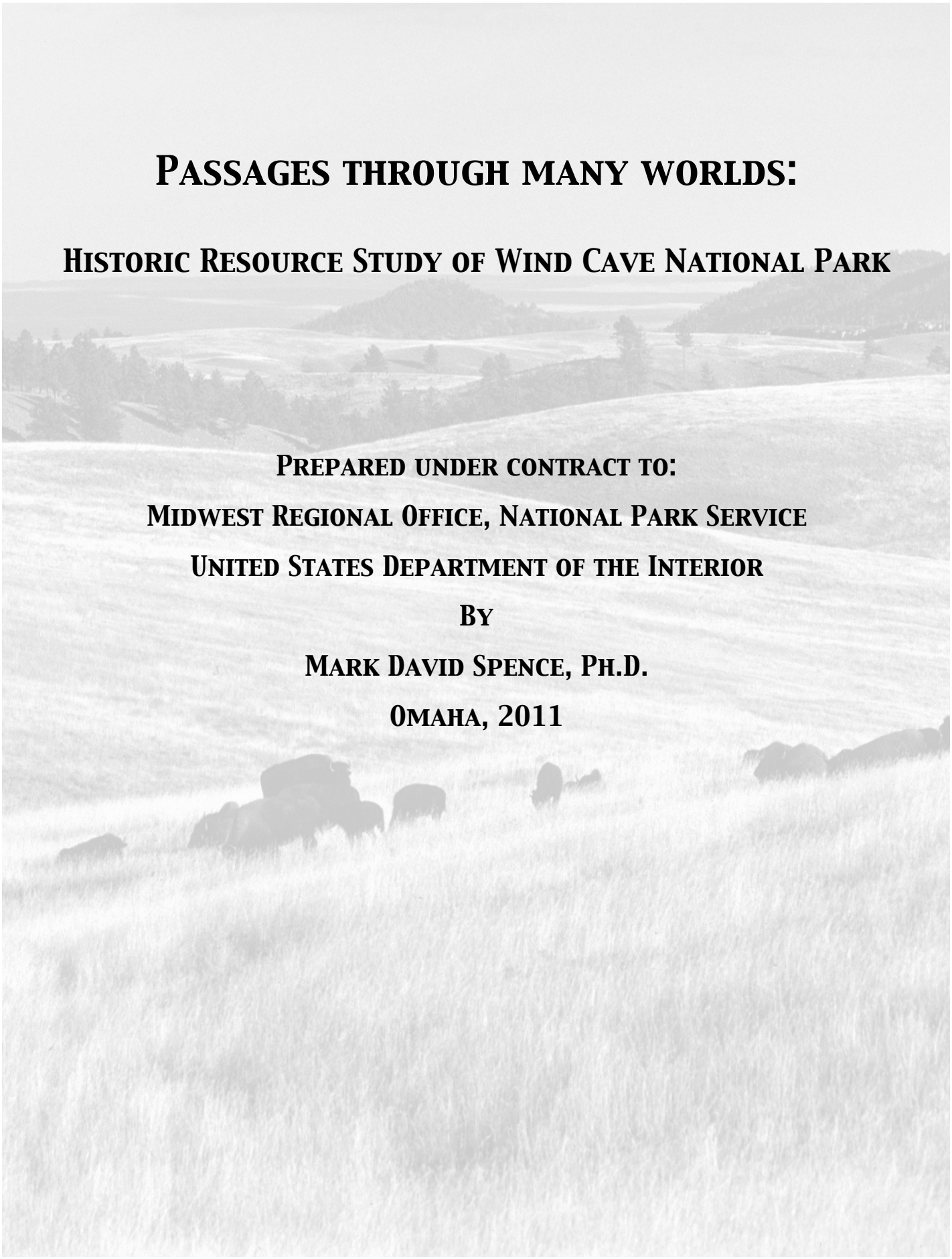
Passages through many worlds:

Historic Resource Study of Wind Cave National Park



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By

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INTRODUCTION

TWO WORLDS MULTIPLIED

Located in the southern Black Hills of South Dakota, Wind Cave National Park is bordered by the Black Hills National Forest on the west, Custer State Park on the north, and private lands on the east and south. Nearby communities include Hot Springs, Custer, and Buffalo Gap, all located within 10-15 miles of the park headquarters. The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Badlands National Park, which are visible from high points within Wind Cave National Park, lie some 20 miles east of the park boundary. Originally signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt on 9 January 1903, the Act "To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park" created the seventh national park in the United States and the first devoted to the protection of a "cavern underlying … certain tracts, pieces, or parcels of land."[1] Subsequent legislation enlarged the park and expanded its purpose to include the preservation and protection of subterranean and surface ecosystems as well as significant cultural and historical resources.

Wind Cave is often referred to as one park that is composed of "two worlds," one above ground and one below the surface.[2] The underground world of the park is its namesake feature: a vast, complex, and often ornate realm of chambers and passages that make up one of the world's longest caves. The surface world of the park covers 28,295 acres of mixed-grass prairie, canyons, creeks, and Ponderosa pine forest. The prairies and grasslands support the other signature feature of Wind Cave; the array of native wildlife that includes bison (*Bos bison bison*), elk (*Cervus canadensis*), pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), black-footed ferrets (*Mustela nigripes*), and a host of migratory and resident bird species.

These two realms, in some respects as different as night and day, are themselves equally part of processes and places that extend well beyond the park's limited bounds. The cave is the product of the same ancient geological and hydrological processes that have formed the Black Hills over millions of years, and is just one spectacular example of the many caves that honeycomb the Paha Sapa Limestone belt that encircles the mountainous core of the Hills. While the surface landscape sits atop this same plateau of limestones, sandstones, and shales, the park's boundary also extends up into the well forested granitic core of the Hills, down across foothills and tablelands to the grasslands of the Red Valley, or Race Track, and over the high-ridged hogback that delineates the outer edge of the Black Hills from the surrounding High Plains. The park thus encompasses a sampling of the five physiographic regions of the Black Hills and their related environments, and traces in the space of a few

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[1] Quote is from U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 63, "An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park," Public Act no. 16: 765.

[2] The current film presentation in the park's visitor center is *Wind Cave: One Park, Two Worlds*, directed by Chris Wheeler (Centennial, CO: Great Divide Pictures, 2001).

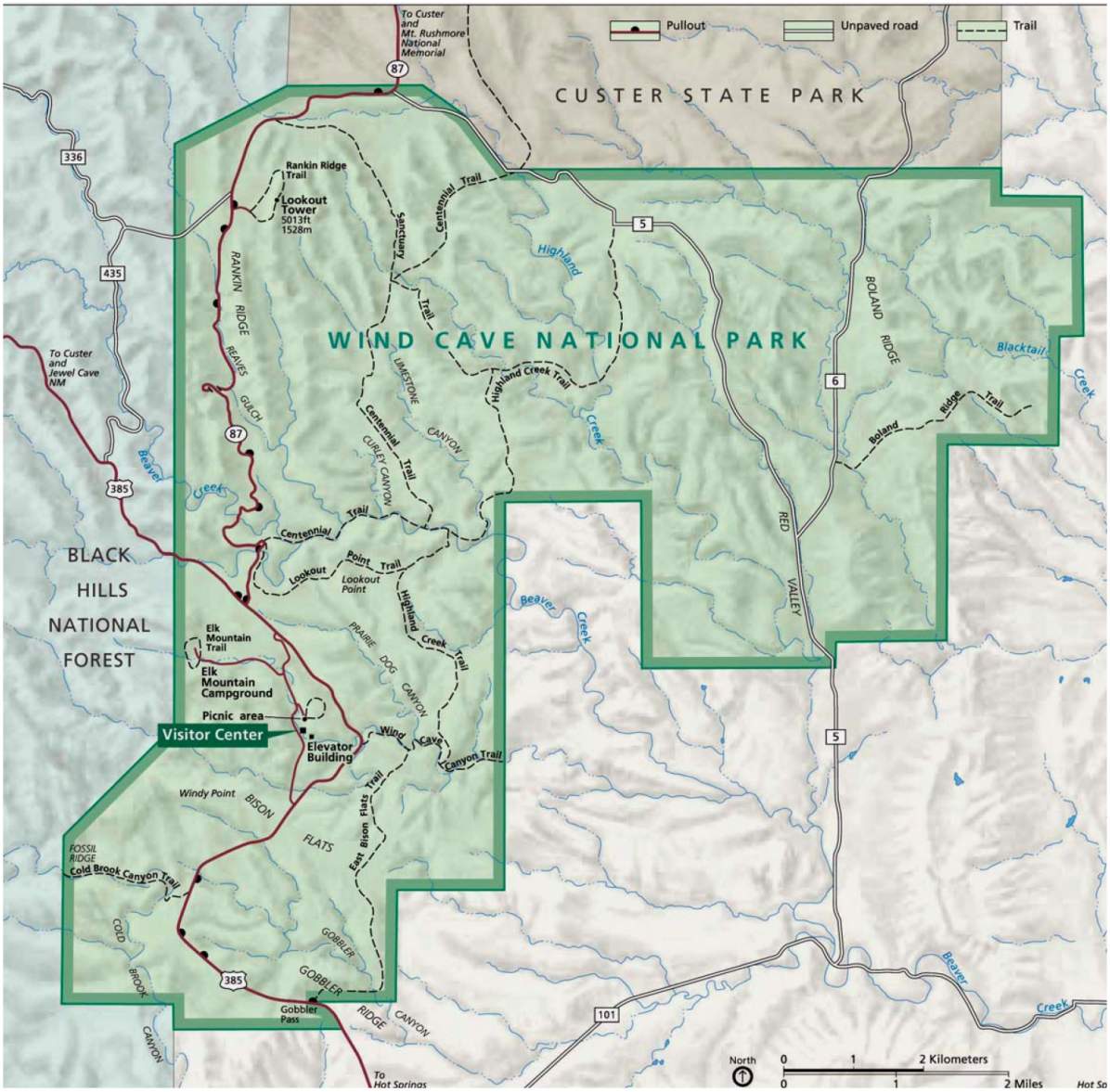

Figure I.1: Map of Wind Cave National Park. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

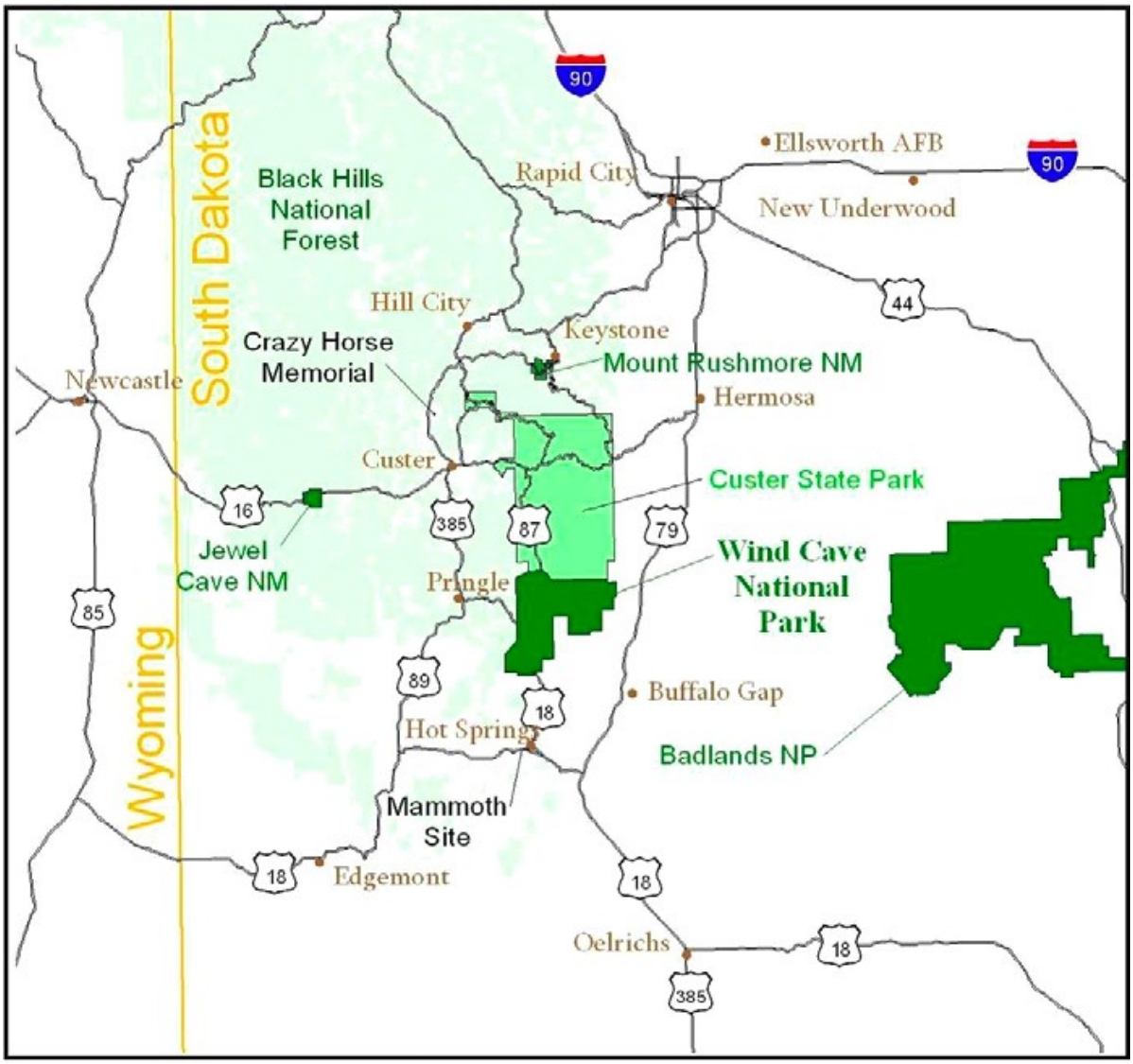

Figure I.2: Map of Wind Cave National Park and Vicinity. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

miles the transition between two very distinct biomes.[3]

Because this relatively small national park presents such a breadth of topographic and environmental conditions, the best way to introduce the landscapes of Wind Cave National Park is in the broader context of two other "worlds:" the Black Hills and the Great Plains. Rising some 4,000 feet above the surrounding grasslands, the Black Hills have aptly been described as an "island on the plains."[4] Indeed, the forests, canyons and peaks can seem a world unto themselves—a realm of cool streams, rocky clefts and sheltered prairies or parklands that stands apart from the vast plains of South Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska.

Though in many respects like the Rocky Mountains and other ranges further west, the Hills possess an especially rich biodiversity that has been fostered by their isolation. Near the very center of North America, and at the far perimeter of the continent's northern, southern, eastern and western ecosystem provinces, they harbor an uncommon array of plants and animals that is stunning in its variety and breadth. Eastern deciduous plants and trees, northern conifers and birches, western pines and aspens, Great Plains and Midwestern prairie grasses all grow in close proximity, and support an equally varied assortment of birds, mammals, and insects.

The biodiversity of the Black Hills certainly mirrors some of the classic elements of island biogeography. Like a remote island in the ocean, the Black Hills are home to endemic species like the Black Hills Spruce (*Picea glauca* var. *densata*) that evolved within the relative isolation of the Hills. The montane grasslands of the Black Hills represent another aspect of island ecology, one that is more about the formation of unique habitats and populations than particular species. Though comprised of grasses and plants that are relatively common in other parts of the continent, the particular mixture of prairie and steppe species that occurs in the Hills is considered endemic as well as threatened.[5]

Rather than set the Hills apart from their surroundings, these island-like qualities have made this special region the center of a much broader world. The Black Hills have long been a key refuge and nursery for Great Plains animal life, especially large fauna like bison, elk, and pronghorn as well as mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). The Hills are also the source of numerous streams that pour into the plains and form the major tributaries of the Cheyenne River, which provides critical habitat for plains wildlife and sustains commercial livestock operations and a host of small communities in western South Dakota. Conversely, this island world pulls in life from far and wide; something that is most apparent in the numbers of migratory fowl from across the Americas

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[3] Sven G. Froiland, *Natural History of the Black Hills, South Dakota* (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Center for Western Studies, 1978), 11-24; Robert G. Bailey, *Description of the Ecoregions of the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1995); David M. Olson, et al, "Terrestrial Ecoregions of the World: A New Map of Life on Earth," *BioScience* 51 (November 2001): 933-38.

[4] Marcel Kornfeld and Alan J. Osborn, eds,. *Islands on the Plains: Ecological, Social, and Ritual Use of Landscapes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003); Edward Raventon, *Island in the Plains: A Black Hills Natural History* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1994).

[5] Other notable endemic species include the White-winged Junco (*Junco hyemalis aikeni*) and the Black Hills Mountainsnail (*Oreohelix cooperi*). Froiland, *Natural History of the Black Hills*, *passim.*

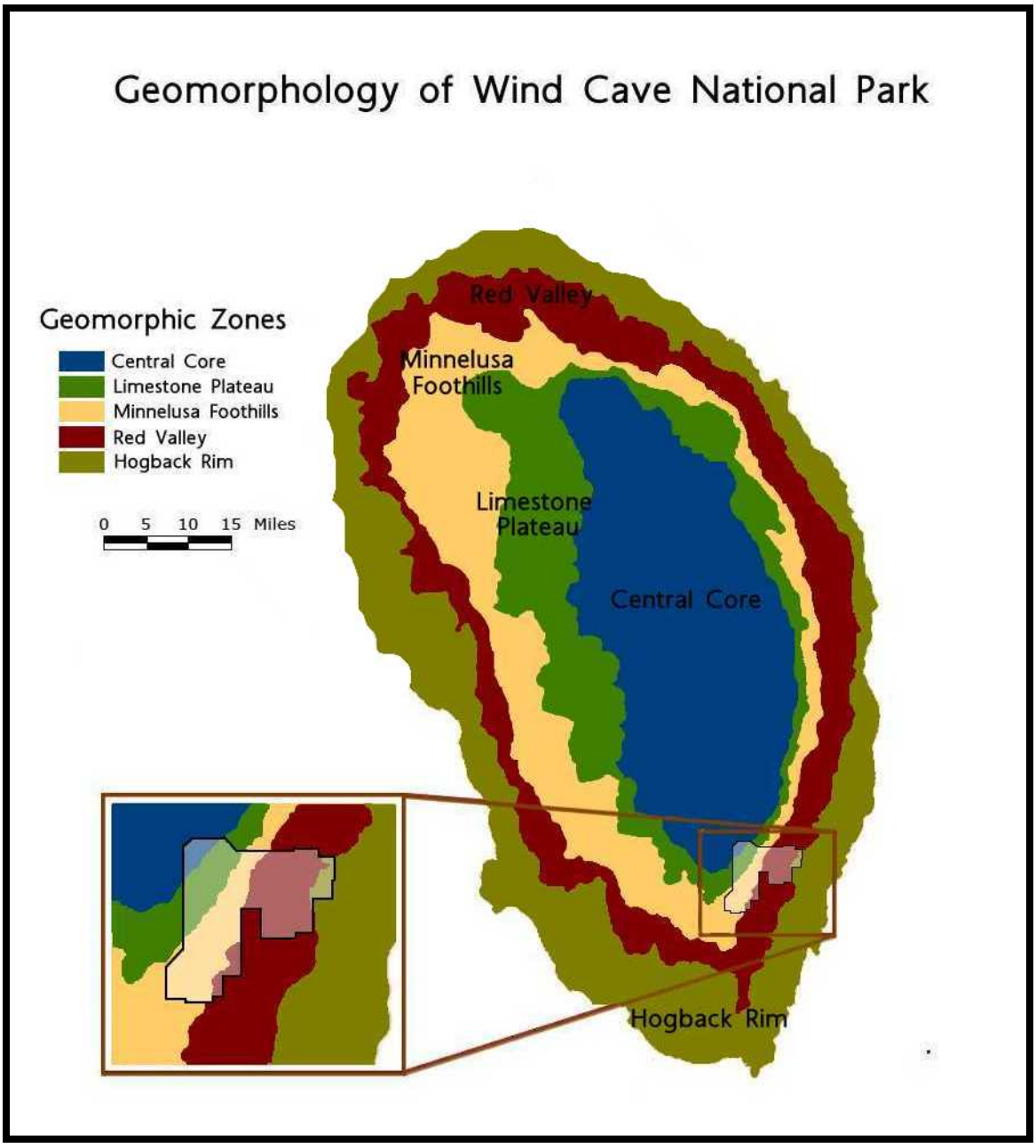

Figure I.3: Geomorphology of Wind Cave National Park. Image depicts the five geomorphologic, or physiographic, zones of the Black Hills and their approximate locations within Wind Cave National Park.

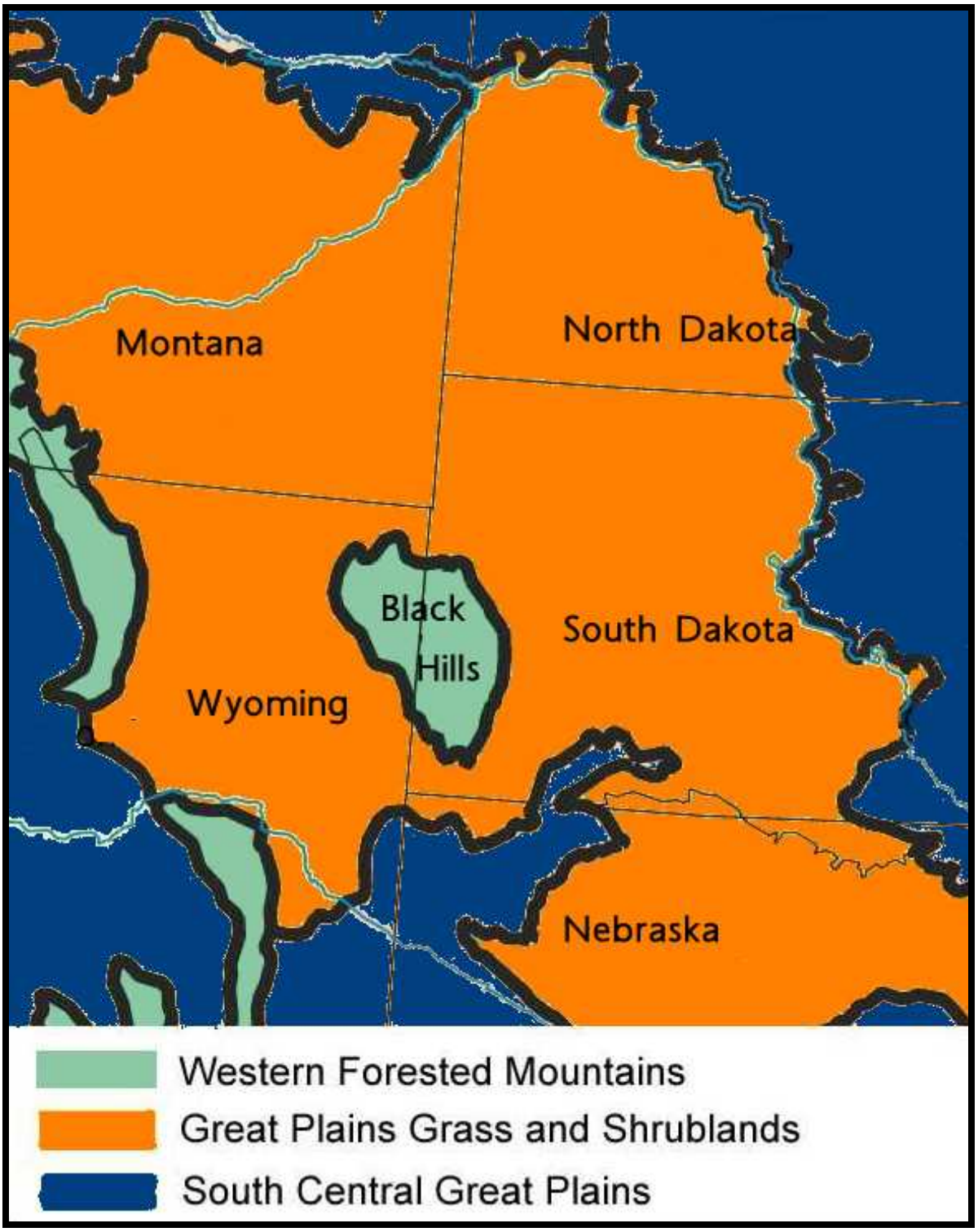

Figure I.4: Biomes of the Northwestern Plains. Source: Map based on material from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

that move through the area and the many nesting sites used by year-round bird populations that thrive well outside the core of their home ranges.[6]

It is through this integrative dynamic, where the forests, streams, canyons, and prairies contribute to the vitality of the surrounding plains, and vice versa, that the true significance of the Black Hills becomes most apparent. This is especially evident along the edge of the Hills, where the island "shoreline" meets the "sea of grass" to create a rich zone of biodiversity. Blessed with ready access to the resources of plains, foothills and peaks, this transition area has long been a place of respite and residence for countless human generations. With the Hills providing shelter from winter storms and relief from summer heat, and clear streams flowing out to the rich grasslands, the meeting of mountains and prairie has made human life possible on the northwestern Great Plains for thousands of years.

A Southern Embayment

Wind Cave National Park lies within one of the largest, most biologically and culturally rich transition zones between the Hills and the surrounding plains. Situated at the head of what might be described as a kind of "embayment" in the Black Hills "island," the national park is in an area where the vast grasslands pour into and mix with the gradually sloping southern Hills. Bisected and framed by the Fall River and Beaver Creek drainages, which flow southward and southeastward from the park area, this section of the Black Hills is open to the Plains through the broad openings in the Hogback that have been cut through the Cascade Springs area to the south and the Buffalo Gap to the east of the national park. With open access to the surrounding Plains, but set between the foothills and the Hogback, this "bay" has long been a sheltered haven for bison, elk, pronghorn and other wildlife. The place name Buffalo Gap corresponds to these special conditions, which provided an important winter refuge and springtime nursery for bison. As Native peoples described it for countless generations, the animals seemed to emerge from the Black Hills every spring as they passed through the natural break in the Hogback and pushed on to the Plains.

Important as a key transition zone between two very different environments, this area is marked by a number of special features that have long made it attractive for human residence and visitation. The southern Black Hills, where Wind Cave is located and the Fall River is the largest stream, are more temperate than the central and northern Hills and are frequently warmed in winter by Chinook winds that push down from the higher peaks. This makes the area more habitable in the winter months and keeps grazing areas free of snow cover. While these conditions are not exclusive to this section of the Hills, the thermal springs along the Fall River in the town of Hot Springs are entirely unique within the Black Hills.

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[6] Kathleen F. Weaver, Tamara Anderson, and Robert Guralnick, "Combining Phylogenetic and Ecological Niche Modeling Approaches to Determine Distribution and Historical Biogeography of Black Hills Mountain Snails (*Oreohelicidae*)," *Diversity and Distributions: A Journal of Conservation Biogeography* 12, no. 6 (October 27 2006): 756-66. Ronald W. Turner, *Mammals of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming*, *Miscellaneous Publication no. 60* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1974; Froiland, *Natural History of the Black Hills*, *passim.*

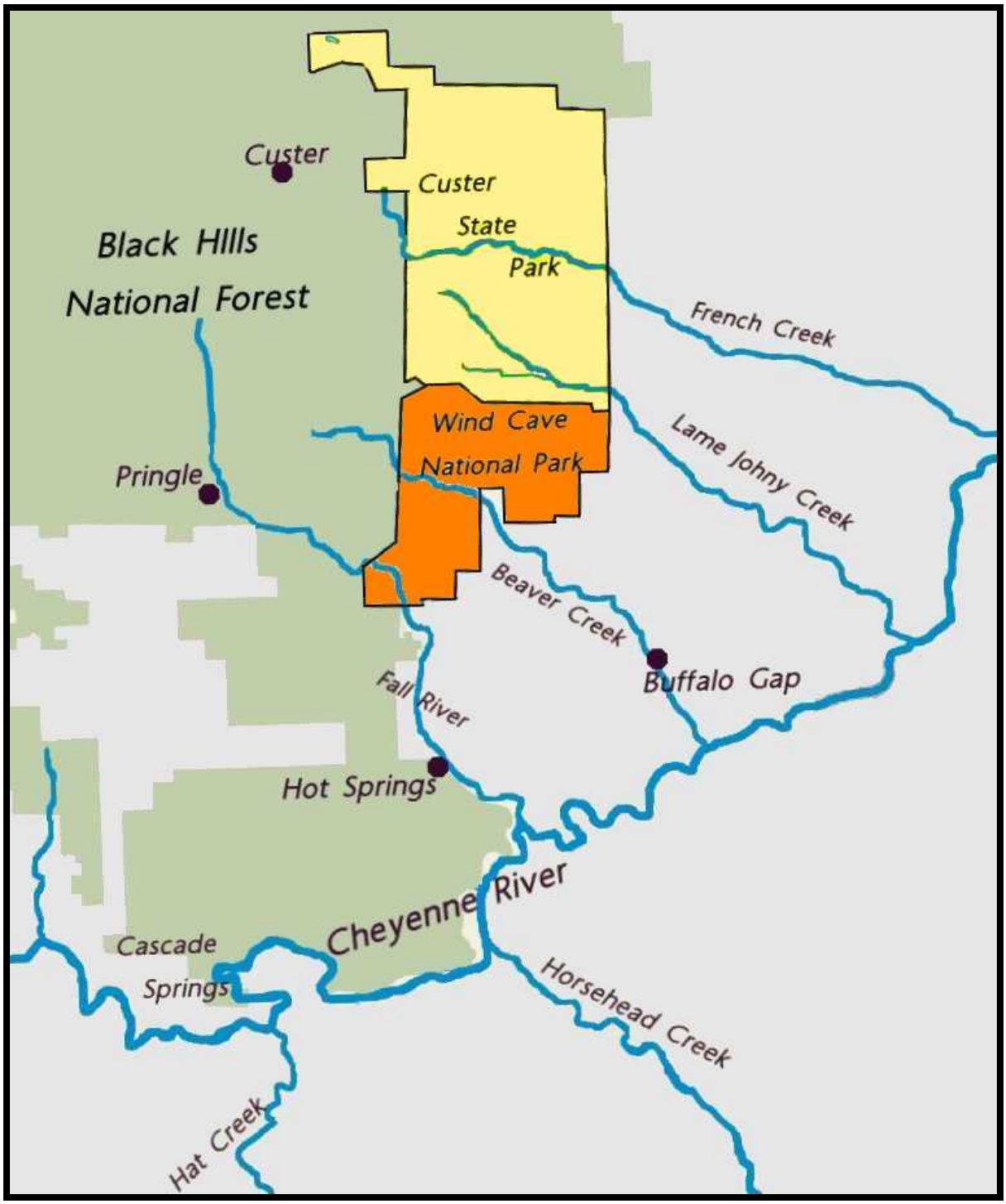

Figure I.5: Southern Embayment and Primary Drainage Patterns: Lower elevation gradients and a broader interface with the Great Plains and the Cheyenne River mark the topography and ecology of the southeastern Black Hills.

Figure I.6: Southern Embayment: View from Rankin Ridge toward the southeast, overlooking the Beaver Creek drainage, Buffalo Gap and the surrounding Plains toward Badlands National Park and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

And as the only source of naturally warm waters for hundreds of miles around, they have long given the area a special significance.[7]

The Wind Cave-Hot Springs-Buffalo Gap area is also an important bridgehead to the ecologically and culturally significant Pine Ridge escarpment to the south. Hat Creek, which flows northward into the Cheyenne River opposite the Cascade Springs area, is a long, winding stream that presents a natural pathway across the plains between the western end of the Pine Ridge and the southern Hills. There are other significant qualities that define this part of the Black Hills, including important mineral resources and the cave itself, that will be discussed in the following chapters. At this juncture, however, it is enough to note that a variety of conditions have fostered a long and rich history of human use and residence that stretches back thousands of years and continues through to the present.

Framework and Purpose

The diverse landscapes and special environmental features of Wind Cave National Park—both above ground and below—led to the park's establishment and expansion, and continue to define its purpose: to protect, restore, and manage park resources in a manner that "allows for scientific research and provides for public use and enjoyment in ways that leave the resources unimpaired for future generations."[8] The significance of the park's rich environment also lies in its past, and in the many generations it has sustained. The geological and ecological properties of the southern Hills shaped, even determined, how people lived, thrived, and died in the area. By the same token, thousands of years of human residence, visitation, and seasonal use shaped the arrangements of forest and grasslands, of animals and plants, and became an integral part of larger environmental processes. In countless ways the actions, beliefs, and accomplishments of distinct cultures and communities have left their marks on the park landscape.

The overt signs of past human use and habitation are often faint, but they stretch back some 10,000 years: these include the ancient Paleoindian materials found at the Beaver Creek Shelter, the remains of mass bison kills at the Sanson Buffalo Jump (just outside the current park boundary), tipi rings from Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho seasonal encampments that remained in use until the second half of the nineteenth century, the debris left by prospectors, and the crumbled foundations of old ranch buildings and farmsteads. Such a lengthy and wide array of material artifacts speaks to the vitality and draw of the Wind Cave area, which remains a place of special importance to Native peoples as well as the descendants of more recent non-Indian settlers. These signs of past use and habitation, and the broader effects on the landscape that they represent, also remind us that Wind Cave National Park is situated in a many-storied place; one that is more richly appreciated and better managed when these stories are integrated into its protection and restoration.

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[7] To the west, some 300 miles away, the nearest thermal waters are in the city of Thermopolis, Wyoming. To the east, the nearest hot springs are in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas at Hot Springs National Park.

[8] Quote from *Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Wind Cave National Park, Custer County, South Dakota* ([Denver]: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1994), 1.

Scope

The National Park Service defines a Historic Resource Study as "a baseline study that provides a historical overview of a park and identifies and evaluates the Park's cultural resources within a historic context."[9] While the present work abides by this basic definition, it also endeavors to make clear the interrelations between what the National Park Service often distinguishes as natural and cultural resources. Intended for a readership that includes resource managers, park planners, interpreters, cultural resource specialists, and the interested public, the current study draws on and is a companion to a number of recent studies on the history, culture and ecology of Wind Cave National Park and its surrounding environs. Among these are John Milner Associates, Rivanna Archaeological Consulting, and Bahr Vermeer & Haecker Architects, *Wind Cave National Park: Cultural Landscape Report* (2005); Jennifer Galindo, *Wind Cave Archeological Inventory Project: Final Report* (2004); Patricia C. Albers, "The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park" (2003); and "Bison Management Plan and Environmental Documentation: Wind Cave National Park" (2006). Along with other Wind Cave related studies cited in the bibliography, this Historic Resource Study also borrows from and contributes to a growing scholarly literature on the environmental and cultural history of the Black Hills.

The present study is composed of an Introduction and twelve chapters. The first eleven chapters are grouped in four distinct parts. Part One covers the geology and paleo-ecology of the southern Black Hills as well as ancient human residence and use of the area. Part Two focuses on the cultural, material, and political significance of the southern Black Hills for different proto-historic and historic Native communities, as well as the competing significance the area held for different Native groups and non-Indians in the nineteenth century. Part Three covers commercial (grazing, homesteading, mining, etc.) and recreational (development of Hot Springs, cave tours, etc.) land use regimes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Part Four explores the historical developments behind the creation of Wind Cave National Park in 1903. The final chapter represents the fifth part of this study, and briefly takes up matters related to the administration of Wind Cave National Park from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s. These will include the U.S. Biological Survey's administration of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve and the Civilian Conservation Corps' work at Wind Cave National Park.

The five-part division gives a simple, overall structure to the narrative, which proceeds both chronologically and thematically through the twelve chapters. The chapters are further divided into sections to provide greater topical specificity. This should make the work more accessible to selective and subsequent use by administrators, staff, and interested readers. The topics in each chapter and section will reflect the recurrence of the following key themes:

[9] *Bulletin 28: Cultural Resource Management Guidelines* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d.), 7.

A. Fundamental environmental conditions and their relation to historical use and development
B. Human impacts on the environment (i.e., the shaping and perpetuation of cultural landscapes)
C. The relation of past land use regimes to park management objectives (re. restoration, protection, interpretation)
D. Tourism and regional development
E. Cultural associations with park sites and resources
F. Role of other (non National Park Service) agencies in shaping parkscape
G. Tribal concerns

Historical and Local Significance of Wind Cave National Park

While this study is ultimately concerned with the history of areas prior to their incorporation into Wind Cave National Park, it also seeks to make plain that the past deeply informs the park's own unique history since its establishment. The creation of Wind Cave National Park in 1903, which involved reserving specific tracts of land "from settlement, entry, sale, or other disposal and set apart as a public park," removed the park area from surrounding land uses and connected it to a loosely defined system of federally administered park lands.[1] Yet the establishment and early development of the national park was closely tied to new local and regional efforts to promote tourism, outdoor recreation, and resource conservation. Though representing a new approach to land management and commercial development, these developments still reflected many of the distinct environmental and historical conditions that characterized the southern Black Hills. Some of these would set Wind Cave apart from other national parks established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and contributed to a number of qualities that are entirely unique within the national park system. In other words, national park status set Wind Cave apart from its larger surroundings, but the historical and environmental conditions of the southern Hills would in turn make the new national park into something of an outlier.

One of the earliest national parks, and the first to center on the protection of a cave, Wind Cave National Park is unique in many ways. Established after the development of Hot Springs, South Dakota, it is the first park to be preceded by a commercially developed tourist area or "gateway" community. The park's ecologically rich setting between the plains and mountains, which made it an ideal place for the reintroduction of bison, elk, pronghorn antelope and other locally extinct or threatened animals, contributed to Wind Cave National Park becoming the only national park to be jointly administered with the U.S. Biological Survey (predecessor agency to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). This arrangement also made Wind Cave National Park one of the first national parks to focus on environmental restoration and the recovery of endangered species. The ancient and ongoing significance of the park area for Native communities is also reflected in another unique circumstance within the national park system: the primary natural resource and the namesake of Wind Cave National Park is regarded as the place of creation for the Oglala Lakota. While it is not the only National Park Service unit to be associated with a place of creation or some other

[1] Wind Cave National Park Act, 765.

especially sacred site, Wind Cave is the only national park where the namesake feature is regarded as the point of creation.

On several occasions in the national park's history, there have been serious proposals to remove Wind Cave National Park from the park system. Unlike Mount Rainier or Crater Lake, two venerable parks also established around the turn of the twentieth century, Wind Cave is a relatively small national park. Yet the park's close association with Hot Springs and early Black Hills tourism, and the significance of Wind Cave National Park for game preservation and environmental restoration, prevented the park from becoming like Platt or Sullys Hill National Parks; two small, early parks that were established within a year of Wind Cave but were eventually "decommissioned" some decades later.[2] In sum, the environmental and cultural history of Wind Cave National Park and the southern Black Hills is as distinct as the landscapes in which it has occurred. To understand the broader historical context of the park, from geological processes through Native habitation and into the twentieth century is to fully appreciate the challenges and promises of Wind Cave, and to recognize its special significance within the region and within the National Park Service.

[2] The 720-acre Sullys Hill Park was established on 2 June 1904 by Theodore Roosevelt through Presidential Proclamation. On 27 April 1904, Congress had authorized the President to establish a "Public Park" around Sullys Hills, but Roosevelt's Proclamation effectively established a small wildlife and game preserve at the southern end of Devil's Lake. Since no official administrative category yet existed for such a land management unity, the area was designated a "Park," and then later referred to as Sullys Hill National Park. By 1914, however, the area became known as Sullys Hill National Game Preserve and was administered by the United States Biological Survey. In 1931, the Game Preserve was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture, and subsequently renamed Sullys Hill National Wildlife Refuge. Acquired in 1902 from Choctaw and Chickasaw Tribes in Oklahoma, and initially designated the Sulphur Springs Reservation, the 858-acre Platt National Park was established in 1906. In 1976, the national park was abolished and combined with the Arbuckle Recreation Area to form the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Historic resources associated with the former national park unit are now recognized as the Platt Historic District.

CHAPTER ONE

FORMING THE BLACK HILLS AND THE NORTHERN PLAINS

"There was a world before this world, but the people in it did not know how to behave themselves or how to act human." So begins a Sicangu Lakota creation story told by Leonard Crow Dog on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 1974. The story describes the cataclysmic flooding of the earth, first by a deluge of rain and then a cracking of the surface "like a shattered gourd, and water flowed from the cracks until it covered everything." This occurred because the "creating power [Wakan Tanka] was not pleased with that earlier world," and the flood provided the means for its destruction and remaking.[1]

Set upon a sacred pipe and pipe bag, which contained many animals and birds, Wakan Tanka drifted across the surface of the waters a long while before determining to make the world anew. Using mud that a turtle had brought up from the depths, he fashioned an island of dry ground and then caused it to spread across the whole planet. A dry world was no better than a watery one, however, and Wakan Tanka felt pity for this barren landscape. So he watered it with his own tears to create the oceans, rivers and lakes that would sustain life. Wakan Tanka then removed all of the animals from the pipe bag, scattered them across the earth, and stamped on the ground to make them come alive. Lastly, he shaped men and women out of the earth, stamped again to bring them to life, and gave them language and understanding. Wakan Tanka also told the people "to live in peace with each other and with the other living things." If they did not, and instead made the "world bad and ugly," then the world would be destroyed again and another made in its place.[2]

In its basic structure, and in many of its particulars, this story of inundation and creation shares a number of key elements with origin stories from other parts of North America—especially those told by Native communities in the upper Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes region where the Lakotas had once lived for many generations.[3] Crow Dog's account also has significant parallels with Northern Plains peoples who tell stories of migrating to the region from very different parts of the continent. The horticultural Mandan, who likely migrated to the Upper Missouri River from the Ohio Valley between 700 and 1000 years ago, have an origin story in which Lone Man and First Creator wander a mostly dry, sandy world. Two waterfowl bring them mud from the bottom of a great lake, from which Lone Man and First Creator fashion more birds and animals. They then use the remaining

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[1] Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, eds., *American Indian Myths and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 496-497. For a discussion of how this story relates to other origin story traditions, see Jace Weaver, *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 266-267.
[2] Erdoes and Ortiz, eds., *American Indian Myths and Legends*, 498-499.
[3] Robert E. Ritzenhaler, "Southwestern Chippewa," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 743-59.

mud to "improve the earth," making hills and bluffs, trees and springs, and great herds of buffalo.[4]

This Mandan migration story is similar to ones told by other horticultural peoples who lived in permanent villages along the Middle Missouri River and its main tributaries, but these Plains peoples offer very different accounts for how humans came into the world. Some, like the Omahas and Poncas, tell of human ancestors descending from a celestial realm while the Hidatsas, Mandans and others describe an emergence from a dark world beneath the surface of the Earth. While the story of a human emergence is specific to some groups, almost all plains peoples have stories about bison entering the world from sacred underground sites that they sometimes returned to if they were offended by human actions or needed to replenish their numbers. Ludlow Cave, the Cave Hills and the Slim Buttes area to the north of the Black Hills harbor such sites that are commonly recognized and revered by Mandans, Hidatsas, Sahnish (Arikaras), Northern Cheyennes, Crows and Sicangu Lakotas.[5] More famously, and more directly relevant to Wind Cave National Park, some origin stories told by Oglala Lakotas identify Wind Cave as the place of emergence for both bison and themselves.[6]

Another story with special relevance to Wind Cave National Park and the formation of the Black Hills is the Great Race. In both Cheyenne and Lakota tellings, the Racetrack or Red

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[4] George A. Dorsey, *The Pawnee: Mythology (Part I)* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1906), 11-12; Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1911), 570-571; James Henri Howard and Peter Le Claire, *The Ponca Tribe* (Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 103-105; "Origin Myth Related by Wolf Chief," and "Origin Myth Related by Scattercorn," both in Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 347-353 and 353-361; and Martha Warren Beckwith, *Myths and Hunting Stories of the Mandan and Hidatsa* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College, 1930), 309-312.

[5] Linea Sundstrom, "Sacred Islands: An Exploration of Religion and Landscape in the Northern Great Plains," in *Islands on the Plains: Ecological, Social, and Ritual Use of Landscapes*, eds. Marcel Kornfeld and Alan J. Osborn (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 264-265; Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness, Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73-84; and "Custer National Forest, Sioux Ranger District: Oil & Gas Leasing Analysis, Final Environmental Impact Statement, May 2005," 3.3-7—3.3-11. The idea that bison first emerged into the world from sacred underground sites, and occasionally returned there if offended by human actions or needed to replenish their numbers, is common to many Plains cultures from northern Texas to Canada. This holds for many groups, regardless of linguistic or geographic origin, and is an idea that could be transposed to new sites over the course of a group's multigenerational migrations. See, for example, "The End of the World: The Buffalo Go," told to Alice Marriott by Old Lady Horse (Spear Woman) in Alice Lee Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, *Plains Indian Mythology* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 138-139; Maurice Boyd, *Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual, and Songs* (Fort Worth, Texas Christian University 1981), 89-93; Sundstrom and Richard Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 2 (October 1996): 177-89; and Emily Brock et al, "Rock Painting Depicting Re-Incursion of Bison onto the South Texas Plains: Painted Indian Cave, Pedernales River, Blanco County, Texas," *Plains Anthropologist* 51, no. 198 (2006): 199-205.

[6] Early published references to Wind Cave as the place of emergence for Oglala Lakotas and bison are James R. Walker, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* (New York: Anthropological Papers of The American Museum of Natural History, 1917) 181-182; and George A. Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," *Journal of American Folklore* 19 (1906): 326-29. More recent published accounts from Oglala Lakotas include James LaPointe, *Legends of the Lakota* (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1976), 79-86; and Karen D. Lone Hill, "Sioux," in *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 591.

Valley around the perimeter of the Black Hills formed when the first people joined with all the animals and birds of the world in a race arranged by the Thunder Beings to determine the prominence of two-legged and four-legged creatures. As the Oglala Lakota spiritual leader Nicholas Black Elk recounted the story in 1944, a victory by a two-legged (human or bird) would ensure that "people will live and spread themselves and not be in want. But if the Four-leggeds win, they will eat you, the people, and the birds." The race took a long time and the crush of animals caused a depression in the earth that pushed up the Hogback and forced the Black Hills to rise higher. In some tellings of the story, so many animals struggled and bled in the course of the race that the depression (the Red Valley) encircling the Hills was stained red. In the end the two-leggeds won, thanks to the cunning of the magpie, and the Thunder Beings gave the people bows and arrows with which they could hunt bison and other four-legged animals. In Black Elk's account, the Thunder Beings further told the people that the place where the race occurred was "the heart of the earth" and the Black Hills were "the promised land." "This land is a being," the Thunder Beings said, and long after they had left the site of the race the People must remember "to look for this land in the future."[7]

The origin stories briefly noted above are not just about some long ago time that ended and gave way to subsequent developments. On the contrary, they are stories that tell of Great Powers, Mysteries, or Medicines (to use some of the more common translated terms) that are always present. These are the kinds of stories that explain the key rituals and values that affirm communities and convey essential lessons about how the world is structured. Through association with the places where they occurred the stories give voice to the ongoing process of world formation. The Black Hills and adjoining Plains are full of such places and stories, where high peaks reach toward celestial realms and numerous caverns provide passage to the underworld, where exposed fossils reveal ancient antediluvian worlds, and where an abundance of prized animals, plants, minerals, hills, springs, canyons, trees, and streams all testify to the promises of the Creator. For thousands of years, scores of American Indian groups have resided in, depended upon, shared, contested, revered and described the special nature of the Black Hills: an area that Lakotas call Wahmunka Oganunka Inchante, which translates as "the heart of everything that is."[8]

A World Before People

All creation stories tell of a world before people. Whether transcribed in the Hebrew Torah, woven into a Tibetan tapestry, or spoken by a Cheyenne elder, creation stories describe the fundamental conditions into which people arrived or were created. This is certainly true of the stories that are connected with the Black Hills, regardless of their particular details or distinct cultural attributes. The same can also be said for other perspectives on pre-human or early-human landscapes, including geological, ecological, and archeological assessments. In their various ways, each of these scientific disciplines seeks to understand the essential bases of life and the human place in the world. This chapter will provide an overview of the

[7] Raymond J. DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1985) 309-310.
[8] Spelling and translation comes from an interview with Charlotte Black Elk on *The West Film Project* (2001) <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/hearteverything.htm> (accessed 3 March 2010).

geological and ecological processes that shaped the Black Hills and surrounding plains prior to the first record of human presence. In doing so, the narrative will parallel or corroborate an essential, common truth that is embedded in the oral traditions of the Mandans, Hidatsas, Arikaras, Poncas, Pawnees, Kiowas, Plains Apaches, Arapahos, Cheyennes, Crows, Lakotas and others: namely, the Black Hills is an extraordinary place where a rich variety of mineral, plant, and animal resources have sustained and inspired people since time out of memory.

As Mircea Eliade wrote, in every cultural tradition the physical place at the heart of a creation story is a site of inherent creative power where "a superabundance of reality" indicates "an irruption of the sacred into the world."[9] Eliade's reference to reality and its relative abundance can no doubt be interpreted in many different ways. In a physical or environmental sense, it might be described as a measure of biodiversity or an essential repository of culturally and materially significant resources. Such a definition certainly applies to the Black Hills, where grasses, forests, and streams nourished communities and supported the animals they prized, mineral exposures provided tool materials, dyes and paints, canyon walls offered shelter, while numerous peaks, highpoints, and other discrete locales provided sacred places for seeking divine guidance.

However it has been understood, and however it has been experienced, the Black Hills area is an undeniably potent source of life and culture; it is a place that has long attracted, generated, and nourished an array of plant, animal, and human communities. Geology, geography and ecology can only enrich our understanding of the Black Hills' and provide a useful framework for discussing the southern Hills-Great Plains interface. In terms of this Historic Resource Study, such an approach provides a necessary basis for later chapters on the human history of the park area and follows from an essential goal of Wind Cave's Natural Resource Management Plan: namely, to understand, restore, "protect and perpetuate the natural systems and conditions" within the park.[10]

Black Hills Geology

The Black Hills are essentially the product of three geological processes; the formation and overlay of different rock materials across millions of years, the uplift of older, deeper layers, and erosion.[11] The result is a classic, elongated domal structure that is

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[9] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 45.

[10] Quote is from *Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Wind Cave National Park, Custer County, South Dakota* ([Denver]: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1994), 14.

[11] The following discussion of Black Hills geology is broadly informed by Rodney M. Feldman, "Wind Cave National Park," in *Geology of National Parks*, eds. Ann G. Harris, et al, (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2003), 209-32; Arthur N. Palmer, *The Geology of Wind Cave, Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota* ([Hot Springs, SD]: Wind Cave Natural History Association, 1981); James S. Monroe and Reed Wicander, *The Changing Earth: Exploring Geology and Evolution* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2005); R. F. Diffendal, Jr., "Plate Tectonics, Space, Geologic Time, and the Great Plains: A Primer for Non-Geologists," *Great Plains Quarterly* 11 (Spring 1991): 81-102; and R. G. Wallace and James F. Stratton, *Field Geology of the Black Hills* ([Charleston, IL]: Eastern Illinois University, 1997).

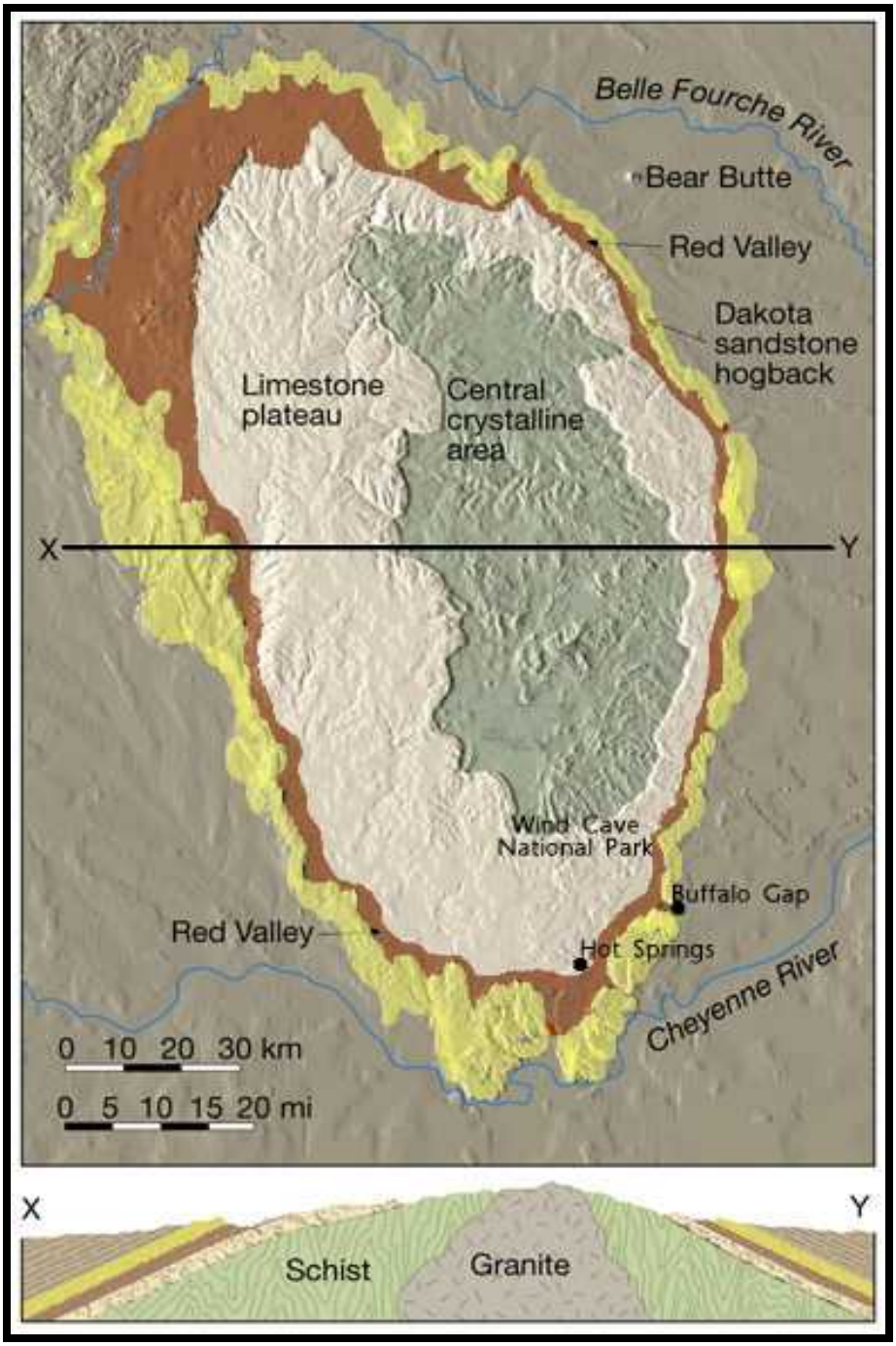


Figure 1.1: **Geology of the Black Hills.** Map based on satellite image from U.S. Geological Survey and diagram reproduced in Donald E. Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains*, *Geological Survey Bulletin 1493* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1980).

comprised of several anticlines (uplifted rock strata through which the dome has pushed). As James S. Monroe and Reed Wicander note, "in an eroded dome [like the Black Hills], all rock layers dip outward from a central point and the oldest exposed rocks are at the center of the structure."[12] If viewed from a sufficient altitude, the various anticlines are evident as concentric rings that slope down toward the surrounding plains. These rings or strata are clearly delineated, and geologists have identified four distinct geological zones within the Hills: the granitic Central Core, the Limestone Plateau, the Red Valley or Racetrack, and the Hogback Rim. The extensive Limestone Plateau includes an additional geomorphic subdivision (known variously as the Minnekahta or Minnelusa Foothills and Plains), which corresponds to specific layers of limestone with surfaces that are more rolling and less wooded than the upper Plateau area.

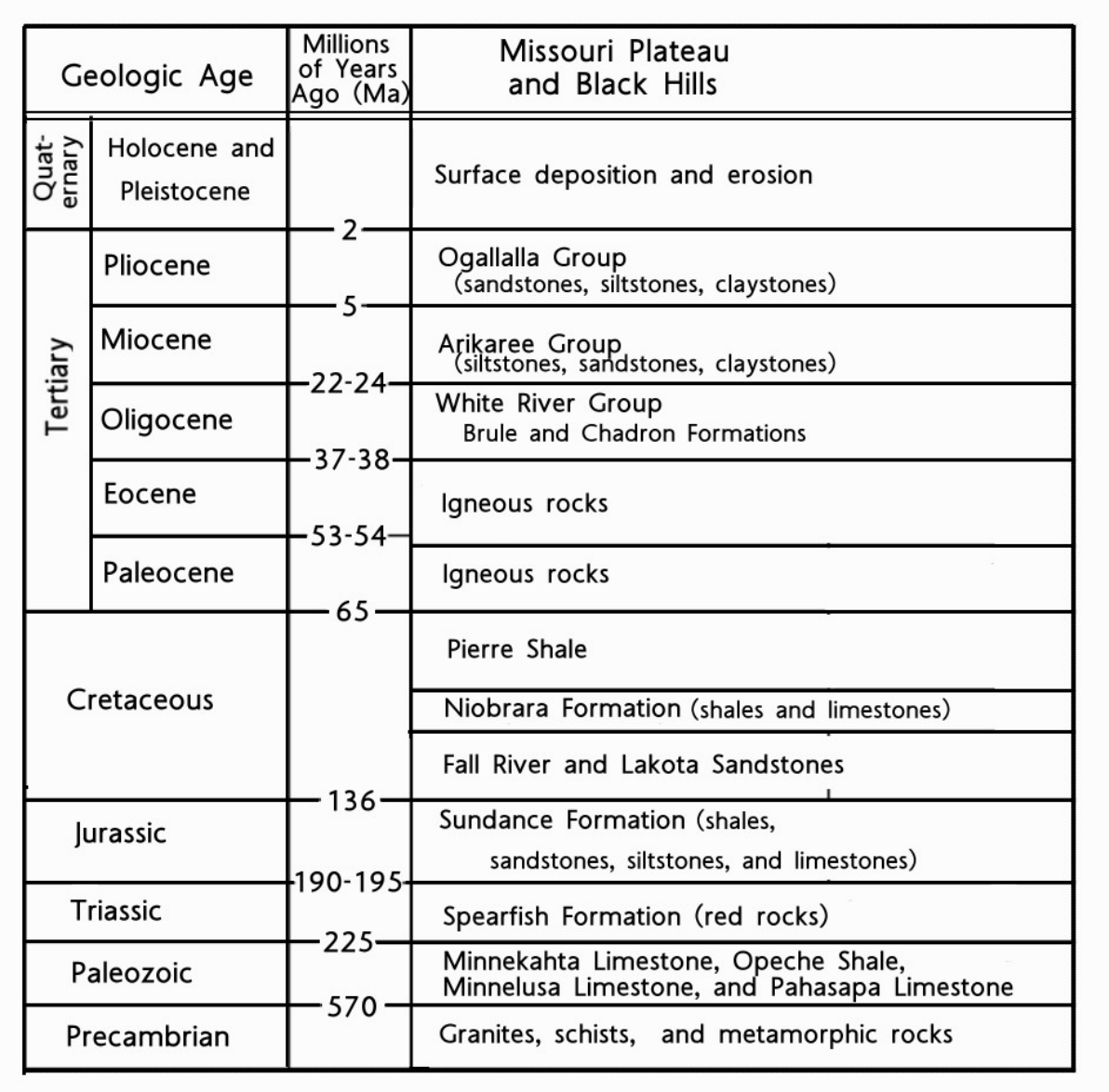
Comprised of some of the oldest exposed rocks in North America, the Central Core of the Black Hills was initially formed during the Precambrian Era (4.6 Ba to 600 Ma).[13] The area that would become central North America was repeatedly covered by a vast inland sea, with each inundation bringing significant sediment deposition that ultimately compressed and hardened into rock material. Some 2.5 billion years ago, convection cells in the earth's mantle pushed magma toward the surface. The heat and pressure caused the layers of sedimentary rocks to rise and metamorphose into much harder quartzites, gneisses, and schists which became the base materials for Harney Peak, Mount Rushmore, the Needles and other dramatic features of the central Hills. By the beginning of the Paleozoic Era (600-250 Ma), this uplifted area had eroded back to the level of the surrounding landscape and became subject to new cycles of inundation, domal uplift and erosion. The ensuing layers of marine sediments became the basic components of the Limestone Plateau and the Racetrack; namely the Paha Sapa, Minnelusa, and Minnekahta Limestones as well as Opeche Shale.

Similar geological processes carried through the Mesozoic Era (250-65 Ma), forming the sandstones and shales that cover the Hogback. Toward the end of the Mesozoic and the beginning of the Cenozoic Eras (circa 65-40 Ma), the last of the great inland seas retreated and the massive mountain building process known as the Laramide Orogeny commenced. The same tectonic forces that raised the Rocky Mountains also pushed the ancient core of the Black Hills back up through the earth's surface and gave rise to the igneous intrusions that formed the Bear Lodge Mountains and Bear Butte to the north and northwest. Another uplift in the Miocene Epoch (23-5 Ma) broke the surface further and caused folding and faulting throughout the various layers of the dome. Erosion and stream formation, along with continued uplift, further scored the Hills and established the topography and drainage patterns that were in place toward the end of the Pleistocene (1.8 Ma to 10,000 BP).

Great Plains Geology

The Black Hills lie entirely within a larger region that geologists call the Unglaciated Missouri Plateau, a broad tableland that spreads south and west of the Upper Missouri River

[12] Monroe and Wicander, *The Changing Earth*, 266-268.
[1313] "Ba" and "Ma" are accepted abbreviations for Billion Years Ago (Ba) and Million Years Ago (Ma).



Geologic Age		Millions of Years Ago (Ma)	Missouri Plateau and Black Hills
Quaternary	Holocene and Pleistocene		Surface deposition and erosion
		2	
Tertiary	Pliocene		Ogallalla Group (sandstones, siltstones, claystones)
		5	
	Miocene		Arikaree Group (siltstones, sandstones, claystones)
		22-24	
	Oligocene		White River Group Brule and Chadron Formations
		37-38	
	Eocene		Igneous rocks
		53-54	
	Paleocene		Igneous rocks
		65	
Cretaceous			Pierre Shale
			Niobrara Formation (shales and limestones)
			Fall River and Lakota Sandstones
		136	
Jurassic			Sundance Formation (shales, sandstones, siltstones, and limestones)
		190-195	
Triassic			Spearfish Formation (red rocks)
		225	
Paleozoic			Minnekahta Limestone, Opeche Shale, Minnelusa Limestone, and Pahasapa Limestone
		570	
Precambrian			Granites, schists, and metamorphic rocks

Figure 1.2: Stratigraphic Column of Black Hills Geology. Adapted from table presented in Donald E. Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains*, *Geological Survey Bulletin 1493* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1980).

as it arcs across the Great Plains. North of the river's course, and east to the Ohio River, vast glaciers repeatedly leveled the central lowlands of the continent during the Pleistocene Epoch. The unscoured area around the Black Hills is thus more topographically varied than the plains and prairies to the north and east, and more clearly shows the effects of deposition and erosion that occurred during the second half of the Cretaceous and continued though to the advent of the Pleistocene ice ages. This period of time, spanning some 65 million years, diverges from the geological history of the Black Hills in several ways and ultimately laid the foundations for the historical landscapes of the Great Plains.[14]

During the Laramide Orogeny, as the various ranges of the Rocky Mountains were uplifted, layers of sedimentary rock eroded from the rising crest and formed vast alluvial plains. Continued uplift caused streams and rivers to cut further into the mountains, carrying even more rocks, mud and sediment onto the accumulating plains. This deposition occurred on, and formed, much of the High Plains region that runs south of the Missouri Plateau to the Texas Panhandle, but analogous processes occurred on a smaller scale around the Black Hills. A long period of relative stability followed this dramatic process of mountain building and erosion, and continued through to the end of the Eocene Epoch (56-34 Ma). A new period of uplift and volcanism at the end of the Eocene carried more sediment onto the Plains, which became the base for the strata of rock material known as the White River Group that extends across much of the Central and Northern Plains.

The build up of shales and overlying soils near the Rockies caused further downcutting of stream and river beds through most of the Miocene. The steeper drainages in turn carried their gravels, sands and sediments further to the east and south, and eventually laid down the material of the Ogallala and Arikaree Formations that underlie the entire Great Plains. River systems became further entrenched toward the end of the Miocene when tectonic movements lifted the entire western half of North America and created a more pronounced eastward tilt to the Plains. Near mountain ranges the streams often dug canyons into underlying sedimentary rocks, while on the Plains the rivers cut into plateaus or scoured broad floodplains. The Powder River Basin to the west of the Black Hills is an example of the latter process; the ancient precursors of the Tongue, Powder, and Big Horn Rivers cleared away much of the material that overlay the area's rich coal deposits, which had formed out of the tropical forests that once flourished on the alluvial soils of the Paleocene plains.
A somewhat different process occurred east of the Black Hills with the formation of the White River Badlands. The steep gradient of the uplifted Hills sent thousands of small streams over the soft clays and silts that formed along its eastern flank during the Pliocene Epoch (5.3-1.8 Ma). Over time the tributaries of the White and Cheyenne Rivers formed, and continued to carve through lower strata of geological formations. Some 500,000 years ago the distinctive buttes, gullies and spires of the South Dakota Badlands had taken shape. By the end of the Pleistocene, the White and Cheyenne River basins had widened and deepened to expose

[14] The following discussion of Great Plains geology is broadly informed by Donald E. Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains*, *Geological Survey Bulletin 1493* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1980; reprint, with minor revisions, Medora, ND: Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, 1990); Monroe and Wicander, *The Changing Earth*; Diffendal, Jr., "Plate Tectonics, Space, Geologic Time, and the Great Plains;" and Ann G. Harris, Esther Tuttle, and Sherwood D. Tuttle, *Geology of National Parks*, Sixth ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2003), 115-138.

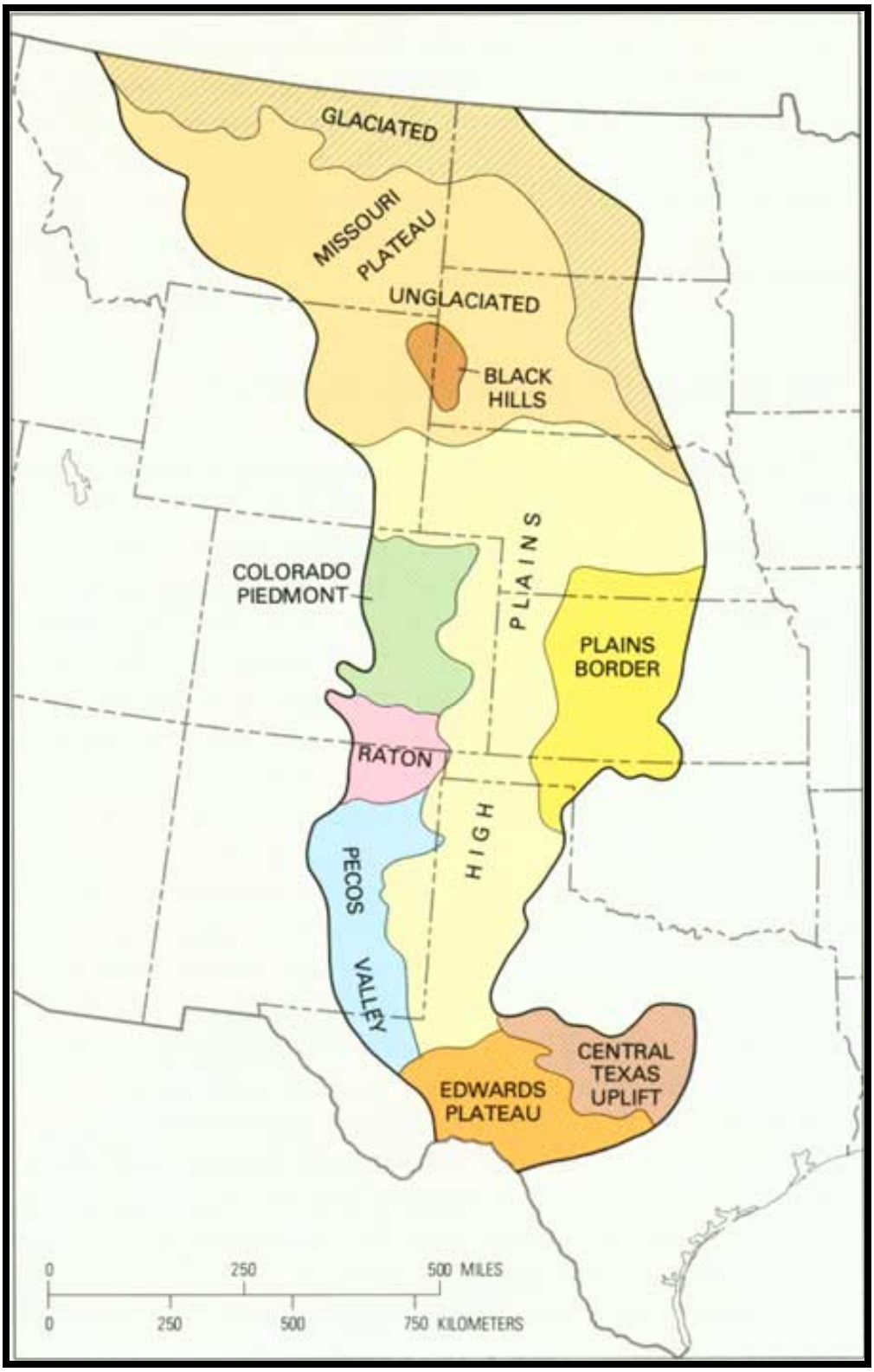


Figure 1.3: **The Great Plains Province and its Sections.** Source: Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains.*

colorful layers of earth that spanned 75 million years of geological activity. During the formation of these badlands, the White River also cut through softer alluvial materials to expose the sandstone cliffs of the Pine Ridge escarpment, which defines the southern boundary between the Missouri Plateau and the High Plains.

From the ancient rocks along Harney Ridge to the sediments carried through Buffalo Gap and onto the plains by Beaver Creek during a summer thunderstorm, the surface landscapes of Wind Cave National Park reveal many of the dramatic and ongoing processes that have shaped the earth for eons. The same is true of Wind Cave itself, which continues to grow new and larger speleothems (mineralized cave formations) even as it imperceptibly erodes further into the Paha Sapa limestone. Such processes are fascinating in and of themselves, and they can explain a great deal about the topography and environment of Wind Cave National Park, but the formation of the Black Hills and the Great Plains is not simply a matter of sediment, rocks, erosion and uplift. Indeed, the slow geological changes that continue to shape the southern Hills and the Wind Cave area have a dynamic counterpart in the biotic communities of the national park, which are themselves rooted in evolutionary processes that are literally part of, and as old as, the Hills.

Paleontology

During the four billion-year span of the Precambrian era, what we know as North America was part of larger landmasses that paleogeographers call super continents. Through movements of the earth's crust (e.g., plate tectonics), super continents slowly broke apart and reformed in different configurations; their collisions raising up mountain ranges and their separations leading to the formation of deep rift valleys and new coastlines. The last super continent, known as Pangaea, formed 320 Ma and started to break apart into the precursors of today's continents some 175 Ma. Through the formation and break up of these super continents, and during much of the 145 million year existence of Pangaea, most of present-day North America was located along the equator where it experienced repeated flooding by vast inland seas. These warm waters gave rise to earth's earliest life forms, which resembled various strains of bacteria, algae and sponges. Millions of years of life and death led to a vast accumulation of these primitive organisms among the sludges and sediments that had settled on the sea floor, and ultimately became part of the deepest layers of shales, sandstones, and limestones in the Northern Plains and Black Hills.[15]

During the Paleozoic Era, a process called the Cambrian radiation occurred: a rapid appearance and diversification of new taxa that gave rise to most of the complex animal types that still inhabit the earth. The tropical seas that periodically covered North America

[15] The following discussion of Black Hills and Great Plains paleontology is broadly informed by Amy Diane Morrison, "Paleontology and Paleoecology of a Late Pleistocene Fauna from the Southern Black Hills, South Dakota" (M.S. thesis, Northern Arizona University, 2000); John A. Harringron, Jr., and Jay R. Harman, "Climate and Vegetation in Central North America: Natural Patterns and Human Alterations," *Great Plains Quarterly* 11 (Spring 1991): 103-12; and Jane Paxson Abbott, "The Paleoecology of the Late and Post-Archaic Section of the Beaver Creek Shelter (39cu779), Wind Cave National Park, Custer County, South Dakota" (M.S. thesis, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 1989).

experienced a rapid explosion of new life forms, including various arthropods, shellfish, snails, and mollusks. While some of these are preserved as fossils, most of the decayed shells and exoskeletons of these animals were compressed over time and formed new layers of limestone above the pre-Cambrian materials. In the Carboniferous Period (359-299 Ma) of the later Paleozoic, a combination of uplift and lowered sea levels converted much of Pangaea into a vast tropical lowland. The area that became North America was mostly covered with new land-based plants and populated by amphibious and, somewhat later, reptilian animals. Fossilized traces of this world can be found in the Minnekahta Limestone of the Black Hills, but most of the biota became the carbon rich material that makes up the vast coal beds of central and eastern North America.

At the beginning of the Mesozoic (251 Ma), the planet underwent a profound but still unexplained change called the Permian–Triassic extinction event or the "Great Dying." Whether caused by a series of large meteorite impacts, rapid climate shifts, mass volcanism, a pronounced change in oceanic conditions, or some combination of these and other factors, the effects were astounding: as much as 96 percent of all marine species, 70 percent of all terrestrial vertebrate species, and a substantial number of insect species went extinct. New life forms evolved in the wake of the Great Dying and the so-called Age of Dinosaurs commenced, with reptiles of various size and form filling aquatic and terrestrial niches as herbivores, predators, and combinations of both. Through the Triassic (251-200 Ma) and much of Jurassic (200-145 Ma) Periods of the Mesozoic, a good deal of the North American portion of Pangaea was again beneath a shallow sea. The exposed terraces of the Badlands offer glimpses of this world, with the fossilized remains of large predators like plesiosaurs, early salmonids, and flightless pelagic birds that looked something like six-foot grebes or cormorants.

Central North America once again rose above sea level during the late Jurassic and through the Cretaceous Period (145-65 Ma), the result of the uplift and rifting of Pangaea as well as climate shifts and changing sea-levels. The changed environment allowed terrestrial dinosaurs to flourish for millions of years within the present geographic boundaries of the Great Plains. A wide variety of fossilized remains have been found in the Hogback as well as in shales and rock formations to the north, south and west of the Black Hills. The late Cretaceous also witnessed the early development of avian and mammalian life forms and a general increase in speciation as Pangaea broke apart and the smaller continents moved to different latitudes. When another mass-extinction occurred, what paleontologists call the Cretaceous–Triassic extinction event (65.5 Ma), the large dinosaurs disappeared along with a number of other life forms. Mammals and birds persisted, however, and radiated into new orders, families, genera and species that filled many of the pelagic and terrestrial niches previously occupied by dinosaurs.[16]

The break-up of Pangaea also involved tectonic collisions between what is now far western North America and the rest of the continent. This in turn gave rise to the Laramide

[16] Richard V. Sole, "Extinctions and Biodiversity in the Fossil Record," in *Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change, Volume 2: The Earth System—Biological and Ecological Dimensions of Global Environmental Change*, eds. Harold A. Mooney and Joseph G. Canadell (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 297-391.

Orogeny and other mountain building events, which significantly altered the climate and biota of central North America. Western mountain ranges captured most of the moisture coming off of the Pacific and converted the warm, humid plains to a cooler and drier savannah environment by the beginning of the Miocene Epoch (23-5 Ma). Uplift and erosion had also increased the elevation of the plains and, combined with global cooling and the northward drift of the continent, fostered a transition from savannah to grassland that more closely resembled present-day conditions. Herds of large and small grazing animals occupied the Northern Great Plains region, including types of horses, rhinoceros, and camels; riverine environments supported types of fish, amphibians, birds and mammals that have persisted into the present era.

These conditions largely continued through to the beginning of the Pleistocene Epoch (1.8 Ma-10,000 BP), when the global climate underwent a pronounced cooling trend often referred to as the "Ice Age." In North America massive glaciers pushed as far south as 40 degrees latitude, advancing and retreating intermittently during periodic climate fluctuations. In this changed climate, the relatively temperate grasslands and savannahs of the Missouri Plateau converted to boreal forests and cold-steppe grasslands. Closer to the glacial moraines, spruce and mixed deciduous forests predominated; further south, grassland areas intermixed with stands of birch and spruce, and included wet meadow areas as well groves of juniper and oak.[17] While these environments also included many of the same grassland species that persist today, the Missouri Plateau and much of the Great Plains supported an array of spectacular fauna that included wooly mammoth, Columbia mammoth, peccary, giant short-faced bear, llamas, and camels as well as bison, pronghorn, elk and prairie dogs.[18]

The World of Creation

By the late Pleistocene, many of the environmental conditions that would make the Black Hills a unique and rich "island" environment within the historic era were in place. The last continental ice sheet reached its maximum some 13,000 years ago, stopping along the arc that is now marked by the Missouri River. Relative proximity to the ice sheet, and an elevated position above the plains, made the northern Hills part of the same vast belt of tundra and coniferous forest that grew along the perimeter of the vast glacier. Within the 125 miles that mark the breadth of the Black Hills, however, the surrounding plains underwent a significant transition and the southern Hills descended into cold-steppe grassland punctuated by small stands of spruce, birch, juniper, and oak.

A warming trend and the northward retreat of the last great continental glaciers marked the beginning of the Holocene (10,000 BP-Present). The pronounced climate changes

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[17] Ronald R. Weedon and Page M. Wolken, "The Black Hills Environment," in *Megafauna & Man: Discovery of America's Heartland*, eds. Larry D. Agenbroad and Jim I. Mead (Hot Springs, S.D.: Mammoth Site of Hot Springs, South Dakota, Inc., 1990), 123–35; Christopher N. Jass et al, "Late Pleistocene Mollusks from the Southern Black Hills, South Dakota," *Western North American Naturalist* 62, no. 2 (2002): 129-40.

[18] The following discussion of late Pleistocene and early Holocene paleoecology is broadly informed by Jass et al, "Late Pleistocene Mollusks from the Southern Black Hills;" and Björn Kurtén, *Before the Indians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 85-101.

that ensued were manifested in the alteration and diversification of environmental conditions within the Black Hills and the surrounding plains. Spruce forests followed the retreating glaciers and became established in cooler climates to the north, but relict stands remained at high elevations and within shaded canyons to become the endemic variant *Picea glauca* var. *densata*. More drought tolerant western pines became the dominant trees in the Hills, while a variety of grasses, shrubs and deciduous trees associated with the cold-steppe conditions of the Pleistocene established niches throughout the Hills. The surrounding plains also underwent a marked shift, becoming dominated by a more xeric short-grass prairie.

These shifts in the composition and distribution of plant communities had a commensurate effect on the region's fauna. Many species associated with late Pleistocene conditions migrated elsewhere, while others coming from the south, west and east found conditions in the Hills that approximated the places in which they previously evolved. Other species simply went extinct. Among these were large fauna like the mammoth, camel, and giant bison (*Bison latifrons*) that could not digest the grasses that now thrived on the plains. Predators of these herbivores also became extinct, including the Saber-toothed Cat and the American Cheetah. Animals common in the historic era—deer, elk, pronghorn, and bison (*Bos bison bison*)—predominated in the new conditions of the Holocene, with bison having an especially significant impact on the wide formation and composition of the short-grass prairie. The grazing preferences of the smaller but more numerous species of modern bison allowed grasses like blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), buffalo grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) and sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*) to predominate on the plains.

Almost like the "Lost World" of fiction and film, the Black Hills contain a mosaic of landscapes and species that are themselves the products of different times and places. More than an "island in a sea of grass," the Black Hills are like an island in space and time: a repository of relict species stranded at the end of the Ice Age and of distant migrants from all points on the compass. Yet the Hills do not stand apart from the processes and places that contribute to their rich diversity. On the contrary, they stand at the center—revealing in especially clear and concentrated forms the forces that have shaped the planet. The series of ancient worlds that formed the rocks, minerals and soils of the Hills, and are revealed in a multitude of readily seen fossils; the lifting, breaking and erosion of these materials through eons of geological time to create a remarkable topography that fosters a wide array of habitats and microclimates; the resulting peaks, canyons, forests, grasslands, streams, and rolling plains; the concentration of plant, animal, and insect species from across a wide swath of North America: all of these together offer potent testimony to the grand forces of creation, the "superabundance of reality" that Eliade identified.

Whether new spring grass sprouting from the ash of an autumn burn or a fossilized coral along a wall in Wind Cave, both are part of the variously tiny and titanic forces of world formation that have shaped the Black Hills and Northern Plains. And both convey the simple truth that creation, or genesis, is not simply a beginning. It is an ongoing process. Native peoples certainly recognized and revered this process in the Black Hills for thousands of years, and saw in its special forms (thermal springs, peaks, fossils, caves, streams, rare species, sites that could support large multi-group ceremonies and inspire personal visions) a

multitude of what Eliade called "irruptions of the sacred into the world."[19] Yet as the anthropologist Linea Sundstrom suggests, these qualities told as much about the life-sustaining vitality of the place as they did some intrinsic sacredness—which in many respects were one and the same thing.[20] Archeological, ethnological and historical evidence clearly demonstrates this basic correlation between the material and the sacred that lies at the heart of Native peoples' experience of the Black Hills, especially in the southern Hills where the interface with the Great Plains was most extensive.

[19] Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 97.
[20] Sundstrom, "Sacred Islands."

CHAPTER TWO

ANCIENT LANDSCAPES AND FIRST PEOPLES

The term "First People" can mean a number of things: the first humans to be created; the founding generation of a long-lived society or culture; the first people to arrive and reside in a previously uninhabited place; the first community of *Homo sapiens* to evolve from *Homo erectus*; the aboriginal peoples of the so-called New Worlds (i.e., the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand) and the formally recognized communities made up of their descendants. How and when people first came into the Black Hills region is unknown and probably unknowable. Recent archeological studies suggest that humans may have been in North America as much as 20,000 and perhaps even 50,000 years ago, but these remain unproven and hotly debated. The oldest physical trace of human DNA in the Americas comes from a coprolite (fossilized feces) found in Oregon in 2007 that dates back some 14,300 years.[1]

While people have clearly been in North America for longer than 14,000 years, the earliest physical evidence of human habitation on the Northern Plains is more recent. It is nevertheless ancient, and dates back to the late Pleistocene—before the end of the last Ice Age. Whether or not these were the first people to know the Black Hills, they certainly experienced a world quite different from the historic era; one populated by mastodons, camels and other megafauna that seem the stuff of a mythical time and landscape. Their traces likely remain in the area, however, and these ancient people may have been the first to quarry and knap the significant lithic deposits around Flint Hill near Edgemont and Battle Mountain near Hot Springs. Likewise, people from the late Pleistocene may also be responsible for the oldest petroglyphs among the rich trove of rock art sites in the southern Hogback.[2]

Archeologists commonly use the term Paleoindian to identify the first humans who lived in North America. Coined in the mid twentieth-century when archeologists assumed that the first people in the America's came from Asia across the Bering Land Bridge after the close of the last Ice Age, Paleoindian is now more commonly used as broad category for three distinct periods known as Clovis (10,600-11,500 BP), Folsom

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[1] Andrew Curry, "Ancient Excrement," *Archaeology* 61, no. 4 (July/August 2008): 42-45.

[2] Linea Sundstrom, *Storied Stone: Indian Rock Art in the Black Hills Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 48-51. The 37,000-year dating comes from Alan J. Osborn, "Paleo-Indians," in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 589. The 50,000 year date is noted in Daniel C. Schiffner, "The Current Debate About the Origins of the Paleoindians of America," *The Free Library,* 22 December 2003 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The current debate about the origins of the Paleoindians of America-a0111897842> (accessed 17 August 2010); and University of South Carolina, "New Evidence Puts Man in North America 50,000 Years Ago," *Science Daily*, 18 November 2004 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/11/041118104010.htm> (accessed 17 August 2010).

(10,000-10,900), and Plano (7500-10,000). Clovis, Folsom, and Plano sites have been found in most areas of the contiguous United States, and all are identified with the widespread production and use of a particular form of blades and spearpoints. The periods in which these different tools and weapons were made correspond to long term climate changes, which in turn determined the prevalence of widely utilized animals.

The long, narrow Clovis points were used during the late Pleistocene to hunt mammoth, camel, horse and a large form of bison (*Bison antiquus*). Smaller and somewhat wider Folsom points correspond with the fauna of the early Holocene, which thrived in the climatic and environmental conditions that had caused the extinctions of the Pleistocene megafauna. Plano points tended to be smaller still, and are more varied—both within particular archeological sites as well as across different regions. This suggests a broader reliance on smaller types of game, a greater array of specialized animal processing techniques, and increased cultural variation throughout what is now the contiguous United States.[3]

Projectile points and the types of fauna they kill do not define cultures, nor should they serve as evidence that Paleoindians were primarily hunters—or that widespread use of a particular technology represented cultural commonality across vast areas. Such assumptions about the past were once readily accepted, but new archeological evidence suggests that Paleoindians, instead of being "classic big game hunters," were broad spectrum foragers that utilized a wide array of plant, animal and mineral resources. Living in small, highly mobile groups that came together for large communal hunts (where their distinctive projectile points were left among the bones of their prey), those who lived in and around the Great Plains apparently operated across fairly large territories. While much remains unknown about Paleoindians, especially those who lived during the Pleistocene, it takes no great leap of imagination to see how the southern Hills would have presented a wealth of resources and opportunities.[4]

While there is scant evidence of Clovis-era peoples in the near vicinity of the Black Hills, this is not necessarily surprising. Most Clovis sites on the Northwestern Plains have been discovered by accident—especially as the result of recent construction and road building projects associated with coal mining operations in Wyoming.[5] Few such "accidents" have occurred in the Black Hills, but it is not likely that many Clovis

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[3] "North American Prehistory: An Outline," in *Archaeology of Prehistoric Native America: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Guy E. Gibbon and Kenneth M. Ames (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xvi-xix.

[4] David A. Byers and Andrew Ugan, "Should We Expect Large Game Specialization in the Late Pleistocene? An Optimal Foraging Perspective on Early Paleoindian Prey Choice," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32, no. 11 (November 2005): 1624-40; Marcel Kornfeld and Mary L. Larson, "Bonebeds and Other Myths: Paleoindian to Archaic Transition on North American Great Plains and Rocky Mountains," *Quaternary International* 191, no. 1 (15 November 2008): 18-33; Matthew E. Hill, Jr., "Variation in Paleoindian Fauna Use on the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains of North America," *Quaternary International* 191, no. 1 (15 November 2008): 34-52; and Amy Diane Morrison, "Paleontology and Paleoecology of a Late Pleistocene Fauna from the Southern Black Hills, South Dakota" (M.S. thesis, Northern Arizona University, 2000).

[5] Kornfeld and Larson, "Bonebeds and Other Myths:" 18.

Years B.P.	Period		Subsistence and Settlement
130 >	**Late Historic**		Mining, logging, agriculture, industry; modern rural settlement
250 >	**Historic and Protohistoric**		Bison hunting; plains equestrian nomadic pastoral pattern
1,500 >	**Late Prehistoric and Plains Village**		Communal bison hunting, limited foraging; dispersed with seasonal aggregation; camps and semi-permanent villages
2,500 >	**Late Plains Archaic**		Communal bison hunting, some foraging; dispersed with seasonal aggregation; little use of Black Hills center
5,000 >	**Middle Plains Archaic**		Mixed hunting and foraging dispersed, some aggregation for communal hunts; intensive use of entire Black Hills area
7,500 >	**Early Plains Archaic**		Mixed foraging and hunting some communal hunting; dispersed with seasonal aggregation; limited use of Black Hills
10,000 >	**Paleoindian**	**Plano**	Communal bison hunting around Black Hills perimeters; mixed hunting and foraging in Black Hills proper.
11,000 >	**Paleoindian**	**Folsom**	Communal bison hunting; some foraging; western Black Hills
12,000 >	**Paleoindian**	**Clovis**	Mammoth hunting; no use of Black Hills proper

Figure 2.1: Culture History Chronology for the Black Hills. Table based on material from Jennifer Galindo, *Wind Cave Archeological Inventory Project: Final Report* (Lincoln, NE: National Park Service, Midwest Archaeological Center, 2004).

sites will ever be found on purpose given their antiquity and the relatively small imprint that Paleoindians must have had on the land features where they lived. Nevertheless, there is a known Clovis site in the western foothills of the Black Hills, as well as sites within a short distance of the Wind Cave area: namely, at Agate Basin to the south and in the White River Badlands, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, to the east.[6]

While the warmer and drier conditions of the Holocene contributed to the extinction of the mammoth and other megafauna, they also fostered more abundant and diverse plant and animal populations. Human populations also increased as spruce forest, tundra, and steppe conditions gave way to mixed deciduous and coniferous forests, savanna, and prairie with numerous marshes, ponds and streams. The abundance of new habitats did more than foster population growth, they also allowed communities—or members within communities—to become more specialized in the resources they processed and utilized.[7] Given their greater numbers, and relative chronological proximity to the present, evidence of Folsom and Plano era peoples are much more common than Clovis era sites. Two Folsom sites at Agate Basin, as well as several surface level finds of Folsom-style projectile points in various parts of the Hills, clearly indicate that people were at least living on the perimeter of the southern Hills and using the interior ranges. Moreover, the patterns of use and residence that is indicated by this archeological evidence would hold for the next 10,000 years.[8]

The extinction of *Bison antiquus* largely marks the end of the Folsom era. While most Folsom sites are identified with large bone-beds of *Bison antiquus*, at places where large numbers of animals had been run off of a cliff or cut bank and slaughtered, climate change rather than human predation accounts for the extinction of this ancient relative of the modern bison (*Bos bison bison*). As the plains environment continued to become warmer and drier, thus bringing a pronounced change to the forage conditions on which *Bison antiquus* depended, human populations made commensurate adaptations. The result was greater use of more diverse environments, with increasingly specialized activities. Significant Plano sites near the Black Hills are the Hudson-Meng Bison Kill site in Sioux County Nebraska, the Long or Angostura site just south of Hot Springs, and Agate Basin. Within the Black Hills, a number of projectile points have also been found at springs and in high altitude meadows.[9]

While modern bison largely replaced *Bison antiquus* as the focus of large communal hunts, Plano sites also indicate more use of deer, elk, pronghorn and other smaller game animals. Like their predecessors, Plano peoples seem to have lived in

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[6] John Albanese, "Resumé of Geoarchaeological Research on the Northwestern Plains," in *Geoarchaeology in the Great Plains*, ed. Rolfe D. Mandel (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 230.
[7] Walter E. Dean and Antje Schwalbb, "Holocene Environmental and Climatic Change in the Northern Great Plains as Recorded in the Geochemistry of Sediments in Pickerel Lake, South Dakota," *Quaternary International* 67 (May 2000): 5-20.
[8] Albanese, "Resumé of Geoarchaeological Research," 230-233; Sundstrom, *Storied Stone*, 11-12; and Jennifer Galindo, *Wind Cave Archeological Inventory Project: Final Report* (Lincoln, NE: National Park Service, Midwest Archaeological Center, 2004), 136.
[9] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills: A Contextual Approach* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 67-68.

relatively small, highly mobile groups. Their territorial ranges may have been somewhat smaller, however, as the human population density on the Northwestern Plains increased and as ecological diversity allowed for more specialized adaptations. These changes gave rise to one of the more significant cultural differentiations to occur in the Plano period, what Linea Sundstrom calls the rise of

> mountain-oriented groups [that] developed a highly diversified seasonal subsistence economy, including the hunting of sheep, deer, wapiti, and small game animals and gathering edible plants. In contrast to the open plains pattern, communal bison hunting is not in evidence at the higher elevation sites, although individual bison were occasionally taken.

While this broad cultural distinction occurred across the western Great Plains, the Black Hills appear to have been "used by both mountain- and plains-oriented groups, the former in the Hogback and interior zones and the latter in the foothills and Hogback zones."[10]

Like Paleoindian, the term "Archaic" is used to identify archeological evidence associated with a range of human communities across a wide stretch of space and time. In part distinguished from the Paleoindian period by the absence of late Pleistocene and early Holocene megafauna, the Archaic is defined by a general lack of large kill sites and an increasing reliance on a broader-spectrum of plant and animal resources. In North America, the Archaic period is also characterized by greater variation between and within geographic regions, and the development of more localized economies. For the Great Plains, the Archaic is divided into three distinct periods: Early (7,500-5,000 BP), Middle (5,000-2500 BP), and Late (2,500-1,500 BP). Each of these periods are marked by significant environmental and cultural changes, and the Archaic as a whole comes to an end with the development and adoption of agriculture.[11]

On the Great Plains, as in other parts of North America, the Early Archaic period coincides with the Holocene Climate Optimum or Altithermal. In part an extension of the climatic changes that had led to the end of the Ice Age, the Altithermal was marked by significant global warming that lasted from 9,000 to 5,000 BP. On the Great Plains, a drier and warmer climate regime led to reductions of forage for bison, diminished stream flow and surface water resources, and generally made the region less supportive of human occupation. By the same token, high altitude areas that were once too barren or too cold became more hospitable. Thus areas like the Black Hills became important refugia for plants, animals and humans. Although very little archeological evidence from the Early Archaic has been found in the Black Hills, or elsewhere on the Northwestern Plains, one significant site dating back to this period is in Wind Cave National Park at the Beaver Creek Shelter. Based on evidence gleaned by archeologists from this site, and from her own research around the southern Hills, Sundstrom has "hypothesized that a highly diversified, mountain-oriented subsistence pattern dominated the Black Hills

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[10] *Ibid.*

[11] George C. Frison, "Hunting and Gathering Tradition: Northwestern and Central Plains," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 13, Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 131-133.

proper during [the Early Archaic], with a separate large-game hunting based subsistence pattern having been retained to some extent in the foothill zones.[12]

Sundstrom's ideas echo the conclusions of George Frison, whose lifetime of work has made him a leading scholar on Great Plains archeology. In a recent essay summarizing Archaic Period archeological sites on the Great Plains, Frison writes that "Evidence from the Early Plains Archaic suggests that the Black Hills may have been a kind of oasis where bison were able to maintain their numbers."[13] The ecological conditions in and near the Hills apparently retained many of the characteristics that had allowed bison to thrive in the Plano and Folsom Periods. As the Altithermal ended, a climatic shift that marks the beginning of the Middle Archaic Period (5,000-2,500 BP), temperatures on the Great Plains became more moderate and rainfall increased. Bison ranges necessarily extended further from the Hills and herd populations grew, but during the region's long winters and the frequent if relatively brief droughts of the early Middle Archaic they would have remained centered on the Hills. As bison numbers increased on the Plains, so too did human populations—especially through migrations (both seasonal and long-term) from the Missouri River and beyond. The convergence of people and animals in and around the Black Hills during the early Middle Archaic Period no doubt created the regular spectacle—and the frequent witnesses—of large bison herds pouring out of Buffalo Gap in the spring and returning again in the fall.

The archeological record of the southern Hills attests to the abundance of bison and other game animals, as well as the increased variety and amount of plant resources, that fostered human population growth during the Middle Archaic period. Radiocarbon dating of all known archeological sites in and around the Black Hills indicate a peak use and habitation of the area during a 500-year (i.e., 20-25 generation) stretch between 4000 and 3500 BP. A 1996 Cultural Resources Overview of the Black Hills National Forest identified 144 known sites with archeological components dating to the Middle Archaic Period—which is more than eleven-times the number of sites associated with the Early Archaic Period.[14]

While the number of sites indicates increased usage of the Black Hills area, the plant, animal, tool and other material evidence they contain also suggests a varied array of use patterns that reflect the distinct position of the Hills within the Northern Plains. Evidence from Middle Archaic sites on the open plains to the north and west of the Black Hills are consistent with subsistence practices that were primarily based on communal bison hunts. On the Southern Plains, Middle Archaic Period communities based most of their material and nutritional needs "on broad spectrum foraging with seasonal small game hunting and general gathering. During this period in the Black Hills," as archeologist Jennifer Galindo notes, "it appears that a mixture of large game hunting as in

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[12] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 68.
[13] Frison, "Archaic Period Sites," in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 24-25.
[14] Brad Noisat, "Early Plains Archaic," and Sundstrom, "Middle Plains Archaic;" both in *Black Hills Cultural Resources Overview*, eds. Lance Rom, Tim Church and Michele Church (Custer, SD: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Black Hills National Forest, 1996), 2b-3 and 2c-1.

the north, and generalized foraging characteristic of the south, were combined to include communal bison hunting, individual hunting of other large and small game, and broad spectrum foraging."[15]

This hybrid of southern and northern use patterns, and their adaptation to the diversity of resources and microclimates in the Hills, became the foundation of human residence and use through the Middle and Late Archaic (2,500-1,500 BP) Periods. The diets and seasonal movements of people in the Black Hills were varied yet dependable across vast stretches of time. Food and material resources included bison, deer, pronghorn and various small game, prickly pear, a variety of seed plants, pine boughs and timber, wild onions, bulbs, various kinds of berries," legumes, plums, prized stone and minerals, and protein-rich insects like grasshoppers and crickets.[16] Sheltered areas in the lower hills provided regular residence sites during the winter, and places like the Beaver Creek Shelter site were used repeatedly over thousands of years.[17]

While Beaver Creek and other rock shelters might be used at several different times of year, as a storage site and work area, for residence before, during and after significant communal hunts that involved nearby game drives and the Sanborn Buffalo Jump, other sites in the interior of the Black Hills were used on a strictly short term, seasonal basis: spring and summer when various plants sprouted and flowered; late summer when berries ripened; fall hunting and processing of deer and smaller game, as well as collecting timber resources. High peaks and alpine springs also served as likely sites of particular spiritual significance, as did caves like Wind Cave. The Red Canyon area near present-day Edgemont was also a place of special importance, as evidenced by a vast trove of rock art dating back to the Middle Archaic period and perhaps earlier. Other sites of frequent and even long-term use related to hunting, foraging, quarrying, and collecting minerals are also located on both sides of the southern Hogback. And of course, the warm waters of the southern Hills attracted users from far and wide.[18]

The increased human presence in the Black Hills area, whether in terms of regular seasonal use or more permanent residence, certainly fostered a deep and abiding connection to the area across many generations. The nature of this connection is not easily surmised from the archeological record of the Middle Archaic Period, but some cautious speculation is warranted. Some of the more unique properties of the Hills, such

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[15] Galindo, *Wind Cave Archeological Inventory Project: Final Report*, 137. Galindo's conclusion is primarily based on Sundstrom, "Middle Plains Archaic." For a brief overview of Middle Archaic use patterns to the south of the Black Hills, see Charles Barron McIntosh, *The Nebraska Sand Hills: The Human Landscape* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 20-22.

[16] Sundstrom, *Storied Stone*, 14.

[17] Lynn Marie Alex, Robert A. Alex, and Mark D. Fahrenbach, *The Archeology of Beaver Creek Shelter (39cu779) Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota: A Preliminary Statement* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1991); James Martin, et al, "The Beaver Creek Shelter (39cu779): A Holocene Succession in the Black Hills of South Dakota," in *Prehistory and Human Ecology of the Western Prairies and Northern Plains: Papers in Honor of Robert A. Alex (1941-1988)*, ed. Joseph A. Tiffany (Lincoln, NE: Memoir/Plains Anthropological Society, 1993), 17-35.

[18] Martin, et al, "The Beaver Creek Shelter;" Alex et al, *The Archeology of Beaver Creek Shelter* . Also Frison, "Hunting and Gathering Tradition: Northwestern and Central Plains;" Galindo, *Wind Cave Archeological Inventory Project: Final Report*; and Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*.

as prized lithic and mineral resources, thermal springs, timber, and a rich array of plant and animal species, certainly made the area known well beyond the communities that lived in or frequented the area most. Through stories, gifts and trade, the Black Hills became part of other peoples' worlds, and by the same channels their worlds became part of life in the Hills.

The material significance of the Hills, for communities both near and far, also must have had a commensurate social or cultural importance. Large communal hunts near the Hills, planned and located well in advance, were times of exchange, revelry and ceremony. The movements of smaller, more intimate family-based groups into various ecological niches to collect berries, trap small game, or obtain and process minerals also shaped social patterns and individual behaviors. Summer use of high alpine areas, winter camps in protected canyons, spring and fall movements of bison away from and toward the Hills all represented significant periods in the annual calendar. In short, the Black Hills occupied a critical place in the lifeways and worldviews of many people over a very long stretch of time.

While there is no way to precisely reconstruct and convey the social or cultural significance of the Black Hills during the Middle Archaic Period, the area's topographic and ecological diversity, as well as its location in the midst of the Great Plains, must have fostered a variety of understandings. Seasonal migrants to the Hills no doubt appreciated a particular locale in the Hills somewhat differently than a more indigenous or frequent resident of the area. Further distinctions would have occurred within different parts of the Hills. Springs, caves, canyons, gathering sites or hunting locales that were particularly well known or well used by a certain group probably had some unique attributions that distinguished the place, and their community, from another locale and its people. Thus places like Ludlow Cave and Wind Cave could both be places of creation, where bison emerged into the world. However, these were not mutually exclusive creation sites. Rather, they held special significance to people who resided in or frequented different parts of the Hills: namely, the Slim Buttes area to the north of the Hills and the Buffalo Gap area of the "southern embayment."

The variety of material and spiritual associations that Middle Archaic peoples must have had with the Black Hills and, as archeological evidence suggests, the southern Hills in particular, probably date back to the early Holocene. Taking a long view of human history in the southern Black Hills, Sundstrom notes that during the Middle Archaic Period "different lithic (stone tool making) traditions occurred in the area contemporaneously, perhaps representing ethnically distinct groups … [with different] burial practices, habitation structures and subsistence practices." This "ethnic variability," she notes, "suggests that the pattern of increased cultural diversity that started in the Plano period with the divergence of open plains and mountains-foothills adaptations eventually led, by Middle Archaic times, to a flowering of many distinct but economically-similar ethnic or macroband groups." This basic pattern of distinct

communities "coexisting in a single environmental region," she concludes, would "persist throughout the remainder of Northwestern Plains prehistory.[19]

Late Archaic Period (2,500-1,500 BP)

Marked by a moderate and gradual shift in climate, the Late Archaic period continued many of the basic trends already in place during the Middle Archaic—yet also brought new developments that variously simplified and diversified the material cultures of the northwestern Plains and the Black Hills. As central North America became somewhat cooler and wetter, grass species flourished. This in turn fostered an increase in bison herds and other ungulates. By the same token, the profusion and diversity of some plant resources in the interior Hills must have diminished. These shifts may account for the smaller number of Late Archaic sites found within and near the Black Hills, when compared with Middle Archaic sites, as well as the greater prevalence of sites related to migratory hunter-gatherers with a stronger orientation toward bison hunting.[20]

Lush grasslands and great herds of bison brought more people on to the Great Plains. These movements were most pronounced on the Southern Plains, but they occurred throughout the entire Plains region. The Black Hills area in particular seems to have attracted people from three broadly distinguishable cultural traditions who either came from, or closely engaged with people from, different areas within the Great Plains region. Some Late Archaic sites in the Hills have materials associated with Yonkee and Pelican Lake cultures, which are more commonly found to the west and north of the Black Hills. The Yonkee tradition may have come out of the foothill areas of the Central Rockies, and perhaps had connections with Great Basin cultural traditions further west, while the Pelican Lake culture seems to have developed on the Northern Plains in present day Alberta and Manitoba.[21]

Distinguished by their lithic technologies, both of these cultural traditions are associated with groups that were especially expert in organizing large communal bison hunts, either through the use of bison drives that directed herds over buffalo jumps or into arroyo traps and corral sites where they were killed and butchered. People displaying elements of the Besant cultural tradition also made regular use of the Black Hills area. They too were highly skilled at large-scale bison hunts, though their social organization may have corresponded with Plains Woodland traditions that developed in the Missouri River area and the prairies to the east. With a social organization that was probably more stratified than those associated with Yonkee and Pelican Lake groups, Besant-Woodland peoples made pottery, constructed burial mounds, and practiced some forms of horticulture. While no mound sites occur in the vicinity of the Hills, and horticulture was unlikely, evidence of pottery has been found in some Late Archaic sites.

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[19] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 69-70.
[20] *Ibid.*, 70-73; and Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains*, 2 ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1991), 88-91and 101-108.
[21] Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains*, 111-122; Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 70-73.

How much of this pottery, or the various materials associated with Yonkee and Pelican Lake traditions, was left by distant migrants or used by more local groups with whom they interacted, cannot be known. Certainly it was both, or all. Middle Archaic peoples already situated around the Hills would not have simply abandoned the area, but instead adapted to the same conditions that attracted and supported peoples with more distant associations. Through accommodation, as well as contest and conflict, various peoples—some with more recent and others with more ancient connections to the Hills—likely developed an amalgamation of different cultural patterns that functioned in the unique context of the Black Hills.

In this way a diversity of people and land uses mirrored the topography and ecology of the Hills, and reflected the area's unique situation within a vast expanse of plains. By and large, most Late Archaic groups seem to have been more focused on bison hunting than people of previous eras, and utilized other resources of the Black Hills area on a more occasional basis. Nevertheless, as Sundstrom points out, "some local groups continued the Middle Archaic pattern of intense use of a wide variety of resources." For instance the Late Archaic and Middle Archaic use of the Red Canyon Rockshelter and the McKean site [in the western foothills] are very similar, "with evidence for pemmican making, seed and root roasting, and consumption of large and small animals. The Late Archaic-Woodland period," she concludes, "was thus a time of both change and continuity in the Black Hills country."[22]

The Late Archaic Period, which closed some 1,500 years or 70-80 generations ago, might be described as an endpoint for the vast and undifferentiated expanse of time that Native peoples often refer to in a phrase like "since time out of memory," or "time immemorial." A long ago period in which the basic elements of an ancient oral tradition developed: a period of flood and cataclysm, of creative forces writ large, of mythic animals and First People, of calm, plenty and hardship, of fundamental lessons about how to live. In geological, environmental and cultural terms, it is the time that set the patterns of life in the Black Hills for many centuries and many generations. While environment does not determine history, it is always key. On the Northwestern Plains, and the Black Hills especially, environmental conditions both generously allow and severely limit what is possible. Climate and geomorphology, as well as ancient patterns of evolution and adaptation, are the legacies of long ago times—and they have remained dramatic agents of the region's history ever since. More specifically, they are the process that created and continue to shape the basic conditions that the National Park Service is committed to protecting, restoring and interpreting.

[22] Sundstrom, *Storied Stone*, 16.

Chapter Three

Contests and Alliances: Forming the Template of Black Hills History

Terms like "Paleoindian" and "Archaic," which fall under the even broader category of "Prehistoric," can seem arbitrary and prejudicial markers of human history. In many respects they are. One can hardly expect that the people who lived thousands of years ago gauged time, or identified their connections to past and future communities, in a similar framework. None would have thought themselves "paleo," "archaic" or "pre" versions of later peoples. "What's past is prologue," we are fond of quoting Shakespeare, but such a phrase is strikingly inappropriate when speaking about thousands of years of life on the Great Plains.[1] Countless generations of many different peoples can hardly be described as the collective prologue for a relatively brief stretch of time that we call "historical." Even worse, the terms used to divide this vast prologue into particular periods titled "Early," "Middle" and "Late" suggests that past human societies were somehow deficient; almost as if their purpose on earth was to be a stage of cultural development in an upward march of humanity, in which each period gave way to a more advanced condition.

The unfortunate implications of terms like "archaic" or "prehistoric" date back to the initial development of professional archeology and anthropology in the late nineteenth-century. At the time, these academic disciplines were primarily concerned with explaining stages of human development from primitive origins to the celebrated triumphs of the industrial age. Such conceits have long since fallen by the wayside; replaced by studies on the organization and development of particular cultures. This cultural approach moved archeology and anthropology away from arguments about inferior and superior stages of human development (and the place that various peoples in the present or the past might fall on that spectrum), but in doing so it tended to view its subjects in isolation. For archeologists, ancient cultures became discrete things: they developed, became fully formed, and then disappeared—to be replaced by new peoples or to reform in whole new ways. Anthropologists took a similar approach to their subjects, which they viewed as distinct communities with unique social organizations, traditions, and patterns of cultural expression.[2]

The cultural approach has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the ancient past, the recent past, and the present. Yet the thorough and now long-standing

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[1] The phrase "what's past is prologue" comes from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It is famously inscribed on the base of Robert Aitken's statue "The Future" (1933-1935), which stands in front of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

[2] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 80-86.

rejection of the human-development approach to archeology and anthropology may have overlooked one of that older school's potential virtues. Viewing human societies in terms of particular "development stages" is highly subjective and racist, but at least the concept of a "stage" provides some basis for recognizing shared commonalities among different peoples. For most of the twentieth century, the emphasis on distinct cultural developments has tended to overlook the interconnections between peoples who lived in the same place and time. When archeology and anthropology directly inform each other, it often involves connecting the material antecedents of a particular culture with basic characteristics identified in the more recent anthropological record. What can be lost in this approach is a sense of the relationships that shape multiple cultures sharing the same environmental and temporal context—and how their relationships (rather than certain cultural idiosyncrasies) might also shape subsequent groups that develop or arrive in same region.

Connecting a particular group to a specific cultural antecedent can explain volumes about certain beliefs, linguistic traits, migrations, and the like. On the Great Plains in the mid nineteenth-century, for instance, it can explain general differences between Lakotas and Arapahos: groups that spoke very dissimilar languages, had different social organizations, and adopted plains equestrian nomadism at different times. Yet these differences cannot explain why some Arapaho bands lived with Lakotas, while others kept a wary distance. Nor can they explain why Arapahos and Lakotas, with their different histories on the Plains, could have similar associations with the same places and shared, along with many other plains peoples, very similar community rituals like the Sun Dance. On the nineteenth-century Plains, and for thousands of years before, different peoples came to know each other intimately through marriage, adoption, abduction, conflict, alliance, and trade. In the process they shared knowledge about places, tools, resources, traditions and taboos. And as long established groups encountered newer arrivals, lessons and beliefs dating back to time out of memory were likewise incorporated by new generations of different peoples.

None of this is to suggest that Native North America, for thousands of years, was a sort of pan-Indian blend of people and beliefs. Remarkable diversity has always been a hallmark of the continent's first peoples. For that reason alone, culture is an important and indispensable rubric for understanding the history of the northwestern plains. Because much of this diversity is rooted in extraordinary adaptations to changing environmental, social, and demographic conditions, the clear periodization of Paleo, Archaic, and the like are also important. While the terms themselves may be unfortunate holdovers from a century ago, they do correspond to significant and widespread shifts in the material cultures of many peoples. These in turn closely follow pronounced ecological and climatic changes that shaped how, and how many, different groups lived on the Great Plains and around the Black Hills.

This chapter will cover three periods of time on the Great Plains that archeologists, anthropologists, and historians identify as Late Prehistoric (250-1500 Common Era, or CE), Proto Historic (1500-1750 CE), and Historic (1750-1900 CE). While the narrative will work with and against this standard periodization, it is important

to recognize that significant cultural, social, economic and environmental developments do correspond to specific periods of time. In doing so, however, attention will also be given to broad commonalities across these eras. Time periods, like the concept of culture, are useful, but also permeable. The goal in this chapter is to emphasize the important dynamics that shaped life for many peoples on the northwestern plains across wide stretches of time. Instead of a parade of tribes, or a chronological march across time, the focus will be on the common arena in which these different peoples lived, interacted, and passed on their legacies. Ironically, this emphasis on commonalities will allow clearer recognition of specific cultural and historical developments. More importantly for this study, it will also demonstrate the special importance of the southern Black Hills and the vicinity of Wind Cave within broader processes of continuity and change.

As the historian Theodore Binnema argues, the history of the northwestern plains from 250 CE through the historic era, is "complex, nuanced, and often paradoxical. For many centuries small human communities moved onto the northwestern plains and defended themselves there through complex combinations of trade, warfare, and diplomacy with neighbors who were often very unlike themselves." The history of the northwestern plains is really the history of a "common and contested ground of diverse communities"[3] At the center of this history were bison, which attracted people from adjacent areas to reap the bounty of the great herds. To do so required the development of sophisticated hunting and foraging strategies that involved complex seasonal migrations. As diverse groups moved from open plains to sheltered river bottoms, from the canyons, meadows and forests of the Black Hills to the silt laden banks of the Missouri River, they frequently met others; sometimes in peace and mutual collaboration, sometimes in competition and conflict.

For centuries, these movements and meetings were the fundamental and continuous reality of life on the northwestern plains, though common needs often led to disparate outcomes. In some cases, Binnema notes, "culturally dissimilar communities occasionally mingled, merged, fused, and even formed new 'mixed' identities. Elsewhere members of a single culture could take different paths: they sometimes split, diverged, and even developed new identities."[4] Key environmental, technological, and demographic changes often reset the ground rules of this common and contested region. The most significant include the adoption of the bow and arrow around 250 CE, the advent of the 300-year Neoboreal Episode ("Little Ice Age) in the mid sixteenth-century, the widespread incorporation of the horse and gun into plains cultures in the early eighteenth-century, and the rapidly growing presence of Euroamerican peoples, diseases and commerce in the early nineteenth-century. All caused significant and long-lasting changes in the movements, compositions and interactions of plains peoples—and they rightly mark important dividing lines or periods in the region's history. Through these periods, however, the southern Black Hills and the Wind Cave area remained a place of central importance as the basic dynamic of adaptation, contest, and alliance continued across boundaries of culture and time until the late nineteenth-century.

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[3] Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 3.
[4] *ibid*, 198.

New Patterns and New Peoples of the Late Prehistoric Plains

Beginning about 1750 years ago, a climate shift known as the Scandic episode created warmer and drier conditions on the northwestern plains that lasted for nearly six centuries. Temperatures, rainfall and weather patterns approximated those of recent times, but often with more variation across years and decades. The result was greater variability in subregional environments and a general increase in the size and movements of bison populations, which grazed the expansive grasslands and found respite during the relatively milder winters in protected ecological niches along river bottoms, in canyons, and up in subalpine parklands.[5]

Not surprisingly, these new conditions fostered important adaptations among the people already living on the northwestern plains and around the Black Hills. The Besant societies of the Late Archaic apparently increased the size of their communities and became even more focused on carefully orchestrated, highly ritualized communal bison hunts. These larger hunts combined topographic features like arroyos and jumps with artificial structures that included drive-lanes to direct herd movements and corral structures for entrapment and killing.[6]

All of these techniques required greater numbers of people and a higher degree of social organization than was common in earlier times. They also resulted in a much greater amount of animal flesh, which in turn allowed for a dramatic increase in the production of pemmican. This high-protein, high-calorie mixture of jerked meat, fat, marrow, and dried berries, which had first been developed in the Middle Archaic Period, could be stored in edible form for many months. Its increased use and production among Besant communities allowed them to sustain larger, more sedentary winter encampments. Pemmican also served as an important trade product to Woodlands communities on the eastern edge of the Plains. As trade networks broadened and the dependence on bison increased, archeological evidence at the Sanson Buffalo Jump adjacent to Wind Cave National Park, the Hudson-Meng Bison Kill site near the Pine Ridge in northwestern Nebraska, and sites in the White River Badlands and Powder River Basin indicate that the southern Black Hills became an important locale within this new regime.[7]

While the Scandic episode fostered adaptations among Besant communities, it also attracted new people from the northwest that archeologists call Avonlea. Bearing a whole new technology, the bow and arrow, Avonlea peoples first moved onto the plains

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[5] Richard Perry, "The Apachean Transition from the Subarctic to the Southwest," *Plains Anthropologist*, 25 no. 90 (1980): 279-296.
[6] Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 61.
[7] *Ibid*.; Ann M. Johnson, "Woodland and Besant in the Northern Plains: A Perspective," *Archaeology in Montana*, 18, no. 1 (1977): 27-41; Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains*, 221-223; Brian O. K. Reeves, "Communal Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains," in *Hunters of the Recent Past*, eds. Leslie B. Davis and Brian O. K. Reeves (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 168-94; J. Sanderson Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands: Historic Resource Study, Badlands National Park, South Dakota* ([Omaha]: National Park Service, 2006), 82.

from the Northern Rockies between 150 and 250 CE.[8] Occupying and migrating through more open and dryer stretches of the region, which were almost uninhabited prior to their arrival, Avonlea groups probably did not compete directly with the larger and more numerous Besant groups. It is very likely that they also retained different social and cultural traits. Less oriented toward large communal hunts, which were less effective on the relatively level portions of the plains where they lived, the Avonlea hunted in small groups or as individuals. Bows and arrows proved especially effective in this context since they allowed a single user to remain hidden and still in the midst of a herd. Along with a different hunting technology, the Avonlea also seem to have utilized a more widely distributed array of plant and animal foods than did the Besant, which indicates a higher degree of nomadism.[9]

A very few Avonlea points have been found by archeologists in the southern Hills, the White River Badlands, and at the Angostura Reservoir site to the south of Hot Springs.[10] It cannot be determined if these are contemporaneous with Besant points in the same area, so it is unclear if the southern Hills served as a geographic overlap between Avonlea and Besant groups, or—as had likely occurred in earlier eras—the area supported a localized complex that incorporated elements from the communal bison hunters to the northeast and the smaller nomadic groups to the west and south. Whatever the case, this blending did occur with the advent of new climate patterns that fostered greater diversity on the plains and more clearly put the southern Black Hills at the center of a "common and contested ground" that attracted a number of different peoples.

Plains Villagers and Pedestrian Nomads (850-1250 C.E.)

In the latter half of the Scandic episode, drier conditions reduced bison populations and made communal bison hunts less dependable. In response to these new conditions and circumstances, Besant groups apparently made a full transition to the bow and arrow and adopted many of the subsistence practices of Avonlea communities. Whether this represented an integration of Avonlea and Besant communities is unknowable. Some likely occurred, but archeological evidence also suggests that Avonlea groups, or newcomers from the west with whom they have been affiliated, remained in the open plains to the south and west of the Black Hills. For their part, descendants of older Besant communities to the north and east probably remained in contact with horticultural groups further east—and may well have been augmented by drought-pressed migrants from the Upper Mississippi River Valley.[11]

This broad triangular arrangement of horticultural groups to the east, band level

[8] The presence of dentallium shells and obsidian in early Avonlea sites indicates they were closely associated with people from the Rocky Mountains and further west. Bow and arrow technology was probably introduced to North America by Inuit migrants and had reached the Pacific Northwest around 2,350 BP, then spread eastward. Reeves, "Communal Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains," 168-94.
[9] Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 63-64.
[10] Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands*, 84.
[11] Linea Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills: A Contextual Approach* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 73-74; Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 65.

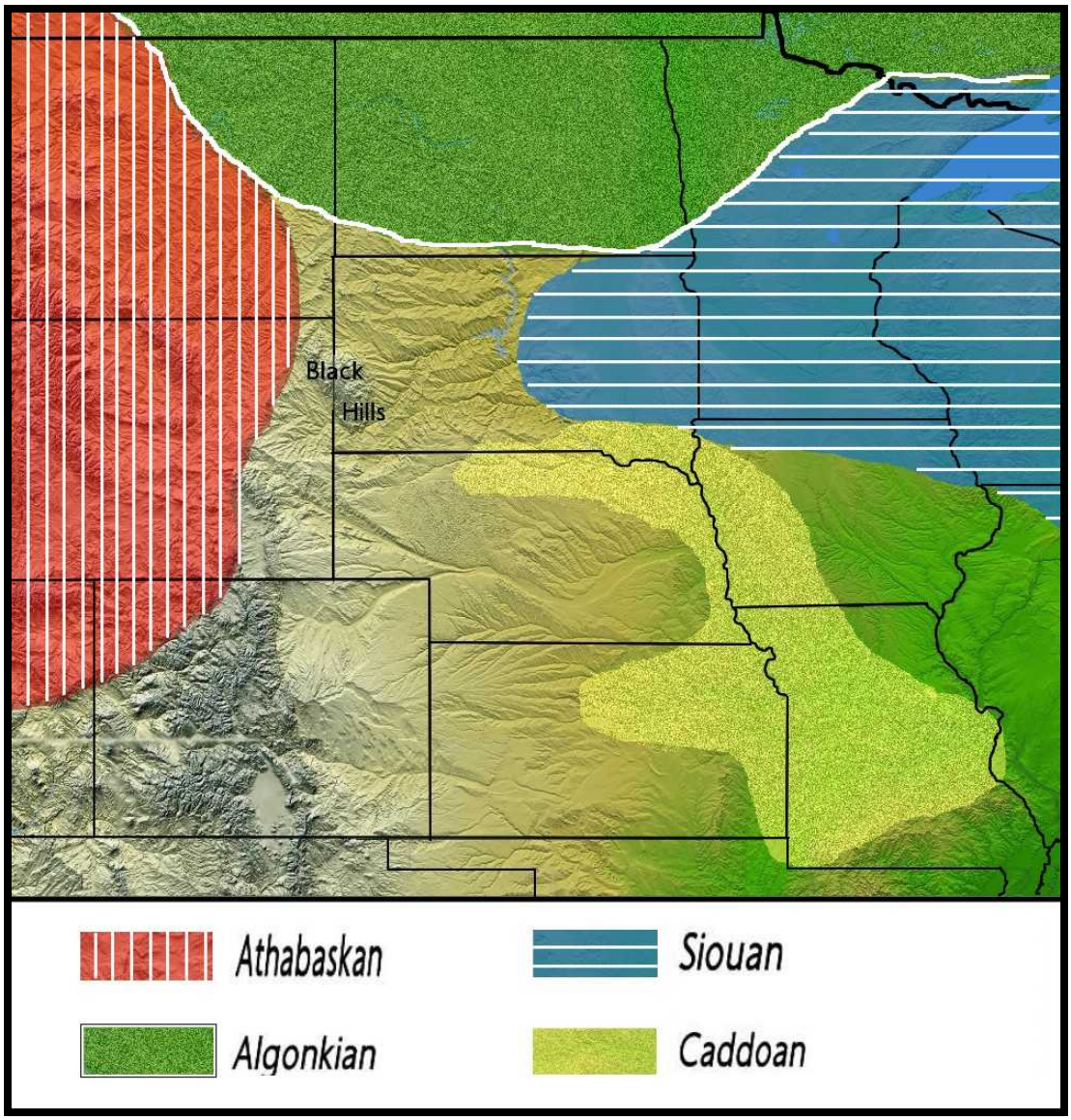

Figure 3.1: **General locations of broad language groupings around the Black Hills, ca. 1,000 CE.**

nomadic hunters and foragers to the west, and residual communal hunters to the north became more populous and more focused on the Black Hills with the advent of the Neo-Atlantic climatic episode (850-1250 C.E.). A period of increased rainfall and more moderate temperatures, the Neo-Atlantic fostered larger bison populations on the plains and allowed the extension of agriculture northward and westward along river corridors. Horticultural groups with ancient connections to the Lower Missouri, Middle Mississippi and Lower Ohio Rivers moved up the Middle Missouri and its main western tributaries—including the Platte, Niobrara, White and Cheyenne Rivers. Pedestrian nomads from the Rocky Mountains and the southwest also moved onto the more hospitable plains. All of these peoples, newer arrivals and more established groups, increasingly came in contact with each other as they utilized common resources on the Northern Plains and around the Black Hills.

Though it is difficult to establish specific origins for any of these Late Prehistoric peoples, archeologists postulate that four broad language families were represented in these new movements onto and through the plains. Siouan speakers from the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys likely pushed westward and integrated with some more established Besant groups along the Middle Missouri; Caddoans from further south made a similar move up the Lower Missouri; Algonkians from the Great Lakes and the northeastern plains (who were likely descendants of Besant groups) moved further onto the northwestern plains; and Athabaskans from the northern and southern Rockies (who probably included descendants of Avonlea groups) increased their numbers on the western plains. While these linguistic affiliations were not determinative of how people would live and interact in the Black Hills they are indicative of a new and increasing diversity of peoples attracted to the Black Hills—where they would encounter, ally, and conflict with each other as they sought the region's prized resources.[12]

Plains Villagers and the Black Hills

Dennis Lee Toom provides a compelling thesis for why sedentary, agrarian-based villages developed along the Middle Missouri River during the Neo-Atlantic episode. While climate change allowed subsistence agriculture to occur along the Middle Missouri and some of its larger tributaries, the lands were still marginal when compared to the crop yields that could be had further east. Some archeologists have postulated in the past that the new agrarian village communities that developed along the Missouri were pushed into this marginal area by more powerful groups further east and south. Yet it is probably more appropriate to focus on what drew people to Middle Missouri rather than what pushed them away from some place else. The special appeal of the area was obvious, and it lay in the opportunity to practice agriculture in the midst of "one of the optimum areas

[12] Patricia C. Albers, *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 17-25.

of the world for nomadic hunting and gathering."[13] The result was an effective integration of Besant or Plains Woodland subsistence strategies with eastern agricultural traditions for a more stable and diverse resource base.

Plains Village groups first developed between 850 and 1100 CE on a stretch of the Middle Missouri River, where they lived in semi-sedentary, semi-horticultural villages and they cultivated maize, sunflower, pole beans, and squash. Situated near the mouths of the Cheyenne, White, and Bad Rivers, they had fairly direct access to the southern Black Hills where they no doubt collected and processed lithic materials as well as hunted game animals and gathered plants.[14] An even more welcoming climate on the plains brought more people to the Middle Missouri around 1,000 CE who, alongside established communities, built large, permanent villages composed of rectangular houses. Like sedentary horticultural peoples to the south and east, their homes were built with heavy posts, wattle and daub walls, and thatched roofing, and they produced an array of ceramics for storage and cooking. These communities, which archeologists identify as Initial Middle Missouri, also developed a close association with the southern Black Hills as well as the White River Badlands. Evidence of temporary hunting camps from this era, some with tipi rings that indicate repeated, long term use, are common in both areas. Initial Middle Missouri communities probably moved onto the Plains in late spring, after the first weeding of the young crop plants. Large multi-age groups comprised primarily of men, but also including women and some children, spent most of the summer as mobile communities of nomadic hunters and gatherers—much as the communal hunting Besant peoples would have done in an earlier era. By fall they returned to their villages, crops, and the relatives who stayed behind, and together they laid up stores from the summer hunts and took in the harvest.[15]

> Seasonal use of the Black Hills would remain central to subsequent horticultural communities along the Middle Missouri for several centuries. Sometime during the latter part of the Neo-Atlantic climate episode, however, sections along the northern, eastern, and southern perimeter of

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[13] Dennis Lee Toom, "Climate and Sedentism in the Middle Missouri Subarea of the Plains" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1992), 1.

[14] Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands*, 86-93; E. Steve Cassells, David B. Miller, and Paul V. Miller, *Paha Sapa: A Cultural Resource Overview of the Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota and Wyoming* (Custer, S.D.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest, 1984), 13-19; and Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 80. Archeological evidence suggests these communities were a western offshoot of groups identified broadly as Great Oasis Culture, which extended along the eastern periphery of the Plains toward the Upper Mississippi River. Archeological evidence in the southern Hills from this period is scant, and hardly distinguishable in material or type from earlier users or residents. This suggests one of two possibilities: the early horticultural villagers who left traces of their presence in the southern Hills were simply a new iteration of Besant/Plains Woodland peoples who already lived in or were familiar with the eastern plains—and thus continued long established practices in the Black Hills; or, they were indeed new peoples who learned and adopted the resource uses developed by earlier groups. In either case, a high degree of continuity seems to have characterized the use of the southern Hills by seasonal migrants from the Missouri River.

[15] op cit. no. 14; and W. Raymond Wood, "Plains Village Tradition: Middle Missouri," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Vo. 13, Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 186-95.

> the Hills became sites for small-scale horticulture and lengthy residence. The Mandans have an oral tradition that a group known as the *Awigaxa* left the Missouri River and established settlements and horticultural sites in the vicinity of the Black Hills. These Awigaxa may be the source of horticultural sites dating from this period in the White River Badlands and in the vicinity of the Angostura Reservoir south of Hot Springs.[16]

Central Plains Tradition

The horticultural sites in the Badlands and southern Hills may also have been associated with peoples who came to the area from the south. As occurred on the Middle Missouri, a number of semi-sedentary villages practicing a mix of agriculture and plains nomadism developed in present-day Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas. Known collectively as the Central Plains tradition, archeologists have identified four discrete cultural complexes or phases associated with particular tributaries of the Missouri River. The westernmost and northern most of these cultural complexes (known respectively as the Upper Republican phase in south-central and southwestern Nebraska and north-central Kansas, and the Lower Loup Itskari phase in central Nebraska), were most oriented toward seasonal plains nomadism and may well have ranged toward the southern Hills.[17]

These peoples, who likely had close ancestral affiliations with the Caddoan speaking Pawnees and Sahnish (Arikaras), were themselves related to Caddoan peoples from the lower Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers. They nevertheless shared a very similar material culture with the Siouan speaking groups that lived on the Middle Missouri River. Consequently, it is not easy to identify which groups were associated with the small horticultural village sites in the southern Hills area. Pottery shards that show similarities to the productions of both Middle Missouri and Central Plains cultures, as well as evidence of defensive fortifications, suggests that both were present and likely clashed over the area's resources.[18]

Research in the Pine Ridge and the Sand Hills to the south of the Black Hills indicates that groups with ancestral connections to Avonlea peoples may also be connected to archeological sites in the southern Black Hills. It also suggests that the blend of horticulture and plains nomadism may not have been unique to Siouan and Caddoan groups from the south and east. Rather, "*in situ* groups may have borrowed material culture and other elements from trading partners to the east" and incorporated

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[16] Wood, "Plains Village Tradition: Middle Missouri;" and LuAnn Wandsnider, "Late Prehistoric High Plains Foragers: Starving Nomads, Affluent Foragers?" in *Great Plains Research,* 9 (Spring 1999): 9-39.
[17] L. Adrien Hannus, *A Cultural Resources Survey of a Portion of the South Fork of the Cheyenne River, Fall River County, South Dakota* (Brookings, SD: Archeology Laboratory, 1983).
[18] Evidence of fortifications in the southern Hills area coincides with the use of defensive structures at the Middle Missouri villages in the latter part of the Neo-Atlantic episode—a time that archeologists suggest was marked by conflict with Central Plains groups moving up from the south. Robert A. Alex, "Village Sites Off the Missouri River," in *The Future of South Dakota's Past*, eds. Larry J. Zimmerman and Lucille C. Stewart (Vermillion, SD: South Dakota Archaeological Society Special Publications, 1981), 39-46; and Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands*, 89.

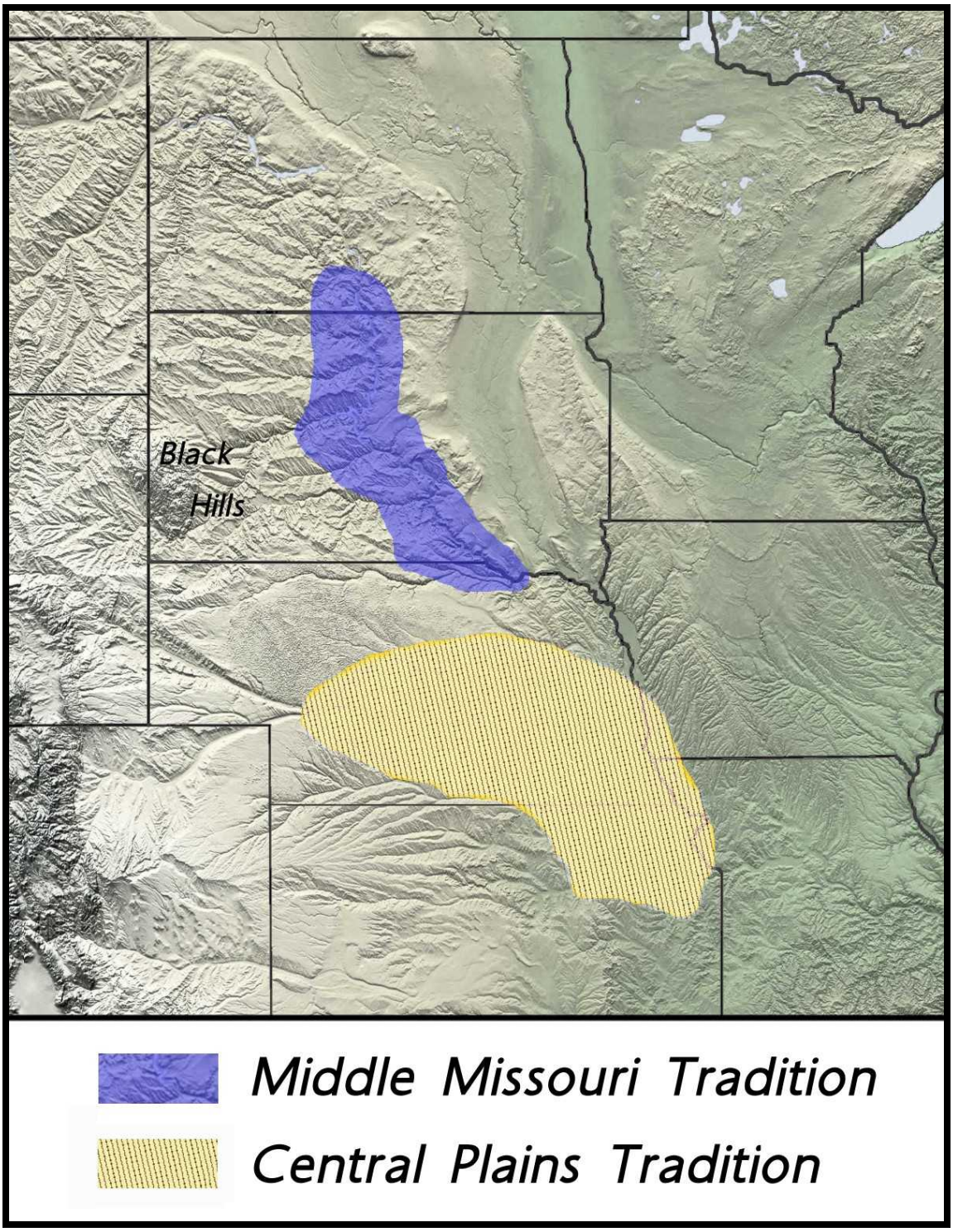

Figure 3.2: General Locations of Middle Missouri Tradition and Central Plains Tradition Groups

them into life on the Northern Plains.[19] It is possible that three distinct societies were developing a common, hybridized material culture that utilized various traditions to take advantage of conditions in and around the southern Hills area during the Neo-Atlantic episode.

As the climate became warmer and drier beginning around 1250 CE, and the prolonged drought conditions of the Pacific episode (1250-1525 CE) re-shaped the ecology of the plains, competition for the common resources of the southern Hills must have intensified as they became more scarce. The desire to retain a firm connection to the Hills likely explains the fortification of many village sites, while the wholesale abandonment of these places sometime after 1300 CE indicates that the southern Hills could no longer support semi-sedentary horticultural communities.[20]

The hybridized subsistence that had developed in the area apparently divided into its constituent parts. Groups most closely associated with the Middle Missouri or the Central Plains agrarian traditions migrated to the banks of the Missouri River and the lower stretches of its major tributaries. As had been the case for centuries before, Middle Missouri River villagers continued to be seasonal plains nomads and the Black Hills figured prominently in their migrations. Those who lived nearer the mouths of the Cheyenne, White and Bad Rivers tended to return to the southern Hills, though not exclusively, while villages further north along the Missouri River were more focused on the northern Hills and the Cave Hills. In addition to these horticultural communities, the Black Hills attracted even more intensive use by nomadic plains hunting groups. Areas in the foothills and around the Hogback served as focal areas for winter village sites and springtime hunting and gathering. In summer these peoples turned to the open plains for sustained communal hunts, and to higher alpine areas for plant foots, lithic materials, and game like deer and mountain sheep.[21]

Protohistoric Cultural Formations

While the Black Hills once again attracted the kinds of temporary and more long term uses that had occurred in earlier periods, the conditions of the Pacific climatic episode fostered a number of significant divisions and migrations among Northern Plains peoples. Middle Missouri and Central Plains cultural groups relocated along different stretches of the Missouri River, and some eventually moved eastward toward the northern prairie country of the Upper Mississippi drainage.[22] Further west, two ancient subsistence

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[19] Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands*, 90. Also Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 75-76.

[20] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 75-76; Sundstrom, *Storied Stone,* 14-15; and Hannus, *A Cultural Resources Survey of a Portion of the South Fork of the Cheyenne River*, *passim.*

[21] Sundstrom, *Storied Stone*, 16.

[22] This occurred in response to immediate environmental conditions as well as part of the demographic shuffle that came with the collapse of large Mississippian city-states in what are now the Midwestern, Eastern and Southeastern United States. The abandonment of Cahokia, located near the confluence of the Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and once the largest urban center north of Mexico, caused an outward migration of tens of thousands of people to the north and west. The movement of these peoples up

strategies persisted; the "bison jumping dominated subsistence pattern of the open high plains, [and] the mixed hunting-and-foraging pattern of the Wyoming basins."[23] Most of these plains nomads had either long resided in these areas, or moved in from points further west and north.[24]

Within this circuit of migration and multiple lifeways on the Northern Plains, the Black Hills remained the hub they had always been. The array of people who moved around, within, to and through the area had changed, however, and their presence would shape the Black Hills for centuries to come. The term "protohistoric," which can be broadly applied to the era in which these changes occurred, is generically defined as the period that comes before the production of recorded documents.[25] In regards to the Northern Plains and the Black Hills, a better term might be "time-within-memory." Historic peoples of the Northern Plains (i.e., those whom Europeans and Americans encountered and wrote about) often have very specific stories about life in the centuries before contact with non-Indians. Some of those stories were later written down in the historical record, and have subsequently become an important resource for anthropologists, archeologists, historians, and tribes trying to deepen their understanding of pre-Contact worlds.

Based on oral histories and material evidence, archeologists and anthropologists are fairly confident that several historically recognizable groups used or lived in the Black Hills area during the arid Pacific episode. These included a number of horticultural groups along the Missouri River: namely, the Mandans, Hidatsas, Crows, Arikaras, Pawnees, Poncas and Omahas. From the southwest, Apachean communities that blended extensive nomadism with some horticulture used the eastern and southern Hills. Archeologists suspect these Athabaskan speakers derived from Avonlea cultural groups, and may well have had an ancient though not necessarily continuous affiliation with the Hills. From the northwest the nomadic bison-hunting Kiowas came to the Black Hills around the beginning of the Neo-Boreal episode (ca. 1550), no doubt drawn by increasing bison populations. Somewhat later, Shoshonean speaking ancestors of the Comanches

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the Missouri River is no doubt connected to the northward movement of some Middle Missouri villages into what is now North and South Dakota.

[23] Sundstrom, *Storied Stone*, 16. At least one group, the ancestors of the Crow Indians (Apsáalooke), came from the east. Perhaps related to former horticultural residents of the Black Hills area, they lived with the Hidatsas and other Siouan-speaking groups on the Missouri River during the early part of the Pacific climate episode. After migrating to and living in the upper Mississippi/Great Lakes area, they returned to the Missouri in the mid fifteenth-century (ca. 1450 CE). Some two generations later, these ancestral Crows (who referred to themselves as Ashalahó, or Many Lodges) made their seasonal migrations to the northern Black Hills and the country to the west into a matter of year-round residence. See Jeffrey R. Hanson, "The Late High Plains Hunters," in *Archeology on the Great Plains*, ed. W. Raymond Wood (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 461-463.

[24] Loretta Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 13-14; Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 51; Hanson, "The Late High Plains Hunters," 462.

[25] For Northern Plains archeology, the term "protohistoric" can have a precise but highly varied meaning. In some contexts it refers to a period from the mid fifteenth to the mid eighteenth-century, in other contexts it is more limited to the first half of the eighteenth century. The concept of "time-within-memory" corresponds more closely to the longer periodization.

also started to utilize the Black Hills and surrounding Plains to the south.

The conditions that brought these peoples to the Black Hills, or sustained their long association with and presence in the area, are complex and not clearly understood. But they deserve a brief accounting. The horticultural peoples from the Missouri River underwent a significant demographic and cultural transformation into what archeologists call the Coalescent Tradition. Marked by two overlapping phases, the Initial (1300-1650) and the Extended (1400-1650), the process of coalescence along the Middle Missouri has been summed up by Steven Lovick and Stanley Ahler as a three-fold development: first, in the movement of Caddoan speaking villagers "out of the Central Plains [who] established themselves as the ancestors of the Arikara in South Dakota;" second, "when the southern Mandan group borrowed architectural and ceramic traits from elsewhere while living in the vicinity of the Black Hills;" and third "when the two groups of Mandan and three groups of Hidatsa interacted" in the Knife and Heart River region.[26]

The Apachean groups of the Central Plains were already established in the southern Hills region at this time, but with the return of wetter conditions a cultural tradition known as Dismal River developed in western Nebraska. With a subsistence economy still primarily based on hunting, Numic speaking Apacheans took up farming along sheltered river bottoms. Groups near the southern Hills established horticultural villages on the Cheyenne River at sites now drowned beneath the Angostura Reservoir.[27]

The conditions of the Neo-Boreal also brought a host of new peoples to the Northern Plains and Black Hills. Attracted by larger bison herds, more secure water sources, and more thickly forested stretches of river (which provided key resources as well as winter shelter to humans and bison), communities from the eastern prairies, the southwestern deserts, the northern and central Rocky Mountains, and the Great Basin all committed themselves to seasonal and year-round living on the plains. Linguistic evidence suggests the Kiowas migrated for several generations across the Northern Plains from what is now northwestern Montana before arriving in the Black Hills area sometime in the late sixteenth-century. The Algonkian-speaking Arapahos made a similar but shorter migration from the Prairie-Plains transition zone west of the Great Lakes, and arrived in the northern Black Hills area in the mid seventeenth-century. Comanchean peoples who had been migrating northward from the Southern Plains, also came to the Black Hills in the seventeenth century.[28]

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[26] Steven K. Lovick and Stanley A. Ahler, *Cultural Resource Reconnaissance in the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site* (Grand Forks: Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of North Dakota Contribution no. 159, 1982), 64; quoted in R. Peter Winham, W. Raymond Wood and L. Adrien Hannus, "National Historic Landmark Theme Study: Village Sites of the Middle Missouri Subarea, A.D. 1000-A.D. 1887," report prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Preservation Center, 1994, 98.

[27] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*, 59-60

[28] Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 2 (September 1991): 469-472; Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 87-88; and Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December): 841-42.

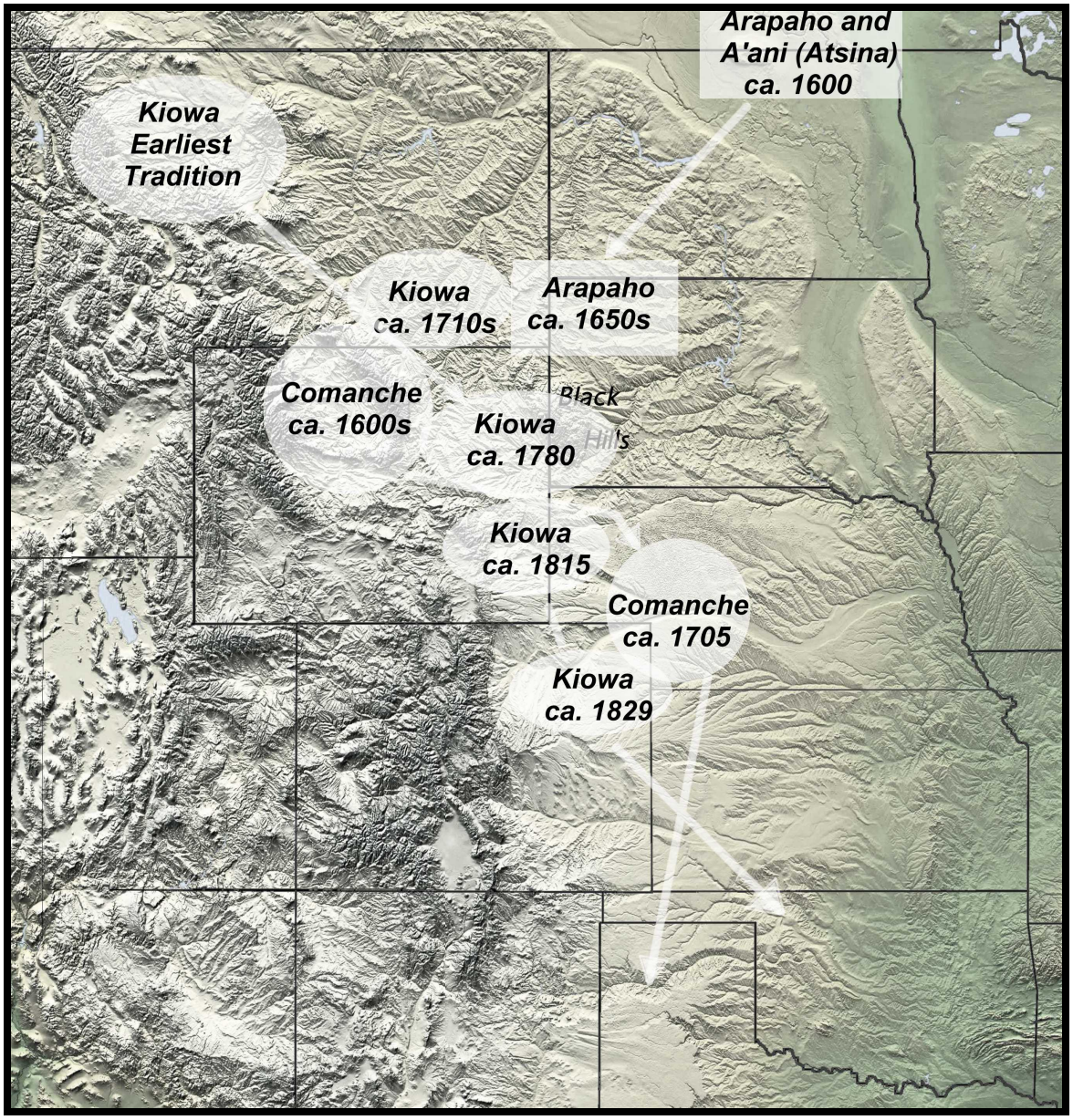

Figure 3.3: Kiowa, Arapaho and Comanche Migrations from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries.

The cooler and wetter conditions of the Neo-Boreal could at times make agricultural less certain on the Northern Plains, but they sustained large bison populations. This basic environmental fact allowed more people to live in the region. Nomadic plains groups grew in size, as did the populations of horticultural villages—which may have collectively numbered about 14,000 people at the onset of the Neo-Boreal episode.[29] As the Middle Missouri villagers incorporated more bison hunting into their mixed subsistence economy, a larger percentage of their growing population moved onto the plains each summer. The same was true of agrarian groups further down the Missouri River, who conducted their seasonal hunts up the Platte River Valley and toward adjoining river drainages. The Poncas, who were centered on the lower Niobrara River, directed their hunts northwestward to the large herds that congregated south of the Black Hills in the summer and fall. "Like other semihorticultural populations who arrived in the region before them, they followed a pattern of seasonal movement where locations near the base of the Hills were used as summer/fall bison hunting grounds." As Patricia Albers writes, the Poncas likely "made periodic attempts to plant near the Hills and to establish long-term residency in the region during the protohistoric era."[30]

The Black Hills and Northern Plains Before Horses and Europeans

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Black Hills were not strictly a homeland to any one group. Kiowas and Plains Apache groups (also known as Kiowa-Apaches) were closely allied with each other and tended to focus most of their year-round movements on the southwestern and southeastern perimeters of the Black Hills. They did not do so exclusively, however, and the Black Hills were a common and contested ground for many peoples. Some, like the Poncas and Arikaras, operated in the same southern sectors of the Black Hills. The Crows, when they were in the Black Hills area, generally passed along the northwestern sections. The Arapahos and Cheyennes, who like the Kiowas and Plains Apaches spent most of their time in the vicinity of the Black Hills, generally focused on areas along the eastern and northeastern perimeter. The Mandans and Hidatsas, who traveled to the Black Hills from the north, tended to concentrate their activities in the Cave Hills and the northeastern Black Hills.

None of these peoples and places constituted specific ethnic zones or districts. Oral histories indicate that all were familiar with each other at some time, and knew there way around the entire Black Hills region. Likewise, all of these different peoples with very different linguistic and geographic origins, valued the area for the same bounty of resources that occurred at the rich interface of plains and alpine heights: bison, pine timber and pitch, various game animals prevalent in the area, seasonal plant resources, mineral dyes, lithic resources, thermal springs, clear streams, seasonal shelter, and more. As Linea Sundstrom notes, they also understood these resources as manifestations of the same creative process. In doing so they recognized several of the same sacred sites, including Bear Butte in the northern Hills, Bear Lodge (a.k.a. Devils Tower) in the

[29] Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy," 477.
[30] Albers, *The Home of the Bison*, 17-25.

northwestern Hills, and different cave sites.[31]

Written evidence about the sacred nature of some places is mostly limited to recorded accounts from Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Lakotas, who were all present in the Hills during the historic era. However, it is very likely that other groups that had previously inhabited or used the area also had sacred associations with Inyan Kara, Harney Peak, the Race Track, and Buffalo Gap. Sundstrom's research on the rock art of the southern Hills, which shows traces of many different cultural traditions across vast stretches of time, also suggests that most all of the groups present in the Black Hills during this period spent time in the southern Hills. One can hardly expect that any would have remained ignorant of the nearby Hot Springs area, given the rarity of thermal springs on the plains and their proximity to so many valuable plant, animal, and mineral resources. The thermal springs, as well as the ancient rock art, may also have had widely recognized sacred attributes: the former for their comforting and medicinal properties, as well as their connections to creative forces in the underworld; the latter for their connections to ancient predecessors from the times out of memory.[32]

As noted at the outset of this chapter, the historian Theodore Binnema has argued for a simpler, more flexible interpretation of plains history that turns away from the large body of scholarship that focuses on the formation of distinct tribes and the demarcation of tribal territories. Instead, Binnema emphasizes the importance of the most fundamental social unit, the small band, for understanding how people lived on and utilized the plains. Instead of tribes, tribal territories, and territorial conquests, the history of the plains is really a matter of larger conglomerations of small groups with mutual interests and common goals exploiting discrete resources in different places at different times of the year. Sometimes, as in the case of the Kiowas and Plains Apaches, people from different places and speaking different languages formed larger social bonds with each other. In other instances, closely related groups like the Crows and Hidatsas would separate and pursue different alliances.

Flexibility, rather than continuity, was the primary social virtue for life on the plains. At times of crisis, of course, communities often define themselves in specific cultural terms and associate or clash with others on those terms. Yet it is during crisis that band-level societies are also most fluid—splintering, migrating, adopting new members and practices, developing new alliances. Such fluidity, rather than cultural stasis, was invariably the most successful strategy for surviving crisis.

While the dynamic movements and interactions of band level groups fostered adaptation, they also sustained an ancient process of cultural transference. In writing

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[31] Sundstrom, "The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 185-212; Sundstrom and Richard Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 2 (October 1996): 177-89.

[32] Sundstrom, *Rock Art of the Southern Black Hills*; Sundstrom, "The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review;" and Sundstrom, "Sacred Islands: An Exploration of Religion and Landscape in the Northern Great Plains," in *Islands on the Plains: Ecological, Social, and Ritual Use of Landscapes*, eds. Marcel Kornfeld and Alan J. Osborn (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 258-300.

about sacred landscapes in the Black Hills, Sundstrom notes that as different groups entered a new area, or came to live with each other in a shared area, "they tended to adopt the sacred places of their predecessors [or new neighbors] as their own and to transfer pre-existing belief systems to these historically sacred locales."[33] In this way, associations with and uses of a particular landscape remained fairly continuous across many generations in spite of the fluid movements and identities of Native communities. Scholars of American Indian history tend to emphasize the persistence of specific Native cultures across long stretches of time. Yet in the case of the southern Hills it probably makes more sense to note the common meanings and persistent significance of the area for many peoples.

Shifting Networks of Regional Exchange

In the protohistoric period the groups that moved around and through the southern Hills operated in a larger network of material and cultural exchange that centered on the Middle Missouri River villages. By the late seventeenth-century the Mandan and Hidatsa villages were the nexus for a vast exchange network that reached from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, across to the Upper Missouri River and the northern Rockies, and down to the Southwest. Though oriented more toward the south, the Arikaras were also central players in this network. At the Missouri River villages, plains nomads would trade dried meat, dressed hides, flour made from prairie turnips, and a host of special plant, animal, and mineral products for corn, beans, squash, sunflower seeds, and tobacco. The sites around the northern, eastern and southern Hills area also apparently served as an occasional trade-fair site, with the southern locales probably involving plains nomads and Poncas from the south, and perhaps some Shoshonean groups from the west and southwest.[34]

As a nodal point in the larger Northern Plains trade network, the Black Hills were part of "a pan-continental exchange network … which linked every tribe in North America with one or more of its neighbors in trade." Through other exchange centers in the Rocky Mountains and on the Columbia River, for instance, dentallium shells from the Pacific Coast might be traded for conch shells from the Gulf of Mexico or Copper from the Great Lakes. "This trade system enriched the lives of the Native Americans by providing both luxury goods and scarce or unavailable raw materials necessary for producing needed tools. It also helped stabilize and reinforce a way of life; as the village people grew more crops to trade to their nomadic neighbors, the latter in turn gathered more goods for exchange. This intertribal trade system also fostered a communication network enabling the exchange of information over hundreds of miles."[35]

The coming of Europeans in the mid eighteenth-century enlarged and transformed

[33] Sundstrom and Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven," 188.
[34] Fowler, *Columbia Guide to the Great Plains*, 35-36; Wood, "Northern Plains Village Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 30 (1973): 1-16.
[35] Quotes from Alex, "Village Sites Off the Missouri River," 38. Also see Wood, "Northern Plains Village Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," 1-16.

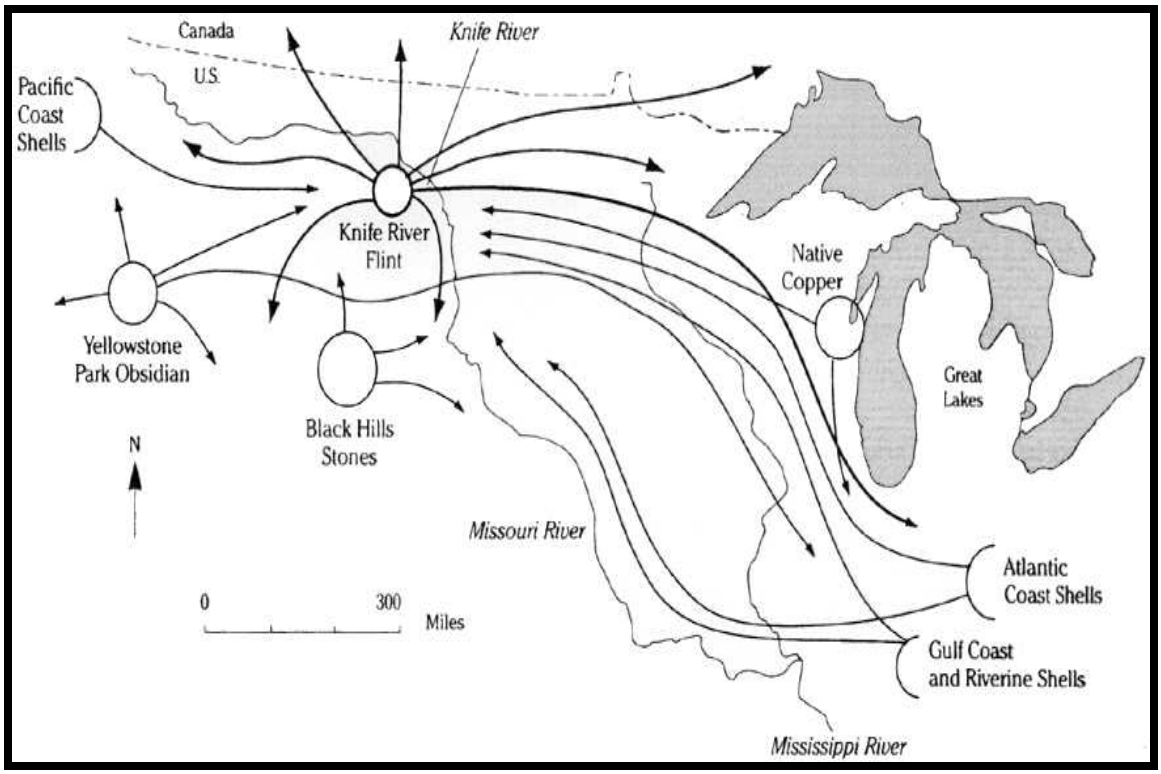

Figure 3.4: Northern Plains and Black Hills within Continental Trade Networks.
Source: National Park Service, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site.

the exchange networks of the Northern Plains. By connecting them to a global trading system that reached to Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, they expanded their context and increased the variety of products that passed through them. The pace and volume of exchange also increased rapidly as horses and guns were incorporated into Native communities. The former would revolutionize life on the plains by making seasonal and year-round nomadism more productive, both in terms of the number of places and resources that could be utilized by a highly mobile group as well as in the amount of trade products that could be carried to and from the Middle Missouri villages. Guns also transformed life on the plains in two especially significant ways. First, hunters could kill more bison and other game animals, with the new surplus becoming part of the growing trade system. Second, conflicts became more deadly which made alliances more necessary.

These new dynamics were further complicated by the devastating effects of epidemic diseases, which took horrible tolls on whole communities and scrambled populations throughout the region. The center of life on the Northern Plains would shift as well. With their populations greatly diminished, and their place within the plains exchange system having been eclipse by American traders based out of St. Louis, the Missouri River villages became small players in a globalizing trade network. Equestrian nomads, who did not experience the same rate of infection and mortality as the more densely populated horticultural villages, became relatively stronger and generally benefited from more direct access to non-Indian markets. Covering vast stretches of the Northern Plains, from the Platte River Valley to the Upper Missouri River, the Lakotas became the largest and most powerful group in the region. In alliance with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, they centered their world on the Black Hills—and in turn made the Hills a centerpoint of the Northern Plains for nearly a century. The following chapter will take up the historical developments that made the area so central in the era of equestrian nomadism, as well as the processes that rapidly transformed it into an important, but peripheral, site within the larger national context of the United States.

CHAPTER FOUR

EQUESTRIAN NOMADISM AND THE CONTEST FOR THE SOUTHERN BLACK HILLS

Sometime in the 1930s, Belle Martin—an elderly Southern Cheyenne woman living near the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency in Concho, Oklahoma—recounted a story of how her people first acquired horses. Two centuries earlier the Cheyennes were living on the Middle Missouri River near the Arikara villages. They had recently moved into the area from the prairie country between the Mississippi and Missouri River, and soon adopted much of the material culture of their new neighbors. The Cheyennes built large, round, earthen lodges like the Arikaras', planted crops, made sustained hunts onto the plains, and traded with distant groups drawn to this exchange center on the Northern Plains. Sometime around 1740, either at their villages on the Missouri River or at an encampment near the Black Hills, they met with some Comanches who had brought horses up from the Southern Plains.

As Alice Lee Marriott recorded Martin's story, the Cheyennes were initially overwhelmed by the possibility of having horses.

> "We never heard of horses," said one Cheyenne priest. "Perhaps Maheo [the Creator] wouldn't like for us to have them."
>
> "Why don't you ask him?" a Comanche said. "We'll trade with you, if you're too afraid to go [with us to the Southern Plains] and get them."
>
> [The Cheyennes considered these proposals, and their priests] smoked and prayed to Maheao, fasting, for four days. At last Maheo took pity on them, and spoke to them through the oldest priest.
>
> "You may have horses," Maheo said. "You may even go with the Comanche and take them. But remember this: If you have horses everything will be changed for you forever.
>
> "You will have to move around a lot to find pasture for your horses. You will have to give up gardening and live by hunting and gathering, like the Comanche. And you will have to come out of your earth houses and live in tents. I will tell your women how to make them, and how to decorate them.
>
> "And there will be other changes. You will have to have fights with other tribes, who will want your pasture land or the places where you hunt. You will have to have real soldiers, who can protect the people. Think, before you decide."
>
> The priests sat and smoked through another four days. Then the oldest one said, "Maheo, we think we can learn the things you can teach us

and our women. We will take the horses, and with your guidance we will learn the new life."

"So be it," said Maheo.[1]

Both in its specifics and its tone, this story reveals a great deal about the revolutionary changes that equestrian nomadism would bring to the Northern Plains and the Black Hills. The Comanches, who included bands that had migrated away from the region just two generations earlier, had already undergone remarkable changes. In their southwestward migration across the plains, the Comanches encountered horses among the Utes sometime around 1700 in the southern Rocky Mountains. Though first used by a few Indian groups in the mid seventeenth-century, it was not until after the Pueblos had expelled the Spanish from the Rio Grande Valley in 1680 and taken their livestock that horses became readily available for use, breeding, and trade. The Utes were early pioneers in the new equestrian world, and the Comanches would soon become their powerful heirs.

The Comanches who met the Cheyennes likely came from more northern oriented bands that knew of the Black Hills from past residence and use. Whoever they were, and whatever their background, they presented a stunning model of what could be done on the plains. First, of course, was the ability to live with and manage such a remarkable animal. Prior to the horse, the only beast of burden for plains nomads was the dog, which could carry small packs or haul light loads on slender travois or drag poles. This effectively limited the size of portable shelters, the amount of materials that could be carried (whether from plant gathering, hunting, obtaining stone tool-making materials, or from trading), the distances covered, and the number of days each journey would require. Just seeing a horse was to instantly re-imagine this world on a vast scale. The horse could pull a travois with several hundred pounds on it, pack at least four times as much as a dog, and carry these larger loads much faster and further.[2]

Reconfiguring the Common and Contested Ground of the Plains

The horse did not simply expand life on the plains, it changed relations among different peoples, and fostered new and more frequent interactions with non-Indians. More people could live on the plains, travel further, kill more bison, have larger lodges, and accumulate more things. In this regard alone the horse fostered a remarkable cultural flourishing among plains peoples which has since become the most celebrated and iconic representation of the American Indian. Yet the horse was part of a larger revolution that

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[1] Excerpt is from "Out of the Earth Lodges," in *Plains Indian Mythology*, eds. Alice Lee Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 95-96.

[2] John H. More, *The Cheyennes* (New York: Blackwell, 1996), 41. The Cheyennes have two different words for horse: the Northern Cheyennes use the term *mo'éhno'ha*, which also means elk; the Southern Cheyennes say *nêstotse*, a word that is commonly used in reference to dogs but more generally means "pet." While these different terms probably stem from two different initial encounters with horses (a Northern Cheyenne story tells of first receiving horses from Arapahos), together the words echo a common assessment of the horse: it was an animal that could do the work of a dog, but was as big as an elk.

Figure 4.1: George Catlin, *Band of Sioux Moving Camp*, ca.1837-1839. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

involved a tremendous growth in trade (among Indians and with non-Indians), and increased competition for access to resources that could be traded or would facilitate trade.

In some respects, the new possibilities of equestrian nomadism only made sense in the context of growing trade relations. For the Comanches, horses were the primary resource they brought to a vast trade network. For the Native peoples who acquired these horses, especially those on the Northern Plains where the climate prevented the growth of large herds, the horse allowed hunters to acquire and transport a surplus of pelts, hides, cured meats and other products for trade. This in turn fostered specialization. Instead of the mixed strategy of horticulture and seasonal hunting the Cheyennes had practiced on the Middle Missouri, they would in time become almost solely reliant on nomadism. What Cheyenne women had once grown on plots of fertile land would be acquired with animal products that Cheyenne men killed and Cheyenne women processed. Horticultural peoples, for reasons that will be discussed below, in turn became more focused on crops that they could trade for the products of the hunt.

More people on the plains, covering greater distances, and pursuing the same vital resources—bison and horse pastures—necessarily came in more contact with each other. As the common ground of the plains became more crowded, it also became more violently contested. Guns were a sought after and costly trade item that facilitated hunting, but also made conflicts between groups far more deadly.[3] Guns were a good part of the draw for the Comanches when they first set off for the Middle Missouri villages, since the Hidatsas, Mandans, and Arikaras had already been acquiring European weapons for at least a decade. With an additional source of guns and other trade items, as well as another outlet for their horse herds, the Comanches could even more firmly defend and augment their powerful situation on the Southern Plains.[4]

No wonder the Cheyennes paused, and their Holy Men prayed, before choosing to live with the horse. The appeal of an equestrian life was irresistible, but the consequences were far reaching and well beyond anyone's reckoning. In fairly short order, however, horses would so transform the Great Plains that life without the animals would become unthinkable.

Other once unthinkable things would shape this world as well. Three small pox epidemics took horrific tolls on Native communities between 1780 and 1802, especially at the villages along the Missouri River. Increased trade with non-Indians, coupled with close living arrangements within the villages, fostered high rates of infection among people with no immunity. The Omaha population dropped from more than 3,000 to less than 300 over this period, and the Mandans, who had already been experiencing a steady population decline through most of the eighteenth century, fell from 3,600 to 1,600. Almost two generations later, the 1837-1838 small pox pandemic wrought unimaginable

[3] Jeffrey P. Blick, "Genocidal Warfare in Tribal Societies as a Result of European-Induced Culture Conflict," *Man* 23, no. 4 (December 1988): 666-668.
[4] Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December): 840-48.

horrors across the Northern Plains. As the historical demographer Russell Thornton notes, an outbreak in the summer of 1837 killed as many as 10,000 Indians in a matter of weeks. By the time the epidemic had run its course, the "total numbers of American Indians thought to have died are overwhelming: 6,000 to 8,000 Blackfoot, Piegans, and Bloods; 2,000 Pawnee; virtually all of several thousand Mandan; one-half the 4,5000 Arikara and [Hidatsa]; … one third of 3,000 Crow; 400 Yanktonai [Dakota];" and scores more across the Rocky Mountains.[5] So much death shook whole world views to their core, caused decimated bands to combine their populations and interests, and forced a scramble among survivors to redefine and assume new leadership roles. Uneven rates of mortality also changed the relative strengths of the peoples contesting the plains, and tended to favor the most mobile, most widespread, and least densely populated groups of equestrian nomads.

Horses, trade, and disease were the distinct, but inseparable, components of a new world that was more variable, more diverse, more contested, and (even with the epidemics) more populated than anything that had ever before existed in the region. All of these characteristics, and the dynamic interactions of each, were further magnified as more non-Indians came onto the plains as traders, explorers, soldiers and migrants. By the mid nineteenth-century, many sections of the Great Plains could no longer support so much life, and so much movement. The end of the Neoboreal climate episode and the onset of droughty conditions in the mid 1850s took a toll on bison herds, which were already overstressed by decades of increased hunting, loss of forage to horse herds, and likely exposure to domestic cattle diseases like brucellosis. Horse populations suffered as well, and the ecological core of equestrian nomadism—grass, bison, and horses—could not so readily support the cultural and economic structures that had developed over the previous century.

Conditions were somewhat unique on the Northern Plains, however, where Lakotas, Northern Arapahos, and Northern Cheyennes continued to thrive. The reasons were both environmental and historical, and they ultimately centered on the Black Hills. Although the Lakotas and their allies have long been celebrated as archetypes for the history of Plains nomadism, "from the adoption of horses to the exhilarating affluence of the buffalo days and from the fierce resistance against the American empire to the final, dreadful defeat," their experience was truly exceptional.[6] The bulk of this chapter will consider this unique history, particularly as it relates to the Black Hills and the Wind Cave National Park area.

The Opportunities and Challenges of Equestrian Nomadism

Equestrian nomadism, which began on the Southern Plains in the early eighteenth-century, was widespread across the entire Great Plains and beyond within two generations. Horses did well throughout the vast region, but not equally so, and

[5] Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 94-95.
[6] Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," 860.

equestrianism developed along three different paths that reflected basic environmental conditions. The milder climate of the Southern Plains, for instance, proved most conducive to the maintenance of large horse herds. This in turn fostered the development of a trade-based pastoralism alongside a bison-hunting economy. The balance between the two was never a simple matter, however, and the new world that horses made possible soon changed the ecology on which it was based.

The cascade of events that stemmed from the equestrian revolution is both tragic and, in the clarity of hindsight, unsurprising. Large horse herds, wide-scale trade, and increased hunting badly undermined bison populations. The region's limited riverine habitats, where bison, horses and humans concentrated in winter, were compromised. With less animals surviving the winters, and less calves born in spring, hunting took a higher percentage of the remaining herds. As the trade in bison hides suddenly jumped in the 1820s, when Americans opened trade connections across the Southern Plains, the annual take of bison increased to new levels. Bison populations faltered even more in the 1840s when rivers became corridors of summer travel for American traders and migrants. During their passage across the Plains they moved through extensive riparian areas where they cut trees for fuel, pastured livestock, trampled soil, and pushed these critical winter refuges past their ecological breaking points. By the time drought hit in the 1850s, Southern Plains Indians were suffering periodic famine. A greater reliance on horses, both for food and trade, proved the most logical response. This strategy only functioned until the end of the Civil War, however, when the American military was freed up to launch "a total war that combined cooperation with professional buffalo hunters, prolonged winter campaigns that disrupted the Indians' herding cycle, and systematic slaughtering of captured Indian horses."[7]

North of the Missouri River, plains equestrianism followed a very different trajectory but ultimately reached a similar denouement. The colder and more extreme climate of the far Northern Plains did not support pastoralism to any significant extent. With rare exceptions none of the northern groups could sustain, let alone increase, their horse herds from year to year except through trade and raiding. As on the Southern Plains, horses enlarged and energized trade networks that increasingly involved guns and other non-Indian manufactured items. In the north, however, the dynamic was somewhat inverted.

In the early nineteenth-century, the average Comanche family owned 35 horses and mules. North of the Missouri River, the "household average varied between one and five, and many families had no horses at all." This general lack of horses prevented a full shift to equestrian nomadism, which usually required six healthy horses per family: one for hunting, two for riding, and another three for carrying household goods and possessions. Most families walked and used dogs when moving camp, lived in small and

[7] Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 2 (September 1991): 484-85; Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 64-72; Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25. Quote from Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," 855.

crowded tipis, and were forced to continue "the pre-horse practices of abandoning the sick and disabled."[8]

In the North, the general absence of horses led to greater social distinctions. Though no one could amass the kind of horse wealth that was common among the Comanches, a family with just a half-dozen horses was far better off than an average household. Horses may have been relatively few, but they were essential for participation in a world of increased trade and hunting. This small difference in the numbers of horses a family or group possessed could have large consequences. With horses so valuable, and so few of them to go around, the egalitarian ethos that characterized pedestrian nomadism was difficult if impossible to sustain. The only remedy was to obtain more horses, which fueled an escalating dynamic of raiding across the northwestern plains.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, horse-raiding profoundly reshaped the social and physical landscape of the Upper Missouri River country. The historian Pekka Hämäläinen gives a concise and potent description of the effects.

> Although in theory the raids focused on property, in practice they led to frequent and bloody clashes, which sparked deadly counterattacks as the relatives tried to avenge their dead…. By fueling a fierce arms race, constant fighting compelled the tribes to maintain high-level production of buffalo robes for markets and to discard traditional checks against overhunting. In the 1840s bison herds were declining on both sides of the upper Missouri River, causing widespread starvation.

As on the Southern Plains, the U.S. military takeover in the years after the Civil War proved "virtually effortless. Exhausted by starvation, disease, and decades of fighting, the northern tribes could rally only weak resistance against the encroaching Americans."[9]

The Northern Plains and Black Hills as Horse Country

South and west of the Missouri River, and north of the Platte, the Northern Plains presented a different arena of opportunity for plains equestrianism. Though only somewhat milder than the climate to the north, the region's topographic diversity supported a richer mosaic of ecotones than any other section of the Great Plains. This not only provided a wider array of resources for plains nomads, as it had for hundreds of generations, it also provided more over-wintering sites (river bottoms, foothills, canyons, coulees, and the like) for both horses and bison. With less overlap between the winter needs of these two animals, and plenty of spring, summer and fall pasturage for all,

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[8] Quote from Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," 847. The Blackfeet were an important exception to this general rule. In part because they wintered in the foothills of the Northern Rockies, where warming Chinook winds allowed for some winter grazing, the Blackfeet averaged about 10 horses per lodge.

[9] Quote from Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," 853.

horses did not undermine bison populations as they did in the Southern Plains.[10] Groups like the Lakotas were thus better able to balance the demands of pastoralism with hunting than the Southern Plains groups did. A somewhat milder climate and easier access to the southern herds also meant that, unlike the more northerly groups, they were not as pressed to compensate for a dearth of horses in a world increasingly defined by mobility and trade.[11]

None of this is meant to imply that the Northern Plains were a kind of Goldilocks arena for plains equestrianism: neither too hot nor too cold, but just right. As elsewhere on the plains, the shift to equestrian nomadism was a mix of opportunities and challenges. Finding a way to act on and perpetuate these opportunities in a sustainable manner, and address the social, economic, and environmental challenges they created, was not easy and it never happened. Even if such resolution was possible in a world of disease, conflict, and American encroachment is an open question, it would not be worked out by the time the United States completed its conquest of the plains. Until this conquest, however, the area proved the most effective arena for the adoption of plains equestrian nomadism. For that reason, especially, the alliance of Western Lakotas, Northern Cheyennes, and Northern Arapahos offered the most potent resistance to the United States of any plains group or confederation.

The Black Hills played a central role in the relative success of this particular strain of equestrian nomadism on the Northern Plains. Besides the Black Hills, the unglaciated Missouri Plateau includes several mountain ranges of varying size. Among these are the Big Horns, the Absarokas, and the Laramies, all of which are key contributors to the biotic and ecological richness of the Northern Plains. However, the proximity of the Black Hills to the Missouri River, and the prairie country further east had long made the Hills more central to human life on the plains for thousands of years. In the equestrian era this centrality was especially pronounced as trade became more focused on the Missouri River. In short, the equestrian revolution that made life on the plains both richer and more dynamic also made the Black Hills more essential.

From East to West: Using and Contesting the Black Hills

When Comanche traders first brought horses to the Northern Plains, their primary destinations were the Middle Missouri River village trade centers of the Arikaras, Mandans, and Hidatsas. They also traded with Crows and Kiowas (and later with Cheyennes) near the Black Hills, but most horses were directed to the villages. The communities along the river embraced the obvious advantages of incorporating horses into their lives, but most of the animals they acquired were reserved for subsequent trade with groups to the north and east. In this respect, the horse did not so much transform as it augmented the basic contours of these agricultural-based plains peoples.

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[10] Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 94-98; Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," 854.
[11] *Ibid.*

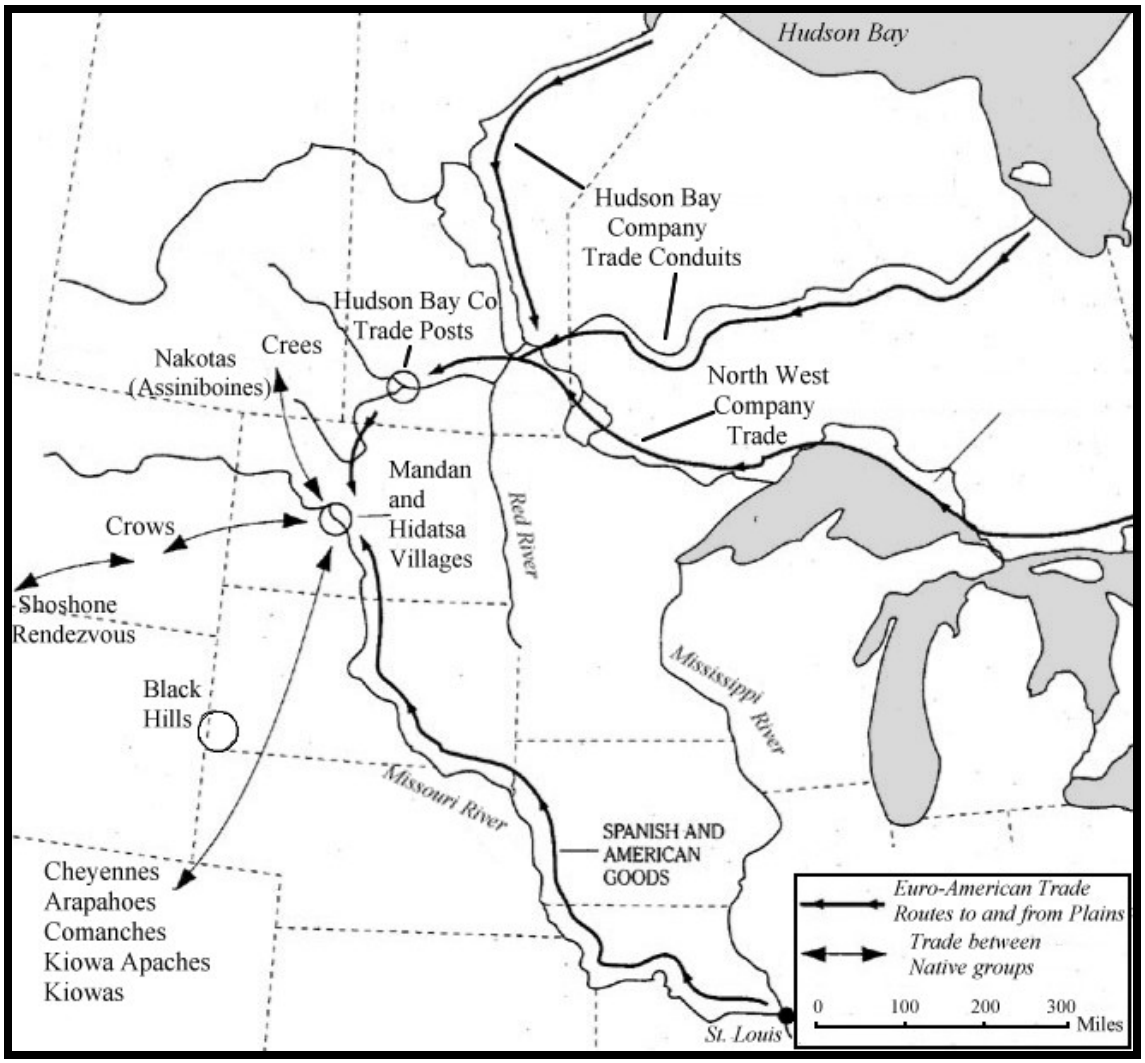

Figure 4.2: Upper Missouri River Trade Networks, ca. 1800. Source: National Park Service, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site. With surplus crops to trade and established connections within colonial trade networks, Upper Missouri River villages attracted much of the produce coming off of the Northern Plains, Eastern Plains, and northwestern prairies. Consequently, they had no real compulsion to take up equestrian nomadism.

When horses, guns and European trade goods became more common, the numbers of people, animals, and materials that moved through the Middle Missouri villages increased almost exponentially. Consequently, they did not need to keep many horses on hand. For one thing, untended horses could trample and devour cornfields. Large permanent herds, even if kept from crops, would also graze up the grasses that otherwise sustained regular trading parties of equestrian nomads. Even worse, the use of bark from young cottonwood trees as winter horse fodder meant that keeping large year-round herds would have destroyed critical timber sources. For these reasons, the typical Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa household only kept one or two horses. Enough for travel and brief hunting forays from the village, or an extended communal venture.[12]

Horses certainly made the Black Hills easier to reach, but the animals may well have rendered them less a part of plains villagers' lives. Long summer hunts became less frequent and less necessary, because bison herds nearer to the Missouri River were easier to find and, with horses, easier to surround and dispatch. In short, more bison could be killed and processed in a shorter amount of time, and the products of the hunt more promptly carried back to the villages. As the closest alpine environment, the Black Hills remained an important area within the plains villagers' world, but the use of horses meant that less people, spending less time, could access the Hills. Even then, it was easier to have other people, and other people's horses, bring the resources of the Hills to the Middle Missouri in trade. These changed circumstances, and the increased use of manufactured metal items instead of lithic materials, made the Black Hills less directly a part of plains villagers lives. On the other hand, they may have taken on a more exclusively spiritual or religious significance: as a place of pilgrimage for catching eagles, fasting, making designs among other ancient markings, taking warm waters, praying at caves for the renewal of bison herds, directly gathering special plants or mineral dies, and a host of other activities.

New Equestrian Peoples on the Northern Plains

The horse was an important addition to the lives of Middle Missouri villagers in the eighteenth century, but it was utterly transformative for the plains nomads of the Black Hills area. Equestrian nomadism would alter seasonal migrations, cause groups that practiced broad-spectrum-hunting and gathering regimes to become more specialized on bison hunting and trade, and create more contested overlaps between resource users. As occurred to the south and the north, plains equestrianism would also change basic elements of pre-equestrian society. Access to more resources fostered greater disparities in affluence and authority within groups while the emphasis on hunting and trade, two primarily male occupations that now had more direct associations with individual ownership of animals and products, distanced women from group decisions. The need to gauge seasonal movements to the grazing needs of horses also kept band sizes small. While this social dynamic was true of pedestrian nomadism, it now required bands to

[12] R. Peter Winham, W. Raymond Wood and L. Adrien Hannus, "National Historic Landmark Theme Study: Village Sites of the Middle Missouri Subarea, A.D. 1000-A.D. 1887," report prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Preservation Center (1994), 98.

move more frequently and further from each other. Extended interactions between multiple bands were often limited to a few large hunts per year. These occurred in mid summer, when horses had fully recovered from the deprivations of winter and open grasslands were lush enough to support herds of horses and large congregations of bison, and in fall, before the weather turned too cold but after bison had finished their rut and grown thick winter robes.[13]

In this new world, the Black Hills would become a key center for a series of equestrian groups that moved into, moved away from, and orbited around the Black Hills from the early eighteenth-century until the 1870s. Indeed, it was almost as if the Hills possessed a special gravitational pull that could draw in and temporarily hold dynamic groups in a swirling world of change. Behind these different movements of people were four basic factors: location (within the bison country, along key trade routes, and in proximity to Missouri River trade centers); resources (for residence, seasonal use, and horse pasturage); rapid change (caused by disease epidemics, new trade possibilities, encroachment of non-Indians and other Native groups, and shifts in bison populations); and conflict (for resources, for access to trade, or for survival). Different groups would find opportunities or insurmountable obstacles in the dynamic interplay of these factors, with some communities choosing to move away from the Black Hills while others eagerly moved in. Given the importance of the Hills for so many groups, however, such movements necessarily involved some degree of conflict or displacement.

If one thing remained constant within all of this motion, it was the directional course it took. When groups that had become established in the Black Hills left, or were forced out, they invariably moved southwestward to relocate in the horse country of the Southern Plains or along the corridors of trade between the Hills and points further south and west. By the same token, the groups that entered the orbit of the Hills always came from the Missouri River. Primarily newcomers to the plains, these peoples had migrated westward from the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi River country. Pushed by the conflicts and chaos associated with various European and Native efforts to control the peltry trade of northeastern North America, they were also drawn by the possibilities of plains-based hunting and trading. Coinciding with the appearance of the horse among Middle Missouri villagers, their arrival on the eastern edge of plains proved an entryway to a whole new way of living. As these new plains peoples made themselves into year-round equestrian nomads, they invariably headed for the Hills—following routes long used by the Mandans and Hidatsas from the northeast, by the Arikaras and earlier Middle Missouri River groups from more due east, and by the Poncas from the southeast.

Equestrian Peoples of the Southern Black Hills

Beginning with the Shoshonean Comanches, who left the area in the pre-equestrian era before returning again as traders, the Black Hills remained an area of critical importance for Northern Plains nomads throughout the eighteenth and into the

[13] Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 71-74 and 194-102.

late nineteenth centuries. The first equestrian groups to focus their lives on the Hills were the pedestrian nomads already in the area when horses arrived. These were the Plains Apaches, the Kiowas, the Crows, and the Arapahos. As noted above, some Cheyenne bands were also present in the Black Hills at the advent of the equestrian era on the Northern Plains. However, their full-fledged commitment to plains nomadism would take a generation or two to develop. By the late eighteenth-century, when the Cheyennes as a whole were well-established on the plains, the Black Hills rapidly became the geographic center for the largest and most powerful group of the plains equestrian era, the Lakotas.

Plains Apaches

The Plains Apaches (Naishan Dene; a.k.a., Kiowa Apaches or Padoucas) of the Black Hills area were likely the first to utilize horses in the southern half of the Northern Plains. Like the Shoshonean peoples further north, and the Apaches of the Southern Plains, their early use of the horse made them a formidable people. In the late seventeenth century, when few groups had access to—let alone had seen—horses, mounted groups of Plains Apaches had become "a dread of" of the Pawnees in present-day Nebraska and "all neighbor tribes."[14] Yet, as had also occurred in other sections of the plains, more widespread adoption of the horse and an influx of European weaponry (the Pawnees were soon well-connected with French traders) took a heavy toll on the Plains Apaches. A combination of disease epidemics, the rise of powerful Comanchean groups to the southwest, and punishing raids by mounted and armed villagers from the lower Missouri River, reduced the geographic range and population of the Plains Apaches. By the mid eighteenth-century the Plains Apaches had largely disappeared as a distinct group on the Northern Plains, with remnant bands having either re-integrated with other Apacheans further south or become associated with Comanches and Kiowas. In the vicinity of the Black Hills, the latter is likely what occurred. In 1805 William Clark, who had a particular affinity for old stories of the "Paducah" Indians (so much so that he founded a city in western Kentucky by that name), made note in his journals of a remnant Plains Apache band he called the "Dotame" that lived among the Kiowas on the west side of the Black Hills.[15]

Information about the Plains Apaches in the Black Hills is limited, both in the written record and in the oral histories of other Native peoples. Yet their presence in the Black Hills is recorded in rock art around the southern Hills, in archeological evidence dating back to the early Avonlea peoples with whom they were ancestrally affiliated, and in the echoes of old stories about the times out of memory. The latter would have likely persisted among the Kiowas, who obtained cultural and material knowledge of the Black Hills from their close association with the Plains Apaches.[16]

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[14] George E. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 46.
[15] Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark: Up the Missouri to Fort Mandan* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 425-26, and 439.
[16] James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Washington: GPO, 1901), 156-162.

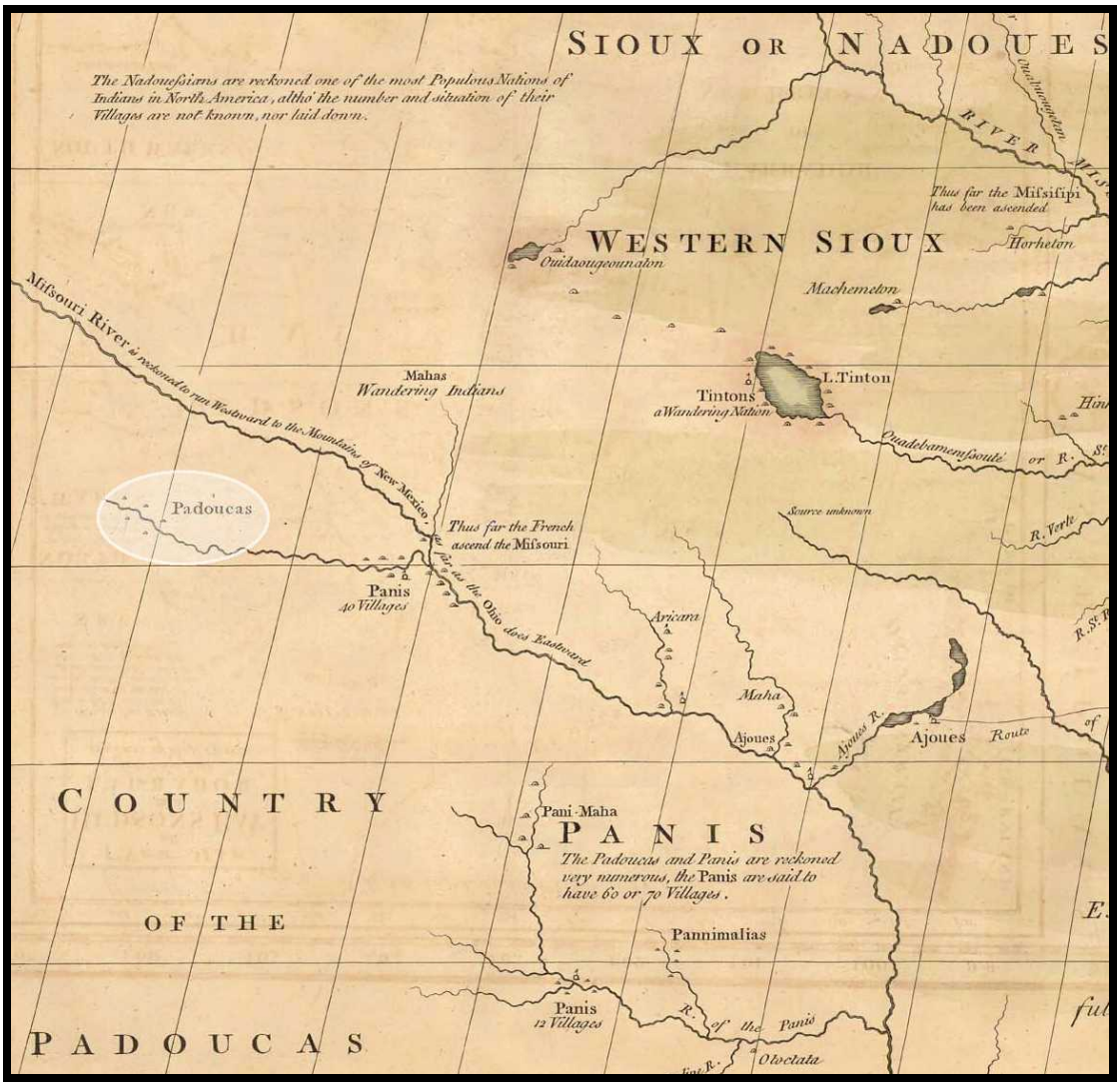

Figure 4.3: Detail from John Mitchell's *A map of the British and French dominions in North America*… (1755). This mid eighteenth-century map locates a Padouca village (highlighted) to the south of the Black Hills on the headwaters of the Niobrara River. It also locates some Arikara villages below the mouth of the Niobrara River near their Pawnee and Omaha kin, and places the Western Lakotas (a.k.a. "Tintons") between the Mississippi and Missouri River.

Kiowas

As recorded by James Mooney in the 1890s, Kiowa oral history places their arrival in the northwestern Black Hills in the early eighteenth-century. Prior to this time they had lived in the vicinity of the Three Forks of the Missouri River. During their migration through the Yellowstone River country they associated with the Crows and Arapahos, who both included the northern Hills area in their seasonal migrations. By the time the Kiowas had arrived in the Black Hills, they had also adopted and modified a Crow version of the Sun Dance that was taught to them by an Arapaho man who married into a Kiowa band. At the time they began practicing this powerful religious ceremony, which was later adopted and modified by most plains groups during the equestrian era, the Kiowas had also become intimately familiar with Bears' Lodge Butte (Devils Tower). It was there that they learned or developed a number of enduring stories about its formation that have strong echoes among other Northern Plains groups.[17]

The likelihood of cultural transference as it relates to one of the most holy ceremonies, and holiest sites, for the Kiowas deserves special mention. Linea Sundstrom suggests that the ceremony and the site are closely connected. "Although the Kiowas do not specifically refer to Bears' Lodge Butte as the preferred site of their summer Sun Dance, … abundant water and grass [made the area] a favorite Sun Dance ground for later peoples" during the equestrian era. Subsequent arrivals to the Black Hills "may have borrowed this ceremonial ground, and even the Sun Dance itself, from the Kiowas, much as they adopted the legends surrounding Bears' Lodge Butte, Bear Butte, and other sacred landmarks."[18]

Whatever the origins or continuities of Kiowa experiences in the northwestern Hills, by the 1760s they had themselves moved on to the southern Hills and the south fork of the Cheyenne River. This short migration was likely precipitated by several factors: Comanchean peoples had largely migrated away from the southern Hills by the time the Kiowas had arrived in the northwestern Hills; the Plains Apaches who once dominated the plains from the North Platte River to the Black Hills, were badly weakened; and the acquisition of horses by the Crows, Arapahos and Kiowas made the northwestern Hills a more contested area. In short, the dynamics of the early equestrian era had opened a remarkable opportunity in the southern Hills.

The Kiowa move to the southern Hills and the Wind Cave National Park area may not have been completely voluntary, but it was likely understood as a fortunate necessity. The resource rich "southern embayment" retained all the material benefits that had attracted previous peoples: foods, shelter, and prized amenities like the thermal springs along the Fall River and the lithic resources on Battle Mountain and elsewhere. In a world increasingly shaped by the physical needs and movements of horses and bison, the good forage, clean waters, and access to the open plains only made the area more attractive.

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[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Linea Sundstrom, *Storied Stone: Indian Rock Art in the Black Hills Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 148.

Ancient associations with Wind Cave may also have given the area an additional appeal. For most plains peoples, including the Kiowas, "bison joined the wind and the stars as supernatural in origin."[19] Unlike the forces of these atmospheric and astral realms, however, bison originated from beneath the earth. Across the length and breadth of the Great Plains, Native peoples have identified specific sites—caves, primarily, but also canyons and mountains—as the places where bison emerged from and returned to the earth. Such places could change with a people's migrations, as occurred with the Kiowas, and become attached to special sites identified by earlier or more permanent residents of a particular area.

The Kiowas' oldest stories locate the place of emergence for people and bison at a site in the far Northern Plains, from whence they had migrated sometime in the distant past. Once on the Southern Plains in the nineteenth century, however, they also associated the emergence of bison with the canyons of the Llano Estacado in Texas. Later, when they had been relocated to their reservation in Oklahoma, Hiding Mountain (Mount Scott) in the Wichita Range was identified as the place where bison left the Kiowas and went below the earth for good. It is implausible that the Kiowas would not have known of Wind Cave during the time they lived in and around the southern Hills. And it is highly likely that they identified the cave opening as a special place of emergence for bison, just as previous people in the southern Hills probably did. In the late eighteenth-century, as bison were increasingly valued for trade as well as subsistence, proximity to such a place could only have seemed highly auspicious.[20]

Perhaps the most significant, and newest, appeal of the southern Hills lay in their central position along the route to and from the horse country of the Southern Plains. The Kiowas quickly became intermediaries between Comanche horse traders to the south, and the Arikara villages to the east. Their alliances and associations with the Crows and Arapahos also fostered connections with the Hidatsas and Mandans further up the Missouri River. This advantageous position on the southern rim of the Hills attracted others, namely the Poncas, who also prized the area for its location within the bison country and along a main horse trading route. Like the Kiowas, the Poncas also traded directly with the Comanches and, through marriage and shared history, had ongoing contacts with the Arikaras. It may well be through this association with the Arikaras, which sometimes involved joint hunting excursions to the Black Hills, that the Poncas first acquired horses near the headwaters of the Bad River and learned of the Wind Cave area. Their efforts to establish a firmer presence in the southern Hills were effectively repulsed by the Kiowas, however, and the Poncas ultimately retreated to the fertile bottomlands of the Niobrara and Missouri River confluence area where they sought to emulate the trade relationships enjoyed by the more northerly situated Arikaras.[21]

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[19] Quote is from Flores, "The Great Contraction: Bison and Indians in Northern Plains Environmental History," in *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Big Horn*, ed. Charles E. Rankin (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1996), 9.

[20] "The End of the World: The Buffalo Go," told to Alice Marriott by Old Lady Horse (Spear Woman) in Alice Lee Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, *Plains Indian Mythology* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 138-39. Also Maurice Boyd, *Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual, and Songs* (Fort Worth, Texas Christian University 1981), 89-93.

[21] Albers, *The Home of the Bison*, 26-57.

For all the attractions of the area, the Kiowas' time in the southern Hills would be brief. As the Oglala and Sicangu Lakotas expanded their territorial reach from the Missouri River toward the Black Hills, a development that will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, these larger and more powerful groups fought for access to and then control of the southern Hills area. Some of the conflicts were absolutely devastating for the Kiowas. Around 1780, for instance, a Kiowa group that the Lakotas, Arikaras, Cheyennes and others referred to as *Witapaha* (a word for the Black Hills and the people who made the area home) were wiped out in a battle with the Lakotas. This was a band the Kiowas remember as the *K'uato*, that lived near the southern Hills and had closely intermarried with a band of Cheyennes. Other conflicts with the Lakotas, which further weakened the Kiowas' ability to remain in the Hills, reportedly took place near present-day Wind Cave National Park around Buffalo Gap and Battle Mountain.[22]

While the Kiowas were certainly pushed out of the southern Hills (an Oglala Lakota leader named Black Hawk would later boast that the Kiowas and their Crow allies were "whipped … out of" the Hills), they also found opportunity on the Southern Plains.[23] Building on their connections within the Comanche trade network, the Kiowas augmented their already sizeable horse herds and began transporting horses between the upper Arkansas River trade center and the Northern Plains. Their efforts to re-establish the trade nexus they had previously operated around the Black Hills were rebuffed, however, and the Kiowas instead located their northernmost encampments along the North Platte River. As the Kiowas and Kiowa Apaches became more deeply involved in the horse trade, and allied more closely with the Comanches, they continued their southward movements and largely abandoned the Northern Plains altogether.

When the Kiowas became a people of the Southern Plains, several Cheyenne and Arapaho bands migrated from the Black Hills to the Central Plains where they became intermediaries in the trade between the Upper Arkansas and Middle Missouri trade centers. These likely included some of the same bands that had previously associated with the Kiowas in the Black Hills, and had either assisted the Kiowas or remained neutral in their conflicts with the Lakotas. In time they would follow the Kiowas' route southward and become known as distinct but closely allied groups, the Southern Cheyenne and the Southern Arapaho, that jointly shared and contested the Southern Plains with the Kiowas, Comanches and Southern Plains Apaches.[24]

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[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Black Hawk quote in Catherine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841-1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 34.

[24] Hämäläinen, "The Western Comanche Trade Center: Rethinking the Plains Indian Trade System," *Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 485-513; Albers, "Symbiosis, Merger, and War: Contrasting Forms of Intertribal Relationship among Historic Plains Indians," in *Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John H. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 94-132; West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 66–72; George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent Written from His Letters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1968), 68–71, 93–95.

Northern Arapahos

Like the Kiowas, the Arapahos first came to the Black Hills as pedestrian nomads. Whether this preceded or coincided with the Kiowas' arrival is not clear, nor is it known when the Arapahos first came onto the Great Plains. These Algonkian speakers likely moved westward from the Red River or the lower Saskatchewan River in the seventeenth century, then south toward the Black Hills where they acquired horses from Comanches around 1730. Within a generation or two a number of Arapaho divisions were ranging westward as far as the Central Rocky Mountains, southward perhaps as far as present-day western Kansas and Oklahoma, and eastward between the Missouri River and the Black Hills. While these divisions spread far and wide throughout much of the year, they apparently congregated in the Black Hills area "in the summer for communal hunts and all-tribal ceremonies" like the Sun Dance.[25]

In the late eighteenth-century, European traders and Missouri River Indians closely associated the Arapahos with the Black Hills. French traders at the Arikara villages made particular reference to one group they identified as *Caminabiches*, an approximation of the Anishanaabeg (Ojibwe) term for "bison people." The primary summer residences of this group were located at the headwaters of the Cheyenne River on the west side of the Hills, the forks of the Cheyenne River to the east of the Hills, and in the southern Hills. Their association with the Cheyennes was also duly noted, both as co-occupants of these areas and as companions when they came to trade at the Missouri River villages.[26]

The *Caminabiches* were also closely associated with the Kiowas, though this was probably only true of the band or bands most oriented toward the southern Hills. Some of these people likely migrated southward with the Kiowas, though most remained closer to the Black Hills while maintaing close trading relations with Kiowas and Comanches. The primary Arapaho alliance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was with the Cheyennes; a people with a very different language and history, but with whom they would become intimately affiliated in the Black Hills area. As was true for the Kiowas, who also derived from a different place and cultural tradition, the Arapahos' occupancy of the Hills, their use of ancient trails and ancient natural shelters, their dependence on the same plants, animals, waters, and minerals that had sustained hundreds of past

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[25] Quote is from Loretta Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 15. Also see Paul H. Carlson, *The Plains Indians* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998), 33-36; and Fowler, *Columbia Guide*, 308. This migration came in part through pressure from the Crees and Assiniboines, who were actively expanding their positions within the peltry trade. Once on the plains in the early eighteenth-century, the Arapahos and Atsinas (Gros Ventres) separated, with the latter remaining on the grasslands of southern Saskatchewan and northeastern Montana. The Arapahos moved south of the Missouri River, and were probably already familiar with the Black Hills when the Kiowas first encountered them in the Yellowstone River Valley.

[26] *Caminabiches* was an apparent approximation of an Anishanaabeg or Chipeawa word for the "bison people"—a widespread term for the Arapahos. See Fowler, *The Columbia Guide,* 15; and Albers, *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 26-57.

generations, and the sacredness they recognized in features like the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and (most likely) Wind Cave, all speak to the continuing significance of the Hills for life on the plains in the new equestrian era.[27]

In a world shaped by horses, accelerating trade, and increased competition for bison, the many virtues of the southern Hills were not enough to hold any group for long. Indeed, the same forces that pushed the Kiowas out of the area and attracted them southward would do the same to most Arapahos and Cheyennes. As the Black Hills became increasingly important to the Lakotas, who alternately competed and allied with the Cheyennes and Arapahos after the Kiowas had been pushed out, many Arapaho and Cheyenne bands found more opportunity to the south and west. By the 1820s a confederation of Arapaho and Cheyenne bands essentially followed the Kiowas' path out of the Hills and became known respectively as the Southern Arapahos and the Southern Cheyennes. Their northern kin, who were now referred to as the Northern Arapahos and Northern Cheyennes, remained in the vicinity of the Hills and became associated with the more numerous and powerful Lakotas.

The Northern Cheyennes

Like the Arapahos, and later the Lakotas, the Cheyennes came to the Northern Plains from the northeast. Most accounts place the Cheyennes on the Middle Missouri River by the early eighteenth-century, having migrated over the course of a few generations from northern Minnesota to the Sheyenne River in present-day North Dakota. During this migration, Cheyenne bands encountered or reintegrated with the *Sutaio*, a more westerly group who spoke the same language as the Cheyennes and soon became a distinct band within a larger Cheyenne confederation. While living on the Missouri River, the Cheyennes adopted the agrarian-based culture and economy of the nearby Arikaras. It was there that they became familiar with the Black Hills when, like the Arikaras, they annually made two extended hunts up the Cheyenne River toward the Hills. As noted earlier, this is also the period when the Cheyennes gained regular access to horses through Comanche and Kiowa traders.

In the 1770s, the *Sutaio* and other Cheyenne bands started to make their western forays up the Cheyenne River a matter of permanent residence. Pushed by increased competition with Lakotas along the Middle Missouri, and drawn by the prospect of occupying a middle-space in the trade between the Kiowas and Arapahos in the southern Hills and the Arikaras on the Missouri River, the Cheyennes established villages and planted crops at the forks of the Cheyenne River. Their move was apparently complete before the 1781 small pox epidemic that devastated the Arikaras (who were reduced from 30 to two villages and lost as much as 75 percent of their population in a matter of weeks) and other Missouri River Indians. The Cheyennes and other off-river groups also suffered, but their infection and mortality rates were far less than anything experienced

[27] Sundstrom and Richard Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 2 (October 1996): 177-89.

by the Arikaras.[28]

Over the next two decades, the Cheyennes made a steady shift away from a life based on hunting and horticulture to one entirely rooted in equestrian nomadism. While some Cheyennes continued to cultivate small plots at seasonal villages near the Black Hills, by the early 1800s the Cheyennes as a whole were a people devoted primarily to hunting, pastoralism, and movement along trade networks. It was during this time that the prophet Sweet Medicine received the fundamental codes of behavior and social organization for all of the Cheyenne bands. This occurred at Bear Butte (Noahavose), where Sweet Medicine fasted inside the mountain and received the Four Sacred Arrows (Mahuts) from Maheo. These affirmed the sacred connection between Maheo and his favorite children, and symbolized the combined strength of the Cheyenne bands. As the historian Elliott West argues, the vision and teachings of Sweet Medicine essentially marked the Cheyennes as a new people. Generations of migration and adaptation had brought them to Noahavose—the sacred center of the world—and it was there that they received a new name: Tsistsistas, "the Called Out People." Maheo also defined the central homeland of the Cheyennes as the Black Hills and the surrounding Plains[29]

With Sweet Medicine's vision the Cheyennes possessed a singular identification with the Black Hills, but it was not an exclusive homeland. As they became equestrian people, they combined with the Kiowas, Arapahos, Plains Apaches and Arikaras to form a trade block that bartered the "horses, meat and hides of the nomadic tribes [for] the corn and tobacco of the semisedentary villagers, who also traded guns and other commodities acquired from tribes with access to the commerce of the French and British [and later the Americans]."[30] In cooperation with these other groups, the Cheyennes competed and fought with participants of a rival block to the north that was comprised of Mandans, Hidatsas, Crows, and Shoshones.

In the late eighteenth-century the weakness of the Arikaras, and the growing strength of the Lakotas, complicated the Cheyennes' relations with the Arapahos, Kiowas and Plains Apaches in the southern Hills. As newcomers to the Black Hills, and to plains nomadism, the Cheyennes had learned a great deal from their close associations with these peoples. That could mean new forms of hunting, such as the skills they learned from Kiowa pronghorn hunters, or the beneficial and sacred attributes of particular locales like the thermal springs on the Fall River, the Buffalo Gap, the Race Track, Wind Cave, Inyan Kara, and Bear Lodge. The central importance of Bear Butte, for instance, was likely derived from close associations with the Plains Apaches, who had long revered the site much as the Cheyennes would, and who had established important relations with Cheyenne spiritual leaders through marriage. Relations with the Arapahos, Kiowas and Plains Apaches were also strongly rooted in trade, as well as collective hunts and raids in

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[28] William Y. Chalfant, *Cheyennes and Horse Soldiers: The 1857 Expedition and the Battle of Solomon's Fork* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 300-317; Roland G. Robertson, *Rotting Face: Smallpox and the American Indian* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 2001), 284-286.
[29] West, *The Contested Plains,* 76; also Peter J. Powell, *Sweet Medicine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), xxxi.
[30] Albers, *The Home of the Bison*, 26-57

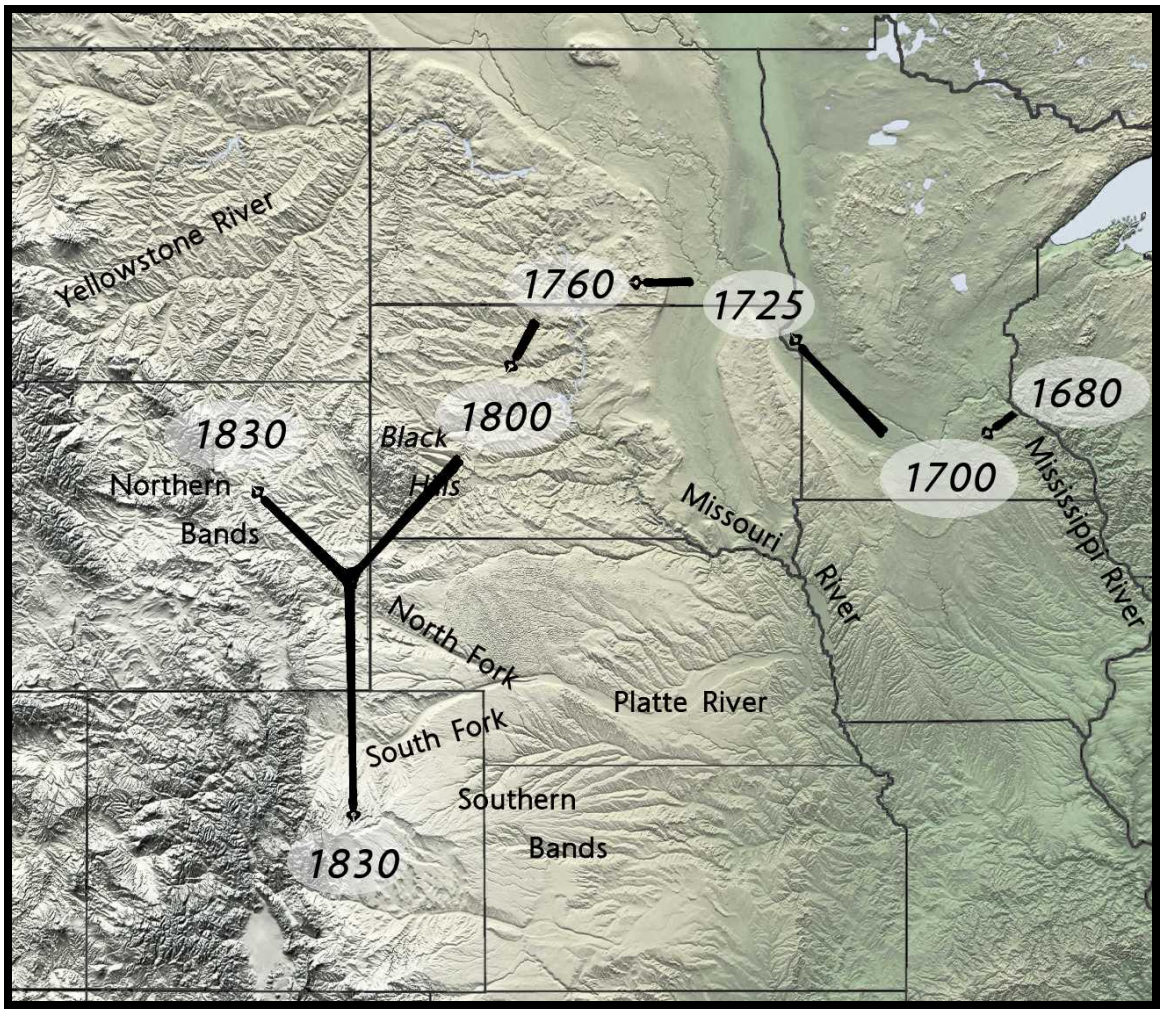

Figure 4.4: Cheyenne Migrations. Map adapted from Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

Crow and Shoshone territories.[31]

Some Cheyenne bands also had long associated with Lakota bands since the time when they lived near each other in present-day Minnesota. These were apparently strengthened in the early equestrian era, since it is likely that Cheyennes were the primary source of horses for the Lakotas. When the numbers of Lakotas in the Black Hills increased in the late eighteenth-century, and these newcomers then went to war with the Kiowas and Plains Apaches, the Cheyennes found themselves in a difficult situation. Patricia Albers offers an excellent summary of the various alliances and conflicts that arose:

> Since the Cheyennes depended on the Kiowas for horses, which they kept not only for themselves but also brokered to the Arikaras and Mandans in exchange for guns and other European trade goods, their relations with their Lakota relatives and friends must have been strained. Indeed, winter counts and oral traditions report a number of battles taking place between the Cheyennes and Lakotas.

One line of conflict even involved a Cheyenne band with strong connections to more eastern Lakota groups against the Oglalas and Sicangus. As Albers postulates, the Cheyennes in this instance were probably the

> *Wotapio* band, a group descended from intermarriages with Lakotas a century earlier…: they were the ones who lived along the upper reaches of the White River and along the South Fork of the Cheyenne River, and they were the Cheyenne division who became intermarried and most closely allied with the Kiowas. Indeed, as their subsequent history indicates, many of them broke ranks with other Cheyennes and joined forces with the Kiowas, moving south of the Platte River at the dawn of the nineteenth century.[32]

Mobility and Fluid Group Identities

The conflicts and alliances that arose in the southern Hills in the late eighteenth-century reveal two very important dynamics. For starters, the Lakotas' push into the Black Hills,which was also variously resisted by some Arapaho bands in alliance with other groups in the southern Hills, precipitated the Northern and Southern divisions of the Cheyennes and Arapahos. Some of the groups that would become known as the Southern

[31] This is affirmed by a Southern Cheyenne in the late nineteenth-century, and corresponds to Plains Apache and Cheyenne history. The Plains Apache had previously acquired the Four Quartz Rock Medicine Bundle—one of their most sacred medicine bundles—in the vicinity of Bear Butte. One of the first keepers of the Cheyennes' Four Sacred Arrows was a man named Red Hat, who had three prominent Plains Apache wives. William C. Meadows, *Kiowa Ethnogeography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 121; Renate Schukies, Edward Red Hat, and Bill Red Hat, *Red Hat: Cheyenne Blue Sky Maker and Keeper of the Sacred Arrows* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1993), 187; Albers, *The Home of the Bison*, 26-57.
[32] Albers, *The Home of the Bison*, 26-57

Cheyennes and Southern Arapahos were those most closely allied with the Kiowas and Plains Apaches, and they moved south with them. Others would migrate west then south, as competition with growing numbers of Lakotas made challenging Crows, Utes, and Shoshones for their horses and access to large bison herds nearer the Rocky Mountains an enticing prospect. By the same token, the growing strength and deepening association of western Lakota bands with the Black Hills meant that Cheyennes and Arapahos who remained in the area would become the Northern divisions that formed the potent Lakota-Cheyenne-Arapaho alliance.

The divisions within the larger Cheyenne and Lakota communities, and the blurring of community identities as a result of migration, trade, marriage and adoption, also reminds us that an ancient dynamic of plains nomadism remained in place. As Theodore Binnema argues convincingly, group identities on the plains had always been shaped by the necessity of living in small, mobile groups: "culturally dissimilar communities occasionally mingled, merged, fused, and even formed new 'mixed' identities. Elsewhere members of a single culture could take different paths: they sometimes split, diverged, and even developed new identities."[33] These processes only accelerated in the equestrian era. On the other hand, the meanings and importance of places—though reconfigured in the context of horses and trade—were far more permanent than anything we might describe as a tribal territory, a tribal block, or a tribal identity. Indeed, it was that relative permanence of place, in the midst of so much change, that made the southern Hills so important and so contested in the nineteenth century.

[33] *Ibid.*, 198.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RISE OF THE LAKOTAS AND THE AMERICAN INVASION OF THE PLAINS

After the 1810s, and especially by 1830, the fates of the Northern Arapahos and Northern Cheyennes would be intimately connected to those of the western Lakotas. Arrayed against various alliances of Crows, Pawnees, Kiowas, Shoshones, Atsinas, Blackfeet and U.S. Army troops, they would become the preeminent power on the Northern Plains by the mid nineteenth-century. Pekka Hämäläinen offers a concise overview of the ethnographic, environmental and historical factors that contributed to the "extraordinary expansion and endurance of the Lakotas," which he attributes to "a mixture of adaptive genius, favorable circumstances, and historical contingency."

> They were a populous nation with strong allies, a steady access to American markets, and a flexible political system that allowed the autonomous bands to take periodic unified action. They were also surrounded by weakened native groups, Crows, Pawnees, and Arikaras, and they largely escaped the deleterious effects of the changes sapping the strength of many Plains nomads after 1830—the removal of eastern Indians to Indian Territory, the opening of overland trails, and the consequent invasion of deadly microbes….

The success of the Lakotas also derived in part from the moderate size of their horse herds, which "never became a serious threat to the riverine ecosystems and bison herds." Even though the Lakotas became heavily involved in the hide trade, "the bison ecology in their homelands remained relatively stable … until the mid-1840s," and was then augmented by access to more "western ranges they had seized from the weakened Crows."[1]

The political flexibility of the Lakotas that Hämäläinen references was a manifestation of the complex organization of bands and divisions that comprised the larger Sioux confederation. Before assessing its effective application to the plains environment of the nineteenth century, and its particular relevance to the history of the Black Hills, some delineation of these bands and divisions is necessary. The term "Sioux" is of French Canadian and Odawa derivation that is broadly applied to seven groups that know each other by their word for "Allies." Different dialects pronounce the word in three different ways, as Dakota, Nakota, or Lakota, and each pronunciation corresponds to a historical and geographic association of particular groups. The Dakotas—or, more accurately, the people who pronounce the word for allies in that fashion—include the Mdewakanton, the Wahpeton, the Wahpekute, and the Sisseton. In

[1] Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures." *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December): 855-56.

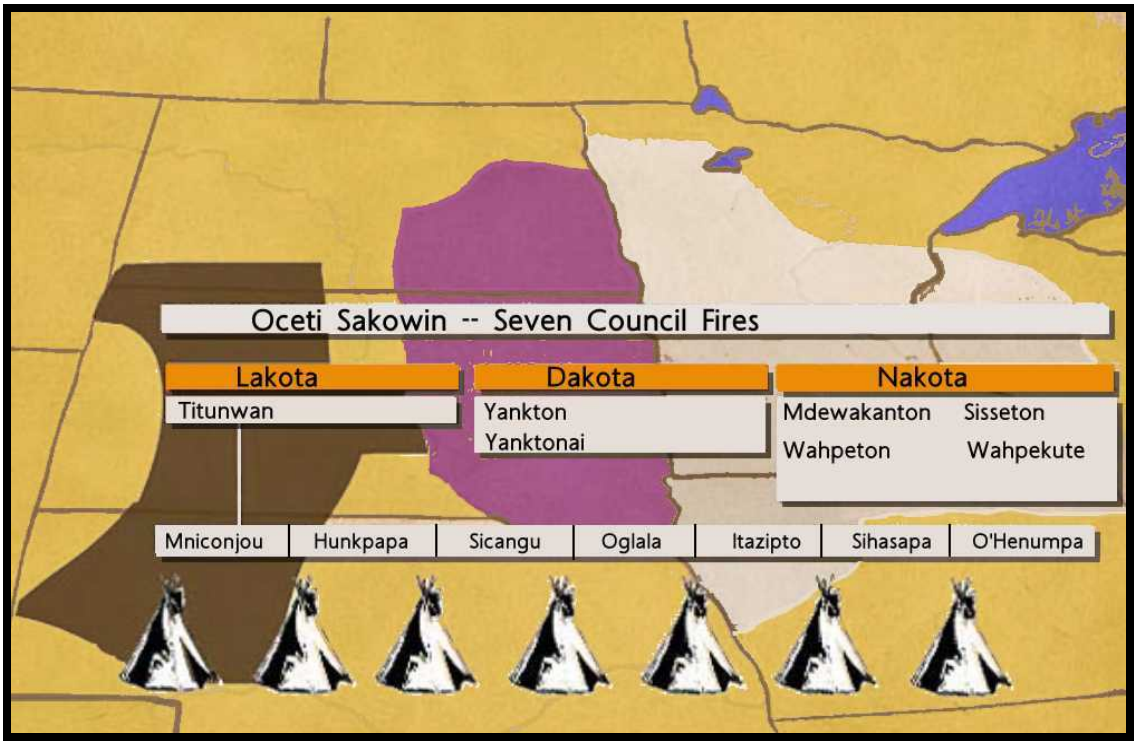

Figure 5.1 Relative Positions of Lakota, Nakota and Dakota, and list of the seven Lakota bands or *tíyospaye*, ca. 1830-1850. Adapted from map produced by the Smithsonian Institution.

the nineteenth century these groups, who were commonly referred to by non-Indians as the Santee Sioux, lived in present-day Minnesota. The Nakotas, who are also known as the Western Dakotas, included the Yanktons and Yanktonais—two very closely related groups that were located in the vicinity of the Missouri River in the nineteenth century. The Lakotas, also known at the Titunwan or Western Sioux, were the largest group in the Sioux Confederacy and the one to first make the transition to equestrian plains nomadism.

The Lakotas were further delineated by seven bands or *tíyospaye*: Hunkpapa, Sihasapa (Blackfoot), O'Henumpa (Two Kettles), Itazipto, Mniconjou, Sicangu (Brulé or Burnt Thighs), and Oglala. Of these groups, the Oglalas and the Sicangus were the first to take up plains equestrianism in the eighteenth century, and the most closely associated with the Black Hills. No section of the plains was strictly the territory of a particular band, however, and bands never represented clearly defined ethnic identities. For instance the famed Oglala war leader Crazy Horse was the son of an Oglala father and a Mniconjou mother, who was herself the sister of the Sicangu headman Spotted Tail.[2]

Such relations sustained connections between different bands, but they could also lead to functional splits and reconfigurations of different groups. If members of a *wicoti*—a subgrouping of the *tiyospaye* composed of several families—became dissatisfied with a headman, or sought to pursue opportunities elsewhere, its members often voted with their feet and horses. In this way accord and consensus remained in the *tiyospaye* they left behind, while their departure allowed them to pursue a new opportunity or combine with other groups with whom they agreed. In short, movements of *wicoti* fostered a greater responsiveness to the dynamic circumstances of equestrian nomadism.

The Lakotas were not unique in this form of social or political arrangement; plains nomadism had long required such flexibility. Yet the size of the Lakota population, which probably numbered around 20,000 in the 1820s, and the strength of their alliances with the Northern Cheyennes and Northern Arapahos, meant that schisms within and connections among the various *tiyospayes* operated in a large common arena. At various times, notably during the expulsion of the Kiowas from the southern Hills and later when the United States sought to force the Lakotas onto reservations, *tiyospayes* could find themselves on opposite sides of a critical dilemma. For the most part, however, the band and sub-band structures of the Lakotas reinforced each other—either through the rapid formation of alliances or in the independent action of a subgroup that ultimately brought new opportunities into the broader Lakota orbit. In both instances, the result was an almost perpetual expansion of Lakota territory.

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[2] The present discussion is broadly informed by Catherine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841-1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

Lakota Expansion

The Lakotas' movement on to the Northern Plains was initially tentative and sequential. The western Oglalas and Sicangus likely migrated to the Missouri River in the early eighteenth-century, where they were subsequently joined by Yanktons, Yanktonnais and Sissetons. Yet no significant movement towards the plains would occur for a few generations. Bison were still numerous near the river, the beaver peltry trade was as profitable as ever, and the demographic center of the Lakota and Dakota world remained well to the east. It was around this time that some Lakotas acquired horses, either through trade or in raids, from the Middle Missouri villages. There are also stories of pedestrian Oglalas receiving horses from Cheyennes at villages on the White River. At least until the early 1780s, however, the Lakotas mostly remained on the east side of the Missouri River. While there, a number of Oglalas and Mniconjous took up farming and, like the Cheyennes, lived among the Arikaras.[3]

By the mid eighteenth-century, the appeal of plains nomadism had started to take on a new urgency. Diminishing bison herds and depleted beaver populations further east, and pressure from westward expanding Anishanaabeg groups in the Upper Mississippi River area, encouraged more Lakotas and Dakotas to move toward the Missouri River. Yet even as the Lakota and Dakota populations crowded into the area, the Arikaras presented a significant obstacle to any further expansion to the west. Occupying a nexus in the plains trade network, and numbering as many as 20,000 people in their 30 villages along the river, the Arikaras had more ready access to horses and guns than did the Lakotas or Dakotas. All of this changed suddenly with the smallpox epidemic of 1781, and subsequent disease outbreaks over the next 15 years.[4] The Arikaras were suddenly reduced to 2,500 people, and the Middle Missouri became a causeway for Lakota expansion on to the plains.

By the mid 1790s the tables had more than turned, and the surviving Arikaras moved south to live with Pawnee relatives and north to reside with the Mandans and Hidatsas. As European traders became established among the Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras around the mouth of the Knife River the Lakotas became a powerful player in a new trade dynamic. Situated astride the Missouri River, between the upriver villages and the trade center of St. Louis, they were able to threaten and more directly participate in the growing trade between Europeans (and Americans, after the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806), plains nomads, plains villagers, and Dakota communities up the James River.

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[3] Patricia C. Albers, *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 46-50.

[4] Adam R. Hodge, "Vectors of Colonialism: The Smallpox Epidemic of 1780-82 and Northern Great Plains Indian Life" (MA thesis, Kent State University, 2009), *passim*; and Douglas R. Parks and Alfred Morsette, *Traditional Narratives of the Arikara Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 10-11.

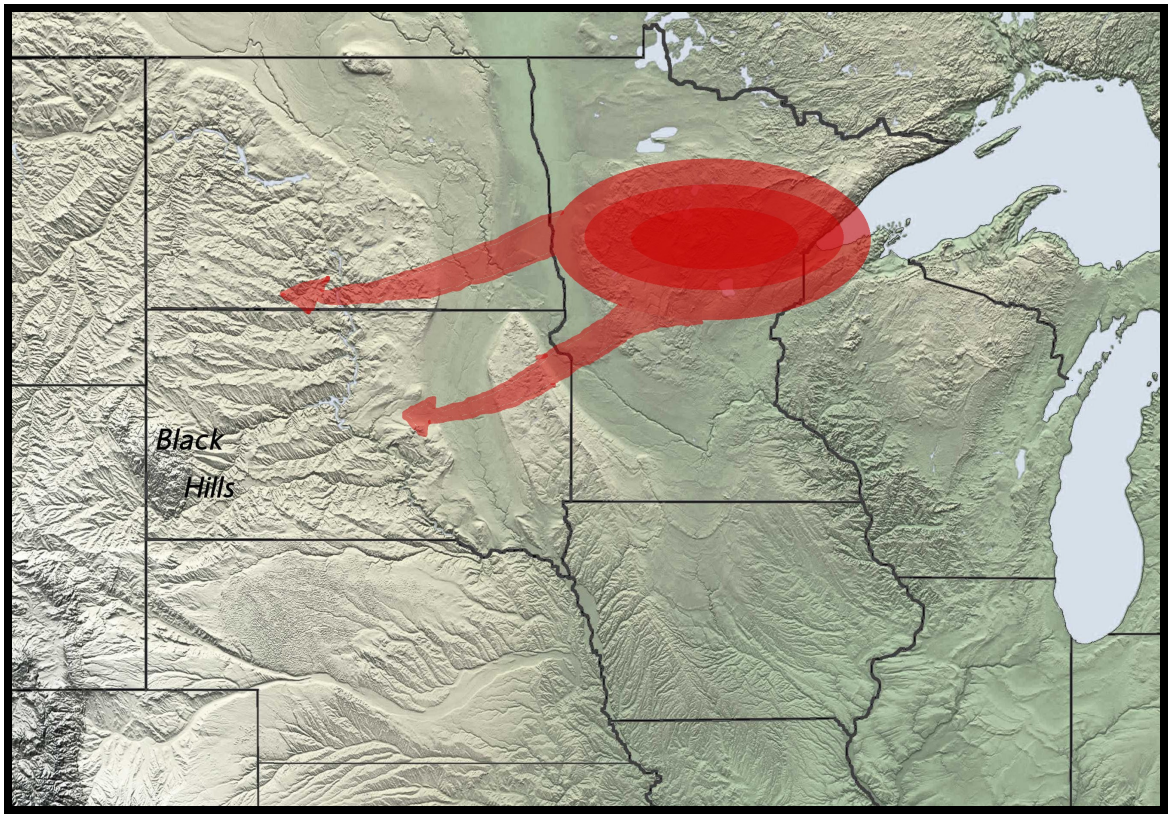

Figure 5.2: General routes of Lakota Movements from the Great Lakes to the Great Plains between the Mid-Seventeenth and Mid-Eighteenth Centuries. Adapted from map produced by the Smithsonian Institution.

It was in this context of ascendant trade and wide-open access to the plains that the Lakotas quickly developed into the region's preeminent power. Richard White has argued that the Lakotas' movement on to the plains in the eighteenth century was part of an "advance westward" that had begun a century earlier, and in time would result in the conquest and control of "an area from the Minnesota River …, west to the head of the Yellowstone, and south from the Yellowstone to the drainage of the upper Republican River." This may be true, but the shift to plains equestrianism was not so much an extension of "a sustained movement by the Sioux" as a transformation of the Lakotas.[5] Situated in the heart of a dynamic world of trade, bison, and horses, the Lakotas did not just move westward, they underwent what Dan Flores describes as "a kind of ethnogenesis, re-creating themselves around new, richer possibilities than they had ever encountered."[6]

Their route to supremacy on the plains would follow well-worn and ancient paths between the Middle Missouri and the Black Hills. And like the Plains Apaches, Kiowas, Arapahos, and Cheyennes before them, they would be profoundly shaped by the place. As Kingsley Bray notes in a recent biography of Crazy Horse, while writing about the time period of his subject's birth near the Black Hills in 1840, it was there that Oglalas, Sicangus, and Mniconjous had become a "vigorous, confident, and growing" people. The Black Hills would define Crazy Horse's people, as well as their allies, for many of the environmental, material, and creative reasons noted in previous chapters. And as occurred with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, the Lakotas would learn from others how to join the rituals, rhythms, and seasonal migrations of their own lives with the sacred and material properties of the Hills. Yet there would be a historically specific dimension to the Lakotas' relationship to the area; one that was certainly based in the special characteristics of the Hills, but nevertheless distinct from past and future eras.

One of the most important characteristics of the Black Hills was their proximity to the Missouri River, and the seven Lakota bands as a whole filled in the area between the Hills and the river. To the considerable degree that they remained oriented toward the Missouri River, the Lakotas monitored and participated directly in the increasing trade with Americans. They still returned to the remaining Arikara and Mandan villages to acquire corn, tobacco, and other cultivated staples, but as the dominant party in this exchange. As one French trader put it in the 1790s, Lakotas viewed the Arikaras as "a certain kind of serf, who cultivates for them and who, as they say, takes, for them, the place of women [who are traditionally associated with farming]."[7]

The geographic situation of the Black Hills, as an ecological island in the plains and a launching point to areas further south and west, also figured prominently in the

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[5] Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Lakota in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65, No 2 (September 1978): 321.
[6] Dan Flores, "Wars over Buffalo: Stories Versus Stories on the Northern Plains," in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, eds. Michael Eugene Harkin and David Rich Lewis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 159.
[7] Pierre Antoine Tabeau, *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition of the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 130.

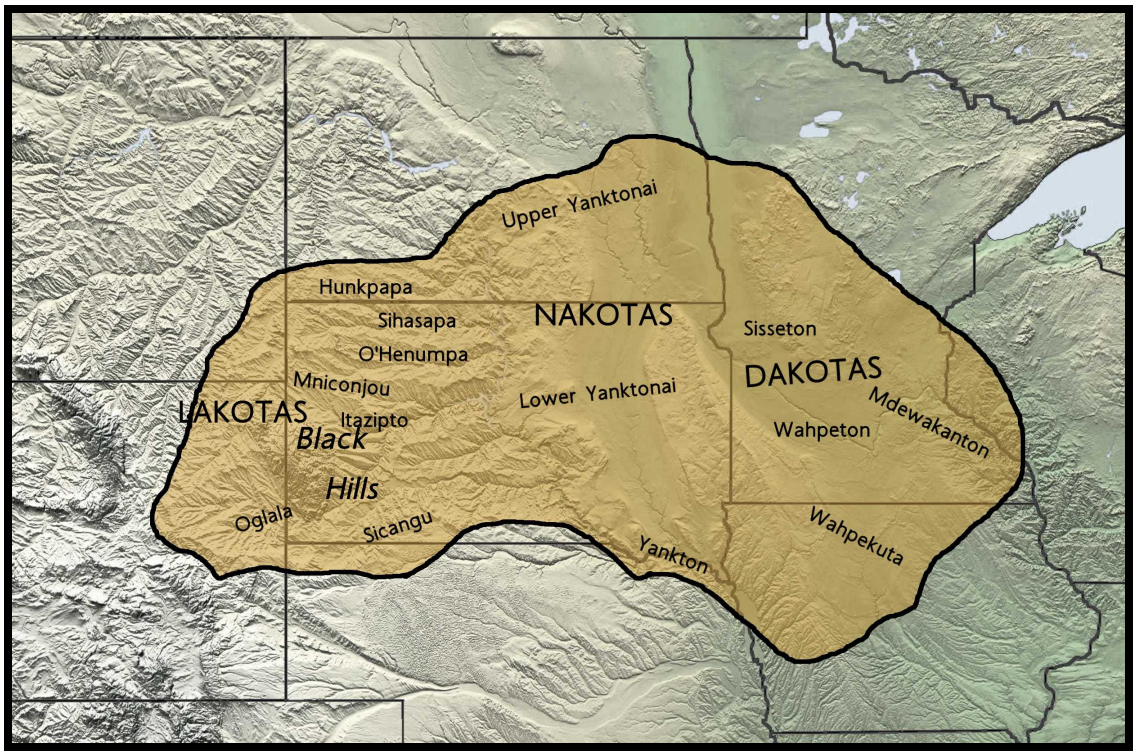

Figure 5.3: "Map of Nineteenth-Century Sioux Country." Based on map from Robert W. Galler, Jr., "Sustaining the Sioux Confederation: Yanktonai Initiatives and Influence on the Northern Plains, 1680-1880," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 39.4 (Winter 2008): 467-490.

Lakotas' new equestrian life. This was especially true for the Oglalas and Sicangus who, like the Northern Cheyennes and Northern Arapahos before them, were drawn by the abundance of bison and good pasturage in the Powder River Basin and in the country between the southern Hills and the North Platte River. The desire for more bison corresponded to two developments: their growing scarcity in the area between the Hills and the Missouri River; and a pronounced increase in the market for bison hides in the 1830s. This latter development would transform life on the plains, and fuel the powerful growth and expansion of the Lakotas.[8]

With steamboats plying western rivers by the 1830s, the amount of bison robes that could be carried off the plains to eastern markets, and the amount of goods carried into Indian country, grew significantly. Situated in the heart of a bison rich country, the Lakotas were poised to dominate this new market. From the Black Hills they could look toward four prized bison grounds: to the south was the Forks of the Platte River country; to the southeast the Republican River basin; to the southwest the Laramie Plains, and to the west the vast Yellowstone River basin country. Various bands of Lakotas pushed into all four of these areas after the small pox epidemic of 1837, which had badly weakened the Pawnees to the south and the Crows to the west. While Cheyennes and Arapahos had also contested for these same areas over the previous decades, they did so as interlopers on what they still considered to be Crow, Pawnee, Shoshone, or Blackfeet territory. The Lakotas, in alliance with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, came as challengers, and viewed these areas as open country. As Richard Irving Dodge would later note, each of these four areas "became a debatable ground onto which none but war parties penetrated."[9] The Lakotas were in a much stronger position, however, since they had essentially opened the "debate" on the status of these other groups' homelands. The Crows, Pawnees, Shoshones and Blackfeet, on the other hand, regarded the Black Hills as the heart of Lakota territory—and they were not in a position to debate or contest the issue. In short, the Lakotas were expanding from their home, while the others were retreating within theirs.

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[8] The bison hide trade essentially replaced the beaver pelt trade, which had long been the focus of relations between Indians and non-Indians in North America. By the early 1830s, beavers had been trapped almost to the point of extinction. At the same time, the fashion of beaver felt hats was replaced by a new craze for silk headwear—which was suddenly available to European and American consumers with the opening of the South China trade. When the 1837 smallpox epidemic devastated the primary agents of the Missouri River peltry trade—the agrarian villagers—the fur trade turned almost exclusively to bison hides. The Lakotas were also affected by the epidemic of 1837, but fared better than the more densely populated and sedentary villagers along the Missouri River. With a more dispersed population, the rates of infection among the Lakotas were not as high. Some bands also benefited from inoculations they received from U.S. government agents some five years earlier. With the Lakotas as the prime suppliers, the American Fur Company—which primarily operated in the Northern Plains—bought 45,000 bison robes in 1839. The next year they acquired 67,000, and within a decade the annual haul amounted to 100,000 robes and more. While the trend line was clear, these numbers only represented part of the total numbers of bison that were killed for trade, with many sold to private traders and smaller operators. See John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 3-25; and David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 65-69, 100.

[9] Richard Irving Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West and Their Inhabitants* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1877), 130.

Powerfully situated around the Black Hills, the Lakotas maintained an unceasing and ultimately successful effort to expand their reach across the Northern Plains. They could hardly do otherwise. Their growing population required more resources, which essentially meant access to more bison, more horses, more wintering sites, more plant gathering areas, and more trade goods. To meet these requirements, they had to move into new areas where bison were abundant, where wild horses could be caught or domestic horses raided. The imperatives of equestrian life continually required the Lakotas to press into "debatable ground" until the debate was over.

In terms of population and territorial movements, the equestrian Lakotas reached their zenith by the mid 1850s. After that time, a series of profound changes would diminish the benefits of their expansive tendencies. The end of the Neo-Boreal episode and the onset of extreme droughts took a heavy toll on bison and horse populations. Conditions between 1857-1864 were worse than those of the 1930s Dust Bowl, and poor forage may have caused bison populations to decline by as much as 60 percent in some areas of the plains.[10] The increased traffic of humans and livestock along the American emigrant trails to the west coast and, after 1859, to the gold fields of Colorado, put added strain on fragile plains resources. By the mid 1860s, when wetter conditions returned, two new competitors for plains resources arrived; Métis market hunters of mixed Cree and European heritage from the Red River Valley to the north, and U.S. military garrisons. The latter did not take a direct toll on bison, but they were invariably located in critical over-wintering sites. More significantly, they presented a military challenge to Lakota expansion—especially when U.S. troops became allied with Crows, Pawnees, Shoshones, and Arikaras.

Relative to other plains groups, however, the Lakotas continued to grow in numbers and strength. As the Crows suffered in the same drought conditions, and faltered under the dual challenge from the Blackfeet to the north and the Lakotas, Arapahos and Cheyennes to the east, the bison-rich lands along the Tongue, Powder and Big Horn Rivers became the almost exclusive domain of the Black Hills groups. To the south, the Pawnees also suffered greatly through the 1850s, especially as American settlers pushed beyond the Missouri River after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. However, it would be in the old Crow country, and in the expanse of plains to south of the Black Hills, where the Lakota-Cheyenne-Arapaho alliance would become most formidable to other Indian groups. It would also be in these places where they came into direct, violent conflict with the other great expanding power in the heart of North America: the United States.

The Lakotas in the Southern Black Hills and Wind Cave Area

The eastern and southern Black Hills were the initial focus of the Sicangu and Oglala movements on to the plains, and it was there that these western Lakota bands

[10] Flores, "Wars over Buffalo," 163.

perfected their adaptation to full-blown equestrian nomadism. The more eastern Lakota bands largely remained in the stretch of plains between the Hills and the Missouri River, where they occupied the central position in the trade that once focused on the Middle Missouri villages. Bison hunting and the production of hides remained a central occupation, but they also became more focused on pastoralism and carrying the trade between American posts on the Missouri River and more western groups.[11]

By the early 1840s, just as the robe trade was accelerating, bison had become scarce around the southern Hills and eastward to the Missouri River. For the western Lakotas, who needed more bison to maintain a dominant position within the plains trade system and to feed their growing population, this meant moving away from the Black Hills. For their large spring and fall bison hunts, they headed south toward the Republican River and west into the Tongue and Powder River basins. To keep their horse herds in good health, some Lakotas also joined Cheyenne bands that migrated to the Central and Southern Plains in the winter. More than the groups to the east of the Hills, however, the Sicangus, Oglalas and Mniconjous would return to the Hills to cut lodgepoles, procure plant resources for food and medicine, and to hunt deer and elk.[12]

Not all *wicoti* ranged so far from the Black Hills. Within the broad extension of Lakota bands to the east and west, the Hills continued to sustain smaller groups much as they had for thousands of years. Patricia Albers notes that as late as the 1850s the Hills area as a whole remained the primary territorial range for a few sub-bands that "pursued more diversified subsistence strategies, [and took advantage of] easy access not only to small herds of bison but also to elk, antelope, deer, and bighorn sheep. They also held diverse plant environments and good locations for winter shelter." In the southern Hills and surrounding plains, Albers goes on to note, some Lakotas and Cheyennes

> spent a great deal of time at the base of the Hills and in the open parks … where good hunting grounds and pasturage for their horses were found. Many of them also used the high elevation interiors of the Black Hills in the summertime for specialized purposes and camped in these areas for short periods of time as well.[13]

While most of the Lakotas that lived in or utilized the southern Hills through the mid nineteenth-century were either Sicangu or Oglala, the fluid nature of Lakota society ensured that members of other *tiyospaye* were also present. By the 1860s, however, regular use and residence diminished as western Lakotas pushed further south and west into the remaining bison country and eastern bands became more oriented toward the

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[11] Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun, Josephine Waggoner, and Emily Levine, *With My Own Eyes: A Lakota Woman Tells Her People's History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 21; Ostler, *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 29-31.

[12] Robert Wellman Campbell, "A Landscape History of the Black Hills" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2006), 60-66; Linea Sundstrom, "The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, no. 3-4 (1997): 187-200; Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35-36.

[13] Albers, *Home of the Bison*, 81.

Missouri River. As this occurred, the significance of the Black Hills did not diminish so much as it shifted. Though still regarded as a kind of "reserve storehouse, to be tapped in times of want," the material importance of the Black Hills waned.[14] The cultural importance of the area persisted, however, and perhaps even increased.

Situated at a rough midpoint between the seven Lakota bands, the Black Hills were like a meeting lodge or sacred dance area in the midst of a great camp circle. As such, they served as the unifying center of the Lakota world. They were the preferred locale for the various Lakota bands to congregate in the summer for social exchange, collective decision-making, and the performance of the Sun Dance. Indeed, in making their great summer encampments, the Lakota bands would be arranged in a great circle that mirrored their relative positions around the Black Hills. At the center was the Sun Dance area, and in the middle of that was the sacred pole. In this arrangement of people and ceremony, the Black Hills were as the Lakotas called them, "The Center of Everything That Is."[15]

Along with their central geographic position, the Black Hills provided a perfect environmental setting for the Sun Dance. To support large gatherings of people, the great summer encampment needed to be held in places "which afforded a good water supply, ample wood, grazing and forage for horses, protection from wind, and security from enemies."[16] The Black Hills provided a number of sites that met all of these criteria, and as the unchallenged territory of the Lakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos, they were by far the most secure setting for the Sun Dance. Not all Sun Dance ceremonies were held in the Black Hills, and those that were generally occurred in the northern Hills. The sacred sites of Bear Butte and Bear Lodge Butte were favored locales, in part because their situation in the northern Hills was closer to most Lakota bands and their environmental settings allowed them to support large gatherings of equestrian nomads. This was not so true of the southern Hills, where both Cheyenne and Lakota traditions locate the origins of the first Sun Dance. Performed by bison near Buffalo Gap after the Great Race that made the Race Track, and there taught to the People, the Sun Dance had an ancient association with the Wind Cave area. At the height of the equestrian era, however, location and basic environmental conditions around Wind Cave were not capable of hosting a great gathering of a widespread people.[17]

Much as historical developments and population movements gave heightened significance to the Black Hills as a sacred centerpoint of the Lakota world, the rapid decline of bison numbers in the 1860s and 1870s must have also brought a new focus to the origin place of the bison at Buffalo Gap and Wind Cave. Like the Sun Dance, ceremonies devoted to increasing bison herds by calling them up from underground, or to

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[14] Quote from Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 115.
[15] Alexandra Lynn Witkin-New Holy, "The Significance of Place: The Lakota and Paha Sapa" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 138-143.
[16] Royal B. Hassrick, *The Sioux: Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 173.
[17] Albers, *Home of the Bison*, 531-555

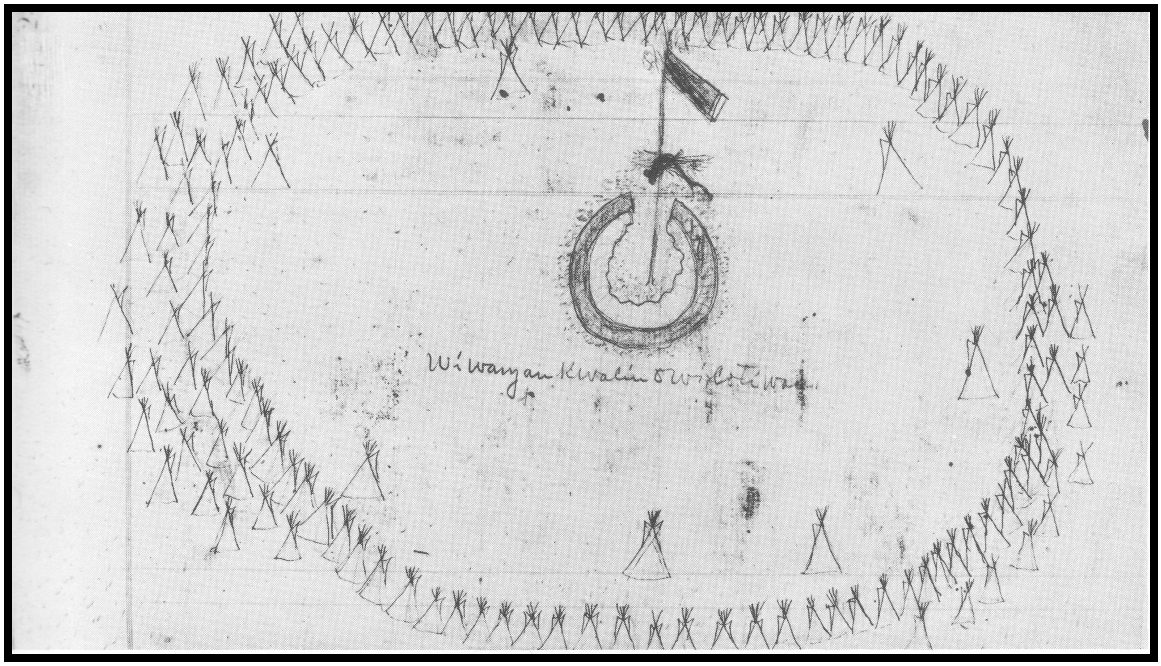

Figure 5.4: "The gathering, or camping, for the Sun Dance," drawing by Amos Bad Heart Bull. Image depicts a large encampment surrounding a *hocoka*, the space within the circle created by the circle of tipis. At the center of the image is the Sun Dance arbor. Source: Amos Bad Heart Bull and Helen H. Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

bring distant herds closer, were widespread during the equestrian era. As bison numbers plummeted in the 1860s and 1870s, the ceremony likely became more common and more urgent.[18] Two Sicangu winter counts both note the most memorable event of 1871 to be a failed buffalo-calling ceremony. Where these particular ceremonies took place is not known, but it is likely that Lakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos increasingly directed their hopes and concerns toward the sacred origin places of the bison.[19]

The decline of bison, conflicts with the U.S. military in the late 1860s and mid 1870s, and the movement of most Lakota bands to reservation agencies nearer the Missouri River actually augmented the material significance of the Black Hills for off-reservation groups. With bison numbers in sharp decline and a looming war with U.S. troops intent on forcing all Lakotas to live on reservations, the famed Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull knew that effective resistance would depend on the resources of the Hills. As he told a young Oglala named Standing Elk in 1875, the Hills were like a "meat pack," full of the deer and elk that had increasingly come to take the place of bison.[20] Lakota leaders already living at the agencies also viewed the Black Hills in a similar manner, especially as government rations failed to meet the physical needs of their people.

When, also in 1875, federal Indian Commissioners pushed for an Agreement that would cede the Black Hills to the United States, most Lakotas balked. Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and others refused to even entertain the idea, but those already living at an Indian Agency, and near garrisoned troops, did speak with the Commissioners. However, they made it abundantly clear how much they valued the Black Hills. The Oglala leader Red Dog stated that full compensation for the Black Hills would have to be enough to sustain the Lakotas "for seven generations to come." Stabber, another Oglala leader, told the Commissioners to "give us as many millions as we have asked for the hills, [because] we know those hills will support us for generations to come." Others took up the Commissioners' notion that the Agreement could be construed as a mineral lease,

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[18] Recent historians often assert that Native peoples were "not conservationists in the modern sense." To "practice conservation," the environmental historian Dan Flores writes, "a culture has to possess the idea that concrete actions towards elements of nature (like buffalo herds) in the *present* will influence their prospects for the *future*."

[18] Flores suggests that mid nineteenth-century plains Indians did not understand why bison numbers were declining, and thus could not recognize that their own hunting practices and horse herds were significant contributing factors. Native peoples surely recognized their own impacts on bison herds, just as they noted the effects of migrant trains and commercial hide hunters. The way to restore bison numbers meant halting the latter, and assuring that residents of the plains lived in accordance with the needs of bison. For Native peoples, reaching this accord involved rituals and ceremonies that could bring human communities in line with the sacred rhythms of the world they inhabited. In terms of bison, and a bison calling ceremony, this would bring the herds back up from the underworld—where they had retreated because they had not been appropriately respected or utilized. Flores quoted in "The Great Contraction: Bison and Indians in Northern Plains Environmental History," in *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Big Horn*, ed. Charles E. Rankin (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1996), 17; emphasis in original.

[19] Sundstrom, "History in Pictures: Father Buechel and the Lakota Winter Counts," unpublished essay at *St. Francis Mission Among the Lakota*, 2006 <http://www.sfmissionmuseum.org/exhibits/wintercounts/documents/buechel_winter_counts.pdf> (accessed 18 August 2010).

[20] Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 115.

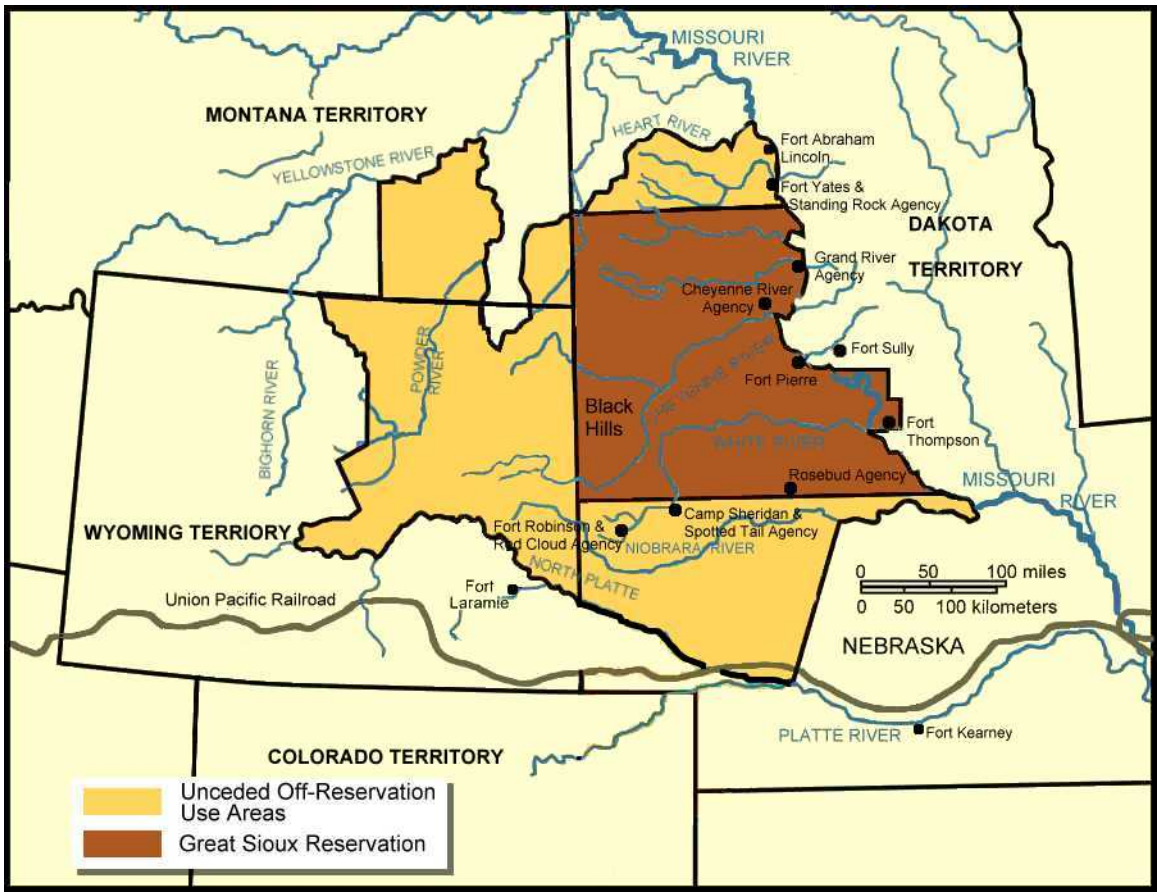

Figure 5.5: Great Sioux Reservation and Unceded Territory as defined in the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, with Military Forts and Agencies, ca. 1875.

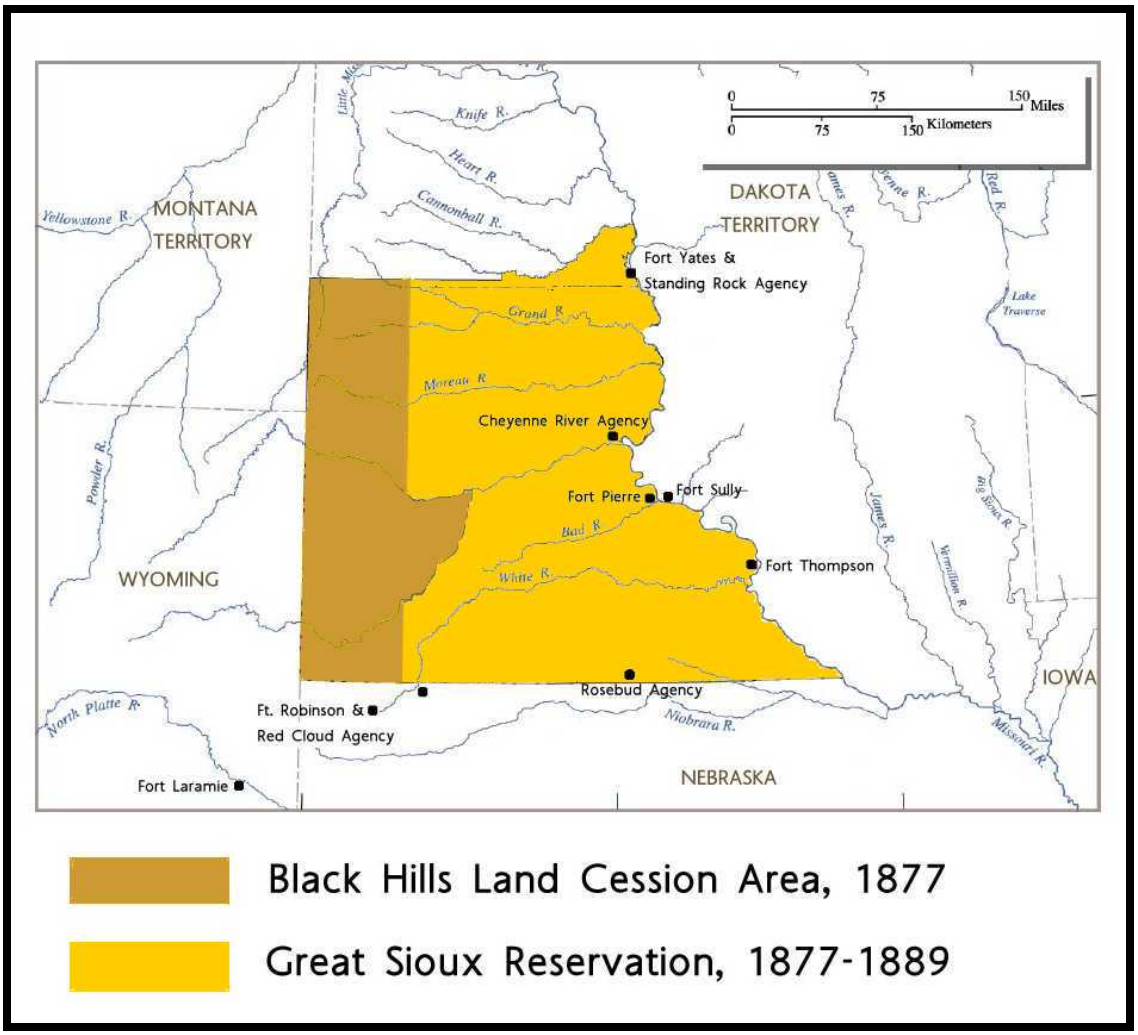

Figure 5.6: Boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation and the Black Hills Land Cession Area. Adapted from *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 13, Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001.

with the Black Hills reverting back to the Lakotas after mining had ceased. Such a lease, the Sicangu leader Spotted Tail argued, would have to be limited to the pine-covered interior of the Hills. Still working to have an agency established near Buffalo Gap, he was unwilling to relinquish the lands between the Spotted Tail Agency (which was then located southeast of present-day Chadron, Nebraska) and the Race Track. The area, which was criss-crossed with trails between the Agency and the Wind Cave National Park area, simply had too many resources that his people would need for generations to come.[21]

While the Lakotas who negotiated with the Commissioners clearly stated the significance of the Black Hills, the meetings proved an exercise in futility. By September 1875, when the Commissioners met at various Indian agencies on what was then called the Great Sioux Reservation, the Army had already conducted two summer-long reconnaissances through the heart of the Black Hills. The first was led by Colonel George A. Custer in 1874, and the second by Colonel Dodge in 1875. Thousands of gold miners had also invaded the southern half of the Hills around present-day Custer, South Dakota, and by fall of 1875 federal officials regarded the establishment of American towns in the Black Hills as both irreversible and desirable. In short, the United States had every intention of taking the Black Hills regardless of their meaning and value for the Lakotas.

In late 1876, without the required consent of three-fourths of the various Lakota and Dakota leaders, Congress accepted an agreement drawn up by the Indian Commissioners after their meetings on the Great Sioux Reservation, and passed it into law on 27 February 1877. By that time, a military order of 1 January 1876 requiring all Lakotas to leave the areas to be ceded had resulted in the Black Hills War of 1876-1877. Despite the famous victory at Little Big Horn in the Summer of 1876, effective resistance to the U.S. military's policy of relocating all Lakotas to Indian agencies had ended by the spring of 1877. A new era in the history of the Black Hills and the Wind Cave National Park area had begun, as a number of ancient associations were pushed into exile.[22]

The Black Hills as Cultural Refuge and Homeland

Between 1890 and 1913 Amos Bad Heart Bull (1868?-1913) produced hundreds of ledger-book drawings depicting Lakota history, particularly as it related to the Oglalas before and after their removal to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. While most of the drawings related to events or activities, one presented a sort of illustrated map of the Black Hills. Along with major streams and specific sites on the plains, Bad Heart Bull identified eight significant features within the Black Hills: Ki Inyanka Ocanku (The Racetrack); Mato Tipi Paha (Bear Lodge Butte, a.k.a. Devils Tower); Hinyankagapa (Inyan Kara Mountain); Baha Sapa (Black Buttes); Re Sla (Gillette Prairie); Mato Baha (Bear Butte); Mini Kata (Hot Springs); Pte Tali Yapa (Buffalo Gap); and Miniluzan (Rapid Creek). Some elements of the map, namely the placement and courses of the

[21] Quotes from Price, *Oglala People*, 150-151; Also see Albers, *Home of the Bison*, 279-281; and Ostler. *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 123-126.
[22] Ostler. *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 128-148.

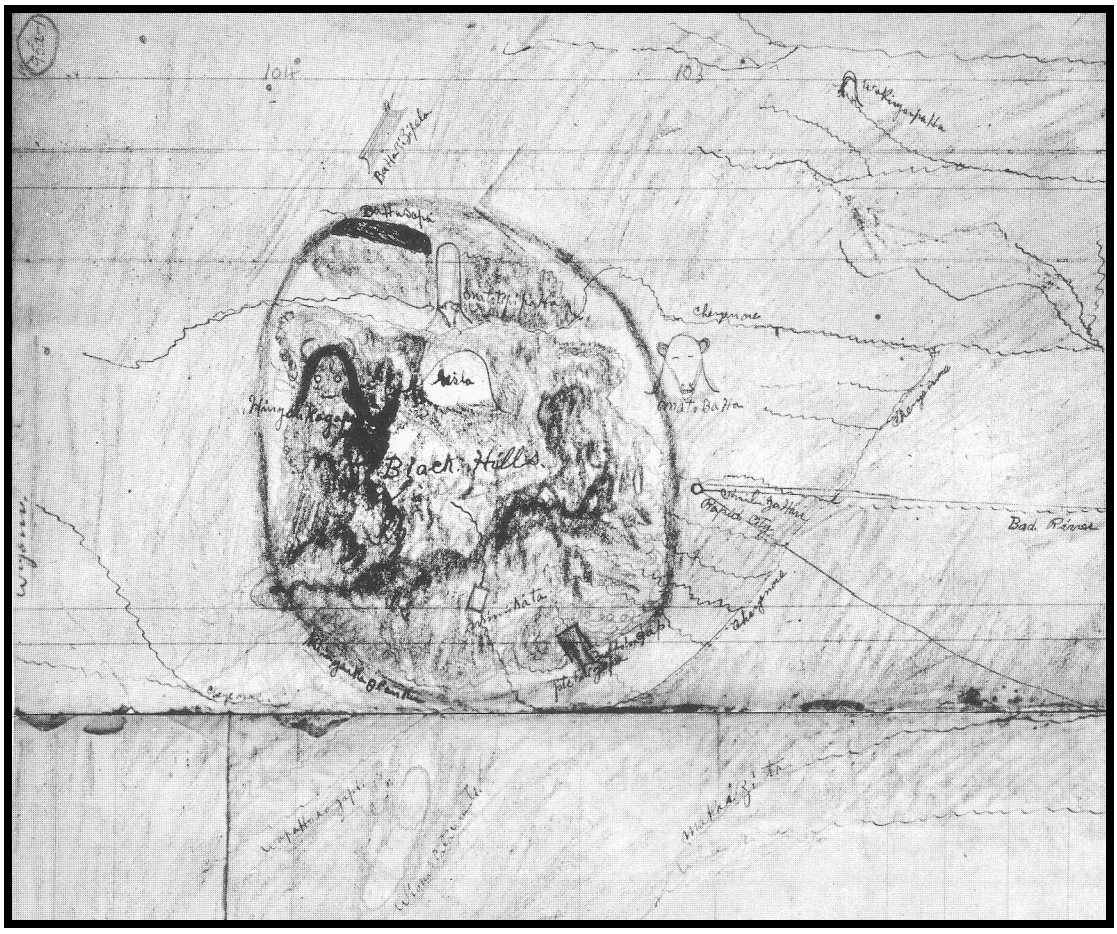

Figure 5.7: Detail from Illustrated Map of the Black Hills by Amos Bad Heart Bull. Source: Amos Bad Heart Bull and Helen H. Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 289.

streams and the straight lines representing the 103rd and 104th meridians, correspond to basic cartographic practices. Yet as G. Malcolm Lewis notes, "the Black Hills [themselves] are represented quite differently: densely, abstractly, and several of the features totemically…. Bad Heart Bull did not intend [his drawing] to represent the Black Hills as a topographic reality but as it was according to Lakota theology, a consecrated enclosure."[23]

In Bad Heart Bull's representation the Race Track is a sacred circle that encloses the seven other sacred locales, which themselves correspond to sacred patterns of stars and constellations. Of the seven locales identified on his map, two are located within the southern "embayment" of the Black Hills: the thermal springs along the Fall River, and Buffalo Gap. While Wind Cave is not identified, neither are dozens of other sites within the Black Hills that have special sacred significance to the Lakotas. Yet the very close association of Wind Cave with Buffalo Gap, as the source or womb of the bison that pour (or are birthed) through the break in the Hogback, might suggest that Bad Heart Bull had the small cave opening in mind when he blocked out the large figure of a gap in the Race Track. Whatever the case, Bad Heart Bull's map clearly illustrates the continuing importance of the Wind Cave National Park area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for the Oglala, Sicangu, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and other Lakota residents on the nearby Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where he lived.

Bad Heart Bull's own life story bears out the profound attachment the Lakotas had, and have, for the Black Hills. As a young boy he was known as Eagle Bonnet, the son of Bad Heart Bull and his wife Red Blanket. The elder Bad Heart Bull was the brother of the Oglala headman He Dog, and the nephew of Red Cloud. At the age of eight, Eagle Bonnet was with his family at the Battle of Little Big Horn. As members of the Sore Back band of Oglalas, his family was also one of the last to surrender to the military in the early spring of 1877 and come in to the Red Cloud Agency near Fort Robinson, Nebraska. His father and uncles were part of the group that escorted Crazy Horse's band to the Agency a few weeks later. After Crazy Horse was killed in September 1877, the Bad Heart Bull family fled the reservation and eventually joined up with Sitting Bull in Canada. They surrendered with Sitting Bull in 1880, and moved to the Pine Ridge Agency in 1882. Amos Bad Heart Bull thus came from an Oglala family with one of the strongest, most uncompromising attachments to the Black Hills.

Eight years after his family's move to Pine Ridge, Amos Bad Heart Bull witnessed the Wounded Knee Massacre, an event that he depicted in the ledger book he acquired that year. His drawings, which mostly focused on events from before his birth and also included numerous depictions of the Battle of Little Big Horn, served as something of a primer on the nature of Oglala life before the reservation. Depictions of the killing of his cousin Crazy Horse, and the tragic massacre at Wounded Knee, also convey the violent ending of that pre-reservation life. Yet Bad Heart Bull also included depictions of everyday life on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, as well as mid-summer

[23] G. Malcolm Lewis, "Recent and Current Encounters," in *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use*, ed. John Rennie Short (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 87.

celebrations held on the Fourth of July. In that way, the ledger book as a whole illustrates the significance, and remarkable persistence, of the Lakota world from before 1877 through the subsequent decades. The Black Hills remained at the center of that world, and the nearby southern Hills—with their sacred sites and the vital array of resources that so concerned Bad Heart Bull's great-uncle Red Cloud—were just over the western horizon.[24]

[24] Mari Sandoz, "Introduction," in Amos Bad Heart Bull and Helen H. Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), xix-xxii.

Chapter Six

Conquest, Commerce and the Nature of Gold

The isolation of the Black Hills is in part physical, or ecological, but it is also conceptual. For the Lakotas, who commonly refer to the Hills as "The Center of Everything That Is," this small mountain range on the Great Plains is the point of reference for describing the remoteness of other places. From this perspective, isolation can be gauged as a matter of distance from the Black Hills. Such was no doubt the case for all Native communities that had lived in and around the Black Hills since the last Ice Age—for whom life on the Northern Plains would have been impossible without the many resources and spiritual attributes of the Hills. For Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Hills were one of the most isolated areas in all of North America, in large part because of their centrality to the Lakotas. As William Clark noted in 1806, the Lakotas represented an especially "serious source of inconvenience" to American expansion onto the Plains, and would remain so "until some effectual measures be taken to render them pacific."[1]

Clark developed a special hatred of the Lakotas during his co-captaincy of the famed Corps of Discovery (1804-1806) because they so directly and contemptuously challenged the expedition's assertion of American authority on the Plains. This challenge remained in place throughout Clark's entire 31-year career directing western Indian policy from St. Louis—from 1807 until his death in 1838—and it largely held for other federal policy makers through the 1850s.[2] By then a series of historical developments would profoundly reconfigure and reshape the Plains, and draw them more directly into the economic and political orbits of the United States. Overland migration across the Central Plains, disease epidemics, construction of military posts in the heart of tribal territories, new American settlements on the eastern Plains, more alcohol-fueled commerce at trading posts, declining bison herds, increased competition and conflict both within and between Native groups, and occasionally violent encounters with non-Indians all took a heavy toll on Native communities.

In this maelstrom of change and decline the relatively populous and powerful Lakotas could gain some advantages over other Native groups, but all lost ground to the growing American presence. Eventually, war and conquest became the "effectual

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[1] Quote is from William Clark to Hugh Heney, 20 July 1806; in Donald Dean Jackson, *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: With Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 310.

[2] For a brief overview of Clark's career, see Mark Spence, "Let's Play Lewis and Clark: Strange Visions of Nature and History at the Bicentennial," in *Lewis and Clark: Legacies, Memories, and New Perspectives*, eds. Kris Fresonke and Mark Spence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 227-228. For a fuller assessment, see Jay Buckley, *William Clark: Indian Diplomat* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

measures" that ultimately rendered the Lakotas "pacific," but these were only the most brutal instruments in a larger process of re-ordering the landscapes and peoples of the Northern Plains. From personal, relatively frequent, and often mutually beneficial encounters with fur traders in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to broad changes in U.S. policy, the world of the Northern Plains—and the Black Hills—was re-oriented toward American markets and legal systems. In just a few decades the vast area that Washington, D.C. officially identified as "Unorganized Territory" or "Indian Country," and bounded on the east by a string of forts demarking a Permanent Indian Frontier, became fully integrated into the political, economic, and social institutions of the United States. In the process, the peoples and resources of the Northern Plains and the Black Hills were thoroughly organized and reconstituted. Political boundaries marked a new order of states, Indian reservations, and private property, rail lines traced new forms of commerce, and everything from trees and ore to grass and flesh was commodified by distant markets.

This process of transformation was at first gradual and tentative in the Black Hills, which Americans had coveted since Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark across the continent. During the 1820s and 1830s, military exploration and the fur trade brought information about the Hills to policy makers in Washington as well as residents of St. Louis and other communities along the middle Mississippi and lower Missouri River. The 1840s overland migration to Oregon along the North Platte River, and the military post at Fort Laramie some 100 miles to the south of the Black Hills, fostered wider knowledge of the area and the Native peoples who knew it best. Military campaigns against the Lakotas and their allies in the 1860s brought more familiarity, and fed rumors of gold in the Hills. More government exploration, an ensuing gold rush, and a decisive military campaign to force the Lakotas, Northern Cheyennes and Northern Arapahos to relocate to a diminished reservation suddenly "opened" the Black Hills to the United States in the mid 1870s. The next ten years witnessed a dramatic reordering and re-peopling of the area that followed the classic boom and bust cycles of earlier western "rushes," but this time on a fully industrial scale.

By the time the proverbial dust had settled in the mid 1880s, one of the best-known chapters of the so-called "Wild West" had already come and gone. In a matter of years an old world had been all but destroyed, and a new world of gold, cattle, and speculation burst forth then flamed out. This brief era of destruction and creation yanked the Black Hills into broader national systems of commerce, transportation, and politics—and in doing so it set the terms and created the conditions that would eventually shape the establishment and early management of Wind Cave National Park.

Taking Measures: U.S. Exploration of the Black Hills

The idea of exploration is commonly allied with ideas about discovery. To explore is to uncover and reveal the unknown, or to make it known to a larger world. There is a peculiar logic in this formulation that implies the discovered place, person, or object is something of a non-entity until it becomes part of the explorer's world. That

which is discovered is either unknown to itself, unaware of its larger significance, or has no particular significance until it is known and valued by the explorer's audience. Within this conceit lies the real purpose of exploration and discovery. To discover something is to give it a particular meaning or purpose that it did not have before, and to locate its significance in the context of the explorer's worldview. In short, exploration is an exercise of power and definition.

In the great game of Finders-Keepers known as the Age of Exploration, the Black Hills was a very late prize.[3] Probably first encountered by non-Indians in the mid eighteenth-century, it would not become well known to outsiders until after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Consequently, the exploration and redefinition of the Black Hills took place almost entirely within an American or U.S. context. Unlike most other areas of the continent, where European powers vied with each other to monopolize discrete sections of North America, the exploration of the Black Hills would serve the purposes of nation-building rather than the goals of imperial competition.

Official, government-sponsored explorations always presented the significance of the Black Hills in the context of the military, political, and commercial processes that defined the United States in the nineteenth century. As with most explorations of the American West from Lewis and Clark forward, that meant "discovering" the best sites for farms, ranches, roads, and towns as well as the locations of prized natural resources. It also meant learning about different Native communities, the places and resources that sustained them, and their ability or inclination to resist American encroachments. In the case of the Black Hills this matter was of special importance.

All explorers of the Northern Plains recognized the Black Hills as the physical and cultural center of the Lakotas and their allies, and thus accorded it a special strategic significance. On the one hand, military commanders viewed the Hills as a likely final redoubt for the Lakotas, as a place that could sustain their communities for an indefinite amount of time, provide refuge from U.S. troops, and offer great advantages to attackers who wanted to strike against any military encampment. On the other hand, if a military garrison could be established in the Black Hills country, it would keep all of these advantages from the Lakotas and accord them to the Army. Moreover, such a garrison would provide a central point from which the Army could conduct campaigns against the various bands of the western Lakotas that encircled the Hills.

These concerns were of foremost importance to government explorers, largely because all exploration of the area was conducted under the auspices of the War Department. Yet explorations of the Black Hills always combined immediate strategic interests with assessments of the area's potential for future development. Whether that meant evaluating the qualities of various streams, estimating the lumber value of forests, or commenting on the game and grass in the southern Hills, exploration was always about two things; redefining the centerpoint of Northern Plains Indian life as a place for non-

[3] The term "Age of Exploration" usually refers to the period from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth century, but is sometimes extend to the early nineteenth-century,

Indian private property holders, and informing military and civilian policy makers on the best measures for effecting this transformation.

Pre-Military, or "Unofficial" Exploration of the Black Hills

While the U.S. military would conduct nearly all of the exploration that occurred in and around the Black Hills, the earliest written reference to the Black Hills may well be that of the Verendrye brothers, Francois and Louis-Joseph, who on a clear January day in 1743 reported seeing mountains from a high bank along the Missouri River. Whether these were the Black Hills, or some higher range further west, is unknowable since the Verendryes did not make regular accounts of particular locations or routes of travel. Yet the significance of the Verendrye "discovery," such as it was, does not lie so much in its accuracy or its primacy as it does in its broader connection to the North American fur trade. The various efforts of French, British, Spanish, and American interests to claim a share of "Indian trade," as it was known, became the basic context for all subsequent reports about the Black Hills until the mid nineteenth-century.

None of the information written about the Black Hills could be described as exploration, however. For the most part writers simply located or described, rather than redefined, the area. The famed journals of Lewis and Clark, for instance, only made passing reference to the "Côte Noir" (the French term for "Black Hills"), and then only as a landmark for identifying the general locations of particular Native groups or the course of the Cheyenne River.[4] Such information was all that anyone deemed necessary. The Black Hills themselves did not harbor enough beaver to warrant a trapping expedition, and most of the furs that came out of the Hills could be directly obtained from Native traders. The real significance of the area, in so far as Europeans and Americans were concerned, lay in its position within the larger exchange networks of the Northern Plains. In that regard, the Black Hills were not so much a place to know as a landmark for identifying where certain plains groups lived or traded themselves.

While no systematic exploration of the Black Hills ever occurred during the fur trade era, one trapper did provide a brief description of the southern Hills and the Wind Cave National Park area that is worth noting. In late September 1823, a twelve-man brigade from the Rocky Mountain Fur Company set out from Fort Kiowa (a trading post near present-day Oacoma, South Dakota) for the Big Horn River Basin and the Upper Yellowstone River. Led by Jedediah Smith, they followed the White River and crossed the Bad Lands, where they camped with several Lakota bands. James Clyman, a member of the small brigade who later authored a brief accounting of his life, recalled that the party nearly died of thirst while crossing the plains between the Badlands and the South Fork of the Cheyenne River. Once sated, however, they likely followed the same route that bison and Native peoples had used to reach the Buffalo Gap. From there the party

[4] William Clark, who made most of the geographic notations for the 1804-1806 expedition, variously rendered the French term for the Black Hills as "Côte Noir," "Côte noir," "Cote Noir," "Cote-Noir," "Court Noir," and "Cout Noir."

moved up the Beaver Creek drainage. As Clyman described the experience, the national park area was a pure delight:

> at length we arived at the foot of the black Hills which rises in verry slight elevation about the common plain[.] we entered a pleasant undulating pine Region cool and refreshing so different from the hot dusty planes we have been so long passing over and here we found hazlenuts and ripe plumbs a luxury not expected[.] We had one two day travel over undulating Pine with here and there an open glade of rich soill and fine grass.[5]

Clyman's brief passage through the southern Hills hardly amounts to exploration, but it proved to be the most extensive bit of outside knowledge about the area for more than three decades. Other non-Indians associated with the fur trade also made brief forays into and around the Hills in the late 1820s and early 1830s, but none left any words for posterity.[6] The general lack of interest in, or information about, the Black Hills stems from three factors. First, the rapid decline of the fur trade in the 1820s, and its collapse in the early 1830s, took away the kind of commercial and political significance that would have otherwise inspired exploration. Secondly, the rise of Lakota power on the Plains, and its general focus around the Black Hills, effectively kept outsiders away from the area until the mid-nineteenth century. Thirdly, American interests in the Plains generally passed well to the north and south of the Black Hills, and followed major river courses toward the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Coast.

Exploring the Plains and the Black Hills

In the early 1840s, through the efforts of John C. Fremont, the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers mapped routes across the Central Plains to the Rockies and the Pacific Coast. The path along the Platte River passed within 100 miles of the southern Hills and soon became the famed Oregon Trail. In 1853, Isaac Stevens charted the Northern Pacific Railroad Survey along a route well to the north of the Black Hills. It was not until 1855, however, that U.S. interests on the Plains finally took in the area between these two transcontinental routes. The reason had little to do with a particular interest in the Black Hills themselves, and almost everything to do with their importance to the Lakotas and their Arapaho and Cheyenne allies.

The first, tentative exploration came in the midst of a military campaign against the Lakotas. In the summer of 1855, Brevet Brigadier-General William S. Harney led 600 troops up the Platte River on a punitive expedition against Lakota bands in the vicinity of the Platte River Road (a.k.a., Overland Trail). Harney, who reportedly declared "By God,

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[5] James Clyman, *Journal of a Mountain Man*, ed. Linda M. Hasselstrom (Texarkana, TX: Spurlock Publishing Company, 1998), 21. All spellings are from Clyman's original text.

[6] They would have come from the short-lived fur trade posts at the mouth of the Belle Fourche River and at the confluence of the White River and Wounded Knee Creek. Some trappers and traders may also have ventured to the Hills from the trading post at Fort Laramie.

I'm for Battle—no peace," was on a mission to restore American authority on the Plains and avenge the so-called "Grattan Massacre" of a year before.[7] On 19 August 1854 near Fort Laramie, an old trading post that had since become a major resting point on the Overland Trail and the U.S. Army's main installation on the plains, Second Lieutenant John Lawrence Grattan led a small detachment of soldiers in a direct attack on a large encampment of mostly Sicangu Lakotas. The Sicangus and some Mniconjous quickly retaliated and killed every soldier. Emboldened by this lopsided victory, and angered by the destructive changes wrought by overland travelers along the Platte River, a number of Sicangu and Mniconjou raiding parties lashed out against military and civilian targets. Most of these raids, which occurred throughout the fall, winter and spring of 1854-1855, resulted in significant loss of livestock and property (including a mail coach hauling $10,000 in gold coin), but some lives were also taken.[8]

As Harney understood matters, American authority could only be restored through actions that were dramatic, brutal, and implied far-reaching consequences. In early September he encountered and surrounded a Sicangu village on Blue Water Creek, a few miles from Ash Hollow on the lower North Platte. In an early morning attack, Harney's troops killed about 250 of the 350 residents. At least half were women and children, and afterwards the Lakotas referred to Harney as "Woman Killer." While the attack dealt a crushing blow to the Sicangus and served as a warning to other Lakotas, Harney continued to press his advantage in a more symbolic manner. After a brief stay at Fort Laramie, where he acquired supplies, hired guides, and advised various Lakota leaders on how to make retribution for the previous year's attack on the mail coach, Harney led his large contingent toward the Black Hills and the heart of Lakota country.

As much an expedition as a parade of force, this venture had two related objectives. To chart and secure the route between Fort Laramie and Fort Pierre (another old fur-trading post that had just been acquired by the U.S. Army), and to demonstrate the ability of U.S. Army troops to move at will in Lakota territory. Harney hoped to invade the Black Hills directly, and sent scouts around the Buffalo Gap area and the southeastern edge of the Hills to find possible targets. He soon received reports of "many signs [that] the Sioux were moving into the hills for the winter." Harney wanted to pursue, but his scouts convinced him that such an endeavor would prove disastrous. With winter coming early and hard (the first significant snow had already fallen by 4 October), the only choice was to proceed to Fort Pierre. While Harney may have been disappointed by the lack of military engagement, his venture had its desired effect. By late winter, important leaders from Sicangu, Mniconjou, and several other western Lakota bands had come to Fort Pierre to secure peace. In early March, Harney concluded a treaty that ended what some historians have called the "First Sioux War."[9]

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[7] Harney quoted in Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 41.
[8] Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 32-33.
[9] Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854–1856* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16. Also see R. Eli Paul, *Blue Water Creek and the First Sioux War, 1854–1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

One of the conditions of the 1856 agreement with Harney was a restriction on all American travel (whether commercial, military, or bound for new homes further west) to the Platte River Road and the Fort Laramie—Fort Pierre Trail. Yet that summer Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren, who had served as the topographical engineer for Harney's 1855 campaign, spent 1856 and 1857 exploring the major rivers of the Northern Plains as well as possible routes through the Black Hills. Warren's objectives were manifold, and included taking measure of Lakota resources, assessing possible transcontinental rail routes, and gauging the potential for future American development. However, as Warren noted, "the greatest fruit of the explorations" occurred during his time in and around the Black Hills, where he gained "knowledge of the proper routes by which to invade [the Lakotas] country and conquer them."[10]

Such talk of future conquest had an ironic ring, since Warren's planned exploration was severely curtailed by a threatening encounter with a large group of Mniconjou Lakotas in the western Hills. Through a combination of stealth and rapid marches, however, he did manage a brief but wide ranging reconnaissance of the western, southern, and eastern perimeter of the Hills. His group likely passed between the Buffalo Gap and the present national park boundaries as it traveled northward from the Hot Springs area, but no one in the expedition left any specific descriptions of the southeastern Hills. The brief journey nevertheless had real value since, as Warren noted, the Black Hills were "the great point in their territory at which to strike all the Teton Dakotas."[11] Knowledge of the terrain, and a fuller appreciation of the area's strategic position within the Lakota world, were essential to effecting any plans for conquest.

Warren's relatively brief tour around the Hills was augmented some two years later when Captain William F. Raynolds led an "Expedition to Explore the Headwaters of the Missouri & Yellowstone Rivers" in 1859-1860. Raynolds, who brought along some of the same personnel that had previously accompanied Warren, essentially took up where the former had left off—in the northeastern Hills. Like his predecessor, however, Raynolds was able to make only a cursory assessment of the area. Concern about possible conflict with Lakotas was part of the reason, but so too was the discovery of gold. On the eastern approach to the Bear Butte area, members of the expedition found small amounts of gold in a stream flowing out of the Hills. The find was confirmed by the geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden, who had previously accompanied the Warren expedition and shared with Raynolds some of the responsibility for the planning and conduct of the 1859-1860 enterprise. While Hayden was ambivalent about possible gold strikes, Raynolds was deeply alarmed. "[I]f gold had been discovered in any considerable quantity," he knew "the party would have at once disregarded all the authority and entreaties of the officers in charge and have been converted into a band of gold miners, leaving the former the disagreeable option of joining them in their abandonment of duty, or of returning across the plains alone, through innumerable perils." Before much gold

[10] Gouverneur Kemble Warren, *Preliminary Report of Explorations in Nebraska and Dakota, in the Years 1855-'56-'57* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1875), 53.
[11] *Ibid.*

could be found, however, he ordered a hasty passage into and through the northern Hills.[12]

The Warren and Raynolds expeditions shared all of the same military and policy concerns, but the latter brought the volatile possibility of a gold rush into the mix. Before any real venture into gold prospecting could occur, however, Army planners expected they would have to develop and implement a concerted military action against the Lakotas and their allies. The Civil War thwarted such plans for several years, and even held up the publication of the Raynolds report until 1868. Of course, informal reports of the gold discoveries during the Raynolds expedition had already become widespread among the growing populations of eastern Dakota Territory as well as the Rocky Mountain mining communities of Colorado. Yet the heart of Lakota territory remained too little known, and too dangerous, for would-be Argonauts.

By 1865 the Northern Plains was becoming something of a no-man's land for Americans, as Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho fighters began to attack civilian and military targets. Two factors contributed most directly to these attacks: the November 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, in which a company of volunteer soldiers out of Denver savagely destroyed a Southern Cheyenne village that had made clear its peaceful intentions by flying both a U.S. flag and a white flag of surrender; and the construction of the Bozeman Trail from Fort Laramie to the recent gold strikes in western Montana. The former required vengeance from the Cheyennes and their allies, and forced many to rethink the hoped for benefits of peaceful accommodation to American expansion. The latter was a direct violation of the 1856 Agreement with General Harney that restricted U.S. travel and the construction of military posts from pushing north of the Platte River.[13]

In response to these developments, Army planners put together the first major venture onto the Northern Plains in the post-Civil War era. The result was the Powder River Expedition, a three-prong military campaign that involved upwards of 2,000 U.S. troops. The purpose of the Expedition was three-fold: to keep the Bozeman Trail open and safe from attack; to punish groups that resisted this new encroachment into the bison-rich country west of the Black Hills; and to reassert U.S. military authority on the Northern Plains now that the Civil War had ended. The campaign failed to meet any of its objectives. Instead, the success of some Native attacks against the U.S. military and a heavily defended wagon train emboldened the Lakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos on the Northern Plains. Lack of firearms and ammunition, however, prevented them from pressing any advantage.[14]

The immediate consequence of the Powder River Expedition was a failed peace treaty council at Fort Laramie in 1866 and a series of new conflicts which became known as Red Cloud's War, named after the Oglala Lakota war leader. Some of the conflicts

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[12] William Franklin Raynolds, *Report on the Exploration of the Yellowstone* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2008), 14.
[13] Bray, *Crazy Horse*, 83-102.
[14] Evan S. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Big Horn* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984), 127.

with U.S. troops involved the marshalling of as many as 2,000 Native fighters, a remarkable concentration of purpose for nomadic and politically decentralized communities as well as a profound expression of resistance against further encroachment into areas north of the Platte River Valley. Despite some notable victories against the Army, including the annihilation of an entire party of 81 soldiers and cavalry near Fort Phil Kearney in December 1866, Red Cloud's War proved only amounted to a temporary balancing point between Lakota and U.S. power on the Northern Plains.[15]

Red Cloud's War came to a formal end with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which established the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation (essentially all of present-day South Dakota west of the Missouri River), closed the Bozeman Trail, and recognized a vast expanse of "country north of the North Platte River and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains … [as] unceded Indian territory, … [where] no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same; or without the consent of the Indians first had and obtained, to pass through the same." The off-reservation, or "unceded" rights were expansive, but they received an important qualification in another part of the treaty. Lakotas and their allies could occupy these lands "so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase." In other words, the Lakotas had exclusive usufruct rights to areas they had come to dominate over the previous three decades; but those rights were expected to end once the resources that first attracted them to the area had declined.[16]

The specific language on the Great Sioux Reservation was different, as well as more definitive, and it would have a direct effect on the subsequent history of military exploration in the Black Hills and the Wind Cave National Park area. While it too was technically "unceded Indian Territory," the reservation was more explicitly defined as permanently "set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation" of the Lakotas and their allies; a condition that obligated the United States to ensure that "no persons except … such officers, agents, and employés of the Government as may be authorized to enter upon Indian reservations in discharge of duties enjoined by law, shall ever be permitted to pass over, settle upon, or reside in the territory."[17]

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 codified the fundamental terms and physical boundaries of American and Lakota relations, but it also sharply defined the subsequent purposes of exploration and military action. Both were directed toward a set of related goals: forcing Lakotas to abandon their "unceded Indian territory" and limit themselves to the boundaries of the reservation; and reducing the reservation through a cession of the Black Hills to the United States. In military and administrative terms, the Black Hills and the unceded territory had similar importance. From the early 1860s forward, the Powder River country west of the Black Hills had the largest remaining bison herds and the best

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[15] Americans would generally know the battle that took the lives of 81 soldiers as the Fetterman Massacre; Lakotas refer to it as the Battle-of-the-Hundred-Slain. Bray, *Crazy Horse*, 99-102.
[16] "Treaty with the Sioux—Brulé, Oglala, Miniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, and Santee—and Arapaho, 1868," in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 7 vols. Vol. II, ed. Charles Kappler (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 999-1000, 1002-1003
[17] *Ibid.*

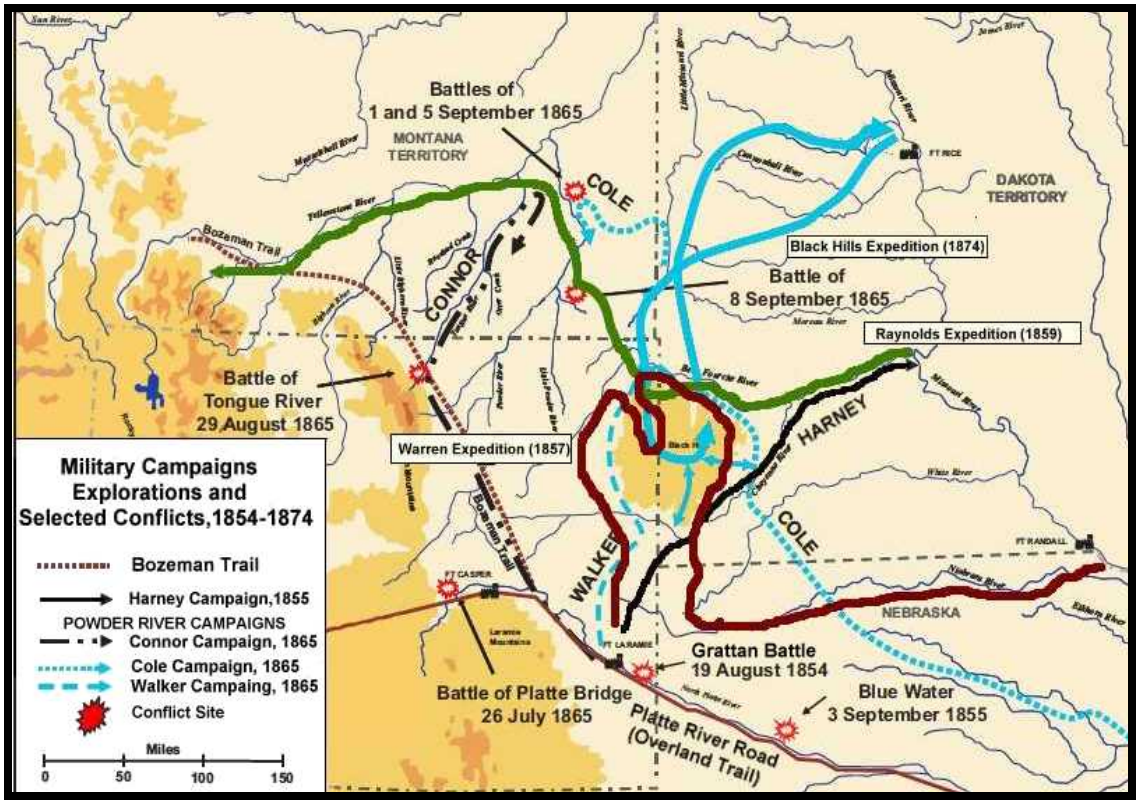

Figure 6.1: Military Campaigns, Explorations, and Select Battles, 1854-1874. Adapted and compiled from maps and information in Charles D. Collins, Jr., *Atlas of the Sioux Wars*, 2nd ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, Department of the Army, 2006).

pasturage for horses. These qualities, coupled with its distance from Indian Agencies and military posts near the Missouri River, made the area especially attractive to a growing number of Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos who wished to keep their distance from U.S. authority. As Red Cloud's War demonstrated, they were also prepared to defend the autonomy they still enjoyed. The terms of the 1868 Treaty notwithstanding, such autonomy was anathema to U.S. policy, and ending this situation became a primary motive behind the Army's prosecution of the so-called Great Sioux War of 1876-1877.[18]

Military planners viewed the Black Hills much as they did the Powder River country. Located within the Great Sioux Reservation, the Hills could support small bands seeking to steer clear of Indian Agents and the regulations of reservation life. Moreover, as Harney, Warren and Raynolds had reasoned, the Hills could also become an area for mounting a level of armed resistance against U.S. authority. In other words, having the Black Hills within the Great Sioux Reservation only ensured that subjugating the Lakotas would be especially difficult, if not impossible. Of course the Black Hills had other qualities that were very attractive to Americans. Unlike the Powder River country, which did not have any obvious economic appeal to the first wave of military explorers, the Black Hills had promise as a supply of timber for Missouri River settlements, a place for homesteads and ranches, a font of fresh water on the Plains, and as a source of gold. While the concerns of federal Indian policy makers were important, it was these latter qualities that ultimately gave the Great Sioux War its other, more appropriate name: the Black Hills War.

The Coming of Custer

In early 1874, General Phillip Sheridan decided to act on the now almost 20-year old proposal to build a military fort in the Black Hills. Toward these ends he commissioned Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer to lead an expedition that summer. By the time Custer had formed his command and put together its members, the expedition had become something never seen before or since. When it left Fort Abraham Lincoln on 2 July, the company numbered over 1,000, included a battery of three Gatling guns and a cannon, had 110 wagons of supplies and equipment, and brought 300 head of cattle in case hunting proved poor. These numbers served to demonstrate the Army's ability to marshal overwhelming force in its movements through Lakota territory, but they also made the enterprise a massive junket. The expedition included five newspaper reporters, a photographer, two miners, a cluster of young scientists, and a band. Some of the supply wagons even carried a fair amount of champagne and alcohol.[19]

One of the purposes of the expedition was to reconnoiter a route to the Black Hills from the North, from Fort Lincoln to Bear Butte. This 292-mile march across the plains was anything but a pleasure trip. However, the 26 days of the two-month expedition that were spent in the Black Hills proved a grand little adventure. For Custer the highlight was

[18] Ostler, *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 58-62.
[19] The following discussion is based on William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 419-424.

the killing of a grizzly bear, but he also took great pleasure in playing the role of a modern Adam: naming several places after himself, and the highest point in the Black Hills after General Harney. The real significance of the expedition stemmed from the efforts of the two "practical miners" that accompanied the massive company. As Captain Frederick Benteen observed, the news reports of gold from "our summer picnic to the Black Hills of Dakota, ... [soon] turned about half the West loose, searching for their share of the golden content of the Hills."[20] The following summer, with miners already encamped at the site where the expedition had found gold, another expedition pushed through the Black Hills. Formed by the Department of the Interior, led by the geologists Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney, and escorted by a military detachment led by Lieutenant Colonel Richard I. Dodge, the Newton-Jenney expedition set out to confirm and assess the prospects for gold mining in the Black Hills.

Jenney did not believe the Hills were especially promising as gold country, and Dodge made some effort to enforce the 1868 Treaty with the Sioux and remove miners from the area. The simple fact that the government had sent another expedition only fired greater interest in the Hills. The long-standing complaints of town leaders in Yankton and Sioux City against the government for not going to war against the Lakotas and taking their lands only grew louder and more shrill. From the Lakota perspective, the movements of two military expeditions through the Black Hills were acts of war. By the summer of 1875 the United States had already raised the notion of buying the Hills; an offer that created division among several Lakota and Dakota bands. By early 1876, when it became clear that many Lakotas and Dakotas refused to part with the area, the U.S. Army launched military campaigns to force these "hostiles" to come into their agencies. The ensuing Black Hills War (a.k.a. Great Sioux War) of 1876-77 would count Custer as one of its casualties, but the conflict proved most tragic for the people who centered their lives on the Hills.

A New Industrial Order Comes to the Black Hills

In the summer of 1876, the Black Hills stood within a historical vortex that involved gold, conquest, the birth of mass media, and a pronounced shift in the nation's economic and social order. In some form or another all of these factors stemmed from the rapid industrialization that occurred in the wake of the Civil War, which created a burst of economic growth and prosperity that was quickly followed by a long and severe downturn. Beginning with the Panic of 1873 and lasting until 1879, the "Great Depression," as it would be known for several decades, was in part triggered by speculation in the financing and construction of western railroads. The source of the depression would ultimately provide its resolution, however, as conditions were eased and eventually resolved when the resumption of rail construction allowed for the industrial exploitation of western resources.[21]

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[20] Quoted in Brian W. Dippie, "Its Equal I Have Never Seen: Custer Explores the Black Hills in 1874," *Columbia Magazine* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 27.

[21] M. John Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic of 1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

Though it seems a long way from the Black Hills, the city of Chicago is the best locus for explaining the forces that took the center of the Lakota world and rapidly transformed it into a distinctly American province. As the national economy recovered in the late 1870s and early 1880s all western railroads directed traffic through the booming city of Chicago, which quadrupled to more than 1 million people and became the second largest city in the nation just two decades after the Great Fire of 1871. Much of this explosive growth came from the forests, grasslands and mountains of the West, which were converted into food, lumber, houses, jobs, factories, machines and capital. To borrow from Carl Sandburg's famous poem "Chicago," the West *made* the city into the meat packer, the "Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation."[22]

The dramatic rise of Chicago reminds us that the "winning of the West" was an industrial conquest, and it played out with special force in the Black Hills and the Northern Plains. The near extinction of the bison is a case in point. The final slaughter of the once great herds occurred because, in the early 1870s, a new tanning process created a huge market for bison hides. Supple but strong, they were trimmed and stitched to become machine belts for eastern and European factories. Once cleared of bison the plains became an "open range" for industrial scale meat production, with new rail lines carrying millions of cattle to the Union Stockyards in Chicago. Like the slaughtered herds of bison and cattle on the surrounding grasslands, the pine forests of the Black Hills forests also fell in great numbers—cut down for mine timbers, rail ties, and a host of construction projects related to the mining and stock-raising industries.[23]

The abstract processes that would build Chicago and shape the West had an especially powerful, even instantaneous effect on the Black Hills. Much of this was a simple matter of timing and location. Of all the western gold rush locales, the one that hit the Black Hills between 1874 and 1877 was the closest to eastern population centers and the one most readily incorporated into national market systems. Almost simultaneously, it pulled in former gold seekers from earlier rushes to Montana, Colorado and Oregon as well as people from the Northeast, the Midwest, and the old Confederate States. A truly national event, the gold rush also occurred during the rise of American mass media and stories from the Black Hills provided exciting material for a new host of popular newspapers, national magazines, and cheap dime novels. All of these conditions heightened the drama and violence of the area's rapid transformation, increased the pace and scale of its economic development, and created a wide audience for the actions of its most colorful characters.

Along with the gold rush, the Black Hills War also became the stuff of national legend even before it ended. Across the United States the names Crazy Horse and Sitting

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[22] Carl Sandburg, *Chicago Poems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916), 3-4. For a superb study of Chicago's central importance to the history of the Great Plains, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

[23] Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 218-224; Martha Geores, *Common Ground: The Struggle for Ownership of the Black Hills National Forest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 34-39.

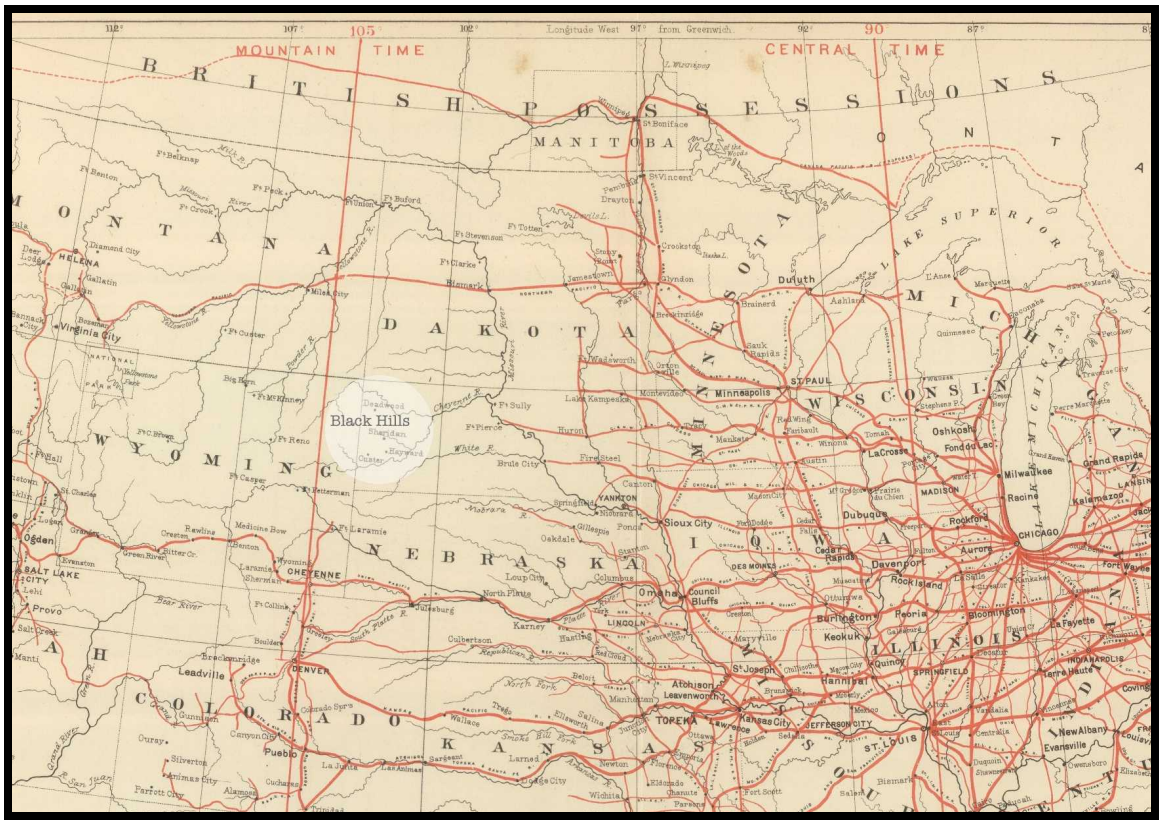

Figure 6.2: Western Railroad Routes, ca. 1880. Source: Detail from *Railroad map of the United States, showing the through lines of communication from the Atlantic to the Pacific, together with the various steamship lines along the seaboard* (Philadelphia: Wm. M. Bradley & Bro., 1884.

Bull became as famous as Custer and quickly replaced Tecumseh and Pontiac as the most noble, most heroic, and most tragic figures in the nation's pantheon of Indians.[24] Yet the attention accorded these men did not arise because their conflicts with the U.S. Army were associated with, or precipitated by, the invasion of miners to the Black Hills. Rather, the gold rush *and* the Sioux Wars acquired the status of instant legends because they occurred within the same broader economic, social and environmental contexts that were reshaping the Northern Plains. The Lakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos wanted miners out of the Hills, but their conflicts with the Army stemmed from an array of concerns related to railroad construction, land cessions, and continued access to more distant and diminishing bison herds. For their part, military leaders did not view conflict with Indians in terms of defending miners or promoting the gold rush to the Hills. Instead, they saw themselves in a much grander light: as agents of industrial recovery and economic expansion who, as Custer noted in a popular essay that was published just before his last engagement on the Little Big Horn River, would bring general prosperity to the nation and peace to the Plains through conquest.[25]

The stripping of bison hides, the surveying of railroads, the rush of miners across the plains—all of these were part of a rapid and extraordinary transformation that occurred on the Northern Plains in the 1870s when everything, it seemed, could be measured in terms of industrial processes and capital outlays. The value of an entire hillside, and the effort required to tear it down, could be determined by a precise rubric: $18.94 per ounce of gold. A live bison had no cash value, but dead it was worth $3.50 minus the cost of the bullet and the price charged by the railroad to transport a stack of hides to a factory in Pennsylvania. And a sack of flour was worth whatever a hungry miner would pay for it.[26] Such transactions, and the commercial networks that made them function, profoundly reshaped the social and physical environment of the Black Hills in a very short space of time and set the course of development for the next century and more.

The Nature of Black Hills Gold

Just days after Custer's August 1874 report of gold along French Creek reached newspapers in Chicago and New York, would-be gold seekers started making plans to invade the Sioux Reservation and stake a claim in the Hills. Yet getting there came with significant challenges, from Lakotas defending their territory and Army patrols that were obligated by the Treaty of 1868 to keep Americans out of the Great Sioux Reservation.

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[24] Pontiac was an important Odawa leader who inspired numerous Native communities in the Great Lakes region to fight against British rule in the 1760s. He would later be celebrated as a noble and worthy adversary to western expansion, who deserved the admiration—if not the accommodation or respect—of his conquerors. Tecumseh led a widespread conflict with the United States in the 1810s, and he too was lionized as a tragic but honorable adversary to the new nation.

[25] Custer speaks to this directly in General G. A. Custer, "Battling the Sioux on the Yellowstone," *The Galaxy* 22, no. 1 (July 1876): 91-102. The essay was in-press when he died on 26 June 1876.

[26] Historical gold prices tabulated by the National Mining Association, "Historical Gold Prices, 1833 to Present" <www.nma.org/pdf/gold/his_gold_prices.pdf> (accessed 3 March 2009). Bison hide price from Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157.

The first group to successfully run this double gauntlet was the 28-member Gordon Party, which left Sioux City, Iowa in October 1874 and arrived at the site of Custer's encampment along French Creek shortly before Christmas. After building several cabins and a stockade, platting a townsite they called Harney City, and establishing a mining district, the group was escorted out of the Hills by the Army in April 1875. Several members quickly returned, however, and by summer the French Creek area was crowded with 800 miners. With the Army unable and increasingly less willing to hold back the flood of miners, the Black Hills were overrun by 4,000 to 5,000 thousand gold seekers at year's end.[27]

In early 1876, less than a year after the Gordon Party's expulsion from the Black Hills, the site of Harney City had been renamed twice (first Stonewall, then Custer City), included 6,000 inhabitants, and supported another 4,000 people in the surrounding area. The new city's fortunes quickly changed, however, when word came of rich gold deposits in the northern Hills along Deadwood Gulch. By early summer, Black Hills gold-fever had shifted to the gulches and narrow valleys of the northern Hills and Custer was little more than an overbuilt ghost town with just 14 residents. Deadwood became the newest and biggest city in the Black Hills, with theaters, saloons, banks, hotels, brothels, law offices, a newspaper, and a host of other services for a rootless and free-wheeling population.

One of the hard truths about the Black Hills gold rush is that it never really rewarded the efforts of the miners who flocked there in the mid 1870s. The brief flood of people that hit Custer and passed on to Deadwood nevertheless brought a great rush of capital *into* the Hills. Correspondence between two brothers at the height of the Custer gold rush nicely illustrates the point. In February 1876, S. J. Cornell excitedly wrote that "placer claims will pay at the very latest $10.00 per day to the man." Such enthusiasm had no basis in reality, but Cornell rightly advised his brother and partners to "bring six months grub with you, and tools for yourselves. Also bring several pairs of gum boots, your saddle pony is mighty handy."[28] By the time his brother and companions joined Cornell in the Black Hills, the placer claims in Custer had been abandoned in the rush to Deadwood. The party moved on as well, and participated in a new short-lived boom and bust cycle that likely chewed through their supplies and "grub" in less than six months.

As Cornell's venture suggests, it took more than a mine to pay for all the panning, sluicing, and prospecting that occurred between 1875 and early 1877. The development of the Homestake Mine near Lead ultimately brought stability to the mineral ventures of the northern Hills, but this long-term industrial venture in hard-rock mining still

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[27] Harold Edward Briggs, *The Black Hills Gold Rush* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1980), *passim*; Watson Parker, *The Black Hills Gold Rush, 1874-1879* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1965), *passim*; Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 176-201; Robert Wellman Campbell, "A Landscape History of the Black Hills" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2006), 149-176; Geores, *Common Ground*, 29-40.

[28] S. J. Cronell to his bother in Pine Bluff, Wyoming Territory, 13 February 1876; quoted in Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park: A History of Custer State Park and Northcentral Custer County* (Custer, S.D.: J.Y. Sundstrom, 1994), 26.

conforms to a basic truth about gold mining.[29] Besides consuming capital, gold mining uses up a great deal of resources. Whether conducted by a small group of miners beside a stream, or a large corporation like the Homestake Mining Company, mining produces nothing but waste product and, with luck, some gold. It does not produce food, clothing, draft animals, shelter or any of the other necessaries of life in the diggings. Almost all of those must be supplied from outside. In the case of the Black Hills, the resulting environmental transformations and the accompanying social arrangements that rapidly spread across the landscape became the true origins of the area's subsequent history. Gold did not transform the Black Hills. Rather it was the allure of gold, and the frenetic activity it attracted from distant commercial and population centers, that rapidly shaped the region and quickly pulled the Wind Cave National Park area into a whole new order of things.

[29] When combined with all of the costs associated with running the massive hard rock mining operations, the price of reclaiming and restoring the environmental damage wrought by the massive open pit mines may some day make the company's total operations more expensive than the value of the gold it produced. See, for instance, James M. Taylor, "Daschle Battles Environmentalists over Spent South Dakota Mine," *Environment & Climate News*, 1 March 2002 <http://www.heartland.org/publications/environment%20climate/article/198/Daschle_battles_environmentalists_over_spent_South_Dakota_mine.html> (accessed 6 February 2010).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WIND CAVE AREA IN A NETWORK OF MARKETS AND CATTLE

Non-Indians first utilized the future Wind Cave National Park area as a pathway to and from the gold mining districts, and then as pasture for beef cattle to feed the mining camps and new towns. Within a decade, however, the southern Hills area was less an adjunct of the mining districts and more a co-equal center of commerce and development. Cattle raising quickly became the local industry, providing enormous amounts of beef to Indian reservations, mining towns, and eastern markets. These developments in turn fostered the growth of small farmsteads in and around the southern Hills that supplied produce to the region's larger cattle outfits. In the early 1880s, as industrial mining around Lead created stable, growing communities, the Hot Springs and Wind Cave area attracted investors and pleasure seekers from the northern Hills. The arrival of the first railroad to the Black Hills, which reached Buffalo Gap in November 1885, greatly augmented all of these early trends and initiated a series of profound environmental and social transformations. Cattle ranching became even more closely tied to Chicago markets, the thermal waters at Hot Springs suddenly had appeal for a national audience, new farmsteads were settled to supply growing markets for produce in Hot Springs and the region's cattle towns, and improved connections between the northern and southern Hills created a stronger regional identity and economy.

Freighting

One of the riskiest and most essential commercial services during the gold rush years involved freighting and other associated transportation services like stagecoaches, livery stables, and mail delivery. All used the same routes in and out of the Hills, and all had to contend with various dangers and discomforts—from crossing flooded streams and suffering through long stretches of waterless country to feared encounters with armed highwaymen or Native fighters intent on making trespassers pay dearly for invading the Black Hills. These dangers, which could result in the loss of life, limb and treasure, were compounded by other less disastrous aggravations like sick cattle and equipment breakdowns. However, the difficult terrain of the seemingly flat and level plains proved the most constant source of frustration. Unlike the migrant trails through the Platte River Valley to the south, all of the routes to the Black Hills had "more irregularity of surface, more abrupt ascents and precipitous descents, more broken, jagged and apparently impassable territory than could be found anywhere else in the country."[1] Blistering summer heat and biting winter winds added to the challenge of hauling freight, but the

[1] Hyman Palais, "South Dakota Stage and Wagon Roads," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 25 (1950): 215.

legendary "gumbo" mud of spring seemed to draw out the most exasperation and cursing from the notoriously foul-mouthed bullwhackers.[2]

Risk and discomfort had their rewards, however. An enterprising freighter could sell his cargo in Custer City or Deadwood for twice what he paid for it, and with some luck and skill a number of individuals made fortunes out of relatively small initial investments. Fred Evans, who later became a central player in the development of Hot Springs, learned this basic economic calculus in the 1850s when he worked as a freighter and bullwhacker during the Colorado gold rush. He eventually parlayed his earnings into a number of successful business ventures in Sioux City, Iowa, where he was living when Custer's initial report of gold in the Black Hills reached the press. The news inspired him to return to the freighting business, and he quickly joined with two partners to form the Sioux City & Black Hills Transportation Company. Along with preparing the Company's first shipment of goods, Evans also became involved with managing the transportation needs of the 150 people who made up the first large group to embark for the Hills in the spring of 1875.[3]

Evans then formed his own company and moved operations up the Missouri River to Fort Pierre, some 250 miles closer to the gold fields and at the head of a route that skirted military posts and Indian agencies. The first shipments arrived in the summer of 1876, just in time to supply the rush to Deadwood Gulch, and Evans' new fortune was secured. By 1880, the Evans Transportation Company had shipped more than 3500 tons of freight to the Hills by way of the Fort Pierre-Deadwood Trail, but business vaulted to new heights when he abandoned Fort Pierre for Chamberlain in 1881.[4] The new site had two important advantages: the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad had just reached the Missouri River at Chamberlain, thus providing access to a wider and less costly variety of goods; and the new the site was located at the head of an easier and better pastured route to the Hills. Within a year, Evans quickly grew his business into a large enterprise that had offices in Rapid City and Chamberlain, ran a half dozen way stations, employed up to 1500 men, and owned 1500 oxen, 400 wagons, and 250 mules.[5]

Evans' success was not universal, but until the mid 1880s freighting proved a very profitable venture for several companies along all the main routes into the Black Hills. As Annie B. Tallent noted,

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[2] S. M. Booth quoted in Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976* (Custer, S.D.: Custer County Historical Society, 1977), 27-28. For an overview of conditions along the freight trails, see Estelline Bennett, *Old Deadwood Days* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 67-104.

[3] John S. McClintock and Edward L. Senn, *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills: Accurate History and Facts Related by One of the Early Day Pioneers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 29-30, 316-317.

[4] Erik McKinley Eriksson, "Sioux City and the Black Hills God Rush, 1874-1877," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 20, no. 3 (July 1922): 331, 341-342; Peter Rosen, *Pa-Ha-Sa-Pah; or, the Black Hills of South Dakota: A Complete History of the Gold and Wonder-Land of the Dakotas* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1895), 417-418; Annie D. Tallent, *The Black Hills; or, the Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1899), 189-190.

[5] Phillip S. Hall, *Reflections of the Badlands* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota Press, 1993), 37-45, 79-80; Hall, "The Ephemeral Chamberlain Road: A Freight Trail to the Black Hills," *South Dakota History* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 1-23; and Bennett, *Old Deadwood Days*, 100-101.

> during the years prior to the advent of the first railroad, the immense freight and passenger traffic between outfitting points and the Hills, not only yielded large results to the operators, but was an important factor in the business economy of the Black Hills; and from those standpoints may be regarded as the most prosperous years in their entire history.[6]

The amount of commerce in the Hills, and the profits to be made in freighting and transportation, ultimately spawned half a dozen major routes across the Plains. During the initial rush to Custer City most traffic came from the south and southwest, out of Sidney, Nebraska and Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. When the Deadwood gold rush hit, Sioux City, Yankton, Chamberlain and Fort Pierre became important transportation centers for Black Hills commerce, as did the more distant railhead town of Bismarck to the north. As Deadwood, Lead and Rapid City developed, and Custer City and the southern Hills gained or re-gained population, all of these routes remained in operation and proved very profitable.

While each route had a particular virtue that offered some competitive advantage within the larger marketplace, all reflected the same basic duality that had long defined the Black Hills: isolation and proximity. Geology, climate and ecology created a unique landscape that is both separate from and connected to other locales. For Native peoples, this gave the Hills a special significance and made life possible on the Plains. In the pre-equestrian era, the Black Hills were an important locale for several different groups along the Missouri River to the east and north, and the Platte River to the south; locations that were near enough to develop a strong material dependence and cultural association with the Hills, yet too far and too remote to allow for a wholesale movement away from established networks of trade and intercourse in the greater Mississippi Valley. Not surprisingly, the main jumping off points for shipments to the Hills were situated in the vicinity of the ancient village centers along the Missouri River and in the Upper Platte River Valley. Freighters and outfitters, like Native peoples just a few generations before, staged their operations in areas that were within striking distance of the Hills but could also sustain agriculture and trade. And when freighters, stages, and private parties set off for the Hills they essentially followed trails that were first pioneered thousands of years before.

The Routes to the Southern Black Hills

Of all the routes to the Black Hills, the ones from the Platte River Valley proved the most significant during the initial gold rush to the Black Hills. As Colonel Richard Irving Dodge reported after his 1875 expedition to the Hills, the best jumping off point was Sidney, where "two routes, both fairly good, lead to the Black Hills; the one, *via* the [Red Cloud and Spotted Tail] Agencies, the other, *via* Cheyenne [and Fort Laramie.]" As Dodge pointed out, and large numbers of would-be miners demonstrated, these two

[6] Tallent, *The Black Hills*, 189.

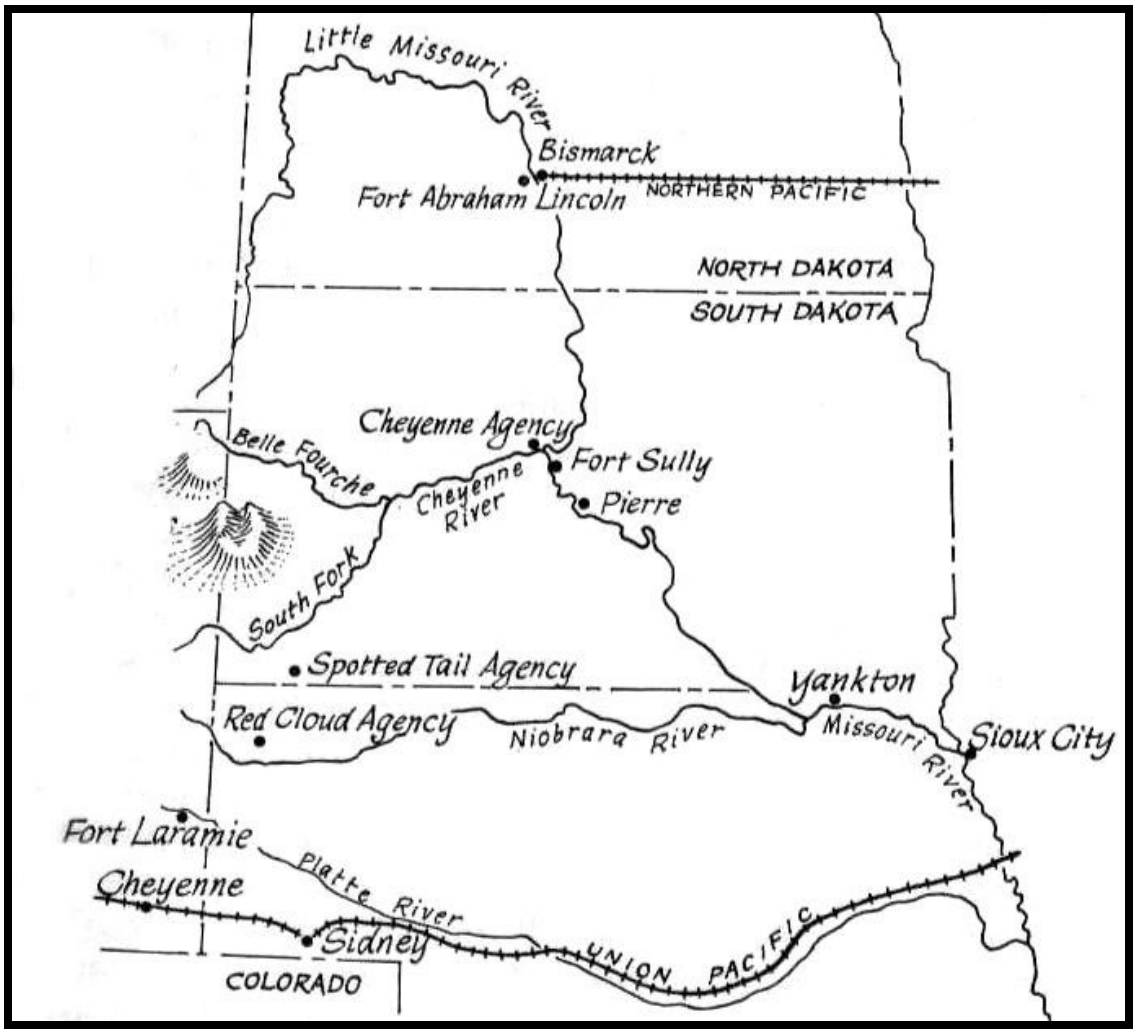

Figure 7.1: Map Showing the Major "Jumping Off" Points for the Black Hills during the Gold Rush. Source: Watson Parker, *The Black Hills Gold Rush, 1874-1879*.

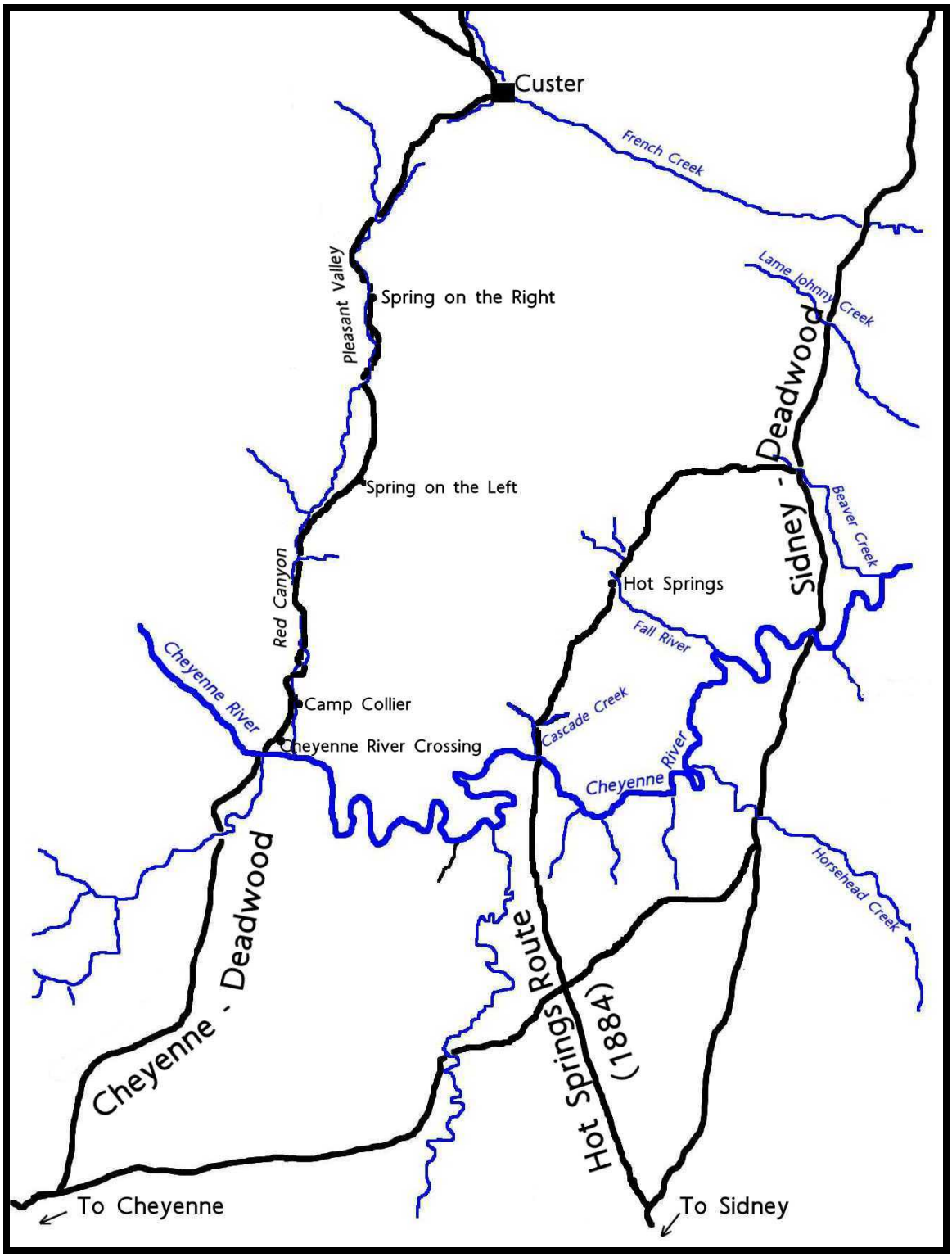

Figure 7.2: Map of Southern Black Hills Area Showing Cheyenne and Sidney to Deadwood Stage and Wagon Roads. Adapted from Hyman Palais, "South Dakota Stage and Wagon Roads," *South Dakota Historical Collections*.

routes had many virtues. Located along the Union Pacific Railroad line, Sidney was easy to reach and, compared to other starting points, relatively close to the Black Hills. Given Custer City's location in the southern Hills, the routes through Buffalo Gap or the Red Canyon provided the most direct access to the gold fields. The southern approach also came with the least likelihood of dangerous conflict on the plains with Lakotas, Cheyennes or Arapahos. Most of the way was to the west of the recently reduced Great Sioux Reservation, and both routes benefited from the assistance and protection of military patrols and forts along the way.[7]

Connected by the same rail line and servicing the same camps and towns in the Black Hills, Cheyenne and Sidney were less rivals than competitive partners in the business of exploiting the resources of the Black Hills. While this particular dynamic reflected a common set of concerns (the quest for gold, access to railroads, and fear of conflict with Native communities), it also followed the course of ancient patterns. Long before horses had come onto the plains, and increasingly so afterwards, Native peoples with common interests, common purposes and common relations had traveled from the North Platte River country to the southern Hills. Guided by the same needs for water, temporary shelter, and relatively unbroken country, for thousands of years they traced the same routes that freighters, stagecoach drivers, and private travelers would take in the 1870s. All entered the Hills by the same two gateways, the Red Canyon and Buffalo Gap, which skirted the east and west sides of the Wind Cave National Park area.

Headed to a very specific locale within the Hills, and drawn by a singular resource, freighters, stage drivers and gold seekers did not linger in the "southern embayment" of the Black Hills "island." Yet it was there that the twin interests of Cheyenne and Sidney physically intersected on trails that ran through and near the current Wind Cave National Park area. From Buffalo Gap, the Sidney route followed "old Indian trails" across the divides above Beaver Creek and Cold Brook Canyon. As one early gold seeker noted in April 1876, the route could be "rough and rocky" in places, but not too difficult. The climb from the Buffalo Gap to the vicinity of present-day Pringle only required half a day's travel for his relatively large party of "twelve wagons, fifty-two souls, including twenty-two women and children."[8] Near Pringle, or Point of Rocks as the area was known in the 1870s, the Sidney and Cheyenne routes came within a few miles of each other as they headed toward Custer. The Cheyenne route, which approached Custer from the southwest, entered the Red Canyon just north of present-day Edgemont, passed two watering sites called Spring-on-the-Hill and Spring-on-the-Right, then ran through Pleasant Valley to Custer. The route was longer than the trail up from Buffalo Gap, and the climbs could try "worn beasts severely," but it too

[7] From Cheyenne, travelers to the Hills could follow the same trail that freighters and army troops used between Fort D. A. Russell and Fort Laramie. The route from Sidney followed an even more utilized trail between Fort Sidney and Fort Robinson. This route was well away from the main living areas of the so-called "hostiles" who continued to hunt and live off of the reservation in the Powder River country.

[8] Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, 28. This same route was traversed in the summer of 1874 by Professor Walter Jenney and Dr. Valentine McGillycuddy, the leaders of a federally financed scientific expedition to the Black Hills in 1875; Tallent, *The Black Hills*, 645-646; Robert J. Casey, *The Black Hills and Their Incredible Characters* (New York: Bobs-Merrill, 1949), 87-88; Jennings, "Autobiography," in *Fall River County Pioneer Histories* (Hot Springs: Fall River County Historical Society, 1976), 143.

followed ancient paths into the Hills and offered one of the best routes into the interior Hills.

Until 1877 the relative proximity of these two routes, and their passage through areas well-used by American Indians, made them similar in another important respect. Both could be deadly dangerous for freighters, stagecoach drivers and passengers, and private traveling parties. On the Cheyenne route, the steep walls of the Red Canyon offered numerous advantages and easy cover for would be attackers. In the spring of 1876, a number of travelers lost their lives and belongings in the canyon. Whether at the hands of Lakotas defending against the gold rush invasion of the Black Hills, or road agents like William "Persimmon Bill" Chambers who may have allied with small parties of Lakotas and Cheyennes, a number of travelers were killed in the spring of 1876. In the wake of these attacks, a detachment of troops was sent out from Fort Laramie on 8 May 1876 to establish Camp Collier.[9] A partial fulfillment of the Army's earlier plans to locate a fort in the Black Hills, the small garrison's troops became involved in a battle with "twenty Indians" on 1 August 1876 at a ranch near the Cheyenne River. By morning the battle was over with one unidentified Indian casualty. The other 19 made off with some mules and horses, and later that afternoon successfully ran down and destroyed a stage leaving the Black Hills for Cheyenne.[10]

While the Sidney to Custer route into the Hills offered less opportunity for attack, it proved equally deadly in the spring of 1876. Samuel M. Booth, the train master for a party out of Sidney, wrote to his local paper in Wisconsin about a brief meeting at the Red Cloud Agency with "a chief by the name of 'The Hand'" who warned the travelers about a large group of Lakotas camped at the Cheyenne River crossing opposite the Buffalo Gap. Booth ignored the warning and refused an offer of safe passage, which basically amounted to a toll of ten dollars. Instead, he and his party wound up spending a tense and sleepless night on guard at the river crossing. As Booth told readers of his hometown newspaper in Wisconsin, the next evening, while camping at "Buffalo Gap where half a dozen battles have already been fought," he had the good "fortune to get a shot off at" a person he derisively called "a sneaking devil." Some blood but no body was found at daybreak, and the morning's travel proved uneventful. However, just beyond the present-day western boundary of Wind Cave National Park, Booth's party "came upon three wagons that had been captured by Indians." Part of a freight shipment of saw mill equipment on its way to Custer, "everything in them that was not carried off was destroyed, coffee mills broken, flour scattered about, harness cut into small pieces, wagon shot full of balls, etc." Another half mile up the trail, near the present-day Rifle Pit Campground, Booth's group "came to another place where there had been a battle—blood on the stones, any amount of cartridge shells and other signs that showed we were close to business."[11]

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[9] Paul L. Hedren, *Fort Laramie and the Great Sioux War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 74-75, 103-104, 107-108. "Camp at the Mouth of Red Canyon," which became better known as Camp Collier, was named after its commander, Captain William Collier

[10] Hedren, *Fort Laramie*, 139-140.

[11] Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, 27-28. A portion of this letter is also reprinted in Tallent, *The Black Hills*, 291-292.

Violent encounters of this nature ended within a year. The presence of Camp Collier at the southern end of the Red Canyon helped quiet matters along the Cheyenne route, but the end of the Black Hills War proved more decisive. The two-year military campaign against Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Northern Arapaho bands intent on exercising and defending the terms of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, the U.S. Congress' acceptance of the 1876 Black Hills land cession agreement, and the increased number of troops stationed on the plains effectively restricted the Lakotas and their allies to reservations.

Lame Johnny's Cameo on the Historic Stage

In the period immediately after the Lakotas, Northern Cheyennes, and Arapahos surrendered, and while Deadwood was still in its initial boom, the two southern routes into the Black Hills attracted highwaymen who preyed upon vulnerable freighters, stage coaches, and private traveling parties. The Red Canyon proved especially dangerous since its connection to Cheyenne attracted more shipments of gold and other valuables while the canyon walls provided numerous hiding places for attackers.[12] The Sidney route did have some troubles, but the only violent crime of special note occurred in 1878 when Cornelius Donahue was hanged by a lynch mob about eight miles north of the newly established town of Buffalo Gap.[13]

Better known as "Lame Johnny," Donahue was a notorious cattle rustler and horse thief who came to the Black Hills from Texas in 1876. When gold prospecting failed, he returned to horse-stealing and eventually took up robbing stagecoaches on the Cheyenne-Deadwood trail. Easily identified by his namesake limp, Donahue was accused of participating in several robberies, including one of the earliest shipments of bullion from the Homestake Mine in September 1878. Donahue was later caught trying to steal horses from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and then sent on a stagecoach out of Sidney to face trial in Deadwood. He met his final fate in early July 1879 near the creek that now bears his name in Custer State Park, a few miles north of Wind Cave National Park and not far from the caves below Kings Ridge where he supposedly kept stolen horses and livestock. The legend of Lame Johnny grew over the years, much like the proliferation of stories about Calamity Jane, Wild Bill Hickock and others. For a long time his name was even associated with the discovery of Wind Cave. Perhaps the result of foggy memories about his hide-away a few miles north of the cave or, more likely, the promotional instincts of Hot Springs boosters, tales of the famous outlaw brought excitement and romance to a trip up to the cave.[14] Whatever his possible associations with the park area may have been, they no doubt followed the same paths as others; namely, the trails and wagon roads that crossed or adjoined the present park boundaries.

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[12] Merrill J. Mattes, *Fort Laramie Park History, 1834-1977* (Denver: Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service, 1980) 1 March 2003 <http://www.nps.gov/fola/history/part1-13.htm> (accessed 12 May 2010).
[13] R. T. Lawton, "Necktie Party Ended Lame Outlaw's Career," *Deadwood Magazine* <http://www.deadwoodmagazine.com/archivedsite/Archives/LameJohnny.htm> (accessed 17 May 2010)
[14] *Ibid.*

Local Traffic and Development in a National Context

The Deadwood gold rush eventually put an end to the dangers of traveling in the southern Hills, in large part because the shift of traffic to Deadwood and Lead drew the two southern routes along different courses. Freighters from Sidney still passed Buffalo Gap, but then continued north through the Red Valley along the route of what is now State Highway 79. Their destination was the new market town of Rapid City, which became the primary transshipment center for the northern Hills. The Cheyenne to Deadwood route, which tended to handle more stage traffic than freighters, shifted to two other pathways. The Red Canyon trail remained in use, especially for traffic headed through Custer, but stage companies generally routed traffic well to the west and east. The most common route from Cheyenne avoided the southern Hills altogether and followed the general course of U.S. Highway 85 through present-day Newcastle, Wyoming and then over to the upper Spearfish Creek drainage and down to Deadwood. Another route involved traveling to Edgemont, crossing over to the Hot Springs area and Buffalo Gap, then up to Rapid City.

The arrival of the first railroad line to the Black Hills, which reached Buffalo Gap in November 1885 then pushed on to Rapid City a few months later, soon brought an end to long-distance freighting and stage travel from Sidney and Cheyenne. As new rail lines reached into the southern Hills over the next few years, however, they sparked a resurgence in local freight and stage traffic in the Wind Cave National Park area. By 1891, Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs were both served by the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, a subsidiary of the Chicago & North Western Railroad, while the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad ran a narrow gauge line up the old Cheyenne-Deadwood route with a stop at Pringle. Within and around the triangle formed by these three rail stops, timber, livestock, and farm produce from the Hills, and finished goods from distant market centers, moved along the “old Indian trails” and wagon roads that crossed the present boundaries of the national park.

Following ancient pathways, but traveling through commercial arteries established in the late 1870s, this local traffic would trace the patterns of social, economic, and environmental change in the southern Hills for decades to come. As the gold rush era faded and long-haul freighting gave way to railroads, a new meshing of local environmental conditions with larger national trends fostered the development of communities centered around cattle ranching, homesteading, and tourism.

In the popular depictions of Black Hills history, miners, freighters, cattlemen, homesteaders and tourists are often presented as discrete figures that follow each other in an orderly parade of history that begins with Indians and ends with the ever-advancing present. In the southern Hills and around Wind Cave, at least, there is no tidy chronological ordering of these various elements because they are all of a piece. Mining claims would play a critical part in the establishment of Wind Cave National Park in 1903, nearly three decades after Custer’s report of gold. In the 1920s, homestead claims were still being filed on lands that would later be added to the national park. Native peoples continued to use the resources of the Hills and take the waters at Hot Springs,

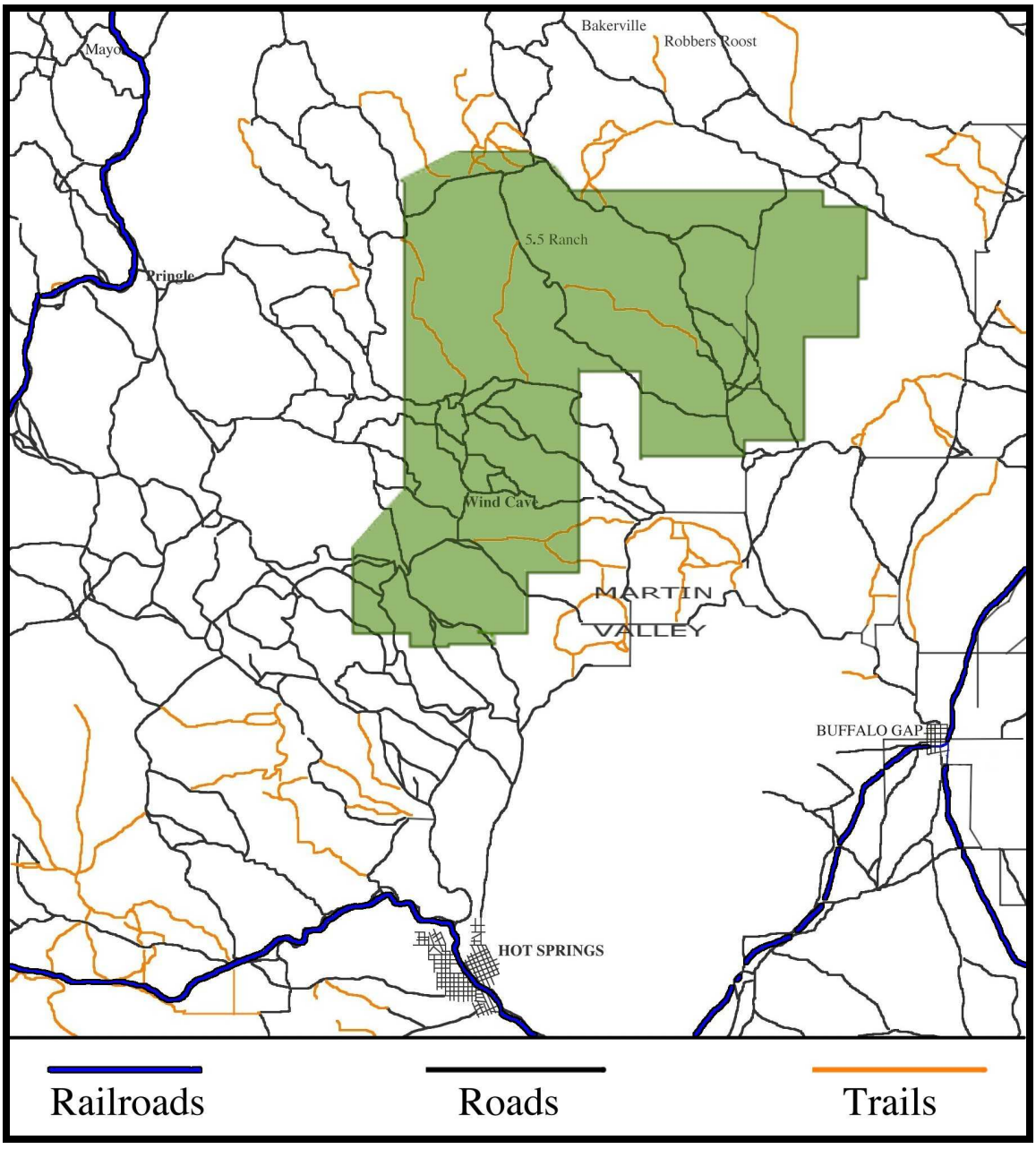

Figure 7.3: Railroads and Main Wagon Roads in Vicinity of Wind Cave National Park Area, ca. 1890s. Road and trail grids adapted from maps of the southern Black Hills produced by the U.S. Geological Survey between 1893 and 1900.

and tell stories of Wind Cave long after the 1877 cession of the Black Hills. Cowboys from the Open Range era became the earliest advertisers of Wind Cave while early freighters like Fred T. Evans would become central players in the development of the Hot Springs tourist industry in the 1890s. In the Wind Cave area, homesteading, ranching, prospecting, and tourist promotion were not activities that corresponded to discrete periods. Rather, they occurred simultaneously across several decades and often involved many of the same people. To understand the history of the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is important to recognize how cattle ranching, railroads, and town-building fit within the same larger context. While the following sections of this chapter and the next will differentiate between particular types of land use and enterprises, the overriding concern will be to emphasize the connectedness of these various endeavors and their collective effects on the Wind Cave National Park area.

Cattle Country

By the early 1880s, cattle ranching in and around the Black Hills developed into a full-blown industrial enterprise that connected people, animals, resources and capital within a vast network that included London, Chicago, New York, Colorado, Texas, Iowa and much of the Midwest. However, the first herd in the Black Hills grazed in a very different context; one immediately associated with the early gold rush but rooted in the hybrid world that had developed on the Northern Plains in the mid nineteenth-century. Antoine and Nicholas Janis, the sons of a French father based out of St. Louis and a mother of African ancestry, maintained 2,500-head of cattle at their trading post a few miles west of present day Custer. Both men had close relations with the Oglalas: they served as translators at the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie; Antoine was married to an Oglala named First Elk Woman; Nicholas was married to an Oglala named Martha He Bear, and their son was married to Red Cloud's daughter. All were forced to leave the Hills in 1878 when the federal government ordered their wives to move to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. On the way, they must have driven their cattle through the Wind Cave National Park area and out Buffalo Gap. Once on the reservation, the two brothers continued to ranch and manage small commercial enterprises until their deaths some years later.[15]

Even before the Janis families left the Black Hills, the area's potential for cattle ranching had already reached a wider audience of policy makers and private investors. In the report on his 1874 reconnaissance of the Black Hills, Custer made special note of "the rich pasturage to be found in this region." "In no portion of the United States," he wrote, "have I ever seen grazing superior to that found growing wild in this hitherto unknown region…. Cattle could winter in these valleys without other food or shelter than that to be obtained from running at large." These sentiments were given broader voice in *Harper's Weekly*, which published a feature issue entitled "The Black Hills Expedition" in

[15] Irma R. Miller, *French-Indian Families in America's West: Lessert (aka Claymore), Roy, Chatillon, Delor, Royer* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), 52-53, 57-60, 68, 72, 80, 93, 102; and George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 96, 174.

September 1874[16]

The following summer Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney were sent to the Black Hills to conduct a thorough scientific reconnaissance that would confirm and elaborate on Custer's report. In their resulting *Report on the Geology and Resources of the Black Hills of Dakota*, Newton and Jenney devoted several pages to describing the region's many virtues as a potential grazing country. "For the requirements of the population that the Black Hills will support in the next twenty years," they wrote, "enough hay can be procured from the wild grasses; and should the demand in future increase, an ample supply can be raised from sowing timothy or other cultivated varieties on the bottom lands of the valleys." Newton and Jenney made special note of the conditions in the "south-eastern part of the Hills, on [Beaver], French, Spring, and Rapid Creeks."[17] One of the primary scouts for both the Custer and Newton-Jenney expeditions, Moses "California Joe" Milner, shared the same conviction that cattle, more than gold, would shape the future of the Hills. In a pithy, oft-quoted passage from Newton's and Jenney's report, Milner noted "There's gold from the grass roots down, but there's more gold from the grass roots up."[18]

The most widely read and influential account of the Black Hills and its potential as a cattle country came from Lieutenant Colonel Richard Irving Dodge, who led the military escort for the Newton-Jenney scientific expedition. Unconvinced of the area's potential for gold mining and unimpressed with its agrarian possibilities, Dodge wrote "there can be no doubt of the [area's] immense value as a grazing country. Splendid grass, pure water, excellent shelter from storms—nothing is wanting to fill all the requirements of a first-class stockfarm. It will, before many years, furnish beef and mutton, butter, cheese, and wool for a nation."[19] While many chose to ignore Newton's, Jenney's, and Dodge's caution about gold fever, no one had cause to doubt their claims about the potential of the Hills as a cattle country. Indeed, would-be cattlemen from eastern Dakota Territory were some of the loudest proponents for separating the Lakotas and their allies from the Black Hills, and as early as 1874 General Philip Sheridan made special note of the area's value as cattle country when advocating the forced-removal of Indians from the Black Hills.[20]

The first gold rushers who brought horses or other livestock to the Hills

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[16] General G. A. Custer, "Report of General Custer to the Department of Dakota, St. Paul, Minnesota, August 2, 1874, via Fort Laramie," in *Executive Document no. 32*, 43rd Congress, 2nd Session (1875); quoted in Palais, "History of Stock Raising and Agriculture in the Black Hills," *Black Hills Engineer* 28 (September 1942): 3-4. Also see "The Black Hills Expedition," *Harper's Weekly*, 12 September 1874, 753.
[17] Quote is from Walter P. Jenney and Henry Newton, *Report on the Geology and Resources of the Black Hills of Dakota* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 319. In his report Jenney referred to Beaver Creek as Amphibious Creek, a name it received during the Custer expedition because of its propensity to run on the surface and below ground for various stretches.
[18] *Ibid.*, 317.
[19] Richard Irving. Dodge, *The Black Hills: A Minute Description of the Routes, Scenery, Soil, Climate, Timber, Gold, Geology, Zoology, Etc.* (New York: James Miller, 1876), 56.
[20] Harold E. Briggs, "Ranching and Stock-Raising in the Territory of Dakota," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, XIV (1928), 423; Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 7.

appreciated the area's potential as a cattle country. Early freighters who rested and grazed their oxen in the Hills appreciated it even more, especially after the animals they did not need for their return trip had put on weight and sold at a hefty premium in beef-starved Custer City. During the early gold rush period, small herds of 200 or fewer cattle were also driven to the Hills from Wyoming Territory, Nebraska, and even Colorado. These were allowed to graze a short-while to regain the weight they lost on the trail, then sold to butchers in the booming towns of Custer and later Deadwood where the meat from a cow that cost $15-$25 in Wyoming could fetch between $100 and $125. These herds had to be small, especially if grazed outside the Hogback, since cattle and herdsmen proved easy and valuable targets for Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos intent on thwarting the mining invasion of the Hills. By the spring of 1877, however, conditions changed dramatically and keeping larger herds suddenly became a very attractive prospect.[21]

Cattle Barons

While the local market for beef had its benefits, cattlemen looked well beyond the mining towns of the Black Hills. The abrogation of the 1868 treaty and the end of conflict with the Lakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos opened a grand expanse of country to cattle ranching. From the Platte River to the Yellowstone, and from the Big Horn country to the confluence of the Belle Fourche and Cheyenne Rivers, the vast plains that had once supported great herds of bison were suddenly accorded a new promise and purpose. At the center of it all was the Black Hills, and stockmen instantly recognized that the same commercial and transportation networks that brought miners and goods to the Hills could also serve as conduits for bringing western cattle to urban markets. The rich grasslands of the Black Hills country that so enthralled Custer, Newton, Jenney and Dodge had hardly been grazed since the last sizeable herds of bison were cleared from the area a few decades before, and the region now lay open to all comers. More importantly, through the rail towns of Sidney and Cheyenne and along the freighting trails to the Missouri River towns of Pierre and Chamberlain, Black Hills cattle were directly connected to markets that extended to Chicago, New York and even London.

The quality of western Dakota's grasslands, and the promise of extensive markets, brought a new set of players to the Hills and made the area a new center for a process that had been underway since the end of the Civil War. The bulk of the cattle that poured into the Black Hills country in the late 1870s and early 1880s were Texas longhorns, which had become the dominant livestock on the Southern Plains over the previous decade. During the Civil War, the Union Army's blockade of the Gulf Coast and its control of the Mississippi River had shut-off the Texas cattle trade's connection to markets in the South. Abandoned herds proliferated and ran wild across the Texas hills, prairies, and plains until the close of the War, when the unbranded, semi-wild cattle suddenly became

[21] Paul Friggens, *Gold & Grass: The Black Hills Story* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Pub. Co., 1983), 60-61; Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 3-4; Bob Lee and Dick Williams, *Last Grass Frontier: The South Dakota Stock Grower Heritage* (Sturgis, S.D.: Black Hills Publishers, 1964), 36-50.

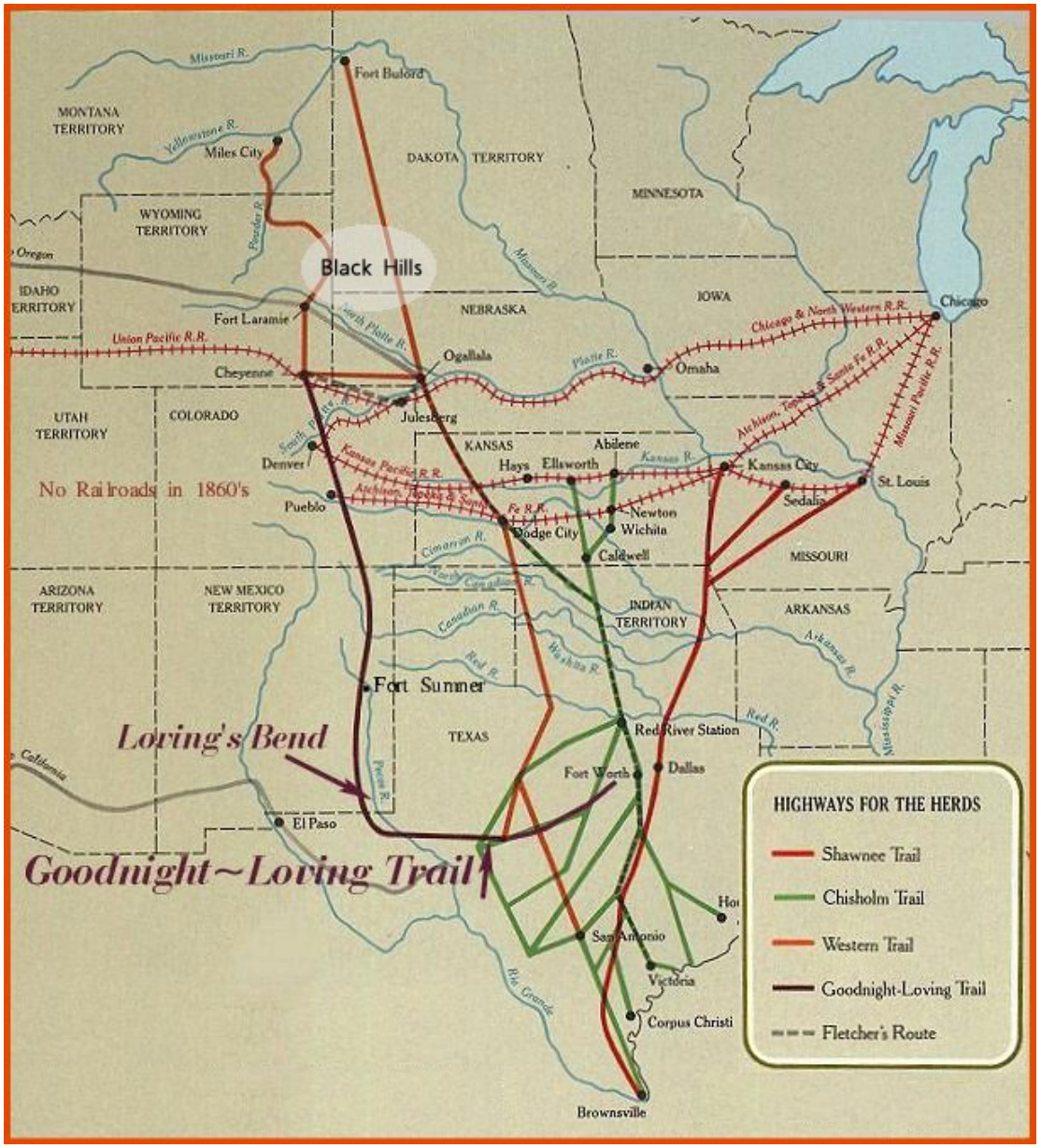

Figure 7.4: Cattle Trails from Texas, ca. 1860s-1880s. Adapted from William H. Forbis, *The Old West: The Cowboys* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1973).

a cheap and abundant commodity.[22]

For very little money, an outfit could capture or purchase a good-sized herd and drive it north to Wichita, Abilene, Dodge City and each new shipping point along the railroad lines that were being constructed across Kansas. For all the attention they have received in fiction, film, and popular history, however, the famed cattle drives along the Chisholm Trail and other routes out of Texas proved short-lived. Restrictions on the transport of Texas cattle (because of concerns about Texas fever tick), the location of new homesteads along the main routes north, and the growth of Kansas-based herds soon pushed the cattle drives further west to Colorado and north to Montana. While a few of these animals would eventually make their way by rail to eastern markets, most traveled by hoof to military installations on the plains, Indian reservations (which received beef and cattle as part of treaty agreements with the United States), and mining communities in the Rocky Mountains.[23]

The 1877 Sioux land cession suddenly created a new destination for these Texas herds, and launched a new rush to the Black Hills country that more than confirmed the official reports on the region's grazing potential. High quality grass that cured on the stem, abundant water sources, shelter from winter storms—all of these proved true. During the gold rush, the first small-scale ranchers also learned that cattle could winter on the open range and still put on fat and muscle. Whereas Texas and Midwestern cattle needed to be fattened through the winter on corn, alfalfa or some other fodder before heading to the slaughterhouse, cattle that spent time in western Dakota, eastern Wyoming and southeastern Montana Territories could be sent directly from the range to the stockyard in early spring.[24] Along with these remarkable environmental qualities, the Hills region had two other irresistible appeals for cattle ranching: good connections to eastern markets and, even closer to home, the promise of large beef contracts for the dozen and more Indian agencies on the Northern Plains. As one scholar recently noted, it was a "heavenly situation" for the cattle industry and tailor made for a classic boom.[25]

In many respects, simple numbers tell a good deal of the story. By late 1878 and early 1879, there were an estimated 100,000 cattle in the area encompassed by the forks of the Cheyenne River. Most of these animals had recently come up from Texas, and most ranged "around the foothills" in a "section extending from Spring Creek" southward to Buffalo Gap and Edgemont, "then extending southeast to Pine Ridge."[26] The following

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[22] Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry: Ranching on the Great Plains from 1865-1925* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 17-22, 44-47; Lee and Williams, *Last Grass Frontier*, 21-28.

[23] Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 228-240; Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Cattle Trailing Industry: Between Supply and Demand, 1866-1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), 30-36; Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry: Ranching on the Great Plains from 1865-1925* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 17-18, 44-47; Briggs, "Ranching and Stock-Raising," 422-423.

[24] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 44; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 220-224.

[25] Quoted phrase is from Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 9.

[26] Quote from *Ibid.*, 11

Figure 7.5: Ranch House at the Bar T Ranch, ca. 1880s.

Figure 7.6: Cattle Round-Up in Fall River County, ca. 1880s. Source for both images: John C. H. Grabill Collection, Library of Congress.

spring the leading ranches and cattle companies in the area formed the Black Hills Livestock Association (BHLA), which soon included 60 members that collectively held 264,000 head of stock by the winter of 1881-1882. A number of these ranches were in and near the southeastern Hills, and included the Circle Bar and the Bar T ranches, which held a combined total of 50,000 cattle south of present-day Hot Springs, and the LT Ranch with 8,000 head on lower Lame Johnny Creek. The 1883 autumn round-up tally for cattle in the Black Hills totaled 500,000, then jumped to 800,000 in 1884 when the railroad finally reached Buffalo Gap.[27]

While these numbers and the growth they represent are astounding, they only partially account for the number of cattle that crowded onto the grasslands of the Black Hills country. Besides the cattle owned by members of the BHLA, large numbers of "dogies" (cattle from Texas) and "pilgrims" (cattle from the Midwest) were driven onto the open range to fatten up and "finish" during the summer months before delivery to an Indian reservation or shipment to Chicago. There is no way to account for the total numbers of animals that grazed in the Black Hills country in this short span of time, but it is no exaggeration to state that the "boom in range cattle … rivaled the boom in precious metals."[28]

Excellent forage, dependable access to distant markets, lucrative reservation beef contracts, and new railroad construction all made ranching a very attractive enterprise, but they do not by themselves explain the frenetic growth of the Black Hills cattle bonanza. Two other short-lived conditions explain the "gold rush" nature of the ranching boom, and its inevitable collapse: free grass and large amounts of speculative capital. In the open-range system that characterized ranching in the late 1870s and early 1880s, all a cattle owner needed to do was file a homestead claim at a reliable water source and then run cattle across the open countryside—which remained part of a vast, unsurveyed expanse of the public domain. Without fences or property boundaries to limit the movements of cattle, a rancher or cattle company could stock the range with impunity. Property rights lay in the cattle themselves, as represented in the brands they received at spring round-ups, but the grass belonged to anyone who owned a grazing animal.

Concerns about overstocking the range were alleviated by the seemingly magical conditions of the Black Hills grazing country. During the severe winter of 1881-1882, for instance, stock losses were significant in the cattle country of the Northern and Central Plains. Yet in the Black Hills area the losses were mostly confined to "through stock," cattle from Texas, Colorado and elsewhere that had not had an opportunity to fatten up or develop a good winter coat. Two years later, the winter of 1883-1884 proved an even more severe test for livestock on the plains, but again the Black Hills herds faired extremely well. With abundant shelter from the Hills and the surrounding broken country, less snowfall (especially around the southern Hills) than other parts of the Northern Plains, and plenty of snow free grazing on the lee side of natural wind breaks, the half a million cattle that wintered on the open range seemed proof that the grasslands of the

[27] *Ibid.*, 24-40; Briggs, "Ranching and Stock-Raising," 428-435.
[28] Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 24.

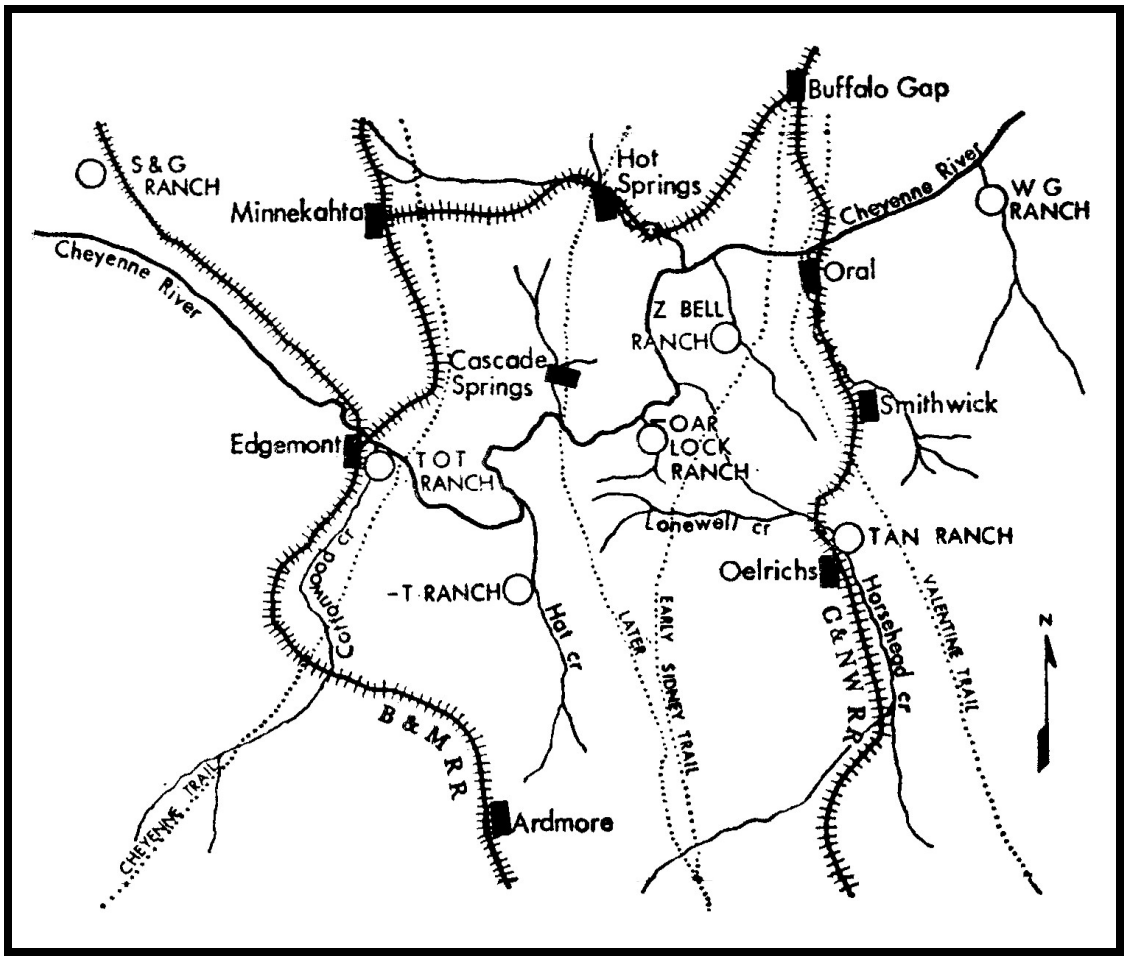

Figure 7.7: Large Cattle Operations in Southwestern Fall River County, ca. 1880s.
Source: August H. Schatz, *Longhorns Bring Culture* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1961).

Black Hills region were an almost limitless bounty.[29]

As cattle fattened and herds increased during the early 1880s, the Black Hills acquired an economic mystique that rivaled its special environmental properties. Not only did the range continue to accommodate more animals, but as more cattle poured into the market the price of beef continued to climb. This happy anomaly attracted a great deal of investment capital from the eastern United States and Europe, especially England and Scotland, where a growing market for dressed beef and live cattle from the United States had increased from almost $5 million in 1879 to almost $12 million by 1884.[30] With expectations of 10 to 20 percent returns on initial investments, outside capital flooded into the Black Hills cattle industry and accounted for most of the rapid growth in herd sizes between 1881 and 1884. Some of the largest operators were in the southern Hills, and included the Anglo-American Cattle Company and the Keystone Land and Cattle Company. With facilities along the Cheyenne River and feeder streams from the southern Hills, these and other operators ran tens of thousands of cattle in a great arc that stretched from Buffalo Gap, south to Oelrichs (which the Anglo-American Cattle Company established as its headquarters and main processing and shipping area), and northwest to the Edgemont Plains where Keystone ran the sprawling Z Bell Ranch.[31]

Wind Cave National Park Area in the Era of the Cattle Barons

The Wind Cave National Park area lies within this broad arc, and cattle from these large ranching operations certainly grazed within its current boundaries. Indeed, the park area exactly fit Baron Edmund de Mandat-Grancey's description of a successful ranching operation. Mandat-Grancey, who stayed at the Fleur de Lys Ranch in 1883 and wrote a popular account of his time in the Black Hills entitled *Buffalo Gap: A French Ranch in Dakota* (*La brèche aux buffles: Un ranch français dans le Dakota*), observed that a successful ranch needed to cover some 20,000 acres of land and must include grazing areas "indented with little valleys to afford a refuge from storms, and it should contain sufficient water."[32] Along with the Fleur de Lys, which specialized in raising Arabian and Percheron stallions, a number of cattle ranches were also headquartered in the Buffalo Gap area in the late 1870s and early 1880s—including five of the original 27 members of the Black Hills Livestock Association.[33] Among these were Gus Craven's Oxen Buckle Ranch, Tom Sweeney's Sweeney Cattle Company, Lank Forbes' and William Grimes' WG Ranch, and Abram Boland's ranch.

The Boland name is particularly significant in the history of Wind Cave National Park and it is likely that Abram and George Boland ran cattle around Boland Ridge,

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[29] *Ibid.* Also see Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 77-78, 89-91; and James E. Sherow, *The Grasslands of the United States: An Environmental History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), 73-82.
[30] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 79-80.
[31] Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 35
[32] Baron Edmond de Mandat-Grancey, *Buffalo Gap: A French Ranch in Dakota, 1887 (La Brèche Aux Buffles: Un Ranch Français Dans Le Dakota)*, trans. Phillis Gorum, ed. Dave Strain ([Hermosa, SD]: Lame Johnny Press, 1981), 42.
[33] Lee and Williams, *Last Grass Frontier*, 78-79.

along the eastern edge of the current park boundaries. George, who served many years as the Postmaster for Buffalo Gap and made early investments in the development of Hot Springs, was appointed the first federal ranger of Wind Cave in 1902 when the site was briefly incorporated into the Black Hills Forest Reserve pending its expected designation as a national park the following year. Abram later became superintendent of the national park in 1911 and, upon his death in June 1912, was succeeded by his son William who served as Acting Superintendent until November 1913. In these early years a good deal of their administrative duties involved the issuing of grazing permits to neighboring ranchers, all of whom they must have known personally. Since Wind Cave National Park operated with very small and sometimes nonexistent annual appropriations in its early years, the revenue from grazing permits became an important component of the superintendent's overall budget and may well have provided a particular incentive for working with the local ranchers.[34]

The most direct association between the national park area and the open-range era of cattle ranching stems from the cave's "discovery" by ranch hands in the spring of 1881. Jesse Bingham, who worked on nearby ranches along with his brother Tom and half-brother John Dennis, is generally credited as the first non-Indian to see the cave opening. While following a deer that he had wounded, Bingham went up the ravine now known as Wind Cave Canyon. As park historian John Bohi described the event, Bingham "was startled by a loud whistling noise … [and] noticed the grass waving violently on an otherwise calm and windless day." When his brother Tom caught up with him the two investigated the source of the noise and found the small opening to the cave, "which let forth such a strong breeze that it blew off Jesse's hat when he tried to look into the hole." The two brothers subsequently brought Dennis to the site, and "played the hat trick on him."[35]

Jesse, who is also credited with killing the last bison seen in the southern Hills—on Bison Flats south of the current park headquarters—later established a small ranch of his own near the current national park. He also acquired a reputation for cattle rustling and left the area in 1890 to escape prosecution. His less than savory reputation, and a growing interest in the cave in the early 1890s, apparently encouraged a number of new claimants for the honor of Wind Cave's "discovery." Some of the more plausible included John Wells and Edward Petty, who claimed to have first encountered the cave in 1881 or 1884. Tom Bingham also threw his hat into the Wind Cave discovery

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[34] *Report on Platt and Wind Cave National Parks, Sullys Hill Park, Casa Grande Ruin, Muir Woods, Petrified Forest, and Other National Monuments, Including List of Bird Reserves, 1912* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 11. On the park's budgets, see Harold R. Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park* (Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1953), Appendix "C": Wind Cave National Park Appropriations and Revenues.

[35] Quotes are from John Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave: A History of the National Park," in *South Dakota Historical Collections* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society, 1962), 365. Bohi's study, which provides a number of detailed accounts of Wind Cave's early history, is an augmentation of Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park*. (At times, Bohi simply plagiarizes Jones' material.) Jones had been a ranger at Wind Cave National Park, but did not complete his study until after transferring to Yellowstone National Park.

Figure 7.8: Tom Bingham in his Cowboy's "Sunday Best," ca. 1880s. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

sweepstakes, perhaps in an effort to defend the family name. No matter who first encountered the cave, or who had the better personal reputation, all of these young men had been in the vicinity of the cave for essentially the same reason. They ran stock in the national park area from ranches along the Fall River; either as cowboys in the employ of a larger outfit or, in the case of Wells and Petty, as owners of small herds. Through the 1880s, the existence of the cave became common knowledge within the ranching communities and families of the southern Hills, and occasionally attracted the attention of a miner or small group of curiosity seekers from Deadwood and Rapid City. Until it became a tourist attraction in its own right, however, the cave was little more than an odd-diversion within the world created by the cattle economy.[36]

Roots of Catastrophe

The world of the open-range cattle industry that brought the Binghams, Bolands, and others to the southern Black Hills came to a crashing end in the late 1880s. In a classic example of what Garrett Hardin called "the tragedy of the commons," overstocking of the range destroyed the basic resource that made the Black Hills area so attractive for ranching. Given the logic of the marketplace, which provided a high rate of return for an investment in cattle, increasing herd size was a rational decision. As Hardin put it, every rancher was "locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited." Unfortunately, the pursuit of one's "own best interest" in a world of supposedly free grass only brought "ruin to all."[37] The open-range was not a commons in a strict sense. Using homestead laws, large ranching operations outside the Hogback filed claims on critical watering sites that allowed them to effectively control access to vast acreages of grass. Nevertheless, there was plenty of overlap between the various ranges used by the largest ranching operations and most everywhere was open to all-comers in the wetter summer months when seasonal streams or springs sustained cattle.[38]

For all intents and purposes, then, the open-range system operated as both a commons and a cluster of monopolies. But the reason every rancher concluded "that the only sensible course for him to pursue [was] to add another animal to his herd" had as much to do with ecology as markets. As range ecologists have demonstrated, in part through research conducted at Wind Cave National Park, the native grasses of the plains evolved in concert with grazing.[39] Because bison populations had declined markedly over the previous decades, much of the grass around the eastern and southern Hills had been grazed only lightly by the time the first Texas longhorns arrived in the late 1870s. These new grazers initially caused the short grasses to thrive. When first grazed in spring or

[36] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 368-369.
[37] Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1244.
[38] Briggs, "The Development and Decline of Open Range Ranching in the Northwest," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (March 1934): 521-36; Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 28-29; and Sherow, *Grasslands of the United States*, 103-108.
[39] See, for instance, *Range Ecology of Bison on Mixed Grass Prairie at Wind Cave National Park: A Final Report* (Ames, IA: Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Iowa State University; University of Wyoming-National Park Service Research Center, 1980).

early summer, grasses that are favored by bison and cattle immediately put out a dense new growth to continue the process of photosynthesis and sustain the development of flowers and seed. During the first years of the open range era, this basic dynamic of grazing and rapid regrowth seemed almost miraculous, and ranchers accorded an almost magical productivity to the grasses in and around the Black Hills.[40]

Within a few years, however, continued and increased grazing took a dramatic toll on the grasslands. Repeatedly clipped to the ground and forced to grow new stems, leaves and stolens, the plants soon depleted the energy reserves stored in their roots. Regrowth was stunted at best, and the amount of forage declined just as the numbers of cattle on the range increased to upwards of 800,000. Unable to withstand heavy grazing, sparse and less nutritious grasses were further undermined by an extremely hot and dry summer in 1886. The value of cattle also dropped precipitously at this time, in part because the supply of beef was coming in line with demand but also because the four great Chicago packers (Swift, Armour, Morris, and Hammond) gained a monopoly over the industry that forced cattle prices downward. Instead of lowering the numbers of cattle on the open range, these conditions caused the reverse. Ranchers from the Southern Plains, in an effort to stave off bankruptcy, sought to bring more cattle to market and drove their herds to Dakota Territory in 1886. Midwestern cattle raisers, who wanted to take their feeders out of the expensive hay and grain markets, did the same and brought more "pilgrims" to the plains.

As is so often the case with any rapid economic boom and bust, the "beef bonanza" was driven by rampant greed and ignorance.[41] Funded by large sums of speculative capital from Europe and the East, and energized by the rapid growth and consolidation of the beef-packing industry in Chicago, the Black Hills cattle country was awash with money and high expectation. Easy money was easy work, it seemed. As the French economist Paul de Rousiers described cattle ranching in the Black Hills, "the business of simply rearing cattle is one which may be started" with very little trouble.

> Silent partners—Easterners, or even Europeans, [simply need to] put a ranchman in charge of their capital, to make it grow by exploiting a troop of horses or a herd of cattle. As there is no cultivation, they are less complicated in management. Grazing is the simplest kind of exploitation that exists, for the animals of a breeding-ranch wander over the prairie all the year round, feeding exclusively on the natural grass which formerly the bison cropped.[42]

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[40] This and the following paragraph are based on Briggs, "The Development and Decline of Open Range Ranching in the Northwest," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (March 1934): 521-36; and Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 92-97.

[41] The term "Beef Bonanza" comes from James K. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza; or How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1881).

[42] Paul de. Rousiers, *American Life*, trans. A. J. Herbertson (Paris and New York: Firmin-Didot & CO., 1892), 48.

Such a cavalier approach to the business of ranching led to tremendous waste. As the historian Hyman Palais noted, "Many of the cattle outfits, especially those supported by foreign capital, without the personal care of vitally interested owners, suffered greatly from waste and inefficiency. Managers, riding back and forth to the frontier towns in 'coaches and six,' drew princely salaries for doing almost nothing."[43] Such a description easily fit Harry Oelrichs, who managed the operations of the Anglo-American Cattle Company from the town in Fall River County that bore his name. Along with well-bred race horses and polo ponies, and the race track and polo field that kept them in good trim, Oelrichs spent a good deal of time and money entertaining a regular parade of refined guests from the East who, as one long-time resident recalled, "constantly carried notebooks on which to take notes on everything they saw."[44] Such largesse and cultural amusement also carried through to most other aspects of the ranching industry. "Cowboys fully employed only a few weeks at roundup and branding," Palais wrote, "rode from ranch to ranch where a reputation for hospitality had been built up at the expense of the absentee owners. Riding stock was carelessly or even abusively handled, and ranch supplies were wasted."[45]

Though it is not fair to color every manager, cowboy, and guest with the same brush, such actions are consistent with most economic booms. When money seems to grow on trees, or out of the ground in the form of gold or grass, extravagance becomes the norm. More than polo ponies and carriages, or Eastern visitors taking notes on western scenes and residents, the worst extravagance in the Black Hills cattle industry stemmed from the short-sighted way that ranchers viewed their primary resource. Instead of grass, ranchers viewed cattle as the "raw resource" of the beef industry. The price of beef in Chicago and the costs associated with transporting and slaughtering cattle, these were the factors that managers, investors, and accountants considered when valuing their businesses. Abundant, nutritious grass is what made their massive enterprises possible and profitable, but because it was essentially "free" they took it for granted.[46]

The ethos of easy money and the host of conditions that allowed it to flourish for a while on the Northern Plains led directly to the catastrophic winter of 1886-1887. By the fall of 1886 the overstocked and overgrazed ranges could hardly feed the "native" cattle of the Black Hills country, and they offered little sustenance to the newly arrived herds of doggies and pilgrims. Knowledgeable ranchers knew that even a mild winter, as occurred the year before, would lead to severe losses.[47] But winter came hard in November, some six weeks earlier than usual, and the Northern Plains were repeatedly hammered by blizzards followed by terrible cold snaps. Rail lines were buried in huge drifts, and by mid winter the snow was four to five feet deep on level ground. Frozen and starved, cattle died by the thousands. When the spring round-up finally came the

[43] Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 34.
[44] Quote from a woman identified as Mrs. Bennett, in August Herman Schatz, *Longhorns Bring Culture* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1961), 25. Schatz remembered Oelrichs fondly, as did his informants. This affection developed during the brief era when the town prospered, and Schatz viewed Harry Oelrichs' personal decline as directly related to the town's collapse.
[45] Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 34.
[46] Quotes from *Ibid.*, 24.
[47] *Ibid.*, 37.

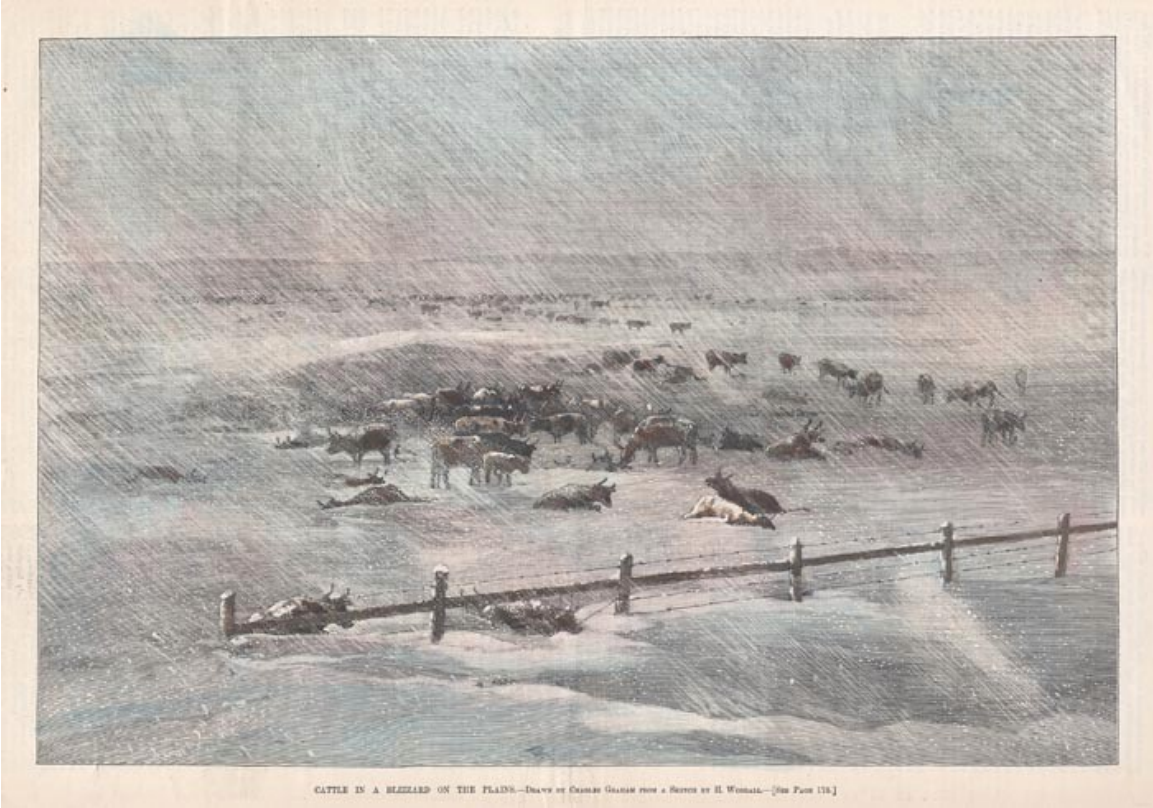

Figure 7.9: "Cattle in a blizzard on the Plains, drawing by Charles Graham from a sketch by Henry Worrall." Source: *Harper's Weekly*, 27 February 1886.

surviving stock was in terrible condition; lone animals were scattered across the plains, their thin hides stretched tight over protruding skeletons. Even more ghastly were the long piles of dead cattle in ravines and along melted snow drifts. Some ranchers lost 90% of their stock and more. With the remaining animals in bad shape, and prices for cattle in Chicago still depressed, many simply walked away from the business.[48]

Change came hard and fast to the Black Hills in the 1870s and 1880s. In just a dozen years, war, Native dispossession, gold rushes and busts, a cattle bonanza and a spectacular collapse had all swept through the area in biblical proportions. By the late 1880s, with so much already gained and lost, the region was literally spent economically, environmentally, and socially. Quieter, more stable development would become the new order for the area, especially in the southern Hills where homesteading, small-scale ranching, tourism, and town-building became the primary economic activities. Yet these developments were as much a consequence of the previous period of boom and bust as a response. After being yanked into the maw of a rapidly industrializing nation, the Black Hills would never again be the same. Neither a center nor a remote destination, the Hills had become an important nodal point in a national network of culture and capital. It would be in that context that residents and visitors would make their lives and vacations.

[48] *Ibid.*, 37-39.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SETTLING DOWN: HOMESTEADING

All parts of Wind Cave National Park were once open to homesteading, and nearly half of the current park area became private property before its incorporation into the national park. Consequently, the establishment and expansion of Wind Cave required two important changes in the status of proposed park lands: the reversion of private holdings back to the public domain, with just compensation; and the removal of unowned lands "from settlement, entry, sale, or other disposal" in order to have them "set apart as a public park."[1] To understand how this basic historical dynamic operated requires some foreknowledge of the land claim and settlement process as well as when the national park's boundaries were established and expanded. The latter is a fairly simple matter. Beginning in 1900, in anticipation of creating some kind of federal reserve or park at Wind Cave, the General Land Office made lands around the cave temporarily ineligible for homestead claims. In 1903, with passage of the Wind Cave National Park Act, a 10,522-acre national park was established. The few private holdings within this area, as well as any "bona fide claim" that was likely to become "patented" (i.e., made into private property), could be relinquished "to the Government [for] … other land, outside of the park."[2] In time, all bona fide claims and private holdings were incorporated into the national park. A 1920 Executive Order from President Woodrow Wilson added 480 acres to protect a water supply, and in 1931 another addition of 1,200 acres was made to the northern boundary of the park.[3]

The most significant acquisition of new park lands came in 1946 when more than 16,000 acres of the Custer Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA) was added to Wind Cave National Park. Managed by the National Park Service in the 1930s and early 1940s, the Recreational Demonstration Area program was part of a larger federal relief effort to stabilize struggling agricultural areas, give employment through the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration, and foster increased recreational opportunities in underdeveloped areas. As National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer described the program in 1937, it would create "land use increasingly valuable to the American people, affording outlets for out-of-door recreation accessible to congested populations, and retiring from agricultural use unarable lands of no economic

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[1] U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 63, "An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park," Public Act no. 16: 765.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] These two boundary expansions were for the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, which was first established within the boundaries of the national park in 1912. The expansions involved the acquisition of a secure water source and additional grazing area. The creation and management of the Reserve, as well as its incorporation into Wind Cave National Park in 1935, is discussed in Chapter Eleven.

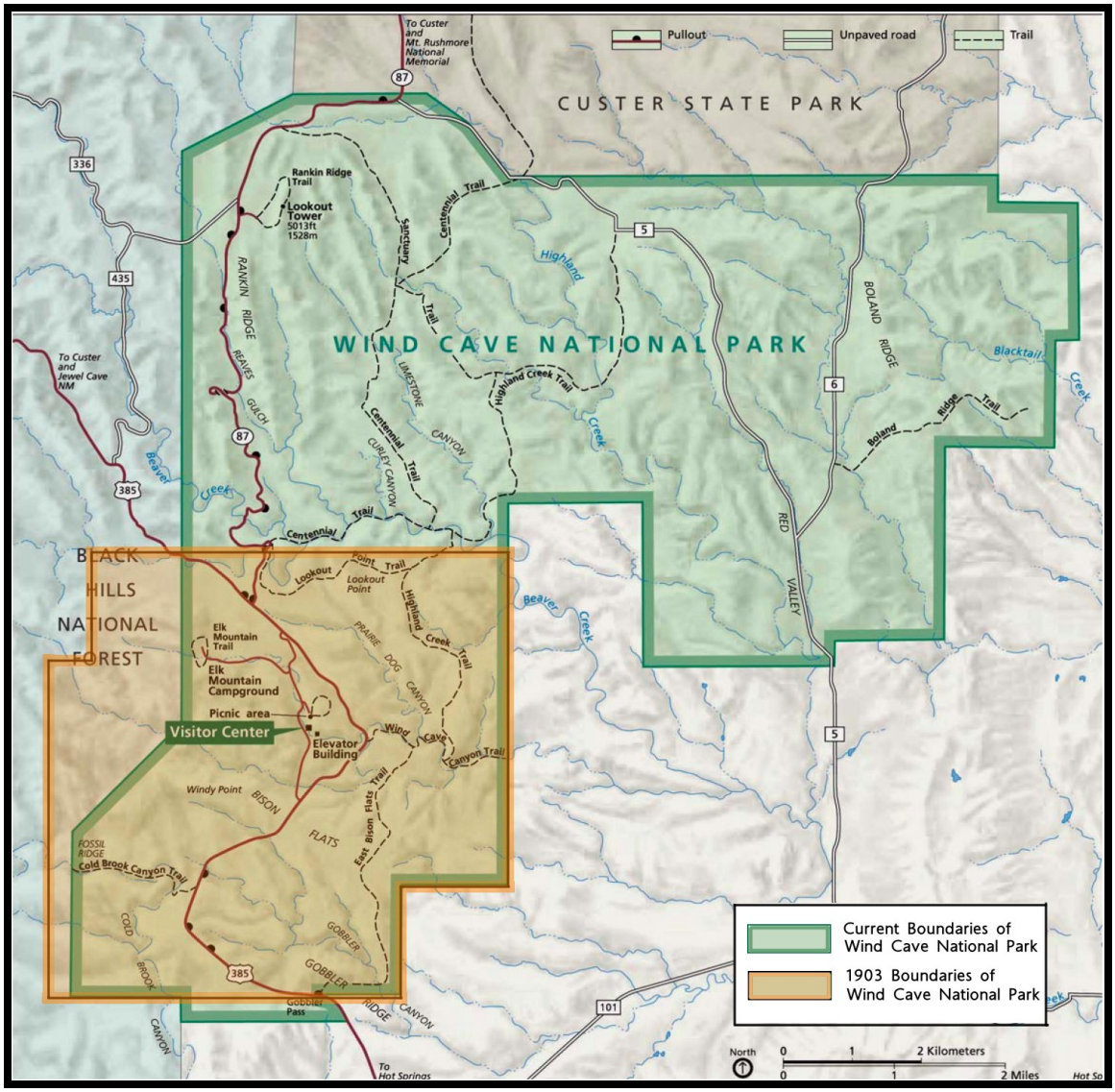

Figure 8.1 Historic and Current Boundaries of Wind Cave National Park. Adapted from map produced by the National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

worth."[4] The program involved buying-out badly indebted farms, taking submarginal lands out of production, and then developing them as potential state or national park holdings. The Silver Creek RDA in Oregon, for instance, became Silver Falls State Park while the Roosevelt RDA in North Dakota became Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The lands within the Custer RDA were added to two existing parks, Custer State Park and Wind Cave National Park. Land acquisition for the Custer RDA, which mostly occurred from 1936-1939, ultimately involved the holdings of 41 families or individuals.[5]

The people who owned land within the current boundaries of the national park all acquired their holdings through the homesteading process, or purchased property from someone else who had done so at an earlier date. Homesteading, as a term, derives from the Homestead Act of 1862, but its legal origins lie in the Distributive Preemption Act of 1841. In order to encourage more orderly settlement of western lands, Congress recognized the rights of squatters on the federal public domain. Any heads of household, widows, or single men over the age of 21, who were citizens of the United States or intended to become one, and who had lived on the site they wished to claim for at least 14 months, could purchase a quarter section (160 acres) of land at $1.25 per acre or more once it had been surveyed by the General Land Office but before it was offered for sale to the general public.

The Homestead Act organized and further codified the basic elements of the Preemption Act. While pre-emption and "squatters' rights" remained part of public land law, the Homestead Act obligated the federal government to more rapidly survey and sale 160-acre units of the public domain. Passed during the Civil War, when Southern politicians who had sought to slow down the growth of western (and likely anti-slavery) territories could no longer thwart the legislation, the Homestead Act essentially authorized a person meeting the qualifications spelled out in the Preemption Act to select any surveyed but unclaimed tract of public land up to 160 acres and gain title to it after five years' residence. Instead of paying a purchase price, a claimant had to make prescribed improvements in regards to cultivation, buildings, and the like. "Proving-up" and gaining title to a homestead followed a six-step process: the filing of a homestead application; publicly advertising the intention to make a claim; giving proof that requirements for residency and sufficient improvements have been met; providing written testimony of two witnesses and the claimant that the claim was bona fide; receipt of a final certificate from the General Land Office; and patenting of title in the name of the claimant. While this process only required payment of a nominal fee, a homesteader

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[4] Director Cammerer quoted in Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1983) <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/unrau-williss/adhi.htm> (accessed 12 March 2010).

[5] On the Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA) program in general, see Unrau and Willis, *Administrative History*. On land acquisition in the Custer RDA and its subsequent incorporation into Wind Cave National Park, see Western History Research, *Wind Cave National Park Land Study: Compiled Data* (Bozeman, MT: Western History Research, 1993), 104-105; Barbara Beving Long, *Historic Contexts and National Register Guidelines: Wind Cave National Park* (Cresco, IA: Four Mile Research Co., 1992), 53-54; and Kristine Johnson, "The Homesteads Comprising Wind Cave National Park" (MS on file in Wind Cave National Park Library).

could also gain title at the end of just six months residency by paying $1.25 per acre.[6]

While preemption and homesteading were the most common routes to land ownership in the southern Black Hills and the Wind Cave area, Congress also created other means for making claims on the public domain that were used in the region. The 1872 General Mining Act applied the basic principles of the Homestead Act to mining claims, and established a similar "proving-up" process for any person seeking to establish a mining operation on the public domain. Though several mining claims were made in and around the park area before 1900, none were ever deemed legitimate by the General Land Office. However, some lands within the current national park area were claimed under the auspices of the Timber and Stone Act of 1878. Designed for land that was deemed "unfit for farming," the Act allowed for land claims related to small-scale logging and mining or quarrying operations. Members of the two families with the closest association to Wind Cave, the Stablers and McDonalds, secured Homestead as well as Timber and Stone claims near the cave.[7]

In the early twentieth-century, on the lands that became part of the Custer RDA, three amendments to the Homestead Act were utilized. These were the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 (which allowed 320-acre claims in arid or semi-arid locations), the Three-Year Homestead Act of 1912 (which reduced the "proving-up" period from five to three years), and the Stock-Raising Act of 1916 (which allowed claims of 640 acres in areas that could only be used for ranching). All of these forms of homesteading shaped the Wind Cave National Park landscape, and to the degree that federal law encouraged increased use of marginal lands they also contributed to the subsequent reversion of these lands to the public domain—first as part of the Custer RDA, and then as part of Wind Cave National Park.

The Transition from Open Range

Though some grew to include several hundred acres, the family holdings within the current boundaries of Wind Cave National Park were never large affairs. Even those primarily focused on cattle were relatively small operations when compared to those outside the Hogback, and all were oriented toward local and regional markets. This included beef contracts for the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as well as butchers in the communities of Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs. No longterm enterprises specialized in any particular market or type of produce, however. Success came through diversification and cooperation, and everyone at some time or another did neighborhood work, cut timber, worked in small mills, hauled lumber, quarried stone, worked for the railroad, spent time on larger ranches, sent their children to work as domestics for wealthier families, and

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[6] The following discussion of homesteading is based on Paul Wallace Gates, *The History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 219-530; and John Opie, *The Law of the Land: Two Hundred Years of American Farmland Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 43-92.

[7] Catherine Rose "Katie" Stabler (brief unpublished memoir), *Wind Cave National Park: Katie Stabler*, 25 January 2008 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/katie-stabler.htm> (accessed 8 May 2010).

produced vegetables, fruits, meat, and dairy products for trade with neighbors and for sale "in town."

Homesteading in the southern Hills did not resemble the "Wheat Bonanza" land rush that brought thousands of so-called "honeyockers" to the wide open grasslands of the Dakotas. The terrain of the southern Hills area simply did not allow for industrial-scale wheat farming, nor were large parcels of unclaimed land suddenly offered for sale—as occurred to the east after vast stretches of the Great Sioux Reservation were ceded to the federal government in 1889. Instead, small-scale farming and ranching largely attracted people who had already been in the Black Hills for a few years.[8] The story of Catherine Mary Haas is fairly typical. Born in Luxembourg in 1875, she arrived in Crawford, Nebraska with her family when she was fourteen. She soon found employment with "a French Countess who had come from Paris to Buffalo Gap in hope of filing on land and striking it rich with gold or other minerals." Once she turned 21, Haas filed a claim in the Hat Creek area near Ardmore, then subsequently added to these lands with her husband Nickles Schaefer.[9]

The Schaefers, like others in and around the southern Hills, made a living from a number of pursuits. Along with livestock and some grain that they raised for market, they grew and processed sorghum, traded work and household produce with their neighbors, and kept a kitchen garden.[10] John Hines, who was born on a homestead east of Buffalo Gap in 1889, recalled a similar kind of arrangement on his family's property. His father William Hines, who was widowed when young Hines was just nine years old, "did various things to make a living." For cash he worked for the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad inspecting the section of line that ran near Buffalo Gap and carried the mail to the trains. He also did what Hines called "ordinary neighborhood work," digging cellars and laying up the walls, assisting with small construction projects on neighboring homesteads, and various odd jobs for neighbors. This work was generally paid with produce and foodstuffs, which supplemented the Hines' own small ranching and farming endeavors.[11]

Within the Hogback and on the lands that presently comprise Wind Cave National Park, homesteading involved an even greater mix of resources and associated tasks. For those who lived closer to the Limestone Plateau and the interior Hills, small scale ranching and farming might be supplemented with wild game that was packed in barrels and shipped to the East from the rail stops in Pringle or Buffalo Gap. A number of men worked seasonally in small sawmills, hauled lumber on wagon roads through the park area to Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs, or worked at the sandstone quarries in Calico and O'Dell Canyons. Wild plants within and near the national park area also supplemented

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[8] "Honeyockers" was a slang term deriving from the corruption of a German expression meaning "chicken chaser;" see Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991, 242.

[9] Francis Moul, "Prairie Grass Dividing: The Land, Life, and People of Sioux County, Nebraska"(Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1998), 92-93.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] John F Hines, interview with Stephen Ward, 19 August 1970; unpublished transcript on file at University of South Dakota Oral History Center Archives, Vermillion, SD.

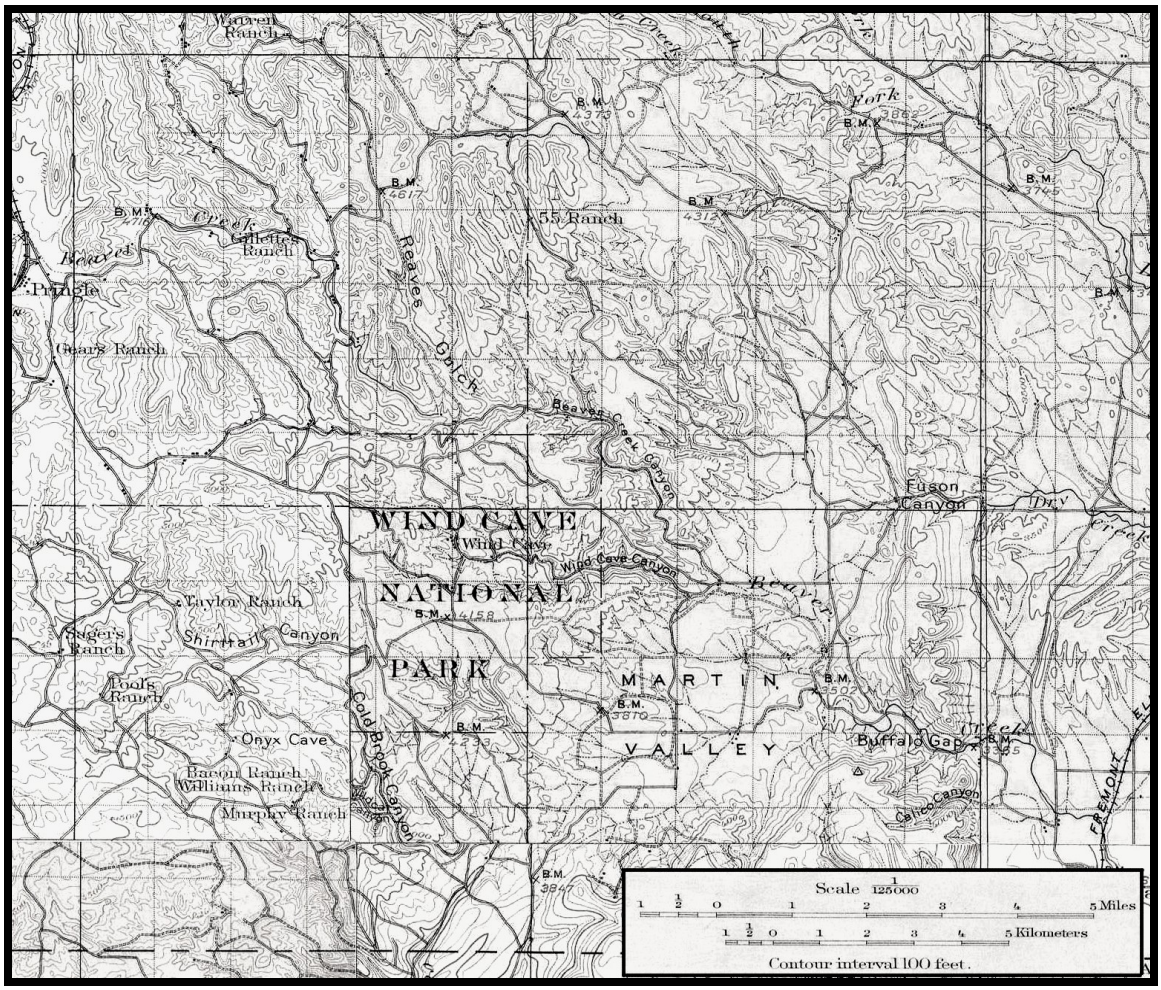

Figure 8.2: Communities, Roads, and Trails in the Wind Cave Area, ca. 1890s. Source: Created from U.S. Geological Survey Maps for the Edgemont (1900), Harney Peak (1898), Hermosa (1899), and Oelrichs (1893) Quadrangles. The four different topographic maps incorporated into this single image were produced between 1893 and 1900. The label "Wind Cave National Park" comes from the Hermosa Quadrangle map and refers to the area recently withdrawn from settlement or withdrawal in 1900. The national park would not be established until 1903.

household incomes, as whole families would gather June berries, gooseberries, plums, raspberries, strawberries, grapes and chokecherries, dry or can them, and then use the produce for trade with neighbors or for sale to businesses and hotels in Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs.[12] While nearly all of the work in the forests, sawmills, and quarry sites took place outside the present park boundaries, these areas and the jobs they entailed were a seamless part of life in the Wind Cave area.

One of the more successful ranching families within the present boundaries of Wind Cave National Park demonstrates all of these patterns of settlement and land use. Walter and Carrie Scott first moved to the southern Hills in 1895, after living several years on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation at Wounded Knee. On the reservation, Walter worked as a rancher, Carrie was the "first white teacher to teach the Indian children that didn't go to the boarding school," and her brother, William Coffield, ran a small store and post office. In 1895 the Scotts and their children moved to the Tierney homestead on Beaver Creek, in what is now the southeastern section of Wind Cave National Park. John Tierney and Scott, who knew each other from working together in the Black Hills Cattlemen's Association, had arranged a deal where Scott would rent and then buy the ranch—which he did in 1896. While Scott spent time away from home working for the Belle Fourche Cattle Company, Carrie and their children stayed on the Tierney homestead to finish proving up the original claim.

As was typical with many homestead settlements, the Scott property was situated in a web of family relations. Immediately to the north, Mrs. Scott's sister held 100 acres adjacent to the old Tierney property, and her sister's husband "plowed on the next place that was just to the north." Shortly after Walter Scott purchased the Tierney property, Carrie Scott acquired the homestead of their neighbor John Tunley "and proved up" on his original claim. The Scott's subsequently acquired William Tunley's adjoining homestead and rented more lands from Ben Reid and his nephew. Within a few years, the Scott's owned a complex of property that "enveloped what [they] called the farm, the home country, the home canyon, and the Dick Over canyon which ran northwest of the Nigger canyon and Sanson's canyon." Besides these particular parcels, and those of Carrie Scott's sister and brother-in-law, "all the open land was free for" running stock and cutting hay.[13]

Acquiring and combining multiple parcels of land through various family

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[12] Moul, "Prairie Grass Dividing," 94; Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park: A History of Custer State Park and Northcentral Custer County* (Custer, S.D.: J.Y. Sundstrom, 1994), 31-33, 44-45, 57-63. A recipe for packing wild game meat is printed in Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976* (Custer, S.D.: Custer County Historical Society, 1977), 192.

[13] Ella Elizabeth Scott Gay, interview transcript: F Ref 1880, Folder 2 "Early Euro Hist.—Misc.," Wind Cave National Park Archives (hereafter WCNP Archives). Also, reminiscence of Harry T. Scott in Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, 372. The term "Nigger Canyon" is patently offensive. While it is important not to perpetuate the sentiments that informed its original usage, the term does serve as an indication of historical conditions and attitudes as well as the presence of the person or people to whom it referred. For a fuller discussion of these matters, with some reference to place names in Wind Cave National Park, see John Brian Harley, "Cartography, Ethics and Social Theory," *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 27, No. 2 (Summer 1990): 1-23.

members was quite common during the homestead era. Filing separate claims in the names of husbands, wives, and adult children, or in partnership with other kin, created many necessary advantages. Besides the assistance and company of family in a rural and often remote setting, a block of collectively owned lands often encompassed multiple environmental settings and allowed for broader land use strategies. Given the legal restraints of the Homestead Act, which divided filings into 160 acre parcels, such a strategy was absolutely essential on the more arid plains.[14] The diverse landscapes of the southern Hills also made this strategy especially effective. As the list of names the Scott's gave to their holdings demonstrates, some properties allowed for small scale farming and home gardens, others provided pasture for dairy cattle and domestic livestock needed for work around the houses and outbuildings. Still other areas offered sheltered canyons where shaded grasses matured and died later than in open areas, and where horses and cattle found protection during winter storms.

By the early twentieth-century, when the original boundaries of Wind Cave National Park were established to the west of the Scott property, ownership of the area that she described had been effectively consolidated by a few extended families. Late in her long life, Elizabeth "Ella" (Scott) Gay gave a sort of word picture that described the social and physical geography of her extended neighborhood—which "ran back to Cold Springs on the northwest and [was] along Beaver Creek and Cold Springs." To "the south [of us] were the Sansons and they raised nine big teams and also cattle. To the south and east was Streeter, Allens which William Coffield bought for his boys. And they raised a small bunch of good Hereford cows …. [T]o the north was Fuson, Courthouses [Korthaus'], and Ged [Gideon] Parkers."

Along with the Martin Valley to the south, the lands owned by the Scott's and their neighbors were the most productive and habitable in the Wind Cave National Park area. Reliable springs and intermittent streams, along with mixed topography and soil types, allowed for an effective blend of ranching, hay growing and very small-scale farming. When augmented with outside work, life in this part of the southern Hills was reasonably successful and stable. Families retained and enlarged their holdings, the children of neighbors often married each other, and many second and third generation Sansons, Korthauses, Streeters, Parkers, Scotts and Allens remained in the area.[15]

Land Holding Trends in the Wind Cave National Park Area

A number of the families noted by Scott held lands within the current boundaries of the national park, as well as to the north, south and the east [16] Concentrated around the Red Valley and Highland Creek areas within the park, and along stretches of Beaver Creek that run downstream from the park, they also tended to be the largest landholders

[14] John Hudson, "Two Dakota Homestead Frontiers," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 63, no. 4 (December 1973): 462-83. Also Rex C. Myers, "Homestead on the Range: The Emergence of Community in Eastern Montana, 1900-1925," *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 218-27.
[15] Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, *passim*.
[16] Ibid.

in the area between Pringle and Buffalo Gap. Within the five townships including and surrounding Wind Cave, a total of 108 land patents were issued between the 1890s and 1920s. Of these, members of the Korthaus family received 16, and the Streeters received 14, which amounted to 27 percent of all patents. Inside the current park boundaries, which comprised 83 of the total 108 patents issued in the area, members of the Korthaus, Streeter, and Parker families received 24 patents, or 29 percent of the total. The McKirahan family, who received nine patents for land in the upper Highland Creek drainage, also became one of the largest landholders within the current park boundaries. In 1946, when Wind Cave expanded by 16,341 acres, members of the McKirahan and Korthaus families collectively owned 7,800 acres of the land that was incorporated into the national park.[17]

The relative success of the Korthaus, McKirahan, Parker and Streeter families was not typical in other sections of the national park area. In the original 10,522 acres that comprised the national park in 1903, very little homesteading had occurred aside from the efforts of the Stablers and McDonalds. While this partly reflected the condition of the land itself, which did not support substantial agrarian settlement, it also stemmed from recent federal actions. In 1900 the General Land Office removed the lands around Wind Cave "from settlement or disposal" in preparation for the expected creation of the national park. Three years earlier, the lands to the west of the of the park area had also been made ineligible for homestead claims after the creation of the Black Hills Forest Reserve in February 1897. In some respects, the small number of homestead claims that were filed in the original park boundaries were premised on land uses not unlike those in the southeastern sections of the park. Pasturage was limited, and cultivation never amounted to anything but an occasional—and tiny—kitchen garden, but a few animals did graze the area and small flocks of chickens pecked the ground. Work on the cave resembled the kind of labor that other homesteaders did in quarries and mines, in town, or at a sawmill. At Wind Cave this kind of work was certainly more full-time, and hardly "outside," but it still fit within the general array of employment in the southern Hills.

The development of Wind Cave itself, however, was not deemed a legitimate means for making a homestead or a mining claim. While various efforts to patent land claims on Wind Cave were attempted, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Nine, none ever proved successful. In the general vicinity of the cave, however, a few claims were patented. One of these, by Susanna McDonald, listed several improvements that suggested a typical southern Hills homestead. The mother of Jesse McDonald, who initiated the development of Wind Cave as a tourist site, Mrs. McDonald filed her claim on a quarter section of land (160 acres) to the west of the cave. Between the time of her settlement on the land in 1892 and receipt of her patent in December 1895, she had made the following improvements: a 14 ft. x 16 ft. house, a 12 ft. x 14 ft. barn, a chicken house, a springhouse piped to a water tank, and fencing around 40 acres. She also claimed to have from five to seven acres under cultivation, and listed the total amount of her improvements at $600.[18] Whether or not all that she reported was true, some exaggeration

[17] Western History Research, *Land Study*, 73-74, 101.
[18] McDonald's claim is transcribed in *Ibid.*, 76. The reasons for the rapid pace of the claim filing are noted in Chapter Ten.

was typical of homestead claims and there is nothing outlandish or impossible in her case file. The level of development she listed would not have been enough to support her, nor could she have accomplished it herself. Rather, as would have been obvious to the land official who granted her patent, Susanna McDonald depended a great deal on the contributions of her son, his wife, her grandsons, and the success of their efforts to develop Wind Cave.

One of the largest properties near Wind Cave was the Valentine Horse Ranch. The land was first preempted in the late 1880s when eastern and European investors began raising and breeding horses in the Black Hills, and the ranch boasted a herd of thoroughbreds that numbered several hundred and a private race-track. Located in the Bison Flats section of the park and along the Cottonwood Creek drainage, the Valentine Ranch benefited from access to water piped in from the vicinity of Elk Mountain. In late 1893, facing financial difficulties and a nasty divorce, Charles Valentine arranged to sell the ranch and stock for $18,000 to investors in New York. The real-estate deal apparently fell through, however, and John Stabler purchased the ranch in early 1894. Stabler, who played a very significant role in the development of Wind Cave, turned the property over to his daughter Catherine (Katie). She subsequently completed a homestead claim on the land, which became the home of her "father, mother, brother Charles and family" and herself. The primary virtues of the property were three-fold: it was close to Wind Cave, it sat astride the road from Hot Springs to Pringle, and it came with the deed to the only spring of water in the area.[19]

To the north and west of the original park boundaries a few families patented typical "farmer-rancher" homesteads in the decade or so after the park was established. These included the Ravers, McAdams, Ennis, and Snyder families, who were part of a scattered community that was centered on the Cold Springs schoolhouse. As a descendant of John and Sarah (McAdam) Ravers recalled, "This little log school served many purposes: school, dances, socials, weddings, and also church on Sundays."[20] Still further north, on a homestead near the present boundary of Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park, and just east of Highway 87, George and Alice (Scofield) Raver homesteaded and raised a family in the upper Highland Creek drainage. They first moved to the site in 1908 and remained for the next thirty years. As their younger daughter Lucille Garrett would later record,

> "On the homestead, they raised cattle, hogs, and chickens. They also raised garden produce which was processed for home use or sold to people who would come to the ranch for it, or often the produce was taken to Pringle or Custer for their regular customers. One crop which gave them lots of hard work, but also much pleasure was … strawberries."[21]

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[19] *Hot Springs Star*, 5 January 1894; 4 March 1894. All citations of the *Hot Springs Star* are from "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives.
[20] Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976* (Custer, S.D.: Custer County Historical Society, 1977), 357.
[21] *Ibid.* 385. A map showing the location of the Raver Homestead is included in Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*.

The families that homesteaded in the southeastern Hills in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a great deal in common. They shared many of the same hardships and small triumphs, did much the same work, and often joined their families through marriage. For instance members of the Parker family, who first homesteaded in the northeastern part of the current national park in the early 1910s, came to be related through marriage to members of the Smith, Reder, Streeter, and Korthaus families.[22] If there is a general distinction between the people who homesteaded in the national park area, it can be attributed to economic and environmental factors. In the eastern half of the park, most of the early homesteaders came out of the ranching economy that dominated the region in the 1880s. They continued this orientation for the next 50 years in the rolling grasslands in and around the eastern half of the national park.

The people who homesteaded in the western half of the park area tended to have more experience with small-scale mining and logging, and often continued to work in those lines as well as in ranching. The upland areas of the national park could also serve as proxies for more forested lands that had been closed to timber claims with the creation of the Forest Reserve in 1897. A number of the residents in the northernmost sections of the current national park boundaries obtained their holdings in lieu of the unpatented claims they were required to forfeit within the Forest Reserve. Their new homes thus became a base for small-scale logging operations (with permits) on the federal forest lands. The proximity of towns like Pringle and Custer, and their connections to Hot Springs and the towns of the northern Hills, also tended to place these timber-oriented homesteads in a more diverse economic setting that could foster the sorts of market gardening undertaken by the Ravers.

Distinctions of Time and Place

There were more subtle, but significant distinctions that shaped how, when and where people homesteaded in the Wind Cave area. The passage or adjustment of federal land laws proved an important determinant of homesteading and settlement patterns, as did local and regional economic conditions. In a careful study of federal and county land records, Ken Karsmizki identified "several peak periods … in the temporal patterns" of homesteading in the Wind Cave National Park area. In the late 1890s, after the General Land Office had completed the survey of the lands now within the national park, the first claims were filed on lands that had already been settled under "squatters rights."[23] Few new claimants arrived in the late 1890s or early 1900s, however. The collapse of the southern Black Hills "tin boom" in 1892, the generally depressed condition of the national economy, and the establishment of the Black Hills Forest Reserve in 1897 all seem to have kept would-be homesteaders away from the Black Hills. Those who did come to western South Dakota at this time were generally part of the land rush to the recently opened lands of the Great Sioux Reservation.[24].

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[22] Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, 340.
[23] "Squatters Rights" had received legal definition in the Preemption Act of 1841.
[24] Paula M. Nelson, *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986).

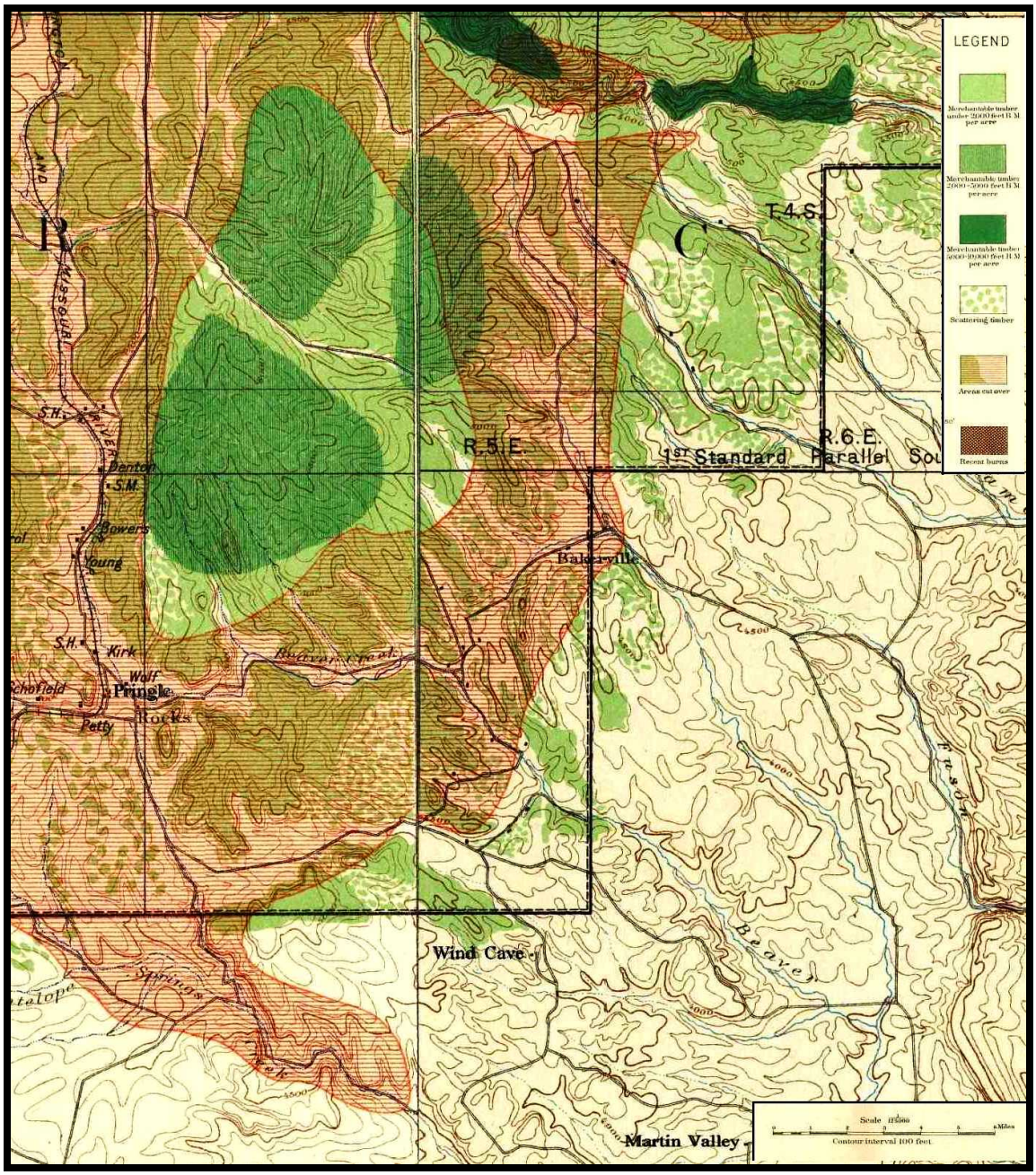

Figure 8.3: Land Classification and density of standing timber in Black Hills Forest Reserve, Hermosa Quadrangle (Detail), 1899. Lands within the Forest Reserve are to the north and west of the dashed boundary line. Wind Cave is located in the lower center of the image. Patented land claims, including ranches and towns identified within the borders of the Forest Reserve, remained in private hands. Source: Henry Gannett, *Forest Reserves* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior-U.S. Geological Survey, 1899).

Some ranching families in the eastern part of the park area increased their holdings through the early 1900s, but most simply enlarged their operations without filing claims because, as Ella (Scott) Gay put it, "All the open land was free for his and neighbors cattle."[25] In the early 1910s, however, homesteading picked up in the Highland Creek area of the park as well as around the Red Valley. Karsmizki speculates that this growth is partly attributable to the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act in 1909 and the Three Year Homestead Act in 1912. The former increased the size of a potential homestead claim from 160 to 320 acres, while the latter reduced the period for proving up a homestead from five years to three years. The larger homestead claims would have been especially attractive to families in the eastern sections of the park, where ranching required greater extents of land. Because many of these same families were able to purchase their lands from the government outright, however, they did not necessarily find any special incentive in the reduced period for patenting a land claim. On the other hand, those in the Plateau areas apparently did appreciate the chance to acquire land with just three-years of labor and occupation.[26]

Another "very significant peak" in homestead patents took place in the early 1920s, which likely "corresponds to the passage of the Stock Raising Homestead Act in 1916."[27] The new Act allowed claims of 640 acres and only required applicants to make some minor improvements to range conditions. Because the Stock Raising Act also separated surface rights from sub-surface or mineral rights, ranchers did not have to avoid filing on areas with existing mining claims or operations. This condition would have been especially welcome in the southern Hills, where mining and ranching often overlapped.[28] By Karsmizki's calculations, 29 percent of all patents filed within the current park boundaries "were dated between January of 1920 and October 1922." All but two of these occurred in the eastern half of the park, in areas where none of the agrarian requirements of earlier homestead laws ever could have been attempted.[29]

By the mid 1920s homestead filings virtually ceased, and only four claims were patented within the current boundaries of the park after 1925.While this slowdown reflects a general lack of good range lands still available for homesteading, it also corresponds with the collapse of agricultural prices and the severe economic depression that hit the rural West and the Great Plains in the 1920s. In the Custer County land records the effects of the depression are poignantly evident "in the foreclosures and the sheriff's sales for property within the park."[30] As prices plummeted and credit dried up, there was simply no means or incentive for the acquisition of new lands.

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[25] Gay interview.
[26] Western History Research, *Land Study*, 30, 67-70. Also Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, *passim*; and Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, *passim*.
[27] Western History Research, *Land Study*, 70.
[28] Paul Wallace Gates, *The History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 516-520.
[29] Western History Research, *Land Study*, 70, and Appendix D: Land Patents within Wind Cave National Park.
[30] Nelson, *The Prairie Winnows out Her Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 145-163.

As in the rest of the Great Plains, the depression that hit the ranchers of the southern Hills likely had environmental roots. The last areas homesteaded within the current national park boundaries were the most poorly watered and least productive rangelands. As a government report stated in 1935, the grasses could "not stand up under concentrated commercial grazing … [while] the non-productive and readily eroding character of the soil … [made ranching] a non-profitable enterprise."[31] After these lands were made part of an expanded Wind Cave National Park in 1946, a United States Soil and Conservation Service report described their poor condition as an "inherited" problem from the 1920s and 1930s. "The accelerated erosion was so advanced in the Red Valley area at the time of acquisition for park purposes that usefulness of the soil for agricultural purposes was almost totally destroyed."[32] Such conditions were common in the financially and ecologically stressed conditions of the Great Plains, and they help explain why Congress began public lands range management and effectively ended homesteading with the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934.[33]

Demographic Patterns

The people who built homes and worked within the current boundaries of the national park had common dreams: to have a "home place," to participate in a new community or reestablish one made-up of kin and neighbors from a previous place of residence, and to acquire a modest level of financial independence. In short, to make something of a place and a life. Like their dreams, the people who filed claims within the current boundaries of Wind Cave National Park shared many other common traits. All of the patentees were European-Americans, and of these only one was not born in the United States. Most came from the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions (43%) or another part of South Dakota (25%). Of the remaining 32%, the vast majority came from Missouri and the Upper South.[34]

Such homogeneity was not unremarkable for the place or the era, but land records

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[31] "Final Project Report: Proposed Custer State Park Extension, South Dakota R-2" (National Park Service, Submarginal Land Division, Third District, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma): F Ref 1931 B2, Folder 1 "Custer RDA Reports," WCNP Archives. Also see William J. Ripple and Robert L. Beschta, "Hardwood Tree Decline Following Large Carnivore Loss on the Great Plains, USA," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 5, no. 5 (2007): 241-46; and D. B. Beard, "Special report on Custer Recreational Demonstration Area, South Dakota" (1942): F Ref 1931 B2, Folder 12 "Custer State Park Extension Purchase (Custer RDA)," WCNP Archives.

[32] Soil and Conservation Service, "Wind Cave National Park, Soil and Moisture Conservation Development Outline" (1950), MS on file in Wind Cave National Park Library.

[33] The Taylor Grazing Act (48 Stat. 1269, 43 U. S. C. §315 *et seq*.) was officially defined by Congress as an "An Act to stop injury to the public grazing lands by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration, to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development, to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range, and for other purposes." It effectively put an end to homesteading on the public domain in what were then the 48 states of the United States. The lands previously open to potential homestead claims were eventually placed under the management of the Bureau of Land Management in 1946, which was formed in that year through the combination of the General Land Office with the U.S. Grazing Service.

[34] Western History Research, *Land Study*. 78-81.

can obscure the larger diversity of a community. Custer and Hot Springs, for instance, included Chinese and African American communities. While people of Chinese descent were barred from owning land, some may well have worked for a few landowners within the current boundaries of the national park. The same is likely true of African-Americans, who mostly worked in the hotels and kitchens of the Hot Springs tourist industry but also worked on area ranches. A few African American families homesteaded near Edgemont, and their patents do show up in the land records. Within Wind Cave, however, at least one African American lived in the current park boundaries—even though he never filed a land claim. In 1987 August Sanson recalled a man known as "Ol' Nigger George," a "good old guy [who] left maybe around 1906, 07." Living in a section of the national park known as Nigger Canyon, this man apparently resided alone in a small shack and made his living burning lime. This was probably the same person that Superintendent Earl Semingsen identified as "'Darkie' George (Campbell)? a runaway slave during Civil War." Semingsen recorded this information after corresponding with Elmer McDonald and a number of area old-timers during Wind Cave National Park's 50th Anniversary year (1953). One of these old-timers, Walter Havens, may have identified a different person, known as "Nigger Jim," who lived in the vicinity of Nigger Canyon and Negro Wool Ridge. As Havens recalled, this person also lived alone in a small shack, but made his living cutting wood and burning it down to charcoal briquettes that he hauled by mule wagon to Hot Springs, where it was used in clothes irons.[35]

These recollections are important reminders about the kind of residence and work that occurred in the Wind Cave area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Standing outside the legal record, they are exceptions that reveal a texture of life that simply does not show up in official documents. Yet the faint and sketchy nature of these more than half-forgotten memories also prove a general rule: law and race largely determined land ownership, and land ownership was the ultimate basis of community. The man or men after whom Nigger Canyon and Negro Wool Ridge were named apparently did not have close relations with their neighbors, since little is recalled about them aside from their race and labor. While their presence in Wind Cave offers further evidence of how the park area was part of a more diverse and larger network of socio-economic connections that ran through Hot Springs, the almost forgotten recollections of Sanson, Havers and McDonald indicate that these one or two African Americans (as well

[35] Carl Sanson, interview with Tom Farrell, 6 May 1987 (transcribed notes), doc. M889; Walter Havens to Earl Semingsen, February 1953, doc. M128; Semingsen to Elmer McDonald, 2 September 1953, doc. M295; and Anonymous, untitled, undated notes on tablet paper, doc. M7; all documents on file in WCNP Archives. For discussions of African Americans in Hot Springs and the Black Hills, see Betti VanEpps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives: African Americans in South Dakota* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2008), 69-83, 118-120; Suzanne Barta Julin, "South Dakota Spa: A History of the Hot Springs Health Resort, 1882-1915," in *South Dakota Historical Collections* (Pierre: South Dakota State Publishing Co., 1983), 252; Maude Petty, interview with John Watterson, 23 June 1973; unpublished transcript on file at University of South Dakota Oral History Center Archives, Vermillion, SD. On Chinese residency and labor, see Liping Zhu, "Ethnic Oasis: Chinese Immigrants in the Frontier Black Hills." *South Dakota History* 33, no. 4 (October 2003): 289-329. For specific accounts of African American Homesteaders in the southern Black Hills, see the entries for "Robert Bailey Family" and "Mrs. Anna Lambert" in *Fall River County Pioneer Histories* (Hot Springs: Fall River County Historical Society, 1976), 300-302. Also see the brief profile of the Kercheval Family in "Manners and Morals: Americana," *Time*, 14 December 1953 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806763-2,00.html> (accessed 6 June 2010).

as the Chinese, African Americans, and American Indians who resided in the southern Hills and likely passed through and worked around the Wind Cave area) were outsiders.

The families and individuals who stayed in the park area and made it home, through long residence and common land use patterns, did so through the land patenting process. Building a "Home Place" was their commonly shared dream, which they pursued in a fairly uniform manner. Most homesteaders were married with children at the time they filed their patents, and many were related to their immediate neighbors through birth or marriage. Nearly all settlers, whether married, widowed, or single and living alone, practiced a similar mix of ranching and cultivation—with a good deal more effort and land given over to the former. To patent a homestead claim, a filer had to demonstrate that one-eighth of the land had been placed in cultivation. This would have amounted to 20 acres of a typical 160 acre homestead. However, as Karsmizki discovered, "many of the settlers within the [national park] area applied for and received authorization to cultivate less acreage than that required by the homestead act." Some even had the requirement waived altogether, but those who did claim some level of cultivation reported fields totaling as few as four and as many as 60 acres. The average filing on homesteads of 160, 320, and 640 acres reported just under cultivated 19 acres.[36]

Even if the cultivation requirement could be waived or reduced, some level of improvement was necessary to patent a homestead claim. In this regard, too, most settlers operated in a very common fashion. Like Susanna McDonald's claim, improvements generally included a house, a barn, sheds and a chicken house. Corrals were also common, as were pens and fences for livestock. Elements related to water management also show up in the land records with some frequency, and include springs (9), wells (19), dams (4), and piping (2). However, very few improvements related to agriculture were declared; these included four orchards, two root houses, and one corncrib. Of course the improvements listed were only present at the time a claim was patented, and landowners continued to add to their properties as circumstances permitted.[37]

Helen Roetzel, who grew up on land to the north of the national park near Custer, described the hard labor required to build a small homestead. Her parents August and Bertha (Gahl) Doll had come the Black Hills in 1902 by way of Nebraska and Wyoming, and her father worked in a number of mines. After renting some property for a year, they filed on their own homestead claim in 1907.

> There were no house, fences, or improvements of any kind. [My father] moved an old granary with a team and rollers about three miles to the new place and we lived the first year in it. He finally built on a lean-to for a bedroom and another for a kitchen and this served until he could get some outbuildings up for some stock and crops in for feed. They hauled water in barrels for house use. About 1911 Dad put in a water system to the house. There was a hydrant out side, but this was much better than hauling it.[38]

[36] Western History Research, *Land Study.* 78-81.
[37] *Ibid.*, 82.
[38] Sundstrom, *Custer County History to 1976*, 259.

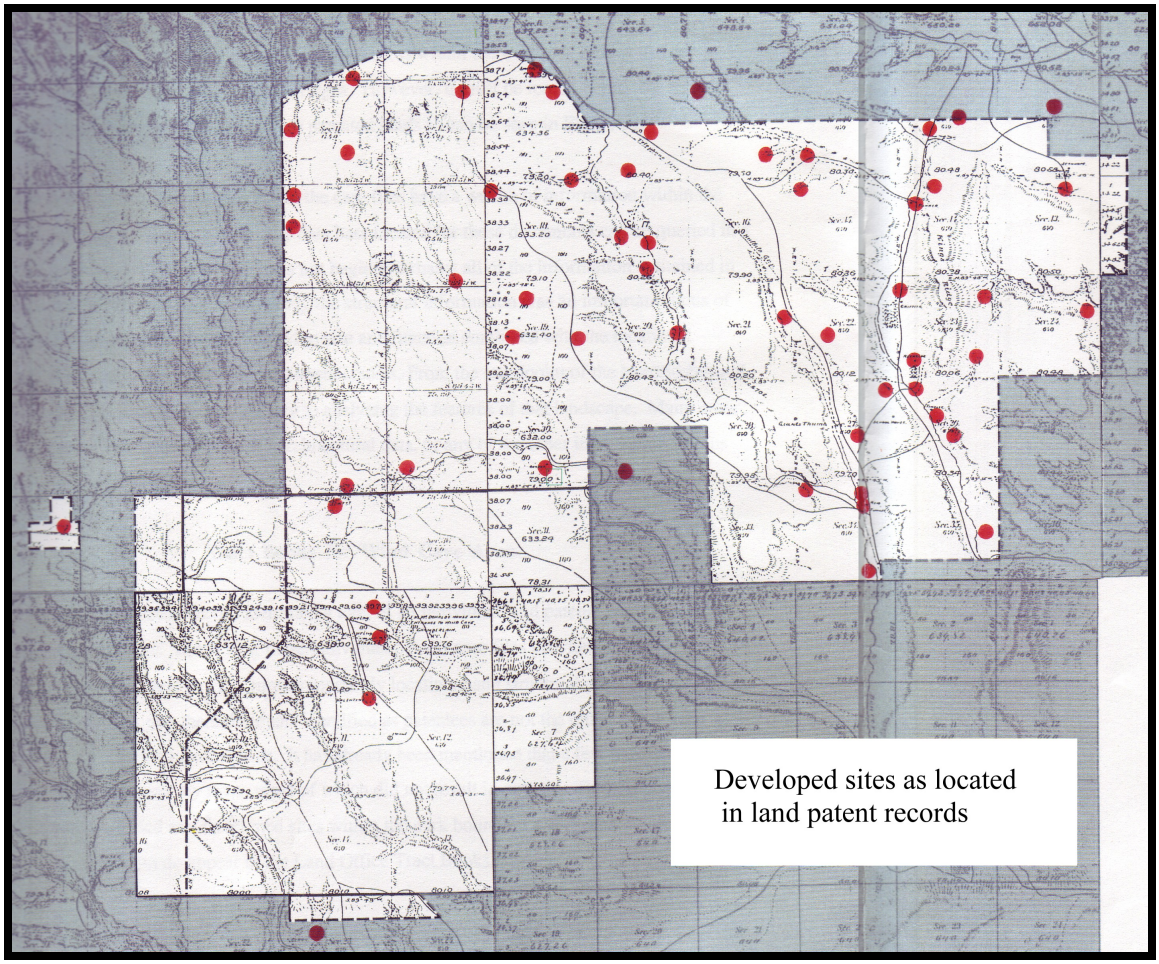


Figure 8.4: Developed Sites on Homesteads within Current Boundaries of Wind Cave National Park. Source: Western History Research, *Wind Cave National Park Land Study: Compiled Data* (Bozeman, MT: Western History Research, 1993).

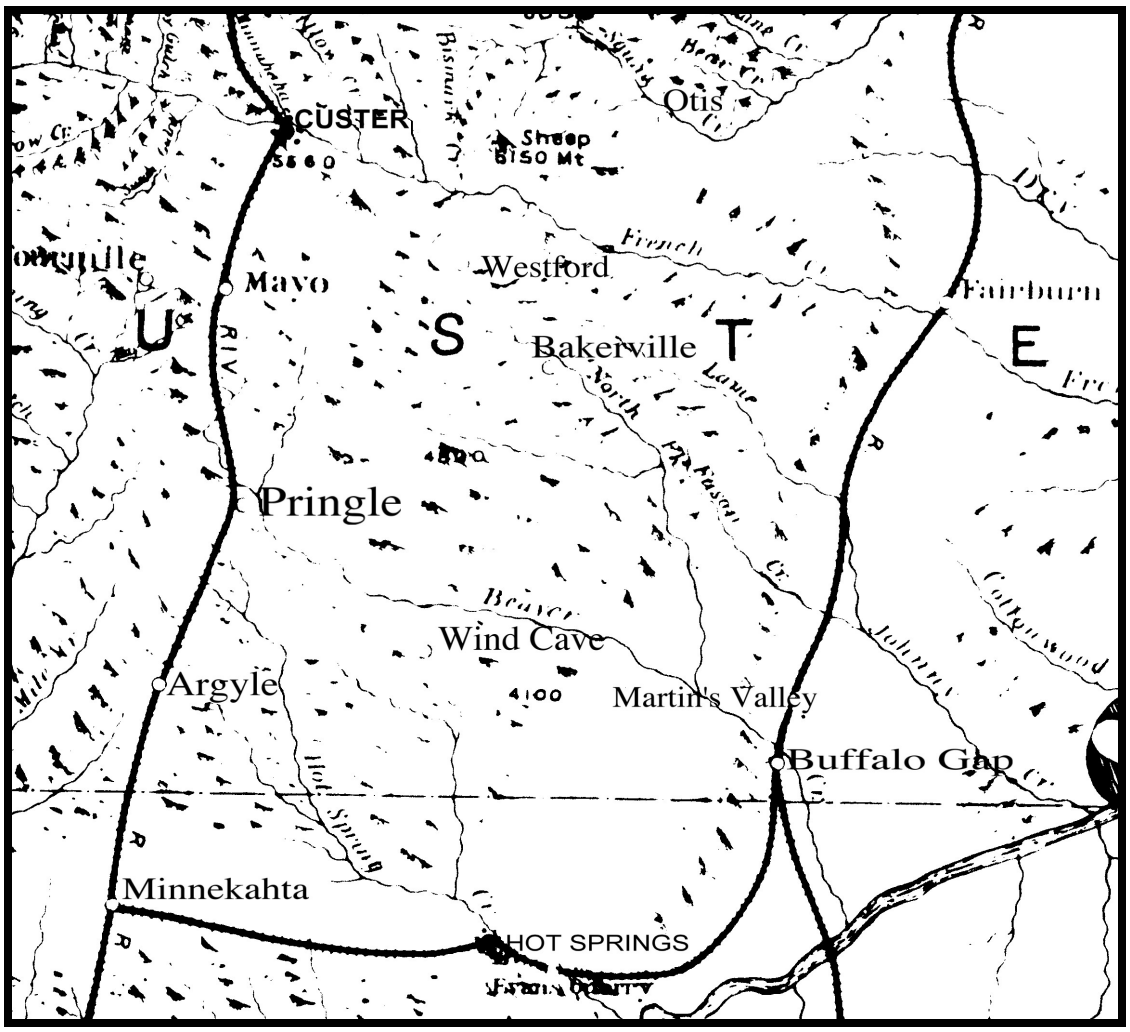


Figure 8.5: Settlements and Towns in the Vicinity of Wind Cave, ca. 1897. Source: detail from Samuel Scott, *Map of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming, with full descriptions of mineral resources, etc.* (Custer City, S.D.: [s.n.], 1897).

The kinds of work and improvements the Dolls undertook were certainly arduous, but not unique. The relatively remote location of their homestead, and the social networks in which they operated, were also typical of conditions in the southern Hills. Through the entire homesteading period, no community center or crossroads establishments of any size developed within the current boundaries of the national park. Wind Cave was the busiest spot on the road from Hot Springs to Pringle, but it largely served tourists or people passing through on their way to somewhere else. It was not a social center for neighboring homesteads in the way that Pringle (to the north), or Martin Valley (to the south), or even the small settlement of Bakerville (to the northeast), ever were.

Schooling for the children of homesteaders exemplifies how isolation both shaped community and challenged family life for young families in the Wind Cave area. Young Hellen (Doll) Roetzel, who lived near what is now the northwest corner of the national park, had to leave home at eight years of age to attend a small school east of Pringle. The school was run by a family that took in borders who lived too far away to make the trip from their homes on a daily basis.[39] Families who lived in what is now the western part of the national park made similar arrangements for their children to attend the Cold Springs School, about one-mile west of what is now the Rankin Ridge Trail parking area, or the small public school in Pringle. As Lucille (Smith) Garret recalled, "school was a problem, for … there was no school close enough … to attend." When she and her sister were young, their mother lived with them at a relative's place near Pringle so they could attend school. By the time they reached seventh grade, the girls were "sent to Hot Springs, and for the next six years … [they] spent the school year in Hot Springs and their summer vacation at the ranch."[40]

Similar arrangements occurred around the eastern half of the park area, where children often boarded with relatives or friends in Martin Valley or Buffalo Gap. For Ella (Scott) Gay, these schools were "three to five miles away" from her family's homestead in the southeastern part of the national park. As her brother Walter Scott, Jr. recalled, she would walk "when the weather was good … and [drive] a one horse shay when it was cold—which was 30 [degrees] below the greater part of the winter. The students in her school heated rocks to put their feet on to keep them from freezing…. They spent their recesses gathering and carrying wood." When Walter was old enough to attend school in Buffalo Gap, his classmates came from all the families who homesteaded in the eastern part of the national park area: "Sanson, Streeter, Korthaus, Parker, Havens, Mann and Herbert."[41]

It is perhaps because of these circumstances, as well as the slow and often difficult nature of travel, that homesteaders so fondly recall the opportunities for "good times and fun, too. Neighborhood dances, parties, and always the Fourth of July picnics at some neighbor's place."[42] Weddings, which generally took place in the bride's home, were also important community affairs—especially since the betrothed often came from

[39] *Ibid.*, 385.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*, 372.
[42] *Ibid.*, 259.

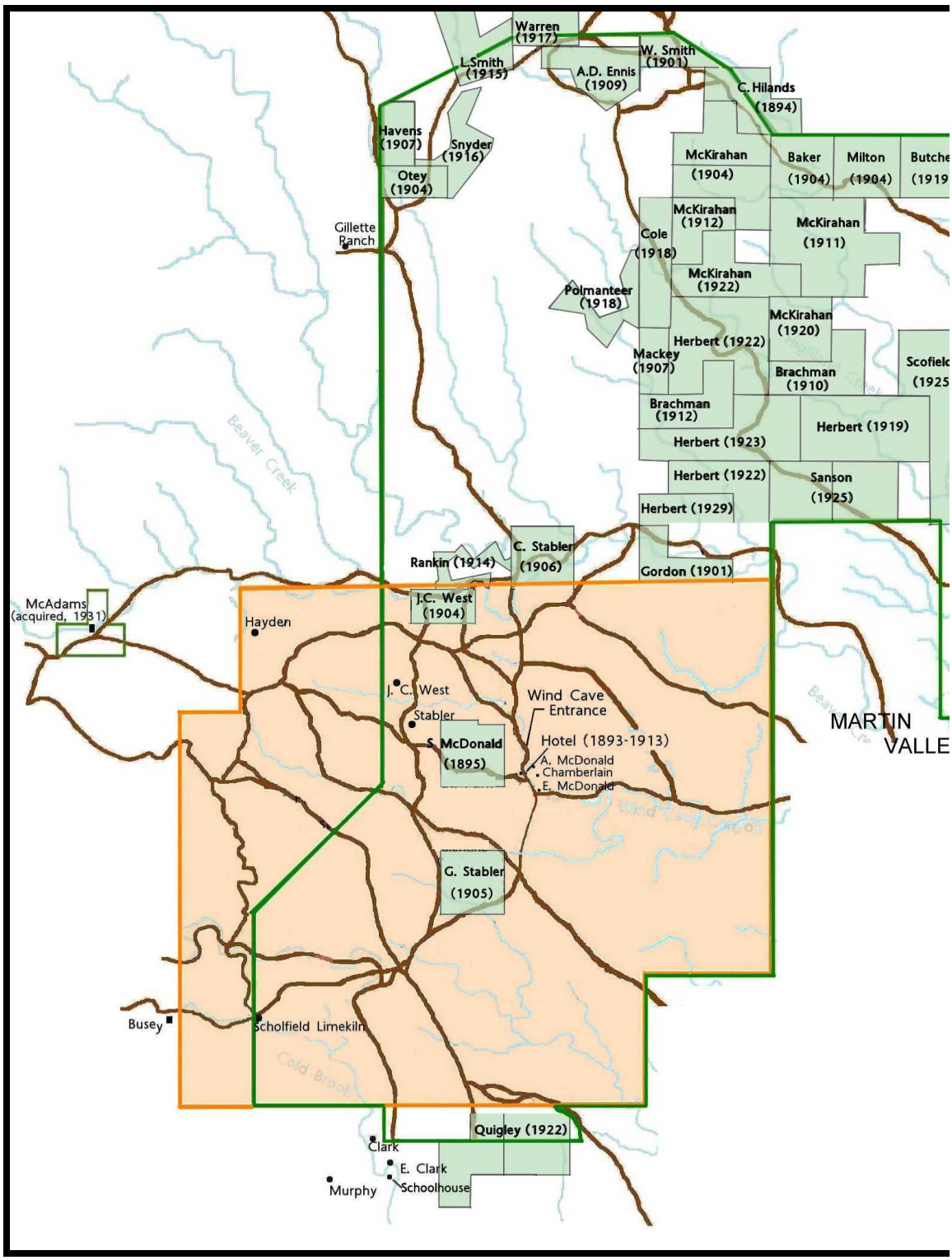
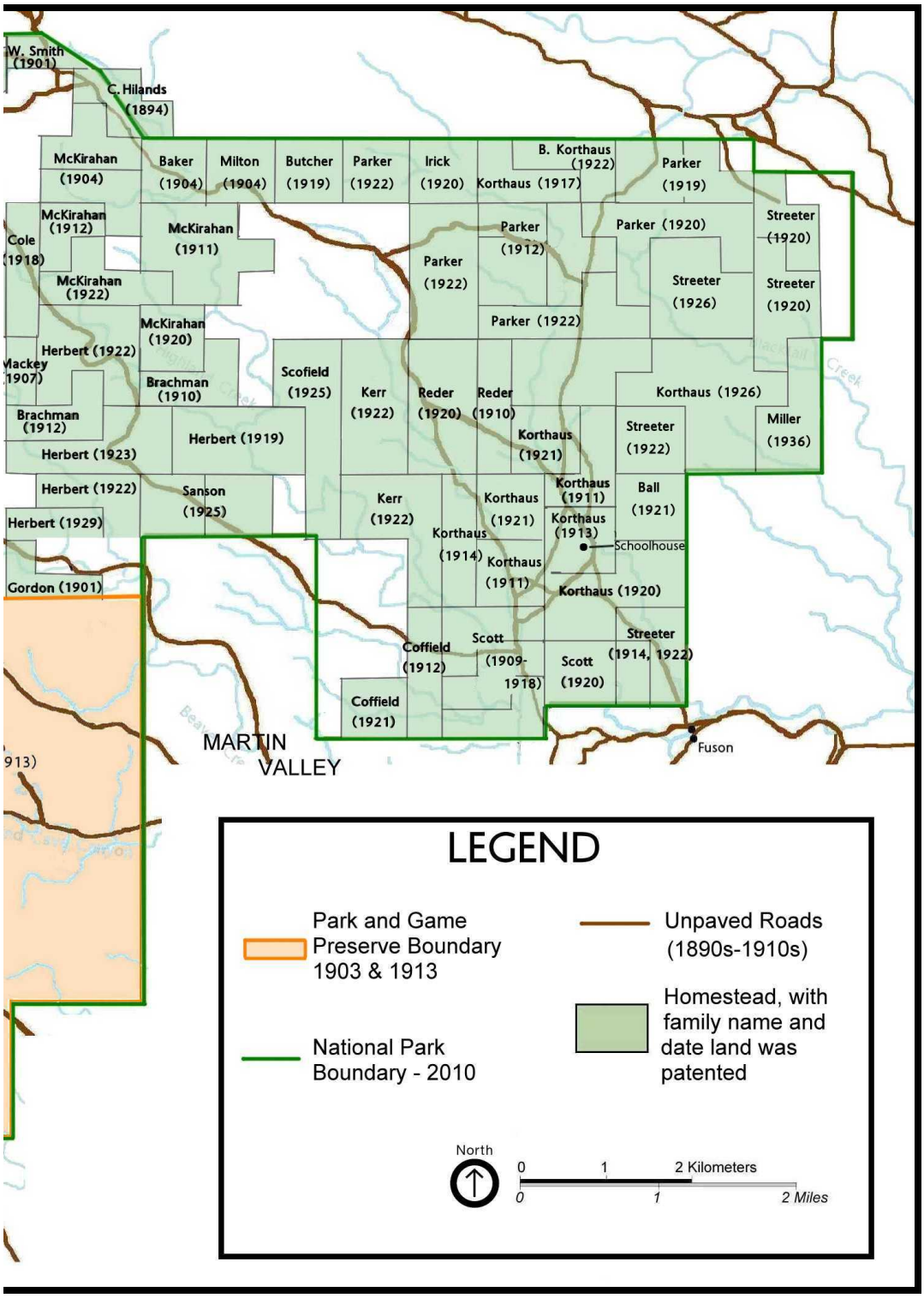


Figure 8.6: Homestead Locations within Historic and Current Boundaries of Wind by properties, and do not directly correspond to a particular historic site.



Cave National Park. Many family names are associated with several adjacent or near-

families who lived relatively near each other. The significance of neighbors, for trading work and celebrating events, and the distance of homesteads from social and economic centers, certainly accounts for the frequency of such unions. This proved the case for all four daughters of James and Elsie (Jewett) Kinsey, who came to the Black Hills in the mid 1880s and eventually established a homestead to the west of the current park boundary. Their daughter Alvina, who in the early 1920s established a homestead in the eastern half of the national park area with her husband Sylvester Scofield, recalled that all her sisters "grew up on the Kinsey ranch. All married local boys."[43]

Homesteading was not always successful, of course, and homestead claims did not always lead to patents. Some families remained in the area for decades, but others moved on and scattered. Carl Dow, for instance, patented a homestead in the extreme northeast corner of the current national park and remained in the southern Hills after his land was incorporated into the Custer Recreational Demonstration Area. His parents and cousins had previously homesteaded a few miles southwest of Fairburn, South Dakota in the 1890s. However, his cousins eventually departed in all directions. By 1925, when Dow had patented his homestead claim, his relatives had already moved multiple times to towns and cities in Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, Nebraska, and Kansas. Dow's own experience was different, however, and mirrored some of the families that would retain a close connection to the Wind Cave area through most of the twentieth century. While Dow retained a ranch on Lame Johnny Creek and worked occasionally for Custer State Park, members of several other families wound up working at Wind Cave National Park. Such work sustained a direct link to a long established the "home place" for families like the McAdams, Parkers, Rankins, Sansons and others after their homesteads were incorporated into the national park in 1946.

All of the families who moved on after only a few years or remained in the area for generations shaped the national park in significant ways. Through sustained use and manipulation of grasslands, soil, waterways, and forests, in the isolated remnants of fruit orchards that persist today, in their many social interactions with the managers of the original 10,522-acre national park, and in the employment they had in the park working on roads, herding and culling bison, repairing culverts and the like, they collectively became a brief but significant part of Wind Cave's ancient story. And in their own family stories of the area, from cave visits in the 1890s to marriages, funerals, and picnics, they continue to enrich and sustain the memory of a place that has largely been restored to its pre-homestead conditions.

[43] *Ibid.*, 300.

CHAPTER NINE

HOT SPRINGS AND BLACK HILLS TOURISM

In his book *Longhorns Bring Culture*, August Schatz recalled how the collapse of the open range system of cattle ranching also took a severe toll on small-scale farmers and ranchers. Large enterprises like the Anglo-American Cattle Company were extremely profitable through most of the 1880s, but their success partly depended on a surrounding network of small landholders for food, produce, and seasonal labor. These small farmers and ranchers were in turn dependent on the large cattle outfits for the markets and employment they provided. The quick rise and fall of Oelrichs, which became the headquarters town and railroad stop for the Anglo-American Cattle Company in 1885, is a perfect case in point. Boasting some 2,000 inhabitants by 1887, including the extensive household of Anglo-American's general manager Harry Oelrichs, the town functioned as a sort of industrial satellite of the great packing and marketing center of Chicago. Complete with its own abattoir and feed lot, and with its own stop on the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad, Oelrichs was devoted to a singular pursuit: turning cattle into meat for eastern markets. The disastrous winter of 1886-1887, coupled with declining prices for beef and higher costs for feed, effectively ruined the Anglo-American Cattle Company and sent Harry Oelrichs packing for New York in 1889.[1]

The small farms and ranches in the surrounding area were not as severely affected by the vicissitudes of weather and markets, but their fates were nevertheless tied to the Company. With the abattoir closed and the general manager gone, Oelrichs became little more than a railroad siding. As Schatz reported, "so many people left Oelrichs that its real estate men became desperate. To hold their people, they made a frantic attempt to reopen the old packing plant … [and enlarge] "Harry Oelrichs' small lime kiln at Limestone Butte … to give work to scores, and lastly plans were made to build a smelter east of town to process the ore from Deadwood." All their efforts were for naught. "In less than a year, Oelrichs, with its dozens of vacant houses, was in truth a ghost town. Its one general store sold little, and what was worse, bought less from the farmers."[2]

While the Schatz family owned a productive farm and had built a seemingly independent life, the collapse of Oelrichs also became their own private calamity. Without a market for their produce, and out of supplies, they were quickly reduced to eating cornmeal mush, cornbread, and some of the unspoiled eggs and butter they could not sell. Their only recourse was to head for the one growing market in the southern Hills: Hot Springs. A fifty-mile roundtrip from their farm, Hot Springs ultimately became

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[1] August Herman Schatz, *Longhorns Bring Culture* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1961); Carrie Breitbach, "Changing Landscapes of Social Reproduction in South Dakota: Restructuring the Cattle Beef Industry" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 2006); Hazel Adele Pulling, *History of the Range Cattle Industry of Dakota* (Pierre: State Historical Society, 1940).

[2] Schatz, *Longhorns Bring Culture*, 107.

the Schatz's salvation. Most of their neighbors had either moved to the booming town to work, or directed all of their trade there. The Schatz's initially chose the latter route, then eventually moved closer to the new resort community. As Schatz recalled, his family was loathe to leave their farm and felt a deep connection to the Oelrichs' area. "Yet what was their to do? Oelrichs was in the past. Hot Springs had taken over."[3] Whether his parents liked it or not, Hot Springs was fast becoming the economic, social and political center of the region. As it did so, this town of warm water and leisure would create the context of Wind Cave's development and ultimately provide the template for the future tourism economy of the Black Hills.

Mni Kata

The thermal springs that feed the Fall River and give the town of Hot Springs, South Dakota its name are unique within the Black Hills. Except for the nearby Cascade Springs, which at 67 degrees are a good 20 degrees cooler, there are no other naturally occurring warm waters in the entire Black Hills region. And much as the Black Hills are something of an island on the Great Plains, these thermal springs are a true oasis. To find another significant source of naturally occurring warm water, one would have to travel westward for 300 miles to Thermopolis, Wyoming. To the south and east, the nearest hot springs are in Arkansas, in Hot Springs National Park. For thousands of years the warm waters in the southern Hills provided respite and comfort for Native peoples, and their location within the bountiful transition zone between the Plains and Hills only made them all the more significant and attractive.

The appeal and significance of the Hot Springs area for Native peoples was clearly evident to the first non-Indians to visit and live in the area in the late 1870s and 1880s. Members of the Newton-Jenney expedition took note of the area in 1875, and subsequently published a brief description of "Minnekata or 'Hot Water' Creek, so named by the Indians from the warmth of the water."[4] Jenney returned to the southern Hills in June 1879 to more precisely locate the several springs that feed what is now known as Fall River. On this second visit, Jenney was accompanied by Dr. Valentine McGillycuddy and Colonel William J. Thornby. Dr. McGillycuddy had also been a member of the 1875 expedition and was enroute to his new appointment as the Agent for the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Thornby, who had been seeking his fortune in the Hills since 1875, would soon become the first person to file a land claim in the Hot Springs area. As he later recalled, "I was very taken with the spring [at the site of what is now the Evans Plunge]… that the Indians had dug out, and where they had bathed, as I found many teepee sites surrounding it, strewn with lodge poles."[5]

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[3] *Ibid.*, 118.
[4] Walter P. Jenney and Henry Newton, *Report on the Geology and Resources of the Black Hills of Dakota* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 236. These sentiments were echoed in Richard Irving Dodge, *The Black Hills: A Minute Description of the Routes, Scenery, Soil, Climate, Timber, Gold, Geology, Zoology, Etc.* (New York: James Miller, 1876), 67.
[5] Quoted in Annie D. Tallent, *The Black Hills; or, the Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1899), 648, 650.

Thornby's land claim never held, however. Tied up with a new mining investment in the northern Hills, he did not have the time to make the kinds of improvements to the site that would give his claim any legal basis or public recognition. The following summer a pair of families from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation built a cabin and set up several tipis at the spring. With no legal basis to do otherwise, Thornby readily forfeited his claim to John Davidson, an American trader married to an Oglala woman, and Joe Laravie, another trader of mixed French and Native ancestry who was married to a Southern Cheyenne woman and was the father of Helen Laravie—the last wife of the Oglala Lakota leader Crazy Horse.[6] Other families and individuals also from Pine Ridge during the 1880s to visit, cut and process lodge poles, trade with non-Indians, and—most especially—to take the waters.[7]

Such visits would have been common in the 1880s, particularly during Agent McGillycuddy's tenure from 1880 to 1886. McGillycuddy, who often sought to ameliorate repressive policies designed to control Lakota movements and behaviors with what he regarded as a kind of permissiveness, often gave passes for off-reservation travel. Sometimes these were for visits to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana and to the Northern Arapahos on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, or to work as freighters. At other times these off-reservation trips were oriented toward the southern Black Hills and the Pine Ridge to hunt, collect plant foods, take the waters at *Mni Kata* (water warmer), and gather lodge poles. They were also for conducting personal and small-group religious ceremonies. In an effort to suppress public Sun Dances, McGillycuddy suggested that individuals could instead "go out on the hills and fast and suffer [for a Vision] and have their 'carvers' do the usual cutting of flesh as a sacrifice to their God in the sweat houses—do this as they are used to doing in times of stress and urgency when they could hold no regular dance."[8] As the historian Jeffrey Ostler notes, McGillycuddy viewed this alternative recommendation as a "temporary evil to facilitate the long-term goal of promoting complete assimilation." A more coercive approach to Lakota spiritual practices would have fostered resentment and antipathy, and likely undermined the agent's authority to achieve other goals. The Oglalas, for their part, used

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[6] *Ibid*., 651-2; *Fall River County Pioneer Histories* (Hot Springs: Fall River County Historical Society, 1976), 144. Suzanne Barta Julin, "South Dakota Spa: A History of the Hot Springs Health Resort, 1882-1915," in *South Dakota Historical Collections* (Pierre: South Dakota State Publishing Co., 1983), 200-204; Badger Clark, *When Hot Springs Was a Pup* (Hot Springs, SD: Kiwanis Club, 1927), 17-19. Laravie, who is the namesake of Laravie Creek on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, is sometimes referred to as Laribe and Larive; see Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92; and Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 201. Davidson is noted in Charles Wesley Allen and Richard E. Jensen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee in the West That Was* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 17.

[7] Patricia C. Albers, *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 157-158. Also A[lfred] T[heodore] Andreas, *Historical Atlas of Dakota* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1884) <http://files.usgwarchives.net/sd/andreas/custer.txt> (accessed 11 October 2009).

[8] Julia B. McGillycuddy, *Blood on the Moon: Valentine McGillycuddy and the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 168; quoted in Ostler, *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 178.

this concession to "carve out a permanent, [discrete] space for having small sun dances" and conducting other traditional ceremonies. Going off the reservation and to the Hills, with the Agent's permission, was thus part of life in the decade after the Black Hills War.[9]

By the late 1880s, conditions changed dramatically on and off the reservation. Having suffered through the same winter that devastated the large cattle operations, the Lakotas and Dakotas subsequently lost a great deal of their own range lands in 1889 when Congress reduced the Great Sioux Reservation by 9 million acres and created six smaller reservations. While the land loss opened up new lands for homesteaders and more direct rail routes to the Black Hills, it marked a tragic low point for the various Lakota and Dakota bands. Territorial loss was accompanied by a round of strong new measures that further undermined Lakota independence, especially on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Rations were cut for groups that opposed the land cession, religious and cultural traditions underwent systematic assault, respected leaders were undermined, and disease, sickness and death were rampant. In this context an apocalyptic movement, the Ghost Dance, took root among the most disaffected. Through intense communal rituals, it was prophesied that non-Indians would die and go away, the bison would return, and dead relatives would come back to life. For non-Indian residents of the Black Hills, all of this boiled down to one vast episode of "Indian Trouble," with rumors flying that attacks were imminent. The tragic consequence of all this fear, misunderstanding, desperate worship and oppression was the Wounded Knee Massacre, in which an encampment of Lakotas were surrounded in late December 1890 by troops of the Seventh Calvary, and between 200 and 300 were killed.[10]

For a few years after Wounded Knee, off-reservation travel was severely restricted. By the time Lakotas from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation started to return to *Mni Kata*, the town of Hot Springs had come into being and their previous camping areas beside the springs were covered by new development[11]. The Native association with the area nevertheless remained part of the new city's identity as a health resort and center for Black Hills tourism. The first person to seriously consider developing a health resort along the Fall River did so after being told about "the curative powers of the springs, using the example of the Indians who came to bathe there as evidence." In subsequent years, developers and boosters made frequent commercial use of the exotic sounding term "Minnekahta," while promotional writers cooked up various "Indian legends" to tout the health properties of the thermal springs and create a number of mysterious attributes for the surrounding landscape.[12]

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[9] Ostler, *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, 179.
[10] *Ibid*., 313-350.
[11] Mary Bingham, interview with John Watterson, 1 July 1973; unpublished transcript on file at University of South Dakota Oral History Center Archives, Vermillion, SD.
[12] William Bruce Leffingwell, *The Vale of Minnekahta* (Hot Springs, S.D.: Hot Springs Herald, 1894); Peter Rosen, *Pa-Ha-Sa-Pah; or, the Black Hills of South Dakota: A Complete History of the Gold and Wonder-Land of the Dakotas* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1895); William C. Gage, *Illustrated Guide to the Black Hills and Picturesque Souvenir of Hot Springs, S.D*. (Battle Creek, MI: Gage Print. Co. Ltd., 1902); John I. Sanford, *The Black Hills Souvenir: A Pictorial and Historic Description of the Black Hills* (Denver: The Williamson-Haffner Engraving Co., 1902).

Figure 9.1: ***Pine Ridge Sioux*****.** Image of small Lakota encampment near Hot Springs, South Dakota, ca. 1900. Source: Denver Public Library.

Adventurous associations with a romanticized Indian past had common appeal in the late nineteenth-century, especially for eastern consumers of western-themed art, fiction, and extravaganzas like Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West shows. These same associations had also been an early staple of railroad-based tourism since the early 1880s. They were new to the Black Hills in the 1890s, however, and they served as the harbingers of a new economic and social order for the region. Black Hills tourism, which effectively began in Hot Springs and eventually became the economic mainstay of the region, marked a course of development that was quite different from mining or cattle ranching. As Robert Wellman Campbell writes, tourism

> was a very different kind of industry from mining, or from farming, ranching, logging, or any other business then operating. First, it was deeply linked to, in fact almost synonymous with, the Black Hills landscape, both natural and man-made. Second, because of this fact, the 'goods' of tourism could not be transported; instead of shipping timber or gold to the outside world, or even instead of trading truck-farm vegetables locally, the customers had to be shipped to the Black Hills.[13]

What Hot Springs would market, and tourists purchase, was an experience. The tangible elements of that transaction took the form of hotel rooms, restaurant meals, transportation infrastructures, and souvenirs. But the product itself was a blend of comfort, history, recreation and entertainment. The successful promotion of tourism depended on creating an experience that was deemed entirely unique to the Black Hills. Emphasizing unique natural features as well as the development of new facilities, the promoters and builders of Hot Springs presenter their town as a place that was both a diversion from and an affirmation of the expectations of tourists.[14]

While tourism made the town quite different from other communities in the Black Hills, the early development of Hot Springs nevertheless followed many of the same patterns that accompanied town building enterprises throughout the region and the West as a whole. In the nineteenth century, land speculation and the laying out of future town sites was a favored but risky route to easy wealth. Success depended on the three maxims of real estate: location, location, and location. For western town promoters, this meant easy and preferred access to a high value resource like ore, lumber, agricultural produce and the like; access to eastern markets through reliable transportation; and access to basic resources like water, stone, and wood for construction and basic infrastructural development. Finding all three virtues of location or access in one place was easier to dream about than make reality, and the American West is covered with thousands of town sites that never amounted to more than a paper map full of empty lot lines. Ghost towns represent a similar failing, but one more closely tied to the boom and bust cycles of a particular resource or the shifting patterns of transportation networks than an outright failure to attract people and capital.

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[13] Robert Wellman Campbell, "A Landscape History of the Black Hills" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2006), 158.

[14] Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 29-40.

The successful development of Hot Springs is quite remarkable when placed in the context of the southern Hills. Following Custer City's boom and dramatic collapse by 10 years or so, and coming in the midst of the open-range system's ruinous ending, Hot Springs grew and prospered into the early twentieth-century. This apparent anomaly stemmed from a single resource, warm water, that was in no way the financial equal of gold, beef, or lumber. However, it was inexhaustible. More significantly, it was situated in a location with relatively easy access to the rest of the nation—first by a short stage coach ride to the rail station at Buffalo Gap and then, after 1891, by two trains that directly served Hot Springs. Besides a special commodity and excellent transportation links, Hot Springs also had the other essentials for town construction close at hand: an abundance of clean water, nearby timber, and several excellent quarry sites. Along with a scenic setting and increasingly well-developed sites for "taking the waters," Hot Springs possessed the three virtues of location and more.

Starting a Town on Climato-Therapy

Charging a small fee to anyone who might like to soak, Laravie and Davidson, along with their friend George Trimmer, were the first to see a financial opportunity in the place they knew as *Mni Kata*. John Dennis of Hill City also filed a claim and built a cabin in 1880 near what became known as Catholican Spring. A number of small ranches and farms had been homesteaded in the immediate area and these families, as well as travelers and visitors from other towns and settlements in the vicinity of the southern and central Hills, constituted the initial clientele.[15] Thanks in part to the enthusiasm of William Thornby, who continued to sing the praises of the area even after his land claim fell through, word of the Hot Springs area and its potential as a health resort would soon spread to would-be investors in the northern Hills. After interviewing Thornby directly, Rudolphus Dickenson Jennings—a young medical doctor in Deadwood—traveled with his colleague Dr. Alexander S. Stewart to investigate the springs in 1881. They were immediately struck with the area's potential as a health resort and soon developed a partnership with three other men from Deadwood, sawmill owner Ervin G. Dudley, First National Bank of Deadwood President L. R. Graves, and Fred Evans. Together they formed the Hot Springs Town-Site Company and quickly set about acquiring the Laravie and Davidson claims, and filed a number of adjoining land claims along the Fall River.[16]

Dudley, Graves and Evans were all well-experienced and successful investors in the Black Hills, and their involvement in the Town-Site Company gave the enterprise special promise. Having two doctors in the Company also proved significant, especially at a time when the medical profession and the general public widely accepted the practice of climatology or climato-therapy. Jennings and Stewart, who moved with their families to Hot Springs in 1882, could both promote and administer this therapy, which held that

[15] Natural Resources Commission, *Medicinal Waters of South Dakota* (Pierre, S.D.: Natural Resources Commission, South Dakota Geological Survey, 1946), 28; Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 203.
[16] Among these was a crude two-story hotel set up by Dr. Kohler; Andreas, *Historical Atlas of Dakota* <http://files.usgwarchives.net/sd/andreas/custer.txt> (accessed 11 October 2009).

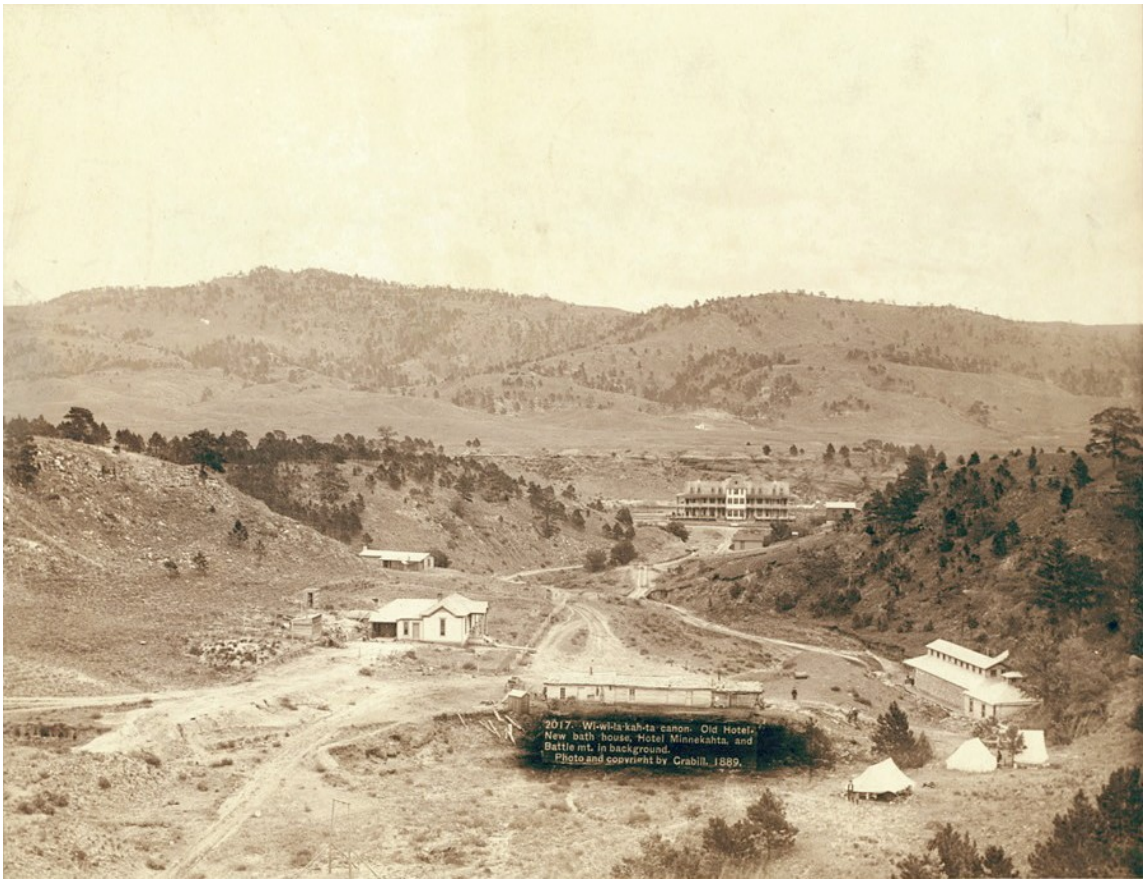

Figure 9.2: ***Wi-wi-la-kah-ta canon. Old hotel, new bath house, Hotel Minnekahta and Battle Mt. in background***. Photograph by John D. H. Grabill, 1889. Source: Library of Congress. The row of four cabins in the center of the image, just above the blocked out informational caption, is the original facility run by the Jennings family over the site first claimed by William Thornby.

clinical use of warm mineral waters, especially in "areas of pure air and increased altitude," provided effective relief and frequent cures of "many diseases and ailments."[17]

Mattie Jennings, who moved with her daughter Abbie to be with her husband in the Black Hills, was instantly enamored with the setting of her new home. With red canyon walls cut by a clear stream, and surrounding plateaus covered with pines and open grasslands, the southern Hills were altogether different from Iowa. The climate was much better as well; summers were cooler and less humid, and winters proved more moderate and less snow-filled than those on the Midwestern prairie. Her home was more humble than the one she left behind, however. "We had four large rooms in a line," she wrote,

> one with four beds where the men were put up when taking the baths. My room (we had no place for women but I took a few into my room), a dining room and kitchen… The spring was where the warm water came out of the hill right into a rock formation and let the warm water run over him. Our bath house was a log cabin about 10 x 10 with a little wood stove in it."[18]

Political Cornerstones

As these crude facilities illustrate, successful development of Hot Springs required more than altitude, clear air, warm mineral waters, and picturesque scenery. It also depended on good transportation links, sufficient capital, and strong political connections. On this last score, the Hot Springs Town-Site Company proved especially adept. In 1882, residents in and around Hot Springs and some cattle ranchers in the southern half of Custer County pushed to establish a separate county. This movement to divide the county partly grew out of a desire to establish a center of government closer to home, but it mostly served what one outside observer called "the interests of the proprietors of [the warm] springs, who desired to give them as much notoriety as possible and thereby build up a fine summer resort in the southern Hills."[19] The resulting election in March 1883 proved inconclusive, with those for and against division both declaring fraud. The matter soon reached the office of Territorial Governor Nehemiah Ordway, which apparently gave comfort to Hot Springs residents who boasted that the Governor was "solid" for them "and he would organize the county no matter what happened."[20]

Ordway did favor the cause of county division and declared Hot Springs the county seat of the new Fall River County, even though at the time the settlement only

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[17] Quotes from Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 207.
[18] Mattie Jennings, "Autobiography," in *Fall River County Pioneer Histories*, 144. Baron Edmond de Mandat-Grancey gave a similar description of the Jennings' facility; see Edmond Mandat-Grancey, *Cow-boys and Colonels* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1963), 289.
[19] Andreas, *Historical Atlas of Dakota* <http://files.usgwarchives.net/sd/andreas/custer.txt> (accessed 11 October 2009).
[20] *Custer Chronicle*, 17 November 1883; quoted in Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 213.

boasted "ten or twelve families."[21] As historian Suzanne Julin rightly notes, "the placement of the county seat was a boon to the young town, bringing with it a sense of stability and official status."[22] Political controversy resurfaced again in 1887, when a bond issue was proposed to pay for the construction of a county court house in Hot Springs. Fall River County residents outside of Hot Springs cried foul, and saw the proposed construction project as an effort by resort owners to use public funds for the improvement of "their" town. Citizens of Oelrichs strongly opposed the bond measure, which also included language designating Hot Springs the permanent county seat. As one old-timer recalled, "Both towns voted—the living, those in the cemetery, and some besides," with the final tally favoring Hot Springs by a margin of 16 votes. In apparent confirmation of Hot Springs' sharpest critics, the construction contract for the courthouse was eventually granted to Evans, who also owned the land on which it was built.[23]

1887 and 1888 marked two more important successes for the original founders of the Hot Springs Town-Site Company, which had subsequently reorganized as the Dakota Hot Springs Company. In the fall of 1887 Hot Springs beat out two other towns, Custer and Spring Valley, to become the site for Black Hills College. With the backing of the well-capitalized and land-rich Company, Hot Springs easily outbid its competitors with gifts of land and financial backing for the college. The following spring Hot Springs also received word that it would become the site for the Territorial Soldiers home. Four other towns in Dakota Territory vied for facility, but pork-barrel politics and the virtues of climato-therapy proved an irresistible combination.

General William V. Lucas, who was the chief advocate for a Territorial Soldiers Home and later became its resident Commandant, suffered from rheumatism and had recently visited Hot Springs on the advice of an esteemed Sicangu Lakota leader named Cante Wicuwa (Useful Heart). Although Lucas was from Chamberlain, a leading contender for the facility, he became an advocate for Hot Springs and its therapeutic benefits (which he fully intended to enjoy in his retirement). With Lucas' support, the bill to locate and pay for the Old Soldiers Home was introduced in the Territorial Legislature by Representative Alexander Stewart, one of the founding members of the Hot Springs Town-Site Company. Despite a veto from Governor Louis Church, Stewart rallied enough support to override the veto. As an admiring biographer later recalled, the bill received "considerable opposition, [but Stewart's] generalship was such that the bill was passed and a good appropriation secured."[24]

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[21] Andreas, *Historical Atlas of Dakota* <http://files.usgwarchives.net/sd/andreas/custer.txt> (accessed 11 October 2009).
[22] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 213.
[23] Quote is from *Seventh Circuit Court: South Dakota Unified Judicial System, Fall River County* <http://www.sdjudicial.com/circuit_courts/index.asp?circuit=7&nav=922&category=seventh_circuit> (accessed 9 September 2010).
[24] On the involvement of Lucas and Useful Heart, see Peggy Sanders, *Fall River County and Hot Springs: Views from the Past, 1881-1955* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 95; and Ernest Lester Schusky, *The Forgotten Sioux: An Ethnohistory of the Lower Brule Reservation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1975), 124-5. On Stewart, see George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, Vol. IV (Chicago. The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), 1181.

The successful efforts to attract Black Hills College and the Dakota Soldiers' Home to Hot Springs, as well as the town's designation as the permanent seat of Fall River County, "brought reassurances to the residents of Hot Springs and to those who considered settling and investing there."[25] All of these efforts, and the security they inspired, were greatly helped by the 1885 arrival of Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Railroad in Buffalo Gap and the commencement of regular stage coach service between there and Hot Springs. With his own freighting business to the northern Hills about to be made obsolete, Evans sold out and sunk most of his money and energy into developing Hot Springs. Taking the helm of the newly formed Dakota Hot Springs Company in 1886, he guided the construction of the 100-room Minnekahta Hotel and the development of what became known as "upper town"—the section of Hot Springs where resort facilities were located. Combined with the successful movement to attract and build the college, courthouse, and soldiers' home, these new developments promised a successful future for the still very new town of Hot Springs. In fairly short order, outside investors bolstered the portfolio of the Dakota Hot Springs Company, new residents joined their fates with the promising town, and patronage of the resort increased.[26]

Some of Hot Springs' early development paralleled the economic growth of the southern Hills during the open-range era. Yet Hot Springs did not really take-off until the spring of 1889, a full year after the collapse of the regional cattle industry. The immediate cause was the news that the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Railroad planned to construct a branch line from Buffalo Gap to Hot Springs, and that the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad would build a connection to Hot Springs from its mainline between Edgemont and Deadwood. By 1890, the town was served by two railroads with connections to all points on the compass.[27]

Resort Development

The late 1880s and early 1890s were heady times in Hot Springs, and boosters loved to keep track of various statistics on the community's rapid growth. The amount of packages and letters moving through the post office served as a good indicator of commerce and growth, and the city's weekly newspaper, the *Hot Springs Star*, took regular notice of the increased volume of mail. Between June 1889 and June 1890, for instance, postal business increased a healthy 224 percent. The population of the town also grew at a similar pace, from approximately 300 in the spring of 1889 to nearly 1,500 in late 1890. Just three years later the number of permanent residents would climb to 3,350. Perhaps the most amazing statistics relate to the building boom in the city. At the end of 1889, the now *Daily Hot Springs Star* reported that real estate transactions for the year totaled some $50,000 while the value of construction projects begun or completed over the previous 12 months totaled $170,000. Within a year, however, the total value "of public buildings and improvements completed during 1890 totaled $326,065 [while]

[25] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 217.
[26] *Ibid*., 216-219.
[27] Joseph P. Schwieterman, *When the Railroad Leaves Town: American Communities in the Age of Rail Line Abandonment* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 2004), 235-237.

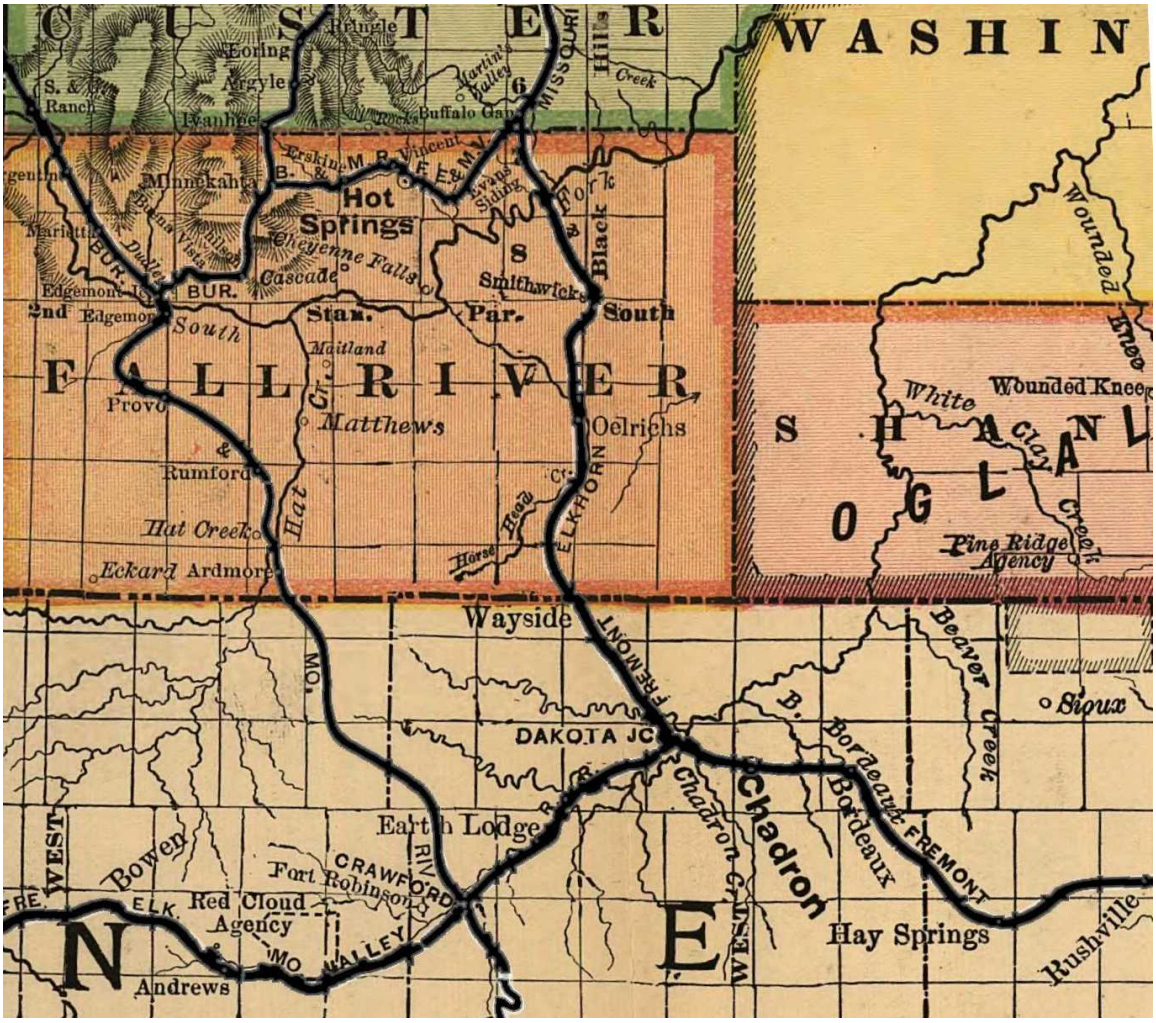

Figure 9.3: Detail from *Indexed county and township pocket map and shippers guide of South Dakota* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1892). Bold lines show railroad routes connecting Hot Springs with national and regional traffic.

private improvements were valued at $763,150." These numbers were reflected in the *Star's* January 1891 tally of local businesses, which listed 44 established or "old" firms (those more than one-year old), and 101 "new" firms that had begun in 1890.[28]

While some of this development served the growing population of "lower town," where most local commerce and year-round residence was concentrated, the direct needs of the 1,500 people who lived in Hot Springs accounted for only a fraction of the nearly $1.1 million spent on construction in 1890. Much of this money went toward the growing tourist trade, which involved the construction of two handsome sandstone commercial blocks, several hotels, and the Evans Plunge Bath—which at the time was the largest indoor swimming pool in the world.[29] Significant funds were also spent on the construction of the main buildings at Black Hills College and the Old Soldiers Home, as well as other public structures and facilities. The pace of construction continued to grow over the next few years, with many of the city's most distinctive landmarks built between 1891 and 1893. These included the Evans Hotel, the Palace Hotel, the Union Station depot, City Hall, a three-story public school, and a number of decorative features and walkways along the Fall River and lower bluffs. In addition to these fine structures, which were built with colorful sandstones from local quarries owned by Fred Evans and others, Hot Springs was also graced by a number of elegant new homes on the bluffs overlooking the city.[30]

By 1893, with the completion of the five-story Evans Hotel—which was advertised as the "Palace Resort Hotel of the West"—Hot Springs could accommodate almost 1,700 visitors on any given day. While this figure equaled half the number of people who resided permanently in the town, two other factors are worthy of consideration. First, a good number of the people who were counted as residents lived almost entirely within the context of the resort community. These included patients at the Soldiers Home, whose presence was based on the same resource that drew tourists, as well as the students, faculty, and staff of Black Hills College who were attracted to and participated in the active cultural life that centered around city's grand hotels.[31] Second, the number of visitors who came to Hot Springs over the course of a year far surpassed the population of the city and they consumed far more than their hosts in terms of food, beverages, and linens as well as energy, public infrastructure, and physical space. In short, Hot Springs existed for, and in many respects was owned by, outsiders.

The sharp economic depression that hit the United States between late 1893 and 1898 slowed Hot Springs' rapid development, but the town's leisure and health-based economy continued to attract growing numbers of visitors from throughout the Midwest and eastern United States. As they had during Hot Springs' initial boom, many visitors

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[28] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 220-221.
[29] *Ibid*.; John I. Sanford, *The Black Hills Souvenir: A Pictorial and Historic Description of the Black Hills* (Denver: The Williamson-Haffner Engraving Co., 1902), 60-81; and Tallent, *The Black Hills*, 665-670.
[30] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 220-221, also see *Stone: An Illustrated Magazine; Volume XIX, June to November 1899* (New York: Frank W. Hoyt, 1899), 153. The pace of construction in Hot Springs increased seven-fold from 1890 to 1893; Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 234.
[31] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 249-252.

Figure 9.4: *Hot Springs, S.D., Evans Hotel* (Detroit Photographic Co.). Source: Library of Congress. Image presents a view of new developments in Upper Town, ca. 1895. The Gillespie Hotel is on the left and the new Evans Hotel is to the right of center. The Union Station is across from the Gillespie Hotel alongside the Fall River.

came as individuals, couples or small groups. The completion of several large hotels also allowed Hot Springs to compete for and attract large organizations. In June 1894, for instance, Hot Springs hosted an excursion of 200 Masons from South Carolina. In subsequent years the city was the site for a number of conventions from various industries and associations, which contributed significantly to the city's continued growth. This only brought more notice to Hot Springs, which necessarily attracted more private parties as well.[32]

Recreation and Diversion

Despite all the efforts to sell Hot Springs as a health resort, a town dominated by convalescents had limited appeal. This became more painfully obvious as medical theories like climatology began to wane and new theories about germ infection made public, warm-water baths seem anything but healthful. Hot Springs certainly retained its original appeal among those who still trusted in the curative, or at least soothing, powers of warm mineral waters. Yet in an effort to attract more visitors during a national economic downturn, Hot Springs promoters sought to cultivate a different and more varied atmosphere. Genteel entertainments, like fine dining and dancing in the large hotels, continued. For many, these nightly events were the entire point of visiting Hot Springs. Along with this more fashionable and class-conscious form of social entertainment, Hot Springs also acquired a reputation as a sort of proto-Las Vegas; a place with saloons, gambling and, at the County Courthouse, easy divorces and easier marriages. While these new trends did not exactly define the town, they represented a growing preference for recreation and frivolity over healthful restoration and improvement among Hot Springs' visitors.[33]

Despite saloons and other "vulgar" diversions, like a dance review entitled "Ducan Clark and her coterie of nymphs du pave," Hot Springs continued to cater to patrons of fine dining, well-healed convalescents, and a number of interests in between. All, however, took a growing interest in what might loosely be called outdoor recreation. Through the 1890s, visitors to Hot Springs increasingly took to clambering along the Fall River, hiking the bluffs above town, or heading into the pine forests further towards the interior of the Hills. A young party of travelers who came to Hot Springs in the summer of 1895 showed all of these proclivities. Approaching the end of a grand railroad tour around the West, the group made a stop in Hot Springs, which they glowingly described in a promotional book for the Burlington Railroad.

> Embosomed as it is within the Hills, picturesquely placed upon Fall River, the atmosphere is at once clear, pure and … freighted with the scent of the great pine and spruce forests that are the crowning beauty of the Hills …,

[32] *Ibid.*, 245-6. For a general study of the 1890s economic depression, see Douglas Steeples and David O. Whitten, *Democracy in Desperation: The Depression of 1893* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).
[33] Julin, "South Dakota Spa," 252.

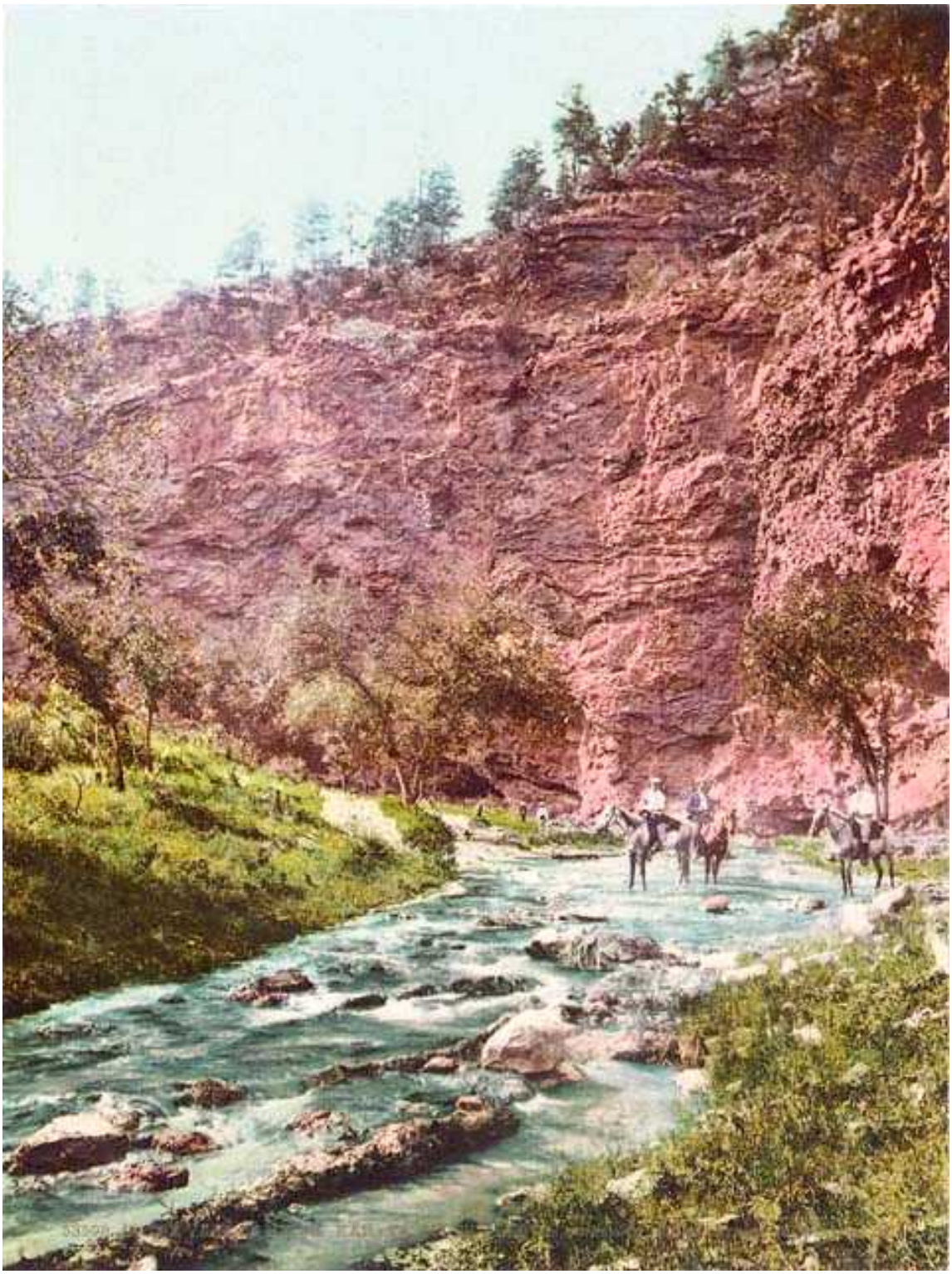

Figure 9.5 : ***In the Vale of Minne-Kah-Ta, South Dakota*** **(Detroit Photographic Co.), ca. 1901.** Group of tourists on a horse-back excursion in Hot Brook Canyon. Source: Library of Congress.

> [Hot Springs] appeals strangely to the men and women who, in this work-a-day world, need just such a tonic as found at Hot Springs.[34]

While they praised the hotels, waters, and scenes around Hot Springs, the group also participated in what John Muir would describe three years later as a "tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses." "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people," Muir wrote, "are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home."[35] This same ethic was expressed in the 1895 travelogue of the visit to Hot Springs and the southeastern Hills, and it had already become part of the area's appeal. The new and old interests of the resort, from the healthful to the "vulgar," from the silly to the sublime, would also shape the development of Wind Cave—which the young party of travelers also visited in 1895. Wind Cave as a tourist attraction could not have existed without Hot Springs, and the nature of tourism in Hot Springs necessarily shaped how and why visitors experienced the cave. A mixture of entertainment and adventure, of the carnivalesque and the sublime, a tour of the "Wonderful Wind Cave" became a standard part of any extended visit to Hot Springs. In fairly short order, however, disagreements over how it should be utilized—and by whom—would dredge up a host of conflicting interests about private property, the purpose of the public domain, mining and homestead rights, and the purpose of nature tourism. How these arose from the recent history of the Black Hills, and how they were resolved with the establishment of Wind Cave National Park in 1903, are the subjects of the next chapter.

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[34] *Out West* (Chicago: White City Art Company, 1897), 151.

[35] John Muir, "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, 81 (1898). 16. Muir also commented favorably on the qualities of the Black Hills Forest Reserve, which he visited in 1896.

CHAPTER TEN

DEVELOPING THE WONDERFUL WIND CAVE

Prior to its establishment as a national park, Wind Cave reflected all of the patterns of land use and economic development that shaped the southern Hills in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From transportation routes to mining, ranching, homesteading, and tourism, the cave and its immediate surroundings show the marks of all the interests operating in the region. A visitor to Wind Cave in 1900, for instance, would likely see livestock grazing in the vicinity of the cave, the effects of dynamite blasts set off by mining claimants and cave developers, a kitchen garden and farm animals beside a homestead, a modest hostelry, a passing wagon traveling between Buffalo Gap and Pringle, and a group of tourists assembled near a constructed entrance to the cave. In short, the development of Wind Cave was not a simple and direct transition from the world of Jesse Bingham to that of Fred T. Evans and his "Palace Hotel of the West." Rather, it occurred within the overlapping and sometimes competing claims of ranchers, farmers, miners, promoters, tourists, and service workers who populated this rapidly changing part of the Black Hills.[1]

While the interests of tourists would be most clearly reflected in the creation and development of Wind Cave National Park, they did not immediately displace other, more established uses of the park's lands. The roads and trails of the pre-park era remained public throughways, livestock continued to graze in the general vicinity of the cave (with the permission of the Superintendent), and local residents acting as private concessionaires still handled most of the tourist traffic. The change in the early years of the twentieth century was not so much in how, or by whom, the area was used, as it was in how tourism became a legitimate concern of public lands management.

In the late nineteenth-century, there were essentially three ways that people could acquire land from the federal public domain; they could claim a homestead, a tract of timber, or a mineral deposit. Claimants were then obligated to demonstrate the efficacy of their claim by converting it into a productive economic endeavor within a few years. If successful they could then purchase the land, or secure a mineral lease, for a nominal fee

[1] It is likely that Native visitations or pilgrimages to Wind Cave also continued to occur, even after the increased restrictions on off-reservation travel that occurred in the wake of the Wounded Knee Massacre. While there are no written accounts of Native individuals or groups coming to the cave for religious reasons, such visits would have almost certainly been surreptitious. Katie Stabler does make a brief note that suggests Native people made some public visits to the cave. Except for one particular "party of 10 or 12 who were in missionary work," however, all were loathe to enter the cave. As Stabler recalled, even the group that she did guide "chanted their Indian songs all the time they were in the cave." While it is difficult to make any conclusions based on this brief recollection, it is clear that Native peoples viewed the cave as something other than a "curiosity" or "scenic wonder." Catherine Rose "Katie" Stabler (brief unpublished memoir), *Wind Cave National Park: Katie Stabler*, 25 January 2008 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/katie-stabler.htm> (accessed 8 May 2010).

from the General Land Office. The potential value of Wind Cave inspired a number of competing claims to secure title to the area, some under the pretence of mining and others as homesteads. Unfortunately for the various claimants, the lands immediately surrounding Wind Cave did not really support farming or mining. Though some efforts were made toward fulfilling homestead and mineral claims, these were eclipsed by the energy and capital that went into making the cave a tourist attraction. Because federal land law did not recognize tourism as a legitimate means for making claims on the public domain, and none of the claimants fulfilled the basic qualifications of a homestead or a mining enterprise, the lands immediately surrounding Wind Cave never passed into private hands. Officials in the Department of the Interior nevertheless recognized tourism as a valuable use of the cave and determined that protecting the area and making it available to visitors was a matter of public interest. Their concerns prevailed and tourism became a secure and lasting endeavor in 1903 when Congress established Wind Cave National Park and authorized the "Secretary of the Interior … to prescribe rules and regulations and establish such service as may be deemed necessary in its management and protection, and … for the accommodation of visitors."[2]

Early Visitation to Cave of the Winds

Land laws and land claims were not matters of particular interest to Wind Cave's earliest visitors. Before Hot Springs developed, options for entertainment and diversion were few in the sparsely settled region. For those with enough curiosity, time and sense of adventure, Wind Cave was something of a "must see" experience. Romantic associations with outlaw hideaways and Indian legends, coupled with the mixture of dread and excitement that came from treading deep within the earth, made Wind Cave a memorable experience. As some old-timers later recalled, traveling to Wind Cave, squeezing through its tight opening ("not much bigger than an old wash boiler"), and pressing into its vast darkness, was something of a local right of passage.[3]

John Bohi, who in 1962 published an account of the park area's history from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth-century, described early interest in the cave as "rather casual."[4] After Jesse and Tom Bingham and their friends first encountered the cave in 1880, word spread to the ranches and communities of the Black Hills. Sometime in 1881 Charlie Crary and a few friends from Custer brought candles to explore the cave, and left behind a roll of string that marked their route. While this group was probably the first to penetrate the cave a fair distance past the opening, the earliest written account of the cave comes from an acquaintance of Crary's named Frank Herbert. During a plum-gathering trip in the southeastern Hills with Mayme Sprague, Jesse Girelle and his wife, and two

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[2] Quote is from U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 63, "An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park," Public Act no. 16: 765.

[3] John Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave: A History of the National Park," in *South Dakota Historical Collections* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society, 1962), 367-368. Also see Harold R. Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park* (Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1953), 33.

[4] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 368.

girls from a family named Cole, Herbert and the group decided to look for the cave and explore it themselves. After a full day of searching the area, they finally found the small cave opening, which Hebert and Sprague entered the next morning. "We had to jump down a hole," he later recalled, "that I could just about squeeze through, six or seven feet…. [W]ith my lantern [we] had to crawl on hands and knees facing a terrible wind for about fifty feet, and then the main hole seemed to be going down at right angles and very steep, but it gave a good foothold." After passing through several rooms, and making a fruitless search for what sounded like an underwater stream, they returned to the surface where they found the rest of their party who had only "went down as far as where the main part turned down, but got scared and went back."[5]

In the summer of 1884, some two years after Hot Springs was established, a few parties from the new town are known to have explored the cave. One group, which consisted of Blanch Steward and her younger brother Charles, the future writer Kennett Harris and his mother, and another young man named Walter, apparently lost all track of time in the cave and did not come out until after midnight. The following morning, when they returned to Hot Springs, they learned that the town was putting together a search party to look for them.[6] In September 1884, the Custer *Chronicle* provided what may be the earliest newspaper reference to Wind Cave when it noted that "Joe Pilcher and several others of the Climax [Mine] … visited the Cave of the Winds Sunday and returned loaded with brilliant specimens of water formation." The *Chronicle* also noted that Pilcher, who later served as Superintendent of Wind Cave National Park from 1909-1911, mistook a stalactite "for an icicle and attempted to eat it."[7]

As the population increased around the southeastern Hills—from the large ranches of the cattle-boom, the opening of mica mines near Custer, and the promising beginnings of Hot Springs—more local adventurers made their way to Wind Cave. What might be described as the first real tourist excursion occurred in the summer of 1886. "A large party," the *Chronicle* reported, "comprising thirty or forty persons in all, supplied with tents, camping utensils and everything essential to comfort," spent two days "exploring the labyrinthine mazes of that attractive wonder, and enjoying the refreshing winds that make that place especially enjoyable when the mercury is seeking the upper levels."[8] Such ventures were a harbinger of the near future. Just two years later, as Hot Springs was on the brink of its remarkable growth and development, Wind Cave received

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[5] Frank Herbert, *Forty Years Prospecting and Mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota* (Rapid City: Rapid City Daily Journal, 1921), 107-108.

[6] *Ibid.* Bohi attributes this information to a "Charles Stewart," but the source of the story was Charles A. Steward. Kennett Harris, who later became a writer of some note, mentioned Wind Cave in one of his best known works: Harris, *Meet Mr. Stegg* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 16.

[7] *The Custer Chronicle*, 13 September, 1884; quoted in Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 366.

[8] *The Custer Chronicle*, 17 July 1886; quoted in Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 367. The party included "Odo Reder and family," who ran a lumber mill in what is now Custer State Park. Reder's brother Theodore and his brother's family may also have joined the excursion. Theodore Reder, of Rapid City, had a particular fondness for the Custer State Park area and foresaw the tourist potential of the Black Hills. In 1891 he constructed the dam that created Sylvan Lake and his wife Lizzie Reder designed the first Sylvan Lake Hotel. See Helen (Reder) Daghenbaugh, "Theodore Reder's Lake," *The Black Hills Historian* (Fall 2004): 1, 5-6; and Suzanne Barta Julin, *A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880-1941* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2009), 32.

its first mention as a bona fide tourist curiosity. The Chicago & North Western Railroad sponsored a promotional booklet titled *The Hot Springs of Dakota: The Great Health Resort of the Northwest*, which made note of the nearby "Cave of the Winds, from whose mouth a rush of wind issues continually. This cave has been explored for a distance of two miles and may, when fully explored, exceed the Mammoth Cave in extent and interest."[9]

The degree of cave exploration mentioned in *The Hot Springs of Dakota* was a significant exaggeration, though it may have reflected what some early spelunkers believed about their dark and disorienting ventures beneath the ground. The distance nevertheless proved a valid prediction within a few years. For the promoters of Hot Springs, however, the comparison with the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky was both a taller and more important claim. By the mid nineteenth-century, the Mammoth Cave was only second to Niagara Falls as the nation's greatest natural wonder and tourist attraction. As one scholar recently noted, "after Niagara Falls, [Mammoth Cave] was one of the earliest focal points of mass tourism in the United States."[10] Of course associations with a famous site do not guarantee a real equivalency. (One need only think of the various places identified as the "Grand Canyon of the East" in New York, West Virginia, North Carolina, and elsewhere to understand this simple truth.) Yet the hope that Wind Cave might prove a wonder of its own, and the expectation that its allure would add to the promise of Hot Springs' development as the "Great Health Resort of the Northwest," was not unfounded.

A Mining Claim on Cave Lode No. 1

For all the excitement of a cave adventure and the many comforts of thermal waters, tourism was still a very small part of life in the southern Hills when Wind Cave was first likened to Mammoth Cave. For a few more years, at least, mining would seem an even more hopeful enterprise. A natural hole in the ground, offering possible access to mica, gypsum, or some other mineral, had obvious attractions. In 1886, the first location certificates for lode mining claims were filed by Frank Horton and Nels Hyde. These were soon abandoned, however, and a new claim was filed by Larimer Faris in January 1889.[11] In late 1889 or early 1890, three more claims were located at Wind Cave by a Mr. O. F. Day, who soon sold them to the South Dakota Mining Company. The Company,

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[9] S. D. Cook, *The Hot Springs of Dakota: The Great Health Resort of the Northwest* (Sioux City: Exchange Print, 1888), n.p.

[10] Katie Algeo, "Mammoth Cave and the Making of Place," *Southeastern Geographer* 44 (Spring 2004): 27-47.

[11] Faris and Horton had apparently known of the cave for some time since they were later credited with exploring as far as Monument Hall, or the Wind Cave Room, on 5 June 1884. Record of their discovery of the "'Monument Hall' Route from 'Devil's Lookout' to 'Monument Hall'" comes from the journal of Alvin McDonald, who will be discussed below. McDonald identified "C.W. Roe, L.C. Faris, Frank Halden and 3 other persons" as the people to first explore this route. Frank Halden is likely the same person identified by Bohi as Frank Horton. See Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 369; and *Wind Cave National Park, Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1892—1893*, 16 March 2007 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/alvin-mcdonald-diary.htm> (accessed 6 June 2010).

which was owned by the Moss family of New York City, subsequently hired Jesse D. McDonald to manage the site and assess its potential for mineral production.[12] This rapid sequence of claims, and the arrival of the South Dakota Mining Company, was based on an expectation that Wind Cave could become a mine. Yet it would be the McDonald family, and the resort-based economy of Hot Springs, that decisively turned Wind Cave toward becoming a tourist attraction.

Jesse McDonald, who has been described as "undistinguished by education or financial success," led something of a roving life.[13] Having lived in central and western Iowa for some years, McDonald moved to Thermopolis, Wyoming Territory, in 1888 with his two teen-aged sons, Alvin and Elmer. The boys, who were the oldest of seven children from the first of McDonald's three marriages, and their father apparently failed to find long-term work. In the fall of 1889 they wound up in Four Mile, a small hamlet on the old Sidney-Black Hills Stage Road about four miles west of Custer. It was there that they met Robert B. Moss, who hired the 43-year old Jesse to manage the Wind Cave site where the South Dakota Mining Company already had a number of men working.[14]

According to documents filed at the Custer County Courthouse in the spring and early summer of 1890, McDonald and Moss had established something of a partnership for the management of the Wind Cave claim. On 1 May 1890, Moss, McDonald and J.W. Layton jointly filed a claim for a site designated as "Cave Lode No. 1," which they had officially located on 25 March 1890. McDonald was clearly the junior member in what was at best a quasi-partnership, and seems to have understood his position as an employee of the South Dakota Mining Company.[15] The partnership, however it may have been construed, was dissolved on 3 July 1890. No doubt in accordance with a prior arrangement, McDonald deeded over to Robert Moss "all the right and title and interest [he (McDonald)] owned … in and to those certain lodes on mining claims known as Cave Lode … situate near the Wind Cave."[16]

The arrangement between McDonald and Moss, even if it served more as a stand-in for an employment contract than a matter of co-ownership, seems to have shaped McDonald's conception of what he could, or should do at Wind Cave. His earliest correspondence with Moss indicates that his duties primarily involved supervising construction and mine assessment work at Wind Cave and other South Dakota Mining

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[12] Jones dates Mr. Day's location claim to 1889, but Bohi identifies early 1890. In either case, the South Dakota Mining Company filed its location claims at the Custer County Courthouse in April 1890. See Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park*, 34; and Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 369.

[13] Quote is from Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 369.

[14] *Ibid.*, 369-370; Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park*, 34-35; and Tom Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud: The Birth of a National Park" (1987), 2-3, MS. on file in Wind Cave National Park Library.

[15] See, for instance, J.D. McDonald to Mr. Moss, 28 February 1890, and McDonald to R.B. Moss, 13 March, 1890: both in F Ref 1880, Folder 11 "Correspondence Concerning Wind Cave," Wind Cave National Park Archives (hereafter WCNP Archives).

[16] Custer County, Recorder of Deeds, Mining Deed Record Book 3:68; quoted in Western History Research, *Wind Cave National Park Land Study: Compiled Data* (Bozeman, MT: Western History Research, 1993), 34, and reprinted in Appendix A.

Company claims in the southeastern Hills. Even before deeding back his nominal interest in the Wind Cave location filing, McDonald must have realized that the cave was not a passage to mineral wealth. Such knowledge would have led directly to another conclusion: the South Dakota Mining Company's claim would probably not hold, and other non-mining related activities at the site were fair game.

While he remained beholden to Moss for the supervision of work at other mining claims that still held promise, the development and promotion of Wind Cave soon became the consuming interest of McDonald and his sons. Such activities were outside the purview of the original agreement with Moss, and McDonald may have interpreted these new efforts as his own personal business or as part of a different but informal arrangement between himself and the South Dakota Mining Company. Whatever the case, his actions would eventually lead to legal conflicts with Moss and give rise to a number of other controversies regarding ownership of the cave. As they fought over who rightfully controlled the site, however, the contest was never about mining. Rather, it stemmed from a basic and mutual understanding that the real treasure of Wind Cave lay in its scenic qualities and fascinating mineral formations.

Developing Wind Cave, 1890-1892

Three and a half months after signing his name to the location filing at Cave Lode No. 1, and two weeks before officially relinquishing his part in that mining claim, Jesse McDonald began his campaign to promote tourism at Wind Cave. On 16 June 1890, he paid the first of many visits to the offices of the *Hot Springs Star* to advertise these efforts. The paper duly reported that

> Mr. McDonald is located at Wind Cave, a natural curiosity of great beauty, about 10 miles north of Hot Springs. He deposited on our desk an elegant specimen from the cave, and the curiosity excites the wonder and admiration of all visitors at the office. Mr. McDonald informs the *Star* that a hotel is being erected at the Cave for the accommodation of visitors, and competent guides can be secured by those wishing to make a tour of the cave."[17]

While the promised hotel would not materialize for a few more years, the McDonalds finished blasting out a new entrance to the cave in the summer of 1890. Located near the cave's natural opening, a small hole just 12 inches in diameter, the new entrance was covered by a trapdoor and enclosed in a small cabin that served as a staging area for tours. And with that, Wind Cave was open for business.[18]

In August 1890, the *Hot Springs Star* published a 2100 word story on the

[17] *Hot Springs Star*, 20 June 1890. All citations of the *Hot Springs Star* are from "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives.
[18] *Hot Springs Star*, 22 and 29 August 1890.

Figure 10.1: Wind Cave, ca. 1890-1891. The cabin constructed on the right is over the natural opening to Wind Cave, and was in place when the McDonalds arrived at Wind Cave in 1889. The larger structure on the left was built by the McDonalds in 1890. It covers the present entrance to the cave, and served as the staging area for tours and as a residence for the McDonalds. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

"wonderful, indescribably wonderful," and "soon to be world famed Wind Cave." The story ran in two consecutive weekend editions of the paper and detailed a more-than-five-hour adventure of "scrambling, crawling and climbing through … so many beautiful pictures of and figures of nature's very delicate penciling and carving." In just a few months, the McDonalds had already conducted hundreds of tourists into the cave and had established a route through a number of newly explored and named chambers and passages. These included the "Bride's Chamber," the "Post Office," "Snow Ball House," "Devil's Track," and "Monument Hall" as well as features like the "camel's back," "Jumbo," and "Cataract." McDonald, who was described as "genial and courteous" by the *Star* reporter, had opened up a new adventure for tourists and residents from Hot Springs, just as the town's recreational economy was starting to boom.[19]

For the next two years, the McDonalds focused on exploring and opening new passages, conducting tours, promoting more visitation, and selling or exhibiting "specimens." The latter endeavor served to promote the cave as well as bring in revenue, especially during the winter months when visitation fell off. In the winter of 1890-1891, for instance, McDonald made a number of visits to the *Star* offices to show-off new mineral formations removed from the cave and offer speculations on their potential value. When the paper's publisher, Willis E. Benedict, planned a trip back East to promote Hot Springs, McDonald brought him "as fine a box of specimens as ever came from that wonderland." Benedict in turn said that he would "take immense pleasure in displaying the specimens and dilating on the wonders of Wind Cave." The paper also made frequent note of McDonald's announcements about the discovery of new passages and chambers, and efforts to make them more accessible to visitors. In February 1891, the *Star* reported that McDonald and his sons "have been working all winter and now have the ways open and the ladders fixed down as far as Roes Misery where they are now … making a way so that visitors need not crawl sideways past this place." By early April 1891, McDonald happily told the *Star* that "great progress [was] being made in the arrangements and accommodations for the summer season."[20]

Wind Cave had effectively become a family enterprise for McDonald, his two sons Elmer and Alvin, and his eldest daughter Mary who had joined her father and brothers sometime over the previous year. Their work involved an array of tasks: blasting away obstacles that thwarted passage through parts of the cave; collecting specimens and selling them as souvenirs or curiosity pieces; improving access to various parts of the cave with ladders, steps, and ropes; conducting tours; and drumming up business in Hot Springs. Along with their work on the cave, the McDonalds also worked at some of the South Dakota Mining Company's other claim sites, hunted, did chores for neighbors, worked on their own home, prospected for minerals or promising quarry sites, and even made trips to the Badlands where they blasted away hillsides to find geodes that could be sold in Hot Springs.[21]

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[19] *Ibid*.
[20] *Hot Springs Star*, 26 December 1890, 30 January, 13 February, 14 February, 27 February and 3 April 1891.
[21] *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1891*. Besides providing a record of early exploration, Alvin McDonald's diary can also be a treasure trove of day-to-day life for the McDonald family at Wind Cave.

This array of work was never regular or lucrative enough to support more than a spartan existence. Nevertheless, the early work on the cave held the promise of future success. It also brought a great deal of satisfaction. More than a site to invest labor and time, the cave was something of a vast family lair that enveloped and defined the McDonalds. Some sense of their relations, and personal attachments to the cave, are evident in an entry from Alvin's diary dated 5 January 1891.

> I have been working out of doors today. I and Elmer started in the cave at 5:15 P.M. And returned to the entrance at 9:31 P.M. We put a shot [dynamite blast] in a small hole in the snow ball route and after getting through, I found a beautiful purple crystal. After bringing two pieces of it out, I traded heaviest one to Mary for a strange fossil that father brought out and gave to her that was worth a good deal more to me than the crystal. The fossil goes in my private collection.[22]

While Mary seems to have spent more of her time working for neighbors, and Jesse was primarily responsible for promoting Wind Cave and managing work at other mining claims, all of the McDonalds explored the cave for new troves of specimens or to find additional passages and rooms that might entice more visitors. None, however, were as passionate about cave exploration as Alvin. His diary, which he began on 1 January 1891 when he was just 17 years old, was primarily devoted to keeping "a correct account of the development and explorations of Wind Cave or any other caverns that fortune favors me to be exploring in. By the word 'exploring' I mean finding cavities that no human beings have yet discovered."[23] In the diary's first month, Alvin recorded 27 separate trips into the cave. In February he logged 33 trips and also accounted for the total amount of time spent in the cave: 119 hours and 45 minutes. Assuming that he slept an average of eight hours per night, and the teenage Alvin made clear on several occasions that he liked to sleep even more than that, his time inside the cave amounted to more than one-fourth of every waking moment that month. In March he spent even more time in the cave, recording 35 trips that totaled 134 hours and 30 minutes. His passion for the cave was evident to tourists, who sometimes felt overwhelmed and worn out by his zeal. On 23 January 1891, for instance, Alvin took two out-of-state visitors on an exploring trip that lasted more than nine hours! "Were plenty tired when we got out," he admitted in his diary. The tour was so extensive, in fact, that it even convinced him to give "up the idea of finding the end of Wind Cave."[24]

For Alvin, the thought of an endless cave was less a matter of resignation than a promise of endless adventure. Indeed, his desire to spend time in the cave sometimes bordered on the obsessive. In one journal entry, he complained of a brief illness that kept

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[22] *Ibid*.
[23] This quote comes from the opening page of Alvin McDonald's Diary for the year 1892. A copy of the entry, written in his own hand, can be viewed at *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1892—1893*, 16 March 2007 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/McDonald_Diary/Page110.pdf> (accessed 6 June 2010).
[24] *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1891*, entry for 23 January 1891.

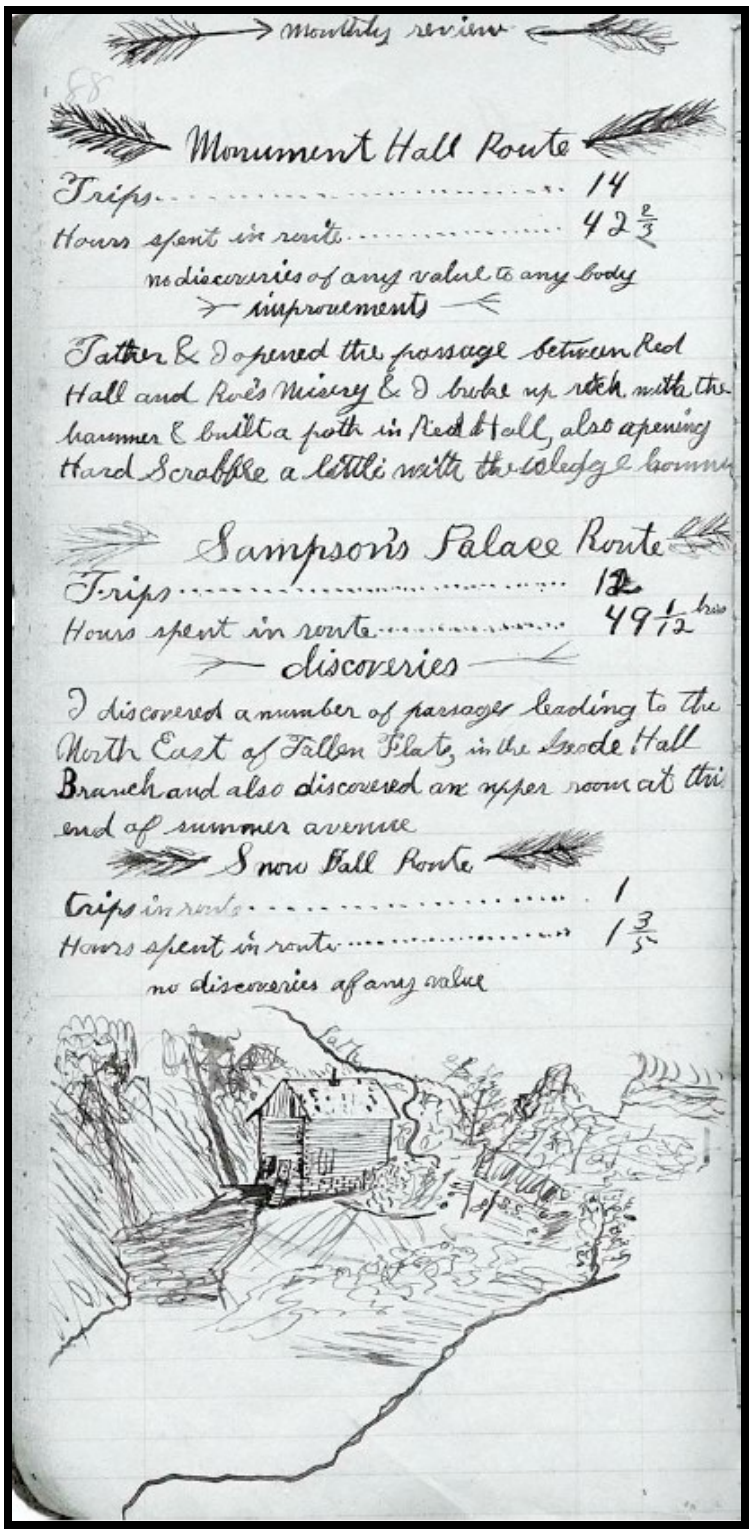

Figure 10.2: Alvin McDonald's Diary, 31 March 1891. This page of shows McDonald's "monthly review" of hours spent exploring select routes and notes on new discoveries. The illustration at the bottom is of the larger cave house and smaller cabin depicted in Figure 10.1. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

him out of the cave. He still managed to spend most the day working on "an itemized map of the Sampson's Palace Route today & got the most of the Geode Hall Branch finished in good colors." The map included some routes he had covered just two days earlier during a seven-hour exploration of new passages. When he exited the cave, he was ecstatic and full of desire to explore more in the coming days. While this venture likely contributed to his illness, the need to convalesce only made Alvin melancholic. After a whole day working on a cave map, and less than 48 hours after his recent adventure, he lamented "Am getting homesick after staying out of the cave so long."[25]

Alvin's passion for exploring is evident in his many diary entries, but the feeling was not his alone. Other members of the McDonald family were deeply enthralled by the cave and the possibility of new discoveries. So too were members of the Stabler family, who came to live at Wind Cave in 1891. Katie Stabler, for instance, offered a reminiscence that provides a very intimate sense of what time in the cave could be like for the two families.

> One experience I remember, Papa [John Stabler] and I were exploring and had, it seems, been in the cave about two hours or more [when we came] … to a small room about 12 feet around shaped like an Indian teepee, the center having a strong draft. Papa had become tired and laid down to rest. (We often went to sleep when tired in cave and never caught cold) I looked down this hole and seeing some rocks that I thought I could reach with my feet, let myself down, my arms resting on the floor until I got my balance. I sat down and lit some magnesium ribbon which I used in large rooms while guiding. I was greatly thrilled being the first person in a room no one had ever been or seen before. It was truly beautiful. It was a very high room, about 100 feet by 50 feet wide. A portion of the ceiling about 30 feet by 15 feet had fallen just about the middle and in falling cracked open. It had their irredesent chocolate colored crystals found no other place in the cave. The rest of the room including the floor was covered with what we called Satin Spar which glistened like diamonds. The pretiest room I ever expect to find this side of heaven. I called Papa and after exploring the room further, we gathered some of the loose pieces of crystals and started our long hard crawl out. As far as I know this room was never named as it was hard to get there and was not shown.[26]

Visiting Wind Cave, 1890-1892

The private, family explorations of the McDonalds and Stablers found a parallel expression in the experiences of early tourists. This partly reflected the simple fact that the cave's primary explorers also made up its small coterie of guides. The McDonald and Stabler children, as well as their fathers, readily imparted their own excitement about the cave to groups of visitors. This came in the stories they told about their own explorations,

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[25] *Ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1891.
[26] Stabler, brief unpublished memoir.

in the names they gave different features, and in the sense of dramatic anticipation they developed in their audience just before flooding a chamber with bright white light from a fast burning magnesium strip. Yet the guides only augmented the attractions that had drawn the visitors to venture beneath the earth: the long black passages, the vast empty darkness of the cave's largest chambers, and the unique features that danced in candlelight or sparkled in the brief glare of magnesium.

For the McDonalds, the Stablers, and the tourists, their experiences in the cave were a heady mix of wonderment and danger that drew on a blend of Old World traditions and New World associations. For Europeans and European Americans, caves had and have a whole host of mythic and even dangerous connotations. As the naturalist Harry Butler recently put it, "they can hold buried treasures, catacombs for the dead, refuges for the living, [and] art galleries for pre-history." They connote the world of earliest humanity, of ice-age "cave men" who "relied on caves for survival against climate change and predators" and made caves "intrinsic to their lives, religion, and death."[27] Dark places of the netherworld, caves also represent passages to ancient realms and fantasy worlds. "As the abode of wonder, mystery and otherness," the writer and inveterate speleologist Hal Calebatch notes, "caves remain without parallel. Throughout the world caves have served as shrines, temples and homes for oracles. They are a source of countless legends and exude a sense of the supernatural, acting as a treasurehouse of adventures for storytellers."[28]

For Americans in the late nineteenth-century, a tour of Wind Cave also evoked associations of discovery. The cave itself had only become known to non-Indians in the past few years, not long after Americans had first become familiar with the Black Hills. In this sense the ancient passage underground was new and little known, and taking a trip into the cave offered a chance to feel like a kind of subterranean Columbus. Discovery was something of a national conceit, especially in the early 1890s when the United States celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas. Yet Wind Cave promised something more than a sensation of discovery. The vast and unknown proportions of the cave suggested that it might be the world's largest. Such a possibility appealed to another national conceit; namely, the propensity to boast about the biggest, tallest, longest, deepest, and greatest places or achievements. In this way, Wind Cave was a kind of underground natural monument for a nation of great destiny.

Its vast scale and abundance of unique features also placed Wind Cave in the rarefied realm of the sublime. As Americans in the late nineteenth-century understood the term, the sublime referred to "Objects of exalted power and grandeur [that] elevate [any] mind that seriously dwells on them, and impart to it a greater compass and strength." Sublime landscapes and natural features like Niagara Falls, Yosemite Valley, a giant sequoia tree, or the dark realms of Wind Cave made suddenly brilliant in a flash of light all, "deepen[ed] contemplation and [gave] their own sublimity to the conceptions of the

[27] Harry Butler, "Forward," in Hal G. P. Colebatch, *Caverns of Magic: Caves in Myth and Imagination* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Cybereditions, 2005), n.p.
[28] Colebatch *Caverns of Magic*, 2.

beholders."[29] In short, an encounter with the sublime was like an encounter with a god: exhilarating, stupefying, terrifying, and spiritually elevating.

In his account of a visit to Wind Cave in 1892, an early tourist and writer named James Morris neatly captured the mixture of physical adventure, sublime quietude and nationalist pride. At the small cabin "over the mouth of the cave," Morris "donned some ragged and dirty clothing, in place of [his] ordinary suit." Then, as he later wrote, he put

> an old felt hat on my head and a candle in my hand, [and] like one doing penance, I was ready to go down into this yawning grave and explore this new world 'Inferno.' We descended a short ladder … the candles were lighted and we followed our guides …. It was down, down, down, by slopes, by steps, by ladders, by ropes; stooping, crawling, sliding; face down, face up; now on one side of the body, then on the other, till the first noted space or chamber was reached. A blue match was lighted, and around and above the solid, forbidding looking walls were seen incrusted with rosettes, from the size of a pea to that of a dollar, which scintillated, glowed and blazed with diamond brilliancy and cooler. It was a fairy scene, bursting as it did from the depressing gloom, and the delighted eyes swept the starry vault until it melted into indistinctness in unscalable heights. Here the true character of the cave, the manner of its formation and its wonderful beauties are first seen.[30]

Later, Morris took a more scientific approach to his praise of Wind Cave, writing that "Nature, in this dark laboratory, with heat, and moisture and chemical gases and petrific forces has produced forms of delicacy and grace, more exquisite than art could execute or mind conceive." Bringing science to bear on one's appreciation of the beautiful was common among nineteenth-century tourists, and only deepened their sense of appreciation for the works of creation. Indeed, Morris believed the marvels of Wind Cave demanded further study: "Depths and distances should be ascertained by scientific means, and some steps taken to define its real origin and character and portray its unrivaled splendors." Then, with a decidedly nationalistic overtone, he closed his remarks with an observation that the "gem incrusted labyrinth" would make a worthy "sarcophagus for a continent, and before whose proportions and adornments the historic grottoes and caves of the old world grow small and mean."[31]

Discovery, nationalism, and the sublime were all part of the Wind Cave experience for early tourists. They were, in fact, the basic raw materials of late nineteenth-century tourism: a form of commerce that the late historian Hal Rothman defined as "a process of designing and defining intangible commodities [or experiences]

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[29] Quote from Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 195.
[30] James Morris, "The Wind Cave of South Dakota," *Great Divide* 7, no. 6 (1893): 121.
[31] *Ibid*.

that can be psychologically possessed."[32] Fun and novelty were also a key part of the mix. This is evident in the many names used to identify specific features in the cave. Along with "Sampson's Palace, "Capitol Hall," and "Garden of Eden," visitors also passed "Prairie Dog and Mound," "New York Elevated Railroad," Popcorn Alley," and "Sheep."[33] Wind Cave may not have been a sarcophagus for a continent, but it was something like a subterranean World's Fair. The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago was filled with edifying exhibits about industry, science, progress and national achievement, and visitors were amazed by a gleaming landscape of fountains, gardens and magnificent white buildings. Yet they were also drawn to the Midway where they could take in a show by the dancer known as "Little Egypt, the Bewitching Bellyrina," ride on George Ferris's 264-foot wheel, or step outside the fairgrounds and watch Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.[34] A tour of Wind Cave operated in a similar manner, as visitors left the "Crystal Palace" chamber to pass through "Beauty Parlor" and grunt along "Hard Scrabble Avenue" before arriving at the more noble, and more nobly named, "Capitol Hall" and "Cathedral."

Unsettling Claims on Wind Cave

As Jesse McDonald first began his efforts to promote and develop Wind Cave for visitation, he apparently did so with Robert Moss' tacit approval. In his account of various cave discoveries, Alvin McDonald noted that he and Moss explored in the cave on at least one occasion: "On the 26th day of November 1890," Alvin wrote, "the route, Summer Avenue, Irish Misery and Sceneries of Wicklow [now known as Temple] were discovered by R. B. Moss and A.F. McDonald." In early January of 1891, Moss was back at Wind Cave with his family and some business associates from Custer City. Alvin took them on a four-hour midnight tour into the Cave that went from 8:40 p.m. to 1:40 a.m. They made it as far as Moss's Palace, recently named by Alvin, and along the way found new parts of the cave they named Whitney Avenue and Shadowy Depths. [35] Moss was also aware that the McDonalds were blasting and removing specimens from the cave, at least some of which they delivered to his offices in Four Mile.[36]

Giving tours of Wind Cave remained a fairly informal affair through 1890 and into the spring of 1891, and probably did not concern Moss or anyone else with the South Dakota Mining Company. Visitor interest in the cave was mostly local and regional, and the tours did not seem to interfere with the other work Moss expected from the McDonalds. Wind Cave was technically still a mine, but giving tours of a mine actually had an important precedent. The coal mining complex at Mauch Chunk in eastern

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[32] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 7.
[33] *Wind Cave National Park, Historic Place Names, 1880-1901*, 28 January 2008 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/historic-place-names-1880-1901.htm> (accessed 6 June 2010).
[34] Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 38-71.
[35] *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1891*, entry for 8 January 1891. J.L. Downs did errands and business for Moss.
[36] *Ibid*., entry for 3 May 1891; McDonald notes, "Hartman took a lot of specimens up to Moss this morning. I met Mr. J.D. Davis at Wests this morning."

Pennsylvania, with its raucous rail car rides, had been one of the nation's most popular tourist sites since the 1820s.[37] If nothing else, tourism and notoriety might foster a decent market in cave specimens, which, after all, were acquired with the basic tools of a small-scale mining operation.[38]

Circumstances started to change in the spring of 1891, however. In early April, Isaacher Scholfield of Buffalo Gap announced that he also had a mining claim on the Wind Cave site. As Alvin noted in his diary for 8 April 1891, "Scholfield had been up to 'Custer City" S.D. trying to sell Wind Cave." Whether that meant he had offered to sell his claim to Moss and the South Dakota Mining Company is not clear, but from the McDonalds' perspective this was disturbing news. Scholfield was a State Senator and a figure of some importance in the southern Hills. On 20 April, Alvin reported that a "Deputy sheriff for Buffalo Gap came here and showed us a notice notifying us to remove from the claim of I. Scholfield …. [A]t 2:00 P.M. I started for Moss City with the notice in my pocket" to deliver the news to Robert Moss.[39]

The McDonalds scoffed at the Scholfield claim, and Alvin even boasted that "He [Scholfield] will get scared out of his share."[40] Perhaps Alvin was right, since the McDonalds were not evicted and nothing ever directly came of Scholfield's legal action. Nevertheless, the claim must have factored into the South Dakota Mining Company's efforts to secure better title to the site. At about the same time Scholfield made his claim on Wind Cave, the Company's attorney, Edward L. Grantham of Custer, reminded Moss that the titles to the Wind Cave site "were mineral and possessory only in an agricultural district." He advised Moss to take advantage of McDonald's residence at Wind Cave and have him, as "your agent, make declaration of his intention to enter as homestead or preempt the ground there or 160 acres of it and enter into contract for deed to the S.D.M.Co."[41]

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[37] John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 191-208. In 1954, Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk incorporated together as the city of Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania.

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1891*, entry for 20 April 1891. Scholfield is identified as "J. Scholfield" in the transcription of Alvin McDonald's diary, but the original document shows that McDonald wrote the letter "I" for the first initial. State records indicate that Isaacher Scholfield of Buffalo Gap served in the South Dakota State Senate from 1891-1892. A copy of the original diary entry can be viewed at <http://www.nps.gov/wica/MCDonald_Diary/Page076.pdf> (accessed 7 June 2010). For Scholfield's tenure in the State Senate, see *South Dakota Legislature: Historical Listing—Legislator Information*, 2010 <http://legis.state.sd.us/historical/LegislatorDetail.aspx?MemberID=1362> (accessed 7 June 2010). The term "Moss City" was sometimes applied to Four Mile, SD; see Jones, *History of the Black Hills and Wind Cave National Park*, 34.

[40] *Alvin McDonald's Diary (Text) 1891*, entry for 8 April 1891.

[41] Quotes are from Gladys Moss Bingham to Edward D. Freeland, 15 January 1938: F Ref 1880, Folder 9 "Correspondence Concerning Wind Cave," WCNP Archives. The first quotation is from Mrs. Bingham's recollection of events, while the second quotation comes directly from Grantham's letter to her father, Robert Moss, which was in her possession. Though Bingham does not give a date for the letter, subsequent developments indicate that Grantham probably wrote it in early 1891, some time after he accompanied the Moss family and other South Dakota Mining Company associates on their visit to Wind Cave on 8 January. The tour of Wind Cave was as much a visit as an assessment, and must have caused Moss and Grantham to rethink the nature of the site's future development—and the ultimate security of the Company's title. Such

Grantham's plan was clearly fraudulent since it violated one of the central conditions of the 1862 Homestead Act: all filers were required to sign an affidavit that a homestead claim was "made for his or her exclusive use and benefit and that, said entry is made for the purposes of actual settlement and cultivation, and not, either directly or indirectly, for the use or benefit of any other person or persons."[42] The goal of this regulation was to prevent one party from acquiring large swaths of land through proxies or agents, but such abuse was common in many parts of the West. Grantham, Moss and McDonald were certainly aware of this legal stipulation, yet all agreed to the plan as initially proposed.[43]

While the McDonald family's presence at Wind Cave, and the buildings constructed at the site, would give them preemption rights to the land, Jesse McDonald was not able to act on this scheme until the area had been surveyed and officially opened for settlement. The General Land Office survey of Township 6 South, Range 5 East (T6S R5E), in which Wind Cave is situated, was not completed until 15 October 1892. The survey was not approved, and the land opened for settlement, until 29 July 1893. Even then, McDonald still did not file his homestead claim until 15 July 1894. Why he waited so long poses a riddle, but its answer begins with the dissolution of his relations with Moss and the South Dakota Mining Company.

The trouble apparently started sometime after Grantham composed his letter on how to better secure title to Wind Cave. While there are no reports that Moss ever expressed any concerns about the guiding of tourists through Wind Cave, or even suggested that he should receive a share of any proceeds from those activities, he certainly felt a right to the cave specimens that the McDonalds were removing from the site. In the winter and spring of 1891, almost all of the work the McDonalds conducted at the site involved blasting, collecting, loading, and removing specimens from the cave. Moss was certainly aware of this work, though probably not its full extent. The McDonalds, for their part, felt obliged to send specimens to Moss in Custer City. After all, Moss owned the mining rights to Wind Cave and thus a substantial share of the valuable contents they removed.

Within this basic concurrence lay a lot of room for disagreement. How much belonged to the owners of the South Dakota Mining Company, and how much should

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thoughts would have been further augmented by a mining assay by Peter Folsom that "showed a return of only a dollar per yard of material." While it is very likely that Moss and Grantham would have known of Scholfield's intentions before they were reported by Alvin McDonald, it may have been Alvin McDonald's visit to Grantham's office in Custer City on 21 April that prompted the letter. In either case, Scholfield's actions would have only given more focus and urgency to the concerns expressed in Grantham's letter to Moss. For Folsom's assay report and its likely significance, see Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud," 3.

[42] *An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain*, *Statutes at Large*, 12, 392. Western History Research, *Land Study*, 34-36.

[43] In her letter to Superintendent Freeland, Gladys Moss Bingham noted that McDonald "was quite willing at that time he was very grateful and appreciative for all that had been done for him and his family." The agreement, in the form of a signed contract, is noted by Bingham and is referenced in a telegram from S.J. Lowell to R.B. Moss dated 25 November 1893. A copy of the telegram was included in her correspondence to Superintendent Freeland. Bingham to Freeland, 15 January 1938.

remain with the McDonalds for sale to tourists and others was one point of contention. The amount of specimens actually removed from the cave, and the amount that Moss and his associates were aware of, was another important discrepancy. Sometime after receiving a cartload of specimens from Wind Cave in early May 1891, Moss realized how much distance lay between these two perspectives and concluded that they were unbridgeable. What McDonald was sending him was clearly not enough, either in quality, quantity, or in percentage of all that was being removed from the cave. McDonald obviously thought otherwise, either viewing his share of the cave specimens as a necessary and deserved portion of his earnings or as something that corresponded to his private efforts to develop the cave as a tourist site.

By the summer of 1891, matters came to a head. In early July, Jesse announced through the *Hot Springs Star* that he intended "to organize a company having for its objective the more perfect opening of the cave."[44] Moss could not abide this new development and soon responded with a registered letter to McDonald. "I hereby require you," Moss wrote with barely contained anger,

> to at once furnish me a full accounting of all the specimens taken from the Wind Cave properties—during the time you have had charge of the cave. Such accounting to include the value of all specimens taken by you from said claims, the amounts realized by you from sales thereof, and collected by you from visitors admitted to view said claims, and an account of your expenditures in connection therewith. Such accounts to cover each month separate and distinct.
>
> You will please make and hand to me the information and account above requested not later than the 20th of the present month [August] and mail said report to me at Custer City ….[45]

McDonald apparently made some effort to comply with this directive, as evidenced by Alvin's sudden but brief use of his diary as a kind of account book for the daily revenues of tours and specimens.[46] Whether Moss ever received the demanded accounting is unknown, but Jesse McDonald was not dissuaded from his efforts to further develop the cave.

Moss essentially viewed McDonald as an embezzler, and that view would only harden over the next few years. McDonald apparently saw himself as the free-lance proprietor of a budding tourist attraction, and came to view Moss as an interloper rather than an employer. From McDonald's perspective, he was responsible to the South Dakota Mining Company for the supervision of a relatively small mining operation. Anything

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[44] *Hot Springs Star*, 3 July 1891.

[45] R.B. Moss to J.D. McDonald, 16 August 1891: F Ref 1880, Folder 9 "Correspondence Concerning Wind Cave," WCNP Archives.

[46] Alvin's accounting runs from mid July to early August. In many of the financial notations the writing is different from the body of the diary entry, and it is likely that these figures were added after receipt of the registered letter from Moss. From late July into early August, the diary was devoted entirely to entries on the amounts received for tours and specimens.

beyond that was a personal sideline, and he had no intention of halting his plans to develop the cave. He recognized that Wind Cave's potential lay within the context of Hot Springs' rapid development and tourism. Hitching his wagon to that future, McDonald clearly viewed his interests as more legitimate than any claims Moss might have on him or the cave. The two men would soon become embroiled in a difficult legal battle that eventually pulled in a host of other parties with competing interests. The primary motivation behind their claims stemmed from the potential value of Wind Cave as a prime tourist attraction. Through the 1890s, the development and realization of that potential fueled a tangled mess of lawsuits and countersuits that ultimately destroyed their claims to the site and contributed directly to Wind Cave's becoming a national park.

The first steps toward making Wind Cave into a place worth fighting over, and eventually "set apart as a public park," began with the early efforts of the McDonald family. Matters did not become truly complicated until Jesse McDonald joined with John Stabler and others to form the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company. With more capital and more players, the promotion and development of Wind Cave began in earnest. While this established a good foundation for Wind Cave's fame in the coming decade, it also greatly complicated the legal issues already surrounding the ownership or management of the cave. Concerns about land titles fostered tension between the partners, while disagreements over money and property eventually made the McDonalds and Stablers into bitter courtroom adversaries. As they fought with Moss and then each other, their actions reached such a level of animosity, and attracted so much notoriety, that the plaintiffs and all other interested observers could agree on just one thing: if their party could not win the rights to Wind Cave, then it was better that no one did. On this last score, it might be said that everyone got something they wanted. How this consolation prize became the capstone for so much effort and antagonism, and how it resulted in the creation of a national park, is not a simple story, but it begins with an addendum to Jesse's original announcement to the *Hot Springs Star* about wanting a partner: "All that is lacking to make the Wind Cave a popular resort is a good hotel. Here is a chance for a good investment."[47]

McDonald's interest in a partner, preferably a hotelier, seemed to describe John Stabler to a "T." The Stabler family had recently come to Hot Springs from Chamberlain, South Dakota, where they ran The Brule hotel for two years. Business boomed for a while, since Chamberlain was the western terminus of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & Saint Paul Railroad and homesteaders were arriving en masse to make claims on the newly opened lands of the Great Sioux Reservation. Once the land rush was over, however, the Stablers sought out a new opportunity in Hot Springs and took over management of the newly constructed Parrott Hotel in the spring of 1891. That summer, John Stabler learned of Jesse's desire for a partner and made his first visit to Wind Cave. As his daughter Katie Stabler later recalled, he "saw great possibilities for development."[48]

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[47] *Hot Springs Star*, 17 July 1891. The quote comes from the *Star* writer, but is based on comments that Jesse McDonald made during a visit to the paper's office.
[48] Stabler, brief unpublished memoir.

The Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company

What little is known about the formation of the Wonderful Wind Cave Company is clouded by subsequent animosities between the McDonalds and Stablers. Jesse's daughter-in-law, Emma Wickstrom McDonald, later recalled that the partnership stemmed from "the anxious solicitations of John Stabler." For a "few hundred dollars in trade [food and supplies]," Stabler "acquired one third interest in the income that would accrue from fees paid by visitors for guides, candles, use of overalls and caps etc." The partnership also obligated "said John Stabler and his two sons, George and Charlie Stabler to put in their time at the cave as Guides and to help with the work of further exploring and opening up of the cave, or chambers in the cave." McDonald also "gave the Stablers the privilege of running a hotel at the cave; they to furnish everything and receiving all profits from said hotel."[49]

Stabler's daughter Katie provided a different recollection that partly corresponds with Alvin's diary notations about his family's frequent hunger, the McDonalds difficult relationship with Moss, and the *Hot Springs Star* notices on Jesse's desire for a partner. "Some time that first summer of 1891 Papa went out to Wind Cave," she wrote, which

> was occupied by a Mr. McDonald (a squatter) … [who had] jumped the [Moss] claim and took it as a homestead. This was unknown to my father at this time or he would not have bought into the cave. McDonald's family were starving, very hardup, and was very anxious for someone to invest money in the developing of the cave. He sold Papa one-half intrest (sic) and we sent out wagon loads of food several times.[50]

Whatever the specifics of the original agreement, and whatever bit of misrepresentation or misunderstanding may have existed between the McDonalds and Stablers, both families brought certain virtues to the partnership. As Tom Farrell rightly notes, the "McDonalds, with Alvin leading the way, were the driving force behind the cave's exploration. The miles of cave discovered included many beautiful rooms, rooms people were willing to spend money to see." Their efforts had also yielded a good deal of specimens, which sold anywhere from 10¢ to $25 and even $100. Stabler had sufficient capital to boost these efforts as well as to build and run a small hotel. Yet Stabler brought more than money to the partnership. A jovial, natural-born promoter and glad-hander, Stabler became well known in Hot Springs as "Jolly John," "Honest John" and by a number of other happy epithets. His garrulous ways also found expression in promotional ventures that soon brought national attention to Wind Cave.[51]

Through the first two years of the partnership, the prospects for both families

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[49] Quoted in Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 394.
[50] Stabler, brief unpublished memoir.
[51] Farrell, "McDonald-Stabler Feud," 6. Alvin McDonald's diary only notes specimen sales in terms of a few dollars per item. The reference to the purchase of a $100 specimen comes from Morris, "The Wind Cave of South Dakota," 121.

Figure 10.3: Stage Coach Arriving at Wind Cave Hotel, ca. early 1890s. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

seemed very bright. In July and August of 1891, with McDonalds and Stablers working together, new sections of the cave were explored, tour routes were improved for easier passage, and abundant hauls of specimens were removed for sale to visitors and in shops around Hot Springs. Visitation picked up as well. Fred Evans arranged for a free stage service from Hot Springs to Wind Cave, which regularly carried 8 to 10 visitors per day. For the month of August, McDonald reported that more than 200 people toured the cave; surpassing the record set the previous month. In September, the *Hot Springs Star* ran a feature story on Wind Cave, noting that an "immense amount of work has been done in enlarging some of the passages thereby making the trip through the cave easier."[52]

In late November 1891, Wind Cave hosted its largest group of visitors to date when Black Hills College President John W. Hancher brought 30 students, faculty, and invited guests up from Hot Springs. After lunch the party was divided, with Alvin McDonald taking "the stouter boys" on a longer tour and the "lady students and a few boys" following another guide on a one-hour tour that went as far as the "Dining Hall" and "First Spring." Reverend Hancher joined the first group, which celebrated a religious service in a chamber with a large rock that resembles a pulpit. Hancher and his party christened the room the "Methodist Episcopal Church, and in subsequent years the college made a November "excursion to Wind Cave … one of the regular features of the [academic] year." The "Church" also became a regular resting area for longer tours and guides generally led visitors in a hymn or popular song.[53]

In early 1892 Jesse McDonald and John Stabler formed the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company, with George H. Bronte, Charles Stabler, and M.V.B. Osmer as additional stockholders. This formalized the partnership they had established the previous summer and brought in new sources of capital to finance continued development of the cave. John Stabler, who was subsequently named "superintendent and overseer" of the cave, also opened the Wind Cave Hotel in late spring with his son George serving as manager.[54] While opening the hotel at Wind Cave and enlarging the Parrott Hotel in Hot Springs, Stabler was also working on a new publicity stunt for the cave: the Petrified Man. Supposedly found in early July about 3 miles north of Wind Cave, the object was displayed in the cave where the curious paid 25¢ to lift a sheet and gaze on a figure that "was well-formed and fully developed physically even to sex."[55]

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[52] "A Day at Wind Cave," *Hot Springs Star*, 25 September 1891.

[53] Star, 4 December 1891. On guides, see *Wind Cave National Park: Wind Cave Room Names* <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/wind-cave-room-names.htm> (accessed 3 May 2010), and Stabler, brief unpublished memoir. For notice of the annual excursion from Black Hills College see *Hot Springs Star*, 18 November 1892.

[54] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 392; *Hot Springs Star*, 26 February, 6 May and 3 June 1892. As Katie Stabler notes in her brief unpublished memoir, when the hostelry at Wind Cave was first built it was called the Wind Cave Hotel. In subsequent years it would also become known as the Stabler Hotel.

[55] *Hot Springs Star*, 15 July 1892.The *Star* reported that Stabler and his partners had "this most wonderful piece of petrifaction out at the cave where it is on exhibition at 25 cents an exhibit." While it is not clear whether this meant the Petrified Man was on exhibit in the cave itself, or outside near the entrance, a brief essay on the Wind Cave National Park website states that the figure was "displayed in the cave." However, this statement is made without attribution, and no particular chamber in the cave is identified. See *Wind Cave's Early Days* 29 April 2006 <http://www.nps.gov/archive/wica/Wind_Caves_Early_Days.htm> (accessed 25 October 2010). Other writers follow the less specific wording used in the *Hot Springs Star*.

Petrified men were something of a fad in the late nineteenth-century West. One of the more famous was "McGinty," an actual corpse that had been filled with preservatives and displayed in 1892 by the famed con man Jefferson "Soapy" Smith in Colorado.[56] The minute descriptions published in the *Star* suggest the Wind Cave figure may have been a similar concoction, but Hot Springs old-timers would later suggest that the Petrified Man was created in the Parrott Hotel out of plaster-of-paris. What ever the case, the figure was reportedly purchased for $2,000 from its two unnamed discoverers by George Bronte of the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company. After displaying the object at the cave and in Hot Springs, Stabler and Bronte subsequently traveled around parts of the Midwest to exhibit the "wonderful curiosity" and advertise Wind Cave. They eventually sold it in Kansas and returned to Hot Springs, richer for the effort and ready to promote Wind Cave even more.[57]

Even more than the preceding year, 1893 began with great promise for Wind Cave. The Stablers and McDonalds spent the winter making "extensive improvements" that included "blasting out … narrow passages" and installing more lighting fixtures throughout the tour routes. In late winter, George Stabler was "appointed postmaster at Wind Cave—a new office having been established." As the *Star* reported, "This will be a great convenience for the people out that way and the many visitors to the cave, who go there to stay for a few days." As Wind Cave became more central to the lives of its neighbors, and more closely connected to Hot Springs, John Stabler gave up his lease on the Parrott Hotel and moved to work full-time at his new establishment at Wind Cave.[58] The Company also gained another shareholder, George Chamberlain of Illinois, who started to promote an electric rail line from Hot Springs to Wind Cave and even spoke of bringing in excursion parties from Chicago. The now five owners of the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company also made plans to join with Fred Evans' efforts to promote the area at the upcoming World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Unlike Evans, who only planned to send displays on Hot Springs for the South Dakota state exhibit, Jesse McDonald decided to spend several months at the fair personally advertising Wind Cave and selling specimens.[59]

By far the grandest event of the year came on Thursday, May 18, when Wind Cave celebrated its opening for the coming tourist season. At 9:00 a.m. a number of newspaper editors and local luminaries "were joined by about one hundred" residents and visitors in Hot Springs, and the whole host set out by carriages and tally ho coaches for the cave. Led by a brass band, "the procession as it left [Hot Springs] presented quite a gala day appearance." As the *Hot Springs Star* reported, "dinner was served at [Stabler's]

These include Robert D. Woodward, "World of Darkness: Early Explorations of the Cave," in *Wind Cave* ([Washington, DC]: National Park Service, 1979), 56-57; and John Hafnor, *Black Hills Believables: Strange-but-True Tales of the Old West* (Fort Collins, CO: Lone Pine Productions, 2002), 10. There is no mention of the Petrified Man in Alvin McDonald's diary or in Katie Stabler's brief unpublished memoir.

[56] Jeff Smith, *Alias Soapy Smith: The Life and Death of a Scoundrel* (Juneau, AK: Klondike Research, 2009), 237-243.

[57] The *Hot Springs Star* noted that Jesse McDonald was a co-owner of the "Petrified Man," along with Stabler and Bronte; *Hot Springs Star*, 30 September 1892.

[58] *Ibid.*, 13 January, 10 March, and 26 May 1893.

[59] Woodward, "World of Darkness," 57.

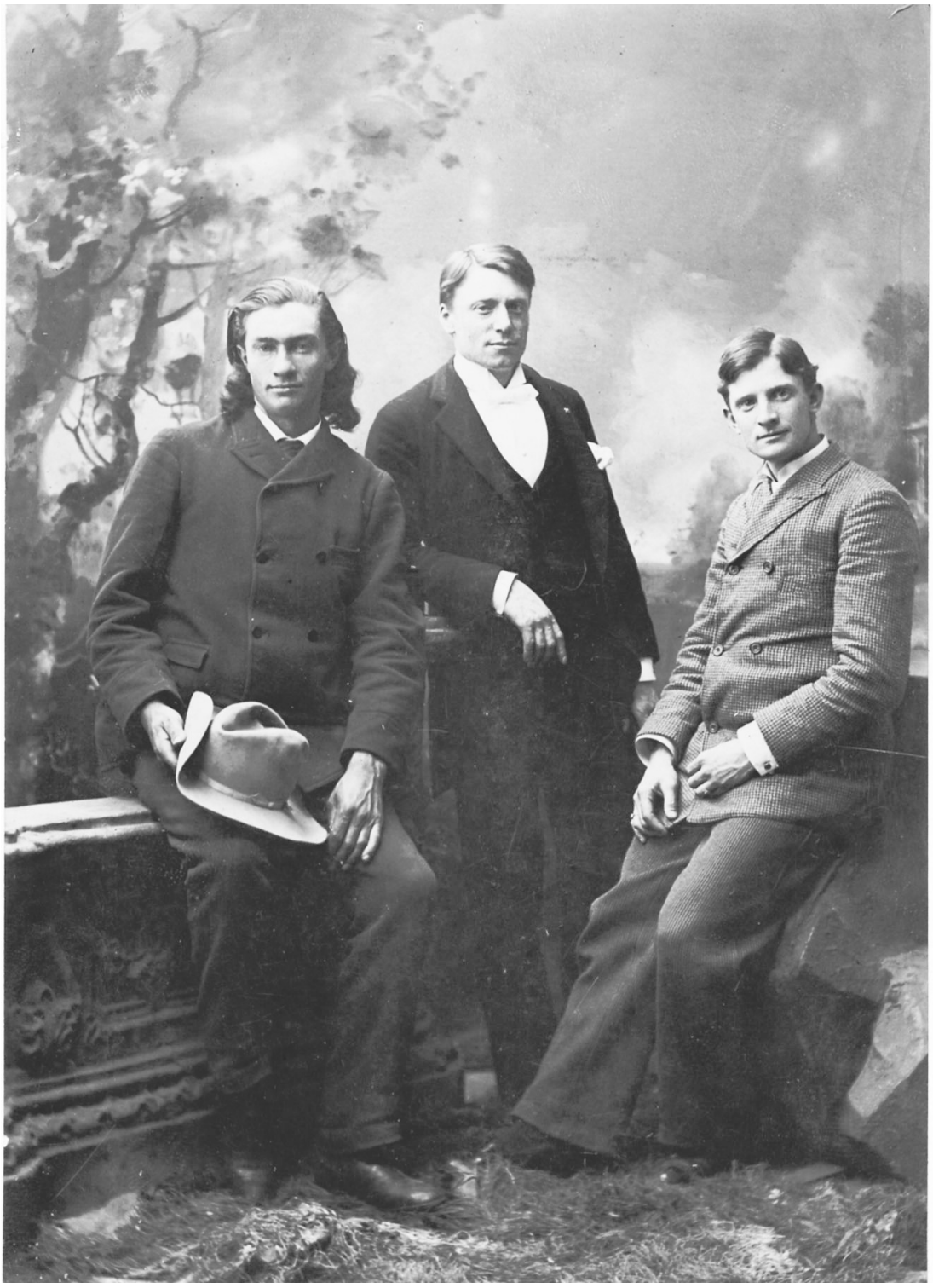

Figure 10.4: Alvin McDonald, Paul Johnstone, and John Moore (1893). Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

welcome rest inn and then the large company was divided into five companies, who under the direction of skillful guides proceeded to take in the wonders of the cave." The *Rapid City Republican* reported that "under present management access to chief points of interest has been made easy … and the darkness of the side passages, domes and chasms is lighted up so as to render additional enchantment to the wonderful scenes." One of the memorable highlights of the day occurred in the recently opened Garden of Eden chamber, where 53 people were entertained "in that palace worthy of the gods as our band discoursed music." The *Republican* pronounced the whole day an "unallowyed pleasure and great praise is due Messrs. McDonald and Stabler for the respectful care and kindness extended to their numerous visitors."[60]

The success of the gala event was soon augmented by a more carnivalesque promotion that garnered Wind Cave even wider attention. In late May, the Hot Springs Opera House hosted a series of shows by Alexander Johnstone, a "famous mind reader" who had previously achieved some renown for staging a sensational carriage ride through Chicago while blind-folded. During Johnstone's stint in Hot Springs, he joined with Wind Cave's promoters to cook up a truly outlandish stunt. Johnstone announced that "a committee of citizens and scientists" would secret a pin in Wind Cave, which he would then find while blindfolded. Why he needed a blindfold in a cave was not explained, nor did anyone seem to ask why a mind reader needed to be tied to a guide who would have candles. At any rate, Johnstone's manager found a number of willing bettors who subsequently lost their money when his man emerged from the cave three days later—with pin in hand. The stunt also garnered a great deal of publicity for the cave. A photographer was sent by the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad to document the adventure and papers across the country carried the story.[61]

By the summer of 1893, all of Jesse McDonald's original hopes, and all of John Stabler's high expectations, must have seemed like they were about to become reality. Sadly for both men, the next few years would unfold like the last act of a classic tragedy. Though they did not realize it at the time, the triumphs of 1893 would be shadowed by a lawsuit from Robert Moss. After taking care of his father's estate, Moss had come back to the Black Hills and turned his attentions to the South Dakota Mining Company in the spring of 1893. Struggling to hold the family's fortunes together in the midst of the national economic crisis known as the Panic of 1893, Moss endeavored to straighten out the company's holdings, call in creditors, and collect for past services. No doubt stung by the very public endeavors at Wind Cave, Moss filed suit against McDonald and the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company on 24 July. In some respects Moss would become an even more tragic figure than either of his antagonists, since his legal action would initiate a series of events that ultimately thwarted all of their dreams.

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[60] *Hot Springs Star*, 19 May 1893; *Rapid City Republican*, 26 May, included in "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives.

[61] Woodward, "World of Darkness," 56-61.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE END OF THE WONDERFUL WIND CAVE IMPROVEMENT COMPANY AND THE MAKING OF WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK

Robert Moss' suit against Jesse McDonald, John Stabler and their partners essentially boiled down to a four-part argument: Moss claimed that he "possessed and [was] entitled to … the sole actual, peacible and undisputed possession" of Wind Cave and surrounding mining claims; the formation of the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company usurped his rights; he deserved $2700 for "the value of the rents, issues and profits" of the cave from 1 January 1892 until the time of the lawsuit; and the Company must cease its actions and leave the premises. The heart of the lawsuit hinged on Moss' assertion that the cave site

> is chiefly valuable for the minerals contained therein and the defendant is constantly engaged in extracting the said minerals and mineral specimens … and selling and disposing of the same to the great detriment of the said property and to the great damage of this plaintiff in an amount which it is impossible … to estimate and the said defendants are now advertising and threatening to continue to extract and sell the said minerals.[1]

Moss clearly implied that removing specimens was a form of mining, but he also suggested that such activity damaged the scenic or touristic qualities of the cave. In doing so he basically acknowledged that the main purpose of sustaining the mining claim was not to extract minerals, but to conduct people into the cave. Selling souvenirs and specimens was an important, but a secondary concern.

Katie Stabler later suggested that the lawsuit, and its implication that Jesse McDonald might have jumped another's claim to the Wind Cave site, came as a surprise to her father John Stabler. He apparently made not mention of the matter, and enthusiastically took charge of the matter for the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company. While Stabler would later rejoice "over the victory achieved in court" against Moss, his efforts were neither decisive nor necessary. Instead, they would be trumped by two cases against the South Dakota Mining Company from Peter Folsom, who sued in February 1893 for non-payment of assay work on various mineral claims. Folsom filed another suit in the summer of 1893, and both cases made their way through the court system. While Folsom did not demand a large repayment, Moss had apparently lost too much money in a series of bank failures and bad loans to make any restitution. Folsom eventually won a judgment against Moss when the latter simply failed to answer to the

[1] *South Dakota Mining Company v. The Wonderful Wind Cave Company*, Custer County Clerk of Courts, complaint dated 25 July 1893: copy in F Ref 1880, Folder 9 "Correspondence Concerning Wind Cave," Wind Cave National Park Archives (hereafter WCNP Archives).

court. In lieu of payment, Folsom eventually received the rights to a number of the South Dakota Mining Company's mining claims, including the ones for Wind Cave.[2]

Even before the Folsom cases had been decided, Jesse McDonald, John Stabler, George Stabler, and Elmer McDonald all sought to strengthen their claims on Wind Cave by filing 160 acre homestead claims on 15 January 1894. On 15 March Katie Stabler filed on land adjacent to her father and brother, and a friend of the Stabler's named Pete Paulson selected a nearby parcel. Four days later, Jesse's mother Susanna McDonald filed on a tract of land, and on 25 July Jesse's second wife, Margaret Drinkham, whom he married that summer, did as well. Much as Moss' lawyer Edward Grantham had once counseled, the McDonalds and Stablers sought to secure their hold on Wind Cave through agricultural claims.[3]

In the midst of all these homestead filings, Moss proved unable to prosecute his suit against the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company. The case was soon dismissed when Moss, likely overwhelmed by the same financial concerns that were preventing him from effectively defending his interests against Folsom, failed to address a simple court order. With Moss temporarily out of the way, and their land claims filed, the McDonald and Stabler families should have felt a new sense of security and vindication. Something else was afoot, however. Instead of trying to jointly block off the area for their mutual benefit, it seems that the land filings by the two families were competitive rather than complimentary.

Jesse, who claimed the land around the cave opening, and his mother, who filed on land immediately adjacent to her son's, won the first round of this unannounced competition. Using the mining claim he signed with Moss to establish a five-year residency at Wind Cave, and paying an additional fee to accelerate the patenting of his claim, Jesse McDonald obtained a receiver's receipt for the land around the cave site on 4 June 1895. His mother received her receipt just four months later. Katie Stabler, who described Jesse as "very ignorant," later surmised that the McDonalds believed these documents gave them full title to the land.[4] However, there was one more formal step in the process of obtaining title to a homestead or timber and stone claim; a "final proof" that involved an official examination of the land in question to insure that requirements for improvement and residence had been fulfilled. Whether or not McDonald was aware

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[2] John Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave: A History of the National Park," in *South Dakota Historical Collections* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society, 1962), 394-5.

[3] According to the *Hot Springs Star*, George Stabler filed a claim under the Timber and Stone Act of 1878. This Act extended the provisions of the original Homestead Act to land deemed unfit for farming. The primary land uses by which a claimant could prove up a claim were timber cutting and quarrying. Katie Stabler recalled that Homestead or Preemption claims were made alongside the Timber and Stone filings, to bring the total acreage for each claimant to 320 acres. See Catherine Rose "Katie" Stabler (brief unpublished memoir), *Wind Cave National Park: Katie Stabler*, 25 January 2008 <http://www.nps.gov/wica/historyculture/katie-stabler.htm> (accessed 8 May 2010). Also see *Hot Springs Star*, 19 January 1894; all citations of the *Hot Springs Star* are from "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives.

[4] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 398.

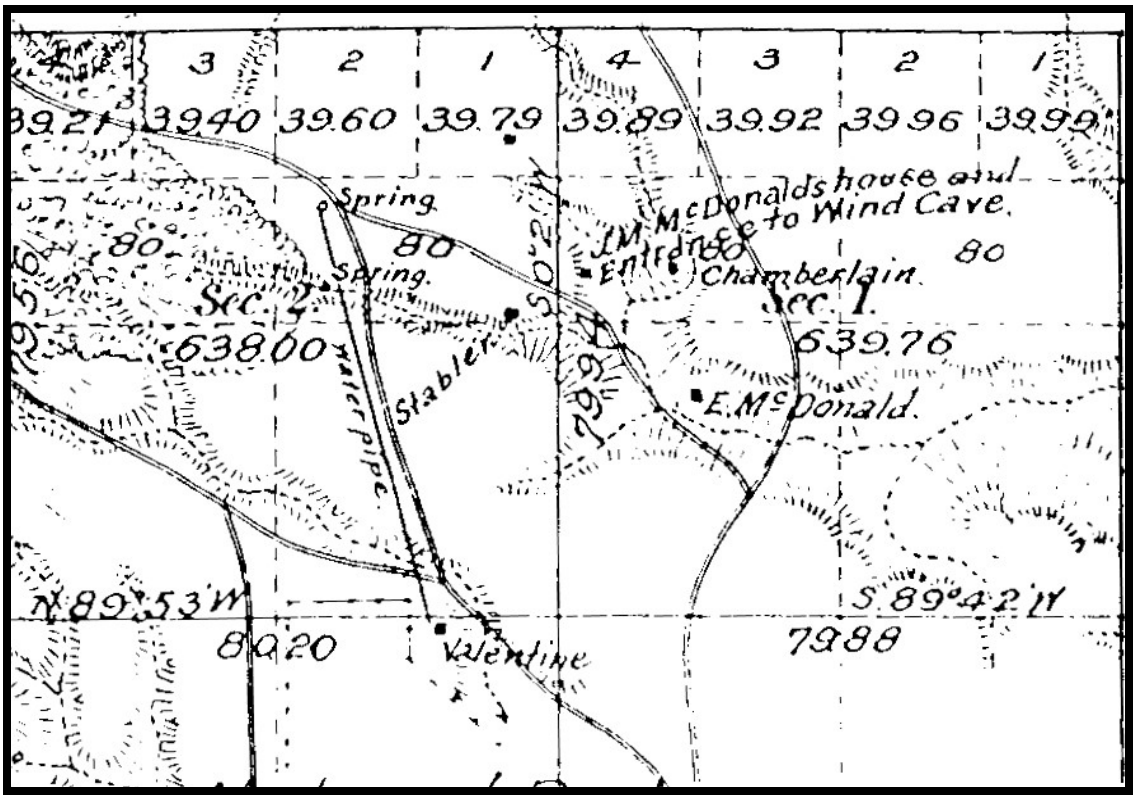

Figure 11.1: Detail of General Land Office Survey of NE corner of T6S R5E (1893). The Map shows the locations of the Wind Cave Hotel (under the name "Stabler"), the "J.M. McDonald house and Entrance to Wind Cave," and the home of "E. McDonald." The Valentine Ranch and its water source would be acquired by the Stablers, and become Katie Stabler's home, in 1894. The name Chamberlain, just north of the cave entrance, refers to the claim of George Chamberlain, who became a partner in the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company in 1893. Source: Reproduced in Western History Research, *Wind Cave National Park Land Study: Compiled Data* (Bozeman, MT: Western History Research, 1993).

of this last, and generally *pro forma* requirement, he did not complete the patenting process before Moss, Stabler, Folsom and others raised serious challenges to his land claim. In response, McDonald would attempt to ban the Stablers from Wind Cave altogether and to gain exclusive rights to the site.[5]

The McDonald-Stabler Feud

The immediate trigger for this turn of events was another court challenge from Moss and a dispute with Stabler over business revenues and expenses. However, as Tom Farrell notes, the real cause behind these dramatic new developments was intrinsic to the McDonald-Stabler partnership "from almost the very beginning." "The two families had almost nothing in common besides the cave," Farrell writes. "Part of the problem was the division of labor. The unbalanced number of sons, daughters, and in-laws between the families created controversy over the amount of work each family was to contribute." Perhaps an even bigger and more basic issue was class. As Charles Stabler would later recall, his family was "fairly affluent" when they first arrived at Wind Cave while the McDonalds had "nothing." This financial inequality certainly contributed to some unease between the families who were neighbors as well as partners[6]

Farrell points out that the nature of the partnership only exacerbated the divisions between the families. "Stabler's hotel added to the problems," he notes. "With most of the money collected from tour fees going back into the development of the cave, neither family earned much. The difference was the Stablers also had the income from the hotel and dining room. While the McDonalds scraped by, living in the cave house at the bottom of the gully, the Stablers lived reasonably well in the hotel above them."[7] As Emma McDonald bitterly recalled, "the Stablers bought ranches and stock while the McDonalds had to charge their groceries during the winter months."[8]

The winter of 1893 and 1894 likely marked a significant turning point in the McDonald-Stabler partnership. Promotion, which was Stabler's forte, began to take precedence over exploration and cave development. This trend was tragically accentuated by the death of Alvin McDonald on 15 December 1893. Alvin had contracted typhoid fever while working with his father at the Columbian Exposition, and his death took away the cave's "Chief Guide" and the prime mover behind its exploration. The McDonald family and its position in the partnership may have been suddenly diminished, but their immediate concern was survival. As John Stabler and his daughter Katie made plans to buy the nearby Valentine Ranch, which Emma McDonald alluded to, the McDonalds were consumed with grief and wracked by anxiety. As the family huddled in

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[5] Tom Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud: The Birth of a National Park" (1987), 7, MS. on file in Wind Cave National Park Library; and Western History Research, *Wind Cave National Park Land Study: Compiled Data* (Bozeman, MT: Western History Research, 1993), 39-40.
[6] Charles Stabler, "Wind Cave, It's Early History and Development," in *Our Yesterday's* ([Hermosa, S.D.]: Eastern Custer County Historical Society, 1970), 87.
[7] Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud," 6.
[8] Emma Wickstrom McDonald, "Wind Cave," undated letter: F Ref 1880, Folder 8 "McDonald Family," Wind Cave National Park Archives; also quoted in Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 394.

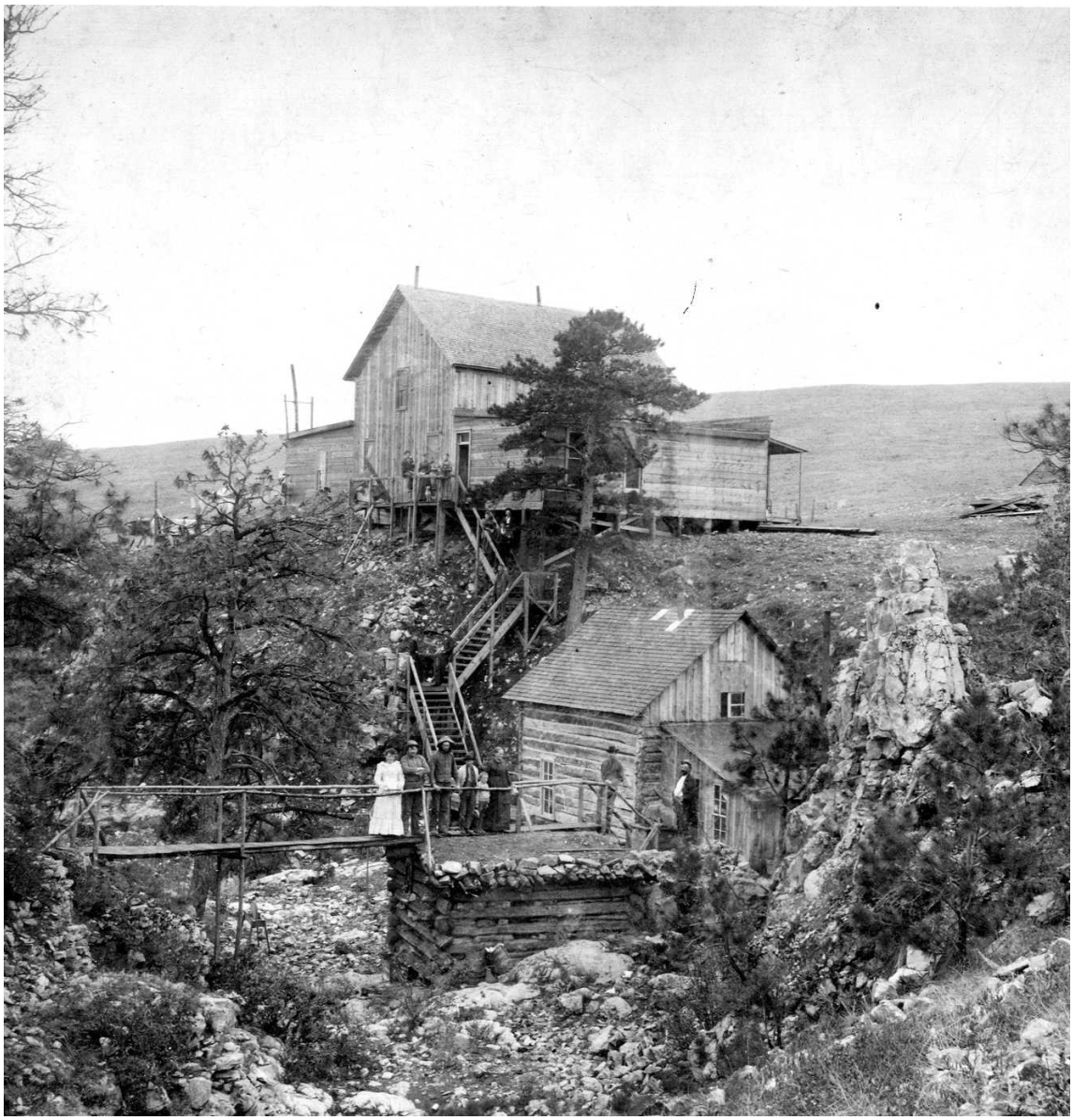

Figure 11.2: Wind Cave, ca. 1890s. Image depicts the separate worlds of the McDonald and Stabler families. The McDonalds are assembled down in the gulch, at the structures they had built and resided in at the cave entrance. Above them, the Stablers are posed at the back of Wind Cave Hotel and along the stairs leading down to the cave. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

the small cabin over the cave, their youngest boy Harry suffered through and nearly died from a severe case of typhoid fever, and Jesse contracted the disease in late January.

These experiences clarified the differences between the two families, and certainly made a life-long impression on Emma McDonald. They also represent the general state of affairs when the McDonalds and Stablers filed their land claims in Rapid City. The business partnership nevertheless held through most of 1895. Despite a depressed national economy, Elmer McDonald and John Stabler continued to jointly talk up the prospects of an electric railway from Hot Springs. Specimens were advertised in national publications and sold by licensed dealers in Hot Springs. Stablers and McDonalds continued to lead tours, remove specimens, and make small improvements to better accommodate cave visitors.[9] From the outside, at least, the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company seemed as solid as ever.

Matters changed significantly in the summer of 1895, however. At the end of August, Jesse McDonald had a falling out with the *Hot Springs Star* and announced that he would no longer take the paper. In giving his reasons, he disparaged the town of Hot Springs as a whole and especially chided the *Star* for not covering the recent visit to Wind Cave of U.S. Senator Richard F. Pettigrew and Congressman Robert J. Gamble. On the whole, the number of stories about Wind Cave was down for the year and McDonald probably had developed a pent-up resentment against the paper. But the matter seemed to go deeper than this, and the *Star* was apparently just the first of several bridges he intended to burn. McDonald was apparently frustrated with the whole business of Wind Cave, and intimated that it might be closed down altogether. He gave no further reason, but in terms of social politics the affair with the *Star* only added to any burdens he already carried. Regarding him as "narrow-minded and suspicious," the *Star* permanently turned against the man who once garnered whole columns of favorable ink.[10]

Some five weeks later, just as the Moss case against the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company was about to be dismissed, McDonald received a direct challenge from his former employer. On 4 October, Moss filed a protest with the General Land Office against McDonald's land entry for Wind Cave. In the protest, Moss alleged a number of fundamental problems with the McDonald filing at Wind Cave. First off, the land in question would not support cultivation and was therefore not a legitimate homestead claim. Second, McDonald's five-year residency claim was fraudulent since his

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[9] Robert D. Woodward, "World of Darkness: Early Explorations of the Cave," in *Wind Cave* ([Washington, DC]: National Park Service, 1979), 62-63; *Hot Springs Star* 5 October and 16 November 1894, and 12 February 1895. An example of national advertisements for specimen sales includes the following:
Specimens and Collections
Wind Cave, Black Hills, South Dakota.—
The largest and most wonderful cave in the world. The specimens are unknown to science and geology.
For further particulars address:
Katie Stabler, Wind Cave, South Dakota
or specimen sales, see advertisement in Haunts of wild game; or, Poems of woods, wilds and waters
The advertisement was posted on a back page of Isaac McLellan, *Haunts of Wild Game; or, Poems of Woods, Wilds and Waters* (New York: C. R. Bradford, 1896).

[10] *Hot Springs Star*, 31 August 1895.

first years at the site were as an agent of the South Dakota Mining Company. Third, McDonald had previously agreed to file a homestead claim on the land and then deed it over to Moss. It is not clear if Moss thought this last transgression was an abridgement of a contractual agreement, or a violation of the 1862 Homestead Act. His primary purpose in filing the protest does not seem to have been part of an effort to win back the land. Rather, it was simply to thwart McDonald. Consequently, either interpretation of fraud would have served that purpose.[11]

McDonald may well have felt like he was under siege by the *Star*, the South Dakota Mining Company, and his well-off neighbors on the hill above his small house. By the same token he must have found some vindication, and inspiration, in the decision of the General Land Office agent in Rapid City. The charges of fraud raised by Moss were dismissed on 26 October, and "local officers [subsequently] found the land to be non mineral, and recommended that the entry be sustained."[12] Emboldened by the decision, Jesse soon determined to take on his partners in the Wonderful Wind Cave Improvement Company. Jesse's wife Margaret held no love for the Stablers, and throughout their brief marriage she cajoled her husband to bring them to task. He finally did so in "the spring of 1896," as Emma McDonald later recalled, and "made the Stablers show the office books and finding (in their own accounts) that they had over drawn their allowance enormously, he kept the books and put Elmer McDonald in charge of them and the office." For the McDonalds, the account books seemed to finally prove that cheating was the cause of their poverty and the Stablers' wealth.[13]

If dissolving the partnership with Stabler is what Jesse McDonald meant when he cryptically told the *Star* that Wind Cave might be closing, it is not what happened. Both men and their families remained involved with the cave throughout the summer, while John Stabler fought back in the press and the courtroom. On 9 October 1896, the *Hot Springs Star* reported that "Honest John Stabler, junior member of the firm of McDonald and Stabler, and one of the proprietors of Wind Cave, objects to being excluded from an equal proprietorship with Mr. McDonald in that great natural curiosity." The paper, which the previous week identified McDonald as "the short-sighted, narrow-minded insolent … alleged proprietor," then gave Stabler room to make his own statement:

> There are articles of co-partnership existing between Mr. McDonald and myself that are as binding as such articles can be. Mr. McDonald has the interest in the cave that I have, and I certainly am entitled to as much credit for the improvements that have been made and the publicity that has been given to the cave as is Mr. McDonald. I have done most of the work, spent a good deal of money and until the past year have had entire management of the business. During the past year Mr. McDonald has been

[11] *Hot Springs Star*, 30 November 1900; C.W. Greene, "Report to the General Land Office Commissioner," 23 November 1899: F Ref 1880, Folder 9 "Correspondence Concerning Wind Cave," WCNP Archives. Also Thomas Ryan, "Decision Concerning South Dakota Mining Company v. J.D. McDonald," 30 November 1900: F Ref 1880, Folder 9, WCNP Archives.
[12] Greene, "Report to the General Land Office Commissioner."
[13] McDonald, "Wind Cave."

> at the head of affairs and now is anxious to kick me out. I want it distinctly understood that I am still a member of the firm and am one of the owners of the cave. I do not propose to be bulldozed or intimidated and will continue to assert my rights.[14]

To defend his interests, Stabler sought to counter McDonald's homestead filing on Wind Cave with a reassertion of the site's mineral potential. Toward these ends Stabler had already joined forces with Peter Folsom, who won his two suits against the South Dakota Mining Company in 1894 and subsequently became the legal holder of Moss' original filing on Cave Lode No. 1. In the summer of 1896 the two men used this six-year old mineral claim to contest the patenting of McDonald's homestead filing, which would have given him full title to the land surrounding the cave entrance. On 29 July the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Rapid City ruled against the basic tenet of the Folsom-Stabler challenge on the grounds that the parcel in question was "non mineral." However, their case did cause the Commissioner to make a more careful review of McDonald's patent filing, which he ruled fraudulent on many of the same grounds that Moss had raised a few years earlier. The only thing the parties could agree upon now was a mutual dissatisfaction with the decision, and they both appealed the ruling.[15]

As the appeal made its way through government channels, matters took a strange and frightening turn at Wind Cave where, in the words of a *Hot Springs Sta*r reporter, "a coldness that was clammy has been growing up like an iceberg between the two families." Sometime in the winter of 1896-1897, Charlie Stabler and his friend Will Ranger apparently salted the area around Wind Cave then reported finding "some good ore" which assayed out at $4.20 of gold to the ton. After staking out their supposed find they took control of the buildings around the cave, which were vacant at the time. When he learned of this turn of events, McDonald had an arrest warrant for "house-breaking" issued on John, George, and Charles Stabler, as well as Will Ranger.[16]

Though no one reported anything special about the "house-breaking" incident, it would later be described in very dramatic and violent terms. According to Emma McDonald, the Stablers, Folsom, Rangel and the McAdams family, "a bunch of cut throats, living near the cave," broke into the McDonalds' house, "covering the entrance to the cave, and when J.D. McDonald and his son, Elmer, tried to go into the house, they met then in the door with guns, saying, they had minerals in the cave and they were there to protect their property, and no McDonald could enter.[17]

Local lore would later tell that the violence—or threat of violence—did not end there. With Elmer McDonald and his family still living on land adjacent to the cave, the Stablers and McDonalds kept up what was described as "a raging feud which for intensity, duration and cost has never been eclipsed in the glamorous Black Hills with all

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[14] *Hot Springs Star*, 2 and 9 October 1896.
[15] Ryan, "Decision Concerning South Dakota Mining Company v. J.D. McDonald."
[16] *Hot Springs Star*, 26 February 1897; Western History Research, *Land Study*, 40.
[17] McDonald, "Wind Cave."

its thrilling past." "Out of court affairs" through the spring and summer of 1897 "went so far that both sides [were] armed with rifles and went about with revolvers and knives in their belts."[18] Such accounts are more in keeping with the area's tradition of tall tales than any particular historical reality, but they certainly correspond to the bitter animosity that had grown up between the McDonalds and Stablers.

With a trial date put off for several months, the Stablers maintained possession of the site and refused to obey a court order for "ejectment" until the charge of house-breaking was settled in court. Instead, John Stabler and Peter Folsom solidified their control of the site by forming the Black Hills Wind Cave Company to handle the management of the cave and hotel. In the midst of these developments, Stabler publicly asserted the validity of the Company's mineral rights to what the *Star* began to call the "Wind Cave gold mine." No mining occurred, but Stabler managed and promoted Wind Cave much as he had in the past. In July the *Star* announced that the "various restraining orders that have been hanging over Wind Cave all this spring have been raised and jolly John Stabler and his partners hold full sway."[19]

In late August, Stabler had his brightest moment ever at Wind Cave, when he and his daughter Katie personally escorted South Dakota Governor Andrew Lee and recent presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan through the cave. Stabler and Bryan apparently had an instant rapport. "Speaking to Billie Bryan," his daughter recalled, "Papa once said 'I wish I might talk like you.' Billie Bryan answered 'I wish I might laugh like you.'" Lee was also impressed with Stabler, and appointed him to the state commission for South Dakota's exhibit at the forthcoming Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha (1898).[20] Perhaps no other encounter at Wind Cave could have more deeply affirmed Stabler's sense of proprietorship. The feeling must have lingered for some time, but it did not last.

With the restraining orders against his residence and work at Wind Cave no longer in effect, and blessed by the likes of Senator Bryan and Governor Lee, John Stabler certainly appeared to have the upper hand over Jesse McDonald—who had moved away from Wind Cave to the small settlement of Mayo. As different as their circumstances may have become, however, their fates were equally insecure. Everything hinged on the appeal of the General Land Office ruling, and Stabler had more to worry about, and more to lose, than his adversary. The trial over the house-breaking incident was continued several times, and the restraining orders dropped, because the Stabler family's defense was rooted in their claim that the land was mineral in nature and thus belonged to them and Folsom. Consequently, any court decision would first have to await a final ruling on who had a legitimate claim on Wind Cave. If McDonald lost his homestead claim, his circumstances would not change. If Stabler lost, he would lose his claim to Wind Cave and be guilty of house-breaking.

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[18] James W. Fowler, "Bitter Fight Over Ownership of Wind Cave is Revealed," *Hot Springs Star*, 31 July 1941; quoted in Farrell, 10.
[19] *Hot Springs Star*, 2 April, 16 April, 21 May, and 9 July 1897.
[20] Stabler, brief unpublished memoir.

Figure 11.3 : "In Wind Cave, S.D. 350 feet below the surface at Odd Fellows' Hall." William Jennings Bryan and Governor Lee in center front of group. By W. R. Cross, ca. 1897. Bryan is holding the child in his lap. Governor Lee is to his left and John Stabler is beside Lee. Source: Library of Congress.

Both sides found an unsatisfying mixture of hope and disappointment in February 1898, when the General Land Office offered an opinion on the nature of the two land claims: "Upon the land in controversy," the hearing officer reported, "is located the entrance to Wind Cave, a very extensive and beautiful cavern, and it seems to be this that both parties are striving to gain possession of. So far as the testimony already submitted shows, this land has little value except for this cave and the crystalline deposits therein." The clear implication of this statement was that neither side in the argument seemed to have a legitimate agricultural or mining interest in the property. Yet the hearing officer believed that more information was necessary before a final decision could be rendered. The "ends of justice," he concluded, "will be best served by ordering a further hearing."[21]

Through the spring of 1898, both sides paid for mineral assessments of the property (to prove or disprove the validity of a mining claim) and submitted a trove of new documents. In July the Land Office in Rapid City completed its review of the materials and rendered a new decision: the land in question was "agricultural rather than mineral in character;" and "there was no fraud in [McDonald's] entry." Folsom and Stabler again appealed the decision, this time to the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, DC.[22] On 21 July 1899 they received a ruling from Commissioner Binger Hermann, who concurred with the earlier decision that their claims were invalid. However, Hermann also ruled that McDonald's entry was invalid since he had not demonstrated any concerted effort to cultivate or improve the land in accordance with the requirements of the Homestead Act. Clearly exasperated with both claims, and suspicious about their ability to effectively administer the cave without chopping it up into countless specimens, the Commissioner recommended that the land should revert back to the public domain and the "cave be reserved by the government as a public resort."[23]

Surprised but undaunted, the two parties jointly appealed the decision of Commissioner Herman to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary's office agreed to review the case, but in doing so also issued an order against removing specimens from the cave. The Secretary also dispatched Special Agent Charles W. Greene from the General Land Office in Rapid City to inspect the cave in the fall of 1899. Greene, who had recently conducted a number of land claim investigations in and around the newly established Black Hills Forest Reserve, arrived at Wind Cave in late November. In his inspection report, Greene concluded "that none of the claimants, either the agricultural or mineral who have fought through the various hearings … would spend a days time or a dollar in money, if the cave were not here. It appears to me that the object to be attained is a patent to the land, and then the cave would be all you would hear of." This possibility concerned Greene, and he recommended that the land in question should be reserved and attached to the adjacent federal forest. However, he stressed that the cave itself "should at once be placed in charge of a competent man to prevent destruction as but little work

[21] Greene, "Report to the General Land Office Commissioner."
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] "A Government Resort," *Rapid City Journal*, 28 July 1899, "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives. "Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office," *Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), 91.

would be needed to close the passages & destroy its beauty." While these sentiments echoed the earlier recommendation of the General Land Office to make the cave into a "public resort," Greene may well have feared that the McDonalds or the Stablers, out of spite, would sabotage and close the cave.[24]

Based on Greene's report and the evidence submitted for appeal, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Thomas Ryan offered a scathing assessment of Folsom's and Stabler's claims in early December. Their arguments fell "far short of proving the land to be mineral in character within the meaning of the mining law. It is not known to contain deposits [of any substance] in paying quantities …, [and] no serious effort has ever been made to develop the land or any part of it as a mining claim." Ryan then turned to the McDonald appeal, and offered a second indictment:

> The testimony shows that McDonald, the homestead claimant, has never made a bona fide effort to cultivate or improve the tract as an agricultural claim. Nor has he resided thereon in good faith as a homestead claimant for the period required by the homestead law …. Good faith in the assertion of his claim is not established by the testimony, but it is established thereby that his purpose in entering and endeavoring to obtain title to the land has not been that of securing a home.[25]

While he spared no harsh words in his ruling against both parties, Ryan devoted most of his comments to a disquisition on the many virtues of Wind Cave. The size of the cave, its many large chambers and passages, and the variety of fantastic "chrystalline depositions and formations of various kinds, such as stalactites, stalagmites, geodes, 'box work', 'frost work', etc.… in the cavern" made Wind Cave a place of great public significance. Ryan agreed with Commissioner Hermann that full consideration be given toward making Wind Cave into "a permanent reservation … for the benefit of the public." He thus ordered that the land claimed by McDonald and the Black Hills Wind Cave Company, "together with the lands immediately surrounding the same …, so far as not already disposed of, will be reserved from settlement, and from disposition under any of the public land laws" until Congress could take up the question of park establishment.[26]

After years of confrontation and legal wrangling, the McDonald-Stabler feud resulted in a complete loss for both parties. Each could at least take comfort in the fact that their adversary did not win, but Assistant Secretary Ryan's ruling was a crushing blow. At first it was too much for Jesse McDonald to bear, and in a fit of passionate rage he and his 19 year-old son Roy stormed down to Wind Cave on Sunday, 9 December, and barricaded themselves into the cave house. As Bob McAdams later recalled, Jesse and Roy apparently said "that possession was nine points of the law, and they was for getting

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[24] Greene, "Report to the General Land Office Commissioner." Underlining in original text.
[25] Ibid.; *Hot Springs Star*, 7 December 1900.
[26] Greene, "Report to the General Land Office Commissioner." Also *Rapid City Journal*, 14 December 1900.

possession."[27] Folsom, who was living in the cabin but away at the time, returned the next day to find himself locked out and the McDonalds inside. A group of neighbors soon gathered and tried to convince the McDonalds to come out. When they refused, Sam McAdams took an axe and knocked in the heavy wooden door, which caused Jesse and Roy to retreat into the cave. As the *Hot Springs Star* reported, "They remained hid away in the cave until Monday when [Roy] made his appearance and asked to be permitted to get away and which was of course freely granted." Jesse was also permitted to leave, but received a kick in the backside from McAdams as he exited the cabin.

This sad, embarrassing end to Jesse McDonald's dream was compounded by another tragedy. On returning to the small cabin where he lived in Mayo, some five miles north of Pringle, he found that it had burned down in his absence. Whether an accident caused by a candle he forgot to put out, or arson, no one knew. Jesse lost all of his personal belongings, and all of his records related to Wind Cave. His renowned collection of specimens was also badly damaged, but according to his granddaughter Inez McDonald Foley the "most important item that was destroyed was a huge wall map of all the routes explored and the rooms opened up for tourists." This was likely drawn by Alvin, and must have been a dearly cherished keepsake.[28]

Jesse McDonald soon moved on to Montana, and ultimately wound up in Minneapolis where he died in 1934. John Stabler remained at Wind Cave, but died in a Hot Springs hospital in the spring of 1901. Some Stablers and McDonalds remained in the southern Black Hills, either in Hot Springs, Buffalo Gap, or near Wind Cave. George Stabler and Elmer McDonald worked for a while as guides for the government, while George and his wife also received the hotel concession. In April 1901 South Dakota Congressman Eben Martin, who had business interests in Hot Springs, advised the Stablers to maintain their property at Wind Cave and give their support to government management of the site. He would then see to it that they were reimbursed and appointed managers of the new reserve. Unfortunately, Martin was not able to deliver on this plan. Jesse McDonald's lawyers also hoped to gain some compensation from the government, but they too failed in this endeavor. In the end, none of the Stablers or McDonalds received anything from the government for any of their investments or labors in the development of Wind Cave.

In his study of the McDonald-Stabler feud, Tom Farrell notes that suspect land claims contributed to the eventual creation of Wind Cave National Park, but only partly. Jesse McDonald, even if his claim was technically fraudulent, would have received his land patent if not for the multiple protests filed by Moss and Stabler. Though his intent was to gain ownership of Wind Cave, the land he filed on was no less suitable for a homestead than any of the nearby filings that were patented by Stablers, McDonalds, and

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[27] Robert and Fannie McAdam, interview with Harold Jones, 17 November 1951; transcript in folder of materials collected by Harold Jones and labeled "Historical Notes," Wind Cave National Park Lateral Files.
[28] Woodward, "World of Darkness," 75. Inez (McDonald) Foley, "The Rest of the Wind Cave Story" (May 1980): F Ref 1880, Folder 8 "McDonald Family," WCNP Archives. Foley was the daughter of Elmer and Emma McDonald, and the niece of Alvin McDonald

others.[29] The problem with Jesse McDonald's homestead filing, as well as the various mining claims filed on the site, really had nothing to do with the specifics of federal land law. Rather, it stemmed almost entirely from the special qualities of Wind Cave that made Commissioner Hermann suggest making it into a national park.

McDonald's claims were contested because Wind Cave was a spectacle, a natural marvel that appealed to many people at a profound level. All the claimants wanted to benefit from the attractions of the site, and therein lay the problem. The purpose of a homestead was to secure a home from the government at little cost and to participate in a larger community of agrarian producers. It made no sense to Commissioner Hermann or Assistant Secretary Ryan to take a piece of the public domain and give it to one individual so that he or she could monopolize a natural feature that would otherwise give "benefit and enjoyment" to the public. Such places should simply remain public. To give one person the exclusive rights to a place of permanent and inestimable value was undemocratic, even corrupt. For that reason, rather than any particular fraud in the various filings on Wind Cave, the site was "withdrawn from settlement, entry, sale, and other disposition, and set apart as a public park."[30]

In 1981, Inez (McDonald) Foley, the daughter of Elmer and granddaughter of Jesse McDonald, was "the last one still living of the McDonalds who lived at Wind Cave." As she told park staff, she was "glad to know that the McDonald memory is still kept live and that people know of the McDonald's gift (and a gift it was) of years of difficult and dangerous work in faithfully exploring and opening up the many miles of the Wonderful Wind Cave, that is now enjoyed by so many." Though she remained bitter about the feud with the Stablers, and the fact that the federal government never compensated her grandfather or her parents, she appreciated the eventual result of all the trouble. "To me, eighty years later, it does seem that … the victory was for all the people who now own the Wonderful Wind Cave and Wind Cave National Park. Under private ownership and management, all these marvelous improvements could never have been made, no matter how hard working, dedicated and faithful the McDonald's were."[31]

A Federal Reserve

When considering the history of the national park system, the establishment of Wind Cave National Park in 1903 can seem like an outlier. The six national parks that were in existence at the time all contained large stretches of spectacular alpine landscapes. Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon (then called General Grant) National Parks were celebrated for scenic grandeur. The same was true of Mount

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[29] Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud," 16-17.

[30] U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 63, "An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park," Public Act no. 16: 765. The phrase "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," or some variation, was used in many early national park bills.

[31] Foley, "The Rest of the Wind Cave Story." Also Foley, letter to Wind Cave National Park, 24 August 1981; quoted in Farrell, "The McDonald-Stabler Feud," 17.

Rainier and Crater Lake National Parks, which were both established during the time Wind Cave was considered a potential park. Glaciers, waterfalls, vast expanses of ancient forests, brilliant wildflowers, and a challenging mountain peak defined Mount Rainier's appeal. Crater Lake National Park also contained scenic forests and mountains, but it was the wide, round, impossibly blue lake that inspired advocates for a national park. The "beauties of the natural curiosities of the Wind Cave," to quote Secretary of the Interior Ethan Hitchcock, also filled visitors with wonder. Yet Wind Cave was tiny when compared with all of the other national parks. Besides a cave tour, there was nothing else to do or see: no mountains to climb; no lakes to gaze upon; no waterfalls to stagger the imagination; no giant trees that humbled and inspired; no magnificent vista that seemed to capture the promise and power of the nation. In short, Wind Cave National Park was not a "Crown Jewel."

The absence of such qualities, and the size of the national park, would later draw criticism. In 1910, Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger suggested that Wind Cave should be "classed as a local or state park and can never in any sense of the word become a national park."[32] Some years later Robert Sterling Yard, a tireless promoter of national parks and public lands recreation, disdainfully referred to Wind Cave as merely "the picnic terminal for a great surrounding country of farms." Along with Platt and Sullys Hill National Parks, two units that had been established in the early 1900s but were later removed from the national park system, Wind Cave was so "absurdly small and out of key with the fundamental idea" of a national park "as to be [a] manifest" blunder.[33]

Historians of the national parks would later take-up Yard's critique, with John Ise calling Wind Cave an "inferior" park "that just happened to be established" and Hal Rothman referring to the park's creation as nothing more than a "pork-barrel maneuver."[34] While it certainly owes its existence to the legal and extra-legal battles of the McDonald and Stabler families, the establishment of Wind Cave National Park was no accident. To understand why such an "inferior" park was established, and why none of its principle advocates thought it sub-standard, first requires an answer to the charge of pork-barrel, or "park barrel," politics. Only then can the reasoning behind the park's creation, and its larger significance for national park history, begin to make sense.

Hot Springs boosters were duly proud of their ability to attract substantial government contracts, including the Battle Mountain Sanitarium and the State Veterans Home. Unlike large building projects and their promise of more residents and employment, however, national parks were not regarded as potential engines of economic development in the late 1890s.[35] Moreover, reserving portions of the public domain from

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[32] "Report of the Secretary of the Interior," in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1910*, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1911), 56.
[33] Robert Sterling Yard, *Our Federal Lands: A Romance of American Development* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1928), 248, 276.
[34] John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 136; Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 53.
[35] By 1899, Congress had only established five national parks: Yellowstone, Sequoia, General Grant (Kings Canyon), Yosemite, and Mount Rainier. None of these parks were established for any potential impact they

settlement or sale—as occurred with the creation of the Black Hills Forest Reserve in 1897—was almost universally viewed as an economic burden.[36] Until Commissioner Binger Hermann of the General Land Office suggested the idea of a federal reservation in 1899, local interest in the cave was entirely wrapped up in the contest between the McDonalds and the Stablers. Those who wondered about how to make the cave more famous, and thus increase its contribution to the economic development of Hot Springs and the southern Black Hills, probably thought "Uncle John" Stabler, rather than Uncle Sam, was the one to do it.

Disgust or exasperation with the McDonald-Stabler feud likely caused some to accept federal action more than they would have otherwise, but no one celebrated when the park idea first crept into the Wind Cave land claims case. Black Hills newspapers neither welcomed nor opposed the notion of a "Government Resort," as the *Rapid City Journal* termed it in July 1899.[37] When Secretary Hitchcock rendered his final decision in December 1900, however, the *Journal* had become more accustomed to the idea and even enthused that Hitchcock believed "the Wind Cave at Hot Springs [is] destined to become as famous as the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky."[38] In contrast, the *Hot Springs Star* worried that the government might not reopen the cave in time for the coming tourist season, and feared that federal management might not match the efforts of Stabler. Representative Martin shared these concerns, and informed the *Star* in April 1901 that he had personally brought the matter up with the [D]epartment [of the Interior] urging haste in reopening this great attraction."[39]

The concerns of the *Star*, and Martin's actions in regards to Wind Cave, suggest that some level of local interest might have influenced how, when and why the national park was established. However, the historical evidence suggests otherwise. As a freshman member of Congress, with just a few weeks under his belt, Martin had very little sway in Washington and probably had no influence on the opening of Wind Cave. The editors of the *Star*, on the other hand, were duly chastised by federal officials for overstating their expectations.

In a story dated 17 May 1901 announcing the long awaited opening of the cave,

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might have on local economies. That notion did not really develop until the 1920s when growing automobility and increased leisure time fostered tremendous growth in the national park system and attracted a number of self-serving park proposals from various members of Congress. It also needs to be remembered that tourism was already well-developed at Wind Cave before anyone considered making it into a national park. For tourism and automobility, see Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002). An especially egregious attempt at park barrel politics in the 1920s involved Albert Fall, who served as the U.S. Senator from 1912-1921 and Secretary of the Interior from 1921-23; see Michael Welsh, *Dunes and Dreams: A History of White Sands National Monument* (Santa Fe, NM: National Park Service, Division of History, Intermountain Cultural Resources Center, 1995), 42-49.

[36] Martha Geores, *Common Ground: The Struggle for Ownership of the Black Hills National Forest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 40-45; Richmond L. Clow, "Timber Users, Timber Savers: Homestake Mining Company and the First Regulated Harvest," *Forest History Today* 4 (1998): 6-11.

[37] *Hot Springs Star*, 28 July 1899.

[38] *Hot Springs Star*, 14 December, 1900.

[39] *Hot Springs Star*, 26 April 1901.

the *Star* enthusiastically noted that C. L. Jensen would have "general supervision" over the cave, with the Jensen Livery and Stage Company serving as "headquarters in Hot Springs for arranging guides, lights, etc., the entire charge for the round-trip, including the cave being $1.50…. The arrangement for the opening of the cave, and placing the care of it and arrangements for guides in the hands of C.L. Jensen, is most satisfactory to the public."[40] Special Agent Greene promptly wrote the *Star* and reminded them of the cave's larger "public." The General Land Office had already appointed an officer to administer the cave, Greene noted, and he reminded the *Star* to again take "notice that my instructions to open the cave say 'no special or exclusive privileges will be granted' and you will rest assured that none will be granted to any person. One person has just as much right as another to act as guide, liveryman or visitor."[41]

Representative Martin would subsequently play an important role in shaping the bill that created Wind Cave National Park, and the *Hot Springs Star* became an enthusiastic supporter of government management. As an editorial noted just one week after the dust-up with Greene, "Wind Cave seems to have more attractions for tourists than ever since the government has withdrawn from settlement about a thousand acres covering this great natural curiosity. This has served to bring it into greater prominence and under government control will continue to receive an immense amount of free and most effective advertising."[42] Such boosterism, and support from the home-state representative, would be typical of most national park proposals in the twentieth century. At Wind Cave, however, these came after the fact. Eben Martin was not even an official candidate for Congress when Commissioner Hermann first conceived of establishing a federal reserve around Wind Cave, and there is no evidence that anyone in Hot Springs or South Dakota ever proposed or promoted the idea of a national park or reserve before the very contentious land claims process had drawn to a close.

Toward a National Park

The creation of Wind Cave National Park in 1903 certainly fits within the broader history of public lands management and conservation in the United States. From the Jeffersonian era until the 1860s, one of the primary functions of the federal government was to acquire American Indian lands through treaties, incorporate them into the public domain, conduct a cadastral survey, then put the lands into the private marketplace. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the relatively straightforward process of "disposal" (i.e., converting federal public lands into a grid of private property) had a demonstrated potential for undermining the larger public interest. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the privatization of vast forests, and their rapid liquidation by a growing timber industry. By the 1880s huge swaths of land had been cutover in the Great Lakes region, which destroyed drainage systems, caused massive floods of agricultural areas, and gave rise to multi-day conflagrations that ruined standing forests and leveled whole towns. Not surprisingly, one of the most significant reversals of federal land policy

[40] *Hot Springs Star*, 17 May 1901.
[41] *Hot Springs Star*, 24 May 1901.
[42] *Hot Springs Star*, 31 May 1901.

involved the protection and management of forestlands in the American West. With the establishment of the United States Division of Forestry in 1881 and passage of the General Land Law Revision Act in 1891 (which established the Forest Reserve System), federal land policy began to include permanently retaining portions of the public domain.

Forest Reserves, which subsequently became known as National Forests, sought to mitigate some of the public consequences of private development for current and future generations. In this respect, they were perfect expressions of what many in the late nineteenth-century termed "conservation." The goal was not to ban industrial or pastoral use of forest lands, but to insure that managed use of forest resources would allow logging, grazing, mining and a host of other activities to continue in perpetuity. Such conservation was also intended to prevent one forest user from acting in a way that infringed on another's livelihood. Examples of this might include logging a hillslope in a way that caused flooding or landslides on the property of a downstream farmer, or leaving piles of slash that caught fire and burned other tracts of forest. In short, conservation sought to balance public and private interests in a way that fostered the continued pursuit of both. Because the issues involved were deemed so critical, and the need to implement conservation measures were sometimes considered so urgent, the authority to create Forest Reserves was embodied in presidential proclamations rather than the cumbersome process of legislative compromise that shaped an act of Congress.

The late nineteenth-century shift in federal land law also stemmed from another precedent, one that came almost 20 years before the Forest Reserve Act. The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 marked the first time the federal government sought to reserve and manage a portion of the public domain for the larger national interest. Converting Indian lands into private property still served that interest, but so too did the creation of a national park where all Americans could claim a common ownership and—in doing so—experience a common national identification with one of the continent's most spectacular landscapes.

Unlike Forest Reserves, national parks were more limited in what they sought to protect. This distinction is partly reflected in simple numbers: in 1901, there were 41 forest reserves containing over 46 million acres, but only five national parks totaling less than four million acres. Instead of forest resources, watersheds, or certain economic endeavors like grazing, mining, or timber harvesting, national parks protected places and experiences. They were, as John Muir put it, distinguished from forest reserves by their "supreme grandeur and beauty." More than "fountains of timber and irrigating rivers," as important as those aspects of forest conservation were, parks were "fountains of life." In *The Act of Dedication* for Yellowstone, Congress defined a national park as a place "set apart … for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" and "for the preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders … and their retention in their natural condition."[43] A national park, unlike a national forest, was not a place to conserve and utilize. Rather, it protected the sublime conditions that

[43] "An Act to set apart a Certain Tract of Land Lying Near the Headwaters of the Yellowstone River as a Public Park," in *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, ed. Lary M. Dilsaver (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 28.

inspired a worshipful awe. Therein lay the great public significance of a national park, and the conditions that warranted public ownership required protection and careful regulation.

The creation of Wind Cave National Park derived from these two trends in federal lands management, and its establishment would even be directly associated with both the Black Hills Forest Reserve and Yellowstone National Park. Yet the creation of Wind Cave National Park was not simply the product of a historical process that began sometime after the Civil War and carried into the twentieth century. Rather, it resulted from a very specific period in the history of the national parks movement and it reflected the efforts of a particular constellation of figures working in Washington, DC.

The first suggestion that Wind Cave should become a "public resort," which Commissioner Binger Hermann proposed in July 1899, occurred in the midst of a new effort in Washington, DC, to increase the number and kind of national parks in the United States. Beginning in the early 1890s, a number of academics and their allies in the federal government initiated an effort to protect "antiquities" still within the public domain. Regret about the destruction of ancient American Indian sites in the Midwest, coupled with more urgent concerns about commercial pothunters tearing through remote archeological sites in the Southwest, eventually resulted in a joint legislative proposal from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Archaeological Institute of America in 1899. In what essentially became the first draft of the Antiquities Act of 1906, the organizations proposed that

> The President of the United States may from time to time set apart and reserve for use as public parks …, in the same manner as now provided by law for forestry reservations, any public lands upon which are monuments, cliff-dwellings, cemeteries, graves, mounds, forts, or any other work of prehistoric, primitive, or aboriginal man, and also any natural formation of scientific or scenic value of interest, or natural wonder or curiosity together with such additional area of land surrounding or adjoining the same, as he may deem necessary for the proper preservation and subsequent investigation of said prehistoric work or remains.[44]

While the language in the Antiquities Act that ultimately passed would be more focused on "prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest," it is important to note that the genesis of the Act was equally, if not more oriented toward places of "scenic" or "natural wonder." For their part, Hitchcock and Hermann wanted to see all of the various kinds of sites mentioned in the 1899 proposal given national park

[44] Undated, unsigned, printed document entitled "A Bill for the Preservation of Prehistoric Monuments, Ruins, and Objects, and to prevent their Counterfeiting, and for other Purposes;" quoted and cited in Ronald F. Lee, *The Antiquities Act of 1906* (Washington, D.C.: Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, 1970); available on-line as *The Story of the Antiquities Act*, 13 September 2007 <www.cr.nps.gov/aad/PUBS/LEE/index.htm> (accessed 20 May 2009).

status. Moreover, as the Antiquities Act did stipulate, they wanted to see new parks established by presidential proclamation rather than acts of Congress.[45]

There were two, fairly recent precedents for this approach to the protection of unique or special sites within the public domain. The first had come in 1889 when a Sundry Civil Appropriations Act authorized the President to "reserve from settlement and sale the land on which [the Casa Grande ruin in Arizona] is situated and so much of the public land adjacent thereto as in his judgment may be necessary for the protection of said ruin and of the ancient city of which it is a part."[46] More than three years passed before President Benjamin Harrison signed the executive order creating the 480-acre Casa Grande Ruin Reservation, and the slowness of the action worried those who feared the destruction of larger and more spectacular ruins in the Southwest. Nevertheless, the principle of preservation through presidential proclamation had been established. The second precedent came in 1897 with the creation of the Mount Rainier Forest Reserve. The impetus for this action came from members of Congress and officials in the General Land Office, but occurred through presidential proclamation in accordance with the 1891 General Land Law Revision Act. However the real purpose of the Reserve was to be a sort of vast placeholder until Congress could craft legislation creating Mount Rainier National Park, which occurred in 1899.[47]

The cases of Casa Grande and Mount Rainier were heartening, but they did not serve as good models for systematic or widespread protection of unique sites with special public significance. Officials in the General Land Office, who were in charge of all National Forest Reserves at the time, appreciated "the use of the presidential proclamation authority for creating forest reserves." Yet as historian Richard Sellars notes, they chafed at "the Casa Grande model of piecemeal, one-site-at-a-time archeological site protection by Congress." Frustrated by these conditions, the General Land Office under Hermann began selecting "archeological and natural sites threatened by vandalism and looting and located on public lands to be temporarily set aside from sale or other disposition."[48]

Such withdrawals, which could be exercised at the Commissioner's discretion, were only temporary measures. Making these actions permanent required legislative

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[45] The initial concern for "scenic" or "natural wonder" sites received emphatic endorsement in President Theodore Roosevelt's first exercise of the Antiquities Act, the establishment of Devils Tower National Monument in 1906. While Roosevelt used his new authority to protect a number of Antiquities, he also established Pinnacles, Muir Woods and Jewel Cave National Monuments, and proclaimed national monuments that subsequently became Lassen Volcanic and Grand Canyon National Parks.

[46] Cosmos Mindeleff, "The Repair of Casa Grande Ruin, Arizona in 1891," *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 326; quoted in A. Berle Clemensen, *Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, Arizona: A Centennial History of the First Prehistoric Reserve* ([Denver]: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), 22 January 2002 <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cagr/adhi/adhi3.htm> (accessed 4 May 2010).

[47] Theodore Catton, *National Park, City Playground: Mount Rainier in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 25-31.

[48] Richard West Sellars, "A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation—the Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act." *The George Wright Forum* 25, no. 1 (2008): 73.

action, but that came with a host of potential problems. Slow action by Congress could allow a temporary withdrawal to lapse, legislative compromise might permit damaging activities to occur at or near a fragile site, or worst of all a few legislators could simply kill a bill that would otherwise have widespread support. The best solution, according to advocates of more parks, was a comprehensive piece of legislation that allowed the Executive Branch, of which the General Land Office was a significant part, to establish national parks through presidential proclamation. Consequently, Commissioner Hermann and Secretary Hitchcock became early and active promoters of the effort to craft the legislation that became the Antiquities Act.

By early 1900, the original proposal from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Archaeological Institute of America had resulted in three preliminary bills from various members of Congress. All three bills were referred to the House Committee on Public Lands, which was chaired by Representative John F. Lacey. In March, Lacey sent all of the bills to Secretary Hitchcock, who promptly turned them over to the General Land Office. Commissioner Hermann took what he considered the main strengths of the three bills and drafted a substitute piece of legislation he titled "A Bill to establish and administer national parks, and for other purposes" that Lacey's committee then adopted as its own. While Congress subsequently modified Hermann's proposed legislation, its original wording offers clear insight into how he defined a potential national park:

> The President of the United States may, from time to time, set apart and reserve tracts of public land, which for their scenic beauty, natural wonders or curiosities, ancient ruins or relics, or other objects of scientific or historic interest, or springs of medicinal or other properties it is desirable to protect and utilize in the interest of the public…; that such reservations shall be known as national parks and shall be under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior.[49]

Wind Cave clearly fit within Hermann's and Secretary Hitchcock's conception of a national park, and both directly identified the "proposed Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota (extension of withdrawal formerly made)" in their *Annual Reports* for 1900.[50] However, Hermann's draft legislation on "national parks, and for other purposes" was experiencing pushback in Congress. A number of western congressmen were concerned about a broad exercise of presidential authority that could lead to the removal of large sections of the public domain from the possibility of private ownership or productive use. Consequently, they worked to limit the legislation—and the President's actions—to small parcels containing ruins or objects of special scientific interest. It thus became abundantly clear that any effort to make Wind Cave into a national park would have to occur independent of the larger legislative effort, and instead follow the

[49] Quoted in Lee, *The Antiquities Act of 1906.*
[50] The wording in this quote comes from Hermann's contribution to the *Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 151.

established route of park creation through a specific Act of Congress. While Lacey endeavored to shape a suitable bill on antiquities that could pass Congress, he also joined with Secretary Hitchcock and Commissioner Hermann to craft a more accelerated piece of legislation for establishing Wind Cave National Park.

The issue for all three men involved a certain degree of urgency. Like the "antiquities" of the Southwest, Wind Cave had been subject to a great deal of "spoliation." Over the course of a decade, untold tons of specimens had been removed for sale. Still more had been damaged or destroyed in the course of blasting, hammering, and prying out pieces of the cave walls. If the temporary withdrawal of lands surrounding Wind Cave was allowed to lapse, such spoliation might recur and the wonders of the cave further compromised. As Hermann noted in a letter to Secretary Hitchcock dated 6 June 1902, Wind Cave's popularity with visitors also necessitated prompt action. "In view of the number of persons that visit Wind Cave at this season," he wrote, "it becomes important that immediate action be taken by Congress to provide for the proper care and management of the cave."[51]

It was during the lead-up to the Wind Cave National Park bill that Representative Martin became a more active participant in the legislative process. As a member of the Public Lands Committee, he would have necessarily been aware of the significant challenges to the draft "Bill to establish and administer national parks, and for other purposes." In February 1902 Martin wrote directly to Hitchcock to offer his support for the Secretary's "very wisely" rendered decision to reserve "this property from public sale for the purposes of a National park." With considerable deference to the Secretary, Martin suggested an immediate short-term management proposal "in order that the property may be better cared for and preserved against possible injury or destruction." The site, he advised, could be attached to the adjacent Black Hills Forest Reserve. This would give a local jurisdiction over the park to the Forest Supervisor and his rangers, who would, of course, be answerable to your office for its proper care."[52]

Secretary Hitchcock and Commissioner Hermann concurred with Martin, and Seth Bullock, a well known and respected Black Hills lawman and entrepreneur who had taken over the administration of the Forest Reserve, was appointed Custodian for Wind Cave. Bullock in turn selected Forest Ranger George Boland, a local rancher from Buffalo Gap who had been working for the Forest Reserve out of Pringle, as the immediate supervisor of Wind Cave.[53]

Martin's primary reason for recommending the attachment of Wind Cave to the Black Hills Forest Reserve was more far reaching than a simple matter of "local jurisdiction." As he noted in his letter to Secretary Hitchcock, Martin hoped that incorporating Wind Cave into the Forest Reserve would accomplish two things. First, it

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[51] Binger Hermann to the Secretary of the Interior, 6 June 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 2 "Park Establishment," WCNP Archives.
[52] Martin to Secretary, 13 February 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," WCNP Archives.
[53] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 400.

would give permanence to the "temporary withdrawal of lands." Second, it would allow time and opportunity for the establishment of a more substantial national park. In a fairly prescient statement, Martin wrote that

> Later on it may seem desirable to recommend that two or three adjacent townships [totaling between 50,920 and 72,960 acres] of the Black Hills Forest Reserve in connection with this wind cave park shall be set aside as a National park where buffalo, elk and other native animals could be preserved. This feature in connection with the wind cave would make the locality one of great public interest. This particular part of the Forest Reserve is very lightly timbered, but contains excellent grazing and is well watered. It was a natural haunt of buffalo and elk before the settlement of the Black Hills country.[54]

Though he offered no comments on Martin's ideas about bison and elk, Commissioner Hermann concurred with the congressman's suggestion to attach Wind Cave to the Black Hills Forest Reserve. He also agreed with the proposal for a larger park, but only insofar as the surface acreage corresponded to the actual extent of the cave. Further "underground survey was essential to ascertain definitely the precise lands under which the body of the cave and its numerous ramifications extend" before locating any proposed boundaries for the national park. To keep a full array of options, Hermann also recommended to Secretary Hitchcock that he withdraw lands currently outside the Forest Reserve that might possibly overlay the cave. As he noted in a letter dated 28 March, these could in turn be attached to the Forest Reserve, thus giving the Secretary the widest possible opportunity for protecting all of the lands above Wind Cave.[55]

Hitchcock disagreed with both the Commissioner and Martin, finding justification for his views in a recently issued report by Myron Willsie, a surveyor from Rapid City working under contract with the General Land Office to examine the extent of the cave. While there was nothing especially new in Willsie's findings, since he essentially covered the known tour routes and commented on some of the areas that Alvin McDonald had explored, the concluding statement of his report must have struck Hitchcock as particularly important: "The possibilities of wonderful discoveries by exploration are beyond the most visionary ideas of man."[56] For Hitchcock this essentially meant two things: a full survey of the cave might take years to complete; and the cave, to the extent that it was presently known, was a stupendous marvel that deserved prompt

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[54] Martin to Secretary, 13 February 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," WCNP Archives. When combined with the 3,840 acres already reserved by the General Land Office, Martin's proposed national park would have totaled between 50,920 and 72,960 acres. This was far more than the 10,522 acre national park established in 1903, and a good deal larger than the current acreage of 28,295. The original withdrawal for Wind Cave was just four Sections of land. A Section is a square mile, or 640 acres. A Township is a square six miles on each side, and contains 36 sections. One Township equals 23,040 acres.

[55] Hermann to Hitchcock, Martin to Secretary, 28 March 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," WCNP Archives.

[56] Myron Willsie to Meyendorff, 20 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 16 "Park Establishment," WCNP Archives.

protection as a national park. Feeling a sense of urgency, Hitchcock also ignored Martin's long-term program for establishing a large national park and stocking it with game animals. In a letter dated 17 May, the Secretary instead directed Hermann to draft legislation for a 10,522 acre national park.[57]

Hermann sent his draft to Secretary Hitchcock on 6 June 1902, who forwarded it to the chairmen of the Committee on Public Lands in the House and Senate on 10 June. The Senate Committee issued a favorable report on the bill the next day and Senator Gamble of South Dakota, who had visited Wind Cave some years earlier, introduced the legislation to the upper house. The bill passed the Senate on 19 June, and the next day Representative Lacey's Committee issued a favorable report on the House bill. Congressman Martin then introduced the legislation on 25 June, but no final vote occurred until 12 December.

The Wind Cave legislation was not controversial, and its delay in the House was simply the result of the long summer recess and procedural issues. Representative Lacey nevertheless felt obliged to offer a strong argument in favor of the bill. Perhaps inspired by reports and correspondence on the cave from his brother-in-law, Charles Greene of the General Land Office, Lacey made a very close comparison between Wind Cave and the nation's first national park.[58] Wind Cave, he stated from the floor of the House Chamber, "is substantially what the Yellowstone country would be if the geysers should die. It has been excavated by hot water in the same manner that the geyser land is now being excavated in the Yellowstone…. The active forces are no longer in operation…, but a series of very wonderful caves remain." Lacey's arguments were augmented by the report of General Land Office Special Agent M. A. Meyendorff, which Hermann had included in the text of the bill. "Those who visited Yellowstone National Park and the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky," Meyendorff had written, "will all accord the Wind Cave only a second place to the Yellowstone Canyon and the geysers of the former, and declare the Wind Cave superior, in point of attractiveness, to the Mammoth Cave."[59]

The actions and arguments for the creation of Wind Cave National Park, and the rapid manner in which the park bill was drafted and ultimately passed on 12 December 1903, all speak to one thing. No one thought Wind Cave to be an inferior park. On the contrary; at a time when its primary sponsors were working to develop what would become the Antiquities Act, the establishment of Wind Cave National Park was a matter that required prompt action. As a place of "natural wonder," "curiosities," and "scenic

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[57] Secretary E. A. Hitchcock to Hermann, 17 May 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," WCNP Archives.

[58] While the John Fletcher Lacey Papers are held at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines, Lacey kept poor records and saved very little of his personal correspondence. Consequently, there is no way to confirm if he discussed Wind Cave with Greene. The relation between Lacey and Greene is noted in "Charles Badger Clark, D.D," in *History of Dakota Territory*, eds. George Washington Kingsbury and George Martin Smith (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), 1101-04.

[59] Lacey's statement in U.S. Congress, House, *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., (1902), 36, pt. 2: 81; Meyendorff's text in "Report no. 2606," *History of Legislation Relating to the National Park System through the 82d Congress: Wind Cave National Park*, comp. Edmund B. Rogers (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1958).

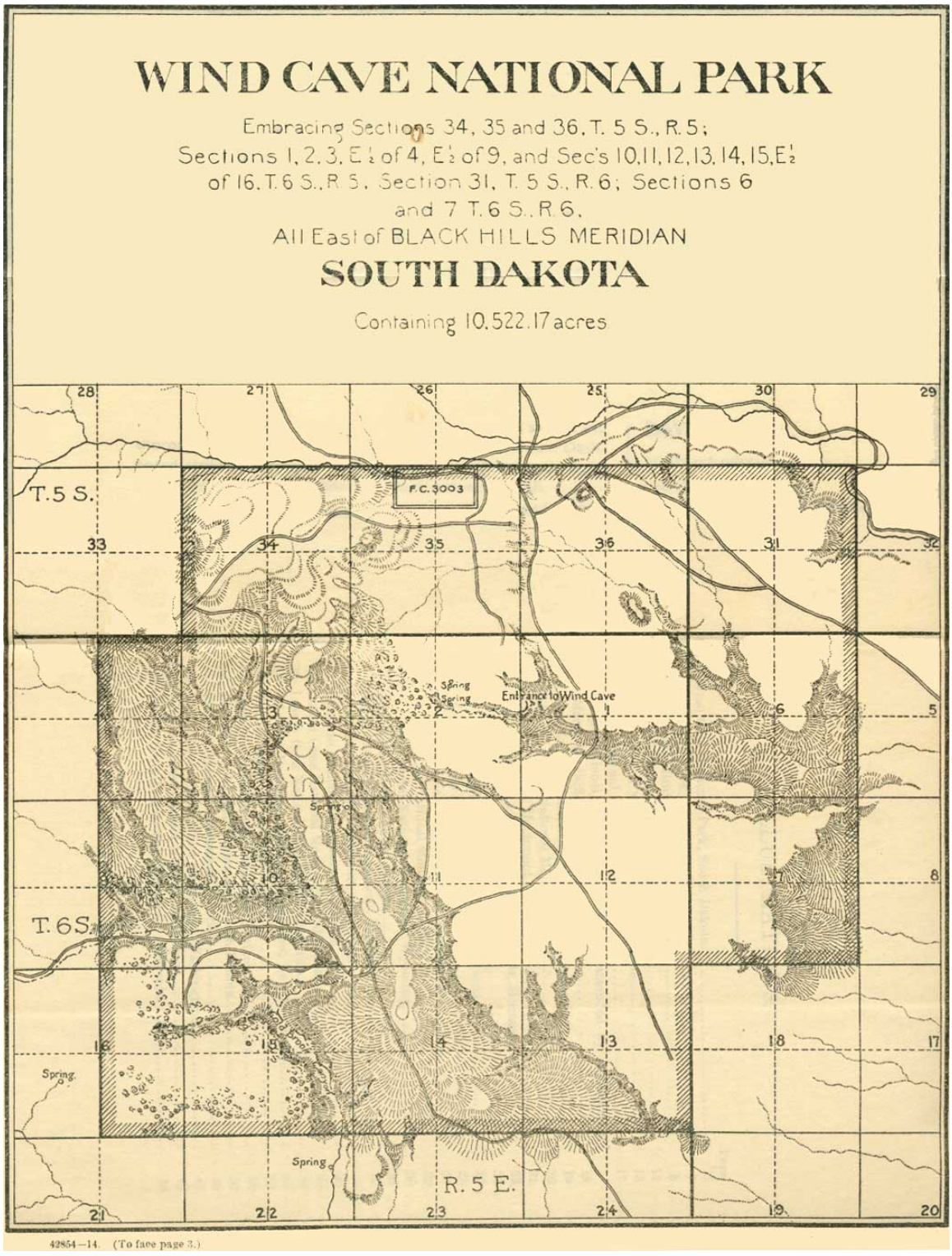

Figure 11.4: Map of the Original Boundaries of Wind Cave National Park. Source: *Report on Wind Cave, Crater Lake, Sullys Hill, and Platt National Parks, and Casa Grande Ruin, 1909* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909).

beauty" that was also subject to "spoliation," Wind Cave perfectly fit the criteria listed in Commissioner Hermann's original 1900 draft of "a bill to establish and administer national parks, and for other purposes." In short, Wind Cave was a model national park when it was established.

The people of Hot Springs certainly agreed. When the Wind Cave bill passed the House, the *Hot Springs Star* ran a banner headline the same day: "It is Wind Cave National Park." In the accompanying article the *Star* reported, "Congressman Martin wired … Saturday saying 'Wind Cave National Park bill passed the House today. It has already passed the Senate and will soon be law.' Thus the good things keep coming for Hot Springs."[60] In the months after President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill into law on 9 January 1903, the *Star* had high expectations for a host of new developments at the cave. In the summer of 1901, Special Agent Greene had told the *Star* that "in the near future a complete system of electric lights and an elevator will be put in," and once Congress "set aside the tract covering Wind Cave as a national park [it would] make a liberal appropriation for its improvement."[61] The first day of that new era seemed to arrive in early March 1903 when an appropriation of $2500 was granted for initial improvements at the park.[62]

It would take until the Great Depression and the New Deal before Wind Cave received enough funding and support to fulfill Greene's early pronouncement about electricity and elevators. Congressman Martin's vision of a bison and elk range came sooner, with the creation of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve in 1912. However, it would not be until after World War II that the park would be expanded to a size that even approximated Martin's early proposal. In its first years, however, Wind Cave seemed more than promising. As historian Kathy Mason notes, Wind Cave's annual appropriation of $2,500 was "minimal, [but] it reflected the general pattern for congressional financing of national parks…. Many congressmen clung to the idea that national parks could and should be self-supporting through admissions revenues and licensing fees for concessions."[63] In 1903, at least, this approach must have seemed like a workable arrangement. Wind Cave's first Superintendent, William A. Rankin, received a stipend of $900 while his wife ran the meal concession at the old Wind Cave Hotel. Guides were also paid per visitor, and concessionaires working out of Hot Springs apparently did quite well. While no one became rich, their incomes were bolstered by the jump in visitation to upwards of 3,000 visitors per year in the decade after Wind Cave became a national park.[64] There was still much "to contend with here," as Superintendent Rankin wrote in his first annual report to the Secretary of the Interior. Until his retirement in 1909, his subsequent reports would also attest that Wind Cave National Park had much promise.[65]

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[60] *Hot Springs Star*, 12 December 1902.
[61] *Hot Springs Star*, 26 July 1901.
[62] *Hot Springs Star*, 6 March 1903.
[63] Kathy S. Mason, *Natural Museums: U.S. National Parks, 1872-1916* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 58.
[64] "Report of the Director of the National Park Service," in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1917* (Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1918), 973.
[65] Bohi, "Seventy-Five Years at Wind Cave," 422.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BEYOND WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK: THE NATIONAL GAME PRESERVE AND THE WORK OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

The establishment of Wind Cave National Park in 1903 seemed to resolve and affirm a host of recent developments in the southern Black Hills. On the one hand, it converted the object of a nasty feud between the Stablers and McDonalds into a public park. In the short term, this guaranteed that none of the interested parties would be able to close the cave, out of spite against the other, or carve up any more of the cave's scenic qualities for the specimens market. Federal management also meant that the cave would not be subject to subsequent land sales and contests, or the shifting fortunes of some future owners who might need to close or transform the cave to satisfy a financial exigency. In short, park status guaranteed that Wind Cave would remain a part of the growing tourist industry that had been shaping the southern Hills for more than a decade. Much as federal and state investment had contributed to the development of Hot Springs as a center for medical care and convalescence, the prospect of secure funding and stable management at Wind Cave served to affirm the area's transition toward recreation and leisure.

Two especially encouraging signs that Wind Cave would develop into a prime attraction occurred during the build-up to the park's establishment. Congressman Eben Martin's suggestion that Wind Cave be made into a substantial national park may not have been widely known, but it reflected a growing interest in wildlife conservation and a sort of post-frontier nostalgia for the vistas and environmental conditions that European Americans encountered some generations earlier. His vision of a "national Park" encompassing 100 square miles or more "where buffalo, elk and other native animals could be preserved" closely matched what the famous Leopold Report would argue in the 1960s; namely, that "A national park should represent a vignette of primitive America." Whether or not Martin's concerns represented what we might describe as ecological sensitivity, many of his contemporaries would have agreed with his contention that a wildlife reserve "in connection with the wind cave would make the locality one of great public interest." [1]

Even more than visions of roaming buffalo or playing deer and antelope, the prospect of new visitor facilities, electricity, and an elevator made the idea of a national park an especially attractive proposition. Special Agent Charles Greene's 1901 statement

[1] Representative Eben Martin to Secretary, 13 February 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," Wind Cave National Park Archives (hereafter WCNP Archives). A. Starker Leopold et al, "Wildlife Management in the National Parks," in *Transactions of the Twenty-Eighth North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference*, ed. James B. Trefethen (Washington, D.C.: Wildlife Management Institute, 1963), 29-45.

that federal management of Wind Cave would "in the near future [bring] a complete system of electric lights and an elevator" along with "a liberal appropriation for [the cave's] improvement," was reported with great enthusiasm by the *Hot Springs Star*[2] As Greene described it, to make Wind Cave into a national park was to make the site into a first rate tourist attraction. Under public ownership and federal management, and with the application of exciting new technology, Wind Cave would combine spectacle and commerce into a world-class experience. Like Martin's proposal, however, it would take some time before any part of this vision was realized.

It would also take the efforts of outside agencies and funding sources. Martin's proposal only began to take shape when private organizations and the United States Biological Survey established what became known as the Wind Cave National Game Preserve in 1912, which operated somewhat independently of Wind Cave National Park until 1935. It took more than three decades before Greene's vision began to materialize, and then only through the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). By the end of the 1930s, however, Hot Springs had faded as both a sanitarium and a recreational destination. Tourism in the Black Hills had grown, but it had also shifted to the central and northern Hills. Wind Cave did not quite become the place that Greene or Martin envisioned, yet the eventual development of the cave and the integration of the wildlife preserve and the national park did create a unique unit in the national park system where ecological restoration was combined with subterranean spectacle.

Wind Cave National Game Preserve

The idea for a wildlife reserve in the southern Black Hills did not begin with Representative Martin. The first specific proposal came from F. C. Crocker, a wealthy New Englander with mining interests in the Black Hills. In 1900, Crocker published an essay in *Outing Magazine* that proclaimed "The Black Hills could be made one of the finest game preserves in the country if it were stocked with elk and buffalo and protected, as is the Yellowstone Park."[3] It is quite likely that Martin, an attorney with close ties to leading figures in the mining industry, knew Crocker and had read the article. He may even have been swayed by Crocker's suggestion that "Some day, some man who wants to make his name immortal, may take the matter up, and in conjunction with the forest reserve bring it before the public."[4] If that was the case, Martin was hardly alone in this

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[2] *Hot Springs Star*, 26 July 1901**.** All citations of the *Hot Springs Star* are from "Historical Newspaper Clippings of the *Hot Springs Star*," comp. Sue Burden (1981): F Ref 1890 B1, Folder 21 "Clippings: *Hot Springs Star*," WCNP Archives).

[3] F[rank] C. Crocker, "Hunting Black-Tail Deer: The Black Hills as a Game Preserve," *Outing Magazine* (November 1900), 146. Crocker's significant business interests in the Black Hills are noted in Annie D. Tallent, *The Black Hills; or, the Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1899), 458; "South Dakota," *Mining and Engineering World* 28, no. 10 (7 March 1908): 426; and George P. Baldwin, ed., *The Black Hills Illustrated* (n.p.: Black Hills Mining Men's Association, 1904), 189. Crocker's membership in the Boone and Crockett Club is noted in Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, eds., *American Big-Game Hunting: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Co., 1901), 343.

[4] Crocker, "Hunting Black-Tail Deer," 146.

desire. In 1906, Black Hills residents circulated a petition to create a sixty-square mile game preserve in the southern portion of the Black Hills National Forest. The idea found a hearty champion in William H. Parker, who won Martin's seat in the U.S. Congress in 1906 when Martin ran unsuccessfully for the Senate. Beginning in 1907, Parker lobbied Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot to create a Jewel Cave Game Preserve. Representative Parker died unexpectedly in June 1908, but the cause was carried forward by his predecessor and successor: Eben Martin, who won the special election to fill the state's lone congressional seat. Pinchot gave serious attention to Parker's and Martin's ideas, but from the start he noted strong misgivings about the creation of a game preserve around Jewel Cave. He ultimately issued an outright rejection of the proposal since, as he noted at the outset of his deliberations, the preserve would have taken good forest and grazing land away from local users.[5]

Though it certainly had local supporters, the main impetus for a game preserve in the southern Black Hills lay in a more national concern about the rapid demise of bison, elk, pronghorn, mountain sheep and other American big game animals. *Outing* was an extremely influential publication among some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the United States. Contributors and subscribers included President Theodore Roosevelt, the naturalist George Bird Grinnell and a host of others who celebrated "sport, travel, adventure, and country life."[6] To continue these outdoor pursuits, to hunt, fish, camp and enjoy what Roosevelt called "the hidden spirit of the wilderness, that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy, and its charm," required a concerted effort to protect the areas where prized game animals lived.[7] In the case of bison, however, this simply was not possible. By 1900 there were only two federally protected herds of bison: a handful of animals living at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C., and 21 bison in Yellowstone National Park. The rest of the bison in the United States were in private hands, and all told they numbered just a few hundred. As bison numbers shrank, the animals increasingly became potent icons of wilderness, the frontier, and American power.[8] The movement to save these animals, and promote the wilderness virtues they represented, ultimately led to the establishment of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve.

In 1905, the American Bison Society was formed to work for "the permanent preservation and increase of the American Bison."[9] The leading light of this movement was William T. Hornaday, who had established the small herd at the Smithsonian Zoo, killed and prepared the animals in the famous bison diorama at the American Museum of Natural History, wrote extensively on the imminent extinction of the bison, and was the first Director of the New York Zoological Park (Bronx Zoo). President Roosevelt was

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[5] Gail Evans-Hatch and Michael Evans-Hatch, *Place of Passages: Jewel Cave National Monument Historic Resource Study* (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 2006), 168-9.
[6] The quoted phrase was the motto for *Outing*.
[7] Roosevelt quoted in Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 150.
[8] Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 168-185.
[9] Mission of the American Bison Society printed on the title page of *Annual Report of the American Bison Society, 1905-1907* (New York: The Society, 1908).

named the organization's honorary president. The previous December, in his Annual Message to Congress, Roosevelt urged Congress to use portions of some forest reserves and other public lands as game refuges for the preservation of "bison, wapiti [elk], and other large beasts once so abundant in our woods and mountains and on our great plains, and now tending toward extinction."[10] Hornaday and the writer Ernest Baynes took the lead in lobbying Congress and their efforts bore fruit in late 1905 with the establishment of a federal wildlife refuge on the Wichita Forest Reserve. The following year President Roosevelt issued proclamations that enlarged the Reserve by 3,600 acres and redesignated it as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. Congress also appropriated $15,000 to erect a fence for the first herd of 15 bison, which arrived by train from the New York Zoological Garden in 1907.[11]

The following year, Congress established the National Bison Range in western Montana on "surplus" lands from the allotment of the Flathead Indian Reservation. These lands had particular appeal for members of Congress and the American Bison Society since they could be acquired at almost no cost to the government through relatively simple bureaucratic transfers between the Office of Indian Affairs, the General Land Office, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.[12] As David Nesheim notes, "The creation of this preserve set the precedent of Congress setting aside the land and appropriating funds for the construction of fences while the ABS [American Bison Society] provided the stock. The ABS raised $10,000 for the purchase which came from a public subscription."[13]

The American Bison Society next turned its attentions to South Dakota. The Montana and Oklahoma reserves were located on the periphery of historic bison ranges, and the society wanted to locate a reserve in the very heart of the Great Plains. In 1911, J. Alden Loring was sent to make a survey of three possible locations: the Rosebud Indian Reservation, the Bald Hills south of Pactola and west of Rapid City, and Wind Cave National Park. Loring assumed the Rosebud Reservation would possess the same logistical virtues of the Flathead Reservation, but he found that too much of the allotted reservation land had been acquired by non-Indian ranchers. Consequently, there were not enough contiguous parcels from which to form a suitable refuge. The Bald Hills did not

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[10] President Theodore Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address" (6 December 1904), available on-line at *TeachingAmericanHistory.org* <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1311> (accessed 6 June 2010).

[11] Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 182-184. The Wichita Forest Reserve was established in 1901 from lands that were part of the soon to be dissolved Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa-Apache Reservation in southwestern Oklahoma. See William T. Hagan, "Adjusting to the Opening of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa-Apache Reservation," in *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Iverson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 11-30.

[12] Unlike the Kiowa, Comanche, Kiowa-Apache Reservation, the Flathead Reservation was not dissolved. Nevertheless, the Allotment Policy did reduce tribal holdings by more than 60% and the process of creating the National Game Preserve and the Wichita Forest Reserve from former reservation lands was very similar. The Office of Indian Affairs was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1947. The General Land Office handled the survey and administration of unoccupied public lands of the United States. The U. S. Biological Survey was within the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

[13] David Nesheim, "Who Wants a Buffalo?: South Dakota's Fenced Herds and Experiments in Management, 1901-1952" (MA thesis, University of Nebraska, 2004), 41.

have these sorts of problems, but the area would not afford sufficient grazing area without incorporating a good deal of wooded country in the Black Hills National Forest. Since Chief Forester Pinchot had rejected a similar proposal for a Jewel Game Preserve just a few years earlier, this was not a likely prospect.[14]

Wind Cave came with none of these logistical problems, and far exceeded the two other sites in several respects. The combination of scenery, quality of range, and accessibility made it a perfect choice for a reserve with "buffalo, elk, deer, [and] antelope." Loring especially appreciated that the proposed reserve would be located around a popular tourist site, which would ensure opportunities for educating and enriching the public. The interest of southern Hills residents in a game reserve also impressed Loring, who reported that residents of Hot Springs were "anxious that the Game Reserve should be located in their vicinity …[and] Congressman E. W. Martin assured me that a donation could be counted on from Hot Springs."[15]

The Board of the American Bison Society concurred with Loring's assessment of Wind Cave. In August 1912, just a little more than a year after Loring made his visit to South Dakota, Congress passed an act

> For the establishment of … the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, upon the land embraced within the boundaries of the Wind Cave National Park…, for a permanent national range for a herd of buffalo to be presented to the United States by the American Bison Society, and for such other native American game animals as may be placed therein.

The preserve was placed under the direction of the United States Biological Survey, which also managed the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve and the National Bison Range.[16] While Wind Cave National Park was a unit within the Department of the Interior, the Biological Survey was part of the Department of Agriculture, which received $26,000 from Congress to "acquire by purchase or condemnation such adjacent lands as may be necessary for the purpose of assuring an adequate, permanent water supply, and to enclose the … game preserve with a good and substantial fence and to erect thereon all necessary sheds and buildings for the proper care and maintenance of the said animals."[17]

The allotment for the game preserve nearly matched all of the funds appropriated for Wind Cave National Park over the previous 10 years, but Congress still balked at purchasing live animals. The largest private herd of bison was in South Dakota, and their owner, James "Scotty" Philip, was eager to sell a large number to the government. None of these privately owned animals ever made the relatively short trip to Wind Cave. Instead, the game preserve's original herd of bison came by railroad from the New York

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[14] J. Alden Loring, "Report on Certain Lands in South Dakota Suitable for a Buffalo and Game Preserve" in *Fifth Annual Report of the American Bison Society* (Boston: American Bison Society, 1912), 27-28.
[15] *Ibid*., 27-29. Parker died in June 1908 and Martin, who had retired from Congress after an unsuccessful run for the Senate in 1906, won a special election to fill Parker's seat and served until 1915.
[16] This name change occurred in 1907.
[17] Act of 10 August 1912 (Wind Cave National Game Preserve Act), c. 284. (37 Stat. 269).

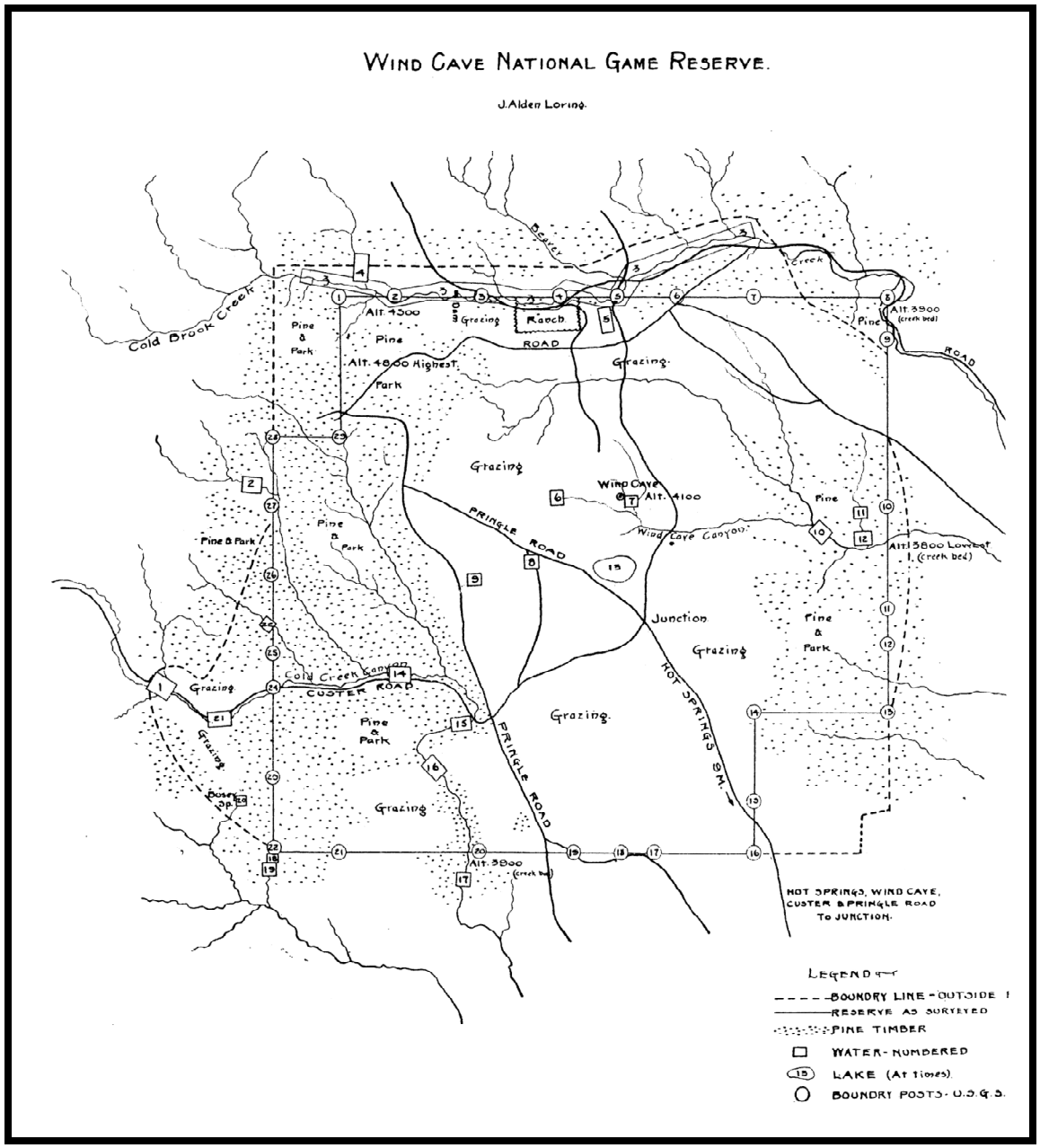

Figure 12.1: Map of proposed Wind Cave National Game Preserve, 1911. Source: J. Alden Loring, "Report on Certain Lands in South Dakota Suitable for a Buffalo and Game Preserve," in *Fifth Annual Report of the American Bison Society* (Boston: American Bison Society, 1912).

Zoological Society, which sent a gift of fourteen bison to Wind Cave in November 1913. The following March, a group of 21 elk were shipped to Wind Cave from the recently established National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Seven of these animals did not survive the journey, but the remaining elk thrived in their new setting. In October 1914, thirteen pronghorn acquired by the Boone and Crocket Club were transported from southern Alberta to Wind Cave. In 1916, the Preserve's population of animals was augmented with six bison and 25 elk from Yellowstone National Park and another nine pronghorn from Alberta. Five years after the first had arrived at Wind Cave, 42 bison, 80 elk, and 15 antelope grazed within a 3,400-acre fenced enclosure. [18]

A year before the second shipment of animals had reached Wind Cave the American Bison Society declared that it had accomplished its primary goal of preserving bison through the establishment of federally managed bison reserves, which by this time also included the small Niobrara National Game Preserve in Nebraska.[19] Along with growing herds in Yellowstone National Park, a new herd in Custer State Park, and private herds across the United States, the future of the animals seemed assured. However, it was one thing to establish a game preserve and another to manage it. In the case of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, the problem was two-fold. Because bison and elk had high reproduction rates, in the wild and in captivity, managers eventually had to contend with too many animals on a limited range. One solution, which did occur in 1929, was to extend fencing around a greater expanse of rangeland. This only provided a short-term solution, however. As herds continued to increase, substantial numbers of bison and elk had to be taken off the range altogether. Some were shipped to zoos, private parties, state and federal land management agencies, and Indian tribes, but others were slaughtered and their meat given away. Antelope presented a different problem. Instead of reproducing, they suffered from high mortality in captivity and Wind Cave managers became pioneers in sustaining and increasing the size of captive herds.[20]

Building a Game Preserve

In his 1911 report Loring advised that the 80-acre ranch of former Wind Cave National Park Superintendent William A. Rankin, which was "the only one now in the Park," "should be acquired" for the headquarters of the proposed Reserve. The buildings on the ranch "are in good condition" he noted, "and part of the land is tilled and fenced." Perhaps most importantly, the ranch also had "an abundance of water."[21] All of these qualities would be necessary for housing a game warden and keeping his stock, while the tilled land could also supply alfalfa or hay if the range proved insufficient during a drought or hard winter. Drawing on the $26,000 appropriation from Congress, the

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[18] Clara Ruth, comp. "History of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve" (December 1921), 31-38: F Ref 1912 B1, Folder 10 Reserve History," WCNP Archives

[19] *Eighth and Ninth Annual Reports of the American Bison Society, 1915-1916* (New York: The Society, 1916), 22-23.

[20] The distinction between preserving and managing bison herds is central to Nesheim's thesis in "Who Wants a Buffalo?"

[21] J. Alden Loring, "Report on Certain Lands in South Dakota Suitable for a Buffalo and Game Preserve," in *Fifth Annual Report of the American Bison Society* (Boston: American Bison Society, 1912), 20.

Biological Survey gained title to Rankin's property in 1913 and the last private parcel within the original boundaries of the national park was made part of the game preserve. The ranch became the residence and headquarters for Fred M. Dille, a Reservation Inspector and Special Agent for the U. S. Biological Survey, who supervised the transport of bison from New York to Wind Cave.[22]

When Dille arrived, the headquarters consisted of a simple ranch house, a barn, and a number of "old broken-down fences." Over the next few years, the house was improved with a cement foundation and cellar, and enlarged. The fences were repaired, the ground cleared of rocks, and within a few years the headquarters included "a granary, a milk house, and a wagon and implement shed." There was also a 60-acre pasture for horses and cattle, and two fields totaling about 11 acres planted with alfalfa. In the first several months after the bison arrived, the animals were kept within a 55-acre enclosure and their diet was supplemented with timothy hay. The small enclosure allowed the New York-bred animals to become acclimated to their new surroundings, and the timothy allowed them to transition from their zoo diet to range grasses. The smaller pasture also provided additional time for construction of the larger fencing project, which required a great deal of effort.

In May 1914, Dille reported on developments at Wind Cave in a letter to the American Bison Society.

> The welfare of the bison, which were donated to the Government by your Society for this Reserve,… are in the best of health. It was a new experience to them to be at liberty in an enclosure of this size and to experience some natural grazing, but they accepted the new conditions like "old timers"' and rarely a day passed but what they indulged in a good stampede … We have the making of a very good Reserve and the people of this section are taking a great deal of interest in the project. The fence is now under construction and it will not be long before the animals can be turned into an enclosure of several thousand acres. They are now sniffing the pine odors from the hills to the west and showing impatience to roam the prospect.[23]

By November, the full 8.67 mile fence was completed around a 4,160 acre enclosure. More than seven feet high, laced with 24 gauge line wire, with stays every 12 inches, and supported by cedar posts between 12 and 16 feet apart, it was declared "the most substantial fence in the United States."[24] Once the bison, elk and pronghorn had moved into this larger range, however, it became "impossible at times for the general

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[22] *Ibid*., 20-22; Ruth, comp. "History of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve;" and Kim Mogen, "A History of Animal Management at Wind Cave National Park" (May 1977), MS. on file in Wind Cave National Park Library.
[23] Frederick M. Dille, "The Wind Cave Reservation," *Seventh Annual Report of the American Bison Society* (New York: American Bison Society, 1912), 55.
[24] Ruth, "History of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve," 19.

public to obtain a glimpse of the game animals within this large pasture." As Dille noted in his annual report for 1914, there was "a clamor for a smaller inclosure alongside the road, near the park headquarters, where some of the animals may be kept so visitors to the park can see them."[25] This was constructed in due course, and it became a favored stopping point for visitors to Wind Cave and for automobile travelers heading north into the Hills from Hot Springs.

During his first year at the game preserve, Dille supervised the transfer and habituation of bison and elk, directly managed and worked on the vast fence project, and initiated the improvements to the Preserve's headquarters. While he personally comprised the entire full-time staff at the Preserve, Dille was soon charged with a significant new obligation. In November 1913, Superintendent William Boland resigned from his position at Wind Cave National Park, and Dille was asked to serve as Acting Superintendent. This duty lasted through July 1914, when Thomas Brazell was named the new Superintendent. Dille then returned to full-time responsibility for the game preserve, but the position soon became too much for one person as new animals arrived and visitation increased, and as construction and rehabilitation projects accelerated. In December 1914 the Preserve gained a new Warden, Abdon P. Chambers, who took care of day-to-day operations while Dille supervised what might be termed infrastructure development: construction, road improvements, developing water storage and delivery systems, fence additions and repairs, etc. Dille remained at Wind Cave National Game Preserve for a few seasons while these projects were underway, but then moved to the recently established Niobrara National Game Preserve near Valentine, Nebraska.[26]

For the next 15 years the Wind Cave National Game Preserve was managed by Chambers, a long-time resident of the Hot Springs area who, by all accounts, enjoyed good relations with the local community and took great pride in his work. His initial concerns remained the same as Dille's, and largely revolved around infrastructure development, incorporating new animals into the Preserve, and maintaining the health of the growing herds. In his first few annual reports, Warden Chambers provided a catalog of chores: clearing the headquarters property of trash and old materials, cutting a fire guard "two rods wide" along the western boundary fence, upgrading the Warden's residence, cutting hay, and a host of other tasks associated with running a substantial ranch.[27]

In his report for 1918, Chambers also provided a full accounting of the animals under his charge and their progress over the previous three years. Since 1914, when the arrival of six bison from Yellowstone National Park brought the original herd to 20

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[25] Dille, "Report of the Acting Superintendent of the Wind Cave National Park," in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1914* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 872.

[26] Dille's career is described in Elsa G. Allen and T. S. Palmer, "Obituaries," *The Auk*, 67, no. 4 (October 1950): 547-550.

[27] Abdon P. Chambers, "Wind Cave Game Preserve, Annual Report," 3 June 1916; "Wind Cave Game Preserve, Annual Report," 4 July 1917; "Wind Cave Game Preserve, Annual Report," 30 June 1918; "Wind Cave Game Preserve, Annual Report," 30 June 1919: all in F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 7 "Warden's Annual Reports," WCNP Archives.

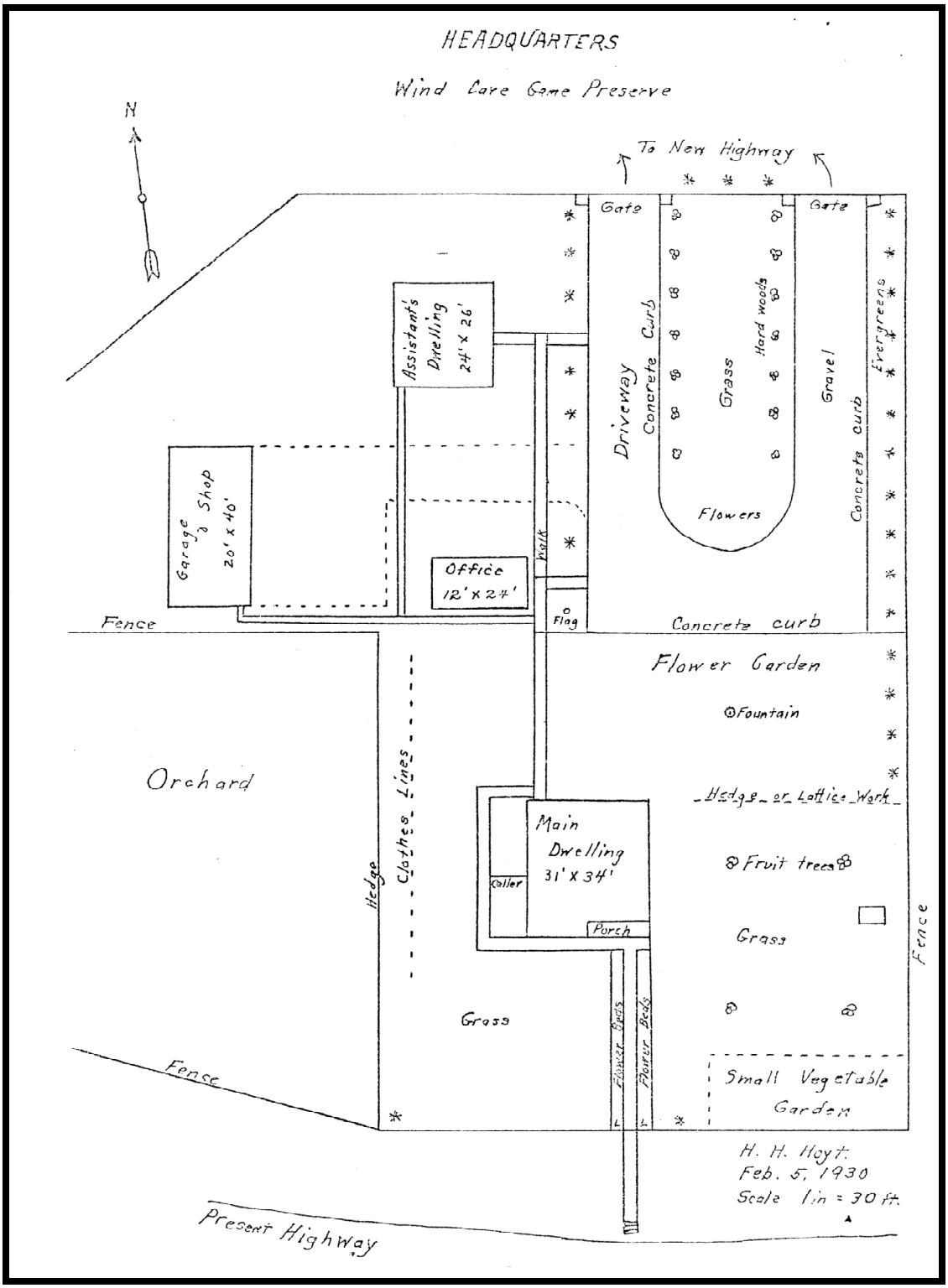

Figure 12.2: Wind Cave National Game Preserve Headquarters, 1930. Image shows the sum of improvements to the game preserve Headquarters that occurred during the long tenure of Warden Abdon P. Chambers. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park Archives.

animals, the herd had grown to "42 head, divided about equally in males and females …. There have been 2 bulls, 1 cow, and 1 calf died, which makes the number of births 26." The quality of the range on the Reserve was in excellent condition and Chambers noted that "The bison have withstood the last two winters without feed outside what they grazed." Elk had also done well, and required no additional feeding. From an initial herd that included 17 animals from Jackson Hole in 1914 and another 25 from Yellowstone in 1916, the Wind Cave herd had increased to 71 head by January 1918. Pronghorn numbers declined over the same period, and had to be augmented. Some of the deaths were caused by coyotes, but most were the result of "indigestion." In 1914 and 1916, the Preserve received a total of 22 pronghorn, but despite 17 births the herd size at the beginning of 1918 had declined by almost a third to just 15 head. Chambers still sounded a hopeful note, however. "While the antelope lacked a good deal of being a success, the bunch which is now left appears to be getting along in good shape." [28]

From the perspective of visitors and supporters, the Wind Cave National Game Preserve was a tremendous success. In 1920, Martin Garretson, the Secretary of the American Bison Society, made a brief tour of the Preserve and offered a glowing report.

> I went to Hot Springs, South Dakota, and motored out to the Wind Cave National Park, some nine or ten miles from Hot Springs. As we entered the park and moved along the road that runs through it I noticed a band of antelope in the distance off to the left, and managed to count sixteen. A short ride farther on brought us to headquarters. Warden Chambers was away but Mr. Brazell, Superintendent of the park, very kindly undertook to show me around. Fortunately, we found the buffalo lying down close to the fence near the road. This afforded a good opportunity for a close-up inspection of the herd, which is not often obtained by persons visiting the park or travelers along the road. The buffalo were fat and fine, not a poor one among them, a few of them got up as we approached the fence, but they apparently were not alarmed, although it was evident they were on the alert and prepared for instant action, but otherwise they appeared as tame as domestic cattle. This is an ideal location for a game preserve. The rolling hills are covered with a thick mat of native grasses, and the Pine Ridge adds picturesqueness to the scenery. There is also in this preserve a fine herd of elk, twenty-one antelope, some white-tail deer and a few mule deer. The people in Hot Springs are very proud of this fine game preserve, and the tourists who visit the park are increasing in number each year.[29]

Visitation was not the primary purpose of the game preserve, but it may have contributed to the long-term survival of Wind Cave National Park. In 1910, just two years before the Preserve was established, Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger wrote

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[28] Chambers, "Wind Cave Game Preserve, Annual Report," 30 June 1919: and Ruth, "History of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve," 19.

[29] Martin S. Garretson, "Report of the Secretary," in *Report of the American Bison Society, 1919-1920* (Brooklyn: The Society, 1920), 18-19.

disparagingly of the national park: "owing to its inaccessibility and the fact that its scenic attractiveness is not sufficient, in all probability, to inspire a greater number of visitors to the park, it should be classed as a local or state park and can never in any sense of the word become a national park."[30] As Kathy Mason has argued, the establishment of the game preserve diversified and augmented Wind Cave's attractions. After 1916, when the National Park Service was established and the game preserve was building on its initial promise, "the national parks had a [clarified] mission to function as wildlife preserves" and tourist destinations. "With bison and elk already established within its boundaries, Wind Cave had anticipated and seemed to fulfill adequately the preservation role."[31]

In the 1910s and 1920s, at least, the game preserve certainly contributed to a growing trend in the National Park Service to present what David Louter has called a "windshield wilderness." Visitors were not allowed inside the fenced portions of the Preserve, but they could readily observe animals from the road that ran up from Wind Cave. While visits to the cave in the late 1910s remained steady at approximately 2,800 per year, the total number of visits to the park totaled 9,000 and more. The discrepancy came from the new tendency within the National Park Service to count all motorists who entered a park. While 9,000 people did not stop and watch the animals in the Preserve, many did—and they added significantly to the total amount of people who counted themselves as visitors within the national park's boundaries. By 1926 the total visits to Wind Cave increased to 85,466, a remarkable number that clearly reflected the growing popularity of the game preserve and car touring.[32]

Whether or not the game preserve and its appeal to a growing number of automotive tourists "saved" Wind Cave National Park, Warden Chambers was confounded by the dual administration of the National Park Service and the U.S. Biological Survey. In 1916, Chambers wrote to the Director of the Biological Survey regarding "one little matter in connection with my duties that I would like some information on. Has the Supervisor of the Wind Cave National Park any right to go inside the enclosure without my consent?"[33] Part of the problem seems to have stemmed from a certain degree of competitive animosity between Chambers and Superintendent Thomas Brazell. But the main problem was institutional. Because the water source used by the national park was within the fenced part of the Preserve, as were supplies of wood, the Superintendent needed access. Yet Chambers feared that he would be responsible for any harm that might come to Brazell or someone else inside the Preserve. Other questions arose over loose stock from the national park and the use of an old road from the cave area across the Preserve. These matters were never clarified, though the retirement of Brazell in 1919—under a cloud of suspicion for mismanaging cave resources and funds—alleviated most of the tension. In 1926, when Chambers was too ill to fulfill his

[30] Richard Ballinger, "Report of the Secretary of the Interior," in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 56.
[31] Kathy S. Mason, *Natural Museums: U.S. National Parks, 1872-1916* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 161.
[32] Barbara Beving Long, *Historic Contexts and National Register Guidelines: Wind Cave National Park* (Cresco, IA: Four Mile Research Co., 1992), 39-40.
[33] Chambers to "Gentlemen," 29 January 1916: F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 4 "Inspector's Report," WCNP Archives.

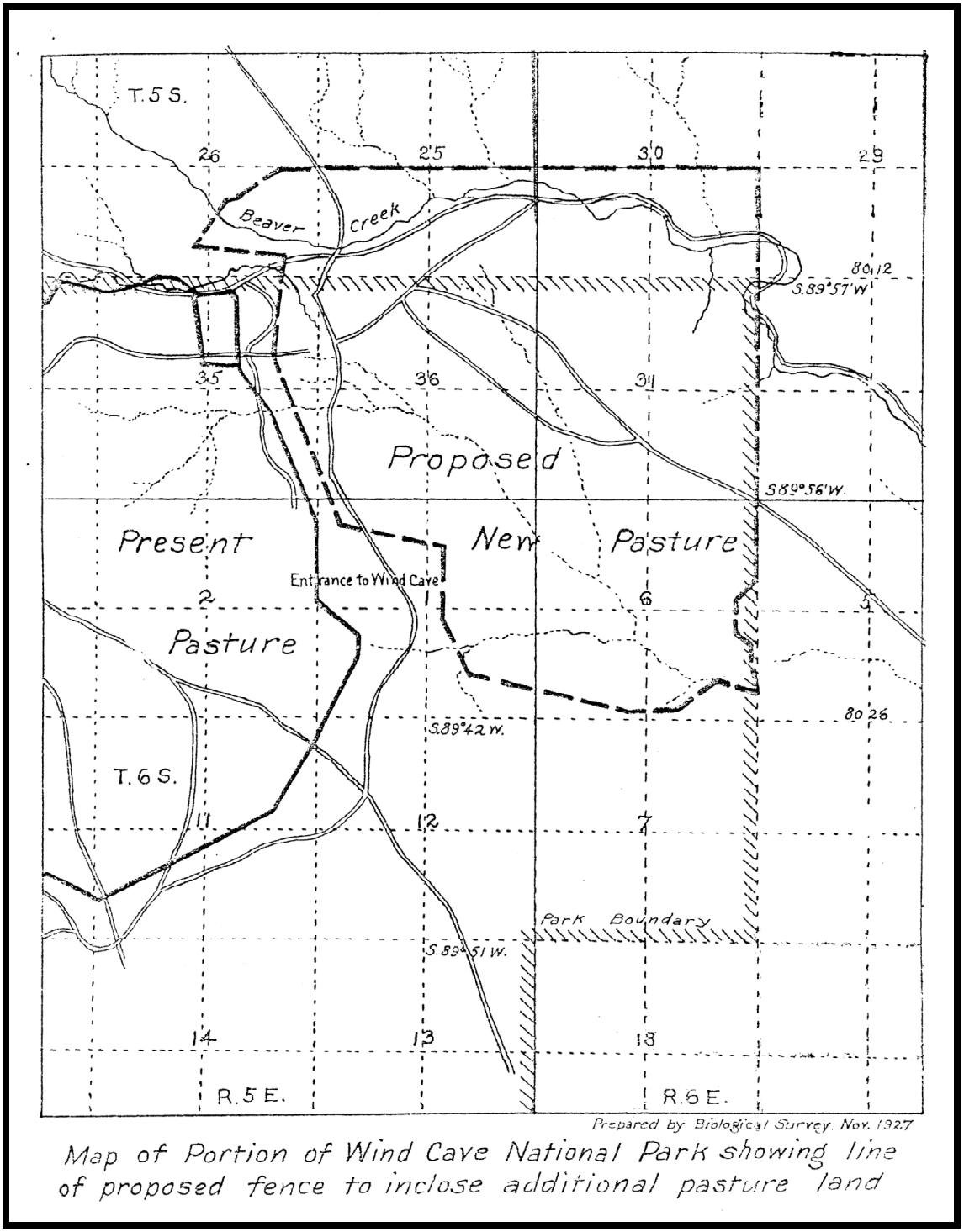

Figure 12.3: Existing and Proposed Fence Lines for Wind Cave National Game Preserve, 1927. The animals that visitors would have viewed in the 1910s and through most of the 1920s were in the pasture on the west (left) side of the road up from Wind Cave. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park Archives.

duties, Superintendent Roy Brazell, who replaced his father, served temporarily in his stead. In this instance, as in the time that Dille had served as Acting Superintendent at the national park before elder Brazell was appointed Superintendent, having two administrative units at Wind Cave proved a virtue. It would not be until 1935, however, when the game preserve was closed and incorporated into Wind Cave National Park that the issue would reach a full resolution.[34]

The other great challenge of Chambers' long tenure involved the survival and growth of the pronghorn population. By early 1924, the herd was down to just 6 does. That summer Chambers secured a yearling buck that initially proved more of a hit with visitors than the other antelope. Raised on a bottle and accustomed to people, the buck spent much of his time near the fence by the road begging sweets from visitors. The following year, however, nine fawns were born and the antelope herd finally began a slow rebound. The mortality of young animals remained high, in large part because the fenced enclosure prevented the pronghorn from using their speed and endurance to escape predators. A reduction of grain feeding and increased reliance on natural browse on the range also helped foster an increase in the population, as did a concerted trapping and poisoning program of coyotes. By 1934, pronghorn numbered 58 animals.

As the pronghorn population recovered, Warden Chambers declined. In 1926 he contracted actinomycosis, apparently from the antelope under his care. An extremely rare disease among humans, it would have formed large and painful abscesses in Chambers' lungs before he ultimately succumbed to the disease in 1929. By the time he retired in 1928, however, his time at the Wind Cave National Game Preserve was marked by a number of important successes. With the help of additional staff, Chambers oversaw a number of projects that were listed out in a 1928 Memorandum. "Since the date of the establishment of the preserve," he wrote, "waterworks have been repaired and a substantial dam and gravel filter constructed, creek crossings have been cemented, and other work of a protective nature for the purpose of guarding against fire and flood waters has been done, fire fighting equipment has been installed, and floodgates built." Chambers also reported that "Capturing corrals and loading chute for use in disposing of surplus animals have been constructed and concrete watering basins have been built to prevent the springs being trampled into mud holes."[35]

Growth and Disposition

In 1929, under the direction of Reservation Manager H. Harrison Hoyt, the game preserve enclosed an additional 3,600-acre range to the north and east of the Wind Cave site. This action came none too soon, since the growing herds of bison and elk had badly

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[34] Roy Brazell to W.C. Henderson, Acting Chief, Bureau of Biological Survey, 12 October 1926: RG 79, CCF 1933-49 "Wind Cave National Park Fauna—General," National Archives, College Park, MD. Also Paul G. Redington to Mr. Stockberger, 27 August 1927: F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 4 "Inspector's Report," WCNP Archives.

[35] "Memorandum Re Wind Cave Game Preserve," 20 February 1928: F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 4 "Inspector's Report," WCNP Archives.

overtaxed their one enclosed range. Even after 41 animals had been sold off or butchered, the herd size still numbered 147 bison. In May 1929, 77 of these animals were released into the new range as were a similar number of elk. While this allowed some expansion of the total number of animals within the game preserve, the new area was soon overgrazed. Over the next few years the annual reductions of bison approached 100 head, and still the herds on the combined ranges had grown to 235 animals by 1935. Saving bison from extinction was clearly not a problem. Rather, managing the range and finding a place to put several dozen extra animals had become the pressing concern for Hoyt and the U.S. Biological Survey. Elk posed a similar problem, even though hard winters and predation caused their numbers to fluctuate more than bison from year to year. By the time the Wind Cave National Game Preserve was transferred to the National Park Service, most of the reductions of elk and bison involved culling healthy animals since most of the former recipients of surplus stock were struggling to manage the size of their own multiplying herds. Contrary to original intentions, the game preserve had become a game farm.[36]

Saving "wild" animals only to kill them might have been deemed a success or a failure, but this ironic situation was hardly unique to Wind Cave. It had become a universal conundrum for all the game preserve managers working in the U. S. Biological Survey, and all sought to increase range areas as well as find new places for excess stock.[37] At Wind Cave, however, Hoyt's efforts to enlarge and improve the lands under his management were complicated by the one truly unique condition that defined his position as a National Game Preserve manager; namely, the institutional overlap between the National Park Service and the U.S. Biological Survey. Collaboration between the two agencies might have proved a boon for both the park and the preserve, and Hoyt initially proposed such an approach early in his tenure. In terms of funding and staffing, however, the U.S. Biological Survey proved the stronger party at Wind Cave. The necessarily unequal nature of any potential partnership, along with the still vaguely defined jurisdictions and responsibilities of each land management unit, tended to make resentment and conflict more likely than cooperation. When this proved the case, Hoyt advocated for the incorporation of the national park into the preserve. This move backfired in the 1930s, however, when the National Park Service designated new plans and new funds for improvements at Wind Cave. These developments caused the dissolution of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve and its incorporation into the national park. They also allowed Wind Cave to benefit from the Recreational Demonstration Area program, a National Park Service administered program that created and enlarged park areas throughout the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. When the acreage of Wind Cave National Park was more than doubled in 1942, the long-held desire to substantially enlarge the wildlife range was finally addressed under national park management.

The effort to integrate the game preserve with the national park, or dissolve the latter and augment the former, found subtle but clear expression in a letter that Hoyt

[36] Nesheim, "Who Wants a Buffalo?" 66-71. Elk numbers from Mogen, "History of Animal Management at Wind Cave National Park," Appendix.
[37] Nesheim, "Who Wants a Buffalo?" 67-72

wrote in 1927 to National Park Service Director Stephen Mather about the "water situation at the park and game preserve." "The situation is this," he noted bluntly, "[t]he park is in desperate need of additional water." Hoyt suggest that "a nice way to handle the situation would be for the Biological Survey people to buy the land and the Park Service to install [the] water system, allowing the Game Preserve to tap the line at a point near their headquarters and use what water they needed. There would be plenty of water for all of our needs for all time." The land he had in mind belonged to the McAdams family, which the American Bison Society had originally identified as a necessary acquisition because of its year-round springs. Nothing came of Hoyt's proposal, even though the McAdams did eventually sell the property in 1931, and the chance for some cooperation between the national park and the game preserve quickly veered toward a more competitive dynamic.[38]

Unable or unwilling to wait for National Park Service action, the Biological Survey quickly decided to go it alone. With the eager backing of U. S. Senator Peter S. Norbeck, who appropriated the funds and helped with the designs, the Survey began construction in 1928 on a dam and new roadway alignment at Cold Spring Creek. The 34-foot high earthen structure was designed to create a reservoir and support a new section of road that would guide travelers away from the unscenic jumble of buildings at the game preserve headquarters and provide a new connection between Wind Cave and Custer State Park to the north. National Park Service officials, who were not directly involved in the planning or design, expressed concern about the project being "inconsistent with park policies to permit an artificial lake or reservoir … [and unlikely to] be an improvement on the present naturally pretty stream."[39] Such concerns were not intrinsic to the mission of the Biological Survey, however, nor did they sway Senator Norbeck. Because he was already working to have the national park and game preserve transferred to the State of South Dakota and made part of Custer State Park, Norbeck viewed the dam and road as a federally subsidized improvement to the state's "crown jewel." As he later boasted to a correspondent, the Senator believed "We can get the whole National Park as a gift any time we want it, but the [Government] should make more improvements first." Given these expectations, and his considerable legislative abilities, the concerns of the Park Service were effectively circumvented in the federal legislation that authorized construction of what became known as Norbeck Dam.[40]

Norbeck's confidence about the eventual incorporation of Wind Cave National Park with his beloved Custer State Park partly stemmed from discussions that occurred within the Department of Interior in the mid 1920s about the possible dissolution of Wind

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[38] H. Harrison Hoyt to Director Mather, 29 March 1927: F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 11 "Game Preserve Matters," WCNP Archives.

[39] Long, *Historic Contexts*, 44.

[40] Suzanne Barta Julin, "Public Enterprise: Politics, Policy, and Tourism Development in the Black Hills through 1941" (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 2001), 166-172; John Milner Associates et al, *Wind Cave National Park: Cultural Landscape Report* (Omaha: National Park Service Midwest Region, 2005), 76. Senator Norbeck quoted in Julin, "Public Enterprise," 167. Park officials must have taken some solace in the ultimate fate of the dam. Formed atop porous limestone, the small reservoir with the grand name of Lake Ta-Tan-Ka simply drained away. The small amount of water that did back up at the dam became popularly known by a less noble name: "Peter's Puddle," after Norbeck's first name.

Cave National Park. The connection between effecting this long term plan through collaboration with the developments at the game preserve came in the form of a letter from U. S. Biological Survey Chief Edward W. Nelson, who wrote Norbeck in November 1926 to offer his support for the closure of the national park. He suggested that the cave itself be converted into a 160-acre National Monument and that the Survey take over exclusive management of all the rest of the land. Nelson had served as Chief of the Biological Survey since 1916, just four years after the establishment of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, and his interest in site was long standing. He wound up retiring in 1927, however, and his ideas about Wind Cave apparently did not receive much priority during the brief tenures of his interim successors. Norbeck likely welcomed Nelson as an ally, and he certainly appreciated the cooperation of the Biological Survey during the planning and construction of Norbeck Dam, but his ultimate goal remained focused on improving conditions within the expected future boundaries of Custer State Park. Consequently, he could be both supportive and noncommittal to Nelson's ideas.[41] As an incumbent Republican Senator re-elected in 1926, Norbeck held the right committee positions and possessed enough political capital to guide matters his way. That is probably why Nelson had written him in the first place, but that is also why Norbeck might also have viewed the incorporation of the national park into the game preserve as just one of several possible steps toward the completion of his own agenda.

Though he could not have been privy to Senator Norbeck's larger plans, Wind Cave National Park Superintendent Anton Snyder still had a strong sense that matters might be slipping away from the National Park Service. In March 1930 Snyder blew-off steam in a personal letter to Director Horace Albright. Upset about restrictions on his authority over land near Lake Ta-tan-ka and Norbeck Dam, he gave new voice to some of the past tensions between the national park and the game preserve.

> It seems to me the Park Service is being placed in a position where all that is valuable on the park outside of the cave itself is going to the Biological Survey. The question in my mind at the present time is whether our attitude should be one of maintaining this park as a Federal reservation upon national park standards or relinquishing the most of it as a game preserve maintained upon Biological Survey standards.[42]

Snyder's letter was a lot closer to the mark than he probably realized, but his anger also had more political efficacy than either he or Albright might have ever guessed. Albright was certainly aware of Norbeck's hopes for Wind Cave, and he likely knew of preliminary discussions about the park among officials in the Biological Survey. Both outcomes must have seemed plausible, though neither prospect would have cheered him. If Albright knew the full extent of matters as they had been developing through the late 1920s, he might well have concluded that the National Park Service would lose Wind Cave under his watch. What neither he nor Snyder could see in 1930, however, was just

[41] Edward Nelson to Senator Norbeck, 30 November 1926. Nelson also wrote Director Mather on the same date: both in F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 6 "USBS WCGP Wind Cave Matters," WCNP Archives.
[42] Anton Snyder to Director Albright, 19 March 1930: F Ref 1912 B2, Folder 11 "Game Preserve Matters," WCNP Archives.

how sharply the political winds were about to turn in favor of the national park.

Norbeck was never able to proceed very far with his program, in part because his political confidence was shaken in the fall of 1930. The off-year election severely eroded Republican control of the Senate, and Norbeck must have revised his expectations for when and how he might orchestrate the transfer of Wind Cave to Custer State Park. Though he was one of a few Republican senators to win reelection in 1932, he lost his committee positions in the Democratic tide that swept into Washington. Public expenditures increased dramatically for parks and recreational programs, and substantial funds poured out of Washington, D.C. to South Dakota, but Norbeck was no longer in control of the planning of projects or the designation of funds. These were instead given over to federal agencies, including the National Park Service, which received their mandates from a Democratic President, Senate, and Congress. Politically weakened and unable to effect policy in any significant way, Norbeck soon withdrew from the public arena as his own health declined sharply (he would die in 1936).[43]

The political reshuffling that came with the 1932 election and the implementation of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal also brought change to the U.S. Biological Survey, which became responsible for a number of new wildlife refuges in the mid 1930s but also had some of its game preserves integrated with other land management units and agencies.[44] This was the case with the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, which was "abolished" by congressional statute on 1 July 1935 "and all the property, real or personal, comprising the same [was] transferred to and made a part of the Wind Cave National Park."[45] Thus ended Norbeck's and Nelson's visions for the park area, and thus began a new era for Wind Cave. The closure of the game preserve and its integration into the national park ended a very unique chapter in the history of the Biological Survey and the Park Service, in which national park lands were subject to the authority of the U. S. Biological Survey. The singular administration by the National Park Service that came with the 1935 legislation also rectified the challenges of dual management. More significantly, however, it affirmed a basic tenet of the 1932 landmark National Park Service publication *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States.* Known more commonly as *Fauna No. 1*, this influential study declared that the primary "function of the national parks shall be to preserve the flora and fauna in the primitive state and, at the same time, to provide the people with maximum opportunity for observation thereof."[46] With the incorporation of the game preserve into the park, Wind Cave fully matched this essential vision of a national park and its management.

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[43] Gilbert Courtland Fite, *Peter Norbeck, Prairie Statesman*. Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2005), 184-191, 205-208.
[44] Lynn A. Greenwalt, "A Brief History of the National Wildlife Refuge System," in *America's National Wildlife Refuges: A Complete Guide*, ed. Russell D. Butcher (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2008), 14.
[45] 16 U.S.C. § 141b : US Code - Section 141B, *FindLaw* <http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/uscode/16/1/XV/141b> (accessed 3 September 2010).
[46] George M. Wright, Joseph S. Dixon, and Ben H. Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: A Preliminary Survey of Faunal Relations in National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1932), 1 February 2000 <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/fauna1/fauna5.htm> (accessed 3 September 2010).

Figure 12.4 Wind Cave National Park Wildlife Ranger Estes Suter with Bison Herd, ca. 1930s. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

The New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps

Even as Wind Cave National Park shed its arrangement with the United States Biological Survey, and wildlife management became a more central component of the National Park Service mission, park managers acquired a new administrative partner in the form of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). One of the largest and most popular of the federal government's New Deal programs during the Great Depression, the CCC sought to address widespread unemployment and environmental problems through a massive public works program. Along with the Works Progress Administration and the Civil Works Administration, the CCC was organized during the initial Hundred Days of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration. Participants, who were popularly known as "CCC Boys" or just "CCCs," were young single males who needed to meet three basic requirements: they had to be U.S. citizens, they needed to be able to perform physical labor, and they had to be unemployed. Participants enlisted for six months at a time and lived in camps within or near project sites. They received meals, housing, and medical care, and were paid $30 a month, though $22-$25 of that amount was sent directly to their families back home.[47]

Between 1933 and 1942, when the last camp was closed, nearly 3 million young men had worked in the CCC. More than half of enrollees were from rural areas, as was the case of most who worked in South Dakota. The CCC also included an Indian Division, which employed half of all male heads of households on the reservations within the state. While all of the enrollees who worked at Wind Cave National Park were white, and nearly all came from South Dakota or a nearby state, some 250,000 young African American men worked in segregated CCC camps from Oregon to Florida. At Wind Cave, as well as camps throughout the country, CCC Boys worked on a variety of projects. These included construction or improvement of bridges, roads and service buildings, the building of trails and recreational facilities, planting trees and native vegetation, small-scale flood and erosion control projects, fire suppression, and range improvement projects for wildlife and livestock. In all, the CCC established 16,953 camps over nine years, and left a lasting legacy in state and national parks and forests in the form of lodges, bridges, roads, campgrounds, visitor centers, trails, rehabilitated forests and rangelands, restored stream environments and a host of other projects.

The CCC was popularly referred to as "Roosevelt's Tree Army," for two good reasons. Nearly two-thirds of all CCC camps worked on U.S. Forest Service or National Park Service projects, and the program as a whole boasted of planting three billion trees in a slew of reforestation projects. The "Army" reference was also apt. The overall administration of the program operated in a three-part division: the Department of Labor managed the recruitment of enrollees, Army officials operated and supervised camps, and

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[47] The following discussion of the Civilian Conservation Corps is broadly informed by Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 2007), 3-16, 43-76; and John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* ([Washington]: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1985), 4 April 2000 <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/ccc/ccc2a.htm> (accessed 3 September 2010).

the Park Service, Forest Service and Department of Agriculture determined and implemented work projects. For all of these agencies, the CCC presented significant administrative challenges in terms of designing and managing large new projects, as well as training and supervising large numbers of young men. The influx of money and labor was nevertheless welcome, and allowed for the development of new recreational sites and the implementation of long proposed—and long delayed—development plans.

Most of the CCC camps under National Park Service direction were in state parks, and generally at sites that only became designated parks after the CCC projects had been completed. Of the 600 CCC camps overseen by the National Park Service in 1935, for instance, 482 were on existing or future state parklands and 118 were in national park units. Averaging about 200 enrollees per camp, the influx of manpower for this year alone amounted to 120,000 laborers, plus an additional 6,000 charged with their supervision and training. The overall administration of the CCC work by the Park Service occurred at two levels. As the historian Donald Paige explains, "The Washington Office approved projects and provided quality control; the park superintendents administered the overall [CCC] program within their parks and, on occasion, in nearby state parks." The work was then conducted in accordance with pre-existing plans for park development, new plans drawn up specifically for the CCC camps, and immediate park needs.[48]

As one of the most economically depressed states in the nation, South Dakota received an ample share of CCC camps. Its initial allocation of 13 camps in 1933, with an expected enrollment of 3,600, represented the largest per capita share of CCC workers in the nation. The state soon received an even greater allotment, and by the end of 1933 there were 15 camps on national forest lands in the Black Hills.[49] In July 1934, Wind Cave became the 16th CCC camp in the Black Hills, and the only one in the state located within a unit of the National Park Service. Its establishment coincided with a significant national increase in the size of the CCC program from 300,000 enrollees to 350,000, with the additional numbers slated for drought relief projects in Midwestern states, including South Dakota. For its first year, the facility at Wind Cave was funded through drought-related appropriations and was designated as Camp DNP-1. Within a year it was incorporated into the standard, and greatly increased, funding mechanisms of the CCC program and became officially known as Camp NP-1.[50]

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[48] Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*. Not every camp corresponded to a single park unit, since camps were often moved and redesignated after a season or two of work.

[49] Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "The Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 9 (Winter 1980): 4.

[50] "2754th Company NP-1 Hot Springs, South Dakota: History:" F Ref 1931 B1, Folder 6 "ECW, CCC, DNP-1, SP-3 General, WCNP Archives. Also "History of Camp NP-1, Wind Cave, Company 2754," in *Civilian Conservation Corps, South Dakota District History: That the Work of Young America May Be Recorded*, comp. C. N. Alleger (Rapid City: Johnston & Bordewyk, 1935), 39-48; Lyle A. Derscheid, comp., *The Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota (1933-1942)*, 2nd ed. (Brookings: South Dakota State University Foundation Press, 1991), 193-201; Hendrickson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota," 14; Peggy Sanders, *The Civilian Conservation Corps: In and around the Black Hills*, *Images of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004),16, 20, 23, 39; and Alice Davis Smith, "CCC Camps in the Black Hills," in *Fifth Annual West River History Conference, September 18, 19, & 20 1997: Papers*, eds. Herbert W. Blakely and Beverly M. Pechan (Keystone, SD: The Conference, 1998), 22.

Figure 12.5: Wind Cave Headquarters Area, ca. 1920s. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

Wind Cave National Park was well primed for the benefits and contributions of a CCC camp. By the late 1920s, a quarter century of small appropriations and general neglect had left the park facilities in a dismal condition. As National Park Service landscape architect Thomas Vint complained during an inspection tour in 1928, "The buildings at the Park Headquarters compose about the most perfect haywire outfit we have in the Park System. They are a disgrace to the United States Government and the National Park Service."[51] The recent push to decommission the park and have it absorbed by the game preserve partly stemmed from the poor quality of the facilities at Wind Cave and the park's chronic under funding. National Park Service Director Stephen Mather, after visiting Wind Cave in the summer of 1928, authorized a significant increase in funding for the development of new facilities. By 1931, the park's annual appropriation of $11,000 was increased to $51,880, with $36,750 slated for new construction, including a water and sewage system, a housing unit for rangers, a power house for a proposed cave elevator, and installation of electric lighting in the cave. Plans were also developed for a new administration and concessionaire building, as well as improvements to the cave entrance, enlarged parking areas, a campground, new administrative facilities, and residences. In short, Wind Cave had already developed and begun to implement a master plan that would guide much of the CCC work over the next five years.[52]

Camp Wind Cave

Located a few hundred yards to the southeast of the cave entrance, Camp DNP-1, or Camp Wind Cave as it was better known, was established on 16 July 1934. The previous week, CCC Company 2754, based at Camp F-13, a U.S. Forest Service Camp located near Mayo, South Dakota, received orders to move down to the national park and set up a new camp. A detachment of 30 men prepared a temporary camp and staging area, and by the end of July all 241 members of Company 2754 were in place. On 2 August, "actual construction of the camp was begun. The bath house and the mess hall were the first buildings to be framed. In about 2 weeks those buildings were in use." As one former CCC enrollee recalled, "A man could wash in comparative comfort and then enjoy a meal that was not 'seasoned' with dust, etc."[53] In fairly short order a hospital, two latrines, a supply building, a recreation hall, a headquarters, an officer's lodge, and eight barracks were completed. On 6 October, just a little more than two months after

[51] Vint quoted in Long, *Historic Contexts*, 42.

[52] It is not clear if the new appropriations reflected a commitment on the part of Mather to keep Wind Cave within the National Park System, or fell within Senator Norbek's long-range plans to have the federal government develop park facilities before turning them over to the State of South Dakota. Mather was primarily concerned with bringing Wind Cave up to the high standards he expected of a national park, but the political and budgetary support that Norbeck gave to the Director's decision likely reflected the Senator's own plans. Suzanne Julin, "'A Feeling Almost Beyond Description': Scenic Roads in South Dakota's Custer State Park, 1919-1932," in *The World Beyond the Windshield: Roads and Landscapes in the United States and Europe*, eds. Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2008), 83-85;Long, *Historic Contexts*, 46-48; Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1983), 14 March 2000 <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/unrau-williss/adhi3a.htm> (accessed 3 September 2010).

[53] Derscheid, comp., *Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota*, 193.

construction had begun, a garage was the last of 18 buildings built at Camp Wind Cave. Clad in bungalow siding and lined with wall boarding, the facilities were far superior to the drafty canvas tents of Camp F-13 and predated by a year the high level of construction quality that became standard throughout the CCC program.[54]

Camp Wind Cave operated from the summer of 1934 until 1 November 1939, when Company 2754 was transferred to Interior, South Dakota where it established Camp NP-2 in what was then Badlands National Monument. For the five-plus years that Company 2754 was stationed at Wind Cave, CCC enrollees completed a number of significant construction projects already called for in the park's pre-existing development plan. These included the administration building, an elevator for a new cave entrance and tour routes, new residences for the superintendent and National Park Service staff, and a new maintenance area. The CCC Boys also worked on significant projects not called for in the development plan. In 1937, CCC laborers performed a full rewiring of the cave since the original wiring had begun to fail after just six years in the moist, subterranean conditions. Even with the increased appropriations of the late 1920s and early 1930s, no funds were earmarked for cave improvements or surface area landscaping projects, both of which became major components of the CCC program and its legacy at Wind Cave. Two multi-year projects also involved areas that were not even part of the national park system when the CCC was established. In 1934, Jewel Cave National Monument was transferred from the U.S. Forest Service to the National Park Service and between 1935 and 1939 Company 2754 established a 25-man "side camp" to work on projects at the Monument. Following the dissolution of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve in 1935, CCC projects included razing and rehabilitating parts of the game preserve headquarters, removing miles of old game fences within the national park boundaries, and constructing a whole new fence around the perimeter of the national park.[55]

In many respects, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the CCC essentially remade Wind Cave National Park and established the basic parameters of park visitation and management for the rest of the twentieth century. The work conducted in and around the cave completely transformed the visitor experience. For the entire five-year duration of Camp Wind Cave, CCC work projects were conducted inside the cave after the close of each tourist season. The steady 47-degree temperature often made the cave the central focus of nearly all wintertime work projects in the Camp. CCC workers hauled out accumulated debris that dated back to the time of the Stablers and McDonalds, blasted and cleaned out wider passages, removed wooden stairs and replaced them with concrete steps and iron railings, cut lower trails in areas with low ceilings, poured concrete paths over places with uneven footing, installed indirect lighting to create more dramatic effects throughout the cave, and artfully concealed the cave wiring.

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[54] *Ibid.* On the upgrading of construction quality in CCC camps, see John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 28-31.
[55] Evans-Hatch and Evans-Hatch, *Place of Passages*, 199-208; Alleger, comp., "History of Camp NP-1, Wind Cave, Company 2754," 46. Superintendent Freeland made it clear that incorporation of the Game Preserve facilities into national park administration, without any budgetary or personnel increases, was a particular challenge that would have been insurmountable without CCC labor; Edward Freeland, "Report to the Director, National Park Service," 7 July 1936: F Ref 1931 B1 Folder "Superintendent's Annual Reports," WCNP Archives

Much of this work, which created a new and more comfortable cave experience for generations of visitors, was done through hard labor. The concrete used in the cave, for instance, was carried in tied-off inner tubes that were hung around the neck so that CCC workers could transport them through steep and narrow passages. Outside the cave, where the use of machines was both possible and necessary, projects still required a good deal of skill and physical labor. One of these included the construction of a new timber and stone footbridge over the gulch between the Administrative Building and the cave entrance. Another relatively straightforward project that utilized a great deal of labor and craft was the path from the cave entrance to the new elevator building. For this task, CCC Boys laid out and paved a nearly half-mile trail, and lined a number of sections with stone retaining walls. The elevator, which plunged through a 208 foot shaft, and the building in which it was housed, proved one of the most significant and difficult construction projects completed by the CCC in the national park. While digging the elevator required the use of heavy machinery, as did the construction of the building that housed the elevator, the exterior trim and stonework involved much of the same skill and hard labor that was used throughout the headquarters area.[56]

Another important, but less noticeable construction project at Wind Cave occurred in the first years of Camp NP-1. As a press release from April 1936 stated, it "consisted of providing additional water for general use and for fire protection of the headquarters area. On this project approximately three miles of the 6-inch water main supplying this area was repaired and countless small leaks stopped." With the recent acquisition of the McAdams property and its key water sources, the park was also able to have a "new 25,000-gallon concrete reservoir … constructed one-half mile west of headquarters and a 6-inch line built from this reservoir into the administrative area, replacing a smaller line and making it possible to install also three new fire hydrants of sufficient size to give adequate fire protection to all buildings."[57] The Utility Area, outside the view of visitors and to the east of the headquarters area, also received significant upgrades. Garages and storage areas were built, and a new sewage disposal and filtration system was installed.[58]

By upgrading and more clearly segregating high use areas, maintenance facilities, and infrastructural developments, the CCC projects followed the two basic principles of national park design in the years between World War I and World War II. First among these was the effort to accommodate the tremendous increase in visitation and automobile use that had begun in the 1920s. New Deal projects sought to extend this trend to new park areas, and to new areas within existing parks. While this often required significant manipulations of existing landscapes and structures, park planners and administrators viewed such development as central to assuring the basic precept of the National Park

[56] Descriptions of completed projects are compiled in various files. The two most comprehensive sources include: Period Final Reports on "Emergency Conservation Work: Wind Cave National Park," in RG 79, Narrative Reports Concerning CCC Projects in NPS Areas, 1933-1935, Folder "NP-1 WCNP—Hot Springs, South Dakota, National Archives, College Park, MD; and the Superintendent's Annual Reports for the years 1933-1940: F Ref 1931 B1 Folder "Superintendent's Annual Reports," WCNP Archives.
[57] "Memorandum for the Press, [April 1936]:" RG 79, CCF 1933-1949 [Wind Cave National Park], Box 1688, Folder 501-03, "Newspaper Articles," National Archives, College Park, MD.
[58] Milner Associates et al, *Wind Cave National Park: Cultural Landscape Report*, 64-65.

Service Organic Act of 1916: "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."[59] Park planning and development in the New Deal years certainly favored visitor enjoyment of scenery over protection of existing environmental conditions, but the two goals were not incompatible. Upgrading sewer and water systems, removing old buildings, paving a patch of grassland for a parking lot, and building trails were directly related to the needs of visitors, and often occurred at the expense of "natural and historic objects and the wildlife. Yet these projects were also intended to direct and concentrate visitor experiences at certain sites, and thus reduce their impacts on surrounding areas.

The second basic principle of National Park Service planning involved the integration of natural features into the built environment. At Wind Cave, this involved the creation of unnoticed façades around the garages, pipes, cables, wires, fuel storage areas, and power plant that made possible every visitor's encounter with the natural spectacle below ground and the wilderness scene on the surface. Unsightly, incongruous, and "unnatural" facilities were screened away behind ridges, plantings, or rock walls while the mechanics of the elevator building were clad in "rustic" architecture. The rustic style itself was a perfect expression of this purposeful exclusion of intrusive or undesirable structures. Rustic architecture, which sought to harmonize the built environment with surrounding landscapes through the use of local stone and rough-hewn timber, developed in western national parks during the railroad era and flourished through the 1930s. As a joint Civilian Conservation Corps—National Park Service publication noted in 1935, rustic "is a style which, through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of rigid, straight lines, and over-sophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings, and with the past."[60]

The result of all this work by the CCC, and the "rustic" aesthetic of the Park Service planners who designed it, was not an exercise in nature fakery. Rather, it was a conscious effort to integrate the cultural and the natural in a seamless experience. As the historian Ethan Carr rightly notes, the designs that CCC workers implemented were meant to "guide the experience of many park visitors and enhance their appreciation of" the special places they encountered. In the interwar years, and especially during the New Deal, such principles expressed the highest ideals of the National Park Service. At Wind Cave and throughout the national park system, the Park Service designed and the CCC built

> scenic roads, campgrounds, administrative "villages," [and] myriad other park facilities in what proved to be the most intensive period of such human alterations in the history of the parks. It was during this era that the "developed areas" in national parks … acquired the consistent appearance,

[59] *The National Park Service Organic Act*, 26 February 2008 <http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm> (accessed 3 September 2010).
[60] Albert H. Good, *Park Structures and Facilities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), 3-4.

> character, and level of convenience that most visitors have since come to associate, almost unconsciously, with their experience of park scenery, wildlife, and wilderness. [61]

At Wind Cave this approach to park development was first expressed in the Beaver Creek Bridge (1929) and the Pigtail Bridge (1930), which were designed and constructed by the South Dakota State Highway Commission to facilitate travel between the national park and Custer State Park. These two remarkable bridges became featured components of the landscape, but the application of rustic design principles also ensured that they would complement and blend in with their immediate surroundings. This was also true of road itself, which followed sinuous grades and skirted scenic vistas to allow travelers to experience the tight contours and open expanses of the landscape through the act of driving. Like the architects of the new park facilities, who sought to blend the built and natural environment, road engineers also took steps to make their roads seem like they were part of the surrounding terrain. Road surfaces were generally kept level with the adjoining grade, and no curbing or striping was used in order to avoid the suggestion of a clear demarcation between the road and the adjoining landscape. When guardrails were deemed necessary along a dangerous curve, or curbs were used to mark off a parking site, then local timber or stone was utilized. This scenic roadway soon became the most popular route into and out of the national park, and effectively made Wind Cave part of a grand automotive tour of the Black Hills that included the Needles Highway and the Iron Mountain Road. When Wind Cave underwent a significant expansion in 1946, the roadway was incorporated into the national park and became one of the most visited and utilized areas within the park. Because of its importance for the history of automobile tourism in the Black Hills, and the continuing integrity of its original design principles, the scenic stretch of SD 87 that runs north from the junction of US 87 to the boundary with Custer State Park is the also the subject of a Historic Context Report that has been completed along with the current study.[62]

Within the Headquarters area of the national park, rustic design principles were first applied to the two park employee residential structures built in the years immediately preceding the arrival of Camp NP-1 in 1934. The preliminary proposal for the Administration Building and the layout of headquarters area by Thomas Vint, who in 1933 was named the Chief Architect of the Park Service, also set the style and tone for the significant building projects undertaken by the CCC. The use of "stone and stucco in the California [or Colonial Spanish] style of architecture" did not precisely jibe with the rustic preference for regional vernacularism, but stucco was relatively inexpensive and allowed for an easy and uniform use of local earthtones. According to Howard Baker, the National Park Service landscape architect who oversaw CCC projects in the Black Hills, Rocky Mountains, and Midwest, Vint's application of "northern Spanish architecture" to

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[61] Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 1.

[62] Mark Spence, "Historic Context Report on South Dakota (SD) 87 Road Corridor, Wind Cave National Park," completed for U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, December 2010.

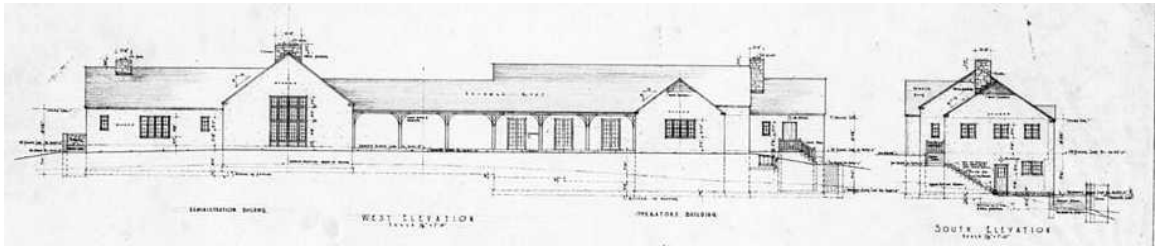

Figure 12.6: Detail of Howard Baker's exterior views for West Elevation and South Elevation plans for the Wind Cave National Park Administrative Building, ca. 1934. The unique blend of stucco, stone, and timber in a vaguely mission-style of architecture became the aesthetic signature of Wind Cave National Park. Source. Source: Library of Congress.

Figure 12.7: CCC Construction at Visitor Center. Under the guidance of skilled stonemasons, CCC crews built stone walls to define parking areas, roadways, and rustic landscaping around buildings. Source: National Park Service, Wind Cave National Park.

a Black Hills setting created a uniquely appropriate style for the rest of the park that "harmonized with the landscape, having a not too rustic but pleasing character."[63]

Standard forms of rustic styling were also used throughout the headquarters area, most notably in the entrance pylons and the many low stone walls used around the visitor center. Extensive landscaping with native trees and shrubs had become quite common throughout the national park system, and thousands of plantings were used to suggest an organic blending between the built and natural environment. Rustic principles even informed the use of indirect lighting in the cave, which provided a subdued focus on specific features while still giving a sense of the dark void just out of view. As on the stretch of SD 87 built by the State Highway Commission, the main roadway within the original boundaries of the national park was also improved and modified through the application of rustic design principles. CCC projects included the re-grading of roadbeds to more closely follow natural contours, and the painstaking removal of any "unnatural" features that could be seen from the main park road or the headquarters area. Old road-beds were removed, old road cuts recontoured, fences and structures taken down, and the areas planted in native grasses, shrubs or trees. Within a year these early efforts in what would later be called "environmental restoration" were indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape. The only feature that was visible from the road was the road itself, yet even that "had been rounded sloped to make [it] seem almost to have 'grown' in the rolling grasslands of the midsection of the park."[64] The removal of game fences along the road, and the extension of the range to the edge of the park boundaries, also fostered a sense of motoring through a wilderness.

Camp Heart Stone

Advocates for the CCC, and many former enrollees, believed that work programs not only improved and transformed places like Wind Cave, but also led to a profound transformation in the bodies and minds of young men. Indeed, CCC Director Robert Fechner bluntly stated that "Our purpose is not only to rebuild forests and lands, but to build men."[65] This occurred through hard work in the out-of-doors, quasi-military discipline, acquisition of new professional skills, and the opportunity to socialize with others. While former enrollees took great pride in the accomplishments of their camps, their memories tend to focus most on the social life of the CCC camps.[66] This is certainly

[63] Howard W. Baker, "Spanish type of building chosen for Wind Cave," *Hot Springs Weekly Star*, 22 October 1935. Neither Vint nor Baker commented directly on the nature of pre-existing architecture, but their interest in what they termed the "California style" did correspond with established local designs. The coloring and style of the new buildings in Wind Cave National Park strongly echoed many of the buildings that comprised the Battle Mountain Sanitarium as well as a number of stucco-sided bungalow homes in Hot Springs and surrounding communities.

[64] "Memorandum for the Press, [April 1936]."

[65] Fechner quoted in Neil M. Maher, "A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (July 2002): 442. These sentiments are closely echoed in "Memorandum for the Press, [April 1936]."

[66] For general statements on the CCC experience, see Edwin G. Hill, *In the Shadow of the Mountain: The*

true for the men who worked at Wind Cave.

Camp Wind Cave, or NP-1, was affectionately referred to as "Camp Heart Stone" by the men who lived there. The name came from a "huge heart-shaped rock, bearing the date of the camp organization, that was embedded in the foundation of the recreation hall. The recreation hall, which was warmed in winter by a large fireplace "built of local rock, arranged in novel designs," was the center of camp social life. A place to read, play games, study or listen to the radio, it provided an area for relaxation away from the cramped barracks. The Heart Stone Recreation Hall also provided classroom space, where enrollees could take course on subjects ranging from Spelling, Physics, "Sioux Indian (language)," and Piano to Butchering, Typing and Diesel mechanics. Within this general blend of trade, college preparatory, and personal interest classes, enrollees could also take correspondence courses from the University of North Dakota. The Recreation Hall was also the place where the camp gathered to hear impromptu concerts by the Wind Cave Quartet, a singing group from Camp Heart Stone that won an amateur singing contest sponsored by the Black Hills Amusement Company and made numerous radio appearances.[67]

Even after work hours, when weather and daylight permitted, a good deal of the social action remained out of doors. Basketball, tennis, volleyball and horseshoes were popular, and many enrollees went up to Lake Ta-Tan-Ka (when it had water) to swim. Baseball was also popular, and the Camp fielded two consecutive winners of the South Dakota CCC baseball championship in 1935 and 1936.[68] With Hot Springs so near, camp social life also extended beyond Wind Cave. As local historian Peggy Sanders notes, "On Saturday nights, men from the camp would pile into Army trucks and ride into town to attend dances." A few enrollees also kept private cars hidden under brush near the camp, and skipped off to other nearby towns on weekends.[69] These excursions, whether authorized or not, helped form close connections between the CCC Boys and surrounding communities.

Spirit of the CCC (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1990), 1-13, and Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 5-8. For the same statements about the CCC experience in the Black Hills, see Sanders, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, *passim;* "2754th Company NP-1 Hot Springs, South Dakota: History;" "History of Camp NP-1, Wind Cave, Company 2754;" Derscheid, comp., *Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota*, *passim*; Hendrickson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota," passim; Smith, "CCC Camps in the Black Hills," 23-27; and Claire Patterson, "A CCC Recruit Looks Back: Claire Patterson's Black Hills Experience," ed. George A. Larson, *South Dakota History* 35, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 335-46.

[67] A list of class offerings on file in F Ref 1931 B1, Folder 6 "ECW, CCC, DNP-1, SP-3 General;" WCNP Archives. The accomplishments and activities of the Wind Cave Quartet noted in Derscheid, comp., *Civilian Conservation Corps in South Dakota*, 197.

[68] Likely as a result of this success, something of a baseball craze swept Camp Heart Stone in 1937. Superintendent Edward Freeland reported that "Wind Cave has three individual [baseball and softball] teams entered in three different leagues and rates high in each." See "274th Company, NP-1, Hot Springs, South Dakota: History" [1937]: F Ref 1931 B1, Folder 6 "ECW, CCC, DNP-1, SP-3 General;" WCNP Archives.

[69] Sanders, *Wind Cave National Park*, 47

The End of the New Deal and the Making of Wind Cave National Park

On 31 October 1939, CCC Camp NP-1 was closed, and Company 2754 was transferred to Badlands National Monument where they formed Camp NP-2. A "side-camp" of 50 men affiliated with Camp Bluebell (SP-3) in Custer State Park were stationed at Camp Wind Cave from February to August 1940 to complete work that Company 2754 was not able to finish. In late 1940 and until April 1941, a 20-25 man detail commuted from SP-3 to Wind Cave to wrap-up a few small projects.

One final New Deal era program did remain in place until shortly after the end of World War Two, though it did not involve work by the Civilian Conservation Corps. This was the Custer Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA), one of the 46 units managed by the Recreational Demonstration Project Land Acquisition Section of the National Park Service's Branch of Recreational Planning and State Cooperation. As noted in Chapter Eight, RDAs were created primarily out of marginal or submarginal agricultural, range, and forest lands that were acquired between 1934 and 1936 and placed back into the federal public domain. At first, the parcels within the boundaries of a designated RDA were purchased from their owners by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and then, after 1935, by the Resettlement Administration division within the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The National Park Service then took responsibility for developing these lands into state parks or some other kind of public recreation area. This work invariably occurred through the use of CCC crews to build campgrounds, picnic sites, hiking trails, and areas for water recreation. No such developments ever occurred in the Custer RDA, in large part because it did not possess any significant potential for recreation. Nevertheless, most of the area was regarded as a likely addition to Wind Cave National Park. With the recent dissolution of the Wind Cave National Game Preserve, and the park's new responsibility for the management of all the large game animals within its boundaries, the Custer RDA was viewed as prime wildlife habitat rather than human playground. As Wind Cave National Park Superintendent Edward Freeland noted in 1940, the "land would be ideal for wildlife purposes, particularly as a buffalo range."[70]

With the land acquisition process all but completed and plans underway for rehabilitating the overgrazed range, 16,341 acres of the Custer RDA were officially incorporated into Wind Cave National Park on 9 August 1946. This expansion of the park to 28,059 acres, along with the completion of the Civilian Conservation Corps projects a few years earlier, literally transformed Wind Cave. In little more than a decade, the "haywire outfit" that so troubled Thomas Vint had an integrated visitor use area, an improved and lighted cave with an elevator, and a unique architectural aesthetic.[71] Together, these fulfilled all of the original promise that Wind Cave National Park possessed in 1903.

The work of the New Deal era also took Wind Cave well beyond its original purpose. Along with new and better facilities, the landscape itself was transformed. The incorporation of the National Game Preserve in 1935 brought the elimination of fences,

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[70] "274th Company, NP-1, Hot Springs, South Dakota: History" [1937].
[71] Vint quoted in Long, *Historic Contexts*, 42.

corrals and dilapidated buildings, all of which were returned to predeveloped conditions. Wind Cave thus transformed into the place of two worlds, one below and one above ground, that eventually proved a staple of park management and interpretation. The 1946 expansion further confirmed this dual nature of the park, and largely fulfilled Eben Martin's vision of a substantial "National park where buffalo, elk and other native animals could be preserved."[72] Though a 28,504-acre park was smaller than Martin had proposed in 1902, it encompassed more open grazing area that better fit the needs of bison, pronghorn, prairie dogs and other short-grass prairie species. Rehabilitating and managing these new lands soon became a central mission of the park, which received important validation in the early 1950s when Walt Disney Productions filmed the Academy Award winning documentary *The Vanishing Prairie* (1954) at Wind Cave.

When the Custer RDA lands were added to Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota Congressman Francis H. Case excitedly proclaimed that "the Wind Cave buffalo herd … [would become] THE herd in the National Park system."[73] While this might have been simple hyperbole or wishful thinking, the improvements and expansion of the 1930s and 1940s certainly confirmed the place of Wind Cave within the National Park System. Efforts to decommission the park and combine it with Custer State Park ceased, while the combination of a spectacular and still mostly unmapped cave system with the first significant effort to restore a Great Plains environmental setting brought new distinction to one of the oldest national parks. This restoration effort, which began in the 1930s with some of the CCC projects, carried through in Wildlife Ranger Estes Suter's endeavor to shape the genetic characteristics of the park's bison herd in the 1940s. In part through consultation with Lakota elders, Suter culled animals that exhibited traces of past interbreeding with cattle.[74] Along with the ongoing project in grassland restoration, the effort to manage the park's large game animals ultimately put Wind Cave at the forefront of national park policy. When, in 1963, the Leopold Report defined "the objective of every national park and monument" as "restoring the primitive scene … using the utmost in skill, judgment and ecologic sensitivity," Wind Cave National Park was already an early harbinger of what would later be called the "ecological turn" in National Park Service management.[75] In time, through the adoption and implementation of science-based ecological restoration practices, the relatively small national park would become an even more appropriate model of Leopold's vision. Wind Cave's bison herd have even fulfilled Congressman Case's prediction, in that it is the only genetically diverse, brucellosis-free herd in the National Park System.

As Wind Cave National Park fulfilled and exceeded the promises of its establishment in the 1930s and 1940s, it also began a resource management regime that

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[72] Martin to Secretary, 13 February 1902: F Ref 1900, Folder 15 "Cave Geology and Surveys 1898-1906," WCNP Archives.

[73] Case quoted in Long, *Historic Contexts*, 55. Representative Case championed the effort to remove Wind Cave National Park from federal jurisdiction and incorporate the park into Custer State Park.

[74] Estes Suter's efforts to cull hybridized bison and breed for what he considered "desirable traits," a criteria that he based on consultations with Oglala Lakota elders is discussed in Curt Netings, "Natives guided early Wind Cave wildlife manager," *Rapid City Journal*, 25 October 2009, 1

[75] Leopold et al, "Wildlife Management in the National Parks,", 29-30; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: London, 1999), 243-246.

largely erased the land use history of the previous half-century. This was a necessary consequence of environmental restoration, especially given the rapid destruction of native flora and fauna that had occurred throughout the Great Plains. In the midst of these new changes (or return to older conditions), park staff made a concerted effort to document and retain traces of the park area's history since the late-nineteenth century. Through the efforts of Harold Jones, John Bohi and others listed in the footnotes of this study, the park's library and archives hold a substantial trove of local history materials. Consequently, Wind Cave National Park is a special place where visitors and area residents can come to understand the relatively recent human history of the region as well as experience some of the ancient environmental processes that continue to shape this part of the world. Since the national park is largely removed from much of the historical spectacles in the northern Hills that are more narrowly associated with "Legends of the Wild West" or the brief period known as "The Days of '76," these experiences and the lessons they impart can be especially valuable.

Wind Cave National Park is rightly treasured for its setting and its history, but more can be made of the park's potential to interpret the world we inherit and inhabit. For generations, centuries, and millennia, the southern Hills and the Wind Cave area have been central to the human history of the Northern Plains in general and the Black Hills in particular. This study has endeavored to root the park area's history within ancient and ongoing processes related to geology, ecology, archeology, and living memory. It has also sought to make clear the longstanding connections between people and place, and between the past and the present. Wind Cave is a many-storied that fully embodies William Faulkner's often quoted observation: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."[76] Because it is a relatively small park that is near a number of communities that remain connected to the kinds of ranching, mining, and tourism enterprises that have shaped the southern Hills for more than a century, Wind Cave has the potential to more fully interpret those aspects of the region's history. More significantly, Wind Cave could be central to a larger National Park Service effort to integrate American Indian concerns and views into park management and interpretation. Revered as a place of creation by many Lakotas, who likely share this sense of Wind Cave with many other communities that once resided in or utilized the southern Hills, the national park has extraordinary significance for how Native peoples understand their world and their relations with the United States. Whether or not one regards Wind Cave as a site of creation, the park itself—from the cave to the rare Prairie Moonwort Ferns (*Botrychium campestre*) that grow in the shade of taller grasses—can teach many lessons about the creative forces that have sustained the past and shape the present.

A Closing Note on the Casey Property

At the time of this Historic Resource Study's completion, Wind Cave National Park is on the verge of making a significant addition to the ecological, historical, and cultural virtues of the park. The 5555-acre Casey Ranch, which was originally established

[76] William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 80.

and built up by the Sanson family, was acquired by the Conservation Fund in the summer of 2010 and is designated to become part of the national park. Assuming that Congress authorizes the necessary budgetary and bureaucratic steps to add these lands to the national park, the boundaries of Wind Cave will incorporate more of the ridges, canyons, and bottomlands that comprise the Beaver Creek drainage. However, the addition of these lands will not simply be an extension of existing park landscapes and resources. Besides increasing the rangeland of the park, opening new areas for the reintroduction of endangered or threatened species, and adding new recreational opportunities for park visitors, the lower elevations in the expansion area would also provide high-quality winter range for elk and deer that is not available within the park's existing boundaries. The addition of the Casey property will also allow for the management and protection of significant cultural resources, including the Sanson buffalo jump, tipi ring sites, and homestead buildings. The buffalo jump and tipi ring sites will provide important opportunities for recognizing and maintaining the ancient and historic connections of Native peoples to the Wind Cave area. Remaining buildings from the original Sanson homesteads will also allow for the management and restoration of rare historical resources that do not currently exist within the national park, and that should become featured components in the interpretation of the region's history of homesteading and ranching. In sum, expansion will deepen and make more apparent the park's ecological, historical, and cultural significance.[77]

[77] For a detailed overview of proposed expansion area, see "Environmental Assessment: Boundary Expansion Study, Wind Cave National Park," prepared for the National Park Service by engineering-environmental Management, Inc. (June 2002)

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