



Mabel Wilkins Jacobsen



Henry Jacobsen

Dakota Images

Unlike many homesteaders who arrived in western South Dakota in the early 1900s, Henry Jacobsen and Mabel Wilkins Jacobsen survived drought and depression to become long-time residents of the region.

Henry Jacobsen was born 26 October 1878 at Hamburg, Germany. Arriving in America as a ship's stowaway, he spent six years at a boys' home in Brooklyn, New York. At age seventeen, he went to Nebraska, where he worked on a cattle ranch and opened a confectionery store. The turn of the century found him working as a cigar inspector and salesman in Chicago.

There he met Mabel Wilkins, a Saint Joseph, Missouri, native born 17 August 1882. The couple married in 1906 and moved with their sons, Francis and Henry, Jr., to a homestead in central Butte County, South Dakota, in May 1910. A daughter, Mary Alice, was born there in 1912.

The Jacobsens took advantage of their location between Newell and Buffalo to start a road ranch, where freighters from Whitewood and Belle Fourche enjoyed fine meals and clean beds. In August 1910, they established the Castle Rock post office, named for a nearby butte. For most of the next thirty-eight years, Mabel Jacobsen served as postmaster in addition to running the general store the couple opened in 1911.

Henry Jacobsen began the *Castle Rock Press* in 1912 after taking over the printing press of the *Rothford Homesteader* as payment on a debt. He eventually acquired the *Moreau News* and the *Redig Press* before selling the entire enterprise to the *Newell Valley Irrigator* in 1928.

In 1917, Jacobsen became a United States land commissioner, a position he held for the rest of his life. He also served for sixteen years as a Butte County commissioner. The "Lone Wolf of Castle Rock," as he sometimes called himself, fearlessly advocated "good government" and "fair play," airing his views in full-page newspaper advertisements or over the radio. He ran for the United States Congress in 1936 and the South Dakota State Senate in 1932 and 1948, losing all three bids.

In 1948, the Jacobsens sold the Castle Rock store and turned their ranch holdings over to their sons. In retirement, Henry Jacobsen surveyed land-patent rights in Butte County and traced title histories on hundreds of county land parcels, a project he was working on when he died at Castle Rock on 24 February 1952. Mabel Jacobsen, who had retired from storekeeping in 1948, died 26 January 1965 at Belle Fourche.

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