



# Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands: A Young Politician's Quest for Recovery in the American West

*Roger L. Di Silvestro*

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*Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands* chronicles the turbulent years Roosevelt spent as a rancher in the Badlands of Dakota Territory, during which the character and commitment of the future president and conservationist took shape. On February 12, 1884--when Roosevelt was building a career as New York State's most promising young politician--his wife gave birth to their first child, Alice. Two days later, both his wife and his mother died in the same house on Valentine's Day. Grief stricken--and driven by doubts about his career after failed attempts as a reformer fighting political corruption--Roosevelt left Alice in his sister's care and went to live on a Badlands ranch he had bought a year earlier. He spent much of the next three years working alongside his ranch managers and hired hands. He grew to love and respect frontier life and to find in the West both physical health and emotional stamina.

His transformation from a young, Harvard-educated New York politician to a working rancher in the mid to late 1880s coincided with the end of the Old West, a turning point in the cattle industry, and major changes in America's attitudes toward wildlife and wild places. Drawing on Roosevelt's own accounts and on diverse archives, Roger Di Silvestro tells the exciting story of how Roosevelt's spirit and political dynamism were forged during roundups, bronco busting, fist fights, grizzly bear hunts, and encounters with horse thieves, hostile Indians, and vigilante justice. In the dramatic life of Theodore Roosevelt, few adventures exceed those that he found in the Badlands.

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