



*Seth Bullock*

## *Dakota Images*

As both merchant and marshal, Seth Bullock helped extend the borders of civilization on the western frontier, particularly in the northern Black Hills.

Bullock was born 24 July 1847 to a retired British army officer and his Scottish wife in Sandwich, Ontario, Canada. At the age of twenty, he headed for the Montana gold fields. While in Helena, he entered the auction and grocery businesses, won election as sheriff of Lewis and Clark County, and served as chief engineer of the fire department. As a member of the Montana Territorial Council, he played a central role in persuading Congress to declare Yellowstone a national park.

When Montana placer mining declined, Bullock and partner Solomon Star loaded a wagon with hardware to sell to prospectors in Dakota Territory. Soon after arriving in Deadwood in August 1876, Bullock again entered local politics, helping to establish sanitation standards and fire and police protection for the rowdy mining camp. In 1877, Governor John Pennington appointed him sheriff of Lawrence County. Bullock remained a popular lawman for much of the next four decades, gaining fame for outwitting his criminal adversaries or intimidating them with his piercing stare rather than using a gun. He also pursued various business interests, including hardware and liquor retailing and mining, milling, and ranching. He introduced alfalfa into Dakota on the S-B stock ranch, which he and Star operated on the Belle Fourche and Redwater rivers, and became a founder of the town of Belle Fourche when he granted S-B land to the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad for a terminal.

A chance encounter marked the beginning of Bullock's lifelong friendship with Theodore Roosevelt, then a deputy sheriff from the North Dakota Badlands. During the Spanish-American War, Bullock organized the Black Hills Squadron of the Third United States Volunteer Cavalry in hopes of joining Roosevelt in Cuba, but the war ended before the squadron finished training. Bullock's cowboy riders did, however, enliven Roosevelt's 1905 inaugural parade. In 1900, the president appointed Bullock as the first supervisor of the Black Hills Forest Reserve, and, five years later, he became United States marshal for South Dakota.

Bullock died on 23 September 1919 and was buried at White Rocks above Mount Moriah Cemetery.

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