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Historic Preservation Issue
Rapid City's Landscape
Vermillion Carnegie Libraries
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On the cover: Several climbers scale a rock face on Cowboy Hill in Rapid City. The area has become a world-class rock climbing destination.

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At the Vertex of Water and Stone

Preserving Landscape and Memory in Rapid City

Eric Steven Zimmer

From the saddle of a bicycle, there is no easy way up Skyline Drive. Access from the south requires a long, slow grind up Tower Road, Flormann Street, or Catron Boulevard. Further north, Quincy Street winds from the historic West Boulevard neighborhood towards the hogback where a massive, concrete brontosaurus peers out over Rapid City. The grueling climb offers many rewards. In several places, the grind melts into luxurious coasts high above the rooftops of Rapid City. A clear day offers views to the southeast, all the way to the dusty Badlands, which are visible between the homes, radio towers, and tall ponderosa pines that line the road. To the southwest, the white, granite glint of Mount Rushmore sits beneath the summit of Black Elk Peak.

This vista helps explain why, for thousands of years, the natural resources and allure of the Black Hills have drawn people to hunt, explore, pray, recreate, and live in and around what is now Rapid City. The community sits where the open prairie meets rocky hills and thick forests. For generations, area residents have shaped their lives in response to the opportunities and limitations of these surroundings. High ridges on Skyline Drive and Cowboy Hill, flowing waters in Rapid Creek and Canyon Lake, pine forests, and grasslands fill the city limits. Rapid City's scenery attracts visitors and transplants, and their backgrounds and worldviews inform how they understand the area. Anyone can feel a strong connection to the landscapes, waterscapes, and skylscapes in and around Rapid City.

The author wishes to thank Eric John Abrahamson, Lois Facer, Brenna Maloney, Sarah Hanzel, the members of the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, and Ashley and Dillon Julius for their insights and contributions to this piece. Thanks go out to the Minnilusa Historical Association, the *Rapid City Journal*, and Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park for permission to use their images. This essay is dedicated with immense love to Stevie Lynn Zimmer, who was born while the research was underway, and her mom, Samantha Zimmer, who spent a long pregnancy in quarantine, patiently listening to her husband talk about old things.



This photograph, taken by the author, shows Skyline Drive and Cowboy Hill as they appear today. Trees, grasses, and the ridgeline blend with roads, homes, businesses, and infrastructure.

The settlement of Rapid City was part of the imposition of Euro-American land ethics onto the Northern Great Plains.¹ Throughout Rapid City's history, as in much of the American West, competition for land and natural resources has shaped and reshaped the landscape while fueling tensions over public and private management, industry and development, and preservation and conservation. Natural forces have also altered the environment through slow processes such as erosion and climate change, as well as sudden disasters like floods, fires, and blizzards.

The landscape that endures in the city's public parks and open spaces has played a critical part in building and sustaining community iden-

1. See, for example, Paul W. Gates, "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935," in *Land Use Policy in the United States*, ed. Howard W. Ottoson (Washington, D.C.: BeardBooks, 1963), pp. 28-46. He argues that the U.S. government saw no inherent value in western lands, believing that only the sweat and toil of settlers would establish their worth. This view, of course, failed to account for the ways in which Indigenous peoples had been living on and using land and water for millennia.

tity and character. In many cases, it has been preserved by private citizens and public policymakers at the behest of their constituents. Indeed, local interest in historic preservation began as early as 1886—just ten years after Rapid City was first laid out. At the time, it was articulated by a small crowd of residents who gathered in a dimly lit express office to trade stories about the early days. Many of these tales referred to landmarks and structures. One story focused on a particular cottonwood tree on a city founder's property. Another told of the log house that served as the city's first hotel. For "the crowd of newcomers" in the room, that night marked one of many early efforts to interpret the city's past and foster a shared understanding of its significance and meaning.²

Since 2019, my colleague Eric John Abrahamson and I have been working with the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC) to update its planning documents, an activity funded in part using federal funds from the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of the Interior. As part of that process, we studied the history of historic preservation in Rapid City, held several community outreach events, and examined local history through a variety of lenses.³ The RCHPC was formed in the 1970s. As in many American communities, its work has traditionally focused on the built environment, especially the evaluation and protection of historic homes and business in and adjacent to the downtown area.⁴ Academic and community approaches to historic

2. *Rapid City Journal*, 29 July 1886. On the history of historic preservation and issues related to place and memory, see Max Page and Randal Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Robert R. Archibald, *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2004); Catherine Cameron and John B. Gatewood, "Excursions into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historical Sites," *Public Historian* 22 (Summer 2000): 107–27.

3. This essay is adapted from a series of short, investigative pieces Abrahamson and I developed to help the RCHPC broaden the community's understanding of its history. To read the Historic Context Document update, Preservation Plan, and each of the topical essays, see <https://www.picturercpast.com/about.html>.

4. See Jeff Buechler, "City of Rapid City Historic Context Planning Document," prepared for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, 1989; Michelle L. Dennis, "Comprehensive Preservation Plan for Rapid City, South Dakota," prepared for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, 2009.

preservation and interpretation have evolved rapidly in recent years, in part as a response to national conversations about race, memorials, and memory.⁵

With these trends and our interest in maintaining the vitality of the city in mind, we thought broadly about Rapid City's history and helped create a conceptual framework for promoting preservation in ways that align with local culture and the needs of our growing community. We have continued to follow the regulations and best practices outlined by the NPS and the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office.⁶ We have also been inspired by emerging approaches to historic and cultural resource management such as Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL), a framework adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011. HUL "considers cultural diversity and creativity as key assets for human, social and economic development" and "support[s] the integration of environmental, social, and cultural concerns into the planning, design, and implementation of urban development."⁷

Taking a wider view of history and historic assets enables cities and towns to work with residents and leaders to use the lessons of the past to make informed decisions about planning and development. Understanding the meaning and value of the natural world from multiple cultural perspectives is one way to support this work. As the preserva-

5. See for example, Thomas F. King, *Our Unprotected Heritage: Whitewashing the Destruction of Our Cultural and Natural Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Liz Almlie, "An Uneasy Fit: History in Historic Preservation," *History@Work*, 3 Feb. 2015, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/an-uneasy-fit>. See also the special edition of *The Public Historian*, "Open House, Reimagining the Historic House Museum," *Public Historian* 37 (May 2015).

6. National Park Service, "Historic Preservation Planning Program," <http://www.nps.gov/preservation-planning/>; South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, "The South Dakota Preservation Plan, 2021-2025," <http://history.sd.gov/Preservation>.

7. "New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained," UNESCO World Heritage Center, 2013, p. 9, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/123569>. HUL is only one of several emergent frameworks that account for the role of culture, wildlife, and environment in historic preservation. Other examples include "Traditional Cultural Properties" and "Indigenous Cultural Landscapes." See National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places—Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs): A Quick Guide for Preserving Native American Cultural Resources," 2012, <https://www.nps.gov/history/tribes/documents/tcp.pdf>; National Park Service, "Indigenous Cultural Landscapes," <https://www.nps.gov/cajo/learn/indigenous-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

tion scholar Daniel Bluestone writes, “We develop a more complex understanding of historic preservation by exploring its associations with efforts to conserve scenery and natural areas.”⁸

Historians and historic preservationists can partner with conservationists, tribal members, outdoor recreation groups, landscape architects, city planners, and other stakeholders to document, understand, interpret, protect, and ultimately enjoy the natural elements that are so intimately intertwined with the built environment and the character of communities like Rapid City.

Today, Rapid City is the second largest city in South Dakota. Situated in the central Black Hills, it is the urban hub of a vast and sparsely populated hinterland that extends hundreds of miles in any direction. The Black Hills formed when a large, oblong section of igneous rock lifted through the earth’s mantle some sixty-five million years ago, breaking through the limestone crust to expose the large, stone center of the Hills. Forests thick with ponderosa pine, blue spruce, and cedar trees cropped up here in and around this central ring. Woods are interspersed with meadows with prairie grasses and shrubs and are home to an array of animals, including deer, elk, beavers, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and rabbits. Abundant numbers of bison, bears, wolves, and mountain lions once inhabited the vast prairies surrounding the Black Hills. Most of the large predators and bison were killed off or pushed out as Euro-Americans displaced early Indigenous inhabitants, though coyotes still frequent the area and mountain lion populations in the Hills have increased in recent years.⁹

Rapid City sprouted from the vertex of water and stone. A long, narrow ridgeline splits the town. Residents can look up at the ridge from any side of town or peer down over the vast distance visible from Skyline Drive or Highway 16. The ridge forms the backbone of the city and includes two main parts from south to north: Hangman’s Hill, which Skyline Drive traverses, and Cowboy Hill, which begins immediately

8. Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, p. 104.

9. Daniel G. Driscoll and Janet M. Carter, “Hydraulic Conditions and Budgets for the Black Hills of South Dakota, Through Water Year 1998” (Rapid City: U.S. Geological Survey, 2001): 3. See also Frank Van Nuys, *Varmints and Victims: Predator Control in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015); Bud Dalrymple, *The Gray Wolf of South Dakota* (Rapid City: Clout International, 1981).

north of Rapid Creek. The Black Hills are an island in a vast sea of prairie, and as historian and Skyline Wilderness Area advocate Robb Campbell put it, “This ridge runs all the way through the city. It’s symbolic. [It’s] what makes Rapid City a city in the Black Hills, not a city *near* the Black Hills.”¹⁰

Rapid Creek transverses the ridgeline. Fed by runoff from winter snows, spring rains, and smaller tributaries like Castle Creek, Rapid Creek originates in limestone springs west of the city. It flows from west to east along a narrow bed, then pools against the dam at the man-made Pactola Reservoir. From there, the water snakes towards Rapid City, where it fills Canyon Lake on the west side of town.¹¹ The creek connects the central hills to the eastern prairie as it passes through “the

10. Dan Daly, “Skyline Wilderness Area a ‘Hidden Treasure,’” *Rapid City Journal*, 30 July 2005. Emphasis added.

11. David F. Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp: Images and Perspectives of Early Rapid City* (Rapid City: Fenske Printing, 1989), pp. 210–12.



Water from Rapid Creek gathers in Canyon Lake on the western edge of town. Canyon Lake Park, which offers twenty-nine acres of recreation, is one of the oldest parks in the city.

Gap,” a large dip in the ridgeline between Hangman’s Hill and Cowboy Hill. Over the years, the creek, the Gap, and a second gap in the Hills presently occupied by the passage of Interstate 90 on the north side of Cowboy Hill have become vital entry points for access to the Black Hills. The creek continues past Rapid City and empties into the Cheyenne River about thirty miles east of town.

For centuries, Rapid Creek has made this location a passing place. Untold generations of Indigenous peoples camped on its banks and utilized its resources.¹² Some stopped briefly on the way to hunt or trade. Others stayed longer after trekking to the area for extended sessions of individual prayer or healing. Still others stayed for weeks or months, holding elaborate ceremonies, camping seasonally, or assembling for large meetings. These activities lent structure and rhythm to early life on the northern plains. For this reason, the Black Hills landscape is imbued with deep meaning and ancient, dynamic connections to place, people, and community. The Black Hills constituted, as the ethnoarchaeologist Linea Sundstrom writes, “a complex sacred geography” in which various Native groups held deep cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial ties to locations throughout the region.¹³

Like in the rest of the Indigenous world, the early Black Hills and the prairies that surround them were complex and contested places. Life on the high plains was challenging. Tribes faced a volatile, unforgiving climate while seeking access to natural resources such as water, wood, stone, and game. They adapted and responded when violence and new diseases threatened their populations or new goods, tools, and technologies brought innovations to their lives.¹⁴

Native peoples’ knowledge of the landscape aligns with archaeological evidence establishing their enduring presence in what is now Rapid City. A map by Amos Bad Heart Bull, a Lakota man, captured an

12. Linea Sundstrom and Wini Michael, “Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park, Rapid City, South Dakota: A Report Prepared for the City of Rapid City, South Dakota, March 2009,” pp. 2, 7.

13. Linea Sundstrom, “The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 (Summer/Fall 1997): 206.

14. See Sundstrom, “Sacred Black Hills,” which lists Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Arikara, and Mandan connections to the Black Hills region. See also Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010).

Indigenous perspective on the Black Hills region around the turn of the twentieth century. He noted that Rapid Creek had long been utilized for winter camps. There, the trees and bluffs offered respite from intense prairie winds. In separate accounts, both Bad Heart Bull and the venerated Oglala holy man Nicholas Black Elk connected Rapid Creek—or Mniluzahan in their language—and the surrounding valley to a Lakota spiritual story.¹⁵

Indeed, Rapid Creek was a vital artery that brought water from the Hills to the prairies. It was a locus of Indigenous activity, as evidenced by hundreds of tool grooves and other stone markings in the area. They document that the Indigenous presence along the creek reaches back as far as two thousand years.¹⁶ Native people, meanwhile, remained there through much of the twentieth century. Around 1900, a handful of Native families lived in Rapid City. Most had relocated from area reservations to live near their children, whom federal officials had forcibly enrolled at the Rapid City Indian School, built on the western outskirts of town in 1898. These families assembled semipermanent camps along Rapid Creek. The waterway extended at different times from the Roosevelt Park area in the east all the way to the boarding school campus, or what local people call “Sioux San.”¹⁷

The most prominent Native villages—known as the Osh Kosh Camp, or simply “Indian camp”—originated in the 1920s or 1930s. The main camp was located on the banks of Rapid Creek underneath tall cottonwood trees along what became the greenway just south of Omaha Street and between Osh Kosh Street and Twelfth Street/Founders Park Drive.¹⁸ The camp existed until 1954, when community leaders purchased a plot of land beyond Rapid City’s northern limits and moved the camp and most of its Native residents to the area that became known

15. Sundstrom, “Sacred Black Hills,” pp. 187–92.

16. Sundstrom and Michael, “Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park,” pp. 7, 24.

17. Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898–1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Heather Dawn Thompson, Kibbe Conti, Scott Riney, and Karin Eagle, “An Inconvenient Truth: The History Behind the Sioux San (Rapid City Indian Boarding School) Lands & West Rapid City,” *Rapid City Journal* insert, 4 May 2017, pp. 3–4.

18. Bev Warne, “Rapid City’s Leaders Face a Historic Opportunity,” *Rapid City Journal*, 7 Nov. 2020. On the location of the Osh Kosh Camp, see the fold-out map of downtown Rapid City in “City Plan: Rapid City, 1949,” Local History Collection, Rapid City Public Library.



The *Rapid City Journal* printed this image of tents in the Osh Kosh Camp in 1953. The neighborhood, which primarily housed Indigenous residents, was destroyed the following year.

as the Sioux Addition.¹⁹ This removal compounded the segregation of Rapid City neighborhoods at midcentury. The consequences of this process continue to resonate in the community today. This challenging history, along with the deaths of dozens of Indigenous children at the Rapid City Indian School in the early twentieth century, has sparked considerable community conversation in recent years.²⁰

Non-Native settlement of Rapid City began in the 1870s. Amid the Black Hills Gold Rush, a small group of settlers arrived at the same rocky outcropping long used by Native peoples. In 1876, they founded Hay Camp and laid out Rapid City.²¹ In the decades that followed, Rapid City grew from a modest cow town and trade outpost into a dominant urban center. As the community grew, new developments radiated out-

19. Thompson, et al., “An Inconvenient Truth,” pp. 12–13.

20. A Native-led community research initiative called the Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project has been researching this story and working with community leaders to begin the healing process. Plans to build a memorial to the children on former boarding school property are underway. The author has served as a volunteer historian for the Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project since 2015. To learn more about this initiative, visit <http://www.rememberingthechildren.org>.

21. Ross P. Korsgaard, “A History of Rapid City, South Dakota, During the Territorial Days,” in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, vol. 38 (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society, 1976), pp. 515–60; “Rapid City History: Early Account of the Laying Out and Settlement of the Town,” *Daily Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 26 Feb. 1903.



After destroying the Osh Kosh Camp and moving its residents to the Sioux Addition, the city turned the area into the open greenspace seen in this photograph.

ward from the downtown core. The city's residents used water from the creek for livestock, irrigation, and in homes and businesses. The creek also produced hydroelectric power, helped process gold, and floated timber to factories for processing.²²

The sister mining towns of Lead and Deadwood were the most populous and prosperous communities in the Black Hills for a half century. Rapid City, meanwhile, struggled to find a foothold. During the 1890s, for example, the city's population declined from 2,128 to 1,342.²³ The town established new businesses and was supported by government investments that suppressed the Native population, opened the region to homesteading, and created and managed state and national parks, forests, and monuments.²⁴ Amid this symbiosis of government support and private enterprise, Rapid City grew. It became a vital access point

22. See Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, pp. 210–12; Eric John Abrahamson and Eric Steven Zimmer, *Expanding the Energy Horizon: A History of Black Hills Corporation Since 1883* (Rapid City: Black Hills Corporation, 2018), pp. 34–35; Martha Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills* (Rapid City: Fenske Printing/Jessie Y. Sundstrom, 1984), pp. 57–59.

23. "Population of Rapid City, SD," Population.us, accessed 24 Mar. 2021, <https://population.us/sd/rapid-city>.

24. On the role of state and federal investment in the Black Hills economy, see Howard R. Lamar, *Dakota Territory: A Study of Frontier Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University



for tourists and retail shoppers and a key shipping hub for raw materials. Rapid City was the largest city in the Black Hills by the 1930 census. But its growth was just beginning.

Rapid City boomed during and after World War II, fueled by three overlapping forces. First, the national baby boom brought some seventy-two million American babies into the world between 1946 and 1964.²⁵ Second was the establishment and expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base. Originally named the Rapid City Army Air Base, the facility had opened shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The base closed briefly after the war but reopened as relations between the United States and the Soviet Union chilled. It eventually became a headquarters for bomber fleets and Cold War-era Minuteman Missiles. Ellsworth's expansion brought federal building contracts and thousands of Air Force

Press, 1958); Suzanne Barta Julin, *A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880–1941* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2009).

25. Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, "The Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060 (Report No. P25-1141)," U.S. Census Bureau, May 2014, p. 2.

personnel and their families to the Rapid City area over the course of several decades. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, Ellsworth employed some seven hundred civilians and 6,600 active-duty military personnel.²⁶

Finally, migration from the rural hinterland—including area reservations—continued as families relocated to Rapid City looking to capitalize on the new jobs associated with the base and the expanding tourism economy. All told, the city's population grew from 13,844 in 1940 to nearly 42,000 by 1960.²⁷

This incredible growth caused a housing and construction boom, and Rapid City added more than a dozen new schools in burgeoning suburbs to keep up with demand. One resident, writing to oppose a proposed community investment in an outdoor tourist attraction, described the situation in a 1948 letter to the editor of the *Rapid City Journal*. "Why should we still be dreaming up ideas to bring the tourists here?" she asked. "Rapid City outgrew its britches long ago. The city can't take care of what's already here. The housing shortage is terrific, the school situation is dreadful, and the city streets and sidewalks are 'X&%!!'"²⁸

The baby boom subsided in the mid-1960s. Rapid City's population would continue to slowly increase for about twenty years, before spiking again—albeit less drastically—in the late 1980s and 1990s. By 2010, the city had around sixty-eight thousand residents; today the number is about seventy-eight thousand.²⁹

Through all of this, Rapid City remained a passing place. The creek continued to serve as both the source of domestic and industrial water and the town's central passage. In different generations, wagon trains, railroads, highways, and airports would connect the city to the outside world. The community itself became known as the "Gate City," given its

26. City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1980," p. 5; City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1990," pp. 4–7; both are pamphlets held in the Local History Collection at the Rapid City Public Library.

27. "Rapid City, South Dakota Population 2021," World Population Review, accessed 24 Mar. 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/rapid-city-sd-population>.

28. Rosemary C. Whiting, "Against Amphitheater," *Rapid City Journal*, 22 Apr. 1948.

29. "1950 Census of Population: Preliminary Counts: Population of South Dakota, By Counties," Bureau of the Census, Series PC-2, no. 18, 21 Aug. 1950; Nathan Thompson, "Rapid City's Population Now More than 78,000, City Says," *Rapid City Journal*, 9 Mar. 2021.

central location and easy access to the Black Hills. Major commercial arteries like Omaha, Main, and St. Joseph streets parallel the Creek's path through town, and a main exit from Interstate 90 brings travelers toward downtown, where they cross the creek before continuing into Rapid City.

Throughout these waves of growth and expansion, the banks of Rapid Creek were home to both the wealthiest and poorest members of town. Recognizing the beauty of creekside property, early developers planted towering poplar and cottonwood trees along the banks, which offered shade and scenery to the new neighborhoods at water's edge.³⁰ The picturesque area near Canyon Lake, for example, was a desirable location for residential homes and vacation cabins. A 1907 flood destroyed the first dam at Canyon Lake and slowed plans for residential developments along the creek. Rebuilt by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, the dam enabled the creation of a large recreation area, which included a swimming beach and diving platform, by 1950.³¹ This made the area popular again, and despite the risk of flood, residents rebuilt along its edges.

A few miles downstream, however, communities of less affluent—and primarily Indigenous—people lived in temporary homes along the creek between Sioux San and the base of Cowboy Hill. Over time, working-class, non-Native families also built homes along the creek, making these spaces a cultural crossroads where residents of different backgrounds met and intermingled. According to Cecelia Montgomery, a Lakota woman who grew up in the Osh Kosh Camp, most Lakota families “camped because they couldn’t afford to rent anywhere; [the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company] paid them very little wages. They were living in tents and some people bought shacks and moved them down there; it was a regular little reservation. They had outdoor toilets and everybody had to use the same water hydrant.”³²

30. Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, p. 211.

31. Peggy Sanders, *The Civilian Conservation Corps In and Around the Black Hills* (Charleston, S.Car.: Arcadia, 2004), p. 118. Bev Pechan and Bill Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City: A Nostalgic Look at the 1920s Through the 1970s* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2002), p. 56; Heidi Bell Gease, “Canyon Lake the Heart of a Neighborhood,” *Rapid City Journal*, 1 Feb. 2002.

32. Cecelia Montgomery, quoted in *Honor the Grandmothers: Dakota Women Tell Their Stories*, ed. Sarah Penman (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), pp. 77–112.

Despite these conditions, Native families built a community at Osh Kosh. James Emery, a Lakota elder and advocate, described how the Native community's emotional attachment to this area persisted after the 1954 removal to the Sioux Addition and the 1972 flood wiped away the Native homes that had either remained or been reestablished in that area. "As far as the Indian was concerned," he said just a month after the event, "most of these places, that was home-sweet-home to him. That was the only place he knew. He loved it there. There was home life there. . . that was home-sweet home."³³

Rapid Creek had flooded several times and the dam at Canyon Lake, which controls the creek's flow through town, had even burst once before, in 1907.³⁴ But the night of 9 June 1972 was different. By then, Rapid City had grown substantially, and many Native and non-Native residences as well as businesses and main corridors filled the floodplain. The rain poured down, and when the dam burst, it sent a gush of water and debris into the heart of Rapid City. The disaster killed at least 238 people and injured 3,000 more. It destroyed more than 1,300 homes and 5,000 cars, doing more than \$160 million worth of damage (\$1.04 billion in 2021 dollars).³⁵

After the tragedy, Rapid City enacted flood zone restrictions and created a long, narrow greenway that abuts the creek. An infusion of federal, state, and charitable funds helped Rapid City rebuild and recover, and scenic parks, ponds, and a bike path filled in the flood zone. Many wealthier households moved up onto ridges overlooking scenic vistas or set back into the forest.³⁶

The greenway provided a flood buffer and spaces for recreation. But its creation also compounded the processes of displacement that moved

33. James Emery, transcript of an oral history conducted 11 July 1972 by Stephen Ward, South Dakota Oral History Center, <https://vimeo.com/channels/sdoralhistory/78842793>. The Osh Kosh Camp had been condemned and forcibly relocated to an area north of Rapid City called the "Sioux Addition" in 1954. See Thompson et al, "Inconvenient Truth."

34. Janet M. Carter, Joyce E. Williamson, and Ralph W. Teller, "The 1972 Black Hills-Rapid City Flood Revisited," USGS Fact Sheet FS-037-02 (2002), <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/fs-037-02/>.

35. United States Geological Survey, "The 1972 Black Hills-Rapid City Flood," https://www.usgs.gov/centers/dakota-water/science/1972-black-hills-rapid-city-flood?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects.

36. See Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, pp. 210–12.



Destroyed houses and cars were among the immediate consequences of the 1972 flood, but the cleanup and redevelopment effort forever altered the city.

many less affluent families to other parts of Rapid City. Today, this general observation holds true: inside Rapid City, more affluent neighborhoods exist on the west end of Rapid Creek, and the further east the creek flows, the less affluent the neighborhoods become. Income levels only increase as the creek passes by newer developments in and around Rapid Valley.³⁷ Meanwhile, unhoused people and families have continued to inhabit area along the creek in the downtown area, and especially those extending towards the eastern edge of town, into the 2020s.³⁸

37. As an example, in the western census tract where Rapid Creek enters the city limits, the median household income was \$96,455 in 2018. Heading east, the creek flows through tracts with median incomes of \$79,578; \$58,644; \$46,552; \$55,788; \$33,009; and \$29,345. At the eastern edge of the city, the median income spikes to \$46,895 then \$61,688 before the creek continues out of town towards the Cheyenne River. “Median Household Income by Census Tract, Rapid City, SD, 2018 ACS 5-year Estimate,” prepared by Benchmark Data Labs, 2020. Copy in the author’s possession.

38. See, for example, Richard Two Bulls, “New Homeless Camp Established Along Rapid



Rapid Creek flows between Founders Park and the base of Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park. The waterway has been vital to commerce and development throughout the city's history.

Managing Rapid Creek itself has also been an ongoing process. Like the forests and prairies that surround it, the creek has served a variety of purposes. In addition to providing water to the residents and businesses of Rapid City, for example, the creek contributed to state initiatives aimed at conserving and managing natural resources in the Black Hills. After claiming land and building a home near an “immense and ever-flowing spring” in 1879, a local settler named Daniel Cleghorn began cultivating trout.³⁹ Fifty years later, his operation inspired the state of South Dakota to establish the Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery on what would become the west side of Rapid City. The state added twenty-two nursery ponds to the complex in 1949. To this day, the

Creek Demands Action from Mayor, City,” *South Dakota Public Broadcasting*, 17 Oct. 2020, <https://www.sdpb.org/blogs/news-and-information/new-homeless-camp-eastablished-along-rapid-creek-demands-action-from-mayor-city/>.

39. *Daily Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 9 Apr. 1879.

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks grows and harvests fish to be released into lakes and streams throughout the area.⁴⁰

Yet the massive, midcentury surge of people and activity also polluted the creek. The population grew so quickly that some neighborhoods, both in and beyond the city limits, developed without city ordinances that regulated their size and layout. This meant that people were building in the floodplain, drilling wells, installing septic tanks, and building access roads—all with minimal consideration for the risks, to residents and the creek, that this construction posed.⁴¹

By 1949, the creek became so polluted that one reporter called it “South Dakota’s Largest Sewer.” Along this “six-mile cesspool,” the story read, “outdoor privies” and rat-infested trash piles combined with “horses, chickens, and goats” that residents allowed to “roam the local creek area that lies less than four blocks from the fancy store fronts of Main Street.”⁴² A 1957 study by the Pennington County Health Department noted that many creekside homes west of Canyon Lake had inadequate wastewater systems that were leaching into the creek and groundwater. Residents, meanwhile, were digging wells perilously close to this contaminated water. Eventually, the state and county public health departments declared Canyon Lake unsafe for swimming.⁴³

Concerned citizens and downstream ranchers complained to South Dakota and the U.S. Public Health Service. In 1963, officials set up seventeen sampling sites between Pactola Lake and the Cheyenne River.⁴⁴ The samples showed clean water above Rapid City, then low water quality in town and downstream. Industrial wastewater was only partially

40. “Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery,” South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks, <https://gfp.sd.gov/cleghorn>. See also, “Stage Set for Dedication of Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery Near Here Tomorrow Afternoon,” *Rapid City Journal*, 5 July 1930; Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City, History*, p. 21.

41. See South Dakota State Department of Health, Division of Sanitary Engineering, “Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek, Dec. 1963, Pactola Reservoir to Cheyenne River” (Pierre: 1964), p. v.

42. Duane McDowell, “Length of Rapid Creek Through City One of Big Health Hazards,” *Rapid City Journal*, 4 May 1949.

43. R. Keith Stewart and Carol A. Thilenius, “Black Hills Lakes and Streams: Stream and Lake Inventory and Classification in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1964” (Pierre: Department of Game, Fish and Parks, 1964), p. 36.

44. “Water Pollution Sampling Slated on Rapid Creek,” *Rapid City Journal*, 2 Dec. 1963; “Pollution Study Report is Ready; Hearing to Come,” *Rapid City Journal*, 2 Apr. 1964.

treated and many municipal wastewater facilities were producing partially treated water or being bypassed altogether. The final report called sections of the creek “unwholesome and unfit for domestic use,” “unsafe as a source of public water supply,” and “harmful to fish and plant life.” City leaders were called to Pierre to testify in 1964.⁴⁵

Rapid City took steps to rectify these issues in the years that followed. Wastewater treatment and careful monitoring by various local, state, and federal agencies have helped maintain a safe supply of drinking water.⁴⁶ Yet concerns over water quality in Rapid Creek have not disappeared. As recently as 2018, a South Dakota Mines study found “that genes from potentially deadly forms of *E. coli* bacteria were present in significant numbers in Rapid Creek throughout and below Rapid City.”⁴⁷ In 2020, moreover, a national watershed advocacy group designated Rapid Creek one of the nation’s most endangered rivers due to the efforts of mining operations pursuing permits upstream from the city.⁴⁸

The ridgeline that runs on the north-south axis in Rapid City has also played a key role in the community’s development. It bisects Rapid Creek just west of downtown, in the heart of the Gap. The neighborhoods on the eastern face of this hogback are the oldest in town. The community expanded from downtown in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a mix of smaller, middle-income homes interspersed among towering, Victorian-style houses along West Boulevard.

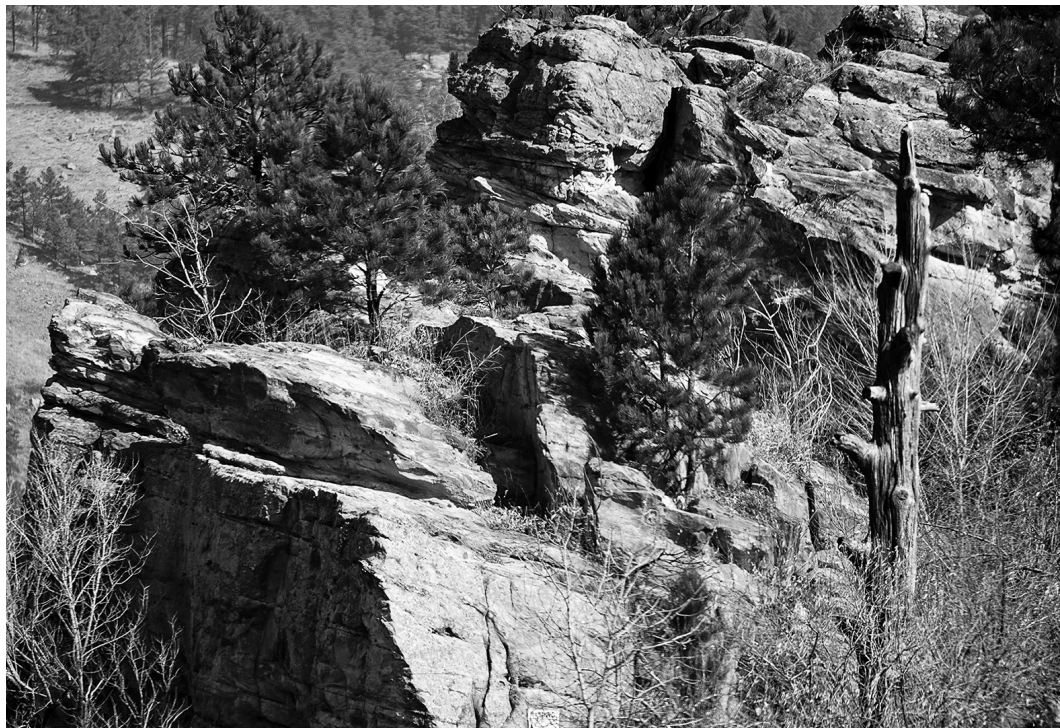
Hangman’s Hill illustrates the ridge’s prominent place in local history. In June 1877, a local man discovered three outsiders camping at the base of Cowboy Hill, near the creek. It was an era of violence and tension between Native and non-Native people. According to the au-

45. “Rapid Creek pollution Hearing Before State Committee Thursday,” *Rapid City Journal*, 3 June 1964. See South Dakota State Department of Health, “Report on Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek,” p. v.

46. J. S. Zogorski, E. M. Zogorski, and T. E. McKallip, “Sources and Summaries of Water-Quality Information for the Rapid Creek Basin, Western South Dakota,” U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 90-115 (Rapid City: U.S. Geological Survey, 1990).

47. Bart Pfankuch, “Studies Reveal Health Hazards in Big Sioux River, Rapid Creek,” *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 29 Aug. 2018.

48. Seth Tupper, “National Group Puts Rapid Creek on Endangered Rivers List,” *South Dakota Public Broadcasting*, 14 Apr. 2020.



Hangman's Tree, seen at the far right of this image, stands on the side of Skyline Drive. It serves as an ominous reminder of a violent incident in the area's early history.

thor Robert J. Casey, who tried to reconstruct the story in the 1940s, the man mistook the campers for Indigenous people and reported them to the sheriff. The officer quickly formed a posse who arrived at the men's campsite and found six horses tied to a tree. On the thin evidence that three men with six horses meant the men must be horse thieves, the sheriff had them arrested and imprisoned in a small, temporary jail-house east of town. Before the judge could arrive from Deadwood, a mob broke the men, one of whom was still a teenager, out of jail, hauled them to the top of Skyline Drive, and executed them on what came to be known as "Hangman's Tree."⁴⁹

49. Robert J. Casey, *The Black Hills and Their Incredible Characters* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1949), p. 32.

What began as an attempt at swift justice and a warning to would-be thieves ended up having a paradoxical effect on local memory. On one hand, the story of the hanging became part of the frontier lore of early Rapid City. In Casey's telling, residents preserved the site for decades after the event. City leaders even replaced the original, withering Hangman's Tree with another one to mark the site. Yet, over time, locals began to regret the incident. Many participants, Casey wrote, came to deny their involvement and other Hills towns viewed the incident as a stain on Rapid City's reputation. Still today, a Hangman's Tree (if not *the* Hangman's Tree), stands near the top of Skyline Drive, though it is on private property and inaccessible to members of the public.⁵⁰

Despite this early, violent incident, the Skyline Drive area was a place where early generations of residents and children hiked and played.⁵¹ Building on this legacy in the 1930s, the WPA undertook several enhancements to the area. Most notable was Skyline Drive itself, which the WPA completed in November 1935. The new road wound from the base of Hangman's Hill to the top of the ridgeline and connected with Highway 16 to the south. Winding up the new road in the 1930s, visitors passed a series of other projects underway, as well as a memorial to longtime Black Hills newspaper publisher Alice Gossage.⁵²

Dinosaur Park was another popular WPA project. Conceived to honor the legacy of C. C. O'Hara, a respected president of South Dakota Mines who passed away in early 1935, the park came to include a visitor's center and parking lot situated across from a large stone staircase that leads up to a series of walking paths. Once atop "Dinosaur Hill," visitors stroll around several large, concrete replicas of dinosaurs that once lived on what became the northern plains.⁵³

In addition to honoring O'Hara's legacy, local boosters saw the project as a way to deepen Rapid City's ties to the growing Black Hills tourism economy. By creating "one of the most unique, attractive and educational recreation spots anywhere to be found," wrote George Mans-

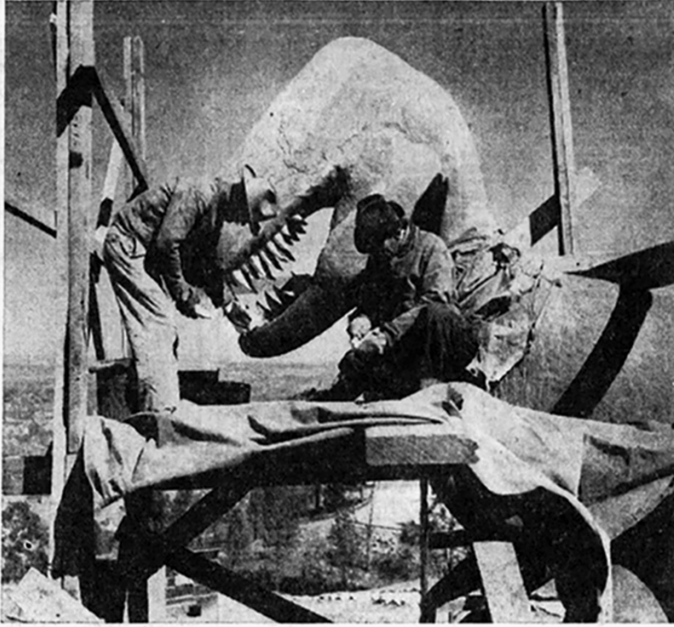
50. Ibid.

51. See Eric Steven Zimmer, *The Question is "Why?": Stanford M. Adelstein, A Jewish Life in South Dakota* (Rapid City: Vantage Point Press, 2019), pp. 51-57.

52. "Sky Line Drive To Be Completed," *Rapid City Journal*, 19 Nov. 1935. The Gossage monument was later moved to Halley Park in the Gap.

53. "Dr. C. C. O'Hara Passes Away at Home in Rapid," *Lead Daily Call*, 21 Feb. 1935.

Tyrannosaurus Rex At Last Given Set Of Teeth



The *Rapid City Journal* highlighted the construction of Dinosaur Park in its 23 April 1938 edition. The site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

field in 1936, the Skyline Drive and Dinosaur Park projects could attract visitors and “afford to the people of Rapid City a short pleasure drive for themselves and their friends,” all while providing much needed Depression-era relief.⁵⁴

Others saw Dinosaur Hill as a poor use of natural space and a waste of government resources. One man steamed in a letter to the *Rapid City Journal*: “We have Skyline Drive, a road which leads nowhere, accomplishes no useful purpose, which marches up a hill and marches down again. And now at a cost of \$24,000,” he complained, “we are to have a bevy of pink elephants in commemoration of our illustrious reptile

54. George Mansfield, “Letter to the Editor,” *Rapid City Journal*, 10 Mar. 1936.

dead.”⁵⁵ Despite this protest, the park was completed in 1938, part of a broader trend that saw the establishment of several dinosaur-themed parks across the United States.⁵⁶ Over the years, Dinosaur Park has made occasional appearances in national media and advertising campaigns. A Rapid City couple managed the visitor’s center until the late 1960s, when the city took over.⁵⁷

The Skyline Drive area included two other nature-themed attractions. First was the Skyline Fossil Forest, an admissions-only exhibit that displayed samples of petrified wood excavated from the hillside. In the 1960s, a fire destroyed the attraction, which the city’s chamber of commerce had managed.⁵⁸

A graduate of the South Dakota Mines civil engineering program designed another project in the area, an earthen stadium carved into a natural bend in a hillside overlooking a meadow that could serve as a stage. Some locals hoped that the amphitheater might host the Black Hills Passion Play, a popular reenactment of the Christian crucifixion story, which the town of Spearfish had hosted for years. The WPA cut terraced steps into the side of the hogback, which, though overgrown, remain visible today. Although the amphitheater did not host the large performances its designers had intended, its construction reflected the common midcentury marriage of work relief, landscape development, and support for the tourism economy.⁵⁹

In the decades after Skyline Drive and its amenities were built, Rapid City continued to grow. The top of the ridge was the logical place for several broadcast companies to situate their studio or communications towers, as it allowed them to use the altitude to transmit radio and television signals across a vast airspace. Independence Day fireworks

55. George S. Reeves, “Letter to the Editor,” *Rapid City Journal*, 6 Mar. 1936.

56. Ross J. Wilson, “Encountering Dinosaurs: Public History and Environmental Heritage,” *Public Historian* 42 (Nov. 2020): 126.

57. “Dinosaur Park, Rapid City,” The Living New Deal, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/dinosaur-park-rapid-city-sd/>. See for example “Stegosaurus with Sex Appeal,” *Dunkirk (N.Y.) Evening Observer* 15 June 1938; “Dakota Parks Trace History,” *San Antonio Express and News*, 22 Apr. 1962; “A Monster Emerges from the Mist,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 10 Sept. 1986; “OK, Big Smiles!,” *Chicago Tribune*, 17 Mar. 2002.

58. “Sky Line Drive To Be Completed,” *Rapid City Journal*, 19 Nov. 1935.

59. “The Amphitheater,” interpretive sign at Skyline Wilderness Area, installed by Troop 131 of the Boy Scouts.

blazed over the ridge each summer. Boy Scout Troops and the Jaycees held annual cleanup days. Recreating on and around Skyline Drive became a common part of life in Rapid City.⁶⁰

In the 1960s and 1970s, the community debated carving a tunnel through the base of the ridge to increase traffic flow between the east and west sides of town. Concerns over the impact to private property and area ecology halted these plans.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the quiet forests and stunning vistas made the Skyline area desirable for housing developments. As large homes filled the hillsides on both slopes of the ridge, a group of conservation advocates and outdoor enthusiasts began searching for ways to protect parts of the hillside from development. By the 1990s, an informal network of game trails had become popular routes for local hikers. As plans for further residential development began to take shape, a nonprofit group called Skyline Preservation, Inc., organized to protect the Skyline Wilderness Area in 1999. By 2005, the group held 105 acres on the eastern slope after the city passed on an opportunity to acquire the property. Working alongside other organizations like the Black Hills Mountain Bike Association, Skyline Preservation, Inc., developed trails and infrastructure while carrying out environmental mitigation techniques to use the land responsibly.⁶²

As the project progressed, some neighborhood residents were skeptical of increased public activity near their property. Other community members were confused by signage and rules and regulations about whether, for example, mountain bikes could be used in the Skyline Wilderness Area, since bicycles were prohibited in federally protected preserves like the Black Elk Wilderness in the Black Hills. Advocates worked through these issues and donated roughly 184 acres to the city around 2008.⁶³ Since then, multiple investments from the Rapid City Vision Fund have supported trail maintenance, wayfinding and sig-

60. "Final Plans Set for Fourth Fireworks Here," *Rapid City Journal*, 30 June 1948; "Jaycees, Boys Clubbers Clean Up Skyline Drive," *Rapid City Journal*, 4 Apr. 1965.

61. "Skyline Drive Ecology Must Be Part of Any Plans for a Road," *Rapid City Journal*, 26 Apr. 1970.

62. Dan Daly, "Skyline Wilderness Area a 'Hidden Treasure,'" *Rapid City Journal*, 30 July 2005.

63. John McLaughlin, "\$1.4m Skyline Wilderness Park Project Open for Bids," *Rapid City Journal*, 8 Jan. 2015; Drew Matthews, "City Poised to Accept Skyline Land Donation," *Rapid City Journal*, 2 Feb. 2017.

nage, and the construction of several parking lots and trailheads. In 2015, for example, an expansion added ten additional miles of trails and a new parking lot, as well as enhancements to existing parking and the lot at Dinosaur Park. The Skyline area remains a popular place to live, play, and enjoy the city's natural beauty.⁶⁴

Across the Gap, on the north bank of Rapid Creek, the ridgeline continues through the city. Like the hogback straddled by Skyline Drive, this ridge—known as Cowboy Hill—is a rocky outcropping of ponderosa pine, stone, and prairie meadows. For more than a century, it too has held a prominent place in local history.

Archaeological evidence and oral histories demonstrate the long-standing use of the creek bed and rocks at the base of Cowboy Hill going back thousands of years. Although the place likely had an Indigenous name—or perhaps several of them, used by different peoples at different moments in time—these monikers may be lost to history. In the 1870s, non-Native settlers founded Hay Camp at the bottom of the hill. There is no official account of how the hill came to be called “Cowboy Hill.” A 1926 story from the *Rapid City Journal*, however, lends the following explanation: “As everyone knows Rapid City used to be known as ‘Cow Town.’” As the “vast open ranges in every direction attracted cattlemen soon after the gold rush,” ranchers began to fill in the hinterland. When they came to Rapid City for supplies or entertainment, “the riders approaching the town from the northwest kept to the north side of the creek.” After setting camp there, many would head downtown to drink and revel. Townspeople could hear them rowdily shouting and firing guns into the air as they came and went downtown, and “in time the eminence became known as Cowboy Hill.”⁶⁵

As Rapid City transitioned from a rough cattle town to a bustling industrial and educational hub, Cowboy Hill took on new meaning. In 1912, a professor and a group of students at South Dakota Mines came up with the idea of painting a large “M,” for “Miners,” near the top of the hill as a publicity stunt and a display of school pride. For many decades, students climbed the hill with hand tools, sand, water, and whitewash

64. John McLaughlin, “\$1.4m Skyline Wilderness Park Project Open for Bids,” *Rapid City Journal*, 8 Jan. 2015; Daly, “Skyline Wilderness Area a ‘Hidden Treasure.’”

65. “How Kola,” *Rapid City Journal*, 19 Mar. 1926.

to brighten their school's emblem as part of its homecoming celebrations. Initially made of sandstone, the M was eventually reinforced by concrete. In the early years, students also doused it in kerosene and lit the M ablaze on "M-Day," allowing the flames to illuminate the night sky. In 1953, the students added smaller letters, "S" and "D," for "South Dakota," on either side of the M.⁶⁶

This annual ritual became an important city event. So much so, in fact, that when Cowboy Hill changed owners in the 1960s, and the new owner attempted to stop the students from climbing across his property, the State of South Dakota intervened to grant an easement to the crest of M Hill based on the site's historical significance and continued

66. See "Cowboy Hill Will Be Decorated with Big 'M' Which Means 'Miners,'" *Rapid City Journal*, 13 Oct. 1912; "Hardrockers Celebrate Homecoming with More Work on Big Concrete 'M,'" *Rapid City Journal*, 4 Oct. 1951; "Burn 'M,'" *Rapid City Journal*, 25 Oct. 1935. One article, which I believe to be erroneous, claims the "M" was created in 1911. See "High on Hill 'M' Draws Attention for 38th Year," *Rapid City Journal*, 6 Oct. 1949. South Dakota Mines was previously named the "Dakota School of Mines," and "South Dakota School of Mines."



This dam and substation along Rapid Creek, constructed at the base of Cowboy Hill in 1912, produced hydroelectric power for local industry.

use by students.⁶⁷ Later on, the South Dakota Mines Foundation acquired the parcel surrounding the M.⁶⁸

The Cowboy Hill area also played a significant role in Rapid City's early industrial development. Between 1908 and 1912, a group of entrepreneurs purchased the water rights along Rapid Creek at the base of Cowboy Hill. They constructed a flume along the creek to run enough water to power an early hydroelectric plant that helped electrify the community.⁶⁹ The area was also the location of a series of beef processing and meatpacking plants. The first, called Rapid City Packing Co., opened north of the creek in 1910. It changed hands several times but continued to process, pack, and ship meats from Rapid City until a fire destroyed the plant in 2002. At the time, the facility was owned by Federal Beef Processors and employed around four hundred workers.⁷⁰

A few years after the meat plant opened, in 1914, another pair of businessmen opened the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company. They ran a large lumberyard at the base of Cowboy Hill. For decades, the operation provided blue-collar jobs to white and Indigenous workers. Like the power company before it, Warren-Lamb invested heavily in a water flume in an effort to float logs efficiently from the central Black Hills down Rapid Creek to its plant. The scheme failed due to insufficient water flow, and the company relied on railroad transport instead. For decades, it harvested timber from in and around Custer State Park, along Slate Creek near Hill City, and other locations. The company appears to have closed in the 1930s but restarted its operations before going out of business in the 1960s.⁷¹

Cowboy Hill has also been part of the regional advertising and communications industries. Early retailers took advantage of the tall, sandstone cliffs facing the Gap to advertise their stores and wares. Like Skyline Drive, the top of the hill is home to radio towers, and in the 1960s, the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company installed a large aluminum reflector that helped bounce radio signals to the nearby town of Hermosa from the top of Cowboy Hill.⁷²

67. "School of Mines Retains Rights to Cowboy Hill," *Rapid City Journal*, 18 Oct. 1967.

68. "Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block," *Rapid City Journal*, 23 Aug. 2006.

69. Abrahamson and Zimmer, *Expanding the Energy Horizon*, pp. 44–48.

70. "Beef Plant, Founders Park Timeline," *Rapid City Journal*, 29 Jan. 2012.

71. Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, pp. 58–59.

72. "Cowboy Hill Again Plays Key Communications Roll," *Rapid City Journal*, 25 June 1966.



Facilities near Cowboy Hill, such as the one pictured here, processed timber from the Black Hills. The lumber industry thrived in the area from the 1910s to the 1960s.

These industrial pursuits touched on another piece of Rapid City's environmental history: air quality and fire. The caption to a 1937 aerial photograph of Rapid City calls out the Warren-Lamb smokestack for, as the author wrote, "belching a dark cloud of smoke" from its smokestack at the base of Cowboy Hill.⁷³ As late as the 1990s, meanwhile, the Federal Beef Processors factory faced complaints about the pungent, unpleasant smells that it emitted, and neighbors cautioned their children from playing near the creek when it ran red with blood from the plant.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, over the last century, numerous fires have broken out on Cowboy Hill, Skyline Drive, and elsewhere. Sometimes, these fires started after reckless hikers and campers failed to douse their flames. Other fires were started by industrial endeavors. In 2012, construction equipment touched off a wildfire that burned some 150 acres

73. "Bird's Eye View," *Rapid City Journal*, 10 July 1937.

74. "Beef Plant, Founders Park Timeline," *Rapid City Journal*, 29 Jan. 2012; "Rapid City Meatpacking Plant Burns," *Black Hills Pioneer*, 30 Jan. 2002. Darla Drew Lerdal, transcript of oral history conducted 22 Aug. 2020 by Eric John Abrahamson. Copy is in the author's possession.



The Schroeder Wildfire, the smoke from which is seen here, burned around 2,200 acres on the west side of Rapid City from 29 March to 5 April 2021. It destroyed multiple structures and forced five hundred residents to evacuate their homes.

on Cowboy Hill.⁷⁵ The ponderosa pines on Rapid City's ridgeline, meanwhile, have been threatened by a mountain pine beetle infestation that has killed around 430,000 acres of trees in the Black Hills National Forest since the mid-1990s.⁷⁶ Despite these threats, both hills have retained much of their forest cover.

The Cowboy Hill area has also been a popular place to hike and recreate. In the 1920s, for example, the local YMCA sponsored activities and games on Cowboy Hill and the surrounding area. By the end of the twentieth century, the hillside had also become a popular location for mountain biking, rock climbing, and bouldering.⁷⁷

75. "City Wildfire Offers Glimpse of Regeneration," *Rapid City Journal*, 1 May 2012.

76. "Mountain Pine Beetle," Black Hills National Forest, USDA Forest Service, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/blackhills/landmanagement/?cid=stelprdb5113978>; R. Keith Stewart and Carol A. Thilenius, "Black Hills Lakes and Streams: Stream and Lake Inventory and Classification in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1964," in South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, *Lake and Stream Classification Report* (1964), pp. 50–52.

77. "YMCA Boys Step Out in Hare and Hound Chase," *Rapid City Journal*, 21 Oct. 1920; "Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block," *Rapid City Journal*, 23 Aug. 2006.

Cowboy Hill remained private property until the early 2000s, when the hill and the surrounding area became known as Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park. Years before her death in 2004, Edna Marie “Eddie” Larsen, a South Dakota Mines graduate and longtime Hermosa resident, had established a trust to create a park to honor her parents’ memory. When Cowboy Hill went up for sale in 2006, the trustees of her estate acquired the three hundred acre property. Since 2008, Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park has operated as an independently funded, self-sustaining non-profit park that is open to the public. It includes over twenty miles of hiking and mountain biking trails and has become a popular spot for



A group of rock climbers rappel down a stone face on Cowboy Hill. Rapid City and the Black Hills have become extremely popular with the climbing community.

locals and visitors who travel to town for events like the Black Hills Fat Tire Festival, a mountain biking race, and other gatherings each year.⁷⁸

As Rapid City looks to the future, it faces many opportunities to integrate history and memory into its planning processes. After the 1972 flood, the community undertook an enormous preservation project that took two forms. First, by restricting construction in the flood zone, officials sought to preserve human lives by minimizing the chances of repeating that devastating tragedy. Second, the city chose not to replace the buildings that were lost. Instead, it designed a long, narrow greenway filled with parks, golf courses, bike paths, and outdoor recreational facilities. The greenway follows the creek from Cleghorn Springs in the west through the heart of Rapid City and towards the eastern prairie.⁷⁹

A half century later, Rapid City continues to grow. The U.S. Air Force recently announced the addition of a new squadron of B-21 stealth bombers in the mid-2020s. Meanwhile, the Black Hills saw an influx of new residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. If such growth continues, the community will undoubtedly need to expand its infrastructure, raising difficult decisions about open spaces and natural resources, how best to pursue an equitable pattern of growth, and how to integrate new residents into local life and culture.

In each of these arenas, historic preservation can serve as a resource to aid planning and preparation. It is a dynamic process that is as much about capturing and communicating community memory and values as it is about protecting aged structures. “Cities are dynamic organisms,” as one UNESCO pamphlet reads. “There is not a single ‘historic’ city in the world that has retained its ‘original’ character.” Instead, “the concept is a moving target, destined to change with society itself.”⁸⁰ The work of historic preservation is to plan for these changes carefully, intentionally, and with a view towards what is lost and gained through the process of keeping.

78. Visit Rapid City, “Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park,” accessed 20 Jan. 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvGlNe9-Mm8>. “Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block,” *Rapid City Journal*, 23 Aug. 2006; “Fat Tire Festival Rolls into Hills,” *Rapid City Journal*, 22 June 2014.

79. Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, p. 210–12.

80. UNESCO, “New Life for Historic Cities,” p. 24.

This article began on the asphalt trail that snakes along Rapid City's southern ridgeline. The opposite ridge, Cowboy Hill, is filled with recreational hiking and biking paths. Rapid Creek is a riverine trail that has connected the central Black Hills to the outside world for millennia. Trails are a popular and important way to connect with a place, and in so doing, become immersed in the landscape and its memory. The author Robert Moor recently observed that "pathways act as an essential guiding force on this planet. . . . Without trails, we would be lost."⁸¹ The same is true of history.

81. Robert Moor, *On Trails: An Exploration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), p. 2.

A Tale of Two Vermillion Carnegie Libraries

Evelyn Heymann Schlenker

In the early twentieth century, Vermillion was home to two Carnegie libraries. One, a public library, served the citizens of Vermillion and Clay County. The other, an academic library for the University of South Dakota (USD), was available to students and faculty. The community strongly supported both libraries and their mission to educate and enlighten the area's residents. Importantly, these iconic historic structures withstood the test of time and continue to contribute to the heritage of Vermillion and South Dakota.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Andrew Carnegie, an industrial titan who had made his fortune in steel, became a leading philanthropist. Carnegie's efforts included donating money for the construction of libraries in the United States. His belief in the transformative educational opportunities that public libraries provided stemmed from his experiences growing up in Scotland, where his father loaned his small book collection out to the family's less fortunate neighbors. The Carnegie Corporation gave over \$56 million to build public and academic libraries. Most of the 2,509 Carnegie libraries were constructed from 1890 to 1916.¹

The Carnegie Corporation helped establish a total of twenty-five public libraries and two academic libraries—one at USD and the other at Yankton College, now part of the federal prison system—in South Dakota. Currently, the Carnegie library building is located in the Yankton College Historic District.² Both Yankton and Vermillion also construct-

1. George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), pp. 3–23.

2. Susan L. Richards, "The Building of Carnegie Libraries in South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 20 (Spring 1990): 1–16. The Yankton Public Library was constructed in 1902. The building served as a library until 1973 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 (Yankton Carnegie Library, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 7 Aug. 1979, National Register Digital Assets, National Park Service, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/79002412>). Currently the building houses the Horn Law Office.

ed public libraries to provide patrons opportunities for education, community, and public events. Eight of the twenty-five original public Carnegie libraries constructed in South Dakota were demolished. Fourteen are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and three are located in a historic district. Only eight still function as libraries.³

To garner library building funds from the Carnegie Corporation, applicants had to fill out forms guaranteeing that their cities had populations greater than one thousand residents. The city also had to pledge to make an annual donation of 10 percent of the cost of the library for its upkeep. In addition, the location of the library had to be easily accessible to its patrons. Fees and donations would contribute to buying books, shelving, and furniture.⁴

James Bertram, the gatekeeper who reviewed the applications, served as Andrew Carnegie's secretary. Bertram was extremely selective about the building applications and letters of support he received from city officials and denied requests for various reasons. Sometimes he determined that a community's existing library was adequate, or that the building should be a state or historical society library. He also voted against libraries that required user subscriptions. In other cases, he deemed funds from local philanthropists adequate to construct a local library or claimed that the forms were not filled out properly. Bertram expected communities that met his approval to hire an architect knowledgeable about constructing Carnegie libraries and provided sample blueprints to help in this endeavor.⁵

Vermillion was one of many communities that sent applications for funding to Bertram. The city was founded in 1859 as a river town bounded by the Vermillion and Missouri rivers to the east and south and by

3. The Carnegie libraries in South Dakota listed on the National Register of Historic Places are located in Brookings, Dallas, Dell Rapids, Canton, Lake Andes, Milbank, Rapid City, Redfield, Sioux Falls, Sisseton, Tyndall, Vermillion, Watertown, and Yankton. The Carnegie libraries in Mitchell, Deadwood, and Hot Springs are located in a historic district. "South Dakota State Register of Historic Places," South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, <https://history.sd.gov/preservation/docs/SRHP.pdf>; Liz Almlie, in discussion with author, 8 Mar. 2021.

4. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries*, pp. 34–56.

5. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



Andrew Carnegie, pictured here in the late nineteenth century, was a leading industrialist and philanthropist. His corporation helped build thousands of libraries in the United States.

bluffs to the north.⁶ It soon became a thriving community of six hundred people.⁷ In 1881, disaster struck in the form of mass flooding and huge ice floes that destroyed three quarters of the town's buildings. Consequently, citizens quickly rebuilt, moving the town to higher ground on the bluffs. In 1882, as part of its revival, citizens decided to build the University of Dakota—which the territorial legislature had founded in 1862—with the first classes held in the county courthouse.⁸ By 1883, portions of University Hall officially opened, though the building was not fully completed until 1886.⁹ The architect was Wallace Dow, a prominent Sioux Falls builder. The building contained classrooms, a museum, and a library consisting of several reading rooms.¹⁰

In 1893, a massive fire consumed University Hall and destroyed the contents of the library, laboratories, offices, and the museum. A few students were injured, but no fatalities occurred. USD president Joseph A. Mauck, who led the school from 1891 to 1897, wrote an open letter to the students published in the school newspaper, the *Volante*. He stated that while University Hall was being rebuilt, classes would continue in other buildings without interruption. Mauck remarked that, “a University consists more in the spirit of the men and women who comprise it than in the buildings and other material equipment.”¹¹ Within a month of the fire, Vermillion residents had raised \$10,216.50 and Clay County issued bonds worth \$30,000 to rebuild, underscoring the community's significant support for the university.

The institution asked Dow to design a new University Hall building. In addition to changing the architectural design to a Georgian Revival style, he also incorporated parts of the old building. The exterior featured Sioux Falls rose granite with limestone accents. Dow also included some of the stone and other material from the Dakota Building—a

6. Herbert Schell, *Clay County: Chapters Out of The Past* (Vermillion: Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce, 1985).

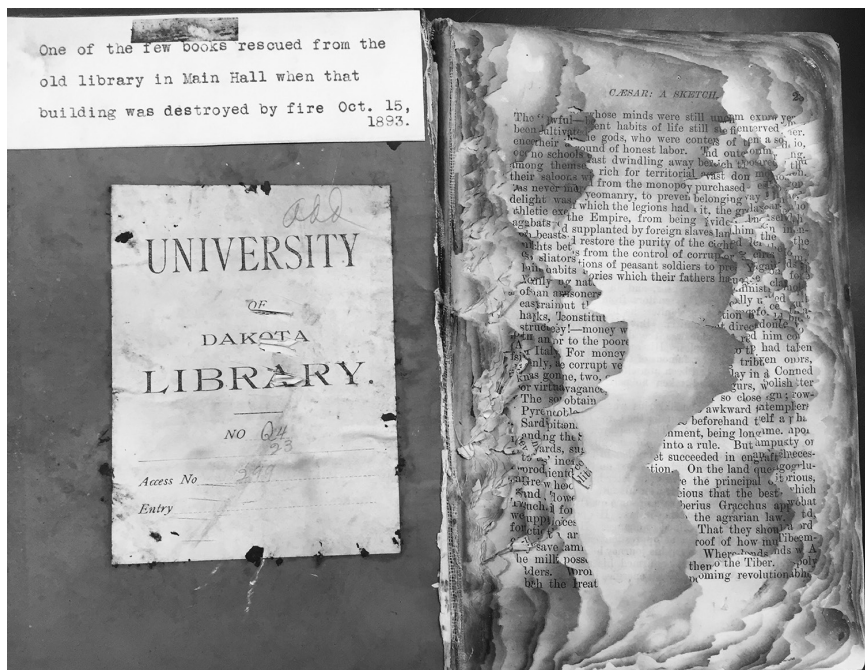
7. Works Progress Administration, *Vermillion, a Civic Picture: A Report on Municipal Government* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1942), p. 5.

8. Cedric C. Cummins, *The University of South Dakota, 1862–1966* (Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1975), pp. 3–16.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–25.

10. Jennifer Dumke, *W. L. Dow: The Architect Who Shaped Sioux Falls* (Charleston, S.Car.: History Press, 2013), pp. 105–7.

11. *Volante*, 13 Oct. 1993.



This book from the USD Library was destroyed in the 1893 fire that consumed the entire University Hall building.

temporary structure that he constructed for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago—into the exterior and interior designs. These additions came at a low price—Mauck purchased the Dakota Building for just seventy-six dollars. The new University Hall was finished in 1895 and contained reading rooms and a library.¹²

Less than ten years later, these library facilities proved inadequate. The student population had grown from 290 in 1895 to 458 in 1905. The populations of Vermillion and Clay County, meanwhile, increased to over 2,100 and 9,300 people, respectively. As of 1900, however, the public library consisted of a reading room in the city hall building. With the continued growth of the city and county, residents believed that constructing new libraries for the university and the general public was essential. USD president Garrett Droppers, who took over from Mauck

12. Dumke, W. L. Dow, pp. 107–11.

in 1899, and other local leaders believed they could raise enough funds for both projects.¹³

Another key player in developing these libraries was their architect, Joseph Schwarz. Born in New York City on 22 February 1858, Schwarz moved west with his family, first to La Crosse, Wisconsin, and then to Sioux Falls in 1881, where he lived until his death. His background in contracting and carpentry was in high demand in the rapidly growing city. Schwarz learned his trade through an apprenticeship, a common practice of the time. He worked as an architect across the Great Plains, including in South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa, from 1895 to 1924.¹⁴

After Schwarz passed away on 26 December 1927, his obituary lauded his excellent reputation as the designer of many prominent buildings in Sioux Falls and the surrounding area.¹⁵ His architectural accomplishments in the city included the Carpenter and Cataract Hotels, the Masonic Temple, the Cathedral School, the Congregational, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches, the Manchester Biscuit Company plant, and parts of Washington High School, as well as several residences. Additionally, Schwarz was responsible for designing county courthouses in Lyons and Moody counties in South Dakota, and in Rock Rapids, Iowa. Schwarz also designed the law and chemistry buildings at USD, in addition to the buildings he designed for Augustana College and Sioux Falls College. Many of his buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁶

Throughout much of his career, Schwarz's main professional competitor was Wallace Dow. Dow had arrived in Sioux Falls first and had the additional advantage of being Anglo-American, Protestant, and connected with prominent politicians and businessmen in the Republican-dominated territory. By contrast, Schwarz, a Catholic and a Democrat, was an outsider. One of the greatest competitions between

13. WPA, *Vermillion, a Civic Picture*, p. 11.

14. Michael Bedeau, "Joseph Schwarz," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wisheart, <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.arc.042>.

15. *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 28 Dec. 1927.

16. "Joseph Schwarz (Architect)," *People Pill*, <https://peoplepill.com/people/joseph-schwarz-1>.

the two architects was the bid for the Minnehaha County Courthouse (now the Courthouse Museum) in 1890. Dow won the contract with a bid of \$80,000, whereas Schwarz bid \$100,000. The building cost \$100,000 to construct. After Dow retired in 1905, Schwarz's firm obtained many public commissions for academic and civic buildings as the population of the northern plains continued to grow.¹⁷

Efforts to build a new public library in Vermillion began in 1902. A petition signed by 397 Vermillion voters requested that the city levy taxes amounting to \$2 million to purchase books and \$3 million to purchase a site to house the proposed library. The Vermillion Public Library Association was formed to secure the funds to pay for the site, building materials, and labor. In January 1903, Vermillion agreed to appropriate \$1,000 annually to support the library. By 6 April 1903, the city council passed a resolution to form a building committee of seven prominent citizens to oversee the construction of the Vermillion Public Library.¹⁸

The committee agreed upon lots eleven and twelve of block twenty-six near downtown Vermillion as the location of the library. By July 1903, almost all of the \$1,185 needed to purchase the lots had been raised. Vermillion agreed to pay the \$1,000 stipulated by the Carnegie Corporation by 21 September 1903. The committee selected Schwarz as the architect for the project. If there were other applicants for the contract, it is not clear from either the Vermillion City Council or Vermillion Library Board minutes. Construction on the building began in 1903. It was open to the public by April 1904.¹⁹

The first floor of the library is raised off street level above a half-story basement. The brick building has a Sioux Falls granite facade outlining the basement windows. The central entrance bay projects into a portico beyond the front facade with a recessed door flanked by two Ionic stone columns. The main body of the building is approximately 40 by 59 feet. A metal, octagonal dome above the lobby contains a skylight. Windows in the front of the building are composed in three bays; the

17. Dumke, W. L. *Dow*, pp. 75–76.

18. Vermillion City Council (VCC) meeting minutes, 4 Aug. 1902, 15 Jan. 1903, Vermillion City Hall. The building committee included L. T. Sweezy, J. L. Jolley, C. E. Prentis, Garrett Droppers, E. C. Barton, C. J. Gunderson, and A. Helgeson.

19. VCC meeting minutes, 6 July 1903; Stephen K. Ward, *Women and Wine: The Making of the Vermillion Public Library in a Man's World* (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, 2004), p. 29.



The Cataract Hotel was rebuilt for the fourth time in 1901. Joseph Schwarz designed this version of the Sioux Falls landmark.

side bays contain two windows each. At the rear of the building, a large, three-part window illuminates the stack room. The Neoclassical style of this building was common in many Carnegie libraries in the United States.²⁰ No photographs of the interior of the building when it served as a library exist.

The library board struggled to maintain the integrity of the building throughout the early twentieth century. The necessary repairs included fixing the roof, shoring up the floors as the weight of the additional book stacks increased, installing a drinking fountain, and laying down a cork carpet to reduce the noise that the children's library in the basement produced. In addition, new entrances were constructed on the south and east sides of the building. The funds to support the library primarily came from the city, with additional monies coming from private donations. Moreover, since both citizens of Vermillion and elsewhere in Clay County used the facility, the library board re-

20. Van Slyck, *Free to All*, pp. 38-39.

quested funds from the county commissioners, who first granted them in 1926.²¹

Beginning in 1924, the library board frequently mentioned the need to enlarge the building due to population growth. Although no expansion materialized at that time, the group established a building fund. In 1935, the board contacted the Works Progress Administration (WPA) about the possibility of constructing a new addition. On 1 July 1936, Harold Benedict Gotaas, a city engineer and USD faculty member, designed a blueprint for the expansion. In August 1936, M. L. Chaney, chairman of the library board, presented these plans to the city council. The city used these plans to apply for WPA funding, with the provision that the city furnish the materials and the WPA cover the labor costs.²²

The possibility of expanding the library did not resurface again in board discussions until 1958. By 1974, the Vermillion Library Board chose Bob Carmack, dean of USD Libraries and a city council appointee, as the head of a committee to investigate the construction of a new building. It was not until 1977 that the city accrued adequate funds to build a new library.

The new library was located directly south of the old building. Some of the furnishings and most of books from the old library were moved into the new structure. On 19 October 1978, Linda Hurd, in an article in the *Vermillion Plain Talk*, noted that the “Diamond Jubilee” of the Vermillion Public Library would be celebrated two days later at 4:00 p.m. The article cited excerpts from Vermillion Library Board of Trustees meeting minutes to highlight changes to the building, such as accidental damage to the glass dome.²³

The fate of the old building was a tricky question. In 1977, Sara Engelhardt, representing the Carnegie Corporation, wrote to library director Robert Precoda and explained that the Carnegie building could be used for other purposes. Engelhardt concluded her letter as follows, “Neither Mr. Carnegie’s heirs nor the Carnegie Corporation has any legal standing in the issue of what becomes of the original library buildings. The

21. Interview with Fern Kaufman, former librarian at the Carnegie Vermillion Public Library, 8 Sep. 2019.

22. Vermillion Library Board (VLB) meeting minutes, 3 Aug. 1924, 29 Oct. 1935; VCC meeting minutes, 3 Aug. 1936.

23. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 19 Oct. 1978.

gift was made to the town of Vermillion which provided a site and operating support for the library. All conditions for the gift were made. It is up to the town as to how the building should now be used.”²⁴ To gather public input regarding the fate of the old library, the city placed an advertisement in the 12 October 1978 issue of the *Vermillion Plain Talk*.²⁵

During a city council meeting later that month, several organizations expressed interest in the building.²⁶ The Teen Center and the Vermillion Area Arts Council (VAAC) both desired to use the space. Alderman Paul Hasse suggested that instead of selling the land or the building, the city should rent it to cover maintenance costs. By contrast, Alderwoman Judith Krueger reported that the library board wanted to sell both the land and building and use the proceeds to help fund the new library.

24. Sara Engelhardt to Robert Precoda, 12 July 1977, Vermillion Library Archives.

25. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 12 Oct. 1978.

26. VCC meeting minutes, 16 Oct. 1978.



This photograph shows the former Vermillion Public Library building as it currently appears. Law offices now rent the building.

The council eventually passed a motion to allow the Teen Center and the VAAC to rent the building. On 6 November 1978, Kris Bowers, the VAAC's treasurer, mentioned that the old library should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.²⁷

Less than a year later, Larry Nelson proposed that his law firm—Mimick, Nelson and McCulloch—lease the building. A lease agreement between the firm and the city was confirmed by 5 July 1979. The five year agreement stipulated that rent would be \$350 per month, which included \$150 in cash and \$200 that could be used to improve the building. The city was obligated to make certain repairs, while the firm paid for utilities. Finally, the firm was allowed to sublet space in the building and had the right to be the first entity to renew the lease.²⁸

Shortly after this agreement was reached, Tom Vogel, chair of the Clay County Commission and an accountant, sued the City of Vermillion and the firm, stating that the lease agreement was illegal and violated several sections of state law.²⁹ Vogel charged that the city did not call for or advertise bids for the building or allow a lease contract. Eventually, it came to light that Vogel wanted to buy the building to install his own accounting business. The suits brought by Vogel against the city and the firm ultimately failed.³⁰

By 1980, the firm was in the midst of improving the old Carnegie library. A group of the company's staff and their friends worked to renovate the building, completing an estimated "350 hours of work." Their labor included replastering the upstairs, replacing the front door, repainting the interior of the building, and removing paint and residue from the woodwork. Other renovations included "replacing missing textured glass dividers between the foyer and other sections of the building, structural maintenance of the basement and replacing the floor in the north wing with a historically suitable covering."³¹

City officials and residents have always appreciated the historical significance of the old library building. In 1982, the building was part of the Clay County Historic Survey. The building was added to the Nation-

27. *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1978.

28. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1979.

29. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 16 Aug. 1979.

30. VCC meeting minutes, 7 Apr. 1980.

31. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 7 Feb. 1980.

al Register of Historic Places on 18 August 1983.³² At present, the city of Vermillion owns the library building and leases it to James McCulloch, who houses his law office there.³³ The building retains its historic significance and contributes to the history and culture of Vermillion. Its historic status gives the city added impetus to preserve the building.

The effort to construct a Carnegie Library on USD's campus faced more challenges than the campaign to build the public library. In the early twentieth century, USD president Garrett Droppers had adamantly promoted building both libraries. In his correspondence with the Carnegie Corporation, he even suggested that the organization grant funds for the university library first. The relationship between Droppers and Carnegie's secretary James Bertram, however, was testy, as their correspondence makes clear.³⁴ Further, Droppers did not have the authority to ask for either library to be built because he was not the mayor. He also lacked the backing of the South Dakota Board of Regents, which had to agree to provide the 10 percent annual contribution for library maintenance. The failure of his appeal may have been related to any of these factors.³⁵

According to historian Herbert Schell, Droppers was an excellent teacher, well-liked by faculty and students. He was also instrumental in the development of the university's law and music schools and set the stage for the formation of its schools of business, engineering, and medicine.³⁶ During his tenure as president, however, Droppers did not fit into the social and political environment of Vermillion. He often shared his left-leaning political opinions in local newspapers. Although the state was generally politically progressive at the time, Droppers was seen as a radical socialist. Moreover, Droppers was a Unitarian. His

32. An article in the *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 12 Oct. 1983, announced the building's National Register designation along with that of the Clay County Courthouse.

33. Interview with James E. McCullough, 19 Aug. 2019. More recently the basement windows were boarded to prevent vandalism. According to McCulloch, water damage to the basement from a malfunctioning sprinkler system associated with the new library extension still needs repair.

34. Ward, *Women and Wine*, pp. 18–23.

35. "Ninth Biennial Report of the Board of Regents of the State of South Dakota to the Governor" (1907), pp. 301–2, Public Documents of the State of South Dakota, USD Archives and Special Collections.

36. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 26 Feb. 1980.



Garrett Droppers served as USD president from 1899 to 1906. He encountered resistance to his effort to build a Carnegie library on campus from James Bertram, the official in charge of distributing funds for such projects.

association with this liberal Protestant denomination stood in contrast with the town's predominantly conservative churchgoers. In addition, countering the strong, pervasive temperance movement of the era, he served wine at receptions in his home. Thus, he made enemies of individuals like Elias Willey, editor of the *Dakota Republican* newspaper, Vermillion mayor W. C. Bryant, and prominent businessmen M. D.

Thompson and Darwin Inman. This turmoil created such tension that three clergymen and the aforementioned men petitioned Governor Charles Herreid to relieve Droppers from his position in 1903. Yet due to extraordinarily strong support from faculty and students, as well as the baseless nature of the accusations, Droppers remained president.³⁷ Droppers eventually resigned his position in 1906 and went on to teach economics at the University of Chicago and Williams College. He was later appointed minister to Greece by U.S. president Woodrow Wilson.³⁸

Although Droppers's effort failed, he laid the groundwork to obtain a Carnegie library for the university. On 6 February 1909, Franklin Gault, president of USD from 1906 to 1913, attempted to increase Carnegie Corporation funding for the university library from \$30,000 to \$40,000, but met resistance from Bertram. A few days later, Bertram reminded Gault that the original amount agreed on in 1906 was \$30,000 and the board of regents had not pledged funds for maintenance.³⁹

Gault responded to Bertram on 19 February 1909 by outlining the need for the increased dollar request. He claimed that the change reflected the cost of building materials, a larger student body, an inadequate current library, and the increased willingness of the board of regents to provide the maintenance fee. In addition, more money was available to purchase library books. By 2 March 1909, however, the funds were still not granted. It was not until 21 January 1910 that Bertram approved \$40,000 of Carnegie funds for the structure. By then, the building had finally gained the support of the state legislature and the board of regents through a joint resolution.⁴⁰

The proposed location for the Carnegie library was the southwest corner of the campus. Architect Joseph Schwarz's plans for the two-story library with a basement illustrate his careful attention to detail.⁴¹ In 1910, USD secretary C. A. Sloan put advertisements for contractors in

37. Cummins, *University of South Dakota*, pp. 70–74.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

39. Untitled document, Box 1, President Gault Files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

40. E. C. Ericson to James Bertram, undated letter, Box 1, President Gault files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

41. Untitled document, Box 1, President Gault Files, USD Archives and Special Collections.



The USD library was rebuilt in 1911. By the 1930s, it needed additional renovations to accommodate a larger student population.

the *Improvement Bulletin*. The estimates for building costs included train cars of cut stone, brick, lumber, and other components, in addition to labor.⁴² The new library was finished in 1911. A picture of the building indicates its unique architectural characteristics, including the Indiana Bedford limestone exterior. The central entrance bay projects into a portico beyond the front facade, with a recessed door flanked by two Ionic stone columns on each side. Light entered the library through many large windows on four sides of the building, as well as basement windows and a skylight. Entrance to the building on the south was via a flight of stairs.

Sketches by library director Ruth Bergman from 1930 provide views of the building's interior. The basement was used to prepare books and store unbound government documents. Heating and plumbing facilities were located on the northeast corner of the basement, as was the janitor's room. The first floor was dedicated to reading rooms, book and periodical stacks, a card catalog, and a station for checking out books.

42. "Bill of components needed to build the University Carnegie Library Building," File 5, Box 2, Charles Sloan files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

The second floor contained stacks for periodicals and newspapers. A few reading tables were available on this floor. For several years, the northeast section of the second floor also housed the university's art department.⁴³

By 1936, student enrollment at USD reached about nine hundred. President I. D. Weeks, who served from 1933 to 1966, considered constructing an addition to the old Carnegie library a priority.⁴⁴ An initial application to the Public Works Administration (PWA), a New Deal program that helped fund public works projects during the Great Depression, was rejected. In 1939, the board of regents gave Weeks full approval to move forward with the project, but stipulated that the state would not pay for the project. With greater support from the regents, the PWA accepted Weeks's second application. The regents then passed a resolution to approve the PWA funding.⁴⁵ That money combined with student fees collected for the University Library Revenue Fund (\$7.00 per year and \$1.00 for the summer) covered maintenance costs for the building.⁴⁶ Hugill and Blatherwick Architects of Sioux Falls were selected to design the addition. The firm, founded by George C. Hugill and Wilfred F. Blatherwick in 1921, designed many structures in South Dakota that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁷

The addition doubled the size of the building. Like the old library, builders used Indiana Bedford limestone.⁴⁸ Construction, however, faced delays, including a two-month draftsmen strike at the Indiana Limestone Corporation. The net result was that the board of regents, as well as the PWA, had to consent to allow the project to move forward several times. Though correspondence about the delays was heated at times, the builders eventually finished and the new University Library was dedicated on 10 October 1940.

43. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 10 Aug. 1967.

44. Cummins, *University of South Dakota*, p. 312.

45. Untitled document, File 7, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

46. Cummings, *University of South Dakota*, pp. 215–16.

47. "South Dakota Architects: W. F. Blatherwick, C. V. Booth, R. H. Booth," *History in South Dakota* (blog), 12 Sept. 2017, <https://historysouthdakota.wordpress.com/2017/09/12/south-dakota-architects-w-f-blatherwick-c-v-booth-r-h-booth/>.

48. John Keller to State Board of Regents and President Weeks, 1 Aug. 1939, File 13, Box 29, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

Dedicatory Exercises

for the
University of South Dakota Library
Thursday, October 10, 4:30 p. m.
on the Library Lawn

President I. D. Weeks Presiding

Dedicatory address

Charles H. Brown, Librarian of Iowa State College, and President-Elect of the American Library Association.

Presentation of Building

D. R. Kemmicott, Regional Director for Federal Public Works Administration.

Acceptance of Building

Hon. E. M. Mumford, President of Board of Regents.
President Weeks.

Address

Mrs. E. R. Doering, Secretary of Board of Regents.

Tour of Building

5:00-6:00 p. m.

The dedication of the expanded USD library on 10 October 1940 was a major event, as the program seen here suggests. President I. D. Weeks was a key player in completing the renovation.

By 1966, USD's enrollment had climbed to four thousand students, and the campus needed a larger library.⁴⁹ The university faced the question of what to do with the Carnegie building once the new library was complete. The old library ultimately became a different type of educational institution: a museum. Weeks and the board of regents first suggested that the vacated Carnegie building would be an excellent facility to house the extensive W. H. Over Museum collections that occupied space in the basement of Slagle Hall. Founded in 1883 as the University Museum, the museum was named after longtime director William Henry Over in 1948.⁵⁰ It contained cultural and natural history artifacts that were integral to the university's educational and research missions. The need for additional offices in Slagle Hall pushed the ad-

49. Cummings, *University of South Dakota*, p. 312.

50. Otto Neuhaus, "A Seed on Fertile Ground," *South Dakota Magazine* (May/June 2000), <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/a-seed-on-fertile-ground>.

ministration to move the museum to a new location.⁵¹ Before the move took place, however, Weeks had to garner support from the regents.

Funds to convert the library into a museum came from the board of regents and several private donors. Carl A. Norgen, a prominent supporter of the museum, donated \$100,000 toward the conversion and to develop natural history exhibits. In addition, in 1966, James H. Howard, the museum's director, wrote a two-page letter to the USD faculty entitled "Statement on Museum Policy" that detailed the mission, activities, and goals of the institution in its new home. He also encouraged the faculty to present suggestions to plan, develop, and produce an updated museum.⁵²

The W. H. Over Museum was not the only occupant of the Carnegie building. In 1967, Arne Larson, who the USD School of Music hired the previous year, was given room 104 of the old library for teaching and rehearsing material from the Golden Age of Bands, spanning from 1860 to 1915. The room also allowed him to display a portion of historic instruments from his collection of about 2,500 instruments that were housed in Old Main.⁵³

The Carnegie building was also home to prominent Yanktonai Dakota artist and university professor Oscar Howe, who worked at USD from 1951 to 1980. He also served as assistant director of the W. H. Over Museum, developing exhibits on subjects such as the Battle of Slim Buttes, which is still on display. With a gallery and studio on-site, he contributed several art pieces to the museum. The Old Main building on the USD campus currently houses a gallery dedicated to Howe's artwork, which moved out from the Carnegie building when Larson's collection of musical instruments grew.⁵⁴

51. Untitled document, File 8, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

52. Untitled document, File 9, Box 108, I. D. Weeks files, USD Archives and Special Collections.

53. *Volante*, 21 Feb. 1967. For his extensive and excellent work in promoting music in South Dakota, Professor Arne Larson was inducted into South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1979 ("Champion of Excellence: Arne Larson," South Dakota Hall of Fame, https://sdexcellence.org/Arne_Larson_1979).

54. Oscar Howe, *Oscar Howe, Artist: Paintings and Commentaries by Oscar Howe* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1974). Oscar Howe was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1979 ("Champion of Excellence: Oscar Howe," South Dakota Hall of Fame, https://sdexcellence.org/Oscar_Howe_1979).



Oscar Howe instructs students in one of his art classes at USD in 1967. Howe was an influential painter who worked in the tradition of northern plains Indian art.

Several considerations determined the fate of the old library building. The first was the 1973 passage of Executive Order 73-1, whereby the university and board of regents gave ownership of the W. H. Over Museum collections—but not the Carnegie building itself—to the state's newly created Office of Cultural Preservation.⁵⁵ In a significant shift, a museum run by USD since 1883 was now managed by the state of South Dakota.

Another decisive factor was Arne Larson's growing collection of musical instruments. In 1973, André B. Larson, Arne Larson's son, used his father's collection to found the Shrine to Music Museum and the

55. South Dakota Executive Order no. 73-1, Forty-Eighth Legislative assembly (1973), Section 254.

Center for the Study of the History of Musical Instruments at USD. As these holdings grew, the Shrine obtained several more rooms to develop display galleries. André B. Larson continued collecting world-class instruments, sheet music, and ephemera that required more space for exhibition, curation, and conservation.⁵⁶ He received collections of instruments from a variety of time periods and from countries all over the world. In 1979, Arne Larson donated his entire collection to USD. The following year, a new conservation laboratory was constructed in the Carnegie building's basement.⁵⁷

By the early 1980s, USD president Joseph McFadden, who was on the Shrine's board of trustees, strongly supported the expansion of the Shrine and suggested that the W. H. Over Museum find another home. He argued that the Over was no longer under the control of the uni-

56. John Koster, "André Larson (1942–2017): A Memorial Portrait," *Galpin Society Journal* 71 (Mar. 2018): 279–83.

57. Newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS), Oct. 1980.



Arne Larson (left) and James Howard (right) stand in front of the entrance of the Carnegie library building on USD's campus. At the time, the building housed both the Shrine to Music Museum and the W. H. Over Museum.

versity according to Executive Order 73-1, while the Shrine was part of USD. Initially, McFadden suggested that the Over occupy several buildings on the USD campus—Old Main, Old Armory, and the Old Law School Library—as well as the National Bank building in Vermillion and the Mead building in Yankton. None of these sites were considered suitable to house the Over’s collections and exhibits. Old Main, for instance, had been condemned since the early 1970s. In 1984, the W. H. Over Museum moved out of the Carnegie building. The museum’s new building on campus opened four years later.⁵⁸

After the Shrine took over the entire Carnegie building, major renovation projects commenced, including the installation of new exhibit galleries and an elevator to improve accessibility. Other improvements included a new heating and cooling system and increased storage space for instruments. By 1985, the new elevator was in place and several of the windows in the building were replaced either by brick and limestone or special glass to decrease the corrosive activity of sunlight on the instruments.

Additional improvements to the building occurred over the years. For example, in 2004, the building—renamed the National Music Museum (NMM) in 2002—had a new roof installed and was tuck-pointed, meaning that new mortar was added. Shortly afterward, the museum’s board of trustees considered renovating and expanding the building. In 2017, the NMM received approval to construct a three-level addition and renovate the older building to improve accessibility, increase the number of exhibit galleries, enlarge and update the concert area, and increase conservation and storage space.⁵⁹ Funds for this major project came from donors, the board of regents, the NMM’s board of trustees, USD, and the city. On 7 October 2018, the NMM was officially closed for renovation. It is set to fully reopen in 2022.⁶⁰

The renovations will increase exhibit and storage space and provide a new acoustically enhanced venue for musical performances. A recent tour of the facility indicates the care taken to maintain and respect the integral architectural characteristics of the Carnegie building and to

58. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 20 Mar. 1980; Julius Fishburne, “Presentation to the USD Planning Committee and Dr. McFadden,” 9 Feb. 1983, W. H. Over Museum Archives, USD.

59. *Vermillion Plain Talk*, 6 Apr. 2018.

60. *Ibid.*, 30 July 2021.



This modern-day photo of the National Music Museum demonstrates how much the original Carnegie library building has been altered.

enhance the accessibility of the NMM with the new wing. In addition, in the fall of 2019, the NMM's new off-site Preservation and Research Center opened, increasing storage space for instruments and research capacity for museum staffers and patrons.⁶¹

The two Carnegie library buildings in Vermillion have a long history of furthering the education of the community and garnering support from patrons and donors, including USD, the board of regents, the city and state governments, the NMM's board of trustees, and many selfless individuals. Built in the early twentieth century, both structures helped educate patrons for several decades before coming to serve a wide range of purposes, from law offices to museums.

61. National Music Museum Newsletter, Fall 2019.

Historical Musings

Astronomy on Fire: The Story of the Dakota Wesleyan Observatory

Michael N. Farney

The ancient Greeks believed that the goddess Urania ruled the stars. Today, few South Dakotans even know her name.¹ This oversight exists despite the efforts of several leaders at Dakota Wesleyan University (DWU) in Mitchell, where I now teach astronomy. These key figures endeavored to spread knowledge of the stars by building an observatory on campus in the late nineteenth century. Twenty-five years before my birth, however, students at the school destroyed that facility and sent it up in flames.

According to legend, on 24 February 1920, Herbert Emery, a history major known as a “deep thinker,” set the Dakota Wesleyan Observatory on fire. He committed this arson while his classmates cheered.² In the light of the inferno, students whooped for joy, though Levi Asa Stout, the school’s former president, may have had the greatest reason to celebrate. At the time of the fire, Stout taught Greek, math, and astronomy at DWU; in this last capacity he served Urania well, tracking the stars across the northern plains.³ How and why the university set out to pursue that knowledge in the first place forms the essence of this story.

I thank Laurie Langland, the archivist for Dakota Wesleyan University; her labors are evident in every paragraph. Associate Professor of Mathematics Joan Lubben constantly corrected the original manuscript and photographed the observatory as it now stands. Kyle Herges, an associate professor in the Department of Digital Media and Design, contributed his time and drone to take photographs of the Dakota Wesleyan Observatory from above.

1. *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, trans. Evelyn White (London: William Heinemann, 1914), pp. 75, 346. Urania’s legend begins with Homer and Hesiod. She is one of the nine daughters of Zeus and a great granddaughter of Uranus, the Titan who embodied the sky.

2. *Dakota Wesleyan University 1921 Tumbleweed*, p. 42. See also *Mitchell Morning Republican*, 26 Feb. 1920; *Mitchell Evening Republican*, 26 Feb. 1920; James D. McLaird, *The Dakota Wesleyan Memory Book 1885–2010* (Mitchell: Dakota Wesleyan University, 2010), p. 42.

3. *Second Biennial Catalogue of the Dakota University, Mitchell South Dakota, 1887–89* (Mitchell: Mitchell Printing Company, 1889), p. 6; *Catalogue Dakota University, 1895* (Mitch-

Two men rose to rescue Dakota University (DU)—as DWU was known until 1904—from the Panic of 1893. The university's board of trustees made Stout the acting college president, hoping he could use his skills as a linguist to garner much needed donations. When he failed to do so,

ell: Dakota Wesleyan University, 1896), p. 4; *Third Biennial Catalogue of the Dakota University, Mitchell South Dakota, 1889-91* (Mitchell: Mitchell Printing Company, 1891), p. 27. Stout's service to Urania lasted nearly his whole professional life. An astronomy class that includes surveying first appears in the aforementioned college catalog. He taught astronomy until he died, around thirty-seven years later.



Levi Asa Stout was an instrumental figure in DWU's history. He served as president and taught astronomy, among other subjects.

the directors replaced him with William Graham, a salesman. Graham's eulogy three decades later speaks to his lasting impact: "When Dr. Graham was born, the genii hovered over his cradle and kissed the mark of genius onto his brow; when he died, the seraphim hovered over his bier and wafted his soul into realms of eternal joy."⁴

While Graham schmoozed donors at DU, to the south, rival Yankton College used donor funds to pursue the stars. The Mitchell newspaper reported that at the time of its purchase in 1888, Yankton's observatory telescope was valued at \$15,000, or \$250,000 in today's dollars. In 1894, the college spent \$2,800 on a new brick observatory to house the state-of-the-art Warner and Swasey refracting telescope. The instrument boasted a seven-inch lens. Yankton's brick building and dome were the envy of other colleges, as was its spectacular telescope. Archelaus Cummins Dakin, who was a foreman for a carpet mill machine shop in Clinton, Massachusetts, a patent holder, and a bank director, provided the telescope. He purchased the instrument for his personal use and later sold it to Yankton College for \$1,600, in line with the catalog prices of the day. Since Graham was unable to secure a similar deal, he crafted an artful piece of salesmanship to compete with Yankton.⁵

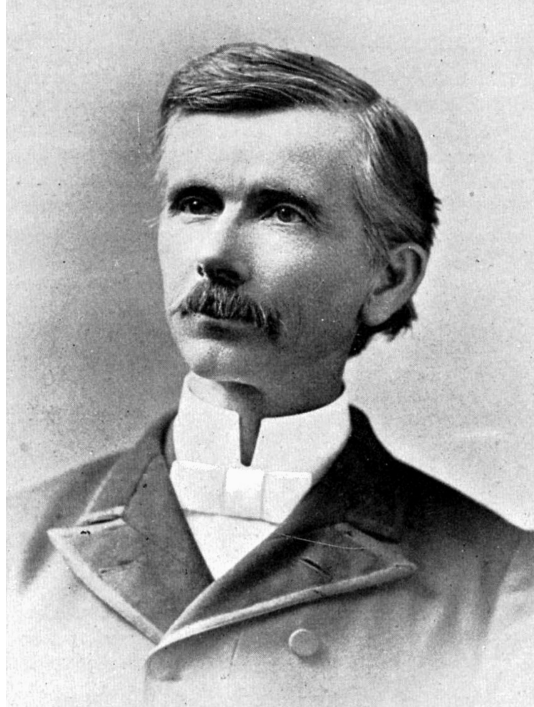
Who could blame him? A major responsibility of college presidents is to fundraise, balance budgets, and implement new projects. For Graham, the job was especially hard, since most South Dakota residents lacked well-established, generational wealth. To impress donors, he had to work diligently and accept any funds he received. Graham's efforts to procure and promote a telescope for DU provide a textbook case of how colleges expand their campus and reputation.

Though he was no sideshow huckster, Graham somewhat resembled

4. O. W. Coursey, *A History of Dakota Wesleyan University for Fifty Years (1885-1935)* (Mitchell: Dakota Wesleyan University, 1935), pp. 61-69.

5. *Mitchell Daily Republican*, 3 Sept. 1888; "Before Sputnik And NASA, Yanktonians Explored The Cosmos," *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 17 Mar. 2003; William John McMurttry, "Yankton College: A Historical Sketch," (master's thesis, Yankton College, 1907), p. 87; Andrew E. Ford, *The Origin of the Town of Clinton Massachusetts 1653-1865* (Clinton, Mass.: Press of W. J. Coulter, 1866); *Catalogue Optical, Physical, Astrophysical and Astronomical Instruments* (Pittsburgh: Johan B. Brashear Co., 1905), pp. 12-13. This catalogue lists a Warner and Swasey six-inch scope at \$1,590 and an eight-inch version at \$3,400. The \$1,600 cost falls within that bracket, which Graham may have known. Edward L. Clarke of Howard, South Dakota, donated the funds to build the observatory in memory of his father.

As president of the university, William Graham led the fundraising campaign for the observatory project.



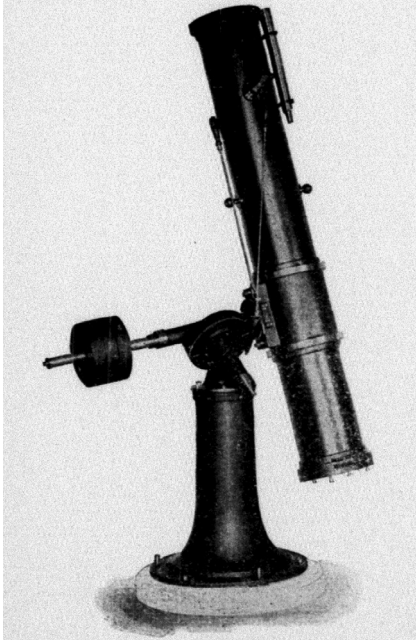
one. On 13 June 1898, a lecturer drew crowds to Mitchell. After the presentation, Graham took the stage and appealed to the audience for funds to purchase a telescope. To ease the fiscal burden, he asked Mitchell High School to share the costs. As the *Pierre Capital Journal* reported, “He did not entertain any idea but what the project could be carried to a successful conclusion and would be ready for use at the opening of the fall term of both institutions.” The same article portrayed a stampede to fund the scope. E. J. Quigley, the superintendent of Mitchell’s schools, “had started the list with \$50 and that he [Graham] would follow suit with a like amount and that the students of the University would pledge \$50 more, making a total of \$150 to start with. He secured \$80 more by subscription and the balance will be raised during the summer.”⁶

Building a temple to Urania was quite expensive. According to local newspapers, “The telescope and observatory will cost completed about

6. *Pierre Capital Journal*, 17 June 1898.

THE TELESCOPE

We are intending to secure.



The above cut represents a reflector telescope 10 1-4 inch aperture. The university and high school are making a joint effort to secure this much needed instrument. It will require \$600 to purchase the instrument and build a suitable observatory. The funds are to be raised by private subscription. Each person subscribing not less than two dollars will be entitled to view tickets for use of the telescope. This is a popular move and should receive the hearty endorsement of the citizens of Mitchell and Davison county. Some two hundred dollars have already been subscribed. Get ready to meet a solicitor with a prompt subscription and this much needed equipment for college and high school will be secured before the close of the fall term. Further information will be given in a short while.

Graham put this advertisement for the telescope in the *Mitchell Daily Republican* to gain community support for the project.

\$600 and the people who contribute to its construction will be given view tickets entitling them to view the heavens above at a mere nominal cost. The telescope will be of the reflective pattern and will be 12 inches in diameter.”⁷ Owning a twelve-inch instrument could give Graham bragging rights, since Yankton’s spyglass had only a seven-inch lens. Yet, the true price for his twelve-inch reflector was \$1,850 when

7. Ibid. Yankton’s refracting scope looked like a traditional spyglass with a front lens. The reflecting telescope Graham had in mind used a mirror to gather light. For a given size, reflectors cost much less than refractors.

mounted with a clock drive like Yankton's.⁸ If we add the observatory building, the bill to study the stars would be astronomical. Quigley, however, had only given the school board an estimate of \$650.⁹ He essentially baited the school board and public with an impossibly low price tag while downplaying the valuation of Yankton's telescope. Despite these tactics, the school board had only raised twenty dollars by September 1898.¹⁰

Even with these setbacks, Graham and Quigley would not quit. On 10 October, they bought a newspaper advertisement picturing a simple, ten-inch reflecting telescope with a price tag close to Quigley's original estimate. Interested parties could purchase "view tickets" costing \$2.00 each, though no record of ticket sales exists.¹¹ On 14 January 1899, the *Mitchell Daily Republican* reported, "The telescope is here at last and will be placed in an observatory on the hill."¹²

The observatory, an octagonal shed, was not built on the hill where Dakota University sat. Instead, it was constructed lower and to the north, beside a pest house used for quarantine, two years later than promised. The scope, with a mere six-and-a-half-inch lens, looked nothing like the one that had been advertised. While it resembled Yankton's instrument, it was far less powerful. DU's telescope lacked a finder scope, setting circles, and a clock drive to follow the nightly motions of the stars.¹³ At the observatory's grand opening on 31 August 1900, only seven people viewed the moon, despite the free admission.

8. *Catalogue Optical, Physical, Astrophysical and Astronomical Instruments*, p. 20. The price for this reflecting scope would have been slightly less due to inflation in catalog prices, about \$1,600.

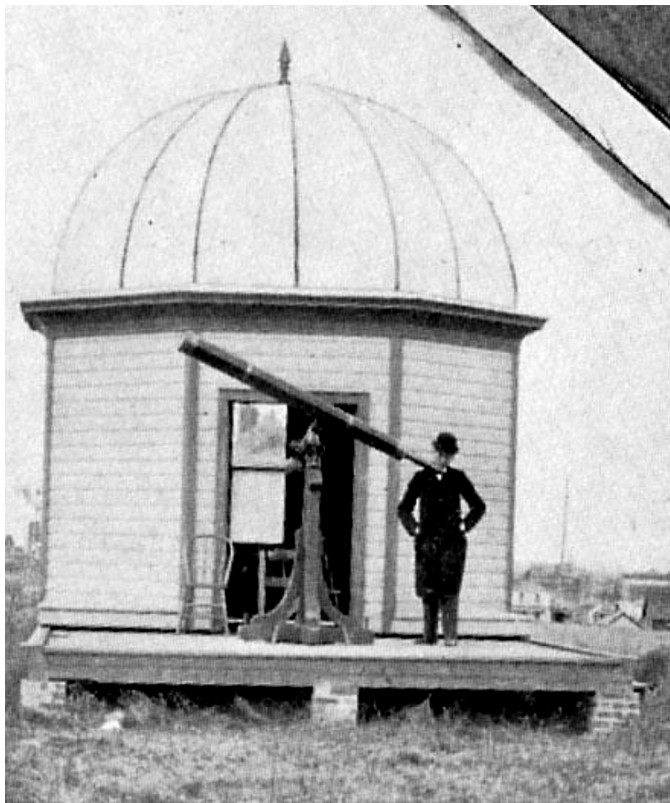
9. *Mitchell Daily Republican*, 30 Mar. 1898. "The probable cost of the telescope will be about \$650, including the cost of a building in which to place the instrument for observation purposes, and it is the plan to have it in operation for the opening of the fall term."

10. *Ibid.*, 2 Sept. 1898.

11. *Ibid.*, 10 Oct. 1898. It cost \$775 in the 1906 Brashear catalog; an inflation calculator puts the scope at \$714 in 1898. One assumes that the observatory would cost very little—as it probably did in the end.

12. *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1899.

13. Violet Miller Goering, *Dakota Wesleyan University: Century I* (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, 1996), p. 15; McLaird, *Dakota Wesleyan Memory Book*, p. 42. Only one picture of the observatory and its telescope survives. As a university catalog described it, "A six and one half inch telescope is located on the campus at a convenient distance." *Dakota Wesleyan University, Catalog, 1910-1911*, p. 51.



This photograph captures the DU observatory in 1901. The telescope had a smaller lens than the one at Yankton College.

As the *Mitchell Capital* described the scene, “When the telescope bought by the University and high school was erected on the hill on the south side of town it was the supposition that the people in general would be glad of the opportunity to take frequent gazes at the starry heavens, but from the lack of patronage shown toward the enterprising gentlemen who put the instrument there it is evident that people do not care to investigate the heavens.”¹⁴

One might call Graham out of touch for campaigning for a product that had such little popular support. Yet, the beauty of the night sky is an excellent part of any college education and, as is so often the case

14. *Mitchell Capital*, 7 Sept. 1900.

with gifts to small schools, this one was extensively used. Since most university students took one or two astronomy courses, perhaps fifty people per year entered the observatory where Stout revealed Urania's glory: the cratered moon and the rings of Saturn, Jupiter, and Venus.¹⁵

I imagine that Stout, as an amateur astronomer, relished his new telescope. He may have been less fond of the observatory, for its dome lacked a slit. The entire building, a 14 by 14 foot structure, had to be wheeled away from the optical instrument in order to reveal the sky. As with the shelter, the telescope's mounting was also poorly designed, posing additional challenges. Since the instrument's eight-foot tube turned on a central pivot, Stout was almost on the floor when he looked vertical.¹⁶ By 1918, the professor, now sixty-two years old, had spent eighteen winters heaving wood and metal, kneeling to Urania, and freezing his bones. Campus records indicate that the telescope was removed from the observatory that same year; when an immortal is your lover, you are bound to wear out.

The observatory not only housed academic pursuits, but also amorous ones.¹⁷ As the campus newspaper reported of the decaying octagonal shell, "It furnished an ideal place for campus lovers, and its venerable walls could have revealed endless stories of romance and tenderly spoken words whispered by man and maid as they sat in the shadows of the massive architecture."¹⁸

Ultimately, such romancing came to an end. In 1920, Dakota Wesleyan won the state basketball championship over Yankton College. As part of the celebration, several students, led by alleged arsonist Herbert Emery, hacked the observatory into boards and sent it crackling to the

15. The catalog says, "A six-inch telescope permits an interesting study of the moon, Venus, and Jupiter and Saturn" (Dakota Wesleyan University, *Catalog 1918-1919*, p. 51). Nothing else is mentioned; probably because not much else was seen. With its superior Warner and Swasey mount, only Yankton's scope could easily point to star clusters, double stars, and nebulae.

16. *Pierre Capital Journal*, 4 Aug. 1899; *Phreno Cosmian*, Feb. 1899. The focal length is stated as eight feet. The tube would have been slightly longer.

17. Jarvis Harriman, *The Man from the Hills: A Biography of Leland Davidson Case* (Canyon, Tex.: Westerners International, 1994), pp. 21-22. Leland Case participated in a secret society meeting in "the 'dome shaped shrine' otherwise known as the observatory." Case enrolled in the 1918-1919 school year and stayed for two years.

18. *Phreno Cosmian*, 4 Mar. 1920.



The author is pictured here in DWU's current observatory, which features a telescope with an eleven-inch lens.

stars. The campus newspaper rubbed in the observatory's misfortune, noting, "Some of our neighborly institutions of learning criticized Wesleyan for burning the old observatory upon the victory over Yankton College so we upon their request will refrain from such disgusting actions and be content to blow our [new compressed air] whistle."¹⁹

The Gay Nineties birthed the observatory, while the Roaring Twenties burned it down. Graham passed on in 1924, as did Stout two years later.²⁰ In their ephemeral observatory, we see three beings etched into history. First, Urania: her sky was not just a circus tent where people paid for views. Second, Graham: he made good on an impossible

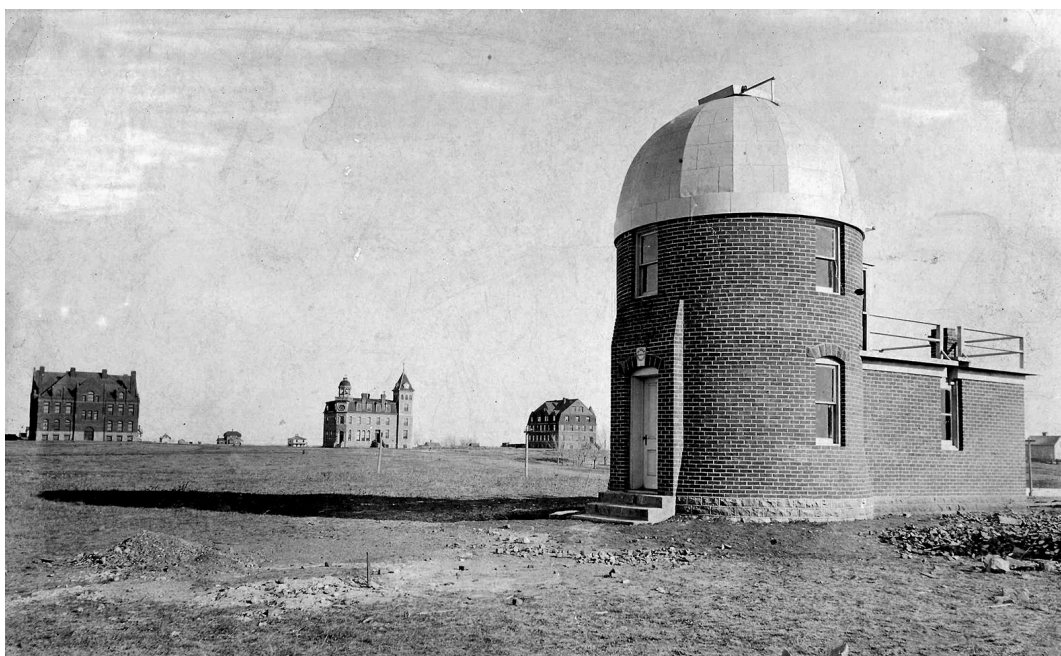
19. *Ibid.*, 13 Mar. 1920.

20. *Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Gazette*, 9 May 1925; *Mitchell Evening Republican*, 1 Feb. 1926.

dream and brought discovery to DU. Lastly, Stout: he didn't speak up when Graham promoted far more than he could deliver. Still, Graham's scheme bore fruit.

Yankton lost the game, but kept the stars; its brick observatory still stands on the grounds of a minimum-security federal prison.²¹ In 1994, a century after Graham's hiring, a new Dakota Wesleyan University observatory—a shed with a removable roof that houses an eleven-inch scope—opened its doors. The telescope's aperture, its opening to the sky, is one inch smaller than that of Graham's dream. The goddess is honored and respected and, again, she works her wiles on scholars. When I teach the stars, my class is packed with eager eyes.

21. "Before Sputnik And NASA."



Yankton College's brick observatory, pictured here in 1895, one year after it was built, has withstood the test of time.

Book Reviews

All communications regarding book reviews and review copies of books should be sent to Book Review Editor, *South Dakota History*, 900 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501-2217.

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Sons of the Wild Jackass: The Non-partisan League in North Dakota

Terry L. Shoptaugh. Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 2019. 264pp. Notes. Illus. Biblio. Ind. Cloth, \$29.95.

Terry L. Shoptaugh's *Sons of the Wild Jackass: The Nonpartisan League in North Dakota* documents the rise of an insurgent political movement in the early twentieth century, focusing on its North Dakota roots and the role of its early leadership. Angered by the state legislature's refusal to fund a state-owned mill, Arthur C. Townley joined Socialists, farmers, and activists to develop a platform for a "non-party" league of farmers. The Nonpartisan League (NPL) worked to help small farmers and merchants by advocating for state-owned industries, including mills, banks, and railroads. The group endorsed candidates who supported their agenda without regard for party affiliation.

Shoptaugh organizes *Sons of the Wild Jackass* around four charismatic leaders of the NPL in North Dakota. Townley, the league's first president, was a former Socialist and a dynamic public speaker, but also moody and impulsive. Similarly, while William Lemke, Townley's trusted lieutenant, was well-educated, a terrific organizer, and a careful manager of NPL business affairs, he was also plagued by personal debts. William Langer, meanwhile, a son of a successful Canadian businessman, practiced law and built a political base among farmers around Mandan, but earned the ire of many political enemies. Shoptaugh also examines Lynn Frazier, a

former teacher and temperance advocate, who won the 1916 North Dakota gubernatorial election with NPL support. Although Shoptaugh acknowledges the importance of other NPL figures and the editors of newspapers like the *Nonpartisan Leader*, most of the book focuses on the activities of Townley, Lemke, Langer, and Frazier.

The NPL encountered fierce resistance from the political and economic establishment. In 1918, the Independent Voters Association (IVA) formed to combat the NPL. The IVA claimed that Socialism tainted the NPL and that its leaders only sought to increase their own power. The League's opponents labeled its leaders as "reds" intent on creating a Soviet-style Communist state. Despite the IVA's opposition, the NPL won a majority in the state legislature and enacted their agenda. Legislators created the State Bank of North Dakota, funded a state mill and elevator, organized a new state agency to promote low-cost mortgages, and formed a state printing commission to select newspapers in each county to print government information. Voters affirmed the new NPL-backed programs in a 1919 referendum.

The IVA was not the only obstacle for the NPL; rivalries among and missteps by its leaders also hampered the group. For example, Langer never forgave Lemke for a failed land investment in Mexico years before the NPL formed. Langer's distrust of Lemke led him to criticize his fellow NPL leader—especially after Lemke scandalously abused the state-assisted mortgage program.

Newspapers, oral history interviews,

and manuscript collections inform *Sons of the Wild Jackass*. Shoptaugh includes only a few passing references to the development of the NPL in South Dakota, where it also acquired significant popular support. Though other works on the NPL—particularly Robert Morlan’s *Political Prairie Fire* and Michael J. Lansing’s *Insurgent Democracy*—provide more geographically comprehensive coverage or make more ambitious interpretative claims, Shoptaugh’s work serves as an accessible and effective introduction to the subject.

JEFF WELLS

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Ambitious Honor: George Armstrong Custer’s Life of Service and Lust for Fame

James E. Mueller. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. 382pp. Illus. Ind. Notes. Biblio. Cloth, \$32.95.

Like George Armstrong Custer, James E. Mueller has a flair for well-crafted anecdotes, which make *Ambitious Honor* an engaging read. Strong writing alone, however, does not justify yet another biography of the controversial cavalry officer, especially so soon after T. J. Stiles’s extremely thorough *Custer’s Trials* (2015). Nor does Mueller’s research methodology: he makes effective use of familiar, well-trodden sources, including national newspapers and the published and archival writings of Custer and his wife Libbie, though he curiously draws much of his discussion of their correspondence from secondary sources. Mueller does, however, offer an inventive reinterpretation of Custer’s character and his relationship to historical memory.

Mueller contends that Custer is best defined not by his service as a soldier, but

rather by his “artistic temperament” (p. x). In an argument reminiscent of Louis S. Warren’s treatment of William Cody in *Buffalo Bill’s America* (2005), Mueller suggests that Custer, after his death at the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn, became an icon of the frontier myth because of his own self-promotion and image cultivation in life. This biography traces Custer’s artistic self-fashioning through his early creative work as a schoolteacher and his use of battle reports and connections with reporters to become a celebrity during the Civil War. Mueller analyzes Custer’s self-presentation as a master hunter and Indian fighter on the plains through his buckskin uniform, hunting trips with foreign dignitaries, and writing both in his memoir and magazines such as *Galaxy*. The last piece of the puzzle is his death, caused by a promotion and the impetuous pursuit of victory.

Ultimately, Mueller belabors and occasionally overextends his argument for Custer as an artist. Custer’s performative self-aggrandizement is well-established. Mueller provides some evidence to suggest that the general prioritized the artistic and intellectual over the soldierly, such as a letter to his sister Ann in which he framed his schooling at West Point as a government-funded education rather than an entrée to the Army. However, in Mueller’s hands, seemingly every example of Custer’s battlefield strategy or knowledge of his enemy becomes a sign of an artistic mind, as though military men were typically incapable of such ways of thinking. Patterns of press courting and ostentatious dress that he learned from such generals as George McClellan and Alfred Pleasanton become evidence of Custer’s uniquely artistic mind.

Most detrimental to Mueller’s argument is that, while he plausibly (and repeatedly) suggests that Custer drew much

of his cavalier character from popular literature, he devotes little space to the roots of the American frontier mythology that the general embodied in his actions and writing. Especially underexplored are nineteenth-century ideas about American Indians, aside from Custer's "romantic notion of the Indian" (p. 20) drawn from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. Relatedly, Native characters do not come alive in Mueller's narrative as white individuals do, and he too often refers to Indigenous groups, aside from Custer's Osage and Crow allies, monolithically as "Indians."

Nevertheless, Mueller concludes with a valuable exploration of how a widowed Libbie Custer, especially through her writing and speaking career, helped craft a heroic image of her husband that has since been undermined, especially amidst the current debate over public monuments. Though his argument about Custer's artistic temperament is questionable, this concluding discussion emphasizes Mueller's larger point about how individual authors shape historical memory by responding to the cultural milieu of their times. This insight will make *Ambitious Honor* interesting to not only Custer scholars, but also scholars of memory studies.

JUSTIN ESTREICHER

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They Met at Wounded Knee: The Eastmans' Story

Gretchen Cassel Eick. Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2020. 353pp. Illus. Notes. Biblio. Ind. Cloth, \$45.00.

Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa) and Elaine Goodale Eastman are well-known figures in American Indian history. Indeed, with their numerous publications and exten-

sive activism, they introduced outside readers to Indians and their contributions to mainstream society. The couple also demanded reforms of federal Indian policy, especially the granting of Indian citizenship and equal rights. The Eastmans have had significant books written on each of them. With the publication of *They Met at Wounded Knee*, Gretchen Eick, a professor of history and an adjunct faculty member at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, offers a one volume double biography that focuses on both Charles and Elaine. Of course, much of what is presented has already been covered in other publications on the Eastmans. However, a major contribution of the book is Eick's analysis of Elaine's relationship with Richard Henry Pratt, head of Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, and the biography of him that she wrote in the 1930s.

The book is well-written, but contains several major issues and problems that Eick could have addressed. Although relating a book's subject to national political and social issues is essential, on several occasions, the author devotes too much attention to events that occurred during the Eastmans' lives. Two examples are her detailing of Colonel Henry Hastings Sibley and U.S. military operations during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and President Woodrow Wilson's actions during treaty discussions to end World War I at Versailles, France, in 1919. Additionally, too many paragraphs in the book lack citations to consulted sources, such as those on pages 61, 151, 252, and 263. Eick also could have offered more information and her views on important subjects such as Bonno Hyessa, Charles's illegitimate daughter, and the significant role Elaine played in writing and editing his books. She was more than just his typist. After Charles's death, she edited and published some of his manuscripts and listed him as

the author. Eick could have used the many primary and secondary sources available on both topics. Finally, a question lingers over the book: how did the Eastmans' biracial marriage endure and falter over the course of twenty-five years, given the racism and discrimination of the era and the Eastmans' ambitious goals? Remember, they did not divorce and kept their separation a guarded secret.

They Met at Wounded Knee contains twenty illustrations, including several of Charles that have never been published before. Readers wanting more details on and more analysis of the Eastmans should consult the publications of Theodore Sargent and this reviewer. Although Eick has written a book that contains several shortcomings as noted above, nevertheless, it should be included in the libraries of students of these two dynamic individuals.

RAYMOND WILSON

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Walks on the Ground: A Tribal History of the Ponca Nation

Louis V. Headman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 570 pp. Illus. Maps. Cloth, \$90.00.

Walks on the Ground is a "personal study" of the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma that synthesizes decades of notes taken by Louis V. Headman, tribal elder and coordinator of the Ponca Language Grant (p. xx). Seven chapters focus on history and twenty-two chapters discuss ethnography. The book's purpose is to revise Ponca history from an internal perspective and to "lay the foundations for preserving the culture and traditions of the Ponca Tribe" (p. xvi).

The historical chapters chronicle the survival of the Ponca people, who migrated to the Great Plains from the East. In the

nineteenth century, they established twenty-eight villages from the Elkhorn and Niobrara Rivers to the Black Hills. Agents of the United States coerced the Ponca's removal to Indian Territory in 1877, where they adapted to the dominant Euro-American culture. Throughout, Headman carefully uses oral histories, maps, treaties, and archaeology to disentangle Ponca history from those of the other First Nations—such as the Omahas and the Sioux—that previously subsumed it.

Chapters 8 through 29 discuss property, naming, kinship, religion, eschatology, and education, among other topics. The chapters on Ponca songs and singers are notable. Songs, Headman contends, "embrace various acts of bravery, deeds of kindness, participation in hunting and war experience," and thereby teach the Ponca people about their heritage (p. 168). Headman also illustrates how the Ponca culture changed over time, as the Ponca people faced removal, forced acculturation, poverty, alcoholism, and economic strain. For example, songs honor twentieth-century war veterans; people exchange Pendleton blankets instead of buckskin shirts at giveaways; many practice Christianity rather than the teachings of the Sacred Pipe; and the English language predominates.

The strongest aspects of the book are its authorial perspective and utilization of varied sources. Headman includes the voices of nine Ponca elders, who told him stories and songs throughout his life. Anthropologist and collaborator Sean O'Neill argues that this inclusion results in a "polyphonic ethnography"—an ethnography that shares authority and represents the diversity of the Ponca people (p. xv). Headman demonstrates this shared Indigenous authority in his discussion of clans that includes three conflicting oral histories of how the clans were formed. Rather than cherry-picking, Headman gives space

and credit to each history. In addition to cross-referencing internal sources, Headman utilizes external sources, such as maps, archaeology, census rolls, and the work of earlier ethnographers. For instance, the chapter on names combines elders' knowledge and oral traditions with census rolls and the *Tract Books Indian Schedules* to list Ponca first names and organize them by clan. Finally, Ponca phrases, names, lyrics, and their English translations fill nearly a hundred pages throughout the book. Headman argues that the Ponca language itself contains history and values and is therefore essential for understanding the Ponca people.

Walks on the Ground is an invaluable resource for those studying the history of the northern plains, Native American and Indigenous Studies, or decolonial methodologies. However, the book is largely self-contained and lacks contextualization, and one wonders if Headman himself has engaged these with historiographies. Furthermore, some of the ideas, particularly in the ethnography section, are disjointed and read like a reference book rather than a synthesis. Nevertheless, Headman has produced an important work for the Great Plains region and for the growing literature of Indigenous-produced histories.

PHOEBE LABAT
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Massacring Indians: From Horseshoe Bend to Wounded Knee

Roger L. Nichols. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. 198 pp. Map. Illus. Paper, \$24.95.

Massacring Indians: From Horseshoe Bend to Wounded Knee by Roger L. Nichols explores ten American Indian massacres in the nineteenth century, with most occurring

in the American West. Throughout, Nichols mainly utilizes secondary sources, and thus synthesizes a large amount of scholarship and history. He begins with the Red Stick War in Alabama in 1813–1814 and ends with Wounded Knee in 1890. Nichols argues that these ten events should be considered massacres and not battles because the U.S. army killed women, children, noncombatants, and those trying to escape. The massacres often happened to “villages whose chiefs thought they were at peace” and were subsequently attacked by surprise (p. 8). American troops also destroyed property, including lodges, food, and clothing. Throughout *Massacring Indians*, Nichols successfully illustrates continuities between the massacres, while also noting their differences.

The central subjects of the book are the groups of people involved in the massacres, both the victims and the assailants. Nichols concludes that in all but two of the massacres, regular troops from the U.S. Army were the main aggressors involved. In both Bear River and Sand Creek, volunteers from California and Colorado made up most of the American forces in large part because these events occurred during the Civil War. Nichols also notes that Indians participated with the U.S. Army in two of the massacres. For example, Osage scouts worked with the United States at the Washita River Massacre in Oklahoma in 1868.

Massacring Indians also analyzes the role public opinion played and how this differed throughout time and space. For example, Nichols discusses the Marias River massacre of a Piegan camp in Montana in 1870. In the West, people and the press praised the army and the attack, but in the East, “humanitarians and reformers denounced it” (p. 109). These contrasting views are evident in many of the massacres under study. Throughout the nineteenth century,

these massacres also received varying levels of national coverage. For example, Wounded Knee received less attention than previous massacres, and the media “considered it the result of an obscure Indian religious movement, not a matter of public safety” (p. 150). Throughout this book, Nichols adeptly demonstrates the varying levels of national attention these massacres received, and how the attention varied based on region.

While *Massacring Indians* offers a compelling synthesis, a further inclusion of the voices of Indigenous people, especially women, who were victims in the massacres would provide a more well-rounded analysis and center the victims. Overall, Nichols makes a strong argument as to why these events were massacres. This synthesis should be read by those who study or are interested in Native history, nineteenth century American history, and western history more broadly. Because of this book’s readability, it would also benefit a wider audience and undergraduate students.

KRISTINA ROGERS

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The Grass Shall Grow: Helen Post Photographs the Native American West

Mick Gidley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 216pp. Illus. Notes. Cloth, \$50.00.

In the 1930s and '40s, Helen Post, an extraordinary photographer, worked with Indigenous subjects and served as the contributing photographer for Olive La Farge’s iconic text *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* (1940). As Mick Gidley notes, her career and artwork have been overshadowed by her sister, Marion Post

Wolcott—the well-known Farm Security Administration photographer. With *The Grass Shall Grow: Helen Post Photographs the Native American West*, Gidley highlights this under-appreciated artist. Broadly conceived, this book explores Helen’s career without denying or exaggerating Marion’s importance.

In order to illuminate his less studied subject, Gidley presents a comprehensive narrative of Helen’s life and career, while masterfully utilizing her photographs as primary source documents, not just as diverting illustrations. Rather than bombarding the reader with an avalanche of images, Gidley instead wisely selects particular images as evidence for his analysis of Post’s career. He identifies and discusses the images’ major themes and significance.

After the first two chapters that cover Helen Post and the production of *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow*, chapter three focuses on the special collaboration between Post and many Indigenous people. Here Gidley reveals the types of photographs Post pursued, the relationships she developed with her Indigenous subjects, and the manner in which she performed picture taking. Gidley notes the “cooperation between subject and photographer” and that their relationship was “mostly reciprocal,” and the photographs were “presented with much tact” (pp. 58, 63, 79). In fact, Gidley especially highlights the Indigenous people in the photographs by exploring their identities and motivations and addressing the fraught power imbalance that is pervasive in the interaction between white photographers and American Indians. Chapter four follows up by connecting Post to broader, contemporary issues in the country. As a “documentarian” in the era of the “Indian Reorganization Act” of 1934, Post demonstrated a political and cultural awareness that is also present in her images. Post’s

photographs appear to have been more sensitive in their making and documentation than in previous decades. Her work appears even more responsible in comparison with the late nineteenth-century "Indian gallery" approach that drove a wedge between Native communities and non-native photographers.

This book joins an ever-growing body of scholarship that addresses overlooked photographers like Helen Post and reevaluates who has been traditionally valued in western history and photography studies. *The Grass Shall Grow* will be interesting to a wide variety of readers, with an accessible narrative and fascinating images. This slim and immensely enjoyable book will leave the reader with an excitement for the scholarship that it will surely inspire.

RACHEL MCLEAN SAILOR
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Cowboy Presidents: The Frontier Myth and U.S. Politics in the Twentieth Century

David Alexander Smith. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. 288 pp. Illus. Ind. Notes. Biblio. Cloth, \$36.95.

The frontier myth has profoundly influenced presidential politics in the United States. Since Frederick Jackson Turner famously argued in 1893 that the frontier experience formed American identity, both progressive and conservative presidents have deployed this enduring myth. Although both versions shared Old West attributes of American exceptionalism and a sense of greater mission, the future-oriented and community-based politics of the progressive frontier myth contrasted starkly with the nostalgia and individualism of the myth's later, conservative guise. David A. Smith seeks to explain

this transformation by examining the influence of the frontier myth on the presidency and, in turn, how the presidency and external events affected the myth. In doing so, Smith explores the struggle between rugged individualism and centralized federal government, which lies at the heart of the frontier myth's role in presidential politics.

Drawing on archival sources and cross-disciplinary scholarship, Smith advances our understanding of the ways cowboy presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush deployed and personified the frontier myth to advance their agendas, primarily through discourse, imagery, and symbols. Smith not only focuses on the attitudes, decisions, and policies of these four presidents, but also the major events responsible for reshaping the frontier myth in presidential politics.

Roosevelt, "the original cowboy president," forged his identity in the Badlands and brought "strenuousness" to the presidency, addressing the economic and social ills of the Progressive Era with "a sense of liberal optimism, proactive government, unity, and purpose that would dramatically shape the contours of national politics for decades to come" (pp. 15, 18, 29). Johnson excelled in domestic policy, using his Texan swagger and frontier symbolism to advance the Great Society, civil rights, and the space program. In Vietnam, however, frontier symbolism helped Johnson sell the escalating conflict to Americans, but it failed to justify the war's continuation and hastened the progressive frontier myth's collapse. Reagan, for his part, revamped the frontier myth to promote individual liberty, small government, and a strong national defense, restoring public confidence with his eternal optimism. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Smith contends, Bush relied on the conservative

myth to initiate the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Public opinion eventually soured on these conflagrations, and the conservative frontier myth receded during the 2008 financial crisis.

The tumult of the 1960s and '70s, Smith convincingly argues, created "the *hinge* from Reagan to LBJ," a period in which a series of national failures and crises—the Vietnam War, Watergate, assassinations, race riots, oil shocks, stagflation, and the Iranian hostage crisis—discredited Roosevelt and Johnson's progressive frontier myth and catalyzed Reagan's conservative version (p. 136). Smith observes that Roosevelt and Reagan proved the most successful in deploying the frontier myth. Roosevelt and Reagan established competing forms of the myth and departed office in relatively popular standing. Conversely, Johnson and Bush diminished the explanatory power of their respective myths, losing public support due to domestic crises and unpopular wars.

The frontier myth, for now, awaits the next cowboy president. Highly critical of the conservative frontier myth, Smith prefers a return to its original, progressive form. Yet, Smith's perceptive analysis suggests that the myth could easily reemerge in a renewed conservative incarnation.

JOSEPH LEDFORD

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The Life of the Afterlife in the Big Sky State: A History of Montana's Cemeteries.

Ellen Baumler. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. 186 pp. Index. Paper, \$19.95.

Ellen Baumler, the former interpretive historian at the Montana Historical Society, invites readers to reflect on the "haunting

beauty" and "ugly truths" of cemeteries in *The Life of the Afterlife in the Big Sky State: A History of Montana's Cemeteries*. The book is a result of Baumler's three decades of experience as a Montana historian, a position in which she documented historic sites for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nominations and created explanatory plaques. This book, the culmination of Baumler's experience and research, successfully appeals to local readers and offers a model of interpretation for cemeteries in the American West.

The Life of the Afterlife in the Big Sky State delivers a chronological narrative with thematic chapters that weave together several different areas of Montana. Baumler covers a range of topics from the prehistory of the Northern Great Plains and archaeological mortuary practices to contemporary white highway crosses and animal burials. Each chapter is organized by sections that reflect a larger unifying theme revolving around death, cemeteries, and human funerary practice. Throughout the book, Baumler utilizes her mastery of Montana history and a variety of sources to invite readers to contemplate how humans in the past understood and processed death. Baumler achieves her goal of appealing to "those who love history, quiet places, and wandering among the dead" through her approachable writing (p. xvii).

Public historians will find this book helpful as a model for how to interpret historic sites that address death, commemoration, and memory. Baumler's expertise as a public historian appears throughout every chapter, and many of her examples are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Her analysis of these sites read as if they were written for the statement of significance on a NRHP nomination. Additionally, Baumler's interpretation of urban and rural sites provides a broader example of how to work with cultural

landscape analysis within the field. For example, her chapter, "Conflict, Misfortune, and Uneasy Transition," recounts violent events in Montana history that "left scars not only upon humans but also upon the landscape," (p. 42). Lastly, Baumlér's text hints at the difficulty of telling the history of death and its meaning because of the contested battle over memory.

Ellen Baumlér's work contains useful and new information to both academic and popular audiences. *The Life of the Afterlife in the Big Sky State* could be used in the classroom or on the road for self-guided tours. Baumlér successfully compiled a concise and cogent book on the cultural meanings of death and cemeteries in Montana. Overall, this well-researched and finely written book makes a significant contribution to the larger literature on death and burial practice in the American West.

MICAH T. CHANG

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Tuesday Night Massacre: Four Senate Elections and the Radicalization of the Republican Party

Marc C. Johnson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. 256 pp. Illus. Ind. Notes. Paper, \$26.95.

In *Tuesday Night Massacre: Four Senate Elections and the Radicalization of the Republican Party*, Marc C. Johnson examines the Senate losses of Democrats Frank Church (Idaho), George McGovern (South Dakota), John Culver (Iowa), and Birch Bayh (Indiana) in 1980. Each of these individuals was targeted by the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), which engaged a new type of politics centered on national issues and out of state money. Johnson argues that the 1980 elections,

which gave Republicans control of the Senate for the first time in decades, demonstrated the effectiveness of this polarized, nationalized strategy that eventually became a hallmark of the New Right and the Republican Party.

Johnson's exhaustive investigation into these campaigns enhances the scholarly literature, and he successfully argues that national groups—chiefly NCPAC—employed coordinated strategies across these campaigns, even going so far as to use nearly identical ads in both South Dakota and Indiana. They drew the state campaigns into national issues, like abortion and the Panama Canal Treaty. These subjects forced the senators to confront the fact that their ideology was often out of step with their state and that they could no longer count on their personal qualities or legacy of service for reelection. These tactics by new right groups illustrate the full effects of *Buckley v. Valeo*, which allowed these groups to spend unlimited money on campaigns. Johnson shows that NCPAC's fundraising was national, but their spending was focused on these four states. This approach was innovative because it used out of state money, allowing the NCPAC to redistribute funds from Republican dominated states to states with tighter elections. Further, the relatively new Federal Election Commission crafted a loose, permissive definition of what constituted illegal coordination. Johnson notes that the greater amount of money raised also allowed these groups to begin campaign season earlier. The Democrats were simply outmatched and unprepared for these changes, and the Republican Party capitalized on the opportunity.

This analysis, however, understates the importance of the simultaneous 1980 presidential election and the down ballot effects of candidate Ronald Reagan's landslide victory. Reagan earned a higher

percentage of the vote than the Republican Senate candidate in three of the four analyzed races (Iowa excepted). He energized conservatives and created Reagan Democrats, many of whom voted for Republicans for the first time in their lives, drawn to Reagan's political ideology. Thus, the author potentially exaggerates the impact of NCPAC and their strategies. Nothing in politics happens in a vacuum, but the public typically pays more attention to presidential elections than senatorial ones.

Overall, this book is a valuable contribution to the study of political campaigns, polarization, and the rise of the New Right. Johnson effectively shows how the development of PACs fundamentally altered the strategies conservatives used, which ultimately polarized the party. Additionally, his engagement with the broader social science literature, including sociology, political science, and history, ensures a nuanced narrative of a compelling argument.

PATRICK RICKERT

Washington University in St. Louis
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Spotted Tail: Renaissance Man of the Lakotas

Edited by James Hanson. Chadron:
Museum of the Fur Trade, 2020. 223 pp.
Illus. Ind. Notes. Cloth, \$30.00.

Spotted Tail (1823–1881) gained early fame as a skilled Lakota warrior fighting the Pawnees. By the time he was thirty years old, he was honored as a Shirtweaver for his numerous successes in battles, counting coups, and capturing horses. By the 1850s and 1860s, Spotted Tail, along with Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, and Sitting Bull, were recognized by both American Indians and whites as preeminent leaders. All four men were victorious military commanders dedicated to preserving traditional Native

cultures and lifestyles. Only Spotted Tail chose to do this with a policy of diplomacy, based on his cunning understanding of white settlers. This book explores and explains that his approach “contained the formula for the successful metamorphosis of Lakota culture to meet changing realities” (p. 10).

The book contains eight essays, two informational sidebars, maps and photographs, with an introduction by editor James Hanson. Kingsley M. Bray and Randy Kane detail Spotted Tail's life and achievements in the first two chapters. Other essays by Paul Hedren, Douglas D. Scott, and Peter Bleed examine specific events of Spotted Tail's life, including his role in the Fort Laramie treaties and his presence in the honor guard that accompanied Russian Grand Duke Alexis on a hunting expedition. Thomas Buecker and Charles Hanson explore Spotted Tail's diplomatic skills in the essay, “Spotted Tail's Agency on Wheels,” and illustrate how he repeatedly created situations that required his agency to be mobile and adaptable. Additional chapters by James E. Potter and Thomas Powers center on the U.S. conquest of the Black Hills and the killing of Crazy Horse, highlighting Spotted Tail's role in each of these defining events in the history of the Lakota nation. A final essay by Richmond Clow details the events of Spotted Tail's death and its lasting impact, including *Ex parte Crow Dog*, a milestone in American jurisprudence.

All of the essays are skillfully written, carefully researched, and reveal the rich character of Spotted Tail. He revered his heritage and adapted to the white man's world by learning English. He also met and negotiated with military and political leaders not only on the plains, but also in Washington. He was witty and always ready to speak his mind. Spotted Tail seemed adept at adapting to new contexts

and doing whatever he could to preserve the Lakota way of life.

The definition of a renaissance man is a person with many talents or areas of knowledge. After reading and contemplating the facts and data presented in this collection of essays, it is plain to see that Spotted Tail fits that description. And as editor James A. Hanson adds, "Spotted Tail was a class act" (p. 9). Everyone interested in Lakota history will want to add this book to their collections.

PATRICIA ANN OWENS
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The Making of the Midwest: Essays on the Formation of Midwestern Identity, 1787–1900

Edited by Jon K. Lauck. Hastings, Nebr.: Hastings College Press, 2020. 399 pp. Cloth, \$30.00.

The reductionistic, but nonetheless pervasive, current image of the American Midwest as a blighted region of hollowed out cities and towns surrounded by rural farmland hides its history from much of the public. It obscures the historical diversity of the Midwest's traditions and its importance in the development of the United States in the nineteenth century. In *The Making of the Midwest*, editor Jon K. Lauck and several authors offer a valuable glimpse into the history of a fascinating American region that merits greater attention in the country's history.

Lauck's introductory essay lays out the broad cultural, economic, geographic, racial, and social boundaries of the nineteenth century Midwest. The initial Anglophone settlement of the region brought with it a culture saturated in Christian conceptions of civic commitment and engagement with the arts. Protestant settlers between 1790 and 1810 saw themselves as

founding a new center of Christian civilization not only in North America, but also globally. Unsurprisingly, reform became a staple of Protestant religiosity in the Midwest in the Early Republic. Midwesterners championed temperance, antiprostitution efforts, and, most prominently, antislavery and abolition in the years that preceded the American Civil War.

The Midwest's influence reached its peak after 1865. Edward Frantz's essay explores Midwestern control of the presidency between 1860 and 1930. Nine of the thirteen presidents in those years hailed from the Midwest, and their presidencies overlapped with the sociocultural maturation of the region and the United States a whole. The same era saw the rise of Midwestern historians like Frederick Jackson Turner, whose ideas influenced historiography for decades.

The collection's chapters are all stimulating. Highlights include David Miller's "Blood and Iron," which traces the development of German culture in the United States and challenges some of the long-held assumptions about German communities in the era of immigration. African Americans became a vital part of the Midwestern social fabric in the years following the Civil War, with the successive migrations of freed Blacks from the states of the old Confederacy. By 1900, the Midwest's racial makeup also included immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Christa Adams explores conceptions of a "cosmopolitan Midwest" with her analysis of the Cleveland Museum's exhibit of Asian art that was on display from 1914 to 1916.

These essays also have significant connections to the modern Midwest. Jason Stacy's "Popucrats" explains the growth of Populism in the Midwest at the end of the nineteenth century. The rise of populist politicians and the co-option of the so-called white working class as a new

political bellwether—replacing the white middle class—in the early twenty-first century make this essay interesting for contemporary readers.

With well-written essays spanning an impressive breadth, Lauck and his collaborators have added a truly excellent, comprehensive collection to the historiography of the nineteenth century Midwest. The essays are accessible both to the scholar and the general reader. The Midwest's influence on the development of the United States deserves to be rediscovered. *The Making of the Midwest* offers the reader an informative and intriguing place to start.

MILES SMITH

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Women in the Writings of Mari Sandoz

Edited by Renée M. Laegreid and Shannon D. Smith. Sandoz Studies, Vol. 1. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 149pp. Illus. Notes. Biblio. Ind. Paper, \$30.00.

Renée M. Laegreid, one of the editors of *Women in the Writings of Mari Sandoz*, writes that the Sandhills women defied easy characterization. This idea is evident in Sandoz's writings, which include the Sandhills short story entitled "The Vine," an excerpt from the dark novel called *Slogum House*, and another from the nonfiction essay titled "What the Sioux Taught Me," interspaced between the new chapters of this book. Thus, the women at the core of this book include a homesteader defeated by the land and her unfeeling husband, one of the most dissolute women in all of western letters, and the eminently capable Lakota women of Sandoz's acquaintance.

This first volume of Sandoz Studies, organized by the Mari Sandoz Heritage

Society, is a promising beginning. The work is comprised of original essays by Laegreid, Lisa Pollard, Shannon D. Smith, who co-edited the book, and Jillian L. Wenburg. Additionally, it includes Glenda Riley's essay that was previously published in *Great Plains Quarterly*.

Although wary of stereotypes, Laegreid nevertheless defines, for scholarly and lay readers alike, the classic conceptualizations of American womanhood in the era of Sandoz: separate spheres, the good woman (including the reluctant frontier wife), and the bad woman. The other authors expand on these well-established categories.

Pollard analyzes Meda and her husband, Baldwin, the two "highly drawn characters" in "The Vine." Pollard observes that these figures show that "drought affects women's lives differently than men's" (p. 46). She leaves open the question of whether Sandoz was engaging in satire of American stereotypes. Riley explains that with the character of Regula Haber Slogum, Sandoz "turned the stereotype of greed and cupidity on its head." She lodged those corrupt traits in the heart of a woman, which at the time seemed "incomprehensible and inconceivable" (p. 71). Riley argues, however, that Slogum is "a true-to-life figure, genuine in her machinations and transgressions" (p. 82).

Smith describes how Sandoz, with her friend Eleanor Hinman, traversed western reservations in a Model T, then returned and commenced combatting stereotypes of native women. Wenburg admires Sandoz as "a hardworking woman" whose "gender ideal was that there need not be an ideal, neither masculine nor feminine" (p. 116). She argues that the writer achieves, at her best, an "androgynous balance" (p. 126). These essays bring the reader back to where Laegreid left off—with possibilities of gender-busting.

This new Sandoz Studies series promises to consolidate and advance the state of Sandoz scholarship for Nebraska and to deepen literary consciousness for the entirety of the Great Plains. Wenburg writes of one of Sandoz's works that its "historical significance lies in its representation of plains women as more than submissive helpmates in the West" (p. 124). Surely,

we are now all on that page, and turning the next one, too, perhaps to whisper with irony, along with Libby Slogum—or is it Sandoz herself?—"And someday the line fence would be farther away, much farther away" (p. 64).

THOMAS D. ISERN
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Fargo, N. Dak.

Announcements

The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society, provides financial support for the work of the society in preserving and interpreting the state's rich past. The foundation offers a number of giving opportunities for donors who wish to leave a legacy of history for future generations. For information on making a contribution or bequest, please contact the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, 900 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501-2217; telephone, (605) 773-6001.

The South Dakota State Historical Society will hold its annual history conference 22–23 April 2022 at the Ramkota River Center in Pierre. The SDHS Press is organizing the event, entitled "Fighting the Good War: South Dakotans in World War II." For more information, visit www.history.sd.gov.

The Dakota Conference has issued a call for papers and proposals for its fifty-fourth annual conference to be held at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 28–29 April 2022. This year's theme is "Radio Comes to the Northern Plains: From Wireless to Wi-Fi (1922–2022)." The conference will focus on how wireless technology changed, and continues to affect, communities in the northern plains. Paper and session proposals on this theme and other topics related to the northern plains are welcome. Please visit <https://www.augie.edu/center-western-studies/events/54th-annual-dakota-conference> to submit or email proposal title, brief description, short biographical sketch, and full contact information to dakotaconference@augie.edu. The deadline for submissions is 25 February 2022.

The Northern Great Plains History Conference has issued a call for papers for its fifty-seventh annual conference to be held in Fargo, North Dakota, 21–24 September 2022. Proposals for individual papers and complete sessions in all fields of history are encouraged. The conference welcomes graduate and undergraduate student participants; prizes will be awarded for the best paper in both categories. Proposals for papers or sessions must include a one-paragraph abstract and a one-page CV for each participant. Please email proposals to mark.harvey@ndsu.edu by 5 April 2022.

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Dakota Images

Maria Darlene Pearson (Hai-Mecha Eunka), a member of the Turtle clan of the Yankton Sioux tribe, was born in Springfield, South Dakota, on 12 July 1932.

Pearson began advocating for American Indian rights, especially regarding the handling of human remains, in 1971. She started this activity when her husband, John Pearson, an engineer for the Iowa State Highway Commission, told her about an incident in Glenwood, Iowa. During a highway construction project, workers found the remains of twenty-six white settlers and two Indians. The settlers' remains were reburied in a cemetery, while the Indigenous people's remains were sent to a state lab for archaeological study. Pearson believed that it was unjust for Indians not to receive the same protection and reverence and supported repatriating their remains to the tribes.

For the rest of her life, Pearson strongly advocated for the proper reburial of Indian remains. She argued against anthropologists and archaeologists who supported removing them for academic and scientific study. She contended that most of the research conducted using these remains was inaccessible to living Indians. She travelled to a variety of international conferences and conventions to speak on repatriation issues.

Her activism led to the Iowa Burials Protection Act of 1976, the first of its kind in the United States. This law mandated that legal protection of burials in Iowa extended to ancient burial grounds, unmarked cemeteries, and Native remains. It also established four cemeteries for Indigenous reburials. The federal government passed a similar law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, in 1990.

Pearson occupied several important positions in the state of Iowa. She chaired the Indian Advisory Council of the Office of the State Archaeologist of Iowa and served as the governor's Liaison for Indian Affairs. Additionally, she acted as an advisor on Indian health and rights for the Iowa state legislature, Iowa Lutheran and Methodist churches, and multiple universities. Pearson's outreach to the American Indian community extended to other issues, including alcoholism and substance abuse. The BBC featured her in a 1995 documentary about the archaeology of Indigenous peoples titled *Bones of Contention*.

Pearson raised six children and had twenty-one grandchildren. She died in Ames, Iowa, on 24 May 2003.



Maria Pearson