

The rush of homesteaders and new settlers into the territory west of the Missouri river still continues. They are coming in even larger numbers than they did last year. On March 20, according to the books of the agents at Pierre, five hundred cars of immigrant goods had crossed the bridge at that place since the first of the year. – Bad River News, Philip, South Dakota, March 26, 1808.



Philip, South Dakota, June 1907.

In September 1907, ranch owners and cowboys completed what was suspected to be the last cattle roundup of any proportion near Philip, South Dakota, a new town only recently laid out in Stanley County.¹ Over fifteen thousand cattle were sorted, dipped, and branded, and the cowboys and ranch men headed farther west. After years of drought and an uncertain economy, a land boom in recent years had brought more homesteaders and their shacks and fenced garden patches to dot the vast free range cattle lands west of the Missouri River.² The Chicago & North-Western Railroad had connected Fort Pierre and Rapid City in June, and the journey west of the river to Philip could now be made in a few hours instead of days. A railroad bridge over the Missouri River was finished and in use by October,

¹ Philip, South Dakota, and Carrie Ingalls' claim site are located in Haakon County. In 1897, Sterling, Jackson, Nowlin, and Armstrong counties were combined with Stanley County, making it the second largest county in South Dakota, at 4881 square miles. Haakon County was created in 1914 from the former Nowlin County and part of Sterling County; it was organized in 1915. Stanley County is used in this article, as that was the county name when Carrie Ingalls first filed and made final proof on her claim.

² "A Pipe Dream." *Bad River News* (Philip, South Dakota), September 5, 1907: 2, 6.

further simplifying westward movement of both passengers and freight.



Carrie Ingalls

Following a two-years' stay in Colorado and Wyoming where she sought relief for hay fever and throat problems, Carrie Ingalls returned to De Smet in July 1907; she was 36 years old. In September, Carrie and Chloe Dow Fuller (widow of De Smet businessman Charleton Fuller and sister of Carrie's brother-in-law, Nathan Dow) traveled west to look over available claims in the Topbar settlement about twenty miles north of Philip. The *De Smet News & Leader* reported: "Mrs. C.S.G. Fuller and Miss Carrie Ingalls went out to Top Bar last week to look over the country in that vicinity. Miss Ingalls placed a homestead filing on a quarter near E.A. Morrison's. Mrs. Fuller decided to not file at this time."³

Topbar (or Top Bar, as it was sometimes written) was named after the cattle brand used by the area's first postmaster, Harry Graham, who in 1889 filed on a homestead on West Plum Creek in Sections 20 and 29, Township 5N, Range 20E.⁴ In



November 1902, rancher John Griffin took over the post office and it moved to his own claim on Cottonwood Creek a mile to the west. Griffin was postmaster until the Topbar post office was closed in 1916, forcing residents to get their mail at Elbon. Elbon post office had been established in December 1906 on William Mohney's claim, the W-NW 26 & E-NE 17, Township 4N, Range 20E. Elbon is rumored to have been named after an early settler named Noble, spelled backwards, but no proof of this has been found. Elbon, like Topbar, moved around on the map a few times before the post office was

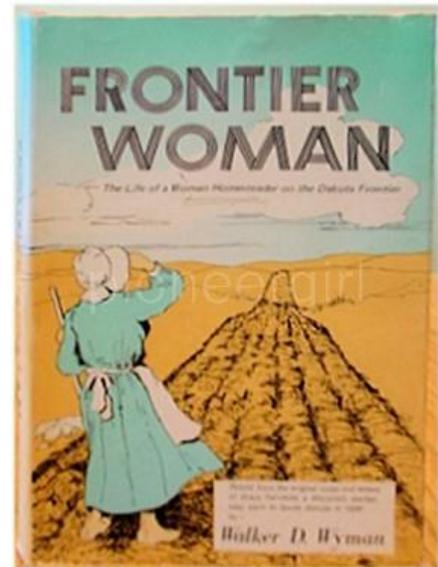
³ *De Smet News & Leader*, October 4, 1907: 4.

⁴ *Pioneers of the Open Range: Haakon County, South Dakota settlers before January 1, 1906*. Midland, South Dakota: Pioneer Club of Western South Dakota, 1965, 151.

discontinued in 1927, at which time Philip absorbed it. Carrie's claim was about halfway between Topbar and Elbon post offices, and was referred to by its nearness to both.

In 1886, Edward A. Morrison settled in De Smet to manage the G.W. Van Dusen grain elevator and run the De Smet Roller Mill.⁵ Although all of E.A. and Jennie Morrison's five children were too young to be classmates of the Ingalls sisters, his younger brothers Sidney and Joseph attended the De Smet school with Carrie and Grace, and E.A. Morrison later served on the De Smet school board. In addition to being a member of the De Smet Lodge No. 58, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Morrison was active in the De Smet Masonic Lodge No. 55, A.F. & A.M., as was Charles Ingalls. He and his wife were members of Bethlehem Chapter No. 13, Order of the Eastern Star, as were Charles and Caroline Ingalls, Laura Ingalls Wilder and Carrie Ingalls. In 1890, E.A. Morrison was elected Mayor of De Smet.

In March 1900, fire destroyed Morrison's flour mill, warehouse, and coal sheds (worth about \$25,000), and he decided to seek his fortune elsewhere. The *De Smet News* reported: "E.A. Morrison will strike out for the wild and wooly west about the middle of this month with his herd of cattle. Hope he will make a million."⁶ The Morrises were no strangers to striking out for the west, having spent three years in Washington Territory before moving to De Smet. Morrison settled in Stanley County, where land was available for homesteading, although it was mostly inhabited by ranchers who instead claimed watering holes for their



Frontier Woman (1972)

free-ranging stock. Morrison paid four bachelor squatters \$300 for their corrals and sheds near West Plum Creek in Township 4N, Range 20E, and he apparently would have given them \$1000 had that been their

⁵ The flour mill and elevator were located on Lots 1, 2, and 3, Brown's Addition to De Smet, on the south side of the railroad tracks on what is now 1st Street, SW. A side-track ran southwest to the mill off the main track.

⁶ *De Smet News*, March 9, 1900: 4.

price. He didn't file on the land until years later. The Morrisons' story is told in Walker D. Wyman's *Frontier Woman: The Life of a Woman Homesteader on the Dakota Frontier*, written from the memoirs of Grace (Wayne) Fairchild, who with her husband, Shiloh, first filed in April 1902 on land only a mile-and-a-half north of where Carrie Ingalls filed five years later.⁷ Fairchild spent more than fifty years on her land, accumulating 1440 acres, most of it surrounding the original homestead.

Between 1900 and 1908, E. A. Morrison spent time both on his Topbar ranch and with his old friends in De Smet. In July 1904, the editor of the *Canistota Clipper* interviewed Morrison:

*Mr. Morrison owns a big ranch 80 miles west of Pierre, on which he keeps 3,000 sheep, 100 cattle and 50 horses. Knowing him to be a man whose word could be relied on, we quizzed him regarding the country west of Pierre. Mr. Morrison says all this talk about there being an insufficiency of rainfall is all bosh, says that last year he had no difficulty whatever in securing forage for his large number of livestock. He also says that he has corn and oats just as good as any to be found in this vicinity. ... According to Mr. Morrison the tide of immigration is moving westward and will soon encroach upon his territory. "It is not," said Mr. Morrison, "claimed that all the country west of Pierre is a farming country. That portion of it lying west of the river from Pierre is poor for 10 or 15 miles out and then you commence to get into the country that is good. Not so good perhaps as you have around Canistota, but crops can be successfully grown, and are successfully grown."*⁸

Morrison's ranch stretched for miles along both sides of West Plum Creek, thanks to his own homestead filing and those of four of his children, plus land bought at public auction and from neighbors who sold out after final proof. Grace Fairchild remembered E. A. Morrison telling her that he helped locate prospective homesteaders on the highest and driest land around him, hoping they couldn't find water and would be forced to leave. He located William Ruenholl and his sons on land immediately west

⁷ Walker D. Wyman, *Frontier Woman: The Life of a Woman Homesteader on the Dakota Frontier*. River Falls, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-River Falls Press, 1972. Although many Topbar homesteaders are mentioned in Grace Fairchild's memoir and there are several pages devoted to the Morrisons, Carrie Ingalls is not included.

⁸ Reprinted in the *Kingsbury County Independent*, July 15, 1904: 1.

and to the southwest of Carrie's claim. Morrison didn't realize that Will Ruenholl was a water-witch and was able to find good water on his own claim and those of his neighbors.⁹ As Carrie's claim file indicates there was a well on her land, perhaps it, too, was located by Will Ruenholl.

E. A. Morrison was in De Smet the week before Carrie Ingalls and Chloe Dow visited Topbar; he may have traveled west with them and helped Carrie file her claim in Pierre. Carrie's 160 acres had previously been held by another De Smet townsman, Levi Whaley, the uncle of Carrie's former classmate, Neva Whaley. Whaley relinquished his first claim and had recently commuted a more desirable quarter section less than a mile to the west of where Carrie filed, but the land office delayed in noting his relinquishment, so it was available (and no doubt recommended by Morrison). Others from De Smet who filed within a mile of E. A. Morrison included Samantha and George Burd (parents of Frank Harthorn's wife, Mabel), Eva Cooledge (widow of De Smet photographer H. Warren Cooledge), and newlyweds Addie and Floyd Cooledge (Eva's son). In Pierre on September 30, 1907, Carrie Ingalls paid fourteen dollars to file on a homestead, the W-NW and W-SW, Sec. 9, T.4N, R.10E, Black Hills Meridian. With six months to establish residency on her claim, Carrie returned to De Smet to spend the winter.

On March 23, 1908, Carrie left De Smet for her claim. The *De Smet News* reported:

*Miss Carrie Ingalls left Monday morning for her claim near Top Bar, eighty miles west of Fort Pierre, and that will be her home for the next eight months at least. Miss Ingalls is located near the Morrisons, Cooledges and the Burds, so she does not want for neighbors who are also old friends and she does not anticipate a very lonely time. Her claim is a valuable one and she does not intend to accept any offer no matter how tempting for the relinquishment of it.*¹⁰

Carrie and the Burds may have traveled west together, and it's possible that her house-keeping items were shipped in the Burds' emigrant car. That week, one hundred cars of emigrant movables left Pierre heading

⁹ Ibid, 50.

¹⁰ *De Smet News*, March 27, 1908. At the time, desirable land in Stanley County was selling for \$8 to \$16 per acre, and quarter section relinquishments were selling for \$150 to over \$1000 between 7 and 35 miles from Pierre.

west, and every freight train from the east left up to a dozen cars at Philip. The *Philip Weekly Review* reported:

*George W. Burd and wife arrived last week from De Smet, and will establish residence on a claim near Topbar. Mr. Burd shipped a carload of goods, machinery and stock, and will homestead his land in the full sense of the word.*¹¹

Carrie wasn't the only Ingalls sister to leave Kingsbury County that spring. Within a week of Carrie's departure, Grace and Nate Dow, along with Nate's sister, Chloe Fuller, and her son Jack, left to spend the summer on the Oregon coast.

The *Bad River News* noted the "rush of homesteaders and new settlers" to their claims west of the Missouri River, "coming in even larger numbers than they did last year. On March 20 [1908], according to the books of the agents at Pierre, five hundred cars of immigrant goods had crossed the bridge at that place since the first of the year... The authorities at Pierre think the immigration is heaviest this spring than it has been in the history of the state." Carrie paid a visit to the editor of the *Bad River News* while in Philip, also noted in the paper:

*Miss Carrie Ingalls of Topbar paid this office a pleasant visit Tuesday. Before she joined the great army of Stanley county homesteaders she was a type sticker in a newspaper office at De Smet.*¹²

Although there's no evidence that Carrie had worked for a newspaper since her time at the office of the *De Smet Leader* from 1889-1894 (prior to her homestead filing, she had taken a permanent position at De Smet Mercantile Company as a sales clerk), she may have been testing the waters to get back into newspaper work. The *Bad River News* reported that several new papers had been launched in Stanley County the week Carrie arrived, including the *Western Ranger*, at Top Bar, with editor Lucile Jenkins,

¹¹ *Philip Weekly Review*, April 10, 1908: 5.

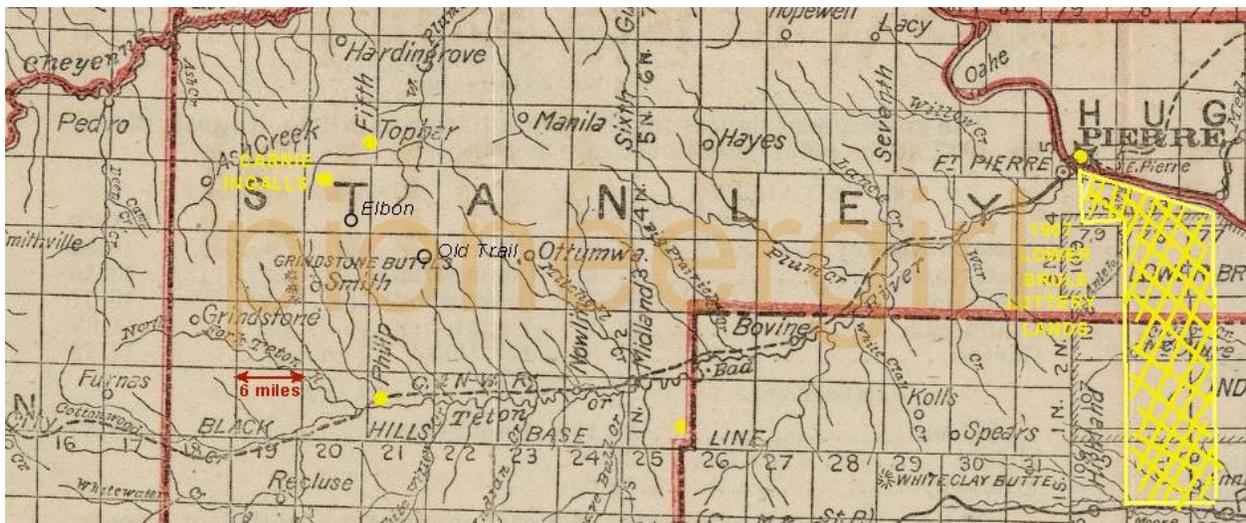
¹² *Bad River News* (Philip, South Dakota), March 26, 1908: 3.

who had previously run the *Old Trail Herald*.¹³ Old Trail was a settlement located between Top Bar and Philip.

Although the timing of Carrie Ingalls's claim filing might suggest that she participated

Lower Brule Reservation Land Lottery

in a government land lottery, that is not the case. The Lower Brule Indian Lands Act, dated April 21, 1906, authorized the sale to non-Indian homesteaders of 56,560 acres of the western part of the Lower Brule Indian Reservation¹⁴, an area about ten miles wide and lying in Stanley County and Lyman County between Pierre and Presho. Hopeful participants were required to submit an application in person between October 7-12, 1907, with the lottery held in Pierre on October 14, 1907. Although around 350 quarter section claims would be available, 2000 names were drawn in order to assure there were sufficient eligible claimants, and all names drawn were published in local newspapers, with the assigned date of



Portion of a 1906 South Dakota map, showing the location of Carrie Ingalls' 1907 homestead and Lower Brule Indian Reservation land to be disposed of by lottery held October 14, 1907.

¹³ Little information has been found about Lucile Jenkins, from Reliance, whose father reportedly lived near Kennebec, South Dakota.

¹⁴ The Lower Brule Indian Lands Act dated April 21, 1906. See: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/59th-congress/session-1/c59s1ch1645.pdf>

filing. Carrie Ingalls's name is not among them. Prior to the lottery, the land had been surveyed and appraised at a purchase price of from \$1.25 to \$4.00 per acre. One-fifth the purchase price was to be paid at the time of entry, with the balance paid in five annual installments. Failure to make a payment resulted in cancellation of entry and forfeiture of any money previously paid.

With hundreds of people pouring into Pierre on each train during the week before lottery registration opened on October 7, some may have been tempted to file on available Stanley County homestead claims outside of the Lower Brule as a backup in case their name wasn't chosen in the land lottery. Carrie Ingalls was surely aware of all this, and knowing that she wanted to file on a claim near the Morrises, Carrie made sure she had filed and was back in De Smet prior to the lottery commotion.¹⁵

Rosebud Reservation Land Lottery

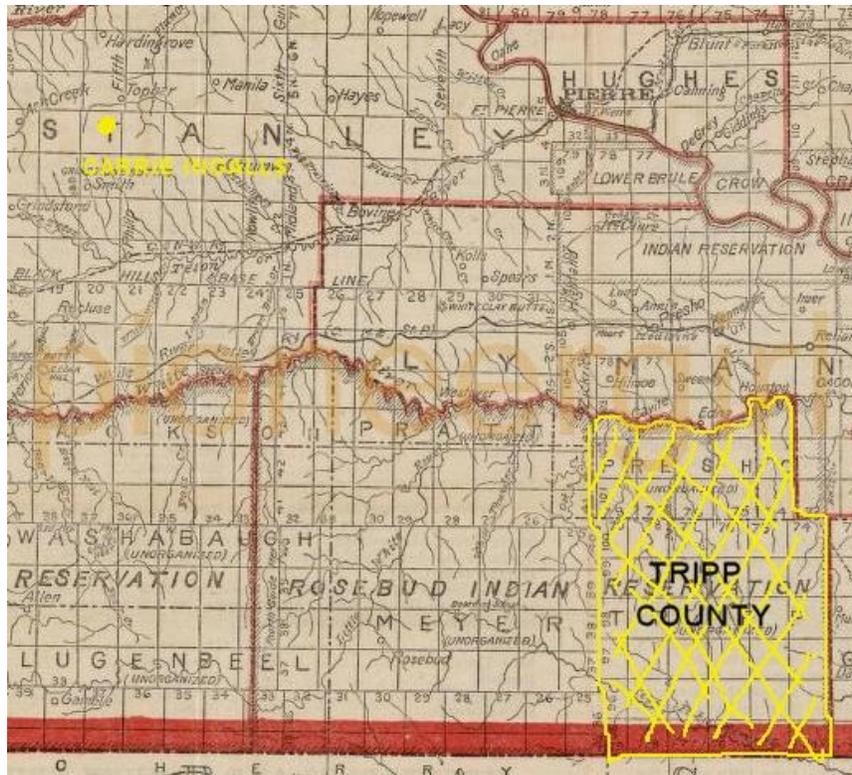
While Carrie was living on her homestead in 1908, President Theodore

Roosevelt issued a proclamation opening to settlement some 800,000 acres of surplus lands of the Rosebud Indian Reservation,¹⁶ which included all of Tripp County. This would also be a land lottery, with the drawing taking place at Dallas, South Dakota, on October 19, 1908. The minimum price for land on the Rosebud land was six dollars per acre, with homestead laws applicable to all entries. Because Pierre had been overrun by land seekers during the Lower Brule lottery, the Rosebud lottery was handled differently. Registration was spread out over two weeks and held at multiple offices: in Dallas, Chamberlain, Gregory, and Presho, all in South Dakota, also in O'Neill and Valentine, Nebraska. Applicants didn't need to be present during the lottery nor file immediately if their name was selected. The first four thousand applicants drawn were mailed a date to appear at a specified location in March

¹⁵ Edith Eudora Kohl's *Land of the Burnt Thigh* (1938) is often referenced when discussing Carrie's newspaper career, as Kohl, like Carrie Ingalls, worked for newspaper publisher E.L. Senn. Edith Kohl, née Ammons, purchased the E-NW Sec.31, T.108N, R.77W, Fifth Principal Meridian, part of the Lower Brule. Her sister, Ida, purchased the N-NE & NE-NW & Lot. 1 Sec.30, T.108N, R.78W, Fifth Principal Meridian. Carrie's claim was 100 miles west of the Ammons sisters.

¹⁶ "Opening of Rosebud Indian Lands in South Dakota (Tripp County)," a Proclamation by President Theodore Roosevelt dated August 24, 1908, in *Decisions of the Department of the Interior and the General Land Office in Cases Relating to the Public Lands*, edited by George J. Hesselman. Volume 37: July 1, 1908—May 31, 1909: 122-124.

1909, at which time a quarter section claim (or fractional subdivision thereof) could be entered at the cost per acre, plus applicable fees. Lottery winners numbered between 4,001 and 6,001 were assigned a date in August 1909, at which time any remaining acreage could be filed on at a cost of \$4.50 per acre, plus applicable fees. During the three and a half years



Location of Carrie's claim in relation to 1908 Rosebud lottery lands

following, the cost would be \$2.50 per acre. As in the Lower Brule lottery, one-fifth the purchase price was due at entry, with the remainder to be paid in five equal annual payments. More than one hundred thousand people registered in this land lottery.

Once part of the undivided Great Reservation of the Sioux Nation west of the Missouri River, Carrie's claim was part of lands offered under terms of an act long predating the Lower Brule and Rosebud lotteries. With its boundary established and amended by treaties in 1851 and 1868¹⁷, the Great Sioux Reservation originally included all of present-day South Dakota west of the Missouri River, land that the U.S. government "set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and

¹⁷ "Treaty with the Sioux Indians dated April 29, 1868." in *United States Statutes at Large*, Volume 1. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1869, 635-647.

occupation of the Indians.” Discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 made it impossible to stop the flow of fortune hunters through Indian land and into the Black Hills. In *These Happy Golden Years* (see Chapter 13, “Springtime”) Laura Ingalls Wilder includes a De Smet visit by her uncle, Thomas Quiner, in which he tells the story of his own illegal 1874-1875 quest for gold as a member of the Gordon party, and of their forced removal from the area by the United States Army.¹⁸

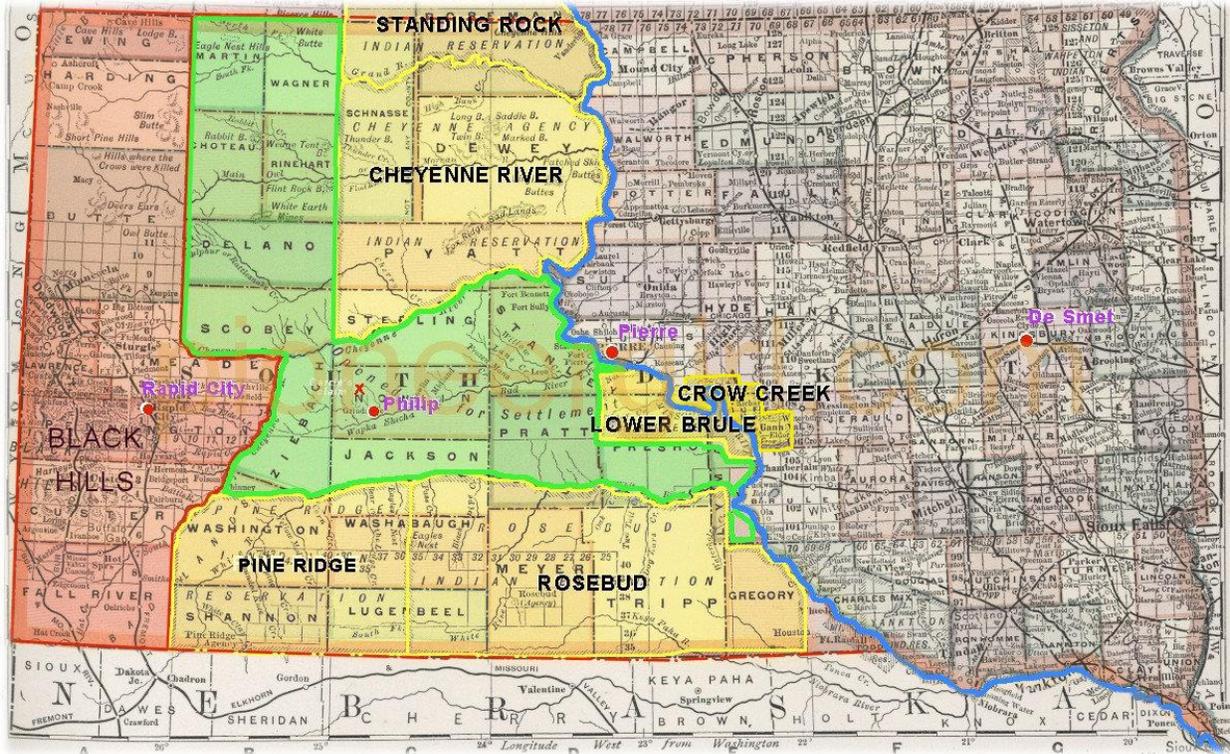
Following defeat at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, Congress cut off aid to the Sioux until they ceded the Black Hills to the United States. The Act of February 28, 1877¹⁹ established permanent reservations for the Sioux Indians and restricted them to the area roughly west of the Black Hills and east of the Missouri River. Three wagon roads would allow travel though the reservation between eastern Dakota Territory and the Black Hills. For any further cessation of reservation lands, the signatures of three-fourths of the adult males in the various tribes would be required.

The 1887 Dawes Act²⁰, in an effort to assimilate the Indians and turn them into citizen farmers, allowed for the allotment of surveyed tracts of reservation land to Indians for purposes, as well as the sale of surplus reservation land to white ranchers and farmers who would serve as mentors. It also served to safely connect eastern Dakota Territory with the Black Hills by upholding the power of Congress to grant the right of way for roads, telegraph lines, and railroads. Provided in severalty, allotments would be held in trust by the United States for twenty-five years prior to issue of patent, at which time the Indians would be forced into compliance with private property laws of the United States. As the process of selecting allotments progressed, a commission under the direction of George Crook obtained sufficient signatures in order to reduce the size of the Great Sioux Reservation.

¹⁸ For more information on the Gordon party, see David Aiken’s *Pioneers of the Black Hills, or Gordon’s Stockade Party of 1874* (1900) and Anne D. Tallent’s *The Black Hills, or Last Hunting Grounds of the Dakotahs* (1899).

¹⁹ February 28, 1877. *An Act to ratify an agreement with certain bands of the Sioux Nation of Indians and also with the Northern Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians*. See: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/44th-congress/session-2/c44s2ch72.pdf>

²⁰ February 2, 1887. *An Act to provide for the allotment of lands in severalty to Indians on the various reservations, and to extend the protection of the laws of the United States and the Territories over the Indians, and for other purposes*. See: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/49th-congress/session-2/c49s2ch119.pdf>



By treaty in 1868, the Great Sioux Reservation included all of present-day South Dakota west of the Missouri River. The 1891 South Dakota map above was highlighted to show reservation lost in 1877 (red) and diminished reservations established in 1889 (yellow), leaving land restored to the public domain (green), where Carrie's homestead was located (red X north of Philip).

The last official business of President Grover Cleveland on March 2, 1889—the night

The Sioux Bill of 1889

before Benjamin Harrison was sworn into office—was to sign the Sioux bill, by which the Great Sioux Nation of Dakota Territory would be divided into separate reservations for Indians receiving rations and annuities at the following agencies in Dakota Territory: Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, and Crow Creek. The act also affected the Santee Sioux on the reservation in Nebraska. Each member of the tribe would be allotted land on the diminished reservations under terms outlined.²¹ Later lotteries such as those in 1907 (Lower Brule) and 1908 (Rosebud) served to dispose of

²¹ March 2, 1889. *An Act to divide a portion of the Reservation of the Sioux Nation of Indians in Dakota into separate reservations and to secure the relinquishment of the Indian title to the remainder, and for other purposes.* [22 stat. 889] See: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/50th-congress/session-2/c50s2ch405.pdf>

For an 1888 map showing the proposed boundaries of the separate reservations, see: <http://www.primeau.org/1888/index.html>

excess reservation lands not needed for Indian allotments.

The six diminished reservations made up about 11 million acres, and the remainder—also about 11 million acres—was restored to the public domain and would be disposed of by the United States to non-Indian settlers. This tract included most of Stanley County, west of the Missouri River and sandwiched between the Cheyenne River Reservation (north of the Cheyenne River) and the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations (south of the White River, a tributary of the Missouri River). Under terms of the act:

...Each settler, under and in accordance with the provisions of said homestead acts, shall pay to the United States, for the land so taken by him, in addition to the fees provided by law, the sum of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre for all lands disposed of within the first three years after the taking effect of this act, and the sum of seventy-five cents per acre for all lands disposed of within the next two years following thereafter, and fifty cents per acre for the residue of the lands then undisposed of... Provided, That all lands herein opened to settlement under this act remaining undisposed of at the end of ten years from the taking effect of this act shall be taken and accepted by the United States at fifty cents per acre...

The land restored to the public domain was opened to settlement in the fall of 1889, with claims available for filing after survey. Homestead entries made prior to February 10, 1893, would thus cost \$1.25 per acre, plus applicable fees. From February 10, 1893 to February 10, 1895, the cost was \$.75 per acre. Between this date and when the undisposed lands were purchased by the United States ten years after passage of the act, the cost was \$.50 per acre, as it remained until all were disposed of. These were not “free” homesteads in the sense that a claimant could obtain the land after living on it for five consecutive years and meeting other criteria of the Homestead Act (as Charles Ingalls’ Dakota Territory homestead claim was described in the Little House books). Depending on the date of first filing, the purchase amount specified in the act was to be paid no matter what.

Although the Preemption Act had been repealed in 1891, the commutation clause of the Homestead Act remained in effect. It was argued that current homesteaders still needed the commutation clause in order to be able to take out a mortgage on their farm after final proof, as ownership was required

in order to mortgage property. Commutation allowed a claimant to purchase the land sooner than five years (with one-fifth the purchase price paid each year of residency), after meeting the shorter residency requirement of a preemption claim. The length of residency required prior to commutation had been increased from six months to fourteen months in 1896.

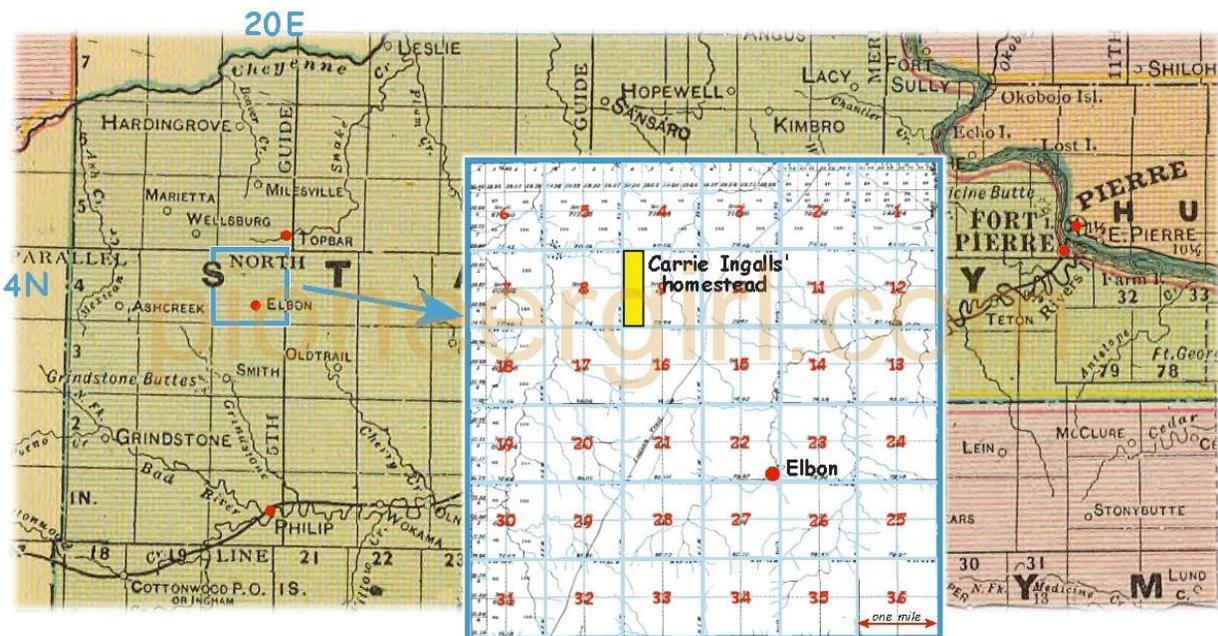
Many factors were involved in the slow or sporadic settlement and taking of homesteads in Stanley County between 1889 and the first decade of the 20th century. In the late 1880s, South Dakota experienced multiple hard winters that greatly reduced free-ranging livestock herds and discouraged both farmers and ranchers. As settlers moved in, there was much debate over the herd law as in force east of the Missouri River (whereby free range privileges would be lost and stockmen would be compelled to herd their stock or run them in fenced pastures year round), and fence laws eventually saw the land of free range cattle divided up by homesteaders' required fencing. Herd law west of the Missouri River passed by a large majority in Stanley County when on the ballot in November 1908.

Although opened to settlement in 1889, claims couldn't legally be filed until after survey, and the survey of Township 4 North, Range 20 East (of the Black Hills Meridian) wasn't filed at the surveyor general's office in Huron until April 17, 1891.²² Squatters merely waited to file a homestead claim until the land had gone down in price, and prospective settlers also waited until the spring of 1893 or 1895 to file as the cost went down, taking a gamble on availability. Many potential homesteaders (and some land officials) stayed away because they misunderstood the Land Act itself, believing that the commutation price was \$1.25 per acre *plus* the fifty cents to \$1.25 per acre which was collected and placed to the credit of the Sioux Indians as set forth in the 1889 Act. This idea became widely circulated after the 1900 expiration of the ten-year clause and purchase of undisposed lands by the United States at fifty cents per

²² Township and Section lines were surveyed by E. Channing Chilcott in August and September 1890. The original survey for this section can be viewed on the Bureau of Land Management website: https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/survey/default.aspx?dm_id=240908&sid=4y3c0tb5.brz#surveyDetailsTabIndex=1

acre. After much debate, a May 1902 amendment to the Sioux Bill declared that settlers paid only the price per acre for which the land was sold by the Indians.

A major factor hindering settlement was the delay in building railroads west of Fort Pierre. Although both the Dakota Central branch of the Chicago and North Western Railway Company and the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway Company were given rights-of-way for tracks and townsites by the 1889 act, they were also required to have completed and put in operation their lines within three years, but neither line had trains running until the summer of 1907.



Portion of 1909 Rand McNally map of South Dakota which includes both Topbar and Elbon. A copy of the original survey of Township 4N, Range 20E is added to show the location of Carrie Ingalls' claim.

With a first filing date of September 30, 1907, Carrie Ingalls was required to pay fifty cents per acre for her claim: \$80 for 160 acres. Although the residency requirement prior to commutation was fourteen months at the time of Carrie's filing, the accepted practice had been that the six months given to allow for construction of a residence under the Preemption Act (usually described as being the six months allowed between first filing and establishing residency on a claim) was considered *part of the fourteen months of residence*, whether the homesteader was on the claim or not. This left *eight months* of unbroken

residence before a homesteader could take advantage of the commutation clause. Only a few weeks after Carrie filed on her claim, Richard A. Ballinger, Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, D.C., ruled that for any claim filed after November 1, 1907, commutation proofs must show “actual and continuous bona fide residence for the full period of fourteen months.”²³ Carrie was spared the additional six months, but she clearly understood that she needn’t be on her claim during the construction period and would only need to spend *eight months* on her claim prior to commutation, as shown by the newspaper account of Carrie’s settlement (*see* page 5).

According to Carrie’s claim file, her house was built on (or moved to) her claim on January 1, 1908. Carrie was in De Smet at the time, but weather had been fine for building with only five inches total snowfall in December and an average temperature at just below freezing. The coldest day of the month was on the 21st, when the thermometer dipped down to zero for the first time.



Carrie Ingalls beside her claim shanty

On New Year’s Day, it was minus 7 degrees.²⁴ Carrie’s shanty was a frame building 10 by 12 feet (the minimum size allowed by law), with a cellar and separate coal shed. She had a well dug, but the claim had no barn or stable. A photograph taken of Carrie standing beside her shanty reveals that the exterior

²³ “Governing Rules Submitted by the Interior Department.” *Rapid City Journal*, October 23, 1907: 1. The new rules were noted in many South Dakota newspapers in October and November, 1907.

²⁴ Monthly weather statistics were taken by E.H. Banks in Philip and recorded in the *Bad River News*. See the front page of the January 9 and February 13 (1908) issues for December and January weather data.

was covered in tar-paper held down by strips of lath. There was at least one double-hung glass window with a wooden exterior shutter, and what appears to be a screen door.

Carrie took up actual residence on March 24, 1908. She had 40 rods of fencing added around the house, making an enclosed yard of about three-quarters of an acre. Value of improvements was said to be between \$175-\$200. Six acres were plowed and planted to “potatoes and garden truck.”²⁵

Carrie left no record of how she spent her months on the homestead, but she was by no means isolated. There was garden work and farm work to see to. Between Carrie’s claim and that of E.A. Morrison a mile to the west, three experiment station farms were being run by agents from the agricultural college in Brookings; perhaps Carrie received farming advice from them. She must have exchanged letters with friends and family, walking to Elbon or Topbar for the twice weekly mail or shopping at Peter Kertzman’s or John Griffin’s general stores in Topbar, or at Lester Teeter’s store in Elbon. There were at least a half dozen weddings on claims within walking distance; Carrie may have been invited to some of them. Many in the area went to Philip in May for the big celebration in honor of the town’s first anniversary, with races, a baseball game, and music. A big attraction was war dances performed by Indians from the Cheyenne Reservation. May was also a month of thunderstorms and wet weather, but Stanley County was said to have never looked so green. Frank Harthorn and family visited the Burds on the next claim north for several weeks in June, and both Freda and Nellie Morrison were summering on their claims to the southwest of Carrie. Elbon had a mandolin and guitar club, and there was a telephone line between Topbar and Philip, with branch lines. A daily stagecoach ran between Philip and settlements to the north, stopping at both Elbon and Topbar. A grand Fourth of July celebration was held near Topbar, with dancing all day, a ball game, foot races and horse races, and a hot air balloon.

October 10, Carrie appeared in Philip before Byron Clow, United States Land Commissioner, to

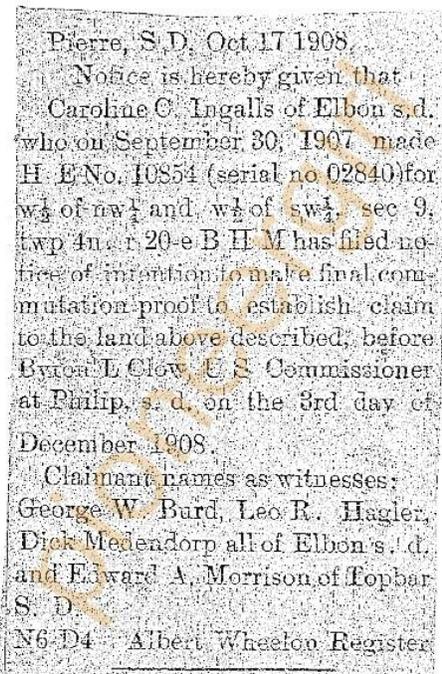
²⁵ Homestead file No. 10854, Caroline C. Ingalls. December 3, 1908, Pierre, South Dakota, Land Office; Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Land Entry File (NATF 84); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

declare her intent to make final commutation before the end of the year. A week later, Carrie arranged to have her final proof notice published in the *Western Ranger* at Topbar (the newspaper published closest to her claim, as was required by law); the notice ran weekly from November 6 to December 4.

The *Western Ranger* was one of seventeen Stanley County “final proof” newspapers owned by E.L. Senn, Carrie’s future boss. By the following spring, Senn owned about forty newspapers scattered through Lyman, Stanley, Pennington, and Fall River Counties.²⁶ As Senn signed and notarized Carrie’s paperwork, she either met him at the time or came to know him through one of the editors of the *Western Ranger* during Carrie’s months on her homestead, Lucile Jenkins or Ora Humphrey. Jenkins was

running the Topbar paper when Carrie arrived, then she set type for the *Philip Weekly Review* before being sent to Pedro to run the *Bugle*, the newspaper Carrie Ingalls took over in June 1909.²⁷ Humphrey took over the *Western Ranger* during the summer of 1908, leaving that winter to be married.

The eight months required of Carrie to live on her land ended officially on Tuesday, November 24. December 3, neighbors George Burd (age 70) and Dick Mendencorp (age 30) accompanied Carrie to Philip to file testimony as witnesses in her homestead proof. Carrie made her own statements before Mr.



Carrie’s 1908 final proof notice from the *Western Ranger*, Topbar, South Dakota

²⁶ *Philip Weekly Review*, March 23, 1909: 1. Senn had just consolidated his line of newspapers with the *Deadwood Daily Telegram* into one company, the Dakota Publishing Company, with a capital stock of \$100,000, the majority of which was held by him. As the number of final proof notices declined, so did the number of newspapers publishing them.

²⁷ Jenkins’ employment record was reported in the *Philip Weekly Review*, January 12, 1909: 5.

Clow, and paid eighty dollars for her quarter section on December 8, 1908, at the Pierre land office.

Carrie was officially a landowner.

Carrie was back in De Smet by December 18. On Christmas Day, the *De Smet News* reported:

*News neglected to mention last week that Miss Carrie Ingalls has returned from her claim which she proved up on in November. Miss Ingalls says she enjoyed her summer on the claim and has no intentions of releasing title to her farm. She is planning to go out again in the spring.*²⁸

Carrie's return to her land the following June must have been brief, as it was also the month she began working for E.L. Senn, on the *Pedro Bugle*, twenty-five miles west of Elbon (too far to commute to her job from the claim). Subsequent jobs on newspapers in Hill City and Roseland kept her from home. August 1, 1912, Carrie married widower David Swanzey, and they settled in Keystone, where they remained permanently.

Carrie owned her former homestead claim for the rest of her life; she died in Keystone on June 2, 1946. Although not enumerated with other real property in her Last Will, with the exception of several bequests to family members, Carrie left the remainder of her estate to the Mount Aetna Lodge No. 128, A.F. & A.M., in Keystone.²⁹ Her attorney was to decide whether to sell any real property prior to final distribution, yet Carrie's claim had not been sold prior to the July 1950 final cash distribution of \$1,472.46 to the Lodge, and there is no mention of any real estate transferred. A provision of the final decree stated that both the cash sum "and any other property not now known or discovered which may belong to said estate" went to the Lodge.

²⁸ From the *De Smet News* (date unknown), reprinted in the *Philip Weekly Review*, January 5, 1909: 5.

²⁹ Last Will of Caroline I. Swanzey, executed April 10, 1940. Reel 29, Pennington County Probate Records. State Archives of the South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre, South Dakota.

On August 6, 1967, at a regular meeting of the Mount Aetna Lodge, a resolution was adopted authorizing the sale of the claim north of Philip.³⁰ August 22, 1969, they sold Carrie's homestead to M.E. Brooks & Sons, for four thousand dollars.³¹ The property remained in the Brooks family partnership for over thirty years; it is now privately owned.

Carrie's former claim is landlocked, with no public road access. Eighteen miles north of Philip in Haakon County, it lies two miles north of Hilland Road and two and a half miles west of State Highway 73, where a marker indicates that you are near the claim. Although the township is still broken into fields that denote claims laid out over a hundred years ago, the homesteads have long been combined into huge ranches and there are few houses or residents. There is no visible evidence to suggest where Carrie's claim shanty may have once stood.



At the northwest corner of Carrie's claim, looking south towards Philip, a century after Carrie homesteaded there. The tree on the horizon in the center of the photo is about the halfway point of the narrow, half-mile long claim. The land is privately owned. Please do not trespass.

[10-27-2019 update]

³⁰ Affidavit authorizing sale of property dated August 22, 1969, signed by A.I. Johnson, Secretary, Mount Aetna Lodge No. 128 A.F. & A.M., Keystone, South Dakota. Pennington County Deed Book 131, page 586.

³¹ Mt. Aetna Lodge No. 128, Ancient Order of Free and Accepted Masons to M. E. Brooks and Sons, Inc., W ½ W ½ of Section 9, Township 4 North, Range 20 East of Black Hills Meridian. Haakon County Deed Book 132, page 261.