

## Buffalo Hunt Trail Rolette County N.D.

Laura Thompson Law's book *History of Rolette County North Dakota and Yarns of the Pioneers*<sup>1</sup> gives the following description of the Metis Buffalo Hunt trail from Red River west.

The oldest and most used trail that crossed Rolette County was the one from the Red River settlement near the present location of Winnipeg. The Half Breeds would arrange to meet, usually along the Pembina River in the general area of Pilot Mound or Calf Mountain<sup>2</sup>, in Manitoba or near Pembina, a large camp would assemble and on an agreed date would start out on the buffalo hunt to the southwest, to Devil's Lake, the Turtle Mountains, or across to Mouse [Souris] River. As the buffalo became more scarce it was necessary to go further west, even to the Missouri River and finally into Montana.

This heavy trail entered North Dakota northwest of Sarles and Badger Butte, and ran southwest to the north end of Rock Lake, thence on past what is now Gronna, and continued west southwest between Rolette and Thorne, passed near Fonda and crossed to Mouse River about two miles southeast of the mouth of Willow Creek. The trail was evidently in use a hundred years ago, when the Metis or Half Breeds had to hunt in large bodies, as they were in the country then claimed by the Sioux. From this main trail there were no doubt branches and loops developed as needed. One of these seems to have skirted the base of the Turtle Mountains, probably extending clear around it, a distance of a hundred miles or more.

From the historical record we know that this trail then continued south southwest to Buffalo Lodge Lake (north of Highway 2) and then south to Dog Den Butte on the Missouri Coteau.



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<sup>1</sup> Rolla, N.D.: Rolla Centennial Committee, 1989 reprint of the 1953 book; pg. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Near Darlingford, Manitoba. In 1738, La Verendrye, his sons and a company of fifty came south from Fort la Reine, to set foot in the territory now known as southern Manitoba. They passed within 11 miles of Morden on their way to the Missouri River, camping overnight at Calf Mountain, one mile from Darlingford.