,
 Nothing to me at all.

It is nothing to me that you sing superb,
 As love-lost notes of the mocking-bird,
 (For you voice evades the written word.)
It is nothing to me that you love the sun
 Spread over the sagebrush flats, that run
 Into the buttes. You are only one,
 And nothing more to me.

It is nothing to me that I kissed you twice,
But a kiss is cheap at any price,
 And a stolen one is always nice.
It is nothing to me that the moon was bright,
 Painting the hills with a silver light,
 And you said you loved me too that night
 Under the watching stars.

It is nothing to me that you rode with him
 Instead of me to the canyon's rim,
 (Ah why are the stars so strangely dim?)
It is nothing to me, though I heard you call,
 I would not look. It is evenfall
 And the years have fled, but after all
 I can't forget—*not you!*



— Nell Goodel Gannett —

Song of Leaving

Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
The moon in the purple is starting to creep
Above the ravines where the little winds sleep,
And each blade of grass is beginning to weep
 'Cause I'm leaving Dakota tonight.

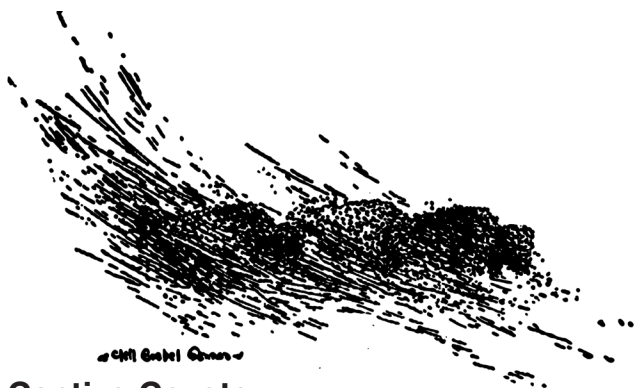
Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
For a man can't fatten on alkali tea
Or fill up on sagebrush, though cooked perfectly,
And eat cactus pudding at twenty and three,
 So I'm leaving Dakota tonight.

Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
I've turned my horse loose out on Nobody's Plains
(But promised to saddle his backbone again)
And left him to shift through the sun and the
 rains,
 For I'm leaving Dakota tonight.

Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
I'm coming again to my prairies sometime,
But now I am going—God knows it's a crime,
I've got to get money, I haven't a dime,
 So I'm leaving Dakota tonight.

Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
God knows I'll get lonesome before I come back
For all of my plains and my old pony's track,
For everything worthy that every man lacks
 Who is leaving Dakota tonight.

Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight, I am
 Oh I'm leaving Dakota tonight.
The prairies have got me and got me outright,
I'm leaving my heart in Dakota tonight,
I can't take it with me—*I haven't the might!*
 And I'm leaving Dakota tonight.



To A Captive Coyote

I wonder if you're happy in your artificial living,
 With your food and drink provided you, galore.
I wonder if you like it, and I wonder if its giving
 You the old unfettered happiness of yore.
Or would you rather tramp the trail of burning
 thirst and hunger,
 In the sage-brush where the sunlight filters
 through,
To roam across the ranges that you knew when
 you were younger
 With the pangs of curst starvation gnawing you.

I wonder if you ever dream of purple plains be-
 yond you,
 Rolling restless in the morning's pearly-gray,
A wonderous land expanded as the crimson-tinted
 dawn grew
 Into daylight from the far foothills of the day.
I see you, sometimes, gazing with a sad and empty
 longing
 To the level prairies where the west wind plays
Its wild and calling music that forevermore is
 thronging
 All the bunch-grass acres where the cattle graze.

I wonder if you ever crave the freedom of the
 ranges
Or the vast and unfenced bigness of it all,
The alkalis' white reaches and the badland's many
 changes
And above it all to sound your challenge call?
That all the wild could hear it and the cowboy in
 his dreaming
Might arouse, and hearken to the weird strain
And watch his herds for stampede with the camp-
 fire lowly gleaming
From his little bivoac upon the plains.

I asked you if you ever dream of evening moonlight
 haunted,
And of nights that sprinkle star-dust o'er the
 vast,
Of deserts dipped in silver where the wild-life
 runs undaunted
In its happy hunted, hunting grounds of a loveliness
 unbroken
To know the unspoiled beauty of a loveliness unbroken
 In a land that never knew a fence or chain,
The glory of an open where man's words are
 seldom spoken
In a world of scorching sun and driving rain.

I know your wordless answer by the way you are
 ignoring
All the questions that I now direct at you,
The wind is in the sagebrush, and the cattle
 men are snoring
In the sod bunk shanties of the D-Z-2.
Your eyes are always watching, never sleeping,
 always waiting
For the old free life which nevermore returns
I see your gaze a-turning, for a moment, tired of
 hating
Out toward the East to see the sunrise burn.

The Upland Plover

Thru long, long months of winter's reign I wait
For Spring's advance, the honking of the geese,
The cranes' far bugle from the clouds, the bloom
Of purple Pasque flowers clothed in nature's fleece.
Yet Spring is not complete until I hear
The plover's note ring thru the atmosphere.

I hear a loud, clear whistle from the hills,
I startle and a thrill creeps thru my heart,
And youth dreams back across departed years
As when friends meet who long have been apart.
The notes repeat, a something my soul
In an enchantment that surpasses art.

Bird of the prairie grass you are my friend,
We both are dwellers of the plains, we love
The perfumed breezes thru the huddled grass,
The sun, the stars—that keep their watch above;
The unplowed acres reaching for the sky,
The days that dawn and wax and wane and die.

So when the Fall air blues the smoky buttes,
And nights grow crisp, as hurried suns have set;
When from my plains I miss your liquid call
And Winter comes, I shall be sad and yet
I know next Spring the still small voice shall speak.
Of northern lands *and you will not forget.*

Adieu

I've had my fill of city life and city streets, you bet,
And it in turn has had enough of me.
I've settled up my 'count book and I haven't
one regret

The way that things have happened—let it be.
I'm going to stake my future in the ranges of the
West,

The kingdom of the pony and the cow,
The city has its features but I like the prairies best
They're wanting me to listen to them now.

The slim coyote is creeping up the draw below the
hill

The meadowlark is singing that its June,
The dawn has streaked the azure and has set the
east athrill,

The prairie rose is wasting its perfume.
The only Missouri River it has broke up its ice.

The dead bunch-grass is quite a living thing.
The wild geese up above have split the silence,
once or twice

And ushered in the drama christened Spring.

I know the thirsty prairies they are drinking up
the rains,

I know the wheat is greening in the sun,
I know the bawling cattle they have taken to the
plains

And I will tramp the trail they have begun.
I know the grouse has mated and the eggs are
 in the nest,
I know the lanky she-wolf's pups are young,
I know the white jack-rabbit has put on a gray
 vest
To match the somber sage it hides among.

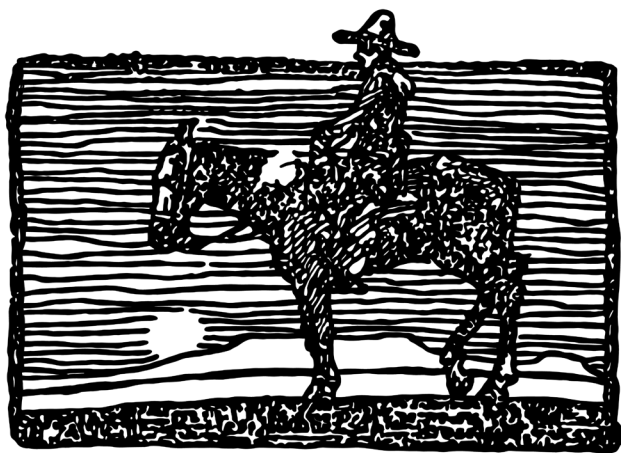
There's still a colt unbroken waiting for the bit
 and spur,
There's still an empty saddle in the shed,
There's still a range that reaches out to meet the
 distant blur,
And mother earth, at evening, for a bed.
There's still a little campfire gleaming at the edge
 of dusk,
A pail of coffee sizzling on the flame,
There's still a cloudless heaven brooding o'er the
 hatching hush,
And set with stars we never knew by name.

And don't you know the shanty that is setting by
 the creek?
The rocky trail that leads you to the door?
And don't you know the prodigal has started in
 to seek,
The welcome there to leave it nevermore.
And don't you know the river, and the glory of
 the trail,
The little sunburned town upon the hill?
And don't you know the grocery where we went
 to get the mail
But never got none yet—nor never will!

I know a voice is calling where the sentry star-
 eyes nod,
 And glint their nervous tremor form the sky.
I've caught the earthly vision, and I'll live upon
 the sod
 And I shall sleep beneath it when I die.
The thousand silver voices blend in chorus for
 me now,
 They're testing me to find if I am true,
I'm not the breed to fail them and it doesn't
 matter how
 I go—just so I get there, and ADIEU!

Envoi

I am thinking, dear, of you—
As I gaze into the blue
Of the hills against the mesa's purple-grey;
And in the twilight hush
That turns pink the grey sagebrush,
There's a thought for you with each departing ray.



A Short Account of a Rowboat Journey From Medora to Bismarck

Clell Gannon

In June, 1925, the writer in company with George Will and Russell Reid of Bismarck completed a rowboat journey down the Little Missouri River from Medora to its mouth at Elbowoods and thence down the Missouri River to Bismarck. The journey covered approximately 350 miles by water and was accomplished in 13 days, the limit of our vacation period.

Our boat was an 18-footer, built especially for the trip, of the flat bottom type which, when supporting a weight of about 1000 pounds drew 5 inches of water. It was christened the Hugh Glass, after the intrepid trapper of the early fur trading days, whose adventurous career has become one of the classics of western frontier life.

Our equipment consisted of a 7x7 miner's tent, a waterproof sleeping bag for each member of the party, food, clothing, several cameras with auxiliary equipment and maps. The maps carried were those of the Missouri River Commission published in 1894 and plat maps of each township from Medora to Bismarck, which we had prepared from available sources. The latter maps were drawn in waterproof India ink and bound in full pigskin.

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There was no particular motive for the trip. It was a vacation and done for the mere joy of it, although back of it all was a passionate love for the Bad Lands and the Missouri River, and an intense interest in ornithology, geology, archeology, and the historic associations with which the region is especially rich.

Our project was not altogether a new one. The journey down the Little Missouri and the Missouri Rivers has probably been made a number of times before by the fur traders and adventurers of the early nineteenth century and perhaps many times by the Indians before them. Undoubtedly the first white man to ever make the voyage was Baptiste Le Page, who came down the Little Missouri from the Black Hills in the summer of 1804, and presumably down the Missouri as far as the Indian Villages and the Knife River. It was at that point he became a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition filling the vacancy created by the dismissal of John Newman on a charge of insubordination. Clark records in his journal for April 12th, 1805, that Le Page's voyage was accomplished in 45 days and remarks that the Little Missouri flows through broken country along its entire course. We who know the rugged character of the Bad Lands along the Little Missouri, would consider that the latter part of his statement puts it mildly.

Our first camp was made at Medora, around which hovers memories of Marquis de Mores and Theodore Roosevelt. The chateau on the west bank of the river and the smokestack of the packing plant on the Medora side remain sadly reminiscent of the Frenchman's visions.

The morning of June 7th dawned with a drizzling rain which detained us in camp until noon. Though the rain had not abated our restlessness got the better of us and we broke camp and started down the river in the rain. The Bad Lands viewed in the rain take on a weird beauty, hard lines are suffused and obliterated, distances are clothed in a mystery and indefinable beauty and the colors, always predominant in the Bad Lands, seem to be intensified and brightened. A few miles downriver we reached Olson's Peaceful Valley Ranch and wet, hungry,

and chilled we were glad to utilize one of the cabins and to feast at the ranch table. That night at Olson's ranch was the only night of the entire journey spent under roof, and our meals there were the only ones not cooked over the campfire.

The following morning the rain had ceased but the sky was covered with dark and ominous clouds. We hiked to Sheep Creek, a tributary of the Little Missouri, which we had passed on our way out from Medora and a few miles up from the mouth located some bull pines (*pinus scopulorum*) which Mr. Olson had directed us to. This is probably the northern limit of the range of this tree in North Dakota.

In the afternoon we continued down the river, going into camp that night opposite the mouth of Ash Creek or Coulee, after having passed the Parker Ranch some miles back. This was formerly the Wadsworth Ranch and, we were told by the people there, the first cattle ranch in the Bad Lands.

At noon the next day, June 9th, we lunched at Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch house site, located about 40 miles by river below, or north of Medora. All that remained of the old house was a few log sills and foundation stones, as well as a flat doorstone still in position. This doorstone has since been moved to the Bismarck Capitol grounds and placed in front of Roosevelt's Maltese Cross or Chimney Butte cabin. The latter cabin was originally located on Roosevelt's ranch a few miles south or up from Medora. Camp was made that night opposite the mouth of Beaver Creek, the largest tributary of the Little Missouri. Howard Eaton, whose VI Ranch was located here was Roosevelt's closest neighbor at Elkhorn Ranch about eight miles distant. It was at the mouth of Beaver Creek that "Flopping Bill" and his vigilante party made their first raid, having as their object a rancher who had recently settled there.

The next day Magpie and Bicycle (originally Beicegal) creeks were passed, and we went into camp two miles below the mouth of the latter creek. One township thru which we traversed that day required traveling 14 miles to cross on account of the windings of the river. All day, the 11th, the river ran swiftly between narrow banks. At many places there was such a large number of snags that it was difficult to find a passage and upon one occasion we rammed a snag, but without accident or injury to the boat. We reached the vicinity of Redwing Creek for noon. The scenery all the way

had been sensational, and every bend of the river brought the unexpected, however, to our way of thinking none of it quite equaled the Redwing Creek country in scenic grandeur. Rain and wind had washed the buttes into grotesque and weird shapes. Cedar dotted the slopes, and sagebrush covered the river flats, adding variety to the soft purples, yellows, and greys of the buttes. We took a number of pictures in this vicinity and continued on passing Bennett and Corral creeks on the right, going into camp a little below the first Squaw Creek (there are two tributaries of the Little Missouri by this name). It was an ideal camp site. Deer trails threaded the woods back of camp, and a number of trees nearby had been felled by beaver, the largest of which measured 51 inches in circumference near the point of cutting. While we were eating our evening meal a beaver swam down the center of the stream past our camp.

Early on the morning of June 12th we passed two ferries. At noon we reached a point a little above Crosby Creek, which with its tributaries drains north and west of the Killdeer Mountains. We attempted to climb the high buttes, rising five or six hundred feet above the river, the southern slopes barren, fretted and precipitous, the northern slopes partly covered with groves of cedar. A sudden thunderstorm, however, sent us clamoring back to our boat, sliding down the butte sides which, when wet, become slippery as grease. After proceeding down the river we had an opportunity of viewing a large landslide of a riverbank which had been undermined by the river and loosened by the recent rain. Many tons of earth slipped into the river sending the water away in huge rolls that would certainly capsize any rowboat that might be caught in its grasp. Ever after we kept our distance from cutbanks. We went into camp that night a few miles above Cherry Creek. For want of a better location we were forced to pitch our tent on a sandbar but spent a comfortable night. A black headed grosbeak entertained us until dark, after which a chat carried on the tune, or what it could imitate of it.

Early in the morning we passed Cherry Creek which enters the Little Missouri a mile above its original mouth by means of a cut-off. This creek has a wide valley, which in pre-glacial times, with Tobacco Garden Creek, was the course of the Little Missouri into the Missouri River. When the glacier blocked that portion of its course it was diverted into an easterly

direction forming the valley that it now occupies. At noon we reached a point directly north of the Killdeer Mountains and climbed the high river bluffs, through heavy thickets of black birch, aspen, and oak, to view them some eight or ten miles to the south. The view from the top overlooking a canyon-like reach of the Little Missouri was of the kind that gains little and suffers much from the inadequacy of a written description. To the south the breaks of the Bad Lands faded into a rolling plain which reached away to the Killdeers, looming blue against the sky. To the east the river stretched in serpentine curves for miles, bordered by a fringe of cottonwoods. To the north and west the Bad Lands toppled and rolled, seemingly without order or design until lost in the blue haze that melted into the horizon. Large, white cumulus clouds floated motionless in the deep blue above, casting intricate patterns of sun and shadow across a vast expanse of land dripping with color.

Gazing away to the Killdeers brought to our minds Sully's battle with the Sioux which was fought at the foot of these interesting mesas in July 1864. It was into the very Bad Lands around us that the Indians took flight and Sully, unable to follow, abandoned the pursuit. It was also in this vicinity that Roosevelt in 1886 came upon the thieves who had stolen his boat, and, capturing them, took them overland to Dickinson for arrest. It was Roosevelt's original intention to take them to Mandan by boat but, on account of ice gorges, was forced to abandon that plan.

That night camp was made between Elk and Jim's Creek.

June 14th was a hard day on the river. As we had been having an unusual amount of rain we encountered little trouble in finding sufficient water to keep us afloat, but below Jim's Creek the Little Missouri spread out over a broad floor, nowhere more than a few inches deep. We were compelled to pull our boat over sandbars much of that afternoon and progress was accordingly slow. The scenery now began to lose much of its ruggedness and color, the valley became broader, the hills more massive and less sheer; which type of scenery continued practically until we reached the Missouri River bottoms. Hans Creek, that day, seemed almost a delusion. Several times we believed we had come to it but each time the river failed to turn north according to our maps. However late

in the afternoon we finally reached it. Here the river spread out over most of the section, after which it turned north abruptly, narrowed down and ran swiftly. Our night's camp was made within the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

People were scarce along the upper river. The ranchers that dwelt occasionally along the lower river were absent here, and the ranches we did see were, for the most part, deserted. After we reached the Indian Reservation we saw a few Indians, but not many. The country through which we had been passing had changed but very little since Le Page had made his voyage one hundred and twenty-one years before.

It was with something of a thrill that we entered the Missouri River on the afternoon of the next day, June 15th. In fantasy we could see it peopled with the explorers, fur traders, and adventurers of other days in mackinaw or keel, or Indians in their bull boats of skin. Lewis and Clark, Maximilian, Catlin, Ashley, Lisa, Colter, Glass and scores of others passed by in pageant fashion. Soon we, too, were caught in its clutch and hurried along in the swirl of the June flood. We landed on the opposite shore near the ferry landing and hiked up to the town of Elbowoods a few miles back from the river. Elbowoods consists of the Indian agency buildings, the Congregational Mission, and a few stores and dwellings. It was the first town we had reached since leaving Medora two hundred miles back, by way of the river—and it was still forty miles to the nearest railroad! While at Elbowoods we called at the Hall Mission. Rev. C. L. Hall began his work among the Fort Berthold Indians, comprising the Hidatsa, Arikara, and Mandan tribes, in 1876 having come up from Yankton on a boat which also carried supplies for General Custer then stationed at Fort Abraham Lincoln near Bismarck. Dr. Hall is still at his post and in 1926 celebrated the 50th anniversary of his arrival. His has been a grand and glorious work with few rivals in the history of missions.

We camped that night on the Elbowoods side of the river across from a bluff on the opposite shore which was the site of a Hidatsa village and, according to their tradition, was once besieged by the Sioux who expected to reduce the Hidatsa water supply and win an easy victory. They, however, had learned of the proposed attack and had dilled rock lines reservoirs with water carried from the river. After several

days the Sioux made a grand assault only to be strenuously repulsed, after which the Hidatsa rolled down a skin of water. This so discouraged the Sioux, as the story goes, that they abandoned the fight and withdrew their forces.

We left our camp at Elbowoods shortly before noon on the sixteenth, passing Fort Berthold and Like-a-fish-hook village, though there was no evidence to be seen from the river of these places. Like-a-fish-hook village was the last village to be occupied by the Berthold Indians. It was established after the abandonment of the Knife River Villages, following the smallpox epidemic of 1837. It was at this village that Dr. Hall began his missionary work in 1876. That night we camped between Ree and Expansion.

The following morning, we passed Expansion on the south. It was at this point that Manuel Lisa once maintained a trading post. At noon we had lunch near the mouth of Snake Creek, near which was located Ft. Stevenson. Continuing on old Coal Harbor and Mannhaven were passed, and we reached the Knife River late in the afternoon, which was entered by means of a cut-off. Here we camped for the night.

Early in the morning we began an inspection of the Indian villages formerly located here, and at which place the Indians were living when visited by Lewis and Clark, Maximilian, Catlin, Henry, and others of that time. A short distance upriver we came to the lower Hidatsa village. It was here that Charbonneau and Sakakawea lived when Lewis and Clark secured them to accompany the expedition to the coast. Maximilian, who spent the winter of 1833-34 near these villages (at Ft. Clark), found Charbonneau still living here and he records that he had then resided among these villages for 37 years. The upper, or main Hidatsa village, was located a couple of miles farther up the Knife.

The town of Stanton, county seat of Mercer County, is situated on the Knife River about a mile below the lower Hidatsa village and the courthouse is located on a part of the Awaxawi village, a small tribe which was closely related to the Hidatsa.

All forenoon was spent among these interesting ruins, now grown over with weeds and wild roses, after which we slipped back down the Knife and out into the Missouri, dropping down to old Fort Clark about seven miles by river

below Stanton. One of the Mandan villages was located at the present river elevator of Deapolis and another immediately north of old Fort Clark. A little above this place Lewis and Clark built their Fort Mandan and spent the winter of 1804-5. Nothing is left of the old fort, the exact location having since been washed into the river.

Fort Clark, near the present town by the same name, was named after William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Its exact location is in the northwest corner of Sec. 36, T. 144, R. 84. It was one of the most important fur-trading posts on the Missouri River and was established in 1831 by the American Fur Company. Remains of the stone fireplaces, slight excavations and the scars of the stockade wall are still plainly in evidence.

Proceeding on with our journey we arrived at Washburn, county seat of McLean Country and old river town, where we tied up because of high head winds which made travel slow and dangerous. Later in the evening the wind subsided, and we resumed our journey, passing Sanger on our left and shortly after on the same side a formation of land marked on the Missouri River Commission maps as "Pretty Point," well known by all river men. We went in to camp on the east side of the Missouri in Burleigh Country a few miles below Sanger. This was our last camp on the trip.

The next day we passed the Burgois or Double-Ditch Indian village (Sec. 21, T. 140, R. 81) and a couple of miles below that we came to the mouth of Square Butte Creek. At noon the railroad and vehicle bridges at Bismarck appeared in sight and shortly after we landed at the Bismarck water plant, having completed our 350-mile river voyage.

It had been a most worthwhile vacation. Geo. Will, who has traveled extensively, remarked that he had seen nothing in the way of scenery to surpass that along the Little Missouri. Of all else the Bad Lands are first of all a land of color. Verendrye the younger, who in 1742 was probably the first white man, together with the other members of his party, to see the Bad Lands of North Dakota, took note of that fact and recoded in his journal:

"I noticed in several places soils of different colors such as blue, a vermillion shade, meadow green, shining

black, chalk white and others the color of ochre."

The bird life was varied and interesting. The most common birds among the Little Missouri were the black headed grosbeaks, oven birds, mourning doves, red headed woodpeckers, whip-poor-wills, long tailed chats, great blue herons, spotted sandpipers, and towhees. A number of golden eagles, great horned owls, and turkey buzzards were seen; and one cinnamon teal, quite rare in North Dakota, was observed on a sandbar. The black headed grosbeaks are matchless singers and entertained us at every camp. The chars were always on the job, singing day and night, rain and shine, and nowhere have I found the oven birds more common or persistent in their song than on the Little Missouri. At least one great blue heron occupied about every bend of the river and on one occasion there were as many as five. All these birds but the whip-poor-will and cinnamon teal were heard or seen on the Missouri.

Few mammals were observed. Both jack rabbits and cottontails were seen. Coyotes were heard almost every night and once in the daytime. Beaver were quite common and a number of them were seen along the little Missouri. Beaver workings were observed along both rivers. The pale chipmunk was common among the Bad Lands buttes, evidence of packrats was seen in the caves and prairie dog towns were occasionally seen. Porcupine gnawing were observed on the pines on Sheep Creek. While crossing a strip of woodlands between the Missouri River and Fort Clark a doe and a fawn were jumped at different times and each dashed away. Deer trails were common at nearly every camp along both rivers.

On the river bottomlands the cottonwoods were the most common trees. Box elders, ash, and elm were also common. On the buttes, particularly on the north slopes, cedars grew in profusion. Aspen groves were also frequent. The prickly pear, wild rose, yucca, and pentstemon were the most common flowers. The mentzelia and gumbo lily had not yet bloomed.

The geology of the Bad Lands region is intensely interesting. Erosion, wind and the burning out of lignite beds are agencies constantly at work sculpturing new and intricate forms the coal beds and petrified stumps tell a story of the centuries gone by, and the cutting of the river gives wonderful

cross-sections into the earth's secrets/ brick-red scoria, resulting from the action of heat from the burning lignite on the clay above and below, forms one of the most characteristic colors of the Bad Land landscape.

Altogether our journey had been a most delightful one, and our experiences along the river are those that will live with us always in memory. We hope, in the not distant future, to again make the voyage except that next time we shall embark at Marmarth and take at least a month for the journey.

Acknowledgements

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