

Granite Faces

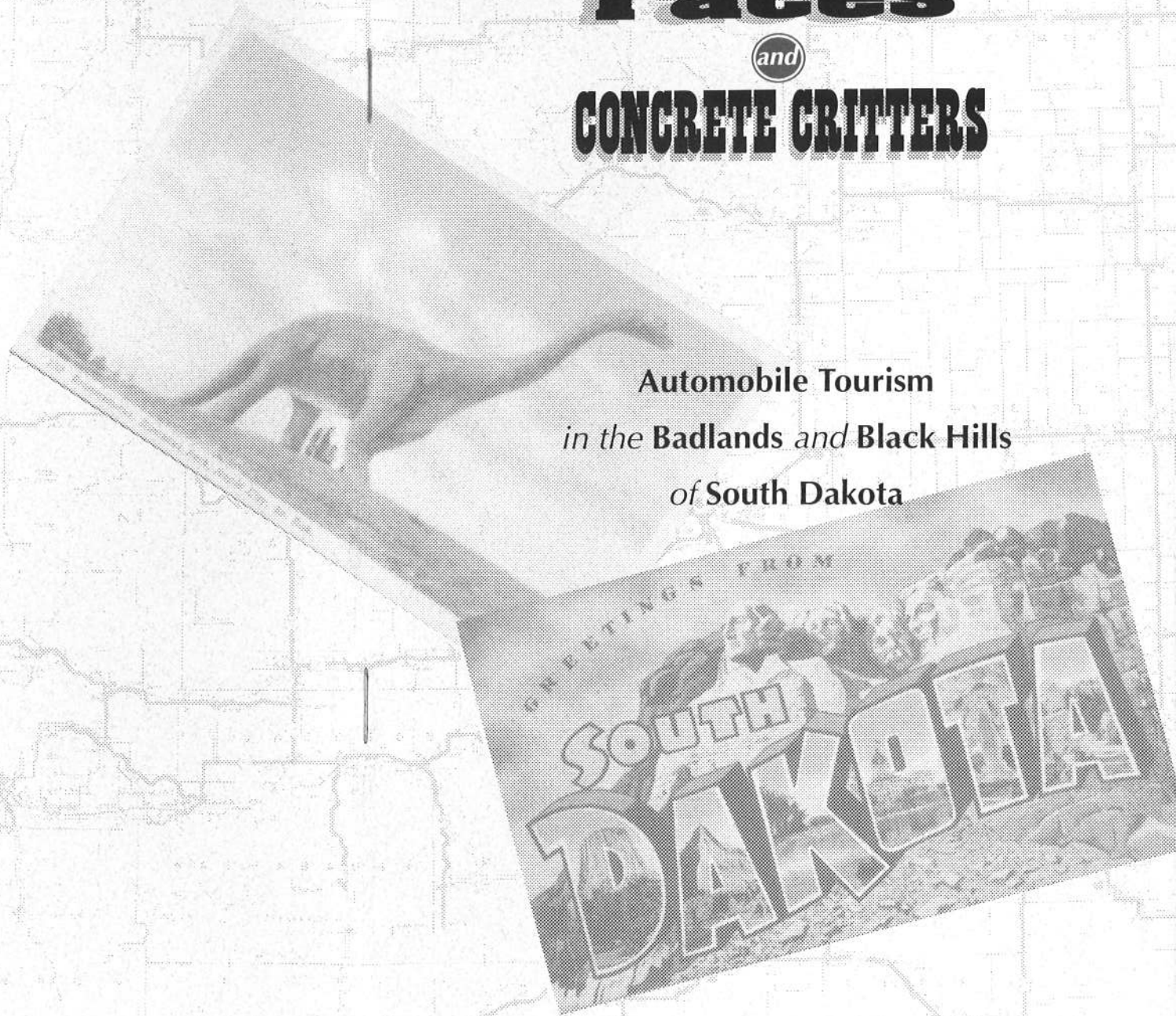
and



CONCRETE CRITTERS

Automobile Tourism

*in the **Badlands** and **Black Hills***

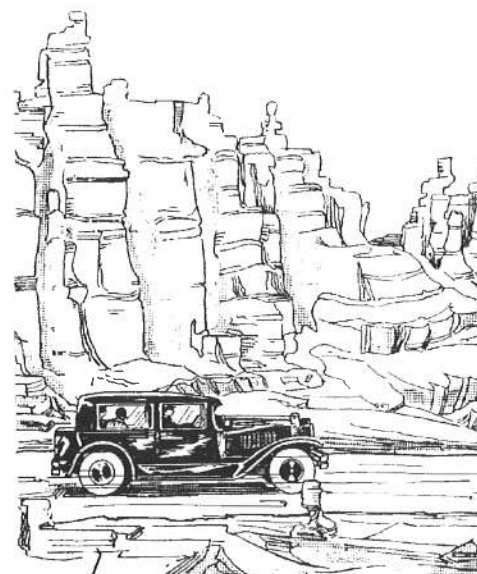
*of **South Dakota***



 **Erratum:** On page 10 the Hustead family name was accidentally misspelled as "Husted". We apologize for this error. 

"I shall be burned for a heretic when I make the statement. But I should be thanked as a prophet and hailed as a discoverer by that jaded public who have "seen everything" and stick to the "through lines." The greatest scenic wonders of the world I know now are touched on grand safe highways but not on railroads. My hat is off to South Dakota's treasures and the men who made them...Go to South Dakota, but drive there."

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1935





Dedicated to Senator Peter Norbeck who had the vision, and to President Calvin "Leading Eagle" Coolidge who did much to make the vision happen.



GRANITE FACES

and

CONCRETE CRITTERS

Automobile Tourism
in the Badlands and Black Hills
of South Dakota

A Guide to Sites Included in the Tours for the
Society For Commercial Archeology Annual Conference
held at Rapid City, South Dakota,
September 29 through October 1, 1994

Sponsored By:
The Society For Commercial Archeology
The South Dakota State Historical Society,
State Historical Preservation Center

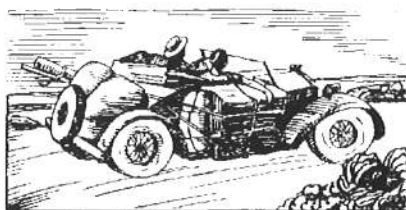
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Author's Foreword

This book was prepared in conjunction with the 1994 Society for Commercial Archeology Conference and Tours held at Rapid City, SD. While it serves as a specific guide to that event, the book has been written in a way that allows any person interested in the automobile and its effect on tourism in this area to enjoy the sites selected for the conference tours. There are three tour sections: a brief introduction to Rapid City, the Badlands tour, and the Central Black Hills tour. Please note that the Rapid City section is merely a supplement to a walking tour given as a part of the conference and is by no means a comprehensive summary of the resources presented in that tour or in the city as a whole. I would urge persons interested in more information on Rapid City to contact the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission c/o Rapid City Planning Department (605) 394-4120. One should also bear in mind that these areas are by no means the only parts of the region which retain significant auto-tourist resources.

As with all publications, this book owes a debt of gratitude to many persons for their contributions. The sponsoring entities have all contributed time and information. Special thanks are due to the SCA Board for agreeing to hold this conference and in particular to Board member Tania Werbizky for her seemingly endless work in putting this event together. Similar thanks are due to Director Paul Putz and the rest of the State Historical Preservation Office staff for their support for this project. A debt of gratitude is owed Mrs. Jessie Sundstrom of Custer, SD for her excellent book on Custer State Park. She and Joe Zarki of the National Park Service, Badlands National Park are thanked for participating in the tours which accompany this book. Lastly, the owners and managers of the sites included in this book are thanked a thousand times for the information they provided and for their continued dedication to preserving these fragments of our automobile heritage.



President's Message

South Dakota is new territory for the Society for Commercial Archeology (SCA), but as we are about to find out, it is hardly lacking in roadside resources. South Dakota was one of the earliest and most aggressive states to promote and encourage automobile tourism in the 1920s, with its numerous state parks, tourist lodges, and scenic highways. Lacking the population densities of Eastern states, western South Dakota did not have mass transit routes with amusement parks and beaches at the end of the streetcar lines, which were so prevalent in larger, more urbanized areas. This state's scenic roads and tourist lodges therefore, predate some of the earliest automobile parkways in the Eastern United States. Happily, many survive, continuing to serve the needs of automobile travelers.

Why do we study and promote these sites? They are often by-passed and forgotten in the rush of progress and the commercial thirst for leading edge success. Early highways, tourist service businesses, and their associated buildings are disappearing rapidly. Because of their often diminutive and once common nature, old roadside buildings for gas, food, and lodging are rarely considered historic and are seldom documented by their owners or by architectural historians. Yet everyone remembers their experiences associated with these icons of the American roadside.

The SCA promotes, supports, and undertakes projects of documentation, education, advocacy, and consciousness-raising to increase the public's awareness and understanding of these significant elements of our heritage. We are a national non-profit organization supported by membership dues and publication sales. The organization's purpose is to study and promote the 20th century roadside commercial built environment of North America. The automobile and its related structures, signs, and symbols are central to this purpose. Join us as we seek out, celebrate, and work to save early gas stations, motels, tourist cabins, drive-ins, neon and porcelain-enamel signs, amusement parks, lodges, shopping centers, and garages of every description. It is enjoyable, educational, and even has a social purpose — what a deal for the "politically correct" 1990s!

On behalf of the entire SCA, I want to express our gratitude to organizers Mike Bedeau and Tania Werbizky, without whom this event would never have taken place. They have spent countless hours researching this booklet, making all arrangements, and ensuring the SCA tradition of quality tours continues.

Peter Phillips SCA President

For more information: Society for Commercial Archeology c/o Room 5010
National Museum of American History, Washington, DC 20560



Rapid City

"...fine little Rapid City, well set in low hills..."

Frank Lloyd Wright

From the beginning of European settlement in the Black Hills, Rapid City has been a major transportation center. The town was founded during the Black Hills Gold Rush of 1876. It is named after Rapid Creek which flows down from the mountains, through a break in the foothills known as "the Gap", past the town and into the Rapid Valley to the east. The hay meadows around Rapid Creek made Rapid City a natural stopping and provisioning point for freighting teams. Numerous stage and freight lines brought passengers and goods to the Deadwood mining region from the railheads in Nebraska and Wyoming via Rapid City. In the early days, the town was even called Hay Camp by the freighters. The Gap also provides a natural gateway into the central and northern hills, resulting in another town nickname.... "The Gate City".

Given these transportation connections and geographical advantages, the city grew quickly. Wagon roads gave way to railroads, the first arriving from the south in 1885. After

the turn of the century two more rail lines connected Rapid City with the Missouri River and the East: The Milwaukee line to Chamberlain and the North Western line to Pierre. Rail connections increased the town's importance as a regional service center and entrepot for tourists to the Hills.

With the increase in auto ownership following the turn of the century, a growing "Good Roads" movement swept South Dakota. Numerous highway promotion associations were established. Early highways typically followed rail lines. It is not surprising, then, that the auto routes which ran across the state to Rapid City followed the two rail lines mentioned above. The Black and Yellow Trail followed the North Western Line from Pierre to Rapid City. Both the George Washington Memorial Highway and the alleged Black Hills Loop of the Lincoln Highway followed the Milwaukee line from Chamberlain. Later highways to include Rapid City in their routing were: The Custer Battle-

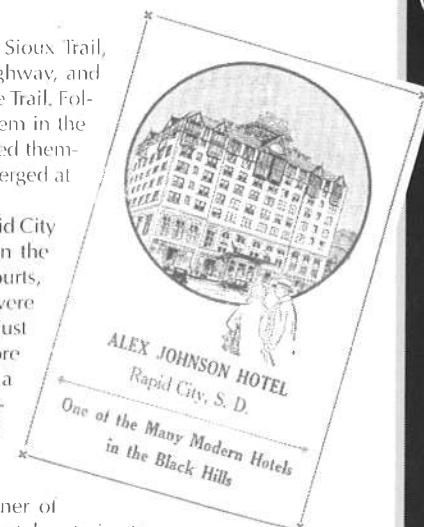


field Memorial Highway, The Black Hills Sioux Trail, The Atlantic, Yellowstone and Pacific Highway, and the Twin Cities, Black Hills and Yellowstone Trail. Following federalization of the highway system in the late 1920s, these cross-state routes resolved themselves into US 14 and US 16, which converged at Rapid City.

As a result of highway connections, Rapid City became a focal point for auto tourism in the Black Hills. Many auto garages, tourist courts, filling stations and associated structures were built along the highway routes. The area just to the east of the downtown commercial core along Main and St. Joseph Streets became a center for such development. Several historic garages and gasoline stations survive in this area. One of the best preserved examples is the Motor Service Company's 1929 garage building located at the corner of Fourth and St. Joseph Streets. Hotels and motels catering to tourists ran the gamut, from the magnificent 1927 Hotel Alex Johnson, to the somewhat more humble 1955 Tip Top Motor Hotel.

Rapid City also embraced neon advertising signs. Undoubtedly the best remaining operable neon sign sits atop the Art Deco style Rapid City Steam Laundry building on Main Street. "Mother Rapid", Rapid City's Biggest and Best Wash Woman, has scrubbed her neon laundry since the 1930s. The vertical marquee sign on the front of the building dates from the same period. The marquee was designed and built by the Rosenbaum Sign Company. Most of the neon signs in Rapid City were designed by this company which was established in 1928 and is still in business.

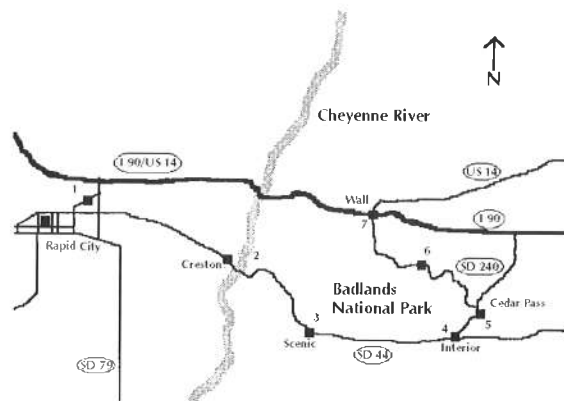
Many of the old tourist courts and other auto structures were located in the Rapid Creek flood plain. Sadly, they were destroyed in the terrible 1972 flash flood which claimed over 200 lives.



Tour I: The Badlands

"like hell with the fires put out"

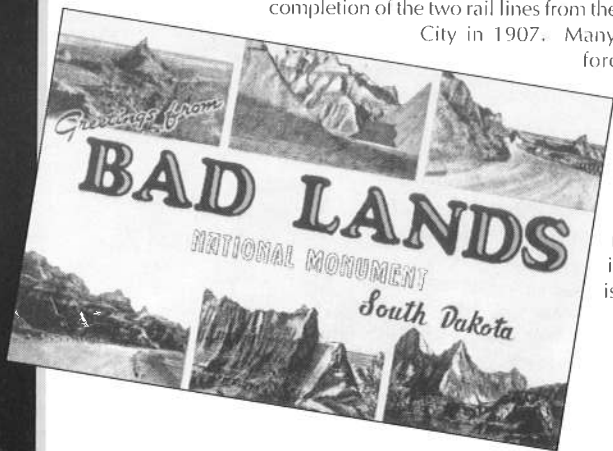
General Alfred Sully



The region known as the Badlands is the highly eroded remains of an ancient sea floor. As the climate became steadily drier, rain washed away loose sediments exposing a maze of rough buttes, pinnacles and deep ravines. Native people both feared the area, due to its treacherous terrain and ethereal qualities, and used the Badlands as a refuge from European encroachment. The last tragic episode in the thirty year war between the Sioux and the US Government was played out in 1890 just to the south of the Badlands at Wounded Knee.

It is natural, given the terrain, that this was the last part of South Dakota to be settled by Euro-Americans. Substantial numbers of homesteaders came into this region only after completion of the two rail lines from the Missouri River to Rapid City in 1907. Many of these settlers were

forced to leave the Badlands during subsequent times of drought and depression. Today it remains a sparsely settled agricultural area relying primarily on stock growing, in addition to tourism, for its livelihood.



1. E. North Street\U.S. 14 and 16

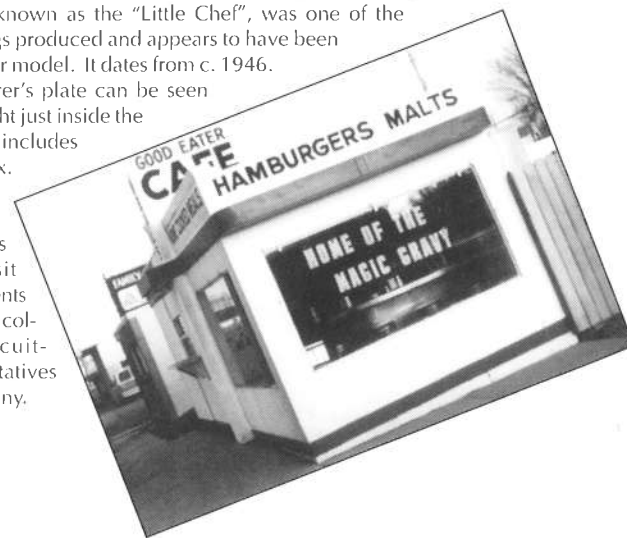
The original highway entry to Rapid City went east from downtown on Main, turned north on East Boulevard and angled east again onto East North Street before leaving the city. This is the original route of the Black and Yellow Trail which connected Chicago with the Black Hills and Yellowstone Park, and of the Custer Battlefield Memorial Highway. It later served as a combined routing for US Highways 14 and 16. One local reference from 1915 also holds that the "Black Hills Loop of the Lincoln Highway" followed what later became U.S. 16. Whether this is merely local boosterism or a sanctioned portion of the Lincoln Highway remains to be discovered.

East North Street retains many auto-related enterprises. There are several period tourist motels including the Horse-shoe Motel (featuring detached cabins faced with perma-stone), The Corral Motel (which has a period neon sign), the Alpine Motel (with several cabins whose eaves are edged with red neon), and the Plaza Sands Motel (notable for an outstanding neon sign with stars and palm trees).

The best remaining automobile oriented structure on this strip, however, is the Good Eater Diner. This twelve-seat metal diner was built by the Valentine Diner Company of Wichita, Kansas which was in business from 1934 until 1974. The Valentine company specialized in small short order sandwich stands, liquor shops and other portable commercial buildings. They even built some structures for the White Castle chain. This example, known as the "Little Chef", was one of the smaller buildings produced and appears to have been the most popular model. It dates from c. 1946.

The manufacturer's plate can be seen at shoulder height just inside the door. This plate includes a small lockbox.

Diner mythology holds that this box was used to deposit purchase payments which would be collected by circuit-riding representatives from the company.

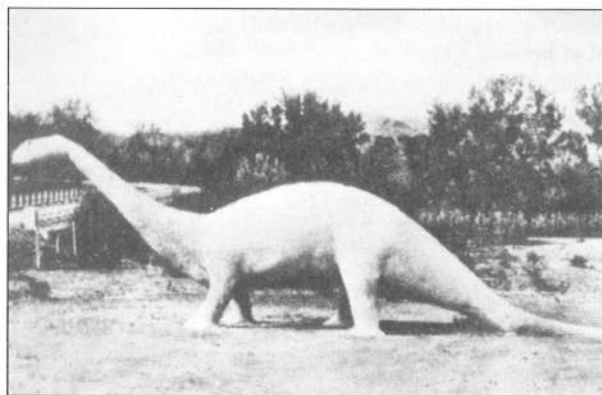


2. The Creston Dinosaur

5

South Dakota Route 44 follows the Milwaukee Road's main line connecting Rapid City with the Missouri River at Chamberlain. This route was designated as part of both the South Dakota Scenic Highway and the George Washington Memorial Highway sometime prior to 1915. It lost out on Federal designation in the 1920s to the parallel route and has remained a secondary highway ever since.

Route 44 connects many of the small towns established in 1907 as water stops along the rail line. One of these towns was Creston, located where the road and railway cross the Cheyenne River. During the Depression the proprietors of the Creston Store found that highway traffic had difficulty in identifying their building. In 1933 Ed Burgess and A.J. Murphy, decided that a sign of some type was needed. Given that the nearby Badlands were known for prehistoric fossils, they hit on the idea of a large concrete dinosaur, to be located across the road from the store. The beast was constructed of assorted scrap metal and wood, including: windmill framing, bridge-



ties, and railroad bolts. The frame was fabricated in the town blacksmith shop, moved to a position across the highway from the store, and covered in concrete. The Dinosaur is the only structure remaining in Creston. Visitors should be aware that the

dinosaur is located on private property and they should not trespass.



3. Scenic

6

Scenic was laid out by the Milwaukee Road in 1907 and named for the scenic Badlands nearby. The town was the commercial center for homesteaders and ranchers in the area. At one time it was the second largest voting precinct in Pennington County, after Rapid City. Today the town has approximately 30 residents and most of its businesses have disappeared. A notable exception is the Longhorn Saloon which has been in business since the town's founding. The bar sign used to read "No Indians Allowed". It was placed there by federal law, which used to forbid establishments within a certain distance of a reservation from serving alcohol to Native Americans. This policy was widely ignored. Indeed, the Lakota phrase on the Longhorn sign translates as "come on in".

There are also several recent vintage concrete dinosaurs located in the picnic area just to the south of the town gas station and cafe.



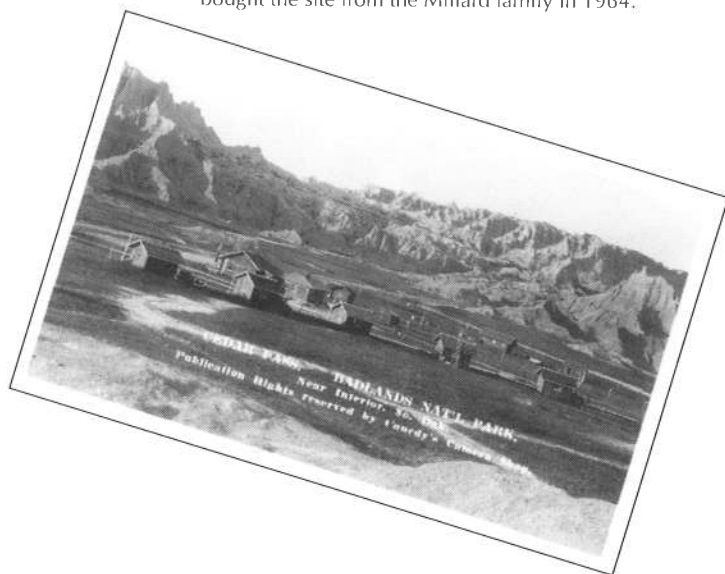
4. Interior and the Cedar Pass Lodge

7

Interior is another town founded by the Milwaukee Road along its Chamberlain to Rapid City line. By 1911 Interior had two hotels, two cafes, five saloons, a bank, a Ford dealer, and a newspaper. It was considered to be "the lively capital of the Badlands". As with Scenic, there was an initial settlement boom which faded as climactic conditions proved to harsh for many homesteaders. Interior was the principal railroad entry point for the Badlands region. To the northwest along the Old Cedar Pass Road, just within the boundary of Badlands National Park, are the Park Headquarters and the Cedar Pass Lodge.

The Cedar Pass Lodge was opened by Mr. Ben Millard and his sister Mrs. Clara Jennings in 1928. Jennings' son had recently married the daughter of Senator Peter Norbeck, who was instrumental in the establishment of the park. They were encouraged by Norbeck to provide private guest services for potential park visitors. Millard also acted as Norbeck's man on the scene and was instrumental in carrying out his vision for the park, especially the Loop Road.

Millard and Jennings began by opening a dance hall and restaurant and eventually expanded to include a gas station, tourist cabins, and a curio shop. The lodge itself has been altered to the point of unrecognizability; however, many of the cabins retain historic features. The National Park Service bought the site from the Millard family in 1964.



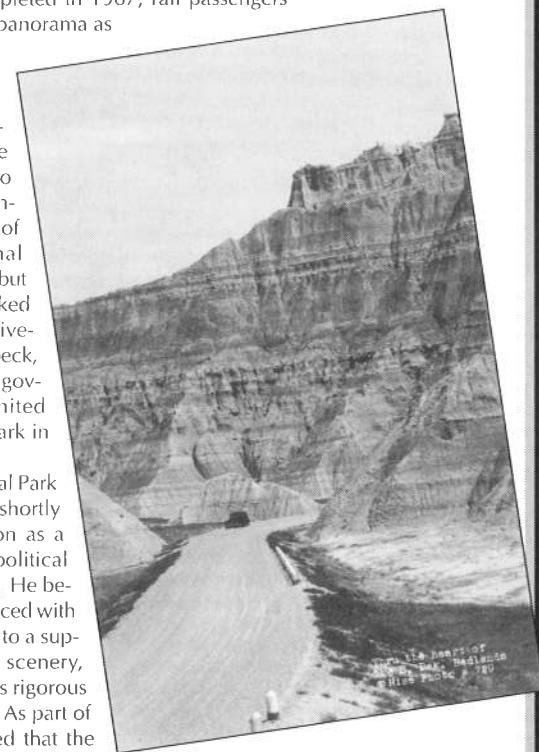
5. The Badlands Loop Road

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The area comprising the Badlands National Park contains spectacular examples of sedimentary erosion which has created an ethereal and chaotic landscape of singular beauty. Prior to this century the area had been little settled and generally avoided by European Americans. When the Milwaukee Road line to Rapid City was completed in 1907, rail passengers were treated to a sixty-mile panorama as they traveled along the White River south of the Badlands wall. Two years later, then State Senator Peter Norbeck proposed that the State Government appeal to the U.S. Department of the Interior to designate a section of the Badlands as a National Park. The request was made but came to nothing. This marked the beginning of a twenty five-year effort on the part of Norbeck, first as a state legislator, then governor, and finally as a United States Senator, to create a park in the White River Badlands.

Norbeck tried for a National Park designation again in 1923, shortly after he went to Washington as a U.S. Senator, but ran into political and bureaucratic resistance. He began to plan again in 1927. Faced with Park Service opposition due to a supposed lack of outstanding scenery, Norbeck opted to pursue less rigorous National Monument status. As part of the process Norbeck insisted that the State of South Dakota acquire all non-Federal land in the proposed park area and build a scenic highway along the Badlands Wall. Only then would the President proclaim the area a National Monument. Norbeck's bill was passed by Congress in the Spring of 1929 and signed by President Coolidge just prior to his leaving office.

Planning of the Badlands Loop Road began the following year. Ben Millard acted as Norbeck's local operative during the project and fought constant battles with State Highway Department engineers over the route and character of the road. Norbeck and Millard envisioned a road similar to the Needles Highway which Norbeck had created in the Black Hills. They



advocated a winding road to follow the contours of the wall, making several ascents and descents from the upper to lower prairie. The highway engineers, on the other hand, desired the straightest, safest and most cost-efficient route. This would have routed the west half of the road well away from the upper rim of the wall through the prairie. Millard and Norbeck won out and a twenty seven-mile highway with many turns, steep grades, and two tunnels was completed in 1935. Both tunnels were quickly deemed to be a hazard due to the unstable soil conditions of the area. They were destroyed and the route regraded in 1938.

In the Fall of 1935, the celebrated architect Frank Lloyd Wright came to South Dakota in order to examine the proposed site for the new Sylvan Lake Hotel, which Senator Norbeck hoped to have him design. As part of his grand tour, Wright was escorted through the Badlands and other sites by automobile. He later wrote of his experience traveling on the Badlands Loop Road:

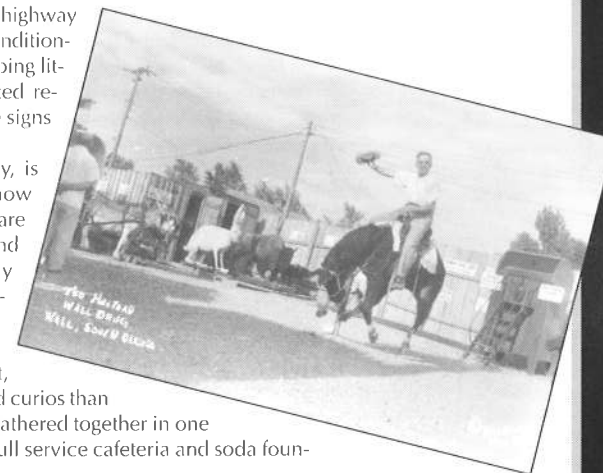
"Endless trabeations surmounted by or rising into pyramid (obelisk) and temple, etherial [sic] in color and exquisitely chiseled in endless detail, they began to reach to infinity spreading into the sky on every side; an endless supernatural world more spiritual than earth but created out of it. As we rode, or seemed to be floating upon a splendid winding road that seemed to understand it all and just where to go, we rose and fell between its delicate parallels of rose and cream and sublime shapes, chalk white, fretted against a blue sly with high floating clouds: the sky itself seemed only there to cleanse and light the vast harmonious building scheme."



One of the seven wonders of the roadside universe, the Wall Drug Store had very humble beginnings. Ted and Dorothy Husted came to run the Wall Drug Store in 1931, just in time for the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Keeping the business afloat was very difficult in the 1930s, as the local economy was hit very hard. The Husteds were even forced to move into the back of the store in order to economize.

When the Federal Highway system was organized both US 14 and US 16, the principal through routes between the Black Hills and the East, were routed through Wall. The relief projects of the 1930s included a large road improvement program which generated increasing traffic through the town. In 1938 the Husteds put up signs along the highway advertising the drug store. As a promotional device the signs included the promise of "Free Ice Water". Given the hot and dusty conditions on the highway in the days before air conditioning, tourists began stopping literally before Ted Husted returned from putting the signs up.

The rest, as they say, is history. Wall Drug now covers nearly a full square block on Main Street and employs approximately 200 people. The business has grown to include western ware and boots, books, art, and more souvenirs and curios than have likely ever been gathered together in one place. There is also a full service cafeteria and soda fountain.

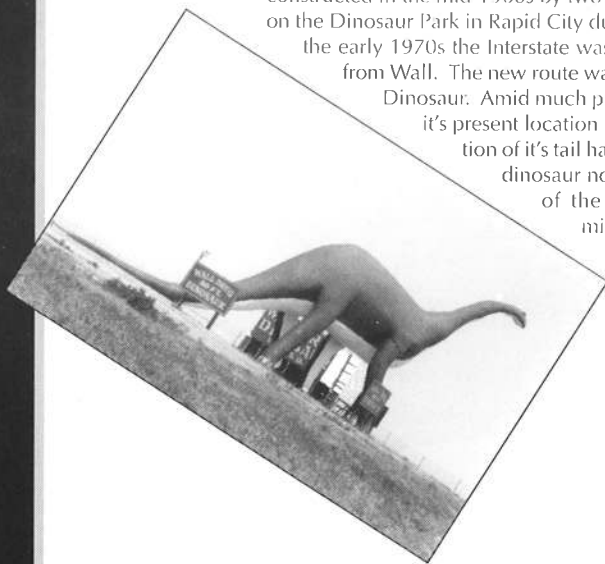


Promotion continues to play a dominant role in Wall Drug's success. Wall Drug signs have been put up all over the world. There is even one on the moon. The ice water is still free, as are Wall Drug bumper stickers (one to a family please). Coffee is still a nickel and a free cup and a donut will be served to all honey-mooners, missile crews and veterans. A used Christmas display was purchased from

Denver's May Company department

store in 1940 and has served as the famous mechanized Cowboy Band ever since. The Wall Drug "backyard" is also home to some fine kitsch, including a six-foot jackalope and a faux bucking bronco, which is so popular it has to be recovered every few years.

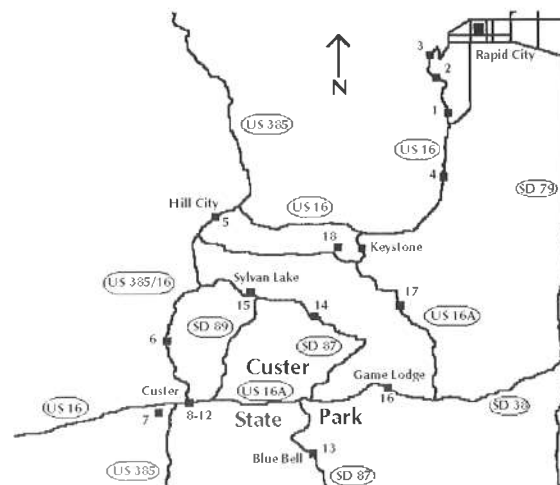
The most spectacular Wall Drug advertisement is without doubt the 80-foot concrete dinosaur located next to the Wall exit on Interstate 90. This steel frame concrete monster was constructed in the mid-1960s by two of the men who worked on the Dinosaur Park in Rapid City during the Depression. In the early 1970s the Interstate was relocated further away from Wall. The new route was to go right through the Dinosaur. Amid much publicity, it was moved to its present location in 1974, although a portion of its tail had to be left behind. The dinosaur now sits on the north side of the new Interstate in the middle of what was the old right-of-way.



Tour II: The Black Hills

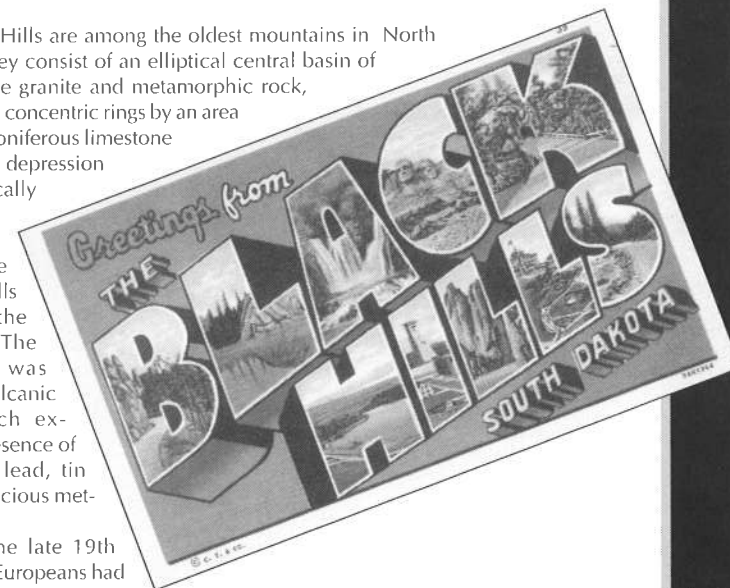
"To troubled humans it is a peaceful retreat from war and politics, business and society, a refuge from urbanization, standardization, socialization, coordination, cooperation, centralization, internationalization and all the other tiresome things that crowded and bewildered mankind is shouting about, a place where one can still be an unworried and unregimented individual, and wear any old clothes, and sit on a log and get his sanity back again."

Badger Clark



The Black Hills are among the oldest mountains in North America. They consist of an elliptical central basin of Algonkian age granite and metamorphic rock, surrounded in concentric rings by an area of white carboniferous limestone uplift, a wide depression referred to locally as "the race-course", and an outer ridge of low foot hills known as "the hogback". The entire area was formed by volcanic action which explains the presence of gold, silver, lead, tin and other precious metals.

Prior to the late 19th century, few Europeans had



the opportunity to explore these mountains. To the Sioux and Cheyenne the Black Hills, or Paha Sapa, were their winter camping grounds, game reserve, and spiritual center. As such they were jealously guarded. Little could be done, however, to prevent the huge influx of prospectors which followed the discovery of gold in 1874. Seemingly overnight, communities sprang up and mines were dug. Towns like Deadwood, Lead, Custer and Keystone became fabled for their wealth and wild ways. The fabulous Homestake Mine, foundation of the second Hearst fortune, has been in continuous operation since 1876 and is one of the leading gold producers in the world.

Mining and timbering came to dominate the Black Hills economy in the late 19th century. As railroads entered the area, a small tourist industry grew up, mostly around the resort town of Hot Springs. This area, in the southern Black Hills, was known for its mineral springs and developed a substantial health resort industry. Hot Springs also became a favorite destination for those seeking a quick divorce as, prior to the early part of this century, South Dakota had very liberal residency requirements.

It was the advent of the automobile and the development of all-weather roads in the early 20th century which created the Black Hills tourism industry. By 1920 tourism had become the second largest industry in the state after agriculture. Area promoters were quick to see auto tourism as a much need boost to the local economy. The idea for the Mount Rushmore National Memorial first saw the light of day at a 1924 meeting of the Black and Yellow Trail Association dedicated to attracting more motorists to the Black Hills. The state government, particularly Peter Norbeck, also began to advance tourism, beginning with the establishment of the State Game Preserve in 1913 which became Custer State Park in 1919.

The commencement of work on Rushmore, combined with President Calvin Coolidge's three-month summer vacation to the Hills in 1927, did much to put the area on the map. As roads improved in the 1930s, private and public tourism investment increased dramatically. The trend has continued to the present day with the routing of Interstate 90 through the Black Hills and the legalization of limited stakes gaming in Deadwood.

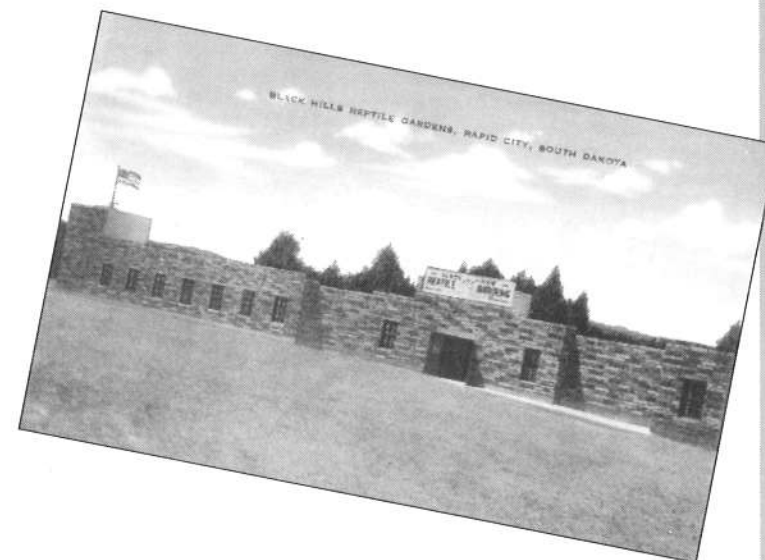
Note: Ideally the first three stops on this tour should be done in reverse order, beginning with Dinosaur Park, continuing along Skyline Drive and reaching Old Reptile Gardens from the north, then continuing onto Highway 16 south at the end of Skyline Drive. These sites were visited in the order described by the SCA Conference Tour book because the tour bus could not go up the steep winding portion of Skyline Drive from Rapid City to Dinosaur Park, but could go down that way.



US 16 is the primary route from Rapid City south to the heart of tourist country near Mount Rushmore. As the highway leaves Rapid, it climbs a broad ridge. In 1965 a new four-lane highway was constructed which ascends the ridge well to the south of the original highway. This isolated a portion of the old road which hosted, among other sites, the original home of Reptile Gardens.

Earl Brockelsby opened Reptile Gardens in 1937 as a curio shop and snack bar. Brockelsby had previously worked as a guide at Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns. One day he caught a rattlesnake in the cave and kept it in a bucket. Many visitors asked if they could see the snake and Brockelsby obliged. The next day he began to charge 25 cents to see the snake. The response was so good that he determined to open an attraction featuring native reptiles. The date is significant as both Skyline Drive and Dinosaur Park (located just to the north) had been completed the year before. The building is faced with homemade concrete blocks faced with samples of various Black Hills minerals.

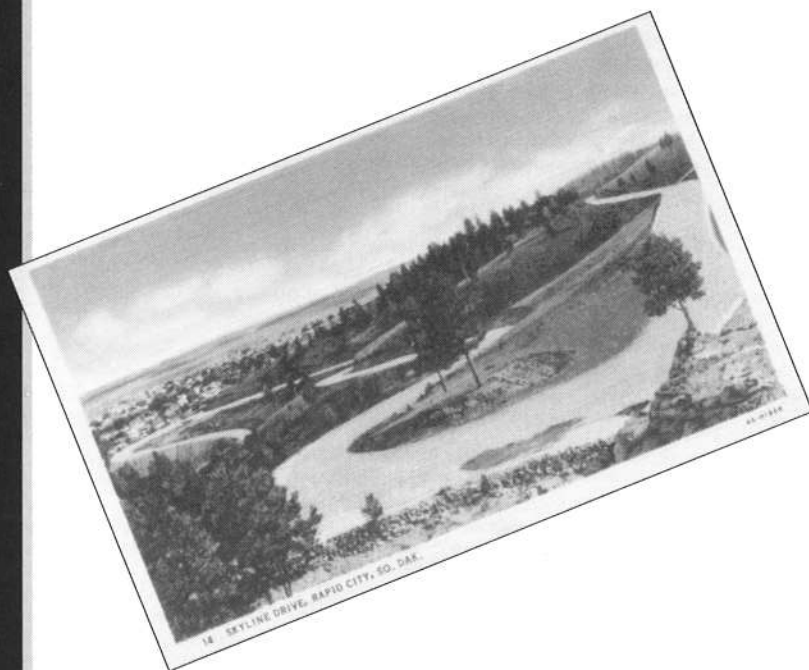
When the highway was relocated in 1965, Reptile Gardens was moved approximately five miles south along US 16. It is one of the largest private tourist attractions in the Black Hills and is still operated by Earl Brockelsby's family.



2. Skyline Drive

15

This scenic drive connects Highway 16 with Dinosaur Park and downtown Rapid City. It was begun by the Federal Emergency Relief Agency in 1934 to provide work for the unemployed in Rapid City. Construction of Skyline Drive was part of a larger road building effort initiated during the Depression to provide greater access to the Black Hills and bolster tourism. It is another example of a winding tourist road which was designed to highlight natural scenery, in this case the views to the east and west afforded by its placement atop the ridge.



3. Dinosaur Park

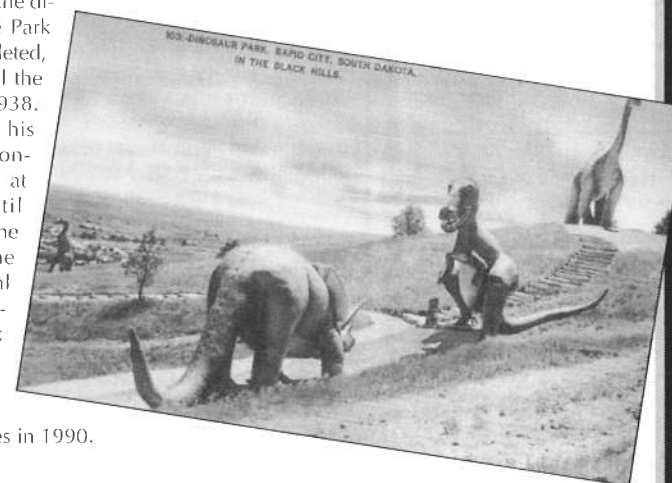
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At the north end of Skyline Drive on the hill overlooking Rapid City is Dinosaur Park, undoubtedly one of the oddest public works projects ever conceived. By the mid-1930s Mount Rushmore had become a major attraction, generating a large increase in the number of tourists coming to the Hills. The Rapid City Chamber of Commerce recognized the potential economic benefit of this increased traffic and proposed to create a large sculpture at the north end of Skyline Drive.

Dr. Cleophus C. O'Harra, paleontologist and retired president of the South Dakota School of Mines, is credited with the idea of using dinosaurs as the theme for these sculptures. Dr. O'Harra worked extensively with prehistoric fossils found in the Badlands and served as a design consultant on the project. Dr. Barnum Brown of the American Museum of Natural History also consulted, providing measurements for the dinosaurs based on specimens in the museum's collection.

In 1936, Emmitt A. Sullivan, a local sculptor and lawyer, was commissioned to design the dinosaurs and supervise construction. The project was funded by a grant from the Works Progress Administration (project #960). Walter Walking, a WPA engineer, provided engineering assistance on the project. Sullivan did not get along with the WPA and resigned from the project in 1937. When he quit he refused to turn over the set of teeth he had made for the Tyrannosaurus Rex, claiming that he had made them in his own time. A compromise was eventually worked out and the teeth were installed in 1938. Frank Lockhart and George McGraw were the contractors who built the figures.

Dinosaur Park was dedicated on May 22, 1936 and a time capsule was placed inside one of the dinosaurs. The Park was not completed, however, until the summer of 1938. Sullivan and his wife ran a concession stand at the park until 1968 when the city made the site an official city park. Dinosaur Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.



4. Highway 16 and Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns

US 16 running south from Rapid City is the principal link between Interstate 90 and Mount Rushmore. As such it is host to innumerable tourist attractions including wildlife parks, motels, camp grounds, musical extravaganzas, and miles of souvenir and curio shops. Most of these sites date from 1965 or later, when the highway was rerouted and widened from two to four lanes. The new Reptile Gardens is located along this stretch of road.

One of the few sites along this highway which predates the four-lane road is the Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns. These caves, famous for their calcite crystal deposits, were a favored winter camping place for many Sioux, including Sitting Bull. Alex and Mamie Duhamel of Rapid City, who along with other members of their family were proprietors of a large hardware and western clothing store, purchased the caves from the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company in 1929. Plans were being made to build a highway (U.S. 16) between Rapid City and Mount Rushmore which would run very near the cave. The Duhamel's idea was to open the caverns to tourists. Preparations for public access began in 1932 and the cave opened to tourists in 1934.

There are several historic structures at the cave site, including a 1927 log cabin located near the cave entrance. The most significant of these buildings is the polygonal dance pavilion which stands along Highway 16 at the beginning of the access road to the cave. It was constructed in 1930 and was the home of the Sitting Bull Indian Pageant.

Shortly after purchasing the caves, Alex Duhamel paid a visit to a Lakota friend at Manderson, SD whom he had known since his days as a cowpuncher. This was none other than Nick Black Elk, the same Lakota holy man and medicine man who's story is related by John Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*. Duhamel asked if Black Elk and other Lakota people who still followed the old religion might come to the Black Hills and demonstrate traditional ceremonies, dances, and life ways for tourists. Black Elk agreed and established a traditional tepee village at the site. A

series of traditional ceremonies were performed in the pavilion with Alex Duhamel's son Pete acting as narrator and translator. It was advertised as "Interesting, historical, educational, glamorous, colorful excitement, no fairy tales or mythical acts".

Following Alex and Pete's untimely deaths in 1941, Mamie Duhamel ran the caverns and her son Bud acted as narrator for the Pageant. Sadly, the Pageant was never profitable. Further, as the participants died or retired, it became difficult to find replacements—the practice of traditional beliefs having virtually dis-

appeared. As such, the Pageant was dropped in the early 1950s. The cave is open to the public, however, and is still operated by Bud Duhamel, now age 91.

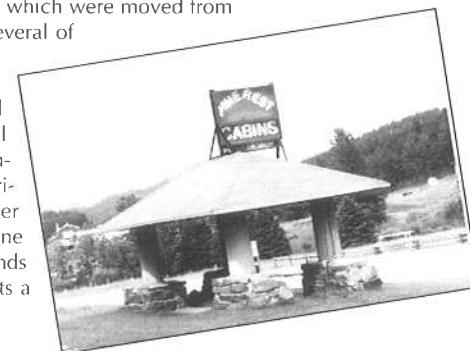
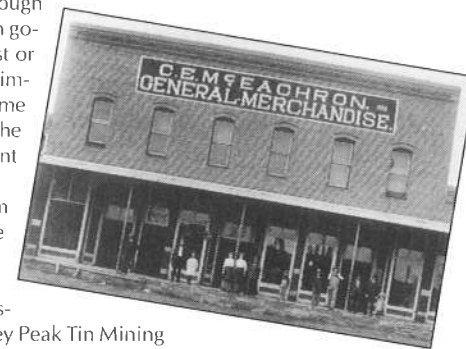


5. Hill City and the Pine Rest Cabins

The tour route follows US 16 west and south into the heart of the Black Hills. Route 16 merges with US 385 just north of Hill City. This section of US 385 is part of the original Deadwood to Denver Highway, more commonly known as the Tri-angle D Highway after it's sign logo. It was organized in the late 1910s to encourage tourist traffic from the south to take a route through the central Black Hills, rather than going around them to either the east or west. This road was continually improved during the 1920s and became a principal tourist route following the commencement of work on Mount Rushmore.

Hill City benefited greatly from the highway improvements. The town was founded in 1876 following the discovery of gold in Palmer's Gulch. Tin was also discovered at Hill City and the Harney Peak Tin Mining Company came to dominate the town's economy. In 1888 this company built the Harney Peak Hotel which has remained a local fixture and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1902 McEachron General Merchandise Building has also been recently rehabilitated to serve as the home of a bookstore/cafe and art gallery.

As with other towns near Mount Rushmore, Hill City experienced a large influx of tourists beginning in the late 1920s. Many tourist camps and cabin courts sprang up in response to increased demand for inexpensive accommodations. By 1931, Hill City had half a dozen such enterprises. Undoubtedly the best preserved of these is the Pine Rest Cabins, located two miles south of town on US 385. Pine Rest is a typical cabin group. It features a central house, in this case a Craftsman bungalow, surrounded by a semi-circular group of cabins. The cabins are not uniform, which leads one to suspect that they were added one or two at a time as the market and ready cash allowed. Local information claims that several of the cabins were originally miner's shanties which were moved from the Harney Peak Tin Mines. Several of the cabins have eaves which are outlined in vintage red neon. Others have concrete steps and chimneys encrusted with colorful stones and quartz fragments. Immediately in front of the proprietor's house is an open shelter which originally housed gasoline pumps. This kiosk, which stands close to the highway, also sports a vintage red neon sign.



6. Crazy Horse Monument

19

In 1946 a group of Sioux Indians, lead by Chief Henry Standing Bear, approached the Polish sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski with the idea of carving a mountain monument to the great Sioux leader Crazy Horse. A site was chosen at Thunderhead Mountain just north of Custer and along US 385. Work has progressed for nearly forty years and the mammoth sculpture, which is in the round and dwarfs Mount Rushmore, has begun to take a very discernable shape. There is a visitors center at the foot of the mountain which features information about the project as well as exhibits of Native American artifacts.

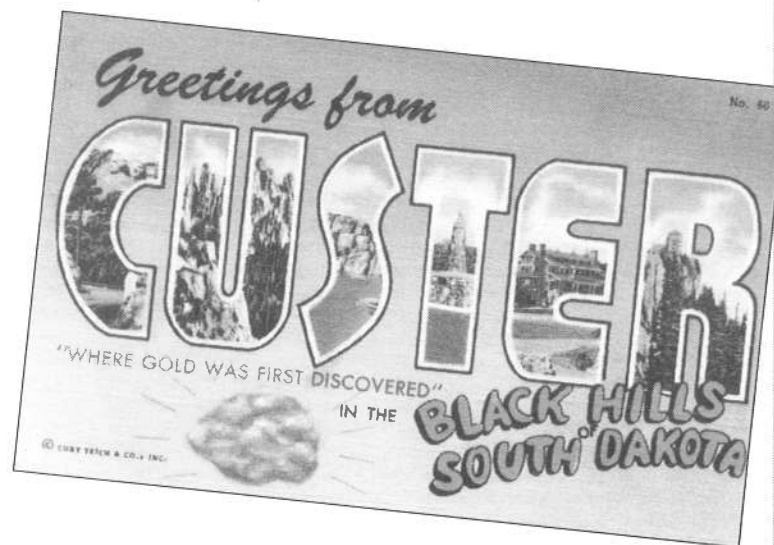


Custer

20

The city of Custer was the site of the initial 1874 Black Hills gold discovery and the first area to be overrun by gold seekers. The town was established in 1875 and for a short time was the center of the Black Hills gold rush. Gold strikes in Deadwood the following spring nearly depopulated the community. The town was well situated, however, to serve as a stage stop along the wagon routes to Deadwood and achieved a stable population and economy by the beginning of the 1880s.

Custer's economy revolved around small-scale mining, timbering, local agriculture, and transportation into the 20th century. The establishment of Custer State Park in 1919 and the improvements made to the highways leading to the park in the 1920s, provided the first real economic effects of tourism in Custer. The routing of Highways 16 and 385 through the town, the Presidential visit in the Summer of 1927, and the increased traffic to Mount Rushmore, spurred a substantial expansion in the tourist-based economy of the city. Tourism has continued to grow and the community retains several excellent tourist-oriented sites.



7. Flintstones Bedrock City

21

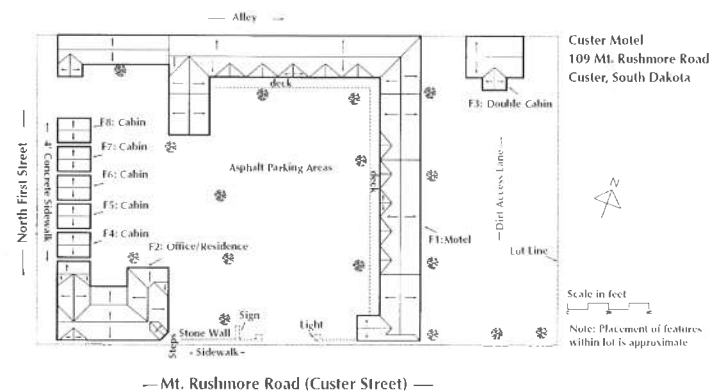
A roadside attraction of a different sort, the Flintstones Bedrock City was conceived of by a local concrete manufacturer in 1964. Once again the a prehistoric theme has been employed to attract tourist dollars, this time based on the fictional past of the Flintstones animated television series. Over the last 30 years it has grown to encompass a large site on the south side of US 16 with a wide variety of concrete structures including: a Bronto-Burger Stand, Gift Shop, and the Bedrock City Main Street. There are also numerous concrete figures including a large representation of Dino the Dinosaur perched on a low ridge next to Highway 16. The topper, however, is a concrete version of Mount Rushmore, known as Mount Rockmore (what else?), which sports busts of Fred, Barney and Dino. In addition there are extensive picnic and camping facilities.



8. Custer Motel

22

Located on the north side of Highway 16 west of downtown, the Custer Motel was built in 1946. It is a typical example of a mid-century motor court featuring a series of small detached and semi-detached stucco cabins arranged around a rectangular interior court which provides parking.



9. Artcrafters Studio

23

Located on the south side of Highway 16 just to the west of the main downtown traffic light, the Artcrafters Studio was built in 1929. The building was constructed by Monte and Lillian Nystrom to house their souvenir business, The Artcrafters Studio, which produced flowerpots, ashtrays, and other knick-knacks covered in thin chips of local pegmatite. The massive stone fireplace in the main showroom is a fine example of Mr. Nystrom's ability as a stone mason. He had previously worked on the State Game Lodge and other structures in Custer State Park. The building's unique architectural style, which might best be described as "Hansel and Gretel Revival," was designed to attract tourists. It is now the home of Barfoot Jewelers.



THE ARTCRAFTERS STUDIO CUSTER S. DAK.

© 1978

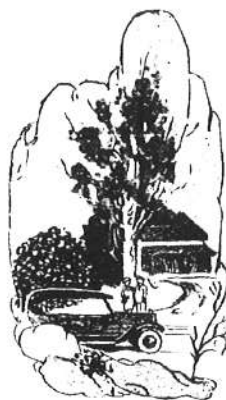
10. Custer Community Building

24

The Custer Community Building was built in 1927 and is located one block north of Mt. Rushmore Road at the corner of Seventh and Crook Streets. Construction was funded through the efforts of the Custer Women's Civic Club and the building was dedicated by First Lady Grace Coolidge during the summer of that year. It is purported to be the largest log building in the world, but this has not been substantiated. It is, a fine example of rustic log construction and is typical of the vernacular log structures which were popular in Western resort areas in the early 20th Century.

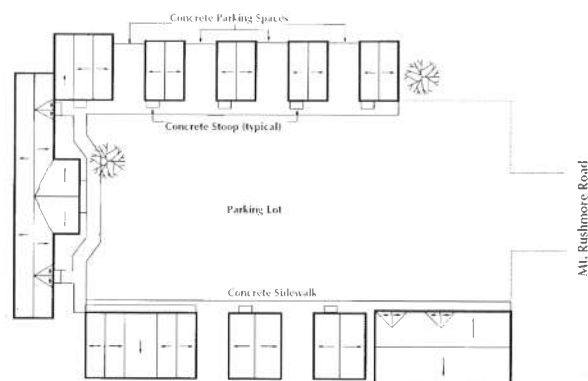
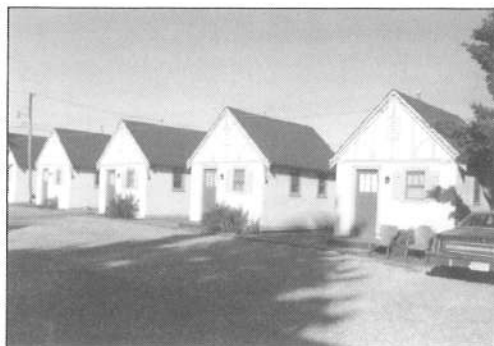


CUSTER COMMUNITY BUILDING
DEDICATED AUGUST 1929 BY
MRS. GRACE COOLIDGE



11. Ben's (now Chalet) Motel

Ben's Motel is another well preserved example of an early motel. It dates from 1937 and may have served as a model for the later Custer Motel on the other end of town. Like the Custer, Ben's has a series of detached stucco cabins arranged around a rectangular parking court. The cabins have a decorative half-timbered treatment which may account for the current name.



Scale in feet

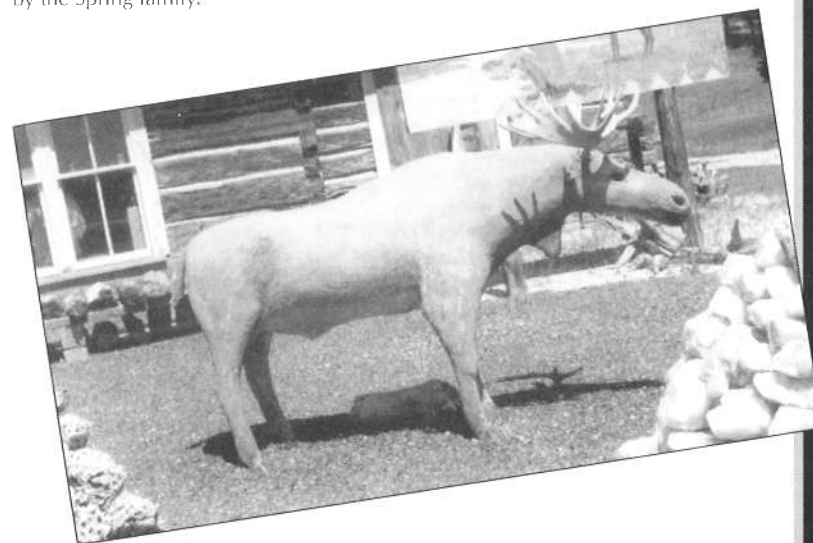
Note: Placement of features within lot is approximate

Ben's Motel
933 Mt. Rushmore Road
Custer, South Dakota

12. Ken's Minerals

Ken's Minerals was opened in 1958 by Kenneth and Martha Spring. It is an example of another type of auto-related tourist attraction which was once quite common and is now becoming rare—the rock shop. Such establishments once dotted all of the highways in the Black Hills selling colorful rocks and minerals, as well as curios made of them, to passing motorists.

In addition to rocks and minerals, Ken's also boasts an impressive array of concrete critters, including the ubiquitous dinosaur and a somewhat more unusual elk with full rack. These sculptures were made by Mr. John Richter of Rapid City and date from the 1950s and 1960s. The shop also houses an extensive fossil and mineral collection and is still operated by the Spring family.



Custer State Park.

Now the largest state park in the country, Custer State Park began in 1913 as the South Dakota State Game Park. It was the brainchild of State Senator Peter Norbeck and remained one of his primary interests throughout his political career as State Senator (1909-1916), Governor (1916-1920) and U.S. Senator (1920 until his death in 1936). Shortly after the park was designated, herds of elk and bison were introduced. Various aspects of park management were divided between state agencies: wildlife management by the State Game Department, timber cutting by the State Forestry Department, road development by the State Highway Department and so on.

By 1919 this awkward scheme had proven itself unwieldy. In that year the Custer State Park Board was formed in order to oversee the development of the park. Governor Norbeck was appointed to sit on the Board and remained in that capacity for many years. Following the establishment of the board, development of the park began in earnest and did not

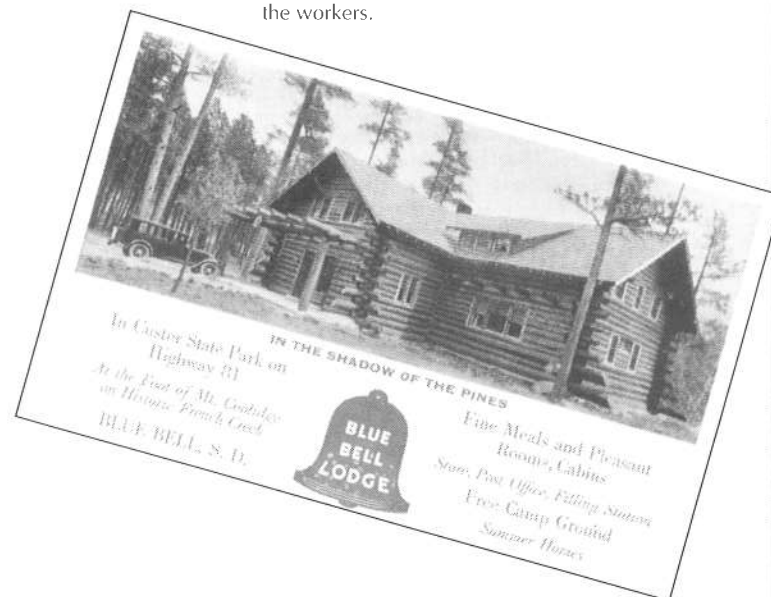
slow until the beginning of the Great Depression. Under Federal relief programs, the park played host to several CCC camps which continued the improvement program. WPA funds were also expended on park structures. The majority of the sites included in this tour were created between the Wars, and they form an outstanding collection of early 20th century recreational resources.



Blue Bell Lodge was the second resort area, after the Game Lodge, to be developed in the park. Blue Bell was built, financed and operated by Chris Jensen, who had been an early stage operator in the area. He built the lodge at one of his favorite spots along the Sheep Mountain (now Mount Coolidge) Road which connects the Park with Wind Cave to the south. This road was the second of a trio of scenic highways built by Peter Norbeck and Scovel Johnson in the 1920s. The lodge was completed in 1927 and Jensen named it after the local telephone company, which he owned, rather than the mountain flower as many people believe. It was leased to the park for a period of 25 years and purchased from Jensen's estate in 1935.

Blue Bell was designed by a local architect, John Phillip Eisentraut, who subsequently managed the lodge and served as the local postmaster. It is a very good example of the simple log architecture which was favored for resort buildings of its day. Vacation cabins, a store and a gas station were constructed at the site. More recent additions, such as a small conference center, have been designed to fit in with the historic buildings.

Just to the south of the lodge on Highway 87 is a magnificent double arch stone bridge which crosses French Creek. It was built in the mid-1930s by CCC workers stationed at nearby Camp Narrows. There were several CCC camps established in the Park and many of the improvements in the area were constructed by the workers.



14. Needles Highway

29

As part of the creation of Custer State Park in 1919, the state acquired Federal lands in the area known as the Needles and around Sylvan Lake. This greatly extended the park to the west. The state also purchased the old Sylvan Lake Hotel and leased it to operators on a yearly basis. This area contains some of the most spectacular scenery and rock formations in the Black Hills.

Peter Norbeck wanted to make the Needles scenery accessible to motorists. He also wanted his new road to cause as little disturbance in the natural setting as possible. Norbeck enlisted the aid of C.C. Gideon, a local contractor who also built the Game Lodge, and Scovel Johnson, a brilliant self-educated civil engineer who worked for the State Highway Commission. The three men rode the entire route from the Game Lodge to Sylvan Lake on horse back, hiking when the terrain was too steep for the horses. Previously, several engineers had insisted that it was impossible to build a highway through this terrain. When Johnson was asked if he could do it, he replied "If you can furnish me enough dynamite, I can".

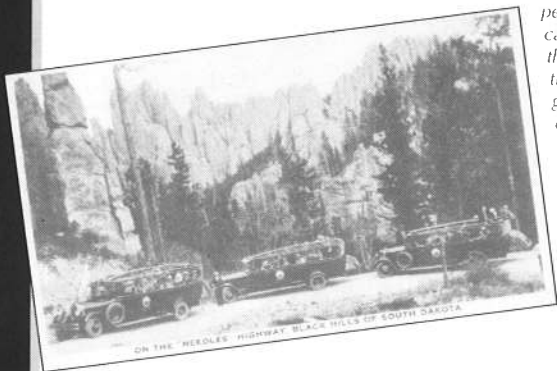
Construction began in 1920 and continued through 1923. The result is a winding fourteen-mile road which offers spectacular views and hairpin curves which can be quite alarming if taken in excess of the recommended speed. Two tunnels carved

through solid granite are so narrow that cars must stop, sound their horns and proceed one at a time. The Needles Highway was immediately recognized as an engineering masterpiece and a scenic wonder.

Again, Frank Lloyd Wright wrote about his experience traveling this road in 1935:

"...several of us drove up another finely laid out road that seemed to know what the region was all about, through scenery I had often heard of as beautiful. But a more flesh and blood

kind of beauty. The beauty that appeals surely to a human being because he is human and brother to the tree and respects individualistic rock formations. Here they are great but not too great. All has the charm of human scale which many great western scenes lack. No home for man the Rocky Mountains; no, nor perhaps the Badlands, yet; but an ideal home; these Black Hills."



15. Sylvan Lake Lodge

30

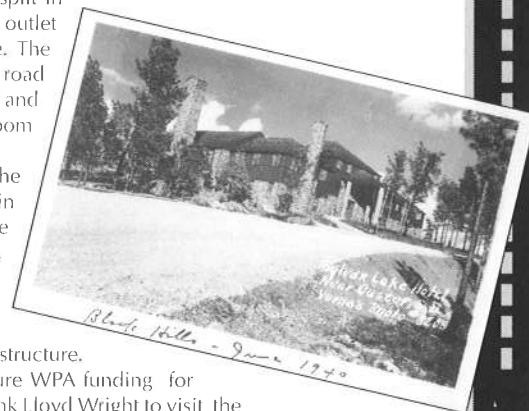
The creation of Sylvan Lake predates the establishment of Custer State Park by 28 years. In 1890 Theodore Reder, a local rancher and sawmill operator, began to scout the hills east of Custer for a possible resort location. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy had recently completed a rail line to Custer and prospects for a mountain hotel seemed good. Reder discovered that a small rock-enclosed valley to the northeast of Custer was drained by a single split in the rock wall. Reder dammed this outlet in 1891 and created Sylvan Lake. The following year he built a wagon road connecting the lake with Custer and constructed a three story, sixty-room hotel on the lake shore.

The State Park Board acquired the hotel and the surrounding land in 1920. In the Summer of 1935 the old structure burned to the ground. Many South Dakotans had fond memories of a vacation or honeymoon spent at the hotel and there was much pressure to build a new structure. Senator Norbeck was able to secure WPA funding for the project and prevailed upon Frank Lloyd Wright to visit the site and prepare plans for a new hotel, this time on the ridge rather than on the lake shore.

Wright wrote about his impressions of Sylvan Lake:

"We wound upward to Sylvan Lake, a gem spot in the Hills where South Dakota plans to entertain her guests. It may be that South Dakota sees a body of water so seldom that her citizens overvalue it for the lake is artificial and small, but what a setting! Here a sweeping mountain resort, with the lake as a vignette seen below, could be a masterful thing of the kind, woven in with the great rich rock and tree foreground, framing vistas of this spot; another and a higher kind of nature understanding well and loving the earth from which it springs, loving it too much to imitate it."

Unfortunately, Wright and park officials were never able to agree on a design and his vision for the site was not executed. The commission for the new hotel fell to Harold Spitznagel, a Sioux Falls architect who had trained at the University of Pennsylvania and worked in Chicago prior to returning to his home town in 1930. Spitznagel created a design which related to many of Wright's principles. He relied on rough coursed stone and simple wood cladding to sheath the exterior of the building. His interiors are an eclectic mix of traditional rustic, Art Deco and Native American motifs. Spitznagel also provided a wonderful stone terrace at the rear of the hotel which offers excellent views through the trees. Numerous tourist cabins were also built at this site and remain popular with vacationers.



16. State Game Lodge

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The Game Lodge was the first public accommodation operated in Custer State Park and remains the center of park activities. Peter Norbeck brought Minneapolis landscape architect Phelps Wyman to the park in 1918, in anticipation of the creation of the State Park Board the following winter. He asked Wyman to create a scheme for developing roads and accommodations in the park. Wyman laid out routes for the

several roads and chose a site overlooking a broad meadow, along what is now called Grace Coolidge Creek, for the Game Lodge. Wyman made preliminary sketches for the building and plans were prepared by Minneapolis architect A.R. Van

Dyke. The building they designed

displays Craftsman touches, such as the rough uncoursed stone foundation and porch, side gables, shallow pitched roofs, and exposed framing elements. The interior is also typical of the style.

Construction began in 1920 and was completed the following summer. Monte Nystrom, who later built and operated the Artcrafters Studio in Custer, did the extensive masonry work on the building. C.C. Gideon supervised construction and performed the duties of Game Keeper, living with his family at the lodge. They were in residence on October 19, 1921 when a pile of scrap lumber in the basement caught fire and reduced the building to ashes. The following summer the park board rebuilt the lodge using the same plans and reopened it on June 15, 1922. Two wings were added to the building in 1968. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

Perhaps the most illustrious guest to stay at the Game Lodge was President Calvin Coolidge who was in residence for three months during the Summer of 1927. Coolidge had chosen the Black Hills partly as a favor to Senator Norbeck and partly because he was increasingly concerned about the growing economic difficulties in rural America. Coolidge established his summer administrative headquarters at Rapid City High School and took over occupancy of the Game Lodge with his



family and staff. The Coolidge Inn, located west of the Game Lodge, was built in just two weeks in order to house the Secret Service and press representatives who accompanied the President. Coolidge participated in many activities while in the Hills. He fished for trout in Grace Coolidge Creek, named in honor of the first Lady, and rode horseback, replete with ten gallon hat, boots and spurs. He was also inducted into the Sioux tribe by Chief Chauncey Yellow Robe and given the Lakota name, Wamblee-Tokaha, or Leading Eagle. He was presented with a magnificent feathered headdress in which he posed for the press. It was from the Game Lodge that Coolidge issued his famous statement, "I do not choose to run for President in 1928".

The amount of publicity afforded by the President's visit to the Black Hills was invaluable and could not have been bought at any price. Thousands of newspaper and magazine articles communicated the details of the President's vacation to the nation and the world. As Mrs. Jessie Sundstrom, author of *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, stated "His appearance literally and figuratively put the state on the tourism maps."



32

17. Iron Mountain Road

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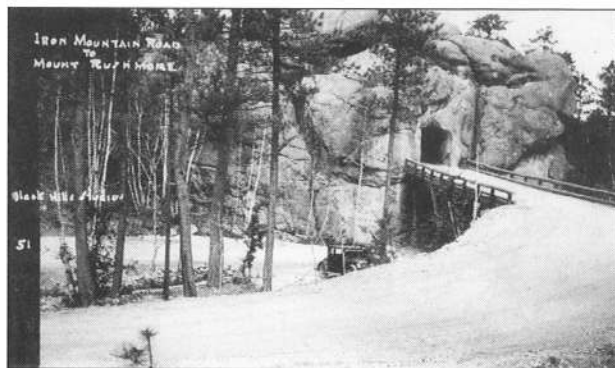
The Iron Mountain Road is the third of three roads designed by Peter Norbeck and Scovel Johnson for Custer State Park. It was designed and built in 1927 to connect the park with Gutzon Borglum's sculpture project at Mount Rushmore. This road has all the hallmarks of their earlier road building efforts. It was constructed to highlight the route's natural scenery and to detract from it as little as possible. The road splits into two one-way sections in several places in order to provide maximum scenic impact. There are several spiral or "pig-tail" bridges on the road which were designed to overcome steep

descents and to provide a touch of whimsy. The road also features three tunnels blasted out of the rock. Each of these tunnels is placed so that, when approached from the south, they provide a framed view of Mount Rushmore.

In 1957 a stone memorial was placed at the top of the Iron Mountain Road as a tribute to Peter Norbeck. The inscription on this memorial, written by the poet Badger Clark, reads in part "He is still present in every mile of road he built, in the noble pines and towering rocks he loved, and in the hearts of the multitudes who will enjoy them."



P. Head of Washington from Iron Mountain Road Tunnel, Stone Valley, South Dakota



18. Mount Rushmore

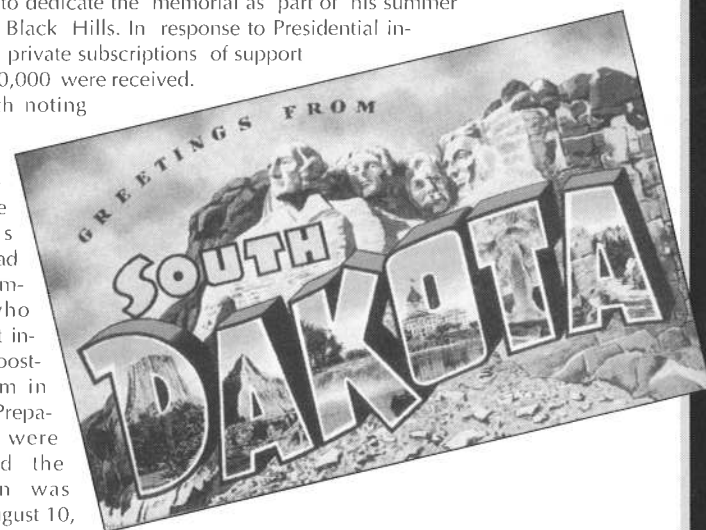
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Without question, the engine which drives the tourist economy in the Black Hills is the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, begun as the idea of State Historian Doane Robinson. In 1923 he conceived that a monumental sculpture memorializing Western heroes and pioneers might attract more visitors to the Black Hills. He quickly enlisted the opinion of Senator Peter Norbeck who voiced his immediate support. Robinson then went public with his idea at a meeting of the Black and Yellow Trail Association held in Huron, SD in early 1924. The idea was controversial at first but was well received in both Sioux Falls and Rapid City, two of the largest communities in the state.

Greatly encouraged, Robinson then looked for a sculptor who would undertake the task. Fortunately for South Dakota, Gutzon Borglum was available. Borglum was an Idaho native who had trained in sculpture at the Julian Academy and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where he had been greatly influenced by the work of Auguste Rodin. Borglum had a penchant for Western themes and won much early acclaim. Best of all, he had recently worked on a massive mountain carving at Stone Mountain in Georgia, but had left following a dispute with its sponsors.

Borglum came to the Black Hills in the Summer of 1924 to scout locations for his sculpture, which by then had changed from a Western to a national theme honoring great presidents. A site at Mount Rushmore was selected in 1925 and initial models were prepared. Costs for the memorial would be enormous and the logistics of carving a mountain in the wilderness were formidable. The project languished for three years for lack of funds. In 1927, President Coolidge was persuaded to dedicate the memorial as part of his summer trip to the Black Hills. In response to Presidential involvement, private subscriptions of support totaling \$50,000 were received.

It is worth noting that several of the large corporate sponsors were railroad and oil companies who had a direct interest in boosting tourism in the Hills. Preparations were made and the dedication was held on August 10,



1927. At the ceremony, Borglum persuaded the President to write the text for an entablature which was to be carved into the mountain. While the entablature was never carved, the President had been won over to the project and with his aid an appropriation from Congress was obtained in 1928. As part of this agreement, the memorial was placed under the supervision of a Federal commission.

Work proceeded rapidly from this point. The first bust, a rendering of George Washington, was completed in 1931. Funding continued to be a problem during the Depression, but enough was secured to begin work on Thomas Jefferson by 1932. Jefferson was originally to be positioned to the left of Washington. The rock proved to be unstable and the Jefferson face had to be destroyed. Work on the figure began again in its present location in 1934.

In 1933 the memorial was officially placed under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Senator Norbeck continued to secure Federal monies for the project until his death in 1936. By the summer of that year the Jefferson bust was complete and was dedicated by President Franklin Roosevelt. The figure of Abraham Lincoln quickly followed, being dedicated in the Summer of 1937. The Park Service received final control of the site in 1939 and the figure of Theodore Roosevelt was dedicated that year. The Coolidge entablature

and the proposed Hall of Records were never completed. Gutzon Borglum died in 1941 and his son Lincoln completed final drilling on the memorial that year.

The impact of Mount Rushmore is incalculable. The great boom in tourism which enveloped the Hills following the Presidential visit was unquestionably

sustained by its development. Visitation has steadily increased from a handful of people climbing to the site on foot in 1927, to over 2.6 million visitors in 1993, all arriving in automobiles and motorcoaches on broad multi-lane highways. It remains the center of Black Hills tourism, which is now the largest single factor in the regional economy. Moreover, the memorial has become akin to a national pilgrimage site and icon, a sort of secular Mecca which figures into hundreds of thousands of summer vacations every year.

