
Building a Vacationland: Tourism Development in the Black Hills during the Great Depression

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In the summer of 1935, Merrill Tucker of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, toured the Black Hills of western South Dakota with a friend. Over the course of a few days, the two young men drove through Custer State Park and visited the communities of Lead, Deadwood, Spearfish, and Belle Fourche. After returning home, Tucker wrote to an acquaintance, "I think the Black Hills are the best vacation land in the United States."¹ Tucker's statement reflects the sentiments of thousands of travelers who found refreshment in the Black Hills during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The region's mountain climate offered relief to visitors who endured heat and drought in their own locales. Its orientation toward economical automobile tourism allowed them to travel on their own timetables and keep within their own budgets. Its novel attractions distracted them from their daily struggles and fears of the future.

Ironically, the hard times of the 1930s helped to establish the Black Hills as a motoring travelers' "vacation land." Tourism proved an economic boon to the region, drawing not only out-of-state, money-spending visitors, but also public programs that provided jobs and aided development of a tourism infrastructure. The business of tourism during the Great Depression contributed to a growth in the population of the Black Hills in the face of statewide population loss and helped to create an identity that has lasted through the intervening

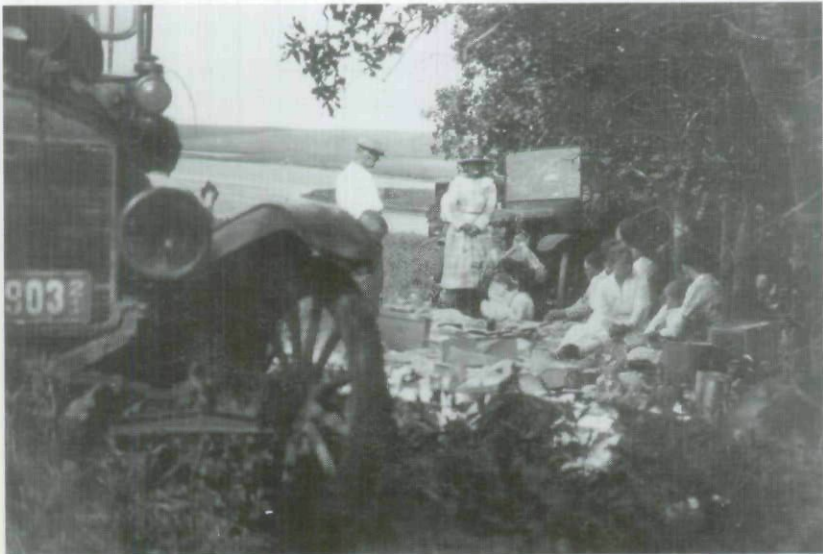
1. *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 6 Aug. 1935.

decades.² The Black Hills emerged from the 1930s with a tourism industry and a landscape profoundly affected by both private enterprise and public programs.

The success of tourism in the Black Hills in the 1930s was not an isolated phenomenon. Despite widespread unemployment and general hard times, Americans continued to travel for pleasure during the Great Depression.³ An increase in the numbers of employees who received paid vacations and the establishment of the forty-hour work

2. Elizabeth Eiselen, "A Geographic Traverse across South Dakota: A Study of the Subhumid Border" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1943), p. 230, addresses these population changes. For a discussion of the Great Depression in South Dakota, see Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 4th ed., rev. John E. Miller (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), pp. 277–97.

3. Tourism declined slightly in the first years of the decade but then began to rebound. Niagara Falls, for instance, counted more than 3 million visitors in 1929, less than 1.5 million in 1932, and nearly 2.5 million in 1934. The Grand Canyon entertained about 185,000 people in 1929, approximately 105,000 in 1933, and more than 140,000 in 1934. Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 238–39.



Touring the countryside by automobile became a popular, affordable pastime during the 1930s. These tourists enjoy a roadside picnic.

week encouraged a positive view of leisure and recreational travel. Americans had embraced the automobile as an economical means of transportation in the 1920s, and affordable cars enabled them to continue enjoying relatively low-cost trips. Businesses that catered to customers of moderate means—roadside tourist cabins, for instance—further encouraged travel on a budget. Finally, New Deal programs utilized public funds to put citizens across the country to work improving and building tourist-related facilities and amenities. Such programs encouraged the development of state and local parks and regional planning efforts aimed at increasing recreational opportunities, as well.⁴

These factors were particularly important in the Black Hills, where tourism was a relatively new venture. The setting for a major gold rush beginning in 1874, the Black Hills were opened to non-Indians in 1877 after the United States government took the land from the Lakotas and other tribes who held it under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The region soon attracted merchants, ranchers, town-builders, and professionals, in addition to prospectors and miners.⁵ A forested oasis in the semiarid, sparsely populated Northern Great Plains, the Black Hills contained beautiful scenery but lacked transportation arteries and tourist amenities, as well as a population base to provide significant numbers of visitors. Nevertheless, by 1881 promoters were establishing a mineral-springs health spa in the southern Black Hills, and, within a dozen years, Hot Springs had become a resort town with relatively luxurious hotels, sophisticated social events, numerous bathhouses, a train depot, and many activities for travelers to enjoy.⁶

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 244–45; Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* ([Washington, D.C.]: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1993), p. 195; John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933–1942: An Administrative History* ([Washington, D.C.]: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1985), pp. 7–19, 39, 60–63, 67; Jesse Steiner, *Research Memorandum on Recreation in the Depression*, Social Science Research Council Bulletin no. 32 (New York, 1937), pp. 56–60.

5. For a discussion of the Black Hills gold rush and the American Indians' loss of the Black Hills, see Schell, *History of South Dakota*, pp. 125–57.

6. Suzanne Julin, "South Dakota Spa: A History of the Hot Springs Health Resort, 1882–1915," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 41 (1983): 205–26, 245–56.



Hot Springs was among the first resort towns in the Black Hills, offering bathhouses, social events, and fine accommodations such as the Evans Hotel, shown here.

The success of the Hot Springs resort industry encouraged the growth of tourism in the surrounding area. Guests made day trips to nearby Wind Cave, which became a popular local attraction and eventually a national park. Cascade Springs, south of Hot Springs, developed its own attractions to draw visitors, who could explore the surrounding terrain, hunt for fossils and artifacts, and take leisurely walks and buggy rides. Entrepreneurs in other areas of the Black Hills also developed businesses aimed at tourists. Theodore Reder dammed a steep valley north of Custer to create Sylvan Lake, and his wife Elizabeth designed the three-story hotel Reder and his brothers built on the lakeshore. Sylvan Lake quickly became a popular vacation spot and gathering place for Black Hills residents. In 1900, Fred and Albert Michaud claimed Jewel Cave, west of Custer, and spent the next half decade developing the site as a tourist attraction. In 1908, Theodore Roosevelt designated Jewel Cave a national monument.⁷

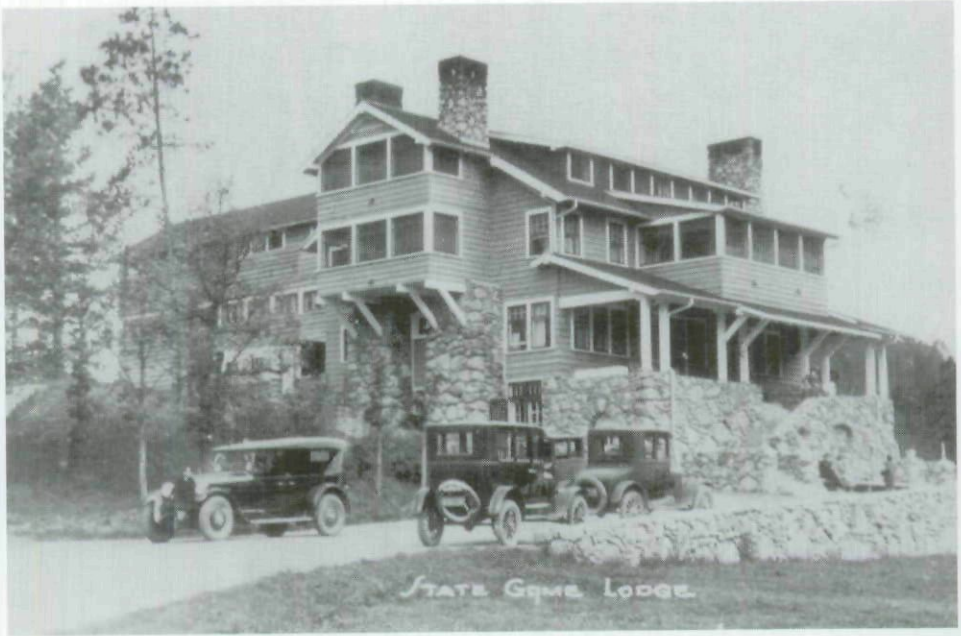
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 251–52; Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park: A History of Custer State Park and Northcentral Custer County* ([Custer, S.Dak.]: By the Author, 1994), pp. 90–92; Karen Rosga, *Jewel Cave: The Story behind the Scenery*, ([Las Vegas, Nev.]: KC Publications, 1998), pp. 34–36.

Although the people involved in these and similar enterprises recognized the potential of tourism in the Black Hills, the industry grew slowly during the first decades of the twentieth century. After World War I, with automobiles widely available and residents of the country's heartland enjoying a measure of prosperity, the Black Hills began to draw increasing numbers of tourists. Efforts by local communities to build roads that gave travelers access to the surrounding scenery bore fruit, attracting motorists infatuated with their new machines. Custer State Park, established in 1919, proved especially appealing to these tourists. The park was the conception of Peter Norbeck, South Dakota governor from 1917 to 1921 and United States senator from 1921 to 1936. Norbeck devoted a great deal of effort to developing the park into a site that would attract and entertain motor-ing travelers, allowing them to view scenery and wildlife from their cars and providing them easily accessible accommodations and other amenities.⁸ "We are looking mainly for tourists now," Norbeck told Custer State Park Board secretary John A. Stanley in 1921.⁹ Custer State Park was not intended solely as a wildlife refuge or a means to protect scenery; it was also meant to bring visitors to the Black Hills and the state.

Despite the advances in Black Hills tourism during the early 1920s, the industry remained largely a local one. Tourism business operators were quite satisfied to draw visitors from eastern South Dakota and bordering states, and the populace viewed mining, logging, ranching, and commerce as the region's economic mainstays. Those attitudes changed dramatically in 1927, when President Calvin Coolidge spent his summer vacation in Custer State Park and well-known sculptor Gutzon Borglum began to carve a mountain named Rushmore. Coolidge's visit focused national attention on the Black Hills as news sto-

8. Suzanne Barta Julin, "Public Enterprise: Politics, Policy and Tourism Development in the Black Hills through 1941" (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 2001), pp. 81-82, 87-88, 91-98. For an in-depth study of Norbeck's life and career, see Gilbert Courtland Fite, *Peter Norbeck: Prairie Statesman* (Pierre, S.Dak.: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2005).

9. Norbeck to Stanley, 4 May 1921, Box 70, Folder Custer State Park, Stanley, Hon. J. A. (1921-1922), Peter Norbeck Papers, Richardson Archives, I. D. Weeks Library, University of South Dakota, Vermillion.



The State Game Lodge in Custer State Park served as headquarters for President Calvin Coolidge during the summer of 1927. His stay in the Black Hills focused national attention on the region.

ries and photographs appeared in newspapers nationwide on a daily basis. The monument at Mount Rushmore received a share of this attention, and a trickle of tourists began making the difficult journey to the site in order to view the sculpture in its infancy.¹⁰

The publicity and growing tourist numbers resulting from the Coolidge visit and the Rushmore project came at an opportune moment. For most Dakotans, the Great Depression of the 1930s was a more painful continuation of the 1920s, when hard times in the state's agricultural sector wreaked havoc with the state's economy. As

10. *New York Times Index*, vol. 14, no. 1 (New York: *New York Times*, 1927), pp. 177, 181-82; *New York Times Index*, vol. 15, no. 3 (New York: *New York Times*, 1927), pp. 147-48, 465; *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, vol. 7 (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1929), p. 239; "2,117,205 Words Wired on the Coolidge Vacation," *New York Times*, 10 Sept. 1927; Gilbert C. Fite, *Mount Rushmore* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), pp. 74-76.

farmers found it impossible to meet their obligations, financial institutions faltered and failed. The end of the 1920s brought more trouble in the form of insect infestations, drought, and severe winter weather. By 1930, agricultural land values were reduced to nearly half their 1921 levels.¹¹

The expansion of the Black Hills tourism industry was a bright spark in an otherwise dark economic picture in the state. As entrepreneurs embraced the notion of catering to visitors, the area's natural resources provided inspiration for the development of attractions. Caves provide good examples. Rudolph C. Stoll, a government trapper, discovered Stagebarn Cavern, twelve miles north of Rapid City. He and two partners incorporated, improved the property, erected highway signs on roads leading to and through the Black Hills, and opened the cave to the public in 1935. Nameless Cave near Rapid City began business on 1 July 1935, and Rushmore Cave, the former Hermosa Crystal Cave, was improved by new owners and renamed in 1936. Bud and Lee Rupp, ranchers in Meade County north of Rapid City, developed Buffalo Cave during the Great Depression; the brothers operated the attraction until the early 1940s, when they sold their ranch and moved away.¹²

Other natural resources also stimulated private tourism development. J. E. Handlin, Sigrid Handlin, and Monroe Handlin leased land near Piedmont that held petrified wood and opened the Black Hills Petrified Forest in 1930. Their offerings included guided tours and petrified-wood souvenirs. J. E. Handlin and landowner Ed Boylan subsequently opened another site on Boylan's land, named Timber of Ages Petrified Forest. In the mid-1930s, young Earl Brockelsby discovered a unique way to capitalize on tourists' interest in nature. He brought his pet rattlesnakes with him to work at local tourist attractions and charged visitors to watch him. Encouraged by their re-

11. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, pp. 281-84.

12. Gary Schilberg and David Springhetti, eds., with contributions by Brian Adams, et al., *1988 NSS Convention Guidebook: Caves and Associated Features of the Black Hills Area, South Dakota and Wyoming* (Huntsville, Ala.: National Speleological Society, 1988), pp. 95-96, 102-4; John R. Honerkamp, Sr., *At the Foot of the Mountain* (Piedmont, S.Dak.: By the Author, 1978), pp. 200-201.

sponse, Brockelsby borrowed money and opened Reptile Gardens in 1937.¹³ Attractions like these provided affordable and novel entertainment for Black Hills visitors.

The Black Hills tourism industry also played upon historical themes. The region's American Indians were a significant part of its history and during the 1930s provided not only an added lure for tourists but also a source of income and recognition for the people who had once held the land. The Duhamel Sioux Indian Pageant was the most prominent of these attractions. The Duhamel family built a prosperous hardware and mercantile business in Rapid City and in the 1920s instituted an American Indian presentation that helped to showcase their enterprise. In association with Nicholas Black Elk, the Duhamels recruited Lakota, or western Sioux, Indians to perform dances and ceremonies for tourists. As the depression deepened, the Duhamels diversified their operations by opening Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns on land they owned beside the road leading from Rapid City to Mount Rushmore. Although the attraction centered on limestone caves, the Indian pageant, which they transferred to the site, was also an important draw for tourists. To stage the Sioux Indian Pageant, the Duhamels built a tipi-shaped ticket office and an octagonal dance hall. Nicholas Black Elk organized and directed the shows, appearing in many of the performances, and the Duhamels maintained a camp for the participants. Black Elk's work in the tourism industry was overshadowed by his collaboration with John G. Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*, first published in 1932, but the performances he coordinated were a prominent and highly visible part of Black Hills tourism in the 1930s.¹⁴

Communities also depended upon their histories as they developed events to entertain residents and draw visitors during the 1920s. Belle

13. Honerkamp, *At the Foot of the Mountain*, pp. 199–200; Ann Connery Frantz, "Partners in Progress," in *Gateway to the Hills: An Illustrated History of Rapid City*, ed. David B. Miller (Northridge, Calif.: Windsor Publications, 1985), p. 121.

14. David O. Born, "Black Elk and the Duhamel Sioux Indian Pageant," *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* 61 (Winter 1994): 22–29; Dale Lewis, *Duhamel: From Ox Cart . . . to Television* (Rapid City, S.Dak.: Francis A. Duhamel, 1993), pp. 117–217; Raymond J. DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 63–65.



Nicholas Black Elk, who became well known for his traditional Lakota teachings, was among the American Indians who performed for tourists during the Duhamel Sioux Indian Pageant.

Fourche, with the help of energetic citizen Ray L. Bronson, instituted the Belle Fourche Roundup after World War I, and it became one of the premier summer events in the Black Hills. The town of Custer expanded its Gold Discovery Day celebration in 1924 to include a pageant that would appeal to a wide audience. Deadwood instituted its Days of '76 celebration in the same year.¹⁵

15. "Ray L. Bronson, 1880–1941," *South Dakota Hiway Magazine* 16 (May 1941): 6; *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 5 June 1924; Watson Parker, *Deadwood: The Golden Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 239.

These events became more important to communities during the depression as they drew visitors and bolstered the local economies. In the case of Deadwood, the 1930s brought some particular advantages. The repeal of prohibition allowed the community to be bolder in emphasizing its historic reputation as a wide-open town. During the Days of '76 in 1935, for instance, Deadwood featured more than fifty nightclubs recalling its glory days. At about the same time, Nell Perriou, head of the Deadwood Chamber of Commerce, and Mrs. Pat Woods developed *The Trial of Jack McCall*, a play about the legal proceedings against the drifter who killed James Butler ("Wild Bill") Hickok in Deadwood in 1876. The performance eventually included a foot chase down Deadwood's main thoroughfare, followed by a trial in which tourists were plucked from the audience to serve as jurors. Spearfish took the notion of theatrical presentation beyond local history. In 1932, a German theatrical company that portrayed the story of Jesus Christ's death fled their homeland for the United States after the rise of Hitler. The company toured for several years before arriving in Spearfish in 1937, where the city donated a natural amphitheatre and citizens raised nearly thirty thousand dollars to build a facility to serve as a permanent home for the Passion Play. Regular performances began in 1939 and soon attracted thousands of tourists.¹⁶

Local residents also profited from tourist attractions by providing services and souvenirs. Master stonemason Monty Nystrom, whose work was featured in many buildings throughout the Black Hills, founded Artcrafters with his wife Lillian in the late 1920s. Their company produced toothpick holders, paperweights, and other items suitable for the tourist trade, as well as fireplaces, monuments, and other stone and rock works. By 1930, the Nystroms employed as many as fifty individuals, mostly women, in their Custer workshop. Lily and Pete Scheckle, who farmed in the Piedmont area north of Rapid City

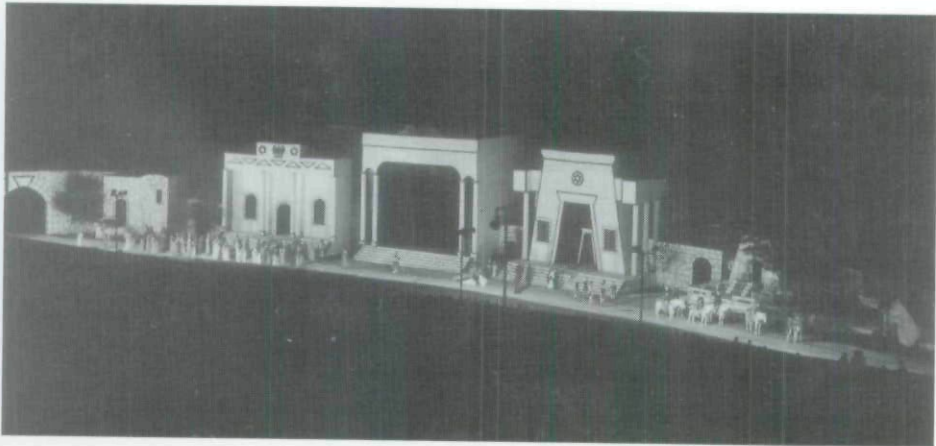
16. *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 6 Aug. 1935; "Director Shares Spotlight with Historical Murderer" (unidentified newspaper clipping), Box Printed Material DE 14-DE16, Folder DE16, City of Deadwood Archives, Deadwood, S.Dak. (hereafter cited as CDA); Parker, *Deadwood*, p. 242; Joshua Garrett-Davis, "Dakota Images: Josef Meier," *South Dakota History* 31 (Spring 2001): 90; Program, Passion Play [1943], Vertical Files, Folder Passion Play, Deadwood Public Library, Deadwood, S.Dak.; *Black Hills Weekly* (Deadwood), 6 Jan. 1939.

along the road to Crystal Cave, profited from the tourist trade during the depression by adding on a public dining room to their house and serving dinners featuring home-grown chicken and vegetables. During the winters, the couple created souvenirs from local rocks and crystals to sell in the summer. Traditional businesses in Rapid City, such as hardware stores and drugstores, featured souvenirs and other goods for tourists during the travel season, depending on these sales to help carry them through the winter.¹⁷

Tourists and the economic advantages they presented gave many people in the Black Hills the ability to make a living, even in the depths of the Great Depression. While some rural counties in the state declined in population by as much as 20 percent during the 1930s, those counties that served tourists gained population, and Rapid City grew by thirty-three percent.¹⁸ "Always keep in mind," the *Rapid City Journal*

17. "Custer in the Black Hills of South Dakota," *Sunshine Magazine* 10 (Apr. 1930): 8; *Custer Weekly Chronicle*, 12 Apr. 1928; Michael A. Bedeau, "Granite Faces and Concrete Critters: Automobile Tourism in the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, 1994), p. 21; Honerkamp, *At the Foot of the Mountain*, pp. 132–33; Eiselen, "A Geographic Traverse," pp. 178, 189.

18. Elizabeth Eiselen, "The Tourist Industry of a Modern Highway: U.S. 16 in South Dakota," *Economic Geography* 21 (1945): 226.



A natural outdoor amphitheatre provides a dramatic setting for the Black Hills Passion Play, performed in Spearfish since 1939.

noted in 1935, "that a vacation land such as ours seems some way to attract the elusive dollar even during depressions."¹⁹

The "elusive dollars" that tourism garnered in the private sector in the Black Hills were supplemented during the 1930s by public money that not only helped individuals and communities to survive the hard times but also expanded the tourism infrastructure, giving visitors new attractions and facilities to enjoy. Federal works projects initiated under the New Deal of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration to alleviate unemployment and poverty throughout the country produced improvements that state and local entities could not have accomplished on their own. Such programs, however, also usurped local decision-making processes in favor of broader planning, and federal guidelines dramatically affected the development of public tourism facilities.

The programs most vital to tourism in the Black Hills were the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The PWA was implemented under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 to provide employment and stimulate the lagging economy. The agency concentrated on erecting public structures such as dams, buildings, schools, and hospitals, and most PWA funding went to pay professionals and skilled workers or to purchase materials. The CCC was established by executive order in 1933 under the Emergency Conservation Work program to employ young single men on relief in conservation-related projects. Before the program ended during World War II, the CCC put 2.5 million young men to work in forests, parks, and on other public lands. The WPA, created under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, provided funds to construct and improve playgrounds, schools, and other public sites; its programs emphasized jobs for unemployed workers. A component of the WPA hired artists, writers, and other professionals to design museum exhibits, create public art, and write guidebooks to the various states.²⁰ Although other New Deal programs also contributed, the PWA, CCC,

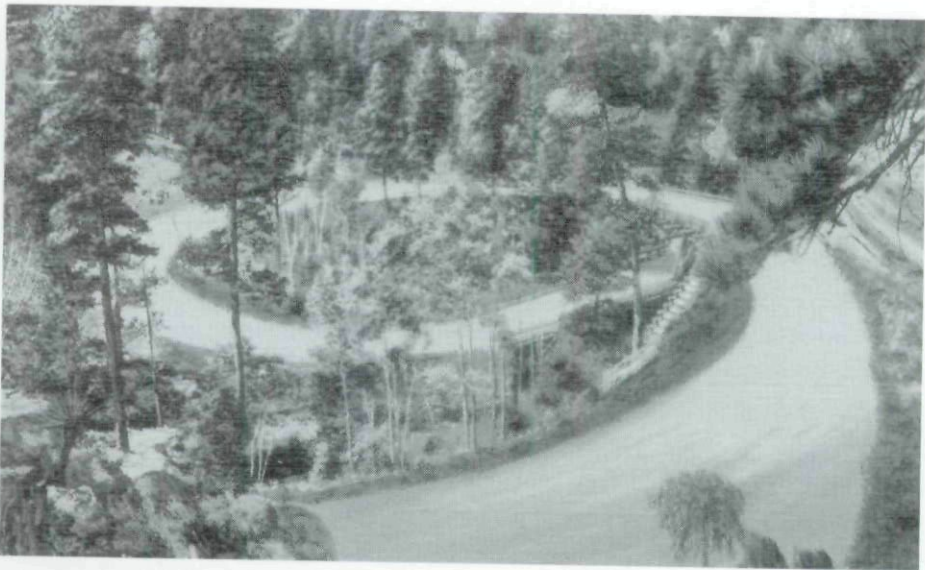
19. *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 30 Sept. 1935.

20. Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1993), pp. 152-55, 255, 263, 269-70.

and WPA were especially important in expanding the tourism infrastructure in the country at large and the Black Hills in particular. In the Black Hills, the New Deal programs proved to be particularly significant resources that followed a long tradition of publicly funded development of tourism-related sites.

Custer State Park was a model of such development from its inception in 1919. Peter Norbeck's vision of a state park that would serve as a magnet for automobile tourists inspired its overall design and individual features. During the 1920s, the construction of the Needles Highway and the State Game Lodge, along with improvements at the Sylvan Lake Hotel and other projects, helped to make the park an important Black Hills tourist destination. In the early 1930s, Norbeck led construction of the Iron Mountain Road, which took motorists over an exciting route through the park that included hairpin turns, "pig-tail" bridges, and tunnels framing views of the emerging Mount Rushmore sculptures.²¹

21. Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, pp. 150–51.



The twists and turns of the Iron Mountain Road, built during the 1930s, gave tourists an exciting driving experience.

Iron Mountain Road was the last major project in Custer State Park that Norbeck was able to dominate, however. The CCC camps established in state parks during the 1930s operated under National Park Service guidelines, and federally salaried professionals, including engineers and landscape architects, evaluated and approved work projects under the auspices of the National Park Service's Branch of Planning and State Cooperation. Federal projects in Custer State Park during the 1930s included construction of the park's museum and the development of exhibits, the creation of Stockade Lake through the damming of French Creek, and the development of trails and campgrounds. When Sylvan Lake Hotel burned in 1935, Norbeck tried to convince the Custer State Park Board to commission Frank Lloyd Wright to design the replacement. Due in part to the influence of National Park Service professionals, the board instead hired Harold Spitznagel, a young Sioux Falls architect who had designed the park museum in the Rustic style used almost exclusively by the National Park Service during the 1930s. The new Sylvan Lake Lodge, built with PWA funds, opened in 1937.²² New Deal works programs in the park diminished state control and increased federal influence on architecture and overall design.

The New Deal programs affected Wind Cave National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument even more dramatically. Shortly after the establishment of Wind Cave National Park in 1903, superintendents began to complain about the lack of federal financial support for development and the primitive conditions that met tourists who came to visit. These issues became more contentious as automobile traffic and tourist numbers increased. Roy Brazell, Wind Cave superintendent from 1919 to 1928, watched the transformation in Black Hills tourism and repeatedly contrasted the rapidly growing infrastructure at nearby Custer State Park with that of Wind Cave, which suffered from lack of attention. While the state constructed good roads in Cust-

22. Julin, "Public Enterprise," pp. 184-205, treats the effects of federal works programs on Custer State Park. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, pp. 152-65, details CCC work in the park. For a discussion of the controversy surrounding the rebuilding of the hotel at Sylvan Lake, see Suzanne Barta Julin, "Art Meets Politics: Peter Norbeck, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Sylvan Lake Hotel Commission," *South Dakota History* 32 (Summer 2002): 117-48.

er State Park and built or improved accommodations and amenities, the staff at Wind Cave National Park contended with deteriorating roads, an inadequate sanitation system, a lack of food and drink concessions, and poor facilities in general.²³ Anton Snyder, who succeeded Brazell, wrote in an official report that the park's "shabby appearance . . . makes us a target for much unfair criticism."²⁴

The sad condition of the national park resulted from more than benign neglect on the part of the federal government. For years, officials with the National Park Service and members of Congress had harbored reservations about the value of Wind Cave. Horace Albright, who became National Park Service director in 1929, discussed with congressmen the option of eliminating the park from the system, and in 1930, Congressman Lewis Cramton of Michigan considered introducing a bill to abolish Wind Cave National Park and incorporate the property into Custer State Park.²⁵

Ultimately, Wind Cave National Park not only survived; it was transformed with the establishment of a CCC camp in the park and federal funds for works projects. Civilian Conservation Corps workers improved the park's main road and built parking areas with stone curbs and a log-and-stone footbridge. They updated the cave's lighting system and trails, remodeled three residences on the site and built two new ones, and worked on water and sanitation systems. Most significantly, they helped to build a new administration building designed by National Park Service architect Howard Baker. The two-unit structure of native stone and stucco connected by a loggia put a new face on the national park. Departing from the Rustic-style log-and-rock construction typical of other state and federal structures in the Black Hills, the building hinted at Mission-style architectural origins, which federal architects may have found more appropriate for its site on open grass-

23. Julin, "Public Enterprise," pp. 106-11, 163-64.

24. "Report of the Superintendent, Wind Cave National Park, Supplementing Report of Chief Landscape Architect Vint," n.d., Box 1, File 6, Investigations II of II, FREF 1914 B1#1-9, The Difficult Years, 1914-1931, Historical Files, Wind Cave National Park Library, Hot Springs, S.Dak. This document is a copy of the original report held in WICA Admin-Supt. File 204-010, Records of the National Park Service, 1785-1990, Record Group 79, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

25. Julin, "Public Enterprise," pp. 166-68.

lands.²⁶ Federal dollars and CCC workers turned a neglected national park into a modern showplace and thus created an important new element in the Black Hills tourism industry.

Civilian Conservation Corps projects produced similar results at Jewel Cave National Monument, located west of Custer. For nearly two decades after its establishment in 1908, the United States Forest Service exercised jurisdiction over Jewel Cave and essentially closed it to public view despite the intentions of the Michaud family, who had originally developed the cave as a tourist attraction. Local pressure brought about by the growth of automobile tourism prompted the Forest Service to enter into an agreement with civic organizations in Custer, South Dakota, and Newcastle, Wyoming, to open the cave to benefit tourists.²⁷ In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered that all national monuments administered by the Department of War and the United States Forest Service be transferred to the National Park Service. The Park Service allowed the local group to continue operating Jewel Cave until 1939 but also established a Civilian Conservation Corps side camp at the site.²⁸

The CCC men built a rock walkway and stairs to the cave entrance and improved stairways and trails within the cave. In their zeal to improve the site, they destroyed a two-story, rustic Stick-style hotel built by the Michauds in 1903, as well as original outbuildings and a tall, decorative pillar made of specimens from the cave and minerals from other areas of the Black Hills. In turn, they constructed a log ranger station in the National Park Service's typical Rustic style, thereby re-

26. Barbara Beving Long, "Wind Cave National Park Historic Context and National Register Guidelines" ([Washington, D.C.]: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 15 Sept. 1995), Appendix A.1; Edward D. Freeland to Director, National Park Service, 1 Sept. 1931, in *Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1908-1959*, Wind Cave National Park Library; David Erpestad and David Wood, *Building South Dakota: A Historical Survey of the State's Architecture to 1945* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 1997), pp. 208-9.

27. Julin, "Public Enterprise," pp. 57-61, 112-15, 169-71, describes the history of Jewel Cave National Monument under Forest Service administration and the arrangement that opened it to tourism.

28. Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 187; U.S., Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, "Statement for Management, Jewel Cave National Monument," 1987, p. 6; Rosga, *Jewel Cave*, p. 37.



These visitors, lanterns in hand, await their turn to tour the depths of Jewel Cave during the 1930s.

placing a genuinely rustic structure with a designed one. The improvements turned the national monument into a model National Park Service-designed site but obliterated the tangible reminders of its roots as an early Black Hills tourist attraction.²⁹

The United States Forest Service also utilized the CCC during the 1930s. The Black Hills National Forest in the northern Hills and the Harney National Forest in the southern section had offered residents and visitors recreational and scenic opportunities since the establishment of the original Black Hills Forest Reserve in 1897, which included most of the timbered lands in the Black Hills.³⁰ The Forest Service mission traditionally focused on management of resources rather

29. Rosga, *Jewel Cave*, p. 37; Ira Michaud, "What I Have Seen and Heard," unpublished manuscript, p. 9, and Michaud, JECA History, "Putting It All Together (Post 1980)," transcript of tape recording, Jewel Cave National Monument Library, Custer, S.Dak.; *Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Report, Wind Cave National Park, 1929-1940*, vol. 1, p. 2, Wind Cave National Park Library; Nancy MacMillan, "Ranger Station Historic Structure Report, Jewel Cave National Monument, Custer, South Dakota" (National Park Service, 15 Sept. 1995), p. 6. The ranger station is considered an excellent example of park Rustic architecture and was included in volume one of Albert H. Good, ed., *Park and Recreational Structures* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938).

30. Martha E. Geores, *Common Ground: The Struggle for Ownership of the Black Hills National Forest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 18, 40-46. The original forest

than development to accommodate visitors, and CCC work within the Black Hills National Forest typically involved fire suppression, surveying, tree thinning, and the collection of seeds for replantation. In addition, however, CCC men improved roads and built facilities to serve tourists, hunters, and other recreationists.³¹

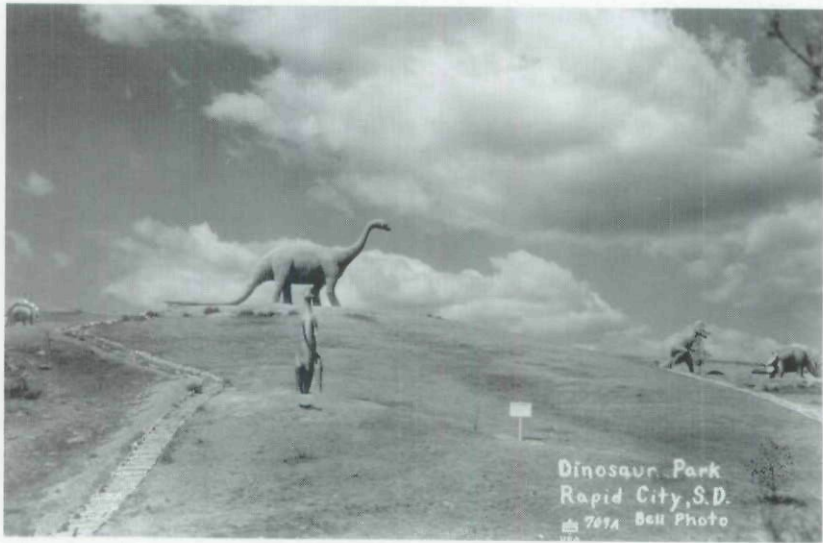
Public works were not confined to federal and state lands. In 1935, the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce conceived of a project that would utilize WPA funds and create a new tourist attraction. The next year, work commenced on Dinosaur Park, located on a ridge overlooking the city. Local lawyer and sculptor Emmitt A. Sullivan designed five full-scale models of dinosaurs; workers constructed them of iron pipe set in concrete and steel frames covered with wire mesh overlaid with more concrete. Although no evidence existed that dinosaurs had ever walked the hills of Rapid City, prehistorical accuracy was not the point. The models, visible from many areas of town, provided an eye-catching and even eerie sight for visitors and residents alike.³² On a more substantive note, in 1938 WPA funds built Rapid City's Sioux Indian Museum, a joint project of the city and the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior.³³ Dinosaur Park and the Sioux Indian Museum both became popular stops for visitors to Rapid City.

reserve became known as the Black Hills National Forest after jurisdiction over the forest reserves was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the United States Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture. In 1910, Black Hills National Forest was divided into Black Hills National Forest and Harney National Forest. In 1954, Harney National Forest again became part of Black Hills National Forest. Harold K. Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), pp. 74-75; Brad Naisat and Linea Sundstrom, "The Black Hills National Forest," in Lance Rom, Tim Church, and Michele Church, eds., *Black Hills Cultural Resources Overview*, vol. 1, *Synthetic Summary* (Custer, S.Dak.: Black Hills National Forest, United States Department of Agriculture, 1996), p. 5e-3.

31. Steen, *U.S. Forest Service*, pp. 209-13; Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), pp. 154-58; Jessie and Linea Sundstrom, "The Civilian Conservation Corps," in Rom, Church, and Church, eds., *Synthetic Summary*, pp. 4c-1-4c-5.

32. Carolyn Torma, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Dinosaur Park, pp. 7/1-2, 8/1-4, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre (hereafter cited as SDSHPO). Two additional dinosaur models were added later. *Ibid.*, p. 7/1.

33. John E. Rau, National Register of Historic Places, amendment to nomination, Rapid City Historical Museum, 23 Jan. 1989, SDSHPO.



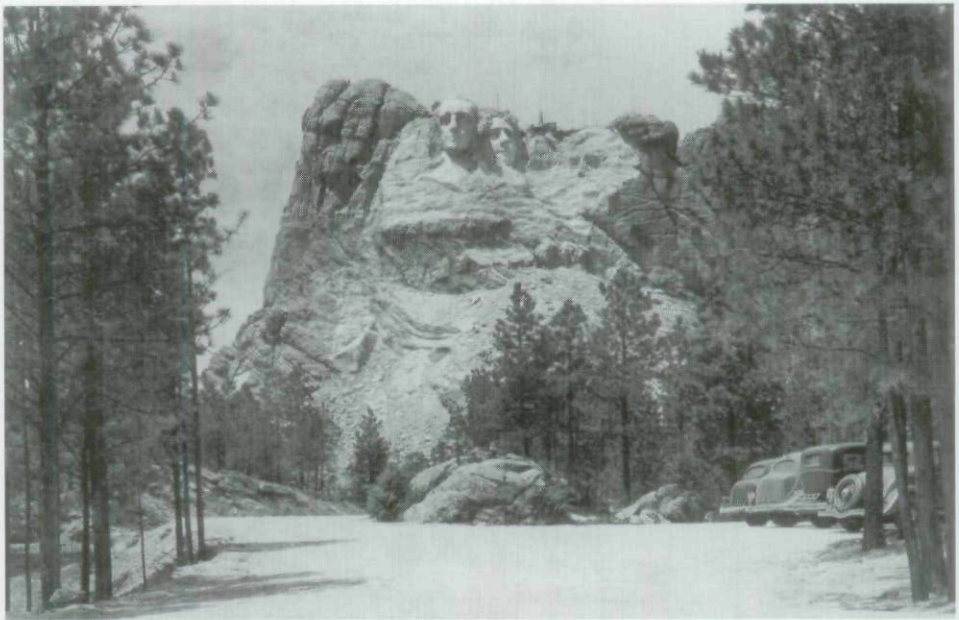
Dinosaur Park, a WPA-constructed tourist attraction in Rapid City, still stands on a ridge in the center of town.

Mount Rushmore, the site that became most important to Black Hills tourism, also benefited from public funds during the Great Depression, but not through the mechanism of the public-works programs. When Congress authorized the South Dakota legislature to arrange for the carving of a national memorial within Harney National Forest in 1925, a key point in the legislation stipulated that the federal government would bear no responsibility for financing the project. The monument's promoters—state historian Doane Robinson and Senator Peter Norbeck among the most prominent—hoped to fund the project through state funds, private donations from local citizens, and the munificence of wealthy friends of Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor designated to create the work of public art. Borglum's contacts provided little money, however, and the state legislature, faced with a deepening economic crisis, refused to provide any funds at all. Black Hills residents were, for the most part, unenthusiastic about the project, making fundraising efforts frustrating and largely fruitless.³⁴

34. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 43, p. 1214.

The memorial finally found a patron in Calvin Coolidge, who had signed the 1925 bill and who, in the last days of his summer in the Black Hills in 1927, presided over the ceremony that marked the beginning of the sculpture's carving. In his speech that day, Coolidge declared that South Dakotans deserved the support of the federal government in completing the memorial. Subsequently, federal legislation provided funds for the project. By the time Borglum died in 1941 and the carving of the memorial drew to a close, the United States government had provided nearly \$850,000 of the approximately \$1 million spent on Mount Rushmore. Federal money expended on the national memorial and other tourism-related projects in the Black Hills created amenities and attractions that state residents and funds could never have accomplished during the depths of the Great Depression.³⁵

35. Fite, *Mount Rushmore*, pp. 66–95, discusses Coolidge's role in the ceremony, his subsequent support, and initial federal funding. John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press for Resources for the Future, 1961), pp.



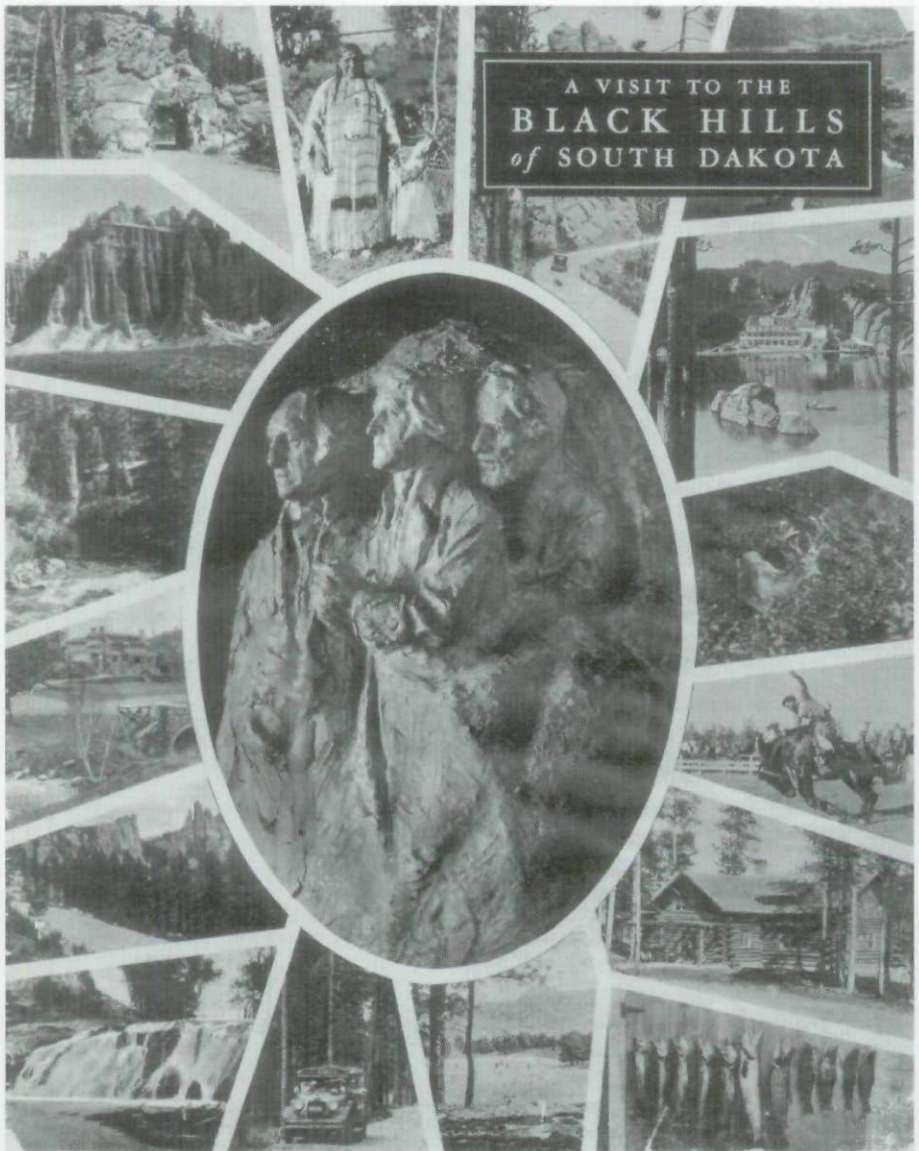
The presidential faces were just beginning to emerge on Mount Rushmore, South Dakota's most famous tourist attraction, at the time of this 1937 photograph.

While the economic strength of tourism during this period provided opportunities, it also created intense competition among communities and sections that affected the trajectory of tourism development and eventually led to a revolution of sorts in tourism promotion. The Associated Commercial Club Secretaries of the Black Hills District formed in 1915 to bring the "commercial clubs" of various Black Hills communities together to promote the area's scenery. Their efforts became more sophisticated as amenities developed, but until the late 1920s, most promotion was directed at residents in the immediately surrounding areas. By the pivotal summer of 1927, Black Hills commercial clubs were attempting to reach a wider audience, and these efforts continued into the 1930s. The midwestern states, located within a drive of a day or two, proved to be a rich source of motoring tourists of relatively modest means. These travelers enjoyed the attractions of the Black Hills and became the target of various promotions. In 1932, for example, the Associated Commercial Clubs provided speakers for thirty days of broadcasts on WNAX, a popular radio station in Yankton, South Dakota, that reached a multi-state audience. In 1934, the Junior Chamber of Commerce from Hot Springs joined the Associated Commercial Clubs in establishing an information bureau in northwestern Nebraska, complete with a display of live game animals that included a buffalo and an elk. They encouraged west-bound tourists who viewed the display to take a route through the Black Hills.³⁶

As the Great Depression deepened and area residents increasingly recognized the revenue-producing opportunities in tourism, commu-

412-13, details federal expenditures for the project. The Peter Norbeck Papers in Richardson Archives, I. D. Weeks Library, University of South Dakota, the Doane Robinson Papers and the Frank Hughes Papers at the State Archives, South Dakota State Historical Society, and Frank J. Hughes, "The Beginning of the Rushmore Memorial, 1925," Box 11, MORU 1002, National Park Service, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Keystone, S.Dak., all provide illuminating details about the struggle to establish Mount Rushmore.

36. J. K. Hull, "Association of Commercial Club Secretaries of the Black Hills District," *Pahasapa Quarterly* 5 (Apr. 1916): 21; Jarvis D. Davenport to Nate Crabtree, 5 Jan. 1940, Folder Old Documents, Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes Association Archives, Rapid City, S.Dak. (hereafter cited as BHBLAA); *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 4 June 1932; *Black Hills Weekly* (Deadwood), 1 Sept. 1933.



Communities and organizations competed for tourist dollars through billboard advertising and the publication of travel guides like this 1930-vintage example.

nities stepped up their efforts to attract visitors. Rapid City hired colorful promoter Ray Bronson, who had turned the Belle Fourche Round-up into a successful event, to lead its efforts. His tactics brought attention to Rapid City but alienated other area tourism officials and increased competition. Deadwood, in particular, accelerated its use of colorful signs to direct tourists to the town and squabbled with Rapid City about sign content and defacement.³⁷

The proliferation of modest tourist attractions designed to draw motoring travelers off the road, the many bold signs, and the intensifying competition for tourist dollars began to define Black Hills tourism. Visitors dashed from attraction to attraction, and the region developed a reputation as a place to drive through rather than linger in. A number of Black Hills business operators, alarmed by the quality of promotion and attractions, called meetings throughout the region to discuss the issues. In December 1939, they formed the Black Hills and Badlands Association, essentially rendering the Associated Commercial Clubs obsolete. The new association vowed to bring greater professionalism to the promotion of the region and to encourage higher quality attractions and amenities. Within a few months, the group hired a consultant to evaluate Black Hills tourist attractions, addressing their concerns about exploitive, unkempt businesses. The association also contracted with a national advertising agency and met with Governor Harlan Bushfield and the state's Highway Commission to discuss Black Hills publicity efforts.³⁸

37. "Ray L. Bronson, 1880-1941," p. 6; Minutes, Deadwood Chamber of Commerce, 12 Feb. 1929, Folder Deadwood Business Club Minutes, and Minutes, Special Meeting of Days of '76 Committee, 18 Feb. 1929, CDA; Frank D. Kriebs to Nell Perrigoue, 20 June 1934, 11 Oct. 1935, John T. Heffron to A. A. Coburn, 3 July 1934, and Nell Perrigoue to Mr. Zopher, 31 Aug. 1935, all in Folder Highway Signs 96.1.16, CDA; Memorandum, W. D. Fisher [no designee], 8 June 1934, CDA; Perrigoue to Jay Deurfee, 23 Oct. 1936, and Deurfee to Perrigoue, 26 Oct. 1936, both in Folder Highway Programs-Traffic Checks, 96.1.16, CDA; Bill Honerkamp, untitled article, *Pine Tree Telegraph*, BHBLAA; *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 17 July 1935; Honerkamp, *At the Foot of the Mountain*, pp. 200-201.

38. Jarvis D. Davenport, Robert E. Driscoll, and Ray L. Bronson to Harlan J. Bushfield, 24 Feb. 1940; Davenport and Driscoll to C. R. Custer, 19 Feb. 1940; "Annual Report of the President, Black Hills and Badlands Association," 12 Dec. 1940; James D. Bump to R. L. Bronson, 15 Apr. 1940; "Annual Report of the President, Black Hills and Badlands Association," 12 Dec. 1940; and "Black Hills and Bad Lands Association Annual Report," 13 Jan. 1942, all

The event that finally ended the Great Depression also brought a hiatus to the new efforts to promote and organize Black Hills tourism. The onset of World War II transformed the American economy and established new priorities for its citizens. With the advent of tire and gasoline rationing in 1942, tourism across the United States dropped off dramatically. Some Black Hills tourism enterprises saw 50-percent reductions in business. At the end of the 1942 tourist season, the Black Hills and Badlands Association closed its office for the duration of the war.³⁹

The efforts of the new association marked a maturing of the region's tourism industry. When travel resumed after World War II, however, the legacy of the 1930s continued to define tourism in the Black Hills. The Great Depression had shaped a tourists' landscape. Public works projects created buildings and improvements that fit within standard stylistic patterns and emphasized the mountain setting. Privately run attractions depended upon eye-catching facilities and bright signs to draw visitors off the road. Together, the two elements of 1930s tourism development—public and private—created an unusually diverse and colorful built environment, transforming South Dakota's Black Hills into a unique vacationland.

in Folder Old Documents, BHBLAA; "Governor Bushfield Recommends Greater Publicity Program," *South Dakota Hiway Magazine* 16 (Jan. 1941): 3-4.

39. Memorandum, A. L. Pankow to M. C. Laird, n.d., enclosure Pankow to Davenport, 8 Dec. 1942; Pankow to Davenport, 16 Mar. 1942; and Jarvis Davenport to E. A. Snow, 21 Sept. 1942, all in Folder Old Documents, BHBLAA.

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