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"North Dakota" by Clinton DeGroat, First UND Commencement: June 13, 1889

Clinton S. DeGroat

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"Clinton S. DeGroat delivered an excellent oration on 'North Dakota.' It was a regular boom for this great country of ours. Among other things he said:

The history of N. Dak. as a state will begin with the adoption of a constitution. The framing of this constitution will affect the welfare of the state down through the centuries. Any wrong step or unwise provision in the foundation of our future law may prove a fruitful source of evil for many generations.

The progress and development of the territory in population and wealth for the past twelve years has been wonderful.

The far famed Red River Valley of the North, with its unrivaled wheat fields, the vast regions of Devils Lake and Turtle Mountains, the valleys of the James, Missouri, Sheyenne, Goose, and Mouse, and the wide spreading pampas of the northwestern counties, where the flocks and herds of a nation may find pasture, all these constitute a magnificent domain of 75,000 sq. miles, greater by 10,000 than all of the New England states.

We are blessed with almost perfect railroad communications and hotel accommodations, with a surface dotted with crystal lakes, blue as the azure skys they reflect and swarming with fish; with our bountiful wheatfields, a vast expanse of gorgeous verdure in its earlier growth, of curiously and beautifully streaked or blended light yellow and yellowish green as it is approaching maturity, and of a golden richness when the straw and berry have ripened.

As for opportunities, no country possesses more or better. Let us recapitulate. The summer shines on no fairer land; the prairies are decked with waving crops; wealth rests at our door; contentment sleeps beneath the roof; the flush of health blooms upon the happy household; virtue, love, and contentment are the golden thread that bind the family circle. Peace like a guardian angel ever watches over us; agriculture with her plow and harrow marches in triumph over the prairie, while bending corn and ripening wheat keep rhythmic sway before the gentle breeze.

'Beautiful under our central skies,
See fair Dakota stand,
With freedom's light in her loyal eyes,
And Liberty a crown in her hand."

Grand Forks Daily Herald (evening edition), 13 June 1889, page 4