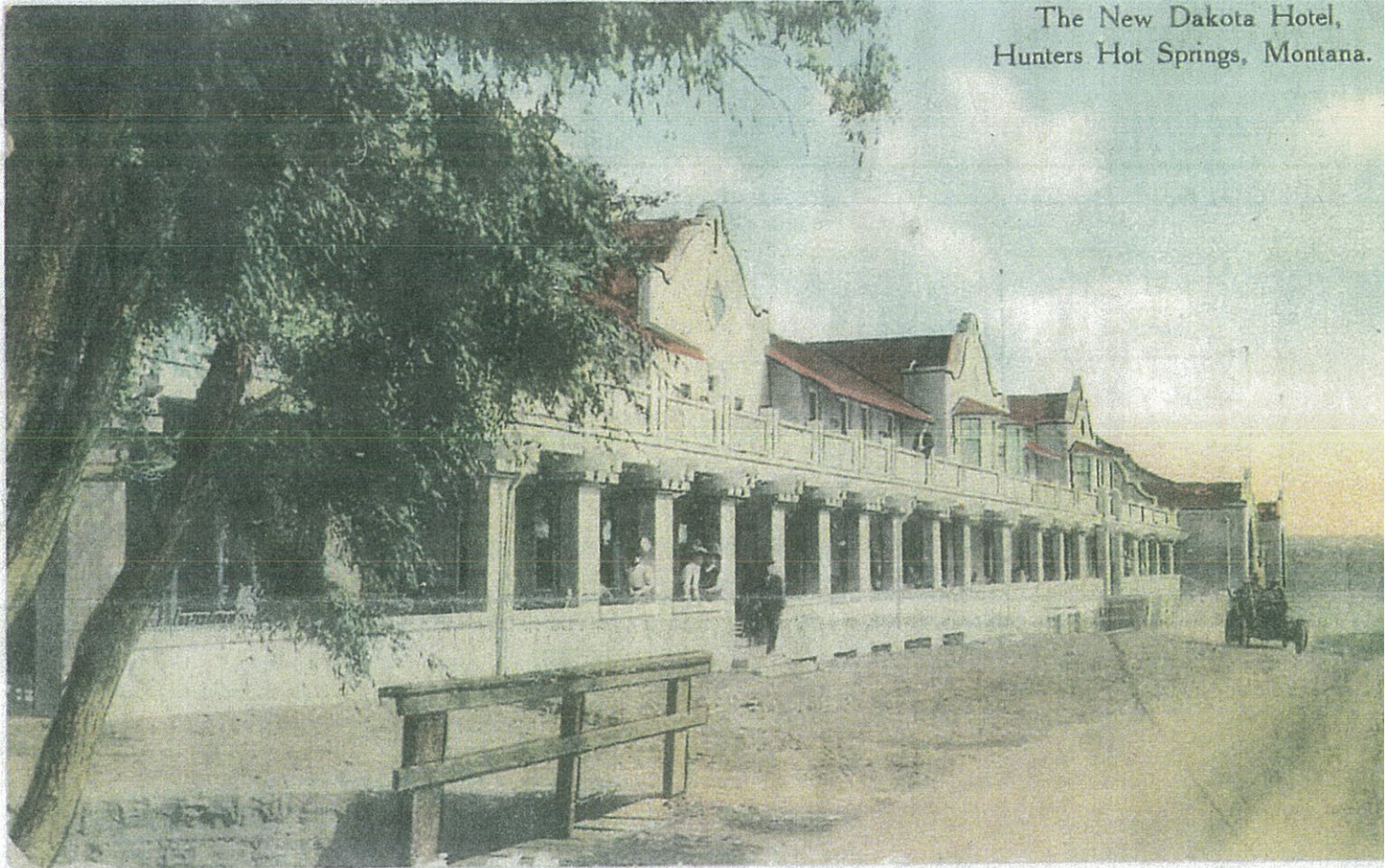


HUNTER'S HOT SPRINGS REVIVAL HITS A SNAG

The New Dakota Hotel,
Hunters Hot Springs, Montana.



Images courtesy of Jerry

These undated postcards show the Hotel Dakota at Hunter's Hot Springs near Springdale, with an outside view above and the resort's room below. The hotel was built in 1909 and burnt down in Nov. 1932.

Owner who wants to revive Hunter's Hot Springs resort say county needs to decide between tourism, industrialization

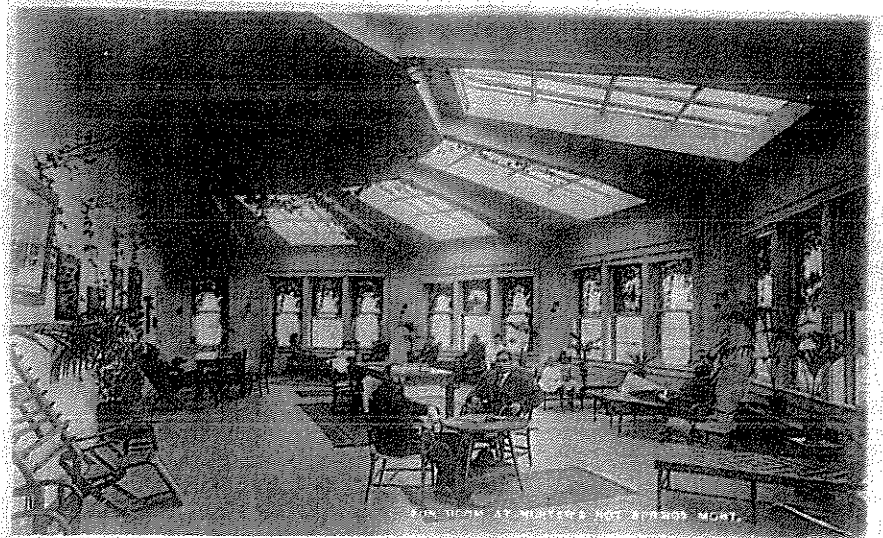
By Johnathan Hettinger
Enterprise Staff Writer

Russell Gordy isn't telling you this as any sort of ultimatum. It's not a this-versus-that proposition. To be honest, he says, the idea wasn't that far along, but he *had* decided to do it.

Instead, it's a warning, and also a question for locals.

"What do you want your county to be?" Gordy said.

Gordy, the owner of a 48,000-acre ranch north of Livingston who made his money in oil, had plans to develop the historic Hunter's Hot Springs resort along Convict Grade Road near Springdale. The renderings, which he says he spent more than \$100,000 on, show a site concept for a 10-to-20 room high-end boutique hotel and spa reminiscent of Hotel Dakota, a 300-room resort that served wealthy clients during the height of Prohibition, with alcohol being flown in from Canada, until it was burnt down in November 1932. The Hotel Dakota replaced earlier hotels built by Dr. Andrew Hunter, the first of which was



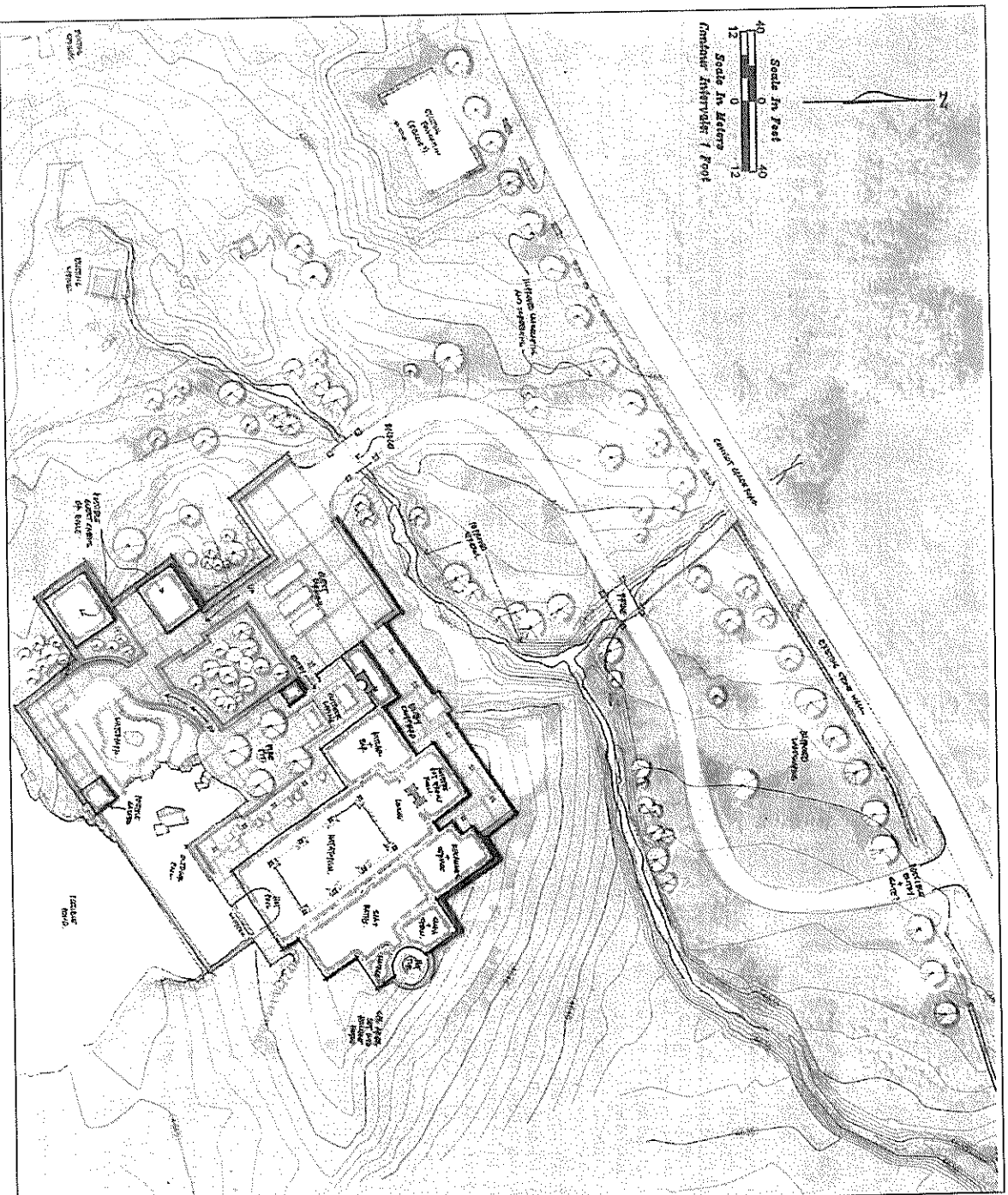
built in 1871.

Gordy's resort would be aimed at wealthy clientele, just like Dr. Hunter's — which served as the backdrop of a famous photo of highly questionable authenticity supposedly showing President Theodore Roosevelt, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and Jeremiah "Liver Eating" Johnson, among others.

The resort would also be open to the public.

Gordy isn't one to think small. When he spent \$40 million on a 48,000-acre ranch north of Livingston in 2002, it was the most expensive ranch deal in Montana

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Courtesy of Russell Gordy
A site concept plan for a new Hunter's Hot Springs Resort, paid for by current owner Russell Gordy, shows a plan for pools and a spa on Convict Grade Road near Springdale.

history. Gordy has said he wants Gordy & Sons, Outfitters, which he owns with his two sons, to be the greatest gun store in the world.

But with San Francisco-based energy company Pattern Development planning a 26-turbine wind development project on neighboring properties that Gordy said would harm the viewshed of his property, which spans from the Yellowstone River to the Crazy Mountains, with views of the Absaroka Mountains, Gordy has for now abandoned the Hunter's Hot Springs project.

Gordy's company, Rock Creek Ranch I LTD, has sued Pattern and the two landowners, Rick Jarrett and Alfred Anderson, alleging the project would limit the enjoyment of their property by creating a nuisance, lower property values and harm wildlife, including golden and bald eagles. In the lawsuit, Rock Creek Ranch is joined by Diana's Great Idea, LLC, a neighboring ranch whose sole trustee is David Chesnoff, a Las Vegas attorney who, according to news reports, has represented clients such as Bruno Mars, Britney Spears and Martha Stewart, and two companies owned by Jan Engwis, another wealthy landowner who listed his ranch for sale for \$19.5 million in June 2017.

Jarrett and Anderson previously declined to comment through a lawyer. Pattern Energy also said they cannot comment due to pending litigation. In court documents, the defendants pointed out that Gordy's land was under a conservation easement and Hunter's Hot Spring does not have an active business license.

Gordy said he checked with lawyers to make sure a development would comply with the easement, and he said it does. He also said he doesn't have a business license because he wasn't at that point yet.

"To be honest, we weren't super far along," Gordy said. "We were far

enough along that we decided to do it, but it wasn't in the development phase."

Gordy bought the property in 2002, combining five different ranches into one, spanning from the Yellowstone River into the Crazy Mountains. Since he bought the ranch, they've had between 650 and 1,200 cow-calf pairs, all black Angus.

Gordy said he originally bought the ranch because he loves to hunt and fish, and visiting his grandpa's farm growing up taught him a love for land. He never intended for the ranch to be his full-time home. His wife doesn't like the cold and wants to return to Texas each winter, he said, but they've made the ranch their home from early June through the end of September.

As the years went by, Gordy became more interested in the history of the property. Dr. Hunter knew there was a hot spring in the area because there were hundreds of Crow and Sioux bathing at the hot springs when he came by.

"As you grow older, you look more at history, at least I do. My wife and I have been together our whole life, and we got to researching it and decided maybe we ought to rebuild this thing," Gordy said.

Though he couldn't do it to the scale of the 300-room hotel, Gordy thought people from across the world would be interested in the things that brought Hunter — and the things that brought Gordy — to the land, whether it be hunting, fishing or the healing powers of natural springs.

But the ongoing battle over the wind turbines — which have been an on-again, off-again project since the early 2000s — stopped that idea before much other than the renderings was done.

"We didn't get too serious because of the wind mills," Gordy said. "I didn't want to build something like that and have wind mills right next to it. I think that destroys the whole tourism aspect of the property."

He approached Jarrett through a lawyer a few years ago, offering to pay money for him to put his land into a conservation agreement that wouldn't allow the land to be developed for wind turbines, but Jarrett declined, Gordy told The Enterprise and said in court documents.

Gordy said his ire is more directed toward Park and Sweet Grass counties for a lack of zoning. The group has also sued Sweet Grass County over a road-use agreement — usually an administrative formality.

"It's not my desire to sue my neighbors," Gordy said. "I'm more concerned with the county than the neighbors. The county ought to have a plan."

Gordy said the value of this area is in its lack of development.

"I love it. It's a beautiful place. It's kind of an unsoiled place, and I would hate to see it soiled by industrialization," Gordy said.

He continued: "This is about tourism versus industrialization. It does a lot more than stop a Hunter's Hot Spring Project. People fishing on the river are disturbed by this. Anybody who views this as a tourist area, as a viewshed from the Yellowstone to the Crazies, is going to be unhappy with an industrial project."

Gordy said he knows he's only a part-time resident, but he wanted to warn the people of Park and Sweet Grass counties that what they have is fragile and needs protection, likely through zoning.

"I just think that's a smart move by any county, especially in a beautiful area like the Crazy Mountains and the Absaroka's. There ought to be a concerted effort by the counties to protect that and make it into what's beneficial for all the people. I don't know if that's happening," Gordy said.

"It's not a knock on the counties, but they want to protect their heritage, the better step up."