

CHAPTER EIGHT

Twentieth Century Economic Development and Tourism

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Introduction

At the turn of the nineteenth century, agriculture continued to form the basis of South Dakota's economy. Early settlement had centered on small homesteading farms where immigrants from the eastern United States and Europe struggled with extreme weather conditions, poor soils, and rough terrain to establish a living based on growing crops (corn, wheat, and milo) and raising livestock (cattle, sheep, and horses). When the railroads arrived in South Dakota in 1907, they provided an impetus for economic development focused on travelers drawn to the area by published images of spectacular scenery and adventure.

Pioneers in the Preservation of Natural Landscapes and the Promotion of Travel (ca. 1830-1907)

Individuals with a strong sense of adventure set out in search of the scenic wonders. Artists and writers were among those who traveled to celebrate this landscape in their paintings and written narratives. Combining a sense of awe they felt in viewing the Western scenery, artists also evoked a spiritual sense of the sublime beauty that was unique to the American landscape. Their depiction of the landscape as uniquely American supported Americans' needs to compete with the historic landscapes of the old world. There was also something spiritual about the Western landscape that elevated it to a higher plane. Artists such as Thomas Cole, who depicted this magnificent landscape, drew a direct connection between nature, God and Nation. In 1835, Cole wrote that America's wilderness was its most distinctive feature:

Because in civilized Europe the primitive features of scenery have long since been destroyed or modified... And to this cultivated state our Western world is fast approaching; but nature is still predominant, and there are those who regret that with the improvements of cultivation the sublimity of the wilderness should pass away; for those scenes of solitude from which the hand of nature has ever been lifted, affect the mind with a more deep toned emotion than aught which the hand of man has touched. Amid them the consequent associations are of God the creator—they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things.¹

As some art historians have noted, artists of the American Romantic movement saw themselves “as spiritual leaders who were involved not only with art but with the iconography of nationalism.”² Henry David Thoreau wrote in praise of the undisturbed natural beauty to be found in the Western wilderness, “national preserves...in which the bear, the panther, and some even of the hunter race, may still exist...not for idle sport or

food, but for inspiration and our own true re-creation” and other Transcendentalists influenced Americans’ appreciation of nature.³

Romantic and Enlightenment concepts of nature expressed in the artistic movements of the nineteenth century fueled a conservation movement and spread sentimental ideas of nature through popular literature such as Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables* and Thoreau’s *Walden*. Concern for protection of the environment led to the formation of various organizations such as the Sierra Club, founded by John Muir, Warren Olney, J.H. Sennger, and William Arnesin in 1892; the Audubon Society in 1905; and the Save-the-Redwoods Society in 1918. These organizations contributed to the proliferation of tourism by supporting the establishment of national parks, which by virtue of being managed by the federal government, were seen to be a way to protect vast areas of natural wilderness. In 1899, a statement prepared by the Sierra Club and several other organizations prompted Congress to pass legislation establishing Mount Rainier National Park.⁴

As part of their membership activities, the Sierra Club began organizing annual outings that were intended to introduce interested parties to the landscapes that Sierra Club members hoped to preserve. After the success of the first outing, such trips became a staple of Sierra Club membership, introducing greater numbers to the wonders of outdoor recreation and travel.⁵

Promoting Travel and Tourism (ca.1890s-1939)

Real life experiences, expressed in narrative form, by pioneer women who had personally witnessed the awesome beauty and rugged terrain of the Western landscape, also expanded knowledge of the Western scenic beauty among those who were exposed to literature. Between 1922 and 1939, more than a dozen women wrote novels or stories that featured young pioneer women in prairie homesteads or ranching communities of South Dakota. Unfettered by social customs and relying on their initiative and survival skills, these early female settlers were the chief protagonists and heroines of the stories.⁶

Authors such as Lucile Fargo and Edith Kohl provided a female-dominated view of life on the prairie that had been previously established by writers such as Hamlin Garland in the 1890s. These women were the essence of modernity with their steadfast refusal to follow the traditional path of marriage, dependence on fathers or husbands, and the expectations of homemaking and motherhood that Society had allotted them. Female characters were portrayed as decision-makers and achievers, having a strong sense of purpose and ambition, and succeeding in establishing homesteading claims. These women were strong anchors that held together the core spaces of their communities such as the schools and churches.

Just as the pioneer environment of early South Dakota provided a new field of action for the literary heroine, so the Western landscape offered a new terrain to be explored and conquered by women who were eager to face its physical and emotional challenges. Women, who read authors such as Lucile Fargo, realized they too could succeed in facing the challenges thrust at the protagonist of *Prairie Girl* (1937), in which the pioneer

qualities of self-reliance, physical strength, and fearlessness gave substance to feminist ideas.⁷

The women who came alone to settle in the harsh lands of South Dakota were the inspiration for others who came after them including travelers who were intent on finding a more serious purpose in life than the traditional role they had so far been afforded. Based on her own experiences, Edith Eudora Kohl recounted in *Land of the Burnt Thigh* (1938) her feelings regarding the beauty of the landscape, the proximity to coyotes and wolves, as well as the sheep and cattle of the homesteaders. Edith Kohl set up the printing of a local newspaper, in which she promoted settlement as a cooperative enterprise between people, businesses, and the railroads. Kohl wrote:

“A surprising number of homesteaders were girls who had come alone. They had a purpose in being there. With the proceeds of a homestead they could finish their education or go into business. Many of these girls came from sheltered homes and settled out in the plains wilderness, living alone in isolated shanties.”⁸

While a number of female novelists set their narratives in the homesteading areas of South Dakota, others wrote within the framework of ranching communities west of the Missouri River, or the mining towns of the Black Hills, the setting for many later ‘Western’ movies. Typical of these novels was the prototype ‘cowgirl’ version of the pioneer woman who participated fully in everyday life on the ranch, riding in rodeos, and camping in the untamed landscape that they loved.

Stories provided insight into the lives of the early women settlers in South Dakota and suggested a freedom and opportunity for women to grow and develop. Such sentiments inspired women to travel to the West in search of similar experiences. The idea of the wilderness as a travel destination appealed to women who were interested in testing the limits of their physical abilities as well as tearing down traditional notions of their capabilities. Many Englishwomen, generally those with independent incomes, explored the mountainous regions of the American West. Often traveling alone, or accompanied by single male companions, they hiked mostly in destinations such as the Rocky Mountains and the Yosemite Valley; places that had been opened to tourists through the improvements made in rail transportation and accommodations.

Tourist guidebooks were important commercial influences on the eastern United States as well as overseas, particularly Britain, where popular opinion of these sites in the western United States was fomenting with the view of them as potential travel destinations. In addition to opening up these places to exploration and discovery, the railroads played a significant role in promoting them. Advertisements placed by rail companies in British newspapers and journals beginning in the 1840s praised the virtues and qualities of scenery and recommended preferred travel routes and points of interest. Such promotional material was also available through the railroad land offices and private land companies at depots across the country. In contrast to the colorful and enticing images portrayed through travel guides that promoted tourism by rail travel, the narratives

produced by those who had visited these sites revealed a different picture of this travel experience. Many complained of the deficiencies in accommodation.⁹

The growing interest in the natural world that characterized America in the mid- and late nineteenth century, was fuelled by the rapid urbanization and development of the industrial revolution in the eastern United States, where open space was becoming increasingly hard to find. Natural wonders became prime tourist destinations and an interest in outdoor recreation grew. Some of these natural wonders, such as Niagara Falls, Mammoth Caves, Yellowstone, and Yosemite, came to be seen as travel destinations where man could also find God manifested in natural beauty.¹⁰

Initially, it was principally the elite who traveled to see the sights they had enjoyed in paintings and through literature. As the availability of popular forms of literature increased, thanks to improvements in printing technology between 1860 and 1900, a broader cross-section of America became exposed to the wonders of the Western landscape. Within this developing technology, the illustrated press carved out its own special niche in the market. Serving to expand the public's horizons, this new form of publication brought into the home images of places, people, and ideas only previously imagined. Premier politicians, industrial tycoons, African chiefs, geographic wonders, and mechanical marvels were all suddenly available through the pages of the illustrated newspapers.¹¹

One of the favorite subjects of illustrated newspapers such as *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, produced in Boston, as well as the *Illustrated American News* and *Harper's Weekly* produced in New York, was the image of the West as "an area at once dangerous and exotic, forbidding and appealing."¹² A deep ambivalence began to characterize many Americans' views of the West as it appeared to represent both a 'Garden of Eden' with its untamed and lush landscapes, and a land populated by the unpredictable American Indian. By definition, the West was regarded by Eastern settlers as the place where civilization and savagery met. It was a place defined by myths and illusions, by incomprehensible extremes of weather, grand mountains and geologic formations, with seemingly unending expanses and emptiness. Whatever sentiments the West might conjure in the minds of visitors, one thing was clear, no other nation had a 'Wild West.'¹³

Picturesque America, another popular magazine/display book, depicted the American West as a place of vast wilderness and solitude. According to its subtitle, the book contained pen and pencil renderings of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, waterfalls, canyons, and cities of America. The book also served as a way of promoting national unity after the Civil War. By revealing the wonders of the country, the book allowed American citizens to construct a national self-image based on reconciliation of the North and South and incorporation of the West.

Oliver Bunce Bell, editor of *Picturesque America* was convinced that Americans wanted to know about the dramatic scenery and new travel destinations that existed within their own country. Visitors from Europe had long complained that the United States was

lacking in the monuments of long-established civilizations, that its coasts were dull, that it lacked the majestic mountains of the Swiss Alps, and that its countryside was not groomed like that found in England. Although technological advances had already begun to alter the landscape, books such as the *Picturesque America* were careful not to reveal the impact engineering feats such as railroads, dams, and roads had had on the landscape. Often images were cleansed of anything that might detract from the purity of the landscape. Even settlements and farms were omitted from the depictions, leaving the impression of an eternal natural heritage that was still awaiting discovery.¹⁴

Railroad Development (ca.1889-1907)

Painters, writers, explorers, and returning travelers portrayed the image of the West as paradise, and railroads provided the means by which to access these places. Due to the location of rail lines, visitors could often glimpse from the windows of the rail carriages the scenery that awaited further discovery. This was the case with the Badlands whose towering formations were visible from the cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, as they traveled across the flatlands of the prairies south of, and parallel to, the formations.

But it was only with the arrival of the automobile that travel to destinations such as the Badlands was opened up to a wider public. The automobile facilitated the development of the tourism industry to the point where it eventually competed with the agricultural economy. Development in the small homesteading communities, such as Scenic, Interior, Conata, and Imlay could not have occurred however, without the railroads, which brought in settlers while also opening up trade possibilities for those living in these remote areas.

By 1907, railroad development through the White River valley had begun to affect the character of the landscape. Towns began to spring up, typically every twenty miles along the line where trains stopped to take on water. From east to west, beginning near the town of Kadoka, the watering stops included Weta, Interior, Conata, Imlay, and Scenic. With its proximity to the Badlands and accessibility via the railroad, Interior became a natural stopping place for tourists. The town soon boasted two hotels, two cafes, five saloons, a bank, a Ford dealer, a livery stable, and a newspaper. In 1928, a newspaper column advertised the sale of the Tourist Inn, in Interior. Run for six years by Ray Schultz, the inn was “rated one of the best equipped places, being a combination of hotel, confectionary, and lunchroom.” Nevertheless, it appears that Mr. Schultz was possibly seeking a more lucrative location for his business as the newspaper stated he was “considering opportunities in the Black Hills region of South Dakota, in Wisconsin, and in Hollywood.”¹⁵

The community of Weta witnessed the construction of a hotel in 1908. By 1910 the town appeared to be flourishing with a variety of venues for visitors including a café, the Confectionary Store, and Hotel, as well as McHenry’s Hotel.¹⁶

Lodge, located about eight miles north of Interior, was a small community that had settled around a post office, and offered travelers a place to stay and take refreshment. It was similar to many small communities that dotted the landscape along the White River.

Known as a road house, the Willow Springs was located on the Sidney-Deadwood Trail and offered, as one traveler described it, “Everything a worthy pilgrim desires can be secured.”¹⁷

Another hotel was located at Scenic, the last stop on the rail line before reaching Rapid City. Like several of the other small towns, Scenic had a newspaper, the *Scenic Observer*, a store, a blacksmith shop, and a couple of restaurants. The small hotels that were built at early homesteading towns were likely similar to one on the Old Bismark Trail in the vicinity of Meadow, South Dakota, which was simply a room in a sod house and offered a resting place for travelers (see Figure 5).

Local Recreation as Tourism (1909-1941)

Life in the small towns of the Badlands was mostly taken up with making a living but there were occasions when the locals would create their own amusements and celebrations. Local entertainment attracted residents from the surrounding area and created a local recreation industry. This local recreation also involved the American Indian population and eventually became an attraction that enticed tourists to the area as well as providing an alternative source of income for the local population.

The northern Plains Indians had considered the Badlands their home prior to settlement by Euro-Americans. Between 1880 and 1920, most American Indians struggled with the process of cultural assimilation. The transition from a nomadic, bison-hunting lifestyle to reservation life proved difficult, and tribal members were confronted with far-reaching cultural changes when the federal government assumed ownership of the region. As a consequence, American Indians were forced to experiment with new economic, social, and political practices, based on what their cultures and the Indian Office would allow.¹⁸

Open-range ranching, practiced on reservations, was an endeavor that allowed the American Indians to continue their skills as horsemen. By extension, the entertainment value of cowboying and rodeos was soon recognized and the rodeo developed into a lucrative attraction for paying crowds.¹⁹

In 1919, the town of Interior began to sponsor an annual “Frontier Days” celebration. In part, Frontier Days was intended to celebrate American Indian culture, supplement local income, and promote real estate sales on the Pine Ridge Reservation. In the 1920 program for the event, the White & Campbell Real Estate Company of Interior advertised “Indian Lands” for sale and promised that “cars and men” would be ready to take prospective buyers out.²⁰ The program went on to read:

OUR INDIANS: Most of the Indians who take part in the celebration are Oglala Sioux from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the north boundary being the White River, which is one mile from Interior. In addition to those from the Pine Ridge, there will be noble red men from the Cheyenne and Rosebud Agencies, also from the Lower Brule.... Six big steers have been donated by the cattle men of this vicinity for a daily barbecue for the Indians. Indian pony races, medicine dances, and other things dear to the

Indian heart, the most thrilling of which will be the Omaha Indian dance in full regalia and war paint. Women, children and men take part in this famous dance. From 300 to 500 Indians will participate each day—the dance staged exactly as it was in the old days when the Paleface still kept his wigwam pitched on the eastern side of the Allegheny Mountains.²¹

At such events, the Badlands region was invaded by model T's, Chevies, and Maxwells. The paved road had yet to be introduced and drivers were accustomed to carrying a shovel as they struggled with the wheel ruts that caused high centers in the roads, and contended with wooden bridges over wet ground. When tourists began to visit these events, they mostly carried tents and camping equipment. Interior put in a free campground on the east side of town, furnished with tables and seats. The campground was used for several years, with as many as twenty or thirty cars accommodated at one time.²²

Locally, the rodeo and cowboy show was also a tourist attraction. In 1928, a group of Pine Ridge men formed the Pine Ridge Sioux Rodeo Association designed to generate outside attention, raise revenue, and promote Lakota pride and camaraderie. According to its organizers, the rodeo's primary aim was to put Pine Ridge on the map.²³

The Pine Ridge Sioux Rodeo Association enriched the social environment of the reservation, but also used its revenue to improve the built environment. In 1929, they rehabilitated an existing hall to accommodate the large rodeo crowds, anticipating new uses to include a town hall, community center, and a meeting place. In 1933, the US government used this hall to house Emergency Relief Workers on the reservation.²⁴ Horsemen in the vicinity of the Badlands who became recognized showmen included George Defender from Standing Rock Reservation (1891-1934). Shannon County settlers knew Defender as the "World Champion Indian Rider" and "the great Indian cowboy."²⁵

The Coming of the Automobile (1908-1940)

Although local celebrations and recreation played a role in promoting tourism, the unusual formations of the Badlands continued to serve as the important draw for tourists, just as it had in the 1870s when paleontologists and fur traders first brought word to the east about this important region. Once automobiles became affordable to a wider range of Americans, a dramatic change occurred in the concept of tourism. In fact, mass production of affordable cars revolutionized the way American's viewed travel. No longer was travel to the exotic wonders of the West the province of the wealthy, or a sentimental and philosophical exercise, it was now open to the common man to find joy in experiencing the outdoors. The person "who thrills in an elemental contact with the reality of nature..." who appreciates that: "There is more than 'scenery' to be complacently inspected; there is the life and atmosphere of the West to be lived."²⁶

A new concept of outdoor recreation was formed with the help of the automobile and the establishment of good roads—one was equally dependent on the other, and South Dakota was one of the earliest and most aggressive states in promoting and encouraging automobile tourism in the 1920s. The state's scenic roads and tourist lodges precede

some of the earliest automobile parkways in the eastern United States. Many survive today, and continue to serve the needs of travelers.²⁷

Development of good roads also needed the legislation of a dedicated political advocate. In 1905, Senator Peter Norbeck made the first automobile trip from Pierre to the Black Hills by means of the Deadwood Trail. Norbeck's description of the roads reveals how difficult it must have been to travel, even in areas that were already becoming popular tourist destinations.

We drove from Fort Pierre to within two or three miles of the Grindstone Buttes the first day where we stopped at a ranch, which was also a post office. We were caught in heavy rains and remained there for several days. Mail was then brought by horseback from Philip and we were told it was 13 miles. After the roads dried up a little we proceeded to Rapid City but had a team help us along for twenty or thirty miles. We found the water too high in the Cheyenne River to cross on our own power but fortunately three cowboys came along and kindly hitched their ropes to the car and towed us across on a gallop. We reached the Rapid City without any serious trouble. We were then caught in a heavy snowstorm and had to leave the car and take the train for home via Sioux City.²⁸

In general, the dirt roads that led to the Badlands were wagon roads that followed east-west section lines. When it was necessary to deviate to the north or south they turned at a sharp right angle in order to conform to the survey pattern. Most deviations from the east-west direction occurred where the topography necessitated a divergence, west of the Missouri River. Thus, while the railroads influenced the location of towns across South Dakota, the topography, and the United States Public Land Survey also contributed to location of roads, which, in turn, influenced further development.²⁹

Where dirt roads existed, some determined travelers persevered to visit the sights they had heard and read about. A federally supported road improvement program, however, was needed before visitors would come in large numbers to the scenic wonders of places as remote as the Badlands (see Figure 6).

The Role of Government in Developing Infrastructure (ca. 1910-1942)

In 1916, when the Federal Aid Road Act was passed it signaled recognition that better roads were essential to the national welfare and that highway improvement was a national as well as a local responsibility. US involvement in the First World War highlighted the need for a coherent network of trunk highways rather than simply a piecemeal collection of local roads.³⁰

Between 1913 and 1919 the number of registered vehicles in South Dakota increased from fewer than 15,000 to more than 100,000. Such an increase added to the need for improved road conditions, as more people than ever before were traveling for pleasure as well as traveling further distances. The increase in tourism began to profoundly affect the

country's economy. A surge in engineering-related construction encompassed road building as well as bridges and tunnels. Construction of highway facilities for the newly mobile millions was a necessary byproduct of increased travel and as a result created new sources of employment. Cars and people needed services; the days when the motorist had to rely on the general store for his gasoline and the local blacksmith for auto repairs were suddenly part of history. Now 'filling stations' with visitor facilities such as cafes, restaurants, and restrooms, as well as curio stores, lined the highways that led to tourist destinations.³¹

Although the Badlands had long been a place of interest, it was extremely difficult to access. The Black Hills on the other hand was more easily accessible, and promotion of this area as a resort attracted visitors, who once they had arrived in the area, likely considered the drive to the Badlands within the range of possibilities. The discovery of gold in 1874 had first drawn attention to the Black Hills as a destination in the late nineteenth century. In the 1920s, the area was seen as a tourist destination with such prominent figures as President Coolidge spending his summers in the Black Hills. In 1927 work began on the Mount Rushmore memorial, which led to the development of a gravel highway from Rapid City through Keystone to Custer State Park and the extension of the highway from the town of Custer to Wyoming, to provide access to Mount Rushmore from either the east or the west. Completion of this highway prompted a new routing of US Route 16 from its original alignment as South Dakota Route 9, which had previously taken traffic northwest from Rapid City.³²

US Route 16 originated in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and crossed southern Minnesota and South Dakota before extending to north central Wyoming. Serving as a principal east-west highway it linked Sioux Falls and Mitchell with Rapid City and became the favored route across South Dakota to the Badlands, the Black Hills, and Yellowstone. The forerunner of US Route 16 was a series of dirt roads that connected the small towns that had sprung up around homesteads and the railroad, but by the end of 1936, the highway was fully surfaced.³³

US Route 14 was another highway that ran across South Dakota. US Route 14 was originally called the "Black and Yellow Trail," which, according to information available from the Federal Highway Administration, referred to the road's role in linking the Black Hills and Yellowstone National Park.

South Dakota took great pride in providing quality roads to travel destinations. In 1942, a brochure advertising tourism in South Dakota indicated an image with roads surfaced in gravel with safety poles at the corners. The wording of the brochure indicated:

Good Roads: Two hardsurfaced dustless highways reach from the eastern border to the western boundary. Along their routes are many places of historic interest and scenic features unique to the state. Widely traveled visitors frequently state that they are able to make more miles with safety over South Dakota Roads than anywhere else. The higher altitude aids visibility and the long stretches of straight road make it possible to keep

going at a steady pace. Without slackening for frequent curves. Stretches of 25 miles without a deviating curve are common, and 50 miles in a bee-line are not unusual. South Dakota highways have gained a national reputation for safety. In 1940 they were given the best safety record in the United States.³⁴

As improved travel routes opened areas to tourist traffic, services blossomed along roadsides within town limits. Many of these were gas stations, some of which boasted cafes or restaurants and were accompanied by campgrounds. By 1939, there were 24 gas stations in Jackson County with 21 of them directly fronting US Route 16. In Pennington County there were 51 gas stations, 24 of which fronted US 16.³⁵

As mentioned earlier, the principal accommodation and service facility open to the traveler in the early days of tourism was the private room, or the hotel that was often a room on a private ranch. Most of these facilities were very primitive. As tourism became accessible to the less wealthy traveler, the camping ground became more prevalent. Communities sometimes provided such facilities, usually without charge. They offered space, water, wood, electricity, laundry and sanitary facilities, lounging and dancing rooms, police protection and sometimes even daily newspapers in the hope that visitors would stay long enough to spend money in the local community.³⁶

In conjunction with the increased availability of roads to destinations unknown, literature provided insight into the best places and means to camp. One such book was J.C. and John D. Long's *Motor Camping*, published in 1923, by Dodd, Mead and Co. of New Jersey. They recommended the national and state parks as good places to find camping facilities, but suggested local opportunities for camping also existed. In the vicinity of the Badlands, campgrounds existed in the towns of Deadwood, Cottonwood, and Kadoka. By 1927, Ben Millard and Senator Peter Norbeck had begun to seek the perfect place to site a refreshment stand, a hotel, and a camp in the area that would eventually become Badlands National Park.

With the surge in camping activities, automobile companies began designing cars that could convert to camping, such as the Reo "Speed Bungalow" or the Hudson-Essex "Pullman Coach." By the 1930s, increasing numbers of camps were being constructed in national and state parks, and motor camps or courts began to provide other options, ranging from primitive shacks or tents with a common bath, to luxurious hotel cottages and efficiency bungalows. By the 1950s, more tourists were using the motor courts than hotels or resorts.³⁷

Further improvements to roads came in 1956 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized funding for an Interstate Highway system. In the area of the Badlands, Interstate 90 (I-90) connected to US Route 14, which ran east-west north of the Pinnacles Entrance of the North Unit. It also lay in close proximity to the town of Wall.

US Route 16A had been a secondary road that funneled traffic north from the Badlands and west of Kadoka to the north and was originally part of South Dakota Route 40. The

Route 16A alignment was applied between 1944 and 1948. When I-90 was constructed, Route 16A conveniently led from the Badlands National Monument to I-90. By 1962, the east end was truncated to Cactus Flats, at I-90. In 1980, the route was re-designated as SD-240 after mainline US Route 16 was decommissioned east of Rapid City.³⁸

When I-90 was proposed, running east to west and north of the Badlands Wall, the town of Wall lobbied successfully to have two exits lead into town, an unusual accomplishment for a town its size. Wall possessed a special advantage in that it lay in close proximity to the convergence of US Route 14 and US Route 16 before following one route west toward Rapid City, cutting through town on the north side. The proximity of I-90 as well as the development of US Route 16A, which funneled tourists from the Badlands to I-90 stimulated the tourism industry, and hotels, restaurants and cafes, and curio stores developed in the area. Wall Drug was one of the attractions that drew tourists into town. In the 1930s, Wall Drug was just one of many small businesses struggling to make a living from the tourist trade. Owners Dorothy and Ted Hustead hit on the idea of enticing weary tourists off the highway by offering free ice water. The gimmick worked and this, together with other enticements, continues to lure visitors to this day.

In the vicinity of the Badlands, families that had previously eked out a living by homesteading, began to see the opportunities presented by increasing numbers of travelers to the area who needed both a place to stay and services for their automobiles. Leslie and Jessie Crew were descendants of a homesteading family in the area of Cottonwood on the Badlands Wall. In 1932, the Crew family moved three miles west of the original homestead site and established a ranch. In 1934, they opened one of the first tourist businesses in the area—a Standard Oil Station with curios and cold drinks (see Figure 7). In 1964, the couple built the Cactus Flat Campground on the ranch, which Jessie continued to operate until 1977, when she sold it to her son Keith, who changed its name to Circle 10 Corral Campground to reflect the original site of the old Circle 10 Corral where cattle had been rounded up since 1900.

In 1962, Keith and his wife Dorothy purchased and restored what had been a homestead belonging to the Brown family. It was a sod dwelling, typical of early homesteading practices. The dwelling was restored and interpreted to provide tourists with insight into early twentieth-century life in the Badlands. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1970, the Crew family further catered to travelers by constructing the Prairie Fuels gas station at Cactus Flat, which has since expanded to a mini-mart Amoco Station.³⁹

Another tourist attraction in the Badlands area was located at Scenic. In the 1920s one traveler wrote:

We follow Highway number 40 through other Badland wonders five miles farther. The road is very good. At Scenic we visit the widely known Museum Filling Station. Here we see a beautiful and interesting collection of stones from the Black Hills. In fact the entire building is covered with

rocks, fossils and other interesting things embedded in concrete. Prehistoric animal bones and Indian relics from the Badlands are within.⁴⁰

After World War II, tourist camps evolved into overnight housing known as motels. Most were family-owned establishments with an average size of twenty-five units. They provided an easy way to buy into the tourism industry, as all that was needed was a small tract of farmland on the outskirts of town, and very few personnel to operate the establishment. Many retired couples opened motels as a way of investing savings. After 1950, however, large chains began to compete with the family-run places, which could not keep up with rapidly changing facilities and modernized equipment. Gradually the motel industry moved from the outskirts of towns into the urban centers and along stretches of highways.

With improved roads and lodging for the vacationer, the State of South Dakota worked diligently to promote tourism as a major source of income. The South Dakota Travel Guide advertised the wide and diverse range of recreational opportunities that were available year-round. With its many lakes and rivers, forests, mountains, and plains, South Dakota was a prime destination for activities such as pheasant, deer, elk, and waterfowl hunting, and fishing. Summer sports included rodeos, hiking and trail walking, swimming, tennis, and golf.

The large increase in recreational travel soon overtook the South Dakotan manufacturing industry in terms of annual income and dollar volume. A 1955 study revealed that over half the population of the United States took a vacation annually and traveled almost 12 million miles with 90 percent of that travel undertaken by private automobile.⁴¹

In 1958, South Dakota boasted approximately 600 motels with 7,000 units that generated an income representing a large share of the state's service industry. The number of motels in South Dakota exceeded the number of those in the neighboring states of Nebraska by 150 and North Dakota by 400. South Dakota motels were considered uniquely positioned geographically to serve the nation's touring public. With attractions such as the Black Hills, the Badlands, and Custer State Park, and highways well-suited to reach them, South Dakota was well positioned to develop a highly successful tourism industry.

In the 1950s the National Park Service recognized the rapidly growing potential for tourism to tap into the consumer society, where travel was easier than ever, roads were safe, and the resources had been folded into well-managed sites. After a World War II-era dearth in funds negatively impacted the tourist trade by allowing national parks' facilities to deteriorate, a new impetus was heralded in 1956 to create massive change and restore the tourism industry. The Mission 66 program, as it was called, infused millions of dollars into the development of facilities at national parks, and in turn the renewed tourism industry spilled over into neighboring communities, providing employment and revitalizing small towns. There is no doubt that the natural and cultural resources of South Dakota, in particular the Badlands and the Black Hills, have long been recognized as a lucrative source of income, and the resources of these natural areas have been successfully harnessed to support an economy primarily based on tourism.



Source: Library of Congress.

Figure 5: Pioneer Hotel, typical early twentieth century tourism accommodation.



Source: National Park Service.

Figure 6: Ca. 1917 Driving in the Badlands.



Source: Photograph courtesy of Keith Crew; reprinted from *Prairie Homestead*, p. 10.

Figure 7: Promoting tourism in the Badlands, ca. 1920.

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- ¹ Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America, A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 135.
- ² Art Historian Barbara Novak quoted in Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America, A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 134.
- ³ Henry David Thoreau, "Chesuncook," in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. II (August 1858): 317, quoted in Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 91.
- ⁴ History of the Sierra Club, online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/history/> (accessed Oct. 3, 2005).
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