

She called the story "My Dakota Land", and her full name was Anna Jane (Kreidler) McGregor. She remarried to Fred Casey after William McGregor died in 1936. She was born in Pennsylvania in 1874. Her parents moved to Iowa in the late 1870's and rented a farm. In the spring of 1882, they decided to come to Hyde County, in the Dakota Territory. Her father was a Civil War Vet, so he could file a Soldier's Declatory. After a bad hail storm, they moved back to Iowa, but got the urge for the Dakota land again, and this is where the below excerpt starts.

Her husband, William Howard McGregor, was born in Chicago in 1872. He was a cousin to the Loomis gang.

Pictures can be seen at:

<http://theusgenweb.org/nd/emmons/treekreidler.htm>

EXCERPT FROM "My Dakota Land"
By Anna Jane Kreidler McGregor Casey
Excerpted, Transcribed and Contributed To
NDGenWeb Emmons County By Maria Barnhardt

The next year I went to Omaha to stay with an aunt and attend school. There I met a boy by the name of McGregor and in two years we were married and came to Dakota to live in the country. Also he was rather tired of working at his trade, that of a plumber and steamfitter. Our Dakota had become two states by that time and we settled near Highmore, S.D., near my folks. We farmed for a couple years without making much headway financially. My young, inexperienced husband signed a contract to carry the mail from Eureka, S.D., to Winchester, N.D., to live halfway between Thule, S.D., and go to Eureka one day and back the next. He loaded our few possessions in the wagon and drove north to Thule where he was to start his mail route on July 1st. On his way he stopped over night at a farm home and got his first encounter with fleas. This little insect he found as the years and months went by was a real native of the Dakotas. Where they finally went to no one seems to know, but they are seldom seen now. The only place he could find for us to live was one mile and a half from the post office. Thule, he found, was a post office in a farm home. When he got settled I with our first child, a boy of eighteen months, met him in Eurkea. Of all the poor looking country I had ever seen was between Eureka and Thule.

It was and is today I think round and north of Thule it was Hollanders. Poor years had left their mark. Eureka though in a few years was a wheat metropolis of the world and the poor looking country prospered accordingly.

It was very unhandy living so far from the post office so he finally made a deal with a Mr. Schaap who had land near the post office to let him build a sod house

on his land, which he did. I carried the mail north every other day while he worked on the house. We had what was known as a piano box cart, which was a box like a buggy fastened to the axle by a big coil spring. It rode nice and easy but thirty miles and back is quite a distance.

One day I was setting on my foot when the horse stumbled and fell. The springs came unhooked, the box came loose and out went I onto the horse. No damage done but I was very glad. I didn't have my boy along. Fortunately I had left him with a neighbor that day.

Our house was soon finished and my job as a mail carrier ended. We lived there until spring when my husband decided there wasn't much future in mail carrying and quit his job. Then he and another fellow thought it would be a paying job to start a butcher shop in Winona, N.D., just across the Missouri River from Ft. Yates, which at that time was full of soldiers from which Winona derived its livelihood. My husband, who was handy man at many things was to be butcher and the other man furnish the meat. Winona at that time was a thriving town for service consisting of one general store, a post office, hotel and seven saloons, with women in most of them. There were only a few other residents.

The soldiers who could get away and were so inclined came over every night from Yates by ferry. All went fine until the Indian agent at Sanding Rock forbid the ferry landing after six o'clock at night. Gradually Winona became a pretty dead town and we began looking for greener fields. We heard a lot about the west river country being such a good cattle country, out on the Cannon Pass, Cedar Creek and Grand Rivers. At that time a rancher showed up by the name of Frank Chesrown, who had a ranch on Cedar Creek and needed a hired man for haying. He offered \$100 for our services for three months. We gladly accepted and he brought a covered wagon and team in for us to move out with. We loaded our few belongings that we would need and our two boys, and Westward Ho! again.

The country was all new to us and very interesting. Just to show you how green we were we thought that all those "nigger head" rocks we saw along the way was coal. Boy!! What a country we thought. We soon found out thought that there was plenty of good coal for the digging with only a few feet of dirt on it. Most everyone dug their own coal and of course where it was easiest to get. The result was in a few years an easy place was hard to find. Gradually, people bought their coal from men who made a business of uncovering coal.

We had a very pleasant summer with the Chesrown brothers, Frank, Bill and Joe. It was Joe's first summer here, too, and Frank said he'd give him all the dirty jobs and maybe he would get sick of it and go back home to Minnesota. But Joe stuck through thick and thin and up until 5 years ago lived on the same ranch north of Watauga. When he retired his son Jack took over. We worked another month for a bachelor, John Pitts, farther down the creek, when we found out that W. V. Wade wanted a man for the winter months. He offered a place to live, a certain

amount of flour; I can't recall how much, but enough, our milk and \$50. His offer we accepted and moved to the Wade ranch which was about 20 miles from Chesrowns on the Cannonball River. Mrs. Wade always went down to Old Winona for the winter to send her son, Frank, to school. She told me if I took good care of her chickens that she would give me six hens and a hen with chickens in the spring, which she did. Behold, the starter of the M4 Ranch.

That was the winter of 1896-97, which is still known as the hard winter by the few old timers left. Winters had been so mild and open that ranchers had grown careless about getting in their winter supplies. The early snow caught many without enough food to last all winter. Consequently they went through quite a lot of hardship and worry before getting to Mandan and back with much needed groceries. We didn't have any trucks and cars in those days. If we had we still would have had to use horses. The snow got so deep that people who had left their hay out in small stacks had trouble finding it and digging it out.

That was the winter, too, of the Spicer murder. Quite a crowd was gathered at neighbor Brickleys having a good time when an Indian messenger arrived with a note from Ft. Yates telling us that Tom Spicer, his wife, his wife's mother, and their married daughter and twin boys about 18 months old had been murdered at the Spicer home, which was couple miles out of Winona, by some person or persons unknown. Perhaps you can imagine the sort of pall that came over our party, and the many conjectures as to who did it or why.

Tom McCrory, a young fellow from Winona who was moving out onto the old Hover place, as it was known then, but better known now as the old Ferguson ranch purchased a few years ago by Martin Weekes. This young man was at our party and was bound to start right out on horseback for Winona. His uncle, Mr. Wade, decided against that, as he thought get in too big a hurry, play his horse out, or get off the road and no telling what he might run into. He finally sent my husband along as a sort of safety measure to keep him calmed down. You see, those people who were killed were all near relatives of the girl he was to marry. They reached Winona without a mishap and joined in the search for the murderers. They were finally located by one thing and another and proved to be Indians who were looking for whiskey. I shall always think that if an old fellow down there hadn't been such an old wise cracker that murder never would have been committed. A short while before that the authorities had confiscated the whiskey in the Winona saloons. Someone asked this old guy, "What did they do with the whiskey?" He, thinking it was smart, replied, "Oh, they put it in Tom Spicer's cellar." Tom, being a very nice man and very religious, this guy thought that was a real joke. It proved to be a real tragedy. The whole community was in a turmoil. Women were practicing shooting. We had just a small .32 caliber revolver which I was more afraid of than Indians.