

## Dakota Images

D. C. Booth had just taken charge of the new Spearfish hatchery when he received a telegram from the United States Fish Commission asking him how soon he could take delivery of one hundred thousand trout eggs. The facility still had no hatching trays, and much of the plumbing remained unfinished. Nevertheless, Booth's response was characteristic: ship the eggs immediately.

DeWitt Clinton ("D. C.") Booth was born 5 August 1867 at Palatine Bridge, New York. His family later moved to Chicago, where he worked in the head office of a railway before obtaining his first federal post with the United States Customs Service at the World's Columbian Exposition. Entering the service of the Fish Commission, Booth worked at various stations before he was placed in charge of the Spearfish, South Dakota, hatchery at its opening in July 1899. At thirty-one, Booth was the youngest hatchery superintendent in the federal service.

Booth immediately faced challenges—not just the hectic rush to prepare for the first shipment of eggs, but also a flash flood the next month that wiped it out. With his usual energy, Booth oversaw the construction of a storm channel and retaining walls that protected the site from future flooding, the first of the improvements that would occur throughout his tenure. By April 1900, the hatchery was stocking Black Hills streams with trout shipped over the railways in iced ten-gallon cans. The facility would eventually supply varieties of trout to locations as far flung as Alaska and Wales.

Booth married Ruby Elizabeth Hine, a teacher at Spearfish State Normal School, in 1901, and the couple ultimately had two children. The same year, Booth was asked to develop the fisheries at Yellowstone National Park as a substation of the Spearfish hatchery. Initially given no extra resources beyond a railroad pass, within a decade Booth and his staff had made their Yellowstone operation the most productive inland game-fish station in the country. In 1911, Booth returned to work full-time at the Spearfish hatchery, where, except for two years at a hatchery near Winona, Minnesota, he stayed until his retirement on 1 November 1933.

D. C. Booth died 27 February 1938 in Dallas, Texas, and is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Spearfish. The hatchery that he opened in 1899 is now preserved as a museum, the D. C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives.

—Rodger Hartley

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