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College President to Cattle Town Editor: Asa Mercer
And Frontier Journalism on the Northern Plains

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Abstract

This research looks at cattle town newspapers of the Old West by considering the career of one frontier editor, Asa Shinn Mercer. Mercer became a newspaper editor and publisher after leaving the University of Washington. He eventually published the *Northwestern Live Stock Journal* in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. Beginning with this editor, the research examines other primary and secondary sources to find connections with significant but less-researched cattle town newspapers on the northern plains: the *Yellowstone Journal*, *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, *Black Hills Daily Times*, and *Sturgis Weekly Record*. These cow town papers are examined for and their attitude toward cowboy culture and the range cattle business. The researcher discovered cow town newspapers did not reflect the industry in a similar manner, possibly based on their location and patronage of cattlemen.

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College President to Cattle Town Editor: Asa Mercer and Frontier Journalism on the Northern Plains

Introduction

As a Seattle, Washington, pioneer, Asa Shinn Mercer is notable for two roles credited to him as a young man: He was first president of the University of Washington, and he brought hundreds of single women from New England to marry lonely West Coast men. As a tribute to his memory in popular culture, a 1960s television series, “Here Come the Brides,”¹ celebrated two seasons of amusing stories based (more or less) on Mercer’s two trips east to bring women to Seattle in 1864 and 1866.²

As it turned out, reality was slightly exaggerated. Mercer was hired as the first teacher at what became the University of Washington. Because the man selected to be first president declined to serve, Mercer as senior (and only) instructor seems to have acted as leader by default until the university briefly closed in 1863 for lack of students.³ As for his brides-for-the-brutes project, true, but only about 75 women, and not 300, as he often later stated, traveled west.⁴

But Mercer’s enhanced retelling of his achievements seems unremarkable in the hyperbolic age in which he lived, and in particular, in the industry in which he spent the largest share of his prime working years. The industry was journalism, and the location was the frontier American West. Mercer became one of the most colorful of newspaper editors on the northern plains, certainly one of the most well known, but he was one of a colorful pantheon. On the western frontier, newspaper editors followed or in some cases preceded settlement. They came from the East for adventure, perhaps, for profit, definitely. Their experiences and contributions to journalism history have been fairly well documented, particularly in the West Coast and

Southwest.⁵

The frontier journalism in the northern plains—specifically Wyoming, Montana, and Dakota territories—has been somewhat less amply examined,⁶ and so will be the focus of this research. This article relies on traditional research methods in historical research to consider a specific niche of American frontier journalism, cattle town newspapers, in a specific geographical location, the cattle drive regions of the northern plains, during a particular time period, the boom years of the Old West long drive era, 1879-1887. The cattle drives that brought Texas beeves north after the U.S. Civil War reached Wyoming, the Dakotas, and Montana in the late 1870s. By 1880 it had become the fashionable way to invest, widely publicized not only in the Eastern press, but as far abroad as Britain and France.⁷ Money poured onto the ranges, as cattle moved onto the northern plains recently vacated by Indians (moved to reservations) and buffalo (slaughtered). By 1885 members of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, most powerful of the cattlemen’s groups, represented two million head worth \$100 million.⁸ As one western scholar concluded, “It is doubtful whether any other aspect of western economic development held the same fascination for Americans in the 1880s as did the range cattle industry.”⁹

Cattle town newspapers played a central role in their frontier towns during this period. For this research, cattle town newspapers are defined as newspapers published in, or as near as possible to, grasslands of importance to cattlemen and cowboys. By the 1880s, significant northern plains cattle towns included Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory; Deadwood, Sturgis and Medora, Dakota Territory; and Miles City, Montana Territory. These were among the later cow

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towns during the long drive era; southern rail heads such as Abilene and Dodge City earlier came to cattle prominence and perhaps greater fame. Some evidence indicates the big cattlemen bankrolled and controlled some of the press in these earlier cow towns.¹⁰ But what about the later cow towns, as the drives moved farther north? The researcher will examine primary and secondary sources in an attempt to answer this question: What was the relationship between cattle town newspapers and the cattle trailing industry during its boom years on the northern plains?

Consulted primary sources include archives of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and Montana Stock Growers Association, along with early published material and newspapers.

Influence of the cow town press

The western frontier press circulated widely back East, its accounts highly influential as America embroidered a myth of the Old West that has endured for a century. Widespread press exchanges gave cow town newspapers influence far beyond their circulations, and encouraged eastern writers to go west themselves to report on the cattle boom. A collection of newspaper articles chronicling the western exploits of Dakota cattle country entrepreneur Marquis de Morès, for example, includes the *New York Sun*, *Journal*, *World*, and *Times*; *Detroit Free Press*; *Boston Leader and Herald*; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*; and other eastern dailies.¹¹ Numerous European newspapers, such as *Le Temps*, then France's most important daily, reprinted accounts of Old West cattle barons and cowboys.¹² The cattle town newspapers often boasted repeatedly of wide circulation back east; "Scarcely a mail arrives without one to a dozen letters or postcards, asking for the paper or for information best supplied by the *Times*," wrote the Deadwood daily's editor, Porter Warner.¹³ While publishers during this period generally kept circulations secret, the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* made an exception. In 1884 it declared its circulation to be 520—in a town of 261.¹⁴ Packard and other cow town editors hired agents to board the trains as they passed through town, or to promote papers back East.

The most productive peddlers could win prizes and bonuses.¹⁵ The *New York Times* twice acknowledged the tiny cow town weekly in Medora, noting the cattle town had "a real live newspaper, called the *Bad Lands Cowboy* [*sic*], with Mr. G. [*sic*] Packard, formerly of Chicago, editor, and is destined before long to become one of the greatest points along the whole line of the Northern Pacific Railroad for the shipping of dressed beeves to Chicago."¹⁶

The stories could attract such international attention that Wyoming's "Johnson County War" of 1892 reached the front pages of most American newspapers, including those as far away as Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁷ The theme of cattle kings versus nesters played to a growing Populist sentiment in late-nineteenth century America, the barons against the little guys, as related in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and other newspapers during the time.¹⁸ The Old West of the cattle drive era grew to become a central myth of American culture, a collective experience that still resonates into a new century.¹⁹

The romance of the era, and its political overtones, attracted some eastern readers, but the attraction for others was practical. Gilded Age capitalists had acquired a considerable pool of riches; they were looking for investment opportunities. Cattle trailing industry promoters promised a 30-40 percent return a year. "Huge demand needs huge supply," according to an 1884 report in *Harper's Monthly*,²⁰ and by then 2.5 million head had been shipped by rail from western cow towns to Chicago slaughterhouses for processing. Eastern tycoons, as well as magnates from Scotland, England and France, poured money into the cattle trailing industry. These cattle barons, as cow town newspaper editors called them,²¹ hoped to grow their fortunes by hiring an estimated 35,000 cowboys, wranglers and cooks during the long drive years of 1867-1886.²² To keep track of these enormous investments, they relied on mailed subscriptions of cattle town newspapers.

Scope

It is important to note that this selection of cattle town newspapers represents a slice of the many frontier newspapers that lived and died on

the northern plains. Four dailies were published in Deadwood alone during this period. For purposes of this research, the author has tried to achieve significance and diversity by choosing the largest dailies of Miles City and Deadwood; a cattle paper at the farthest eastern edge of the cattle regions, in Medora; a weekly close to a key cattle trailhead in Sturgis; and the most important regional special-interest weekly for cattlemen, in Cheyenne, published by the most well-known cattle town editor of the time. A few comments by a cattle town editor in Laramie, Bill Nye, also are included, as he was another celebrity cow town editor of the time, and because his articles were widely reprinted throughout the country.

The article begins by examining the influence of the most enduringly famous cow town editor, Asa Shinn Mercer, in the most important of northern plains cow towns, Cheyenne, Wyoming. Based on Mercer's influence farther north, it moves to examine perhaps the second most important cow town of this region during this time, Miles City. Miles City stock growers included two of the era's most famous who established operations in northwestern Dakota Territory: the Marquis de Morès and Theodore Roosevelt. Their friend and associate A. T. Packard, who published the newspaper, had close business links to southern Dakota Territory at Deadwood, bringing the focus of this research to southern Dakota's Lawrence County. The research compares each paper as a part of cattle town journalism of the northern plains, but individually, as these newspapers were not alike. In fact, editorial approach and content were distinctly different.

The *Northwestern Live Stock Journal*, Cheyenne

Mercer's *Northwestern Live Stock Journal* is today probably the most familiar of the cattle town newspapers. Not only was Mercer an indefatigable self-aggrandizer, but he operated in the most important cattle town of the northern plains. Money and power flowed by Union Pacific Railroad to the Cheyenne Club on Sixteenth Street, at the height of the boom given the nickname "little Wall Street."²³ It was here that the former academic—late from Seattle—

would find his true journalist's voice.

Mercer, an Illinois native, followed two of his brothers to Seattle in 1861,²⁴ apparently not interested in volunteering to fight in the Civil War.²⁵ Following projects of limited success there, Mercer moved to Oregon to try shipping, and for the first time, journalism. One of the few college graduates on the frontier (Franklin College, Athens, Ohio), he believed himself articulate enough to establish a newspaper. But setting the tone for his subsequent journalistic efforts in Texas and Wyoming, Mercer tried not a general newspaper, but niche journalism. He established the *Oregon Granger* in 1873,²⁶ tying fortunes loosely to the growing Granger movement. The venture lasted two years, after which Mercer decided to try writing promotional copy that encouraged settlement in Washington Territory. That also proved to be unsatisfying, so he moved his wife Annie (a former "Mercer girl" he had met on the boat to Seattle) and family to Texas in 1876 to begin a career in frontier journalism that spanned sixteen years and six newspapers.

Mercer apparently edited or published at least five newspapers in northern Texas, all of them around the Red River cattle country.²⁷ It was here that Mercer chased fortune in possibilities of making a journalistic living at the coattails of the apparently enormously profitable cattle trailing industry. Mercer's journalism already specialized in cow country, and he had already moved many times seeking opportunity on the frontier. So it was not surprising that in 1883 he would consider again moving to the new nerve center of the cattle trailing industry, Cheyenne.

Mercer left no memoirs, so what historians know of his arrival in Cheyenne has been gleaned from contemporary newspapers, particularly the Cheyenne *Leader*, in 1884 edited by John F. Carroll. The daily was particularly interested in those who proposed to establish a niche newspaper based solely on cattle interests, and, therefore, a publicity vehicle designed to attract money from cattlemen. In that light, the *Leader* greeted Mercer's arrival by noting the late Texan had "presented himself as greatly knowledgeable about livestock."²⁸ The newspaper

explained that “Mr. Mercer is by profession an editor. His rampant genius had hitherto found vent in the columns of country newspapers in Texas, four at least of which he owned.” It appears Texas journalism had not given Mercer the financial stability he wanted, however, as the *Leader* noted, “like many another ambitious newspaper man, he sadly lacked the usufruct so absolutely essential in every well-regulated newspaper office.”²⁹

Mercer made no apologies, but instead along with his partner, Samuel A. Marney, set out to establish a voice for cattlemen reaching not only to Cheyenne, but throughout northern cattle country. Marney and Mercer had met at a Dodge City, Kansas, cattle meeting, Marney representing the Fort Worth, Texas, *Live Stock Journal* as advertising salesman.³⁰ He and Mercer joined forces, the *Leader* reported, because Marney was able to produce \$200-\$300, allowing the two to establish “a full newspaper outfit on credit” with equipment from St. Louis.³¹ The first issue was produced November 23, 1883.³²

The newspaper (most articles were unsigned during this era) did admit Mercer’s *Northwestern Live Stock Journal* to be of a neat appearance, but indicated its contents consisted mostly of exchanges from other newspapers, “a scrap book publication.”³³ Mercer clearly had concerns larger than peerless journalism. A key to cattle paper success in cow towns was to attract cattlemen to advertise their brands. Cattle companies designed brands to mark their own cattle, registered and protected by territorial law. To make sure others knew which brand belonged to which outfit, newspapers urged them to advertise.

Mercer and Marney grew brand ads at \$12 each to quickly become profitable, according to Mercer. It became “a phenomenal success, the talk of the town,” with every cattle owner buying advertisements, some as large as half a page. Circulation reached 5,000 weekly, “although the number actually paid for was always considerably less.” Mercer boasted he made \$8,000 profit in six months.³⁴ Mercer threw himself into the cattle business, becoming de facto publicist for the powerful Wyoming Stock Growers Association, and so for cattlemen throughout the northern plains. He published

verbatim minutes of stock grower meetings, although so did most other cattle newspapers during this period. Mercer’s journalism went further than his contemporaries could support, however. He was criticized in particular for advocating that “honest men” in the territory should “declare war” against cattle rustlers in Wyoming Territory. J. H. Hayford, editor of the *Laramie Sentinel*, observed Mercer appeared “very benign and patriarchial,” so that “no one would have believed that he was the most blood thirsty monster that ever scuttled a ship or cut a throat.”³⁵ As early as 1884, Mercer was promoting “the hanging noose” for rustlers.³⁶

Mercer’s mercurial temperament would come into full view in 1894, when he published *Banditti of the Plains. Or the Cattlemen’s Invasion of Wyoming in 1892*,³⁷ his turncoat indictment of the Wyoming cattlemen.³⁸ But Mercer’s temperamental self-confidence as cow town editor brought him into costly difficulties soon after his *Live Stock Journal* hit the cow paths. Despite its success, Marney became disenchanted with his role as roving advertising salesman. He was mostly away from Cheyenne, and so meanwhile Mercer set himself up as senior and more important partner able to speak on behalf of the cattlemen. An argument over the newspaper’s bookkeeper, Frank J. Burton, Marney’s brother-in-law, led to Mercer firing the entire staff. Marney hired them back, then left to solicit advertising in Nebraska. On his return he found the newspaper’s staff now consisted of Mercer, his wife, “several youthful members of their family, and a smooth shaven heavily built man who looked like a cattle man, by the name of Trimble, the new bookkeeper.”³⁹

As described in the *Leader*, the argument escalated:

As the scuffle progressed, Mr. Mercer went over the railing with an extreme degree of sullenness. Mr. Marney followed him a close second. When the horizon cleared somewhat it was noted that Mr. Mercer was on top, clawing fiercely, while Mr. Marney was underneath, clawing just as fiercely.”⁴⁰

A crowd of compositors flooded the business office, the foreman, H. W. Moore,

along with Burton and Trimble trying to separate the two. Moore tried to stop Annie Mercer from grabbing a handy spittoon to bean Marney, but as two of the Mercer children, “a girl about ten years of age and a boy somewhat older” threatened with rocks in each hand, Burton let go of Annie. She reclaimed the spittoon and “dealt Marney a terrific blow on the back of the head and lacerating it in a dreadful manner and breaking the spittoon into a dozen fragments.” Dr. J. J. Hunt was summoned; all were horrified at the blood. “The news of the encounter spread like wildfire through the city.”⁴¹

The Mercers pleaded guilty to assault and battery, were fined \$10, and Marney recovered. But he was hardly appeased, demanding Mercer buy out his share of the *Journal*. The newspaper owed money around town, and so creditors sensed a crisis and rushed to collect. F. E. Warren Mercantile Company⁴² demanded payment of \$457.90 for furniture purchased by Marney. Publication was temporarily suspended, and “the overworked shears took a much-needed mid-summer holiday.”⁴³

A *Leader* editorial opined, “The temporary collapse of the scrap book publication known as the *Northwestern Live Stock Journal* furnishes a theme for a few remarks on trade or class papers.” These “trade” papers, as the editor called them, existed primarily as a vehicle for advertising, while news consisted mostly of material borrowed from other papers, “necessarily mildewed with age. It would be ridiculous to assert that any journalistic genius was ever displayed in the original matter.... The fact that it was to represent the stock interest has been proclaimed from the housetops and deeply impressed upon business here.” But, the editor notes, what has it done for the stock industry? “The proprietor claims to have made a mint of money out of the concern, yet in the whole cause of its existence what solitary thing has it done to advance the cattle industry which it claimed to represent?”⁴⁴ The editor noted its only readers were stockmen, so it could not advocate stock business to those who opposed it.

It could be presumed that the *Leader’s* criticism, although perhaps accurate, had behind

it a taint of jealousy; while Mercer and Marney enjoyed enormous success collecting lucrative brand ads, none appeared in the *Leader*. Two days later, the *Leader* affirmed, “Special arrangements have been made whereby the *Sun* and *Leader* of the city will hereafter receive extensive and elaborate reports of everything relating to the cattle industry which may happen beyond the territory.”⁴⁵

Despite the criticism, Mercer did manage to pay off Marney’s share of the business, apparently obtaining a loan from the stock growers association.⁴⁶ By August 1, the former Seattle professor was back in business with his preferred bookkeeper, although it cost him \$2,000 to see Marney leave Cheyenne.⁴⁷

The Yellowstone Journal, Miles City

Two years later the Miles City, Montana, city directory carried this advertisement: “Stock-growers Journal (weekly) S. A. Marney, pub. and prop.”⁴⁸ Marney had decamped up the trail for the second most important cattle town on the northern plains. Miles City was founded in 1878 on the Yellowstone River, named after General Nelson A. Miles. Unlike Cheyenne, it did not at first have access to a railhead, and therefore could only be reached by grueling cross-country stage from Bismarck, Dakota Territory, or by riverboat. The stage cost \$42, but “the journey is too fatiguing for females to undertake.”⁴⁹

Marney’s stock journal never reached the significance his former partner enjoyed in Cheyenne with the *Northwestern Live Stock Journal*. In fact, it was Mercer who was invited to speak at an August 26, 1885, Montana stock growers meeting, representing himself as editor and cattle industry expert.⁵⁰ But other Miles City newspaper editors were not slow in recognizing the potential of cattle in Montana. In response to “constant requests from the east,” Thomson P. McElrath, founder of the daily *Yellowstone Journal* of Miles City, guessed correctly in 1880 that cattle would pour into Montana, and said the area would be generous to the industry.⁵¹

The paper’s interest in cattle grazing came with the very first issues of 1879. This was before eastern Montana became an attraction to the big cattle trailing industry and the big money

that came with it, but the paper noted the area had “splendid stock raising plains in which the famous Montana cattle thrive,” and predicted cattle-raising as sure to be the largest industry there.⁵² The assumption was that the cattle would be raised in Montana, however, and not trailed from Texas. In fact, the newspaper was not initially enthusiastic about the cattle drive industry. As early as January 1881, before the boom from the south, an editorial noted that the range system, that is, letting the cattle forage for themselves during the winter months, would not work and “must be abolished.”⁵³ A letter to the editor added, “This is good stock country, but not in the way people have been led to believe. Stock-raising and farming must go together.”⁵⁴ As late as 1882, the newspaper again warned against the free range system.

But after August 1883, when the Montana Live Stock Exchange was established in Miles City, the newspaper observed that the “city has been swarming with cattle men.”⁵⁵ A total of 20,000 beeves had been trailed to Montana from Texas and Colorado.⁵⁶ Publisher W. D. Knight was swept into the frenzy, as reported in the minutes of the Montana cattlemen’s convention in October: “On motion, W. D. Knight, of the *Yellowstone Journal*, was elected an honorary member.”⁵⁷

Although it repeatedly declared its intention to give a true and accurate picture of the industry, The *Journal* after this date made no more statements in opposition to free-range cattle trailing until after the disastrous winter of 1886-87. The editor, in contrast, warned “grangers” against trying to hinder the drives, saying those who “throw wire fences across the drives with the penny-wise idea that they will get a bonus from the cattle men and roll up dollars for their necessities” can only harm the prosperity of the region.⁵⁸

Of the newspapers examined here, the *Journal* came down with the most serious case of cowmanitis. By October it was using cattle metaphors in its headlines, and an engraving of a steer and a horse on its upper corners.⁵⁹ Published minutes of the Montana Stock Growers Association included repeated proclamations thanking the newspaper for its services, and

inviting its reporters to future meetings. In one case Knight was credited with arranging a large cattle deal. Lucrative cattle brand advertisements exploded, from three in May 1883, to sixty-two, two years later. By May 1886 brand ads had grown to dominate space, with 113.⁶⁰ In an editorial, the editor apologized. He admitted the newspaper was becoming an “advertising sheet,” and promised to enhance news coverage to compensate.⁶¹

While several outside warnings of overstocking the Montana plains did reach the *Journal’s* pages,⁶² the newspaper itself in editorials now denied that overstocking could be a danger, a contrast to its warnings before beef fever reached Montana. So much did the fever sweep up these journalists that on August 22, 1885, the *Journal* announced a name change: henceforth it would be the *Yellowstone Journal and Live Stock Reporter*. “We propose to make our paper a medium for the interchange of ideas among the stockgrowers who are necessarily widely separated,” an editorial declared.⁶³ The change may have been an attempt to better compete with Marney’s *Miles City Stock Growers Journal*, but an editorial in the *Journal* observed, “the most friendly feeling is had between the *Stockgrower’s Journal* and this paper, and we can only bespeak for both a promising future.”⁶⁴

By the summer of 1886, no one seemed to listen to warnings of overgrazing. The scene on the streets of Miles City as reported by the *Journal* took on almost a carnival atmosphere, as cowboys offered shows and parades to the tourists, cattle barons struck up deals, and young men fed on dime novels flocked around foremen of cattle growers looking for a summer contract as a cowboy. A cattle foreman coming to town “is besieged on all sides by men and boys of various ages, desirous of obtaining work at the earliest date,” boys mostly from the East wanting “a chance of experiencing the wild, free life of the prairies.”⁶⁵ An interview with W. K. Peck, “special agent” for W. W. Cole’s circus in town, noted the circus included a Wild West act, a combination of Indians, cowboys, and other Western characters.⁶⁶ A Wild West performance in the actual Wild West? By 1886 the Old West seemed to be becoming a parody of itself, as myth-

makers from the East rebuilt a legend and gave it back to the people who were living it. Edgar W. “Bill” Nye apparently sensed the irony. As editor of the *Laramie Boomerang* in cattle country Wyoming, Nye’s humor was widely reprinted throughout the West, and from there to the rest of the country. More cowboys surely would be needed for a growing industry, wrote Nye. It might be necessary to establish “a cow boys’ college or training school.... I look forward with confidence to the day when no cow boy will undertake to ride range without a diploma. I hope that the day is not far distant when in the holster of the cow boy we will find the *Iliad* instead of the killiad.”⁶⁷

But the *Journal* had apparently not become convinced of the superiority of cattle trailing to Montana-based ranching. It appears to have self-censored after the deluge from Texas and other points south beginning in 1883. Yet the editor may not have actually changed his mind. Montana’s dry summers and harsh winters had never been easy for free-range cattle. In July the newspaper finally warned that cattle trail losses again were high, blamed on drought, short grass, and barriers erected by settlers. The editor warned, “there is every indication that trailing is a thing of the past.”⁶⁸

Every spring saw some losses of free-range cattle. But in the years before 1886-1887, they were generally manageable, and as the northern plains region was new to cattle-trailing, new cattlemen had not experienced a truly harsh winter. But older ranchers, such as Granville Stuart, worried about leaving cattle to forage for grass on dry plains through north country winters.⁶⁹

As the enormous losses of winter 1886-87 become too obvious to deny, the *Journal* again turned to Stuart for comment. Interviewed in April 1887, he said he was concerned, and added, “I hope you newspaper men will turn out in force at our semi-annual meeting in Miles City, as matters of great importance to cattlemen will be discussed.”⁷⁰ The meeting later that month represented a chastened group of members, an industry “shorn of all hurrah.” Losses of trailed cattle hovered from 50 percent to entire herds.⁷¹ The newspaper advocated a positive outlook,

saying, “why not buckle on the armor of cheerfulness and show to all that we may yet be God’s people. All business enterprises have a setback in the nature of business speculation.”⁷² But the day of the king cattle had ended.

One of those present at the bleak Montana stockman’s meeting of 1887 represented cattle interests in neighboring Dakota Territory. Of the paid membership of 337 that year was listed T. Roosevelt.⁷³ Theodore Roosevelt’s leadership of the Montana stock growers saw regular coverage in the Miles City newspaper. Also reported were visits of A. T. Packard, editor of the *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, cattle paper in the Dakota Territory cow town of Medora. Medora, near the Montana border, marked the eastern limit of cattle trailing on the northern plains. But its small size belied its national fame: prominent ranchers there included Roosevelt and Marquis de Morès, the famous European aristocrat who became one of the great celebrities of the Gilded Age.⁷⁴ Packard ran the cattle weekly in their town.

The *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, Medora

Arthur T. Packard, newly graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, moved to Dakota Territory as a journalist. He began his professional life at the *Bismarck (D.T.) Tribune*. He was snared into the booming cattle industry during what he explained was a hunting trip to the Dakota Badlands.⁷⁵ Packard apparently saw potential in the cow town built almost single-handedly by the de Morès, a French entrepreneur who married the daughter of a New York banker and proceeded to spend wildly throughout cattle country. De Morès had become a celebrity back East, but Theodore Roosevelt’s interest in Medora grazing land also helped to make what Roosevelt called an “excessively unattractive little hamlet”⁷⁶ a familiar name throughout the country.

Packard set up his *Bad Lands Cow Boy* on February 7, 1884. As cattle papers go, this was late in the game, but Dakota Territory was last of the northern plains regions to be appropriated for cattle. The boom was reaching its peak, and although older newspapers in Miles City and Deadwood were warning of dire consequences,

Packard apparently chose the optimistic high road. In Medora he became the third of an unusual trio of educated newcomers arrived on the plains for one reason: profit. In his “introductory,” Packard claimed:

The cattle business here, though already of gigantic proportions, is still in its infancy in point of time. We do not come to serve a great moral end. Another field would have been more congenial. We do not come as the agent or tool of any man or set of men. There is a wide field for us to cover, and we intend to cover it. We do come, however, to make some almighty dollars . . . and to preach King Cattle to all men.⁷⁷

Packard’s weekly served a tiny community,⁷⁸ but its influence reached regionally for two reasons: It represented a cow town dominated by two of the country’s most famous cattlemen, and it chose a colorful but controversial name, “Cow Boy.” The reputation of Western cowboys by 1884 was barely turning from disreputable ruffian to noble knight of the prairie, today’s prevalent image. As late as 1881 President Chester Arthur in his address to Congress denounced as “cowboys” the “armed desperados” blocking peaceful settlement of Arizona Territory.⁷⁹ Packard’s unusual name immediately attracted attention, not all of it positive. Packard responded in a candid editorial:

We have been asked why we named our paper The Bad Lands Cow Boy. We adopted the name in the first place to attract attention, which it certainly does. Not to the paper itself, however, do we wish to attract attention, as much as to some facts which we wish to spread abroad as much as possible. First, that cow boys in the West are, as a rule, one of the most peaceful and law-abiding classes of citizens that we have. . . . The term “cow boy” as been a reproach long enough. Every other paper in the land has joined hands to heap contumely on the devoted head of the cowboy. We

will stand singly and alone and uphold a name which we know represents a good cause.⁸⁰

In fact Packard did devote his entire run—February 1884–December 1886—to defending cowboys repeatedly, and to emphasizing the cowboy image as paragon of manly virtue. Articles borrowed from other newspapers bolstered cowboys as “a noble, generous-hearted set of fellows.”⁸¹ In fact, of fifty-one articles related to cowboys published between 1884 and 1886, 82 percent showed the group in a positive light. For comparison, another Dakota Territory cattle town newspaper, the *Black Hills Times*, despite its daily publication, included only thirty stories about cowboys between 1884 and the end of 1886; of those, 70 percent showed them in a negative light. Packard apparently considered himself to be a cattle town editor on a mission. His attitude reflected that of Roosevelt, who when in town frequently visited Packard’s newspaper office, a way to socialize outside of the saloons.⁸² Roosevelt’s arguments in favor of cowboys repeatedly filled columns of Packard’s newspaper. Later, as president and most famous American of his time, Roosevelt’s writing based on experiences in Medora served to help establish and perpetuate the noble cowboy image in American culture.⁸³

Packard’s office also served as venue for the organizational meeting of the Bad Lands Live Stock Association, Packard on the by-law committee.⁸⁴ Based on *Cow Boy* advertisements, the indefatigable editor also served his cow town as job printer, and sold Studebaker wagons, insurance, barbed wire, other serial subscriptions, cattle, cedar fencing, and real estate. He was a notary public, a partner in a coal mine, and general manager of de Morès’ ill-fated Medora–Deadwood stage line. He was an officer in the Bad Lands Live Stock Association and Medora Gun Club, a territorial representative to Republican conventions, chairman of the “bucket brigade” and chairman of a “citizens’ meeting” to organize a fire department, city sanitation effort, school, and committee on public order. He ran, unsuccessfully, for justice of the peace as “the stockmen’s choice.”⁸⁵

What he did not do in the columns of his weekly was offer a critical, or at least a questioning, portrayal of the cattle trailing business, as was reflected in the Miles City and Deadwood dailies. It is unknown how his business would have survived the 1886-87 winter die-off. On January 15, 1887, the nearby Dickinson *Press* announced, "The Cow Boy office at Medora burned out Wednesday night. We understand but little material was saved and Bro. Packard's loss is considerable."⁸⁶ Packard's subsequently returned to Chicago journalism, retiring as Chicago *Evening Post* golf editor.⁸⁷

The Black Hills Daily Times, Deadwood

Of Packard's many entrepreneurial efforts to make some almighty dollars, most promising seemed to be his de Morès-funded attempts to establish a Medora-Deadwood stage line. Business brought him regularly to this principal cattle town of southern Dakota Territory, as noted in the columns of the *Black Hills Daily Times*.⁸⁸ The *Times* reflected Packard's contention that Medora's business was of regional interest. "It is now becoming the fashionable thing to own a ranch," the newspaper reported, pointing out Roosevelt's operation, and writing at length about de Morès, "one of the largest and most entertaining ranchmen now in the west."⁸⁹ Packard's efforts also were regularly covered,⁹⁰ but the newspaper established by Porter Warner and W. P. Newhard in 1877 represented a significant departure from the approach taken by its northern neighbor with its colorful title. The mission of the *Times*, noted an introductory editorial, would be to "advise the best interests of the people—to uphold right and denounce wrong. We owe allegiance to no political party. Cliques and rings will find in us no comfort or support."⁹¹

Such noble introductions proffered in almost every frontier newspaper's initial editorial soliloquy had become so exaggerated that by 1881 cow town satirist Nye constructed his own version:

We will spare our readers the usual programme of what we intend to do hereafter as a moulder of public opinion. We do this partly because we

haven't clearly outlined our course yet in our own mind, and partly because some one might keep a file of the paper and annoy us with it in years to come.⁹²

Like the *Yellowstone Journal*, the *Black Hills Daily Times* was founded before the cattle boom swept to the northern plains.⁹³ In fact, the *Times* was even slower to recognize the potential of cattle. It originally called itself a "mining town" paper⁹⁴ reflecting Deadwood's original base. The Deadwood daily did not initially see benefit of trailed cattle into southern Dakota Territory. Like the Miles City press, the defining year was 1880. In January of this year the *Times* for the first time noticed growth of the cattle business, declaring "the superiority of this country as a stock growing region," specifically around Belle Fourche, fifteen miles north.⁹⁵ But like the *Yellowstone Journal*, early editorials warned against trailing large numbers into the region. An editorial noted cattle will have to be fed to survive in the North, and so will have to stay in herds, "and most probably cattle raising will cease to be an exclusive business and will be carried on in connection with general farming."⁹⁶

As this point the newspaper clearly believed it had little advertising revenue to lose by critically evaluating the cattle trailing industry. It still declared itself primarily a "mining journal," and at an advertising ratio of 60 percent, Warner apparently could afford this kind of independence.⁹⁷ Again in the fall, the newspaper reprinted a long article credited to "a correspondent of the Iowa Homestead," criticizing trailed cattle from Texas as inferior to local stock.⁹⁸

But the number of trailed stock pouring into the territory apparently impressed the *Times* as it did the *Journal*, for in early 1881 the paper began promoting itself to serve interests beyond mining. It soon declared itself "devoted to the mineral, live stock and agriculture interests of the Black Hills region."⁹⁹ Solicitation for brand ads began January 27, 1881, illustrated by an engraving of a cow, and reminding readers, "The above cut with any character of brand engraved thereon furnished by advertiser in the *Times*, the paper with the largest circulation in the Hills Country, especially among the ranches

and live stock growers.”¹⁰⁰ By summer, however, the solicitation had disappeared, apparently failing to attract brand ads.¹⁰¹ The paper decided the milder climate of the Black Hills area could stem the significant winter losses in harsher Montana.¹⁰² That summer the newspaper reported “Immense Herds on the Trail,” promoting the Black Hills as the “future great cattle range of the nation.”¹⁰³ On September 27, 1881, the first brand advertisement appeared. Yet brand advertisements never grew to the huge numbers seen by the Cheyenne, Miles City, and Medora newspapers. Scattered ads appeared and disappeared between 1881 and 1884.

Two years later the newspaper was still issuing warnings that the cattle trailing business could not be sustained, for reasons beyond weather. The railroad “will bring in settlers and the cowboy must retreat before the homesteader as he has done elsewhere.”¹⁰⁴ Despite its admonitions, by summer 1884 the newspaper reported 40,000 head trailed to the area.¹⁰⁵

Cattle trailing was becoming economically important to the city: “A good deal of the money that it generated rubbed off in Deadwood.”¹⁰⁶ While the *Times* published no more articles negative to cattle drive interests after summer 1883, neither did it climb onto the bandwagon to become primarily a stock journal, as did most of the other cattle papers studied here. While the *Bad Lands Cow Boy* never published an article negatively reflecting the cattle-trailing industry, and Miles City, few after cattle fever came to town, Warner never really joined the enthusiasm. Between 1880 and 1886, only slightly more than half of 112 articles published about the industry, 53 percent, were positive; 25 percent related problems and concerns. Another 22 percent were neutral. An 1885 New Year’s editorial reminded readers that while interests of stockmen is second in importance to the newspaper, mining interests still would come first. News items about stockmen, it emphasized, will continue to be published “in their true light.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, that same issue warned, “grave apprehensions exist among cowmen of extraordinary losses upon the range by reason of the severity of the weather.”¹⁰⁸ This pessimistic outlook was a notable exception to reports of the

other cattle papers more circumspect about reporting unfavorable winter prospects. A reprint credited to a Kansas City source predicted “The outlook in general is worse for cow men than it has been in ten years.”¹⁰⁹

The *Times*’ examples of bleak reports even as the cattle boom was at its peak stand in considerable contrast to reports of the other cow country papers examined. Its extensive coverage of the trailing industry reported mostly setbacks, including cattle quarantines and fencing or other obstructions on the trails. At the end of the year an article describing Black Hills industry noted the region expected to see a million head of cattle next season; “all of the available range, however, is occupied.”¹¹⁰

The Sturgis Weekly Record

While the *Times* was the largest daily in southern Dakota cattle country, it was not the newspaper closest to the actual cattle ranges. Belle Fourche was at the center, but is not known to have had a newspaper during this era. Sturgis, a few miles away, was out of the Hills so closer to the plains where cattle passed. In July 1883, the *Times* announced that a weekly would be launched there, “a little late in putting in an appearance,” but has “settled down to make money.”¹¹¹ *The Sturgis Weekly Record* produced its first issue July 27, 1883, published by “Moody and Elliott,” until Charles C. Moody took over sole proprietorship two years later. The newspaper quickly cast its attention to the cattle industry, agreeing “vast herds” were on their way to the region.¹¹² This weekly did not tie its interests so closely to those herds, however. Of twelve articles related to the cattle trailing industry, 37 percent emphasized positive aspects, another 37 percent emphasized problems, and 26 percent were neutral. An early story critical to cattle trailing noted the beeves were trampling grain and fences, while cowboys threatened farmers who protested. The editorial requested cattlemen put an end to this “tomfoolery.”¹¹³

The newspaper did carry up to a half dozen brand ads, although, like the *Times*, it never succeeded in attracting the large numbers found in others. In June, a letter to the editor signed “Chad” criticized cattlemen who bring Texas

cattle to the area, noting they need to be fed and watered during the winter; expecting them to survive by themselves on the northern plains is “cruelty to dumb animals.”¹¹⁴ An article (credited to the *Miles City Stockgrowers Journal*) warned again of trailing too much stock into the region where insufficient food exists.¹¹⁵

In December 1886, on the eve of the great winter losses that ended the cattle boom, an article filling the entire front page presented a surprisingly frank assessment of the industry. The author, reported to be “Frank Wilkeson, a well-known correspondent from Colorado,” predicted correctly that the cattle boom would come to an end with the unusually harsh winter of 1886. But, he added, it was never that profitable. The problem, Wilkeson claimed, was a misleading press. The cattleman “controlled the local press. By adroit misrepresentation, supplemented by social attentions, they virtually dictated letters written by many of the correspondents of the Eastern newspapers,” creating an impression that the industry was “highly profitable.” He emphasized that “honest and well-informed” stock people repeatedly warned investors that “serious financial disaster would inevitably overtake the cattle industry,” but said those who spoke the truth were denounced. “Now the day of reckoning is nigh.”¹¹⁶

As fortunes turned to dust on the northern plains, newspapers built on the cattle industry struggled. The bigger dailies, notably the *Black Hills Times* and *Yellowstone Journal*, survived, but the niche weeklies that tied their entire fortunes to cattle generally did not. One such paper that limped along before succumbing was Mercer’s *Northwestern Live Stock Journal*. Mercer kept spending money even through the great die-off, moving to a bigger office in the spring of 1887.¹¹⁷ This was despite a catastrophic drop in Wyoming Stock Growers Association membership, the group that kept Mercer afloat with brand ads and job work.¹¹⁸ As the decade waned, his creditors beat at the door, and he began desperately to search for other sources of income.

While other cattle papers, such as the *Sturgis Record*, reverted to publishing bold condemnations of the cattle trailing industry immediately after the boom ended, Mercer’s abrupt

criticism beginning in summer 1892, five years later, is hard to explain. It is possible he hoped to curry favor and perhaps appointment through support of the Democratic Party, which opposed the mostly Republican cattlemen. He may have been denied more cash from association members to help pay bills. In any case, after association members disastrously failed to drive rustlers from northern Wyoming in the “Johnson County War,”¹¹⁹ Mercer savagely denounced the cattlemen. In return, they removed every brand ad from the newspaper.¹²⁰ Mercer’s *Journal* had come to an end, but his journalism continued in book form. His *Banditti of the Plains*, the now-legendary story of cattlemen versus settlers, is today the most enduring story from a cow country editor.

Finally, nine years before his death, a speaking engagement brought Mercer back to the beginning of his adult life as a wide-ranging promoter of the Old West. At the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition of 1909, Mercer delivered the Fourth of July address at the University of Washington, Seattle.¹²¹ He died in 1917.

Conclusion

By the 1880s investment in western cattle had taken on international economic importance. Enormous fortunes and hundreds of thousands of head poured onto the sparsely populated grasslands. All the cow town newspapers examined here hoped to pull out their share of that fortune. But they did not all present the industry, or the cowboy culture that grew to surround it, in the same way. Mercer’s *Northwestern Live Stock Journal* was launched for the cattlemen, exclusively. One historian called his relationship with Cheyenne cattlemen “parasitic.”¹²² Mercer’s speeches in defense of the industry and his ringing support of all things cowman—until summer 1892—obviously thrust him into the role of the stock growers’ publicist, at a time before public relations became a standard department of most industries. Mercer benefited through brand advertisements, job printing, and possible subventions, although it is clear that cattlemen did not own the paper.

Packard’s *Bad Lands Cow Boy* also tied its fortunes most closely to the cattle industry. In

particular he relied on the man who built the town, the Marquis de Morès, although he adamantly rejected a charge that his operation was owned by the Marquis. “We are not the tool of nor are we beholden in any way to any man or set of men,” Packard wrote. “Marquis de Morès is the heaviest advertiser, as his interests are the largest here and he will reap the greatest benefit through our publication. Beyond this he has no interest whatsoever.”¹²³ The *Cow Boy* joined the boom just as it was reaching its speculative crescendo, with threat of falling beef prices, harder winters and dangerously overgrazed grasslands. None of this reached the pages of Packard’s weekly, a reflection of his own position as de facto publicist for Dakota cattlemen. Packard also departed from others in his unwavering support of the cowboy image at a time when cowboys were still generally held in disrepute. In this he may have been influenced by Roosevelt, who did so much in his speeches and his books to create the legend of the noble cattle drover. He—along with Morès—was among the country’s most important figures creating that “instant myth.”¹²⁴ Although we know Packard’s office served as social headquarters for both well-known men, we have no specific evidence Packard was controlled by them.

Miles City was initially most isolated, and its newspaper did not seem to be established with cattle industry profit in mind. The editor could not sustain his initially critical view of the cattle trailing industry, however, as the business swarmed into town to dominate its economy. Swept up in the fever, bursting with lucrative brand ads, the newspaper changed its name and its contents to complement the city’s principal business. Unlike the *Cow Boy*, however, the *Journal* did not jump on the pro-cowboy theme, nor did the *Black Hills Times*.

The *Times* also initially found little remuneration from the cattle industry, and began as skeptical about the success of cattle trailed in from the south. Unlike the *Journal*, however, the *Times* did not become swept up with cattle fever as the beeves moved in beginning in 1883. Nor did its smaller weekly on the plains, the *Sturgis*

Record. Of the newspapers studied here, these two maintained most distance from the cattlemen, and some objectivity about long-term industry prospects.

Why the differences? Acknowledging that frontier editors and publishers had different personalities, it is worth taking a closer look at Wilkeson’s comments from the *Record*. This was a contemporary account by an apparently knowledgeable observer. Did the cattlemen control the local press? We have no solid evidence. We can note, however, that those newspapers most likely to support the cattlemen were those in which the editor was taken into the cowman fold. Both Packard and Knight became honorary members of their local stockmen’s associations, and both enjoyed heavy support in the form of advertising. Mercer also survived on brand ads and stock growers association job printing, and became self-appointed spokesman for the Wyoming cattlemen. On the other hand, no evidence can be found to show Moody and Warner from the Black Hills region enjoyed any formal level of cattlemen’s support, and brand ads in comparison to the other newspapers stayed meager.

It seems true, therefore, that the cattlemen did manage to influence content of some important northern plains cattle town newspapers, although there is no evidence cattlemen tried to bribe anyone. Money in the form of advertising, loans, job work and indirectly, increased town prosperity, could do the job. As well, the prestige of being named an honorary member of a powerful group of wealthy men could probably do much to encourage cash-poor editors to remember their cattle colleagues in the news columns.

Unfortunately, as these newspapers circulated widely in the East, eagerly read by investors and others captivated by stories of the frontier West, clearly Wilkeson’s conclusions can’t be discounted: The disastrous cattle trailing bubble that burst in 1887 was made worse by optimistic investors who read and believed sometimes inaccurate reports from the cattle town press.

Notes

¹ The Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062569/>.

² Charles W. Smith, "Asa Shinn Mercer, Pioneer in Western Publicity." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 27 (1936), 347.

³ Lawrence M. Woods, *Asa Shinn Mercer. Western Promoter and Newspaperman 1839-1917* (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 2003), 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵ Barbara Cloud, "Establishing the Frontier Newspaper: A Study of Eight Western Territories," *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (Winter 1984): 805-11; Barbara Cloud, *The Business of Newspapers on the Western Frontier* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992); Julie Dagenais, "Newspaper Language as an Active Agent in the Building of a Frontier Town," *American Speech* 17 (May 1967): 114-121; Thomas H. Heuterman, "Assessing the 'Press on Wheels': Individualism in Frontier Journalism," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (1976): 423-28; William E. Huntzicker, "Historiographical Essay: Historians and the Frontier Press," *American Journalism* 5 (1988): 28-45; Oliver Knight, "The Frontier Newspaper as a Catalyst in Social Change," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (April 1967): 74-81; William H. Lyon, "The Significance of Newspapers on the American Frontier," *Journal of the West* 19 (April 1980): 3-13; Jerilyn McIntyre, "Communication on a Western Frontier—Some Questions About Context," *Journalism History* 3 (Summer 1976): 53-63; Wesley Norton, "Religious Newspapers in the American Frontier," *Journal of the West* 19 (April 1980): 16-21; Delbert Reed, "A Last Hurrah for the Frontier Press," *American Journalism* 6 (1989): 65-84; David J. Russo, "The Origins of Local News in the U.S. Country Press, 1840s-1870s," *Journalism Monographs* 65 (February 1980); Donald W. Whisenhunt, "The Frontier Newspaper: A Guide to Society and Culture," *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (Winter 1968): 726-728. David Dary, *Red Blood and Black Ink. Journalism in the Old West* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Cecil Howes, "Pistol-Packin' Pencil Pushers," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13 (1944-45): 115-138; Robert F. Karolevitz, *Newspapering in the Old West. A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1965); William A. Katz, "The Western Printer and His Publications," *Journalism Quarterly* 44 (Winter 1967): 708-14; John Myers Myers, *Print in a Wild Land* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967); Jo Ann Schmitt, *Fighting Editors: The Story of Editors Who Faced Six-Shooters with Pens and Won* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1958); Keith Wheeler, *The Old West. The Chroniclers* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1976); Daniel W. Whetstone, *Frontier Editor* (New York: Hastings House, 1956).

⁶ W.E. Chaplin, "Some of the Early Newspapers of Wyoming," *Miscellanies*, Wyoming Historical Society, 1917, 7-24; Ross F. Collins, "Cattle Barons and Ink Slingers: How Cow Country Journalists Created a Great American Myth," *American Journalism* 24 (Summer 2007), 5-29; Elizabeth Keen, "Wyoming's Frontier Newspapers. The Newspapermen," *Annals of Wyoming* 34 (April 1962): 61-84; Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Early Printing in Wyoming and the Black Hills* (Hattiesburg, Miss.: The Book Farm, 1943); Jonelle D. Moore, "A History of the Wyoming Press Association, 1877-1934" (Master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1986). Montana: Sam Gilluly, *The Press Gang: A Century of Montana Newspapers 1885-1985* (Great Falls: Montana Press Association, 1985); Robert L. Housman, "The End of Frontier Journalism in Montana," *Journalism Quarterly* 12 (1935), 133-145; Robert L. Housman, "Frontier Journals of Western Montana," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 29 (July 1938), 269-276; Douglas C. McMurtrie, "The Pioneer Press in Montana," *Journalism Quarterly* 9 (1932), 170-181. Dakotas: Barry Brissman, "The *Bad Lands Cow Boy*: Journalism on the Dakota Frontier" (Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1981); Ross F. Collins, "Cattlemen and Cow Town Editors: *The Bad Lands Cow Boy* of Dakota Territory," *North Dakota History* 67 (2000), 26-37; Ross F. Collins, "Cowboys and Cow Town Newspapers in Dakota Territory," *Media History Monographs* 3 (1999-2000), <http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/mediahistory/>; Douglas C. McMurtrie, "Pioneer Printing in North Dakota," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 6 (April 1932), 221-230; Paul C. Schmidt, "The Press in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 31 (October 1964), 217-222; "Newspapers of South Dakota," State Historical Society, *South Dakota Historical Collections*, Vol. XI, 411-518; D. Jerome Tweton, "North Dakota in the 1890s: Its People, Politics and Press," *North Dakota History* 24 (1957), 113-118.

⁷ Earnest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 85; Ross F. Collins, "Building a Media Celebrity: The Marquis de Morès and the Gilded Age," *North Dakota Journal of Speech and Theatre* 7 (1994), 24-41.

⁸ Report of the annual meeting of the WSGA, *Black Hills Daily Times*, Deadwood, 12 April 1885, 4.

⁹ Gilbert C. Fite, new foreword to James S. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza; Or, How to Get Rich on the Plains*, reprint ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), viii.

¹⁰ Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 149.

¹¹ A36, Box 2, File 8, Marquis de Morès Collection, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.

- ¹² Collins, "Building a Media Celebrity," 25.
- ¹³ Editorials, *Deadwood Times*, 19 October 1884, 1; 24 November 1884, 2.
- ¹⁴ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 7 August 1884, 4.
- ¹⁵ Karolevitz, 118; Everett Dick, *The Sod-House Frontier 1854-1890* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1937, 1954, 1979), 418-9; Paul C. Schmidt, "The Press in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 31 (October 1964): 219; George S. Hage, *Newspapers in the Minnesota Frontier 1849-1860* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), 9; Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt on the Bad Lands* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), 76.
- ¹⁶ "Paying Cattle Ranches. A Thriving Industry in the Northwest," *The New York Times*, 21 September 1884, 4. Also mentioned 25 February 1884, 8.
- ¹⁷ Collins, "Cattle Barons and Ink Slingers," 16.
- ¹⁸ "War in Wyoming," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 13, 1892, 3.
- ¹⁹ Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West In Twentieth-Century America* (Lawrence, 1986), 274.
- ²⁰ G. Pomeroy Keese, "Beef From the Range to the Shambles." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 69 (June-November 1884): 292.
- ²¹ "Cattle Ranges. A letter from Gen. Brisbin," excerpt from *Omaha Bee*, *The Black Hills Times*, 29 November 1885, 4.
- ²² David Daly and Joel Persky, "The Western: Myth and Reality." *Journal of the West* 29 (April 1990): 23.
- ²³ Papers of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association (WSGA), archives of the American Heritage Center (AHC), University of Wyoming (UW), Box 46.
- ²⁴ Mercer Island and a Seattle street were named after Asa's much older brother, Thomas. James R. Warren, "Seattle at 150: Mercer Brothers Imprinted Family Name on the City," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Oct. 9, 2001, http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/42017_mercer09.shtml.
- ²⁵ Woods, 15-16.
- ²⁶ Smith, 352.
- ²⁷ The *Sherman Courier*, *Henrietta Shield*, *Bowie Cross Timbers*, *Vernon Guard*, *Wichita Falls Herald* and *Texas Panhandle*, Mobeetie. Charles Hall, "Asa S. Mercer and 'The Banditti of the Plains': A Reappraisal." *Annals of Wyoming* 49 (Spring 1977), 55; Woods, 118, 133.
- ²⁸ *Cheyenne Leader*, 3 August 1884, from the Joseph Jacobucci Papers, Box No., 2, AHC.
- ²⁹ "A Woman's Weapon," *Leader*, 22 July 1884, 3.
- ³⁰ *Leader*, 22 July 1884, 3.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² The newspaper's complete run unfortunately has been lost from archives.
- ³³ Editorial, *Leader*, 24 July 1884, 2.
- ³⁴ *Leader*, 22 July 1884, 3.
- ³⁵ T.A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 270-271.
- ³⁶ Hall, 61.
- ³⁷ Reprint ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).
- ³⁸ Collins, "Cattle Barons and Ink Slingers," 21-22.
- ³⁹ *Leader*, 22 July 1884, 3.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Francis E. Warren was one of early Wyoming's most important pioneers, beginning as a merchant in Cheyenne. He became a cattlemen, territorial governor and senator. He commonly encouraged newspapers by buying stock in their operations, but also tried to influence their publications. W.E. Chaplin, 16.
- ⁴³ *Leader*, 24 July 1884, 3.
- ⁴⁴ *Leader*, 24 July 1884, 2.
- ⁴⁵ *Leader*, 26 July 1884, 2.
- ⁴⁶ Woods, 153.
- ⁴⁷ Hall, 58.
- ⁴⁸ *Minnesota, Dakota and Montana Gazer and Business Directory, Volume 5, 1886-87* (R.L. Polk and Co., and A.C. Danser, St. Paul, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, 1884), 1370.
- ⁴⁹ Thomson P. McElrath, *The Yellowstone Valley. What it is, Where it is and How to Get to It. A Handbook for Tourists and Settlers* (St. Paul: The Pioneer Press Co., 1880), 131.
- ⁵⁰ Proceedings of the Montana Stock Growers Association, Helena meeting, 26 August 1885. MSGA Papers, MC 45, archives of the Montana Historical Association, Helena.

- ⁵¹ Ibid., 5, 57.
- ⁵² *Yellowstone Journal*, 24 July 1879, 1.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 22 January 1881, 1.
- ⁵⁴ A. H. Van Vliedam, Chicago Ranch, Yellowstone Valley, “Stock and Crops,” *Yellowstone Journal*, 5 March 1881, 4.
- ⁵⁵ “Stock Items Rounded Up,” *Yellowstone Journal*, 18 August 1883, 3.
- ⁵⁶ “Inroad of Cattle Kings,” *Yellowstone Journal*, 2 June 1883, 1.
- ⁵⁷ *Yellowstone Journal*, 13 October 1883, 4; 20 October 1883, 2.
- ⁵⁸ “Open the Cattle Drives,” *Yellowstone Journal*, 14 June 1884, 2.
- ⁵⁹ *Yellowstone Journal*, 2 January 1886, 1.
- ⁶⁰ *Yellowstone Journal*, 26 December 1885; 1 May 1886.
- ⁶¹ Editorial, *Yellowstone Journal*, 2 January 1886, 2.
- ⁶² *Yellowstone Journal*, August-September 1884, passim.
- ⁶³ Editorial, *Yellowstone Journal*, 22 August 1885, 2.
- ⁶⁴ *Yellowstone Journal*, 14 February 1885, 1.
- ⁶⁵ *Yellowstone Journal*, 27 March 1886, 1.
- ⁶⁶ “A Boy’s Best Friend,” *Yellowstone Journal*, 7 August 1886, 1.
- ⁶⁷ *Yellowstone Journal*, 9 January 1886, 1. The *Journal* apparently later tried to hire Nye, emphasizing that Miles City’s climate would be good for his health. He agreed to come, but never showed up. *An Illustrated History of Yellowstone Valley* (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Co, n.d., c. 1907), 668.
- ⁶⁸ *Yellowstone Journal*, 24 July 1886, 2.
- ⁶⁹ Stuart’s ranch business eventually succumbed to overstocking on the range; he could see it coming but was powerless to prevent it. William S. Reese, “Granville Stuart of the DHS Ranch, 1879-1887,” *Montana. The Magazine of Western History* 31 (July 1981), 26.
- ⁷⁰ *Yellowstone Journal*, 9 April 1887, 2.
- ⁷¹ *Yellowstone Journal*, 30 April 1887, 1. Some historians have questioned actual figures of cattle lost; Reese, 25, noted cattlemen chronically overstated the number of head they owned. Nevertheless, no one disputes losses were in the many thousands, and marked an ending toll to the days of the cattle drives.
- ⁷² *Yellowstone Journal*, 25 June 1887, 2.
- ⁷³ Proceedings of the Montana Stock Growers Association, Miles City meeting, 19 April 1887, MSGA Papers, MC 45, archives of the Montana Historical Association, Helena.
- ⁷⁴ Collins, “Building a Media Celebrity,” 24.
- ⁷⁵ Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), 75; *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 20 March 1884, 1.
- ⁷⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, reprint edition, 1983), 90.
- ⁷⁷ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 7 February 1884, 1.
- ⁷⁸ 251; 737 lived in all of Billings County. Frontier newspapers generally served populations averaging 5,508. The county did support 24,603 head of cattle, however. Commissioner of Immigration, Dakota Territory, *Resources of Dakota* (Pierre, D.T.: 1887), 324; Billings County Historical Society, *Echoing Trails. Billings County History* (Medora: 1979), 47; Barbara Cloud, “Establishing the Frontier Newspaper: A Study of Eight Western Territories,” *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (Winter 1984), 807-08.
- ⁷⁹ Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1960), 305.
- ⁸⁰ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 14 February 1884, 1.
- ⁸¹ “Defending the Cowboy,” 3 September 1885, 1.
- ⁸² *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 26 June 1884, 4;
- ⁸³ William W. Savage Jr., *The Cowboy Hero. His Image in American History and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 96.
- ⁸⁴ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 13 March 1884, 1.
- ⁸⁵ *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 4 November 1886, 4. He blamed his loss on his determination to prosecute law-breakers, having no sympathy for the “‘ba-a-d man’ idea.”
- ⁸⁶ *Dickinson Press*, 15 January 1887, 4.
- ⁸⁷ Brissman, 38.
- ⁸⁸ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 29 August 1884, 2.
- ⁸⁹ “Owning Ranches,” *Black Hills Daily Times*, 5 October 1884, 3.
- ⁹⁰ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 28 September 1884, 2, and passim.
- ⁹¹ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 31 August 1879, 2.

- ⁹² *Laramie Boomerang*, inaugural issue, 14 March 1881, Accession No. 338, Box 1, Bill Nye Collection, AHC.
- ⁹³ W.D. Knight, who joined the *Journal* in 1880, arrived at Miles City after three years' work on Deadwood newspapers. *An Illustrated History*, 668.
- ⁹⁴ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 24 May 1877, 2.
- ⁹⁵ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 20 January 1880, 4. Belle Fourche by 1890 became the world's largest primary cattle shipping center; Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 244, 250.
- ⁹⁶ Editorial, *Black Hills Daily Times*, 17 April 1880, 2.
- ⁹⁷ Editorial, *Black Hills Daily Times*, 9 May 1880, 2, and passim.
- ⁹⁸ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 24 October 1880, 2.
- ⁹⁹ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 12 January 1881, 3.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 27 January 1881, 3.
- ¹⁰¹ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 25 May 1881, and passim.
- ¹⁰² Editorial, *Black Hills Daily Times*, 16 January 1881, 2, and passim.
- ¹⁰³ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 12 June 1881, 1.
- ¹⁰⁴ "A Rural Newspaper's Opinion of the Stock Range," *Black Hills Daily Times*, 12 June 1883, 2.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 3 July 1884, 2.
- ¹⁰⁶ Watson Parker. *Deadwood. The Golden Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 78.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 1 January 1885, 1.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 12 March 1885, 2.
- ¹¹⁰ *Black Hills Daily Times*, 20 December 1884, 4.
- ¹¹¹ "This is the Record." *Black Hills Daily Times*, 29 July 1883, 2.
- ¹¹² Editorial, *Sturgis Record*, 21 September 1883, p. 2.
- ¹¹³ "Troubles and Cattle." Editorial, *Sturgis Record*, 13 June 1884, 3.
- ¹¹⁴ "Chad," "Those Dead Cattle Again," letter to the editor, *Sturgis Record*, 25 June 1885, 3.
- ¹¹⁵ "Overcrowding—The Danger of Overstocking the Cattle Ranges," *Sturgis Record*, 24 May 1885, 4.
- ¹¹⁶ "Frank Wilkeson, "A Great Business Ruined." *Sturgis Record*, 3 December 1886, 1.
- ¹¹⁷ Woods, 164.
- ¹¹⁸ Records of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, 1884 Financial Statement, Box 46; John Clay recollections, Box 95, AHC.
- ¹¹⁹ Ross F. Collins, "Cattle Barons and Ink Slingers," 7-29.
- ¹²⁰ *Leader*, 1 July 1892, 2.
- ¹²¹ Woods, 199.
- ¹²² Gould, 7, note.
- ¹²³ Editorial, *Bad Lands Cow Boy*, 23 February 1884, 1.
- ¹²⁴ Joe B. Frantz, "Cowboy Philosophy. A Cold Spoor." In John Francis McDermott, ed., *The Frontier Reexamined* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 1967, 169.