



F. Hayden Carruth

Dakota Images

F. Hayden Carruth's career as a pioneer journalist in Dakota Territory lasted only four years, but his work as editor and publisher of a Hamlin County newspaper, the *Estelline Bell*, drew nationwide attention. Estelline, South Dakota, which Carruth knew in its infancy, would later provide the setting for two of his books.

Carruth was born on 31 October 1862 near Lake City, Minnesota. He entered the University of Minnesota in 1881, withdrawing the next year to work on a newspaper in Minneapolis. In 1883, he moved to Estelline, a settlement less than one year old, and was joined there the following year by Ettie Gordon, his new wife from Lake City.

Newspapers and editors often made fleeting appearances in Dakota Territory, but in the first issue of the *Estelline Bell*, published on 4 August 1883, Carruth wrote, "The Bell... has merely come to stay and do good." However, in his last issue, Number 161 on 28 August 1886, he lamented that the wolf at his door had "been in the habit of sitting on the doorstep and making constant use of a howl of great velocity." The paper could not pay for itself, but Carruth's brightly written articles had been reprinted by editors around the country, and he had gained a reputation for humor and good journalism.

On 16 April 1887, Carruth began to copublish (with Samuel T. Clover) the *Dakota Bell*, a humorous weekly newspaper out of Sioux Falls. Money problems plagued this paper as well, and only twenty issues were printed. Carruth next moved to New York City and became an editorial writer for the *New York Tribune* in 1888. After four years, he resigned and began to contribute short stories to magazines. He also wrote three books, including *The Voyage of the Rattletrap* (1897), the story of three young adventurers who travel from Prairie Flower (Estelline) to Deadwood and back in a covered wagon.

Returning to editorial work in 1900, Carruth joined the staff of *Harper's* magazine. In 1905, he became a writer and editor for *Woman's Home Companion* and remained with that publication throughout the rest of his career. He continued to write for other magazines, and in 1923, he authored "South Dakota: The Land without End" for a series in the *Nation*. In 1911, he wrote his most popular book, *Track's End*, a children's adventure story set in early Estelline. Carruth died from a heart ailment on 3 January 1932 at the age of sixty-nine.

by JANET LIVELY

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