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# All about a line: The Sidney-Black Hills Trail's impact on the cultural landscape of western Nebraska and South Dakota

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**All About a Line: The Sidney-Black Hills Trail's  
Impact on the Cultural Landscape of Western  
Nebraska and South Dakota**

A thesis

Presented to the

Department of Geography and Geology

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

In partial fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Abbey R. McNair

April 2005

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## Thesis Acceptance

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Masters of Art,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

### Committee

James R. Hildner - Department of Geography  
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Approved by Christina Dander  
Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

Date 19 April 2005

## University of Nebraska at Omaha

### Abstract

#### All About a Line: The Sidney-Black Hills Trail's Impact on the Cultural Landscape of Western Nebraska and South Dakota

by Abbey R. McNair

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:  
Dr. Christina Dando  
Department of Geology and Geography

When driving through western Nebraska and South Dakota, one can identify artifacts and signs of an earlier highway. In some places the wagon ruts and foundations of previous foundations are still visible; in other places the highway is represented through markers and signs erected by historically minded organizations. The presence of these signs, markers, and wagon ruts mark representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail on the landscape. The presence of the wagon ruts and settlement foundations mark a representation of the trail as it was and gives one a view of the real American West; a West that chronicles the Black Hills gold rush in 1874-1880. The presence of the historical markers and signs, both private and governmental, may represent the Trail as it was, and is, in the Mythic West. This theory of the American West and the Mythic West is what I am exploring in my study of the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. By comparing information from the National Register of Historic Places, the Nebraska and South Dakota Historic Markers programs, signs, and local resources to historic documents I find that the “West” and the “Mythic West” have merged, giving the impression that the present-day interpretations of the Trail are the historic interpretations of the Trail.

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## Glossary

**Actuality.** The state or fact of being actual; reality. Actual conditions or facts.

**Cultural landscape.** The natural landscape as modified by human activities, i.e. most of the present landscape, there being very few parts of the world now unaffected by such activities.

**Heritage.** Construct that elucidates the past so to infuse it with the social constructs of the present culture

**History.** Something that actually happened, the verifiable truth. (Lowenthal 1985). A chronological record of events, as of the life or development of a people or institution, often including an explanation of or commentary on those events – the historian’s interpretation.

**Landscape.** An area of the earth’s surface characterized by a certain type of scenery, comprising a distinct association of physical and cultural forms.

**Myth.** “Foundational story (or stories) that provide support and understanding for the basic institutions of society” (Tuan 1991:686); stories that tell people why things and people are the way they are.

**Place.** A term used to connote the subjective, ideogram, humanistic, culturally oriented type of geography that seeks to understand the unique character of individual regions and places, rejecting the principals of science as flawed and unknowingly biased.

**Relics.** Evidence of actuality (Wishart 1997); the material evidence of a thing that no longer exists.

**Signs.** Something indicating the existence or presence of something else.

## Abbreviations

DAR	Daughters of the American Revolution
NE	Nebraska
NPTC	Nebraska Panhandle Tourism Collation
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSHS	Nebraska State Historical Society
ODR	<i>Omaha Daily Republican</i>
OWB	<i>Omaha Weekly Bee</i>
OWH	<i>Omaha World-Herald</i>
SD	South Dakota
SDSHS	South Dakota State Historical Society
ST	<i>Sidney Telegraph</i>
YUPD	<i>Yankton Union &amp; Press &amp; Dakotian</i>

**M**r. Everyman, when he awakens in the morning, reaches out into the country of the past and of distant places . . . , pulls together . . . things said and done in his yesterdays and coordinates them with his present perceptions . . . Without this historical knowledge, this memory of things said and done, his today would be aimless and his tomorrow without significance.

Carl Becker: *Everyman His Own Historian*

*Chapter 1***INTRODUCTION**

In 1947, Jean Cocteau asked “What is a line?” and after several moments of reflection answered “It is life.” Lines are amazing in their diversity. A line lives through every human’s life, our life is line, and our lives are defined by lines. Look around you, how many objects within your line of sight are defined by a line? We use lines to connect point A to point B of our everyday occurrences, lines illustrate movement and the flow of beings and ideas across the planet; geographers often use lines to define processes and diffusion along a spatial path. A line can define a limitation, a boundary, and the positions of people and objects. A line can also transcend time and be interpreted by people in different ways at different times. This thesis is about a line, the Sidney-Black Hills Trail; and how this line has been interpreted from its formation as a physical line on the earth as an early highway, to a line on a map, through the many lines of its history, to its present cultural representations and interpretations.

Driving through western Nebraska and South Dakota, one can identify artifacts and signs of this earlier highway. In some places one can see wagon ruts and the foundations of previous settlements. In other places the highway is represented through markers and signs erected by historically-minded organizations. The presence of the wagon ruts, historical markers, and signs mark representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail on the landscape.

The presence of the wagon ruts and settlement foundations mark a representation of the trail as it actually was, in fact, and gives one a view of the “American West”; a West that chronicles the hard times, trans-continental moves, and the rough, dry years experienced by many individuals. The presence of the historical markers, both private and governmental, may represent the trail as it was, and is, in the “Mythic West.” The Mythic West is a West where present day values are extolled on the past. In this study of the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, I establish by this study is that the West and the Mythic West have merged in the cultural landscape giving the impressions that the present day interpretations of the trail are actually the historical interpretations of the trail.

### **The Evolution of West to “West”**

Think of the term West – What was the first thing that that came to mind? Was it of a landscape of mountains, arches, or maybe the desert? Maybe a person or a group with whom one associates with the West? Or was the West considered as a distinct location that one can mentally map? All of these cognitions and more can be used to describe and define the West. In this thesis it is important to understand that there are many definitions of West and all of these definitions are intertwined giving us the “West” of today. The West(s) that are being explored in this thesis are those of the American West as it was, and is, and the American West as we want it to be, the Mythic West.

As a cautionary note it is important that the reader understands that there are so many definitions of the West that one could write for years and never finish describing all the “West(s).” What is being covered in this section is a sample of the

definitions the researcher believes are important to the study, to give the reader an understanding of the complexity of the West.

The American West can be described as a jigsaw puzzle. The puzzle is composed of many small pieces and ideas that when fitted together show us the complexity of the West. Some of the pieces of the West are of its historical interpretation, location, place, psychological conceptions, economic factors, and the West of history and myth.

The historical interpretation of the American West is a complex study of native communities and how they and a myriad of cultural groups interact with each other and their environment. The American West of “popular imagination is of a spacious landscape and few people...It is natural wilderness, defined as a place where people are not, more often than a place where people are” (Milner 1994, 2). In the West envisioned, was the presence of the native and non-native communities residing in the region taken into account? The imagined West often ignores the human heritage that has externally and internally shaped the region, and forgets the West was shaped by native cultures long before European involvement.

In grade school one learns about Columbus and his “discovery” of the New World and what is not normally taught is that North America was already settled.<sup>1</sup>

The truth is North America was not an empty land; the “great wilderness” explored by

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Limerick describes “discovery” as a person’s, or a group’s, first encounter with a place new to them; but the common connotation with the word “discovery” is the person finding a place with no occupants. Limerick writes that the problem “lies in the assumption that to qualify for true discovery, the explorer must come across a place that is without previous occupants” (1992, 1025). Discovery, as used in this chapter, refers to the connotation that Columbus found the New World with no occupants and is credited for the establishment of humanity upon the continent, though “discovery” should mean that while Columbus discovered the continent and the natives residing there, as it was new to him, the natives reciprocally discovered Columbus, as he was new to them.

Columbus, Lewis and Clark, and others was already settled by native populations who lived in complex, organized societies. The great wilderness explored may have been created by the explorers; many native populations were devastated by the infectious diseases brought by Europeans and African newcomers (Milner 1994, 9).

The point that is being made is that the natives in North America were the first “westerners.” These native populations were the first settlers, explorers, and travelers. They made their home in now what is the American West. The Europeans, Africans, and others that immigrated to the region in the last few centuries have infused the West with heritage that has become mixed with the native culture, forming a distinct cultural region that is perpetually evolving. This perpetual evolution is one reason why historical interpretation of the West is very complex and not easily defined.

The American West is also a location with boundaries, geography, and political limits. The boundaries of the West are amazingly hard to place. One reason for this is because the West does not stand apart from the lands bordering it. The mountains, deserts, and rivers flow from one region into the next with out a radical change. There are no border crossings concisely labeled “Now entering/leaving the West.” The West can be defined by many different geographical criteria, but many of these criteria do not fit the whole region. If aridity was used, as it commonly is, as a criterion for an area to be labeled West, the eastern parts of Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, as well as the western portions of Oregon, Washington, and some of California, would be excluded. Although aridity can define vast sections of the West from other regions, it would also divide the West itself (White 1991, 1). Richard

White writes in *It's Your Misfortune and None of my Own: A New History of the American West* that "If simple geography determined regions, the West, open to the outside and divided within, would not exist" (White 1991, 1).

But the West does exist as a region and one reason it does may be because the West was not determined by geography, but by history. The West, as we know it today, was created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Americans for whom the West was not just a place, but an also a nationalistic conception. Native communities residing in the plains and mountains did not know they were in the "West." The American West was an idea that became a reality over a long period of time. The conception of the West developed in Europe and was transfused into an American nationalist conception. To many cultures the West has been the *terra incognita*, unknown land, open for discovery and conquest. Great Britain's colonization of the New World, along with other European countries, made America their West. Look at maps from that era and one will gain an understanding of the excitement of going to land where not everything is mapped. The unknown has been a mysterious shadow on the known, a place where stories and rumors were the only information one could gain about this faraway land, or even just land over the mountain. Terra incognita touched the known world, and "throughout most of history awareness of its menacing presence must have aroused an abiding wonder in all but the least imaginative" (Wright 1947, 2). This wonder of the unknown has been passed down from generation to generation and exists to this day. The wonder of the unknown land is one of the reasons the West is so compelling to Americans. The West was, and is, a land Americans can say they "discovered" and created.



The American West as a place, a space that possesses an emotional significance, is tied to our psyche. The West is an open field, pasture, or meadow; a region where outlaws and cowboys still roam. The West is a landscape devoid of human interaction and empty to everything except nature; areas of pickup trucks, hay, and buffalo. The West is a place that is instantly recognized and yet so hard to describe because it means so much and is so different to every person.

Even the political boundaries of the American West, defined by history, are sometimes questioned. The southern and northern borders can be bound by the Mexican and Canadian borders, but there are some that even question these limits. The eastern boundary is commonly contested, as it has evolved through time, but many institutions commonly agree on using the tier of states extending from North Dakota to Texas. The western boundary is often thought of as the Pacific Ocean and the western coastline; but what about Alaska and Hawaii? As one can see the boundaries of the West are not set by only one or two criteria, but a multitude of ideas and concepts. Clyde Milner II describes this concept as a “fragmented unity” that is best understood by individuals living in the region (1994, 2). For it is these people who think of themselves as westerners; they draw and define the psychological boundary lines that divide themselves from the east, south, and even the middle West (Milner II 1994, 2). For some reason this area is not only felt by the residents, but travelers and tourists can also feel this psychological boundary where the West begins and exists.

Where the West begins may or may not be marked by a change in economic factors. The West may be known by its agricultural economy, but it also contains

elements that exist in the East. The defining element of economics of the West comes from its historical conception of “endless land, abundant natural resources, scarce labor and capital. A spirit of entrepreneurship and social and political institutions favorable for economic growth...” (Bryant 1994, 195-196). The West has had an ability to rapidly evolve from a rural environment to an urban environment inside the highly mobile American society. The changes in western economics can be easily seen on the landscape as mining towns became tourist towns, silos were replaced by skyscrapers, and fields are turned into housing tracts. The change can also be seen in the paintings, sketches, and literary works that portray the West. The American West has also been well documented through film, making the transformation of the West a tangible experience for today’s students. The West is a backdrop for thousands of westerns, documentaries, dramas, and the still photography of Ansel Adams, William Henry Jackson, Timothy H. O’Sullivan, Carleton E. Watkins who have influenced how we view the West.

The American West is more than a nationalistic conception; it is a conception that has been embraced by the world community. The American West is visited daily through the medium of television, film, and literature. The West experienced by the world is often an oversimplified version that is characterized by a “vast vista of mountain, plain, and desert occupied by heroic, often male, archetypes noted for their violent actions” (Milner 1994, 7). This oversimplified and oversold version of the West, embraced by the world, is part of the Mythic West.

The Mythic West is the historical American West infused with present day values; it is the West as one thinks it should be, an imagined West. The Mythic West

is often thought of a present day conception, but the concept's historical roots can be traced back to the West before it was even fully settled. The West became the Mythic West, as individuals began to re-imagine events; changing significance and order even before it was written in history books. Many individuals do not realize the history they know is built on a myth. Richard White gives some examples of this concept when he writes:

In the late nineteenth century, Sitting Bull and the Indians who would later fight at Wounded Knee toured Europe and the United States with Buffalo Bill in his Wild West shows. They etched vivid images of Indian fights and buffalo hunts into the imaginations of hundreds of thousands of people. The ceremonials of the Pueblos became tourist attractions even while the Bureau of Indian Affairs and missionaries struggled to abolish them (White 1991, 613).

With the knowledge that the American West re-imagined itself while it was still the West helps to explain why it is so hard, maybe even impossible, to separate the West from the Mythic West. The Mythic West is fed to the world as the West, through "Western" novels, television shows, films, and advertising. The intertwined West and the Mythic West is fused to American culture.

The Mythic West is so intertwined with the American West that people often cannot tell the difference and perpetuate the myth themselves. To be able to separate the two, one must first distinguish among the groups doing the imagining. The imagining is often done by the residents of the West as they construct local versions of a collective past. These versions are often portrayed in cultural events, local histories, architecture, and even home decorations.

The imagined West is also the work of professional writers, journalists, and filmmakers who write to appeal to large audiences. The writers of the West have often

stretched the truth into legend; legends of fictional characters (although there were plenty of real characters to choose from), heroes, and outlaws which are often taken for history. One of the best examples of this concept comes from the film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. In the film, newspaperman Maxwell Scott utters, “When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.” In a review of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, James Becardinelli writes,

The truth is only as meaningful as long as it agrees with what the public wants to hear. When heroes don't exist, it is necessary to invent them. And, never let the facts get in the way of a good story. A clear-eyed deconstruction would likely reveal that what most of us take to be “history” is a patchwork of real events, exaggerations, and tales so tall that Paul Bunyan would likely blink in amazement (Becardinelli 2004, 1).

What many Americans know about the West comes from “western” films and other fictionalized versions of the West. The West they know is a myth. Myths can be defined as stories that tell people why things and people are the way they are; myths are used because they give meaning to the world. The myths about the West are stories about westerners and how they should act in their environment. Many people have seen this myth in action and have fallen victim to it themselves; and although it is kind of funny when one realizes the West they live is a myth, it becomes serious when one realizes an entire culture is based upon this myth.

The myth of the West is hard to differentiate from history, because myths often draw from history. Myths may include real people and actual events; the problem is many myths are made by changing details and rearranging events and timelines to make the event more significant and meaningful. Historians are more

selective with the facts they use in their stories. The facts used by historians are tied chronologically and are, or should be, largely agreed upon events.

A myth, unlike history with chronological restraints, can transcend time. In a myth the past and the present are the same and thus any lesson learned in the past can apply to the present. How a man acted in the past is how men should act in the present regardless of time and place. The myth is anti-history, but a myth itself is also history. Myths are made at certain times in history to portray a lesson or story for a purpose; “myths themselves become historical sources reflecting the values and concerns of the period and of the people who produced them” (White 1991, 616).

The influence of the Mythic West on the American West cannot be wholly comprehended. The Mythic West cannot exist without the American West and the American West (as it is today) does not exist without the Mythic West. The myth is a historical product and history is a product of that myth. Richard White explains the conundrum by writing:

As people accept and assimilate myth, they act on myths, and the myths become the basis for actions that shape history. Historians find they cannot understand people’s actions without understanding their intentions, and those intentions are often shaped by cultural myths. The Mythic West imagined by Americans has shaped the West of history just as the West of history helped create the West Americans have imagined and cannot be neatly severed (White 1991, 616).

At the beginning of this section, the reader was asked to ponder the term “West.” For a moment it might have seemed an easy task until the realization that the West is a complex puzzle where fact and myth fit together to compose the picture of the American West.

*Chapter 2***LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many bodies of literature have been pieced together to form the theory of this study of the American West and the Mythic West, and in this case the landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The literature used ranged from the general perspectives of cultural geography to the specific concepts which were the base for this study; from the general theories of landscape, history in cultural geography, memory and history, heritage and heritage geography to literature on the specific concepts of signs, symbols, and historical markers as representations of culture on the landscape.

**Cultural Geography**

Cultural geography, as defined by William Norton, “is concerned with making sense of people and the places they occupy, an aim that is achieved through the analyses and understanding of cultural processes, cultural landscapes, and cultural identities” (Norton 2000, 3). Cultural geography focuses on the people-side of geography; on groups of people and how these groups interact, change and impact the face of the earth; how they identify themselves and their surroundings, and give meaning to their lives.

The field of cultural geography is by no means a small field; cultural geography encompasses the entirety of human behaviors and thus has developed many different means of ordering and organizing the components of the discipline. Some of the means and components of organization come from Philip L. Wagner and Marvin W.

Mikesell who arranged a book of readings on the history, ideas, and practice of cultural geography around a framework of themes such as culture, cultural area, cultural landscape, culture history, and cultural ecology (Mikesell 1992, 36). A new framework was created by Kenneth Foote and others to encompass the growth and diversity the field had experienced and was arranged around three themes -- morphology, mechanism, and meaning. The three main themes do not combine to form a core component of the cultural geographer's psyche, but outline the three general types of research questions considered by cultural geographers. Foote's, et al., and Mikesell and Wagner's frameworks have contributed greatly to the field of cultural geography and influenced the approach William Norton took to classifying the diversity of cultural geography.

Norton classified the diversity of cultural geography into six themes centered on different research traditions: landscape evolution; regions and landscapes; ecology and landscapes; behavior and landscapes; unequal groups, unequal landscapes; and landscape, identity, and symbol (Norton 2000, 22-24). Norton's framework for understanding cultural geography was to organize the discipline in terms of specific research traditions present in contemporary cultural geography around the perspectives of landscape.

This study draws from several of Norton's traditions. For each of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail markers in western Nebraska and South Dakota, it is important to understand where they are, why they are there, and how they got there. These questions are answered by the research traditions focusing on landscape evolution and regions and landscapes. What each marker means, or the historical interpretation of

the text, is a question answered by research in the landscape, identity, and symbol traditions.

## **Landscape Theories**

Landscape has been one of the fundamental concepts and subjects of cultural geography throughout the last century (Schein 1997, 1). In the field of cultural geography, and to geographers, “landscape has meant different things at different times in different places” (Graham 2000, 20). The concept of landscape is broadly rooted in the Renaissance humanist education centered on culture and morals. Vidal de la Blache’s possibilism established the role of human thought and action in shaping land and life. J.K. Wright’s geosophy inquired into the geographical knowledge of all manner of people shaping the landscape. Carl Sauer believed, as did Vidal de la Blanche, that landscape was indicative of the harmony between human life and the milieu in which it lived (Cosgrove 1984b). Sauer’s chorology described culturally different regions; landscapes shaped by different cultural groups (Cloke, et al. 1991, Livingston 1992).

Sauer’s publication of *The Morphology of Landscape* (1925) “stands as the first U.S. theoretical claim for a specifically cultural landscape as the product of human action” (Schein 1997, 661) and established the base for 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape interpretation. In Sauer’s words “the cultural landscape is fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer 1999, 309-310). Sauer and his students, such as Mikesell and Wagner, defined cultural geography through the 1960s. Their landscape



studies remained positivist, visual, and material. Sauer's work provided the framework for cultural landscape interpretation, and J.B. Jackson's work provided the spark that encouraged geographers to study ordinary landscapes. J. B. Jackson had a profound impact on the field of cultural landscape studies by looking at the countryside as an environment where layers of history had been inscribed throughout time. J.B. Jackson regarded landscape "not as a scenic or ecological entity but as a political or cultural entity" (Jackson 1979, 153). For Jackson, landscapes were social constructs, not collected individual designs: "Jackson called attention to every facet of the cultural landscape, no matter how ordinary or common...he sought to understand varied landscape elements as the product of human values and aspirations" (Foote and Hugill 1994, 16). "Landscape," Jackson wrote "must be regarded first of all in terms of the living rather than looking" (Groth 1997, 21, quoting J.B. Jackson).

Landscape interpretation evolved in the 1960-1970s under the continuing influence of Sauer and J.B. Jackson, but was also heavily influenced by a humanistic approach that focused on individual people, their meanings, values, goals, and actions (Johnston 1997). Humanistic geographers refused to believe that a researcher could be completely objective and acknowledged their own bias and subjectivity. They "sensed a need to study the human condition more directly, in terms not of abstract spatial analysis but of human values, beliefs, and perceptions" (Foote and Hugill 1994, 17).

The *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, a collection that included the work of J.B. Jackson, Pierce Lewis, David Lowenthal, Donald Meinig, and more, conceptualized the landscape as a multi-layered text to be read and interpreted.

Meinig defines landscape as history; landscape “is a complex cumulative record of the work of nature and (society)...” that can be read “in terms of the layers of history, which are...often complexly interwoven” (Meinig 1979a, 43). Meinig does not limit reading to the visible features of the landscape, but acknowledges that we also interpret landscapes through our own context and ideas. He writes, “...any landscape is composed of not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” (Meinig 1979a, 34). Meinig believes all landscapes are symbolic, expressing “cultural values, social behaviors, and individual actions worked upon particular localities” (Meinig 1979a, 4).

Pierce Lewis’s most often quoted text describes the landscape as “our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, and even our gears, in tangible, visible form” (Lewis 1979, 12). Lewis believed in “reading” the landscape because it “keeps us constantly alert to the world around us, demanding that we pay attention not just to some of the things around us but to all of them – the whole world in all its rich, glorious, messy, confusing, ugly, and beautiful complexity” (Lewis 1993, 136-138).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, cultural geography took a stronger theoretical approach and the focus on landscapes moved to the examination and understanding of complex social, political, and economic changes rectified in the landscape. The works of Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, and Yi-Fu Tuan are equally important in the revision of cultural landscape interpretation. Cosgrove examined the role of ‘myth’, the product of human emotion and imagination, in shaping the physical world. Cosgrove is most often noted for the

interpretation of landscape as “a way of seeing, a composition and structuring the world” (Cosgrove 1985, 55). For Stephen Daniels, the landscape is a “highly complex discourse in which a whole range of economic, political, social, and cultural issues” are encoded and negotiated. Landscape can be interpreted as a complex system of visuals that reflect an array of social differences; landscape connects interacting identities. To Duncan, landscape was “an ordered assemblage of objects, a text [which] acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored” (Duncan 1990, 17). Cosgrove and Duncan regard the visual scene and its various representations as “key elements in the complex individual and social processes, whereby people continuously transform the natural world into cultural realms of meaning and lived experiences. These realms are historically, socially and geographically specific...separated by time, space, and language from their origins” (Graham 1993, 8). Cosgrove writes that cultural landscapes are ‘signifiers of the culture of those who made them’ (Cosgrove 1995, 8) and cultural landscapes are highly influenced by powerful groups who will attempt to determine the limits of meanings for the rest of the culture by trying to universalize their own cultural truths through traditions, texts, monuments, pictures and landscapes (Graham 2000, 31).

The construction of these cultural landscapes, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, can be attributed to the language used by the people that formed them. Language is a fundamental component a built environment, for without “...speech humans cannot even begin to formulate ideas, discuss them, and translate them into action that culminates in a built place...” (Tuan 1991, 684). Language is used to bring a place or object into existence, to describe a positive or negative view of an event, to give

significance to or to destroy a location. Words and the way people and cultures use them are an important part of the study of cultural landscapes. In Tuan's description of the narrative-descriptive approach to studying the cultural landscape is to question "how and why language is effectively implied or informally woven into the presentation..." (Tuan 1991, 684). In relation to this study, language is used to explain the landscape of today by looking at the landscape of the past and how the past and present landscapes were formed and presented through words, discussions, documents, and texts placed upon the landscape. Language is a key element in the study of this cultural landscape and in the creation of its places.

These theories of landscape interpretation have influenced the study of the cultural landscape of the Sidney- Black Hills Trail. Meinig wrote that landscape was history – layers of history that are complexly interwoven. The history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is layered in the landscape of the present. The trail ruts are still visible on the physical landscape, there are individuals who remember walking along the trail in the early 1900s and picking up artifacts; it is these people and their descendents who continue to keep the history alive. The trail is also marked in the physical and cultural landscape by signs and markers that effuse "History happened here." The layers of history are complexly interwoven and the past exists in the present; the economic, political, social, and cultural issues are all layers that contend and create the heritage of the region.

## History in Cultural Geography

What is history without geography? And what is geography without history? The two fields are intertwined because both are building blocks for the other and both are part of the “basic stuff of human existence” (Meinig 1978, 1186). Historians and geographers are concerned with the whole of human life; both deal with time and space, and places and events. Historical geographers bring the two fields together and study the geography of the past; they reconstruct the “character of regions and landscapes from original documents, emphasizing the need to see geographical areas in the past as contemporaries saw them, for men at all times have been influenced...[just as] much by beliefs as by facts” (Meinig 1978, 1187).

In this study of the cultural landscape, the history and memory of a culture is studied through several different temporal layers because it is important that one look at the beliefs of the people from the era of formation of the trail (1870-1890) and also to look at the landscape when it was memorialized (1950-present). One way to look at the memory of a landscape is to study the collective memory and which groups actively and passively created that memory. The first study on collective memory was conducted by Maurice Halbwachs in 1925, in which he “maintained that individuals required testimony and evidence of other people to validate their interpretation of their own experiences, to provide independent confirmation on the content of their memories and thus confidence in their accuracy” (Thelen 1989, 1122). Halbwachs noted that people need other people “as a second reference in order to establish subjectivity and create recollection. As a group, people decide which experiences to collectively remember and which ones to forget, as well as how to interpret these

experiences” (Shackel 2001, 1). Collective memory is developed by molding, shaping, and arguing upon what to remember.

The interrelation between history and memory has increasingly been studied since the 1980s. Works by Trigger (1989), Leone, et al. (1987), and Shanks and Tilley (1987) have all critically evaluated the production of history and view the production of historical consciousness as the outcome of struggle between groups. Recent works on memory and history no longer assume that all groups, and all members of the same group, understand the past the same way. These writings and understandings of memory and history came from the scholarship of David Lowenthal (1985), Michael Frisch (1990), David Glassberg (1990), Michael Kammen (1991), John Bodner (1992) and Edward Linenthal (1993). Historical and material representations may have different meanings to different audiences (Glassberg 1996, 9-10, Lowenthal 1985). Some groups use history to justify a particular agenda, “while others do not care to create their own history” (Shackel 2001, 2).

Individual and collective memories develop through dialogue; individual memory is closely linked to a community’s collective memory. A community’s collective past may be a contested past: “different versions of the past are communicated through various institutions, including schools, amusements, art and literature, government ceremonies, families and friends, and landscape features designated as historical” (Shackle 2001, 2). Memories can serve to legitimize the past and also the present. Public history exhibits, monuments, statues, and celebrations can foster the myths which create a common history of the “triumphant, of the literate, of those who survived, and it has been at the nub of their identity” (Glassberg

1996, 13; Laquer 2000, 2). The great French medievalist Jacques Le Goff wrote in the late 1980s that, “collective memory...overflowing history as both form and knowledge and a public rite...is one of the great states of developed and overflowing societies, of dominated and dominating classes, all of them struggling for power or for life, for survival and for advancement” (LeGoff 1992, 97-98). Le Goff writes that memory is a public enterprise, where the collection of memories is the making of oral history, the “mining of folklore for a useable past, and the preservation and study of a material culture as part of an impulse to make the past more democratically accessible” (Laquer 2000, 2). Memory is the object of struggles that progressive scholarship would want to support, but memory is not history.

Pierre Nora wrote that “memory takes root in the concrete...; history binds itself strictly to the temporal continuities. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative” (Laquer 2000, 2). History is critical and suspicious of memory. One must remember that for every history, there is a counter-history, and for each memory there is a counter-memory. Both are dependent and both create the past we accept today.

## **History and Heritage**

The importance of knowing the difference between history and memory is that both are present on the cultural landscape. The geographer David Lowenthal explains this phenomenon in several of his books and writes that history is what actually happened, the “verifiable truth”; but history in effect is not actuality but an interpretation of actuality (Lowenthal 1998, 250). Actuality is impossible to present

and impossible for humans to describe without some type of interpretation; and every individual, group and culture will interpret and describe an event differently. David Wishart describes history as an interpretation of actuality (Wishart 1997, 112). Relics (or evidence) of actuality form facts and facts are what history is based upon. History is in fact an interpretation that can be and is re-interpreted.

These primary interpretations of actuality are what form “history” as Lowenthal describes history; interpretations of the “verifiable truth” (Lowenthal 1985). What happens to this history over time is it becomes re-interpreted and re-imagined and given context in another time -- it is made into heritage. Heritage is history “clarified” and infused with the interests of present purposes. In other words, heritage is a social construct, the contemporary understanding that individuals and groups hold of a particular historical event. Heritage is an individual or communal perception of the past that is not necessarily fact, but is what the individual or community believes to be true. The content and meaning of heritage continually changes as those living today experience new things and alter their perspectives.

Since heritage is the perception of the past in light of the present, understandings of the past change as the conditions of the present change (Lowenthal 1985). While the current literature often uses “history” as a catch-all phrase for dealing with the past and heritage, most scholars operate within the contexts of Lowenthal’s nuanced meanings even if they do not adopt his wording. The point of this discussion is that different individuals and groups see the past differently due to different pasts, presents, and goals. Each perspective is a valid interpretation given the experiences and motives of the organization.



After answering the role of different interpretations of history, one still has to understand the role of history in the present. Historical geographers and historians continue to grapple with the dilemma of explaining the uses and benefits of the past for people living today. Lowenthal provides a framework for organizing the overlapping benefits of the past into six categories. According to Lowenthal, the past provides “familiarity and recognition; reaffirmation and validation; individual and group identity; guidance; enrichment; and escape” to those living in the present (1985, 38). Lowenthal’s themes tend to emphasize what the past means for the people living in the present. A recent addition to the list is tangible economic benefit, marketing the past to gain financially in the present.

The past makes the present. We have an identity because of our past. One way the past has meaning for the present is by providing an identity in the form of history. For any location, history and landscape can serve as foundations for present identity (Lowenthal 1975; 1985; Arreola 1995). Part of this identity may be symbolic. In trying to explain the changing spatial form and meanings of the Middle West, Shortridge argued that people over time applied the label “Middle West” to geographic areas thought to be pastoral or youthful (1989). The historian Henry Nash Smith explored the changing views of the United States West as a symbol ([1950] 1978). Both studies trace the development of ideas tied to geographical space and related to the history of the region. People came to identify with the quality of these spaces through their reputations. The identified qualities became symbols of the Middle West and West, even though those qualities were ideas that did not necessarily exist in fact. Eric Hobsbawm refers to this process as the “invention of tradition” ([1983] 1992). The

invented tradition, be it symbol or historical interpretation, gave meaning to a geographic area and the people there. If people in a community believe an event happened there and have believed it for some time, it becomes part of their identity. In the context of this thesis, the Sidney-Deadwood Trail has been symbolically moved from its historic location into the towns and villages in the region. The history of the trail did not happen in some of these towns but the symbolic representation of the trail has led the people living there to believe it did or claim it as part of their past. That history is now part of their present identity.

History is not the only element of community identity, but it forms a part and serves as a foundation for it. One example of this point in the literature of cultural geography is the homelands concept, incorporating “a people, place, bonding with place, control of place, and time” (Nostrand and Estaville 2001, xviii). Without time to bond in a place and develop traditions tied to the land – create a local history – a homeland would not exist. Another example of the role of history in community identity is the theme concept, where every town is known for something and have an image they project. Several scholars have looked at towns that select and project a community image based on history or borrowed history (Hoelscher 1998; Frenkel and Walton 2000; Schnell 2002). Local history, heritage, and traditions form important elements of cultural and community identity. Further, these elements can serve to create new, if not entirely historically accurate, sources of local identity. The small towns and rural regions around the Sidney-Deadwood Trail have the option to draw on their unique local history in the area and tie their local history into a broader historical framework to provide a foundation of local identity.

Signs and the idea of marking places and objects provided another insight into the literature of cultural geography. An omnipresent feature of the cultural landscape, signs and markers of some kind label almost everything in the landscape today (Zelinsky 1988; 1992). A recent trend in cultural geography is to look at the meaning of signs and monuments – broadly defined – in the cultural landscape. Dwyer looks at how the meanings of museums, historical markers, and the naming of public spaces such as streets and parks provide different interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement in the southern United States (Dwyer 2000). Kelleher studies the interpretations of the Great Irish Famine present in sculptured monuments in Ireland and the United States, focusing is on understanding what is being commemorated and what the monuments “ask us to remember” (Kelleher 2002, 255). Foote, Toth, and Arvay examine the change in memorial landscapes coinciding with the fall of communism in Hungary (2000). The authors note the removal of statues, signs, works of art, and flag stands symbolizing or memorializing the old government and the restoration or new placement of other memorial features commemorating histories or cultures not permitted under the past régime.

In Foote’s book, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, he develops a continuum that classifies types of responses to the violence of a tragedy. The site of a tragedy can become a site of sanctification, designation, rectification, or obliteration and these initiatives can manifest themselves in the landscape and evolve over time (Foote 1997, 7). Some sites, such as the battlefield at Gettysburg, are instantly sanctified, consecrated as a sacred space that many can identify with. Other sites merely carry the designation of a memorial sign. Rectified sites are cleaned and

returned to use, while obliterated sites are removed from their current use or, if used again, put to distinctly different purposes. Each response affects the visible landscape, though the response may range from a statue to the absence of expected uses. While the continuum is useful, it is designed for interpreting events of violence and tragedy and does not necessarily work for sites of "untragic" historical events. Dwyer, Kelleher, Foote and others examine memorial landscapes that include statues, public art, and the naming of public places. Other scholars focus explicitly on the meaning present in signs. Peet (1996) examines the message and meaning of a 1927 plaque marker erected to praise the general who put down Shays' Rebellion in 1787. For Peet, the question to answer is how the meaning of the rebellion changed between 1787 and 1927. Whereas Peet looks at one marker, H. E. Gulley surveys roadside markers across several states in the southern United States (1993). Gulley examines the representation and commemoration of women in markers erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Both Peet and Gulley are concerned with the message – interpretation of history – provided on the markers.

James Loewen is also concerned with the messages printed on historic markers. In *What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong: Lies Across America*, he writes on ninety-five markers across America that "got history wrong" (1999, 15). The lies that travelers encounter on their trips across America subtly distort their knowledge of the past and warp their world views. Loewen's book examines the history that some places tell and the processes by which they came forward to tell it. Markers, monuments, and preserved historic sites are often the initiative of a local organization; organizations such as the local historical society, the Chamber of Commerce or

Department of Economic Development, a church, or like groups. The site will tell a story favorable to the local community that erected and restored it, even if another account might be more accurate and tell another story.

Americans tend to like only the positive history, and communities like to remember and publicize the great things that happen to them (Loewen 1999, 15). The story told might be a racist story, a story of the dominant group; but what about the group that was dominated? In reference to this study, what about the story of the Sioux: the Lakota, the Ogalala, and the Teton, who were pushed out of their territory - a territory which the government promised that no white man would ever settle upon? What does Mount Rushmore express to the Native Americans? Lame Deer, a Dakota Leader, sees a message of domination in the four European faces carved on Mount Rushmore:

What does this Mount Rushmore mean to the Indians? It means that these big white faces are telling us, "First we gave you Indians a treaty that you could keep these Black Hills forever, as long as the sun would shine, in exchange for all the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana. Then we found the gold and took this last piece of land, because we were stronger, and there were more of us than there were of you, and because we had cannons and Gatling guns... And after we did all this we carved up this mountain, the dwelling place of your spirits, and put our four gleaming, white faces here. We are the conquerors (Loewen 1999, 16).

The language used in the historical markers, the groups left out and the groups or individuals being memorialized, negative and controversial facts not being told need to be considered. Historical markers should not be taken for face value: it is imperative to look deeper into the history being remembered. Is it accurate, whose history is being portrayed, whose is being forgotten, what is the wording leading you

to believe? Historical markers are an interpretation of history on the landscape - they are the heritage the dominant culture wants to remember and publicize.

Cultural geographers continue to view the landscape and its contents, asking questions about what different features of the landscape mean to different people, and how those meanings change with time. For many areas, the history means something to the people living there. History is something that they can relate to or identify with. Yet each person or group of people through time interprets that history differently. Cultural geographers can examine both the historical representation and the present representation of an event to explain how the meaning of that event has changed over time.

## STUDY SPECIFICATIONS

The following chapter outlines the methods used to determine the history and heritage of this geographical landscape and their influence on the cultural landscape.

### Study Area

The landscape in study is located in western Nebraska and South Dakota. The landscape is contingent to the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, through the counties of Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte, Dawes, and Sioux in Nebraska and Fall River, Custer, Pennington, Meade, and Lawrence in South Dakota.

The Nebraska region is characterized by three distinct areas: high plains, Sand Hills, and loess hills and canyons. The high plains in western Nebraska consist of a large expanse of high flat tableland with some broken areas. A prominent feature in the high plains landscape is the Pine Ridge Escarpment. The Sand Hills area consists of grass-covered sand dunes. Most of the streams in the Sand Hills are fed by springs or artesian wells and have seasonal fluctuation. The southwestern part of the region is characterized by loess hills and canyons; the loess is windblown unstratified material that can stand nearly vertical in cliffs (Baltensperger 1985).

The South Dakota region is characterized by two distinct regions: the Missouri Plateau and the Black Hills. The portion of the Missouri Plateau that is encompassed in this region is the Sand Hills, an extension of from the Nebraska Sand Hills. The Black Hills were formed by mountain building forces at the same time as the Rocky

Mountains. The region is composed of three subregions which encircle a central core: the Great Hogbacks form the outer ring; the Red Valley a broad open valley that obtained its name from the red soil; the Limestone Plateau which is the highest part of the hills, and the Central Crystalline Basin which is the core of the hills. The highest peak of the Black Hills is Harney Peak which has an elevation of 2,207 meters.

The principal rivers located in this study as the Cheyenne River (SD), French Creek (SD), the White River (NE), and the North Platte River (NE). The climate in this region is about the same as the Nebraska study area as the South Dakota study area: cold winters and hot summers. The Black Hills are normally cooler and wetter than the surrounding plains area.

The social characteristics present in these regions today, both in Nebraska and South Dakota, are characterized by industry primarily concerned with the manufacturing and commercial activities that are based on the production of agricultural produce. In South Dakota tourism, gambling, and recreational activities have been increasingly important to the economy in the last twenty years. The main towns and cities in the study are Sidney, Bridgeport, Alliance, Hemingford, and Crawford in Nebraska and Buffalo Gap, Rapid City, Deadwood and Sturgis in South Dakota.



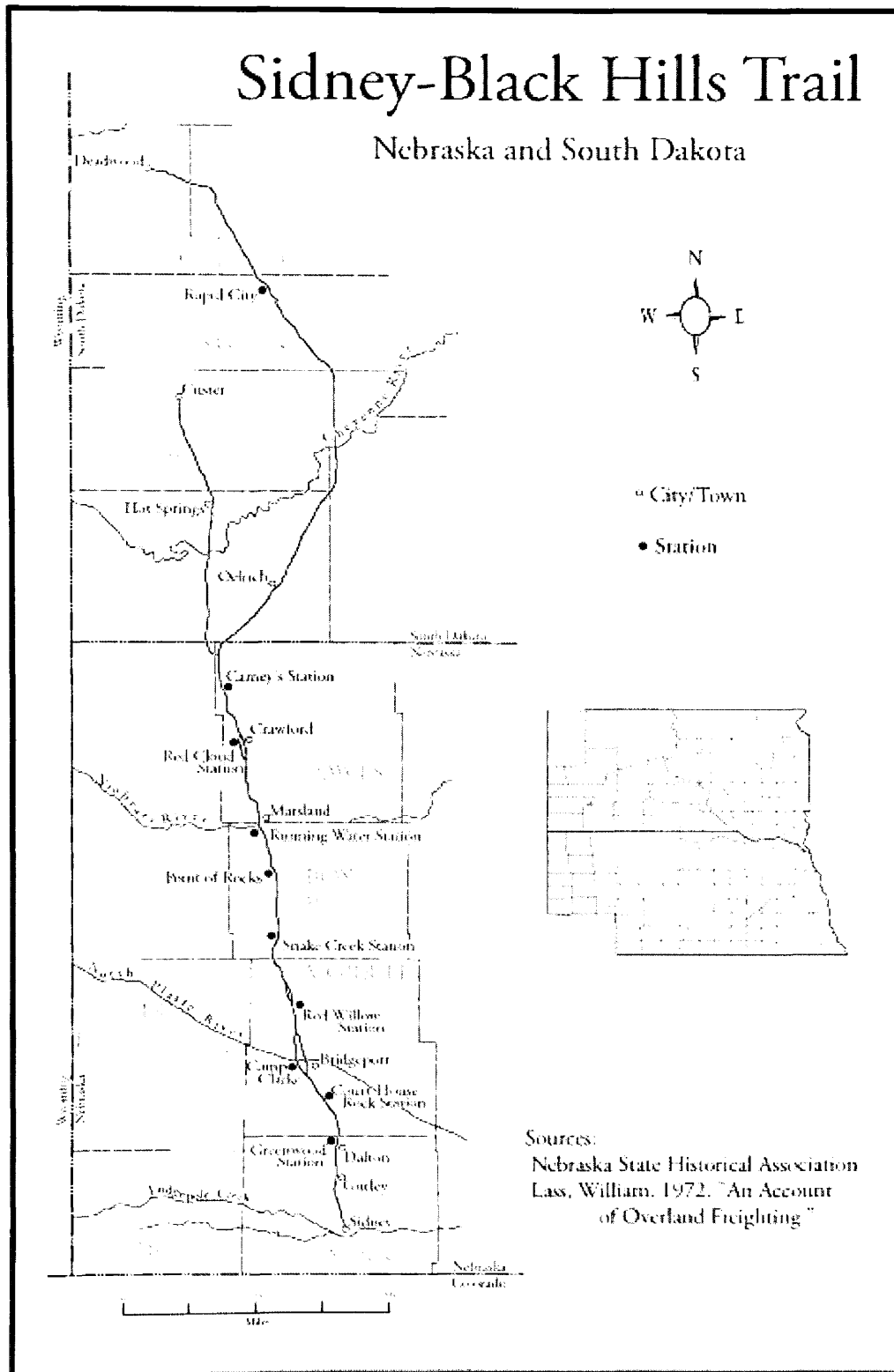


Figure 3:1 Map of Geographic Study Area

## Objectives and Questions

The cultural landscape, according to Pierce Lewis, is made up of the following components: the physical environment, knowledge and perceptions, ambitions, cultural strictures, and tools. The physical environment is the raw material (the base from which all cultures begin). People bring to this environment their knowledge and perceptions; knowledge and perceptions of how the environment should look and in “all cultures, knowledge is flawed, and perceptions warped” (Lewis 1983, 249). The defects of these perceptions vary from culture to culture, place to place, and give character to the regions. The defects in perceptions and differing perceptions allow for ambitions; ambitions of how the environment should be “ordered and improved” (Lewis 1983, 249). The ambitions of particular interest to this study are the economic and social ambitions of the individuals along the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Economic ambitions are concerned with the improvement of the material culture; and social ambitions aim to stabilize and uplift the “moral conditions of society” (Lewis 1983, 249). Lewis writes that all ambitions are curbed by cultural strictures. Cultural strictures are the “canons” of good taste and proper behavior which describe the limits within which a culture permits itself to operate (Lewis 1983, 249). Only after gaining an understanding of the context of these ambitions and strictures can we understand the impact of the tools and signs that leave marks on the landscape.

The main objective of this research is to examine the cultural signs that represent the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in the landscapes of past and present. The main questions being asked are:

1. How has the trail been represented in the landscape historically?
2. How have these representations evolved through time?
3. How is the trail being represented in the landscape presently?

To fully answer these questions, the project is divided to three separate, but dependent, parts: the past, the transitions, and the present.

Historical research is concerned with gathering information pertaining to a property or landscape's historic context. Historic context is defined as "an important theme, pattern, or trend in the historical development of a locality, State, or the nation at a particular time in history or prehistory" (McClelland, et al. 1983, 7). For many landscapes it is not just one historic trend, but rather several overlapping historic contexts.

Donald Meinig wrote in a foreword to *The Making of the American Landscape*, that "every landscape- not just historic sites- is part of a vast, cluttered, complex repository of society, an archive of tangible evidence about our character and experience as a people through all over history" (Meinig 1990, vii). Reading the landscape as history means looking to all the characteristics that make up the landscape: "Landscape messages can be conveyed by artifacts on the landscape, the material culture of a place" (Lamme 1989, 19). Looking at the organizational elements of a landscape allows for identification of patterns and conditions pertinent to the landscape's historic context.

The significance of studying the historical context of a landscape is that it gives the researcher a baseline from which to measure the changes and evolution of the landscape, providing important and valuable information. In this project the historical context of the trail was 1874-1890; it was during this time period that the trail was forged and in active use.

The objective of studying the historical context, the past, is to:

1. Identify the processes, both physical and social, that led to the evolution of the trail.
2. Identify and document the cultures that evolved along the trail.
3. Examine the knowledge and perceptions of individuals residing in the communities along the trail.
4. Examine the knowledge and perceptions of individuals with connections to the trail.
5. Identify the signs used to represent the trail.

The cultural landscape of the trail is represented in the physical environment, the knowledge and perceptions of individuals directly and indirectly involved with the trail, social ambitions, cultural strictures, and the tools which cut the trail both physically and mentally.

The nature of the physical environment and the social environment of this region led to the formation of the trail. The physical environment in which the trail evolved could be considered highly beneficial to the formation of a freight trail. The topography of the land is relatively flat, the prairie vegetation, wooded areas, and streams a welcome sight to travelers. The social environment was formed by

government influences, Native American relocation programs, an economic panic in 1873, and a building curiosity of what was in the Black Hills.

The knowledge and perceptions of these individuals residing in the communities along the trail and of the individuals not physically connected, but economically and socially connected to the trail influenced how the trail was represented. Individuals in the landscape had already experienced a shifting perspective of the region as it had moved from unsuitable land, to homestead land, to a region to be capitalized on. The knowledge and perceptions of the trail brought freight business to haul Indian supplies to the Red Cloud Agency and in time to the Black Hills.

The economic ambitions of freight businesses, newspaper editors, miners, and other entrepreneurs brought businesses to the area along the trail, settling the area, and in turn bringing a new and distinct culture to the region. This culture, like all cultures, brought their own ambitions and strictures about how the land should be shaped; and how individuals should “comport themselves in the presence of a wild landscape” (Lewis 1983, 251). The social ambitions of this culture structured the shape and taste of the landscape representations- what events, stories, and pictures should be told and used; the collections of these opinions determined how the landscape was perceived. The perception of this landscape is evident in the signs that were willingly and unwillingly created by individuals and cultures moving through and settling in the landscape.

The temporal considerations of this landscape have been constantly evolving. Due to the nature of the historic landscape, the researcher thought it was important to

discuss the landscape in the years the trail was in active use; to give a baseline for all other studies done on the landscape in this project. The other temporal consideration was how to determine the present representation of the trail. The term “present” was defined by a Nebraska legislative movement (1949) to form the Historic Land Mark Committee and the subsequent role of the Nebraska State Historical Society in the erection and approval of the content of historical markers in both the public and private realm. So the term “present” in this project is defined as 1950 to the completion of research in the fall of 2004; within the “present” time period consideration has been given to the developmental stages of the historic preservation movement.

The historic preservation movement in the United States can be traced back to 1813 when the Philadelphia State House was saved from demolition, but the historic preservation movements as legislation began in 1906 with the establishment of the Antiquities Act. The Antiquities Act was the first national legislation that provided for the designation of national monuments on federal land. From 1906 to the present there have been many evolutions in the national, state, and local preservation laws and movements: the National Parks Service was established in 1916 to deal with areas too large to be preserved privately; and in 1931, Charleston, South Carolina established the country’s first historic district. In 1933, President Roosevelt authorized the Historic American Buildings Survey; and in 1935, the Historic Sites Act was passed by Congress to establish historic preservation policy. The Historic Sites Act was established to preserve historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for public use and to inspire and benefit the people of the United States.

The next major preservation act was in 1949 with the establishment of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and was followed by Congress passing the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. The National Historic Preservation Act had major provisions which established preservation roles for federal, state, and local levels of government; the Act also provided for the establishment of the National Register of Historic Places, historic districts, and the Advisory Board on Historic Preservation. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 has been to date the most important legislation dealing with historic preservation.

The temporal division of the transition to the present is based on the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, South Dakota's State Historical Society's project of erecting markers on sites that contributed significantly to the state in 1951, and Nebraska's formation of the Historic Land Mark Committee in 1957. After 1960 historic preservation in the states of Nebraska and South Dakota was influenced more by federal government initiatives. Historic preservation in the "present" temporal landscape study shows the influence of national trends such as when in the 1970s numerous cities adopted local preservation ordinances and historic downtowns, structures, and sites were preserved. Preservation peaked in 1976 with towns wanting to honor the bicentennial by preserving an aspect of their community that made them uniquely American (Lowenthal 1977). Preservation of an area gained more of a local economic incentive when in 1978 the Revenue Act established investment tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The funding for preservation was cut drastically in the 1980s and preservation efforts changed rapidly from a socio-moral emphasis to more economic reasons. The 1990s brought historic

preservation back to the mainstream as historic communities became an alternative to modern lifestyles (Cullingworth 1997). History was preserved because it had a moral value as well as an economic value.

The transitional time period between the two temporal studies of this landscape extends from 1890 to 1950 and is an important era in the evolution of the trail's representation. The transitional time period marks a lapse between the evolution of the history being history and history becoming an industry. It was during this transitional time period history first became heritage. History is defined by Lowenthal as being the "verifiable truth" and heritage is the result of history being subjugated and transformed by many different interpretations. Another way to define heritage is a clarification of the past in light of a present purpose (Lowenthal 1983, 250). In light of this evolution, the history industry was renamed the heritage industry.

In *The Go-Between*, L.P Hartley wrote, "The past is a foreign country," and in 1972 Sheridan Mosely wrote that the past has now "become the foreign country with the healthiest tourist trade of them all" (Hartley 1953, 9; Mosely 1972, 776-777). The heritage industry includes both cultural and natural elements. In the cultural context, heritage describes both material and immaterial forms; such as artifacts, monuments, historical remains, buildings, architecture, philosophy, traditions, celebrations, historic events, distinctive ways of life, literature, folklore, and education (Nuryant 1996). In the natural context, heritage includes landscapes, parks, wilderness, mountains, rivers, flora and fauna (Nuryant 1996). Natural heritage also has cultural components, since its value is dependent on subjective human assessment.



The word “heritage” is applied in a wide variety of contexts (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996). It is used as a synonym for objects of the past, or for sites with no surviving physical structures but associated with past events. It is also extended to the non-physical aspects of the past, such as cultural and artistic productivity. Heritage is a cultural, political and economic resource. Since heritage is seen as a value in itself, heritage artifacts are suitable for collection, preservation and presentation. As an economic resource, heritage is used in various forms. The heritage industry is a “major commercial activity which is based on selling goods and services with a heritage component” (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996, 2). Tourism and leisure services obviously play a significant role in this industry, but the manufacturing and sale of heritage products can be considered as similarly important. Aspects of heritage can be used for creating images for places and for promotional purposes.

The creation of images or interpretation of the past has now become big business. The significance of the study of the heritage industry with respect to the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is who is responsible for the interpretations and representations on the current landscape. The objective is not to find out if a particular representation of the past is “wrong” but to find out which organizations and individuals are responsible for the interpretation and presentation of the trail’s heritage.

To reiterate, the objectives of studying the transitional period are:

1. To find out which organizations were responsible for the interpretation and presentation of the trail.
  - a. What were the individuals or organizations objectives?

- b. How did they present their representations?
2. To identify the overall representation of the trail during the years 1890-1950.

The rationale of this study, of the transition, is directly related to the study of the present landscape. The organizations responsible for these representations and interpretations may still be actively pursuing the preservation of the historic landscape and its heritage.

The present cultural landscape of the trail is an evolving representation, one that cannot be stalled in time for study. For this reason the period of the present extends from 1950 to the fall of 2004. The present landscape is characterized by a built environment, meaning that many of the institutions, towns, and organizations were already present in the landscape before 1950. There are cities, roads, land boundaries, and laws which have all effected how the physical and social environment of the landscape has evolved. These modern institutions and individuals all come with their own knowledge and perceptions of the history and the landscape of the region and how that landscape should be presented within the strictures of the present culture.

The objectives of the study of the present landscape are:

1. Identify the institutions, organizations, and individuals responsible for the interpretation and representations of the heritage of the trail.
  - a. Examine the processes that have led to the interpretations of the trail.
  - b. Examine the processes that have led to the presentation of the trail.
2. Identify and document the interpretations of different cultures.
3. Examine the knowledge and perceptions of individuals

- a. Residing in the communities and
  - b. With economic or social connections.
4. Identify the signs used to represent the trail.

The expected result of the study of the present landscape is that the communities and institutions representing the trail have taken advantage of the heritage industry and have in fact benefited from the heritage of the trail. The landscape in study is primarily rural, with small agricultural and railroad communities. The need for the heritage industry came from the economic ambitions of these communities and also the institutions and organizations that benefit from the productivity of these communities. The physical environment, social ambitions, and economic ambitions led to the knowledge and perceptions of how the trail should be represented in “good taste” and the presentation of the cultural landscape in signs and literary material.

The past representations have had a direct effect on the present landscape; the study of the changes in these representations is the main objective of this project. The expected overall result is that the signs that have been historically represented have become the current representations in the cultural landscape; and that the representations have changed to reflect today’s “good taste” or social norms. The present representations may not be in reality the factual events, but the reinterpretation of many individuals’ interpretations of the history and heritage of the trail, leading to a skewed history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and the landscape in which it resides.

The rationale for this argument is that the truth or fact of the trail is only as meaningful as long as it fulfills the ambitions of the public. The public ambitions,

social and economic, rely on the heritage of the trail being interesting and exciting. The problem with this heritage is that it may not be the history of the trail at all; it may just be heritage.

This may be a problem, since heritage has many different definitions. The National Heritage Conference defined heritage as “That which a past generation has preserved and handed on to the present and which a significant group of the population wishes to hand to the future” (1983). Thus, anything can be heritage providing it has the support of the majority, but this relies on a collective will interested enough in heritage and leaves the question of who decides if that heritage is significant.

When deciding what heritage is significant and should be presented, what is the overriding factor that sways the audience: entertainment or factual interpretation (Lowenthal 1996)? R. Hewison, the author of *The Heritage Industry*, would see such interpretations or choices as a mere pandering to the whims of “what sells,” creating a pastiche of information and a populist history (Hewison 1983). Many academic historians would argue that the populist interpretation without an academic backbone is merely “myth,” not necessarily untrue but containing elements of truth and a great deal of historically inaccurate material. Hewison believed these “myths” have become the representation of historic elements people identify with. Lowenthal agreed with Hewison and wrote that these “myths” have become more identifiable than actual facts. Is the history of the Sidney- Black Hills Trail presented in the present landscape fact or “myth”? Have fact and myth merged?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the “American West” and the “Mythic West” have merged. To do this the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is used as a case study to examine how this merging is manifested in the cultural landscape.

### **Methodology and Technique**

To explore how the “American West” and the “Mythic West” have merged in the present cultural landscape of the Trail, the researcher collected and analyzed representations of the past and present cultural landscapes. The primary methods for collecting information were fieldwork and archival research. The fieldwork conducted on the past landscape was in the form of interviews. These interviews were primarily a means to locate individuals and organizations with sources of primary documentation. The literature collected is in the form of books, personal and public correspondence, historic photographs, historic documents, county and local histories, and newspapers.

The method used to analyze this information is a synthesis of hermeneutics and content analysis. The hermeneutic circle is the process by which researchers return to a text to derive new interpretation. The present form of this theory is derived from Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn believed scientific knowledge changed, not through confrontation with the hard facts, but by social struggle between contending interpretations of intrinsically ambiguous evidence. “Reality” is only accessible to us in terms of how we interpret it (Kuhn 1962, 170). Thus if there is no reality to be compared with our knowledge, all we can do is compare one interpretation to another; past interpretation to present interpretation.

The whole idea of no reality makes science and knowledge useless, unless there is some way for external reality to control and limit the interpretations. Richard Bernstein argues that the truth of hermeneutics is that various interpretations are usually possible for each text and objectivism limits the interpretation of the text (Bernstein 1983). Thus the text actually becomes the limit of the interpretations. The task of hermeneutics is to properly understand meaning of a text, how it related to its own time, and how it relates to the present world.

Pickles wrote in “Text, Hermeneutics, and Propaganda Maps” that there are five cannons for any rigorous interpretation of a text:

[1]The integrity of the meaning of the text must be preserved in such a way that meaning is derived from, not projected into, the text...[2] the interpreter has the responsibility of bringing themselves into a harmonious relationship with the text...[the] critique must be rooted in the claims, conventions, and forms of the text...[3]The interpreter must give an optimal reading of the text and of the meaning the text must have had for those for whom it was written and show what the text messages mean for us today in the context of modern views, interests, and prejudices...[4]The whole must be understood from its parts, and all the parts must be understood from the whole [hermeneutic circle]...[5]Since clear and unambiguous texts do not need interpretation, all other texts must be complemented with suitable assumptions in order for the interpretation to make things explicit which the author left implicit (Pickles 1992, 225).

In looking for the meaning of the text for the people in the cultural landscape by using their words, some of the different perceptions of the history of the trail became evident. Some of the layers revealed were knowledge construction, social context, time and place of the writing (historical context), and how the trail was represented.

The second step of the analysis is to look at the information collected and identify the processes that formed the representations using content analysis. Content analysis is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages. Information is processed so that the content of the communication is transformed through the objective and systematic application of codes: codes that make valid inferences from text; inferences about senders, the message, and the audience of the message.

The initial steps of the analysis were to:

1. Code the various units of information. A unit can have multiple codes that relate back to the theory of cultural landscape representation. Codes such as: environment, economic ambition, social ambitions, cultural stricture, and tools.
2. Within each code there are categories and subcategories, each division being defined. Under the code of economic ambition, one category is spatial location by present-day county; another category is whose ambition- investor, freighter, local government, state government, federal government, miner, or other.
3. Each code, subcategory, and examples is directly referenced in field notes or source of obtainment for possible future replication purposes.

The information for the present cultural representation went through a similar coding process. The information collected was in the form of articles, books, newspapers, government documents, tourist brochures, photos of historical markers and signs relating to the trail, and also interviews with local and state historians.

After all the coding of the information, the data was separated by the codes into categories which are concurrent with the counties to which the information relates. By coding the information into counties, the researcher was able to ascertain the spatial attributions of the codes and look for patterns or representation. The codes of both historical and present representation were statistically analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. The primary reason for the use of statistics in this study is to summarize and describe the data collected. The data was first analyzed using the past and present codes in separate analyses and then by using the primary analysis data in a secondary analysis to analyze the changes in occurrences of the codes between the two data sets.

The first analysis of the past data was a tabulation of the codes and the number of occurrences at both the county and historic levels. Using the tabulation of code frequencies, data was compared between the present day county orientations to examine if any spatial trends were evident in the representations of the past cultural landscape. Examples of the data will be used to describe the differing representations between counties in descriptive summaries, which will also include examples of the representations from the field work and literature.

The same analysis was also performed on the codes from the present cultural representation. After both analyses have been performed at the temporal level, the data from both the past and present were compared at the landscape level. The purpose of comparing the past data set to the present data set is to look for changes in the representations from past to present and to locate where these changes have occurred. The changes that occurred in the landscape will be examined by the past



historical representations of that area and who/what was behind that particular representation and an examination of the processes that led to the area having the present representation.

The results of these analyses will fulfill the major objectives of this research.

1. The spatial patterns of representation and how the trail has been represented in the past will be identified.
2. The spatial patterns of representation and how the trail is being represented in the present landscape will be identified.
3. The comparison of the spatial patterns and the representations of the trail will identify how the representations evolved through time.

Figure 3:2 Codes for the Past Representations

Code	Definition of Code	Category	County Codes
E <sub>II</sub>	Historic Economic Ambitions	1-Freighter Ambitions a- Local b- Non-local 2- Investor Ambitions c- Local d- Non-local 3- Government Ambitions a- Local b- State c- Federal 4- Miner Ambitions 5- Other	A- Cheyenne B- Morrill C- Box Butte D- Sioux E- Dawes F- Fall River G- Custer H- Pennington I- Lawrence J- Meade K- Outside
P <sub>II</sub>	Historical Environment	1- Route a- Conditions b- Resources 2- Communities a- Developed b- Station c- Other	
C <sub>II</sub>	Historical Cultural Structures	1- Citizens a- Town b- County 2- Outlaw a- Anglo b- Native American c- Other 3- Emigrant/Immigrant a- Cultural transition b- Other 4- Other	
T <sub>II</sub>	Historical Tools	1- Signs 2- News Ads 3- Social Columns 4- Buildings 5- Billboards 6- Other	

Figure 3:3 Codes for the Present Representations

Code	Definition of Code	Category	County Codes
E <sub>p</sub>	Present Economic Ambitions	1-Local business 2- Tourist Endeavors a- Local b- State c- Other 3- Government Ambitions a- Local b- State c- Federal 4- Other	A- Cheyenne B- Morrill C- Box Butte D- Sioux E- Dawes F- Fall River G- Custer H- Pennington I- Lawrence J- Meade K- Outside
P <sub>p</sub>	Present Environment	1- Trail route 2- Communities a- Developed b- Declining c- Nonexistent d- Other 3 - Access a- Highway b- Trail c- Rail line	
C <sub>p</sub>	Present Cultural Structures	1- Citizens a- Town b- Country 2- Institutional a- Public school b- College c- Other 3- Organizational a- Historical society b- Chamber of Commerce 4- Other	
T <sub>p</sub>	Present Tools	1- Signs 2- Historical Markers a- Public b- Private 3- Buildings 4- Brochures 5- Maps 6- Books/ News Articles 7- Other	

## Significance of Study

This research is significant in that it delves into the representation and interpretation of a historic landscape's evolution and will show how the representation has changed over the course of 130 years. The changing representations and interpretations will show the evolution of both the social and economic ambitions.

The importance of studying the representations is that they are directly tied to our interpretation of history. If history (heritage) is a collection of interpretations, we need as a society to consider what we are preserving and how future generations will interpret our presentations. If what is being presented is “myths” – sensationalized history with little factual basis- how much actual history will be conveyed? The need for fact-based presentations of history and heritage is heightened by the explosion of the heritage industry in the last twenty years.

In David Lowenthal's *The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Preconceptions* he muses on the past presented by public figures, academia, and the media. He writes:

It is not my intent to find fault with these patently anachronistic viewpoints, but rather to indicate their pervasiveness and their perceived utility... There is no true past out there waiting to be accurately reconstructed;... so is history 'socially constructed, not an objective record to be retrieved.' Everyone uses the past creatively, Historian along with the rest. But Everyman does it differently, and if historians are to reach audiences beyond the boundaries of their disciplines, they need... to be cognizant of the screens through which historical information and ideas are commonly filtered (Lowenthal 1989, 1261-1264).

In the case of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail are public figures, media, and academics of history cognizant of the heritage being presented? Everyman, meaning

the general public, views the heritage being presented on the signs and in the literature about the trail to be the verifiable truth, the history of the trail. With the growth of the heritage industry, it is of growing importance to look at how and what interpretations are being presented as the history of the trail, for these representations are indicative of what the next generation will build upon.

*Chapter 4***“HISTORY” OF THE SIDNEY-BLACK HILLS TRAIL**

“Lonesome Charlie” Reynolds tumbled from his saddle at Fort Laramie on August 9, 1874 and whispered words from his parched throat that would begin a new chapter in the history of the American West: “Gold in the Black Hills” (Windolph 1974, 44). Reynolds was the famed scout of General George A. Custer and his report of the discovery of gold in the Black Hills Sioux Indian reservation by miner’s in Custer’s Expedition was enough to set off the one of the last great gold rushes in the United States. The words that were sent over the telegraph wire were simple, “Gold in the Black Hills,” yet they appeared in almost every major newspaper in the United States in the following weeks and soon a deluge of men were headed for the sacred hills.

Gold seekers converged on the Black Hills from all around the country using any conceivable route. One of these routes destined to become a major route in to the Black Hills was the United States military’s trail that ran north from Sidney, Nebraska, to the Red Cloud Agency. Or so the story goes; in this chapter the present-day histories of the trail are examined to give reference to what the historical community has preserved and published as the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The history presented here is of the majority or of those who did the dominating; and in no way represents all the interpretations of the trail and of the history surrounding it. The history presented, and interpreted, in this chapter comes from books published with

information on the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, journal articles, and from historical documents; thus it is a history of the past infused with the present. This purpose of this chapter is to give a reader an overview of the history and heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and to give reference to what is being studied in this thesis. The information used in this chapter comes from all temporal layers: historical documents such as governmental documents, personal journals, pamphlets, travel guides, and newspaper articles; and present representations such as NRHP nominations, county histories, historical markers, tourist brochures. The histories of the past and the present will be separated in the following chapters for analysis and given spatial relevance.

### **Speculation and Convergence**

In 1874 western Nebraska consisted of one large county, Cheyenne, and a large area of unsurveyed territory. To many individuals Nebraska was still a terra incognita and because of this Edwin Curley wrote a travel guide, called *Nebraska: It's Resources and Drawbacks*, in which he wrote eloquently of the beauty of Nebraska and parts of the Dakota Territory. Curley compared landforms to Gothic castles and cathedrals, Chimney Rock to a pyramid, and the Black Hills as a spur of the Rocky Mountains.

At this time (early 1874) little was known about the Black Hills, yet Curley wrote that the Black Hills of Dakota have “the reputation of possessing an immense wealth of gold” (Curley 1875, 307). He went on to write the Black Hills are, in his mind, equitable to the Garden of Eden; the Black Hills are well timbered, their

“geologic formations favorable for deposits of coal, iron, gold, silver, and copper, but they are within a reservation belonging to the Sioux” (Curley 1875:308-309).

Edwin Curley’s speculation was nothing new: for years the Black Hills had been the topic of conjecture around campfires, saloon tables, and in business offices. Speculation was heightened by the occasional Sioux or Cheyenne who would wander out of the Hills and use a gold nugget to buy supplies. Hunters and trappers, who had been illegally entering the Hills, had insisted that the Hills were teeming with gold. It was not until Custer’s Expedition that there was there definite proof of gold.

The Black Hills were owned by the Sioux, through the Laramie Treaty of 1868, and the Sioux Nations were promised that no white man would “ever be permitted to pass over, settle upon, or reside in the territory” (Kappler 1904, 993). Edwin Curley wrote that the Black Hills were a comparative terra incognita until 1874. Several expeditions launched by the urgings of ambitious newspaper editors had been halted and escorted out of the Hills by the military, which had orders to protect the Hills from Anglo invasion.

Speculation of gold in the Black Hills, an economic panic in 1873, and general restlessness promoted the military expedition to the Black Hills led by General George A. Custer in 1874. General P. H. Sheridan’s official reason for ordering the expedition had been to “explore routes and locate sites for future posts;” but the unofficial reason for the expedition was that General Sheridan had hoped to put an end to the



speculation and produce a final answer to the gold question (O'Harra 1929, 226).<sup>2</sup>

Custer's Expedition consisted of approximately one thousand men, counting teamsters. The military force consisted of ten companies from the Seventh Cavalry and one company from both the Seventeenth and Twentieth Infantry. Along with the military, there was a detachment of Native scouts, a botanist, an engineer, a medical officer, two geologists, a paleontologist, a photographer, a cook, a reporter, a guide, and two miners. The expedition left Fort Lincoln on July 2, 1874 and sighted the Black Hills on July 14. The first discovery of gold was made on July 30 (although within the party the date varies from July 26-30) by Horatio Nelson Ross, a miner, at French Creek and was given the discovery claim. The other miner in the party, William T. McKay, described his gold discovery as follows:

Went down to the creek about twenty feet, and tried another pan which yielded about three cents worth of gold. Took it up to headquarters and submitted it to Generals Custer and Forsythe, who were in high spirits at the result, in fact, I never saw two better pleased generals in my life (Radabaugh 1962, 168).

The miners' results were enough evidence of gold for Custer to write two reports in which he announced that, as newspapers would soon report, gold had been discovered in paying quantities. Custer's first report on August 2, 1874 (the report carried by Charlie Reynolds to Fort Laramie) was calculated to bring a deluge of miners to the Black Hills. Custer's second report on August 15, 1874 contained a glowing report

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<sup>2</sup> The Laramie Treaty of 1868 (Article 16) stated that no white persons may occupy or settle the region 'without consent of the Indians first had and obtained, to pass through the same.' This provision of the treaty was rendered meaningless by the loophole that "no persons except those herein designated and authorized to do so, and except such officers, agents, and employees of the government as may be authorized to enter the Indian reservations in discharge of duties enjoyed by the law, shall be permitted to pass over, settle upon, or reside in the territory... In addition, the President could, at any time, order a survey of the entire reservation." (South Dakota State Historical Collections, in Radabaugh's *Custer Explores the Black Hills*).

that would have convinced the skeptics of the time that there was gold in the Black Hills. In the second report, Custer verified his first account and casually wrote that in some creeks gold was found in every panful of earth, miners found gold amongst the roots of the grass, and at every level of an eight foot hole. He wrote that the gold was very easily dug out of the earth, found in paying quantities, and men without much experience could easily pan gold at the expense of little time and labor.

These reports, and those of men the in Custer's expedition, convinced a barrage of men to travel to the Black Hills, still a closed region, which the military could not keep out even after repeated efforts to dispel trespassing miners. During the winter of 1874-1875 a small community was established in an area around French Creek (near Custer City where gold was first discovered) and in the summer of 1875 the miners settled there were escorted back to the Missouri River settlements. A letter from John E. Maxwell to the editor of the *Faribault Republican*, on March 20, 1875, articulated the excitement of the knowing there was gold in the Black Hills and disdain of not being able to obtain it:

...Think of it! Gold reported found in quantities as never seen, from the bed-rock, and only two hundred and fifty miles from [a] railroad terminus...Not only is there gold there, but it a beautiful country to live in, full of beautiful valleys and streams, mountains of plumbago, iron, coal, and useful minerals, together with thousands of acres of pine forests, also hard timber, full of game, and a delightful climate. The only reason why these Hills are not now already occupied, and the only possible drawback just now is in the government refusing to open the country to white settlement, in order to gratify the whim of a few miserable savages, who ask that this beautiful country may remain idle of no benefit to themselves or anybody else, and who cost the country immense sums for their annual support....The spring of 1875 will witness in Dakota, scenes of the greatest activity. Whether to go to the Hills or settle in the beautiful valleys, the seeker for a free home, business chances or sudden riches, cannot do better than to come to Dakota (Maxwell 1875).

During this time another expedition was sent out to obtain more specific information on the gold deposits and the government attempted to induce a group of Sioux leaders to sign away their rights to the region. In September 1875, the Allison Commission (appointed by the Department of the Interior) met with Sioux leaders by the Council Tree near the White River where they attempted to unsuccessfully buy or lease mining rights to the Black Hills. After nine days of discussion and negotiation, the conference of various Sioux tribes broke up without coming to an agreement. The failure of the Allison Commission was immediately followed by the government's "unofficial" opening, or active withdrawal of all active military opposition to the occupancy of the Black Hills, to miners (Briggs 1930, 84). Word soon spread that the military was no longer dispelling miners from the Hills and waves of men began pouring into the Hills.

### **The Formation of the Trail**

Frontier communities in Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Dakota Territory realized that not all the profits were to be made solely from the diggings. Towns along railroad and river routes realized the financial benefits that could be gained by developing their town into an outfitting and supply point for miners and individuals heading to the Black Hills. Newspapers and businesses in these towns soon began "booming" their towns. "Booming" refers to a type of promotion that was commonly used to promote small towns in the West as the best place to outfit, with the best and cheapest supplies, the shortest route, and the best deal available. Newspapers promoted their towns by printing negative news about other outfitting points. Competition between towns could be ruthless; small dangers and events were

exaggerated to give other towns negative connotations, while the benefits and advantages of the trail and town being promoted were exaggerated (Halaas 1981, Karolevitz 1965, Moehring 1999).

The booster of places on the river routes, such as Sioux City, referred to Cheyenne and Sidney as the “Great American Desert Routes,” while Sidney and Cheyenne boosters warned travelers that Sioux City was a “nest of Humbugs” and to avoid the “siren song of Sioux City scalpers and the Yankton gin-mill operators” (Mahnken 1949, 208). Cheyenne and Sidney also competed for trade along the Union Pacific rail line and had a well-documented newspaper war in which each town’s respective newspaper editor made outrageous claims of bad luck along the other’s trail and in the other’s town. In the 1870s newspapers were shipped east and west as a form of advertisement to potential miners (Spring 1948). Cheyenne’s strategy was to get the miners to stay on the railcar when it stopped in Sidney by printing articles about how wretched a place Sidney was and that Sidney’s trail was rough and dangerous. The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* published on July 21, 1877, made the claim that Sidney only had “three or four piddling merchants whose entire stock would not fill two wagons.” The Cheyenne papers also made outrageous accusations of rampant smallpox, an entire town composed of border outlaws and escaped convicts who would rob a traveler, and that transportation to the Hills from Sidney consisted of worn-out wagons pulled by unmanageable mules. The *Sidney Telegraph* was no better in its portrayal of Cheyenne and the Cheyenne route, making some of the same claims and exaggerating every known death and robbery that occurred on the Cheyenne route.

In 1875, many Nebraska towns such as Kearney, Wahoo, Columbus, Grand Island, North Platte, Niobrara, and Central City poised themselves as ideal outfitting and transportation points. Their newspapers promoted them as the best outfitting points with low prices, plenty of water and grass, and a smooth, well-marked trail; but alas by 1876 most of these towns had realized that they had no future as outfitting points due to the geography of their trails (Mahnken 1949, 208). Sidney was the only Nebraska town to develop a lasting trade with the Black Hills area and for five years Sidney (along with Cheyenne, Pierre, and Bismarck) profited from the transportation of goods and people to the Black Hills mining communities.

The reason for Sidney's survival as an outfitting point is attributed to several notable advantages: there was already a trail established traveling north from Fort Sidney to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Indian agencies; troops stationed at Sidney Barracks and Camp Robinson provided military protection at both ends; and since the trail had been used for several years it was a "well-marked" trail. Even though the Sidney route had all these advantages, the trail did not come fully into existence until 1876 with the building of the North Platte River Bridge.

Before the building of the bridge, freighters and travelers either forded the North Platte River or traveled to Fort Laramie where a government operated ferry was already in existence. The North Platte River could only be forded, safely, five months out of the year and thus until 1876 the trail remained under used. In the spring of 1876, Henry T. Clarke of Bellevue, Nebraska, constructed a toll-bridge across the river about three miles west of present-day Bridgeport. Clarke received aid from Omaha businesses, the Union Pacific Railroad, and Sidney merchants to build the bridge.

Clarke built the bridge with the assistance of Omaha businesses of Stephens & Wilcox and others which hoped to develop a trade route with the Black Hills. The lumber for the bridge was transported for free by the Union Pacific Railroad from Moline, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa (Mahnken 1949, 210-211). Sidney's main freighting firms, Pratt and Ferris, Van Tassell, and McCanns, transported the lumber from the depot in Sidney to the North Platte River. The bridge was opened for public use on May 10, 1876.<sup>3</sup>

The opening of the bridge made the Sidney route the shortest route to the Black Hills and soon interest in the Sidney route was promoted all along the Union Pacific line as the shortest and fastest route to the Black Hills. Omaha newspapers, especially the *Omaha Bee*, promoted the Sidney route's safety and convenience, Union Pacific agents published pamphlets on how to get to the Black Hills from Sidney, and the editor of the *Sidney Telegraph (ST)*, Joseph Gossage began a new campaign of booster press.

In the July 15, 1876 edition of the *Sidney Telegraph*, Gossage published (as he had before and would for years after) a glowing report on the Black Hills and how to get there on the "Sidney short-cut route." Under the heading "Sidney, How to Reach it and the Black Hills Country," Gossage published a travel guide on how to get to the Black Hills and about the station stops along the route. "Sidney," he wrote, "is today, concededly the best outfitting point to the Black Hills country, and the 'Sidney Short Cut' the shortest, cheapest, quickest and safest route having its beginning or ending

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<sup>3</sup> The first party to cross the Camp Clarke Bridge, according to the *Sidney Telegraph*, May 13, 1876, was a group of forty-five men not going to the Hills but returning from them in disgust after not finding them as promoted.

from any point upon the Union Pacific Railroad...” (ST July 15, 1876). Gossage’s promotion of the trail in the *Sidney Telegraph* remained positive and glowing throughout the years it was in use; his voice never wavered as the prime promoter of the trail.

In every edition of *The Sidney Telegraph* (1875-1879) Gossage printed the following article (or a version of it):

...[The Trail’s] superiority over all other routes at present in semi-operation, or contemplated by noted speculators “in their minds,” and their pockets, is conceded by the press, and substantiated by the thousands who have tried all other routes, and give the Sidney “Short-Cut” the decided preference...Sidney furnishes every possible facility required by miners, tourists, stockmen and speculators. The road from this point to the gold country is traveled by hundreds, every week, without accident and expeditiously. The poor man can secure cheap transportation, purchase his supplies here at slight advance above cost, and every hour of his journey to the Hills encounter well stocked ranches, plenty of water, and secure an abundance of fuel. With the completion of the North Plate River Bridge, Sidney now has unquestionably the shortest and best wagon road to Custer and Deadwood. Sidney is rapidly becoming what her natural advantages make her, the great supply depot in the northwest to the Black Hills. From ten to eighty freighter wagons leave Sidney for the north everyday and a daily line of stages is fully established....(ST July 15, 1876).

Gossage’s description of the trail was followed by a listing of the prices of goods, outfitting points and stores, freight firms, stagecoach firms and stations, and a description of Sidney.

Sidney, Nebraska, began as a military outpost on the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867. The outpost was formed for the protection of the rail workers as the line pressed through western Nebraska (Lee 1988, 78). In 1868 the United States military set up Sidney Barracks, a semi-permanent outpost. In the beginning of 1873 Sidney’s economy was based on the military post and the feeding of rail passengers, but all of

that changed in the spring of 1873 when the government moved over 10,000 Oglala from a site on the North Platte River in Wyoming to the Red Cloud Agency. The Indian annuities were at first freighted primarily from Cheyenne, but with the commanding officers at Sidney under directions to ascertain if a route from Sidney to Camp Robinson and Red Cloud was possible, the freight's route soon changed. The exploration of the route is generally attributed to Charles Morton, who was sent out with a crew to survey a route in 1873.<sup>4</sup>

In General Ord's *Annual Report of the Department of the Platte*, he wrote that

The route generally taken to the Sioux Agencies on the White River via Cheyenne being difficult and roundabout, I sent sent [sic] a party recently from Sidney to see if a shorter and better one could not be found from that point which is much nearer. Such a route they have found and it is reported to be 60 miles shorter then the [sic] via Cheyenne to Red Cloud Agency, and only needing a good bridge over the North Platte River near the Court House Rock to make it possible in all seasons...Such a bridge would be a great service to the Indian Department as well as the military in sending supplies to those agencies... (Ord Sept. 9, 1874).

The change in the route of the Indian annuities meant economic changes for the small village of Sidney. According to Etau, a correspondent for the *Omaha Weekly Bee*, by September 5, 1874 the people of Sidney were "rejoicing" (OWB Sept. 9, 1874). In the Etau's letter he wrote:

The reason is this: Some time since Lieutenant Lawson, of the Third Cavalry, surveyed a road to the Red Cloud Agency from this point. Over this road it was proposed to carry all government freights for the place. After this road was located it was doubted whether it would ever be used. Now we are informed that the route as located by Lt. Lawson has been adopted, and already two carloads of freight have been

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<sup>4</sup> Like many other events in history, many people are attributed to occurrence of events and establishment of places. In the context of the exploration and location of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail Charles Morton's name was generally attributed to the surveying of the Trail, but being hired by the military, the commanding officer (Lt. Lawson) is also given credit for the surveying of the route.



shipped here for transportation to the above mentioned agency. This will, it is supposed, bring considerable business to this already lively town. North Platte is very much “down in the mouth” about it, but it is acknowledged by men from that town that this is the shortest and most practicable route, by at least 90 miles, and the sense of carrying freight by mule and ox teams that distance farther than necessary, just to suit a few speculators is hard to see... (OWB Sept. 9, 1874).

The combination of the news of a military road to the Red Cloud Agency and the news of Custer’s report on Gold in the Black Hills gave Sidney reason to rejoice. The economy of Sidney changed from a small railroad town to an outfitting point for speculators and prospectors. In 1875 Edwin A. Curley, author of *Guide to the Black Hills*, described the town of Sidney as a “...scene of crowded life, stirring business activity, and tumult and confusion of building enterprise scarcely equaled elsewhere in the West” (Curley 1875, 133). He went on to write that the year before Sidney had barely been able to enter into the competition for the Black Hills business, but was able to “demonstrate immediately the superiority of her route” (Curley 1875, 133). Since 1874 the town’s population “trebled” in both businesses and population, the foundations for numerous businesses had been laid, and arrangements were being made to expand the town (Curley 1875, 133-134). Curley went on to describe the prices of goods, merchants, and modes of transportation available from Sidney to the Black Hills.

### **Stage and Freight Firms**

With the opening of the Clarke’s bridge in the spring of 1876 the volume of travel over the Sidney Trail increased immensely and as the number of travelers, so did the need for transportation (Mahnken 1949, 213). The first attempt to open a stage

line was by J.W. Dear, a post trader stationed out of the Red Cloud Agency in early 1876. Dear's stage left from Sidney every Tuesday morning and carried the passengers as far as the Red Cloud Indian Agency. The fare for this journey according to an advertisement in the *Omaha Weekly Bee* was \$12.50 for a "First-class" ticket (OWB Feb. 2, 1876). After reaching the Red Cloud Agency, a traveler had to find their own transportation to the Black Hills region (Mahnken 1946, 213).

In the fall of 1876 more stage lines and firms opened for business, extending service all the way into the Hills to the mining communities. One of these firms was operated by two Omaha businessmen, Captain Marsh and Jim Stephenson. The firm opened for business in September of 1876 and became well known in the region as they built stations along the trail at regular intervals. In 1877 the weekly service was increased to a tri-weekly service, but with the high demand for transportation by late March 1877 stages left daily for the Hills (OWB Mar. 3 - 7, 1876; Mahnken 1949, 214). In the March 9, 1877 edition of the *Omaha Daily Republican* in an article about Sidney and the Sidney route there was a report on the stage lines out of Sidney, primarily the Marsh & Stephenson Stage line:

...The Sidney and Black Hills stage line, Marsh & Stephenson proprietors, furnishes the only first-class passenger and express accommodations between Sidney and Deadwood, and intermediate points. The stage leaves Sidney on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week regularly, Cheyenne to the contrary notwithstanding. Returning [stages] leave Deadwood for Sidney on the same days. The through trip is made in four days. The line is stocked with four-horse coaches and Concord stages, and on some sub-divisions of the route there are six horses to each stage. They carry the U.S. Mail and express mail. The distance of the entire line is two hundred and sixty miles...The stages are running full all the time...and with the arrival of the Concord stages tomorrow all passengers will be sent through promptly... (ODR Mar. 9, 1877).

The firm of Gilmer and Salisbury, already well known in the West for their stage line between Utah and Montana, opened for business in April 1877 in Sidney. Both stage lines, running at full capacity daily, were unable to keep up with the demand for transportation to the Hills. Men getting off the train often found that tickets were sold in advance and they would often have to wait a week to get a ride. But stages were not the only transportation to the Hills: mule wagon owners often sold rides for fifteen dollars and freight operators, such as Pratt and Ferris, sold rides for ten dollars. Both methods were slower than the stage, but were more economical to many individuals.

Miners, prospectors, businessmen, and more were transported to the Black Hills by stage coach, bull trains, and wagons. The flow of individuals into the communities of Custer, Deadwood, and Lead was immense and it had been estimated that by the summer of 1876 there was more than 10,000 residents in the region (Mahnken 1949, 215). The supplies for the region, just like the prospectors, were hauled into the region from supply depots along rail lines and waterways. The Sidney route's main business was the hauling of supplies from the Union Pacific depot in Sidney to the new mining communities. Everything had to be hauled into the new communities; from food, clothing, and house wares to mining equipment and building supplies. Pratt and Ferris was the most important freighting firm that operated over the Sidney route. The firm had begun as a cattle firm and began freighting annuity goods to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Indian Agencies in 1873 when the Sioux were moved to the White River country. When the Sidney route was extended from the Red Cloud Agency into the Black Hills, a new market for goods was opened up to

the firm and soon it was transporting goods to the mining camps in the Black Hills as well as the Indian Agencies.

There were several other freight firms that were stationed out of Sidney; the firms of McCann, Van Tassel, and others. D. T. McCann had also transported goods to the Indian agencies and Van Tassel was a cattleman who had extended his business to include transportation. There were also several small freighting firms, sometimes referred to as “shot-gun freighters” (Mahnken 1949, 216). These small freighters often had only one or two wagons and hauled goods they thought would be in demand in the Black Hills. There are reports of them hauling eggs, cats, whiskey, potatoes, flour and other commodities that were scarce. The prices of goods in the Black Hills communities were exorbitant and reflected the cost of transporting goods and the interest of the merchants.

The stagecoach and freight companies participated in a reciprocal trade with the Black Hills mining communities; just as the goods and people were brought in so was the gold extracted from the Hills transported to the railroad depots to be shipped east. Transporting the gold out of the Hills was a lucrative and dangerous business (Olson 1949, 3). Gold was transported in substantial amounts and some individuals found stages loaded with thousands of dollars of bullion to be an ever-present temptation and robberies, and attempted robberies occurred frequently.

The Sidney trail was one of only a few trails that were able to operate year round. During the fall and winter months, the number of individuals traveling to the Hills waned, but the demand for goods remained high. The trail from Bismarck and the trails from the Missouri River points were often closed during the winter months

due to heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures. During the winter months, Sidney saw an influx of prospectors who were less fortunate returning from the Black Hills; but come spring the demand for goods and supplies would be once again insatiable and kept the stage and freight firms moving at a frantic pace through the summer and early fall.

### **Stage Stations**

The hauling of goods and individuals to the Black Hills mining communities left deep scars on the physical and historic cultural landscape. During the years of 1874-1880 the trail carved its way into the memories and records of many travelers, whether prospector, entrepreneur, or tourist. The trail was widely publicized in newspapers, travel guides, and railroad pamphlets. The records of the individuals who traveled the trail and the publications on the trail help to reconstruct the trail as it was in the 1800s. The reconstruction of the trail through these documents is important, because unlike the trail ruts which are still visible, many of the stations along the trail have long since disappeared.

The trail left Sidney about a half mile from the center of the town and entered a small canyon (Deadwood Draw) and gradually ascended to the table land to the north. The table land extends to what is generally known as Water Holes Ranch, but is also called “Nine Miles Water Holes” and “Dry Creek” by many accounts (Bloch 1954, 249). Water Holes Ranch was the first station on the trail and was located twelve miles northwest of Sidney. The station was primarily a watering stop and not a night stopover. The ranch was operated by J.F. Hollowell (ST July 15, 1876).

The trail continued on another thirteen miles over flat land before descending down a draw, or canyon, to the Greenwood Station. Greenwood Station was situated in a valley through which Greenwood Creek (or Juster's Creek) ran. The station consisted of several buildings and a corral and was reported to "possess excellent facilities for accommodations travelers and stock" (ST July 15, 1876). The stage line changed their horses at this station and then continued its journey northward to Court House Rock.

The Court House Rock Station was six miles from Greenwood. The trail ascends from Greenwood over steep hills and then descends for three to four miles down into the valley of Pumpkin Creek. The ascent was marked by several trails, the result of freighters and stagecoaches and their drivers' attempt for a faster, easier trail. The Sidney-Black Hills Trail was not a static highway marked out on the landscape. Freight drivers were notorious, according to the *Sidney Telegraph*, for forging their own paths; because of the fluctuations in the trail new stations and paths were constantly being created. The stations discussed in this section of the chapter are the ones that were used for the majority of the years the trail was in use.

The Court House Rock Station was located just to the west of the landform where Pumpkin Creek flows. By most accounts the Pumpkin Creek Station was a "great camping place," but the majority of travelers pushed on to the Camp Clarke Bridge which was eight miles farther north.

The Camp Clarke Bridge, or the North Platte River Bridge, was one of three main stations along the trail. Established by Henry T. Clarke in 1876, the bridge was 2,500 feet long and had 61 trusses. Travelers who used the bridge were charged a toll

of fifty cents per pedestrian, one dollar for a horse and rider, two dollars for a buggy and pair, and seventeen dollars for a wagon with oxen (Lummel 2000, 43).<sup>5</sup>

On the south bank of the river was Camp Clarke and on the north bank the town of Wellsville. Camp Clarke was a station for both freighters and stagecoaches. Camp Clarke consisted of a store which contained a post station, a corral and a hotel or roadhouse for the public. The post station collected and delivered mail to the Black Hills mining communities and the region. Clarke offered a mail service to the Black Hills since the government would not deliver mail north of the river, which was Indian Territory. The occupants of Wellsville operated the toll booth on the north bank of the river. Wellsville was a smaller community than Camp Clarke, but consisted of several houses, a blacksmith, a saloon, houses of prostitution, and corrals and barns (Lummel 2000, 43). There was also a military outpost located at Camp Clarke. For the military, a block house was built with portholes that faced all views of the bridge and the surrounding countryside (Clarke OWH May 7, 1911).

Red Willow Ranch was the next station north of Wellsville, about twelve miles north from the Platte River Bridge. The trail between two stations was hampered by a stretch of sandy soil where many a stagecoach had trouble pulling through. F.J.C., correspondent for the *Yankton Union & Press & Dakotian*, wrote in one of his letters to the paper that during this stretch of the trail that the passengers of the stage had to walk the greater part of the way (YUPD April 16, 1877).<sup>6</sup> The Red Willow Ranch was

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<sup>5</sup> The fees charged for crossing the toll road differ in just about every source. Some cite the pedestrians being charged fifty cents, others two dollars. The researcher used the toll amounts that had the highest rates of occurrence and appeared in the *Sidney Telegraph*. The rates would have fluctuated through the seasons and during years of high and low traffic.

<sup>6</sup> F.J.C., a correspondent known only by his initials, had a regular column in the *Yankton Union & Press & Dakotian*.

owned and operated by E. Morton & Company. The site was promoted as having a “crystalline pool” and a good supply of lumber.

From Red Willows Ranch the trail ascended to Snake Creek Ranch, also known as Blue Water (Klock 1979, 75). The ranch was owned by J. W. Dear, a post trader at the Red Cloud Agency, and was open at all hours. The station was advertised as a place where a good meal was available at any time and where supplies a traveler had forgotten were available. The next eight miles north of Snake River Station was good grazing land and took a traveler past Point of Rocks, a landmark for the trail.

Eighteen miles from Point of Rocks was the Running Water Station (just north of present-day Marsland) where there was a stream (Niobrara) that could be easily forded. Accommodations were provided at this stage station. From Running Water north to White Clay Creek the trail wound twelve miles through the area known as the Pine Ridge and many a traveler commented on the beauty and grandeur of this region. White Clay Creek Station was located in the hills above the Red Cloud Agency and was a stopover for freighters before attempting the descent to the Red Cloud Indian Agency. From White Clay Station the trail sharply descended down Breakneck Hill and into the White River Valley.



Figure 4 Stage Stations and Distances

### Sidney-Black Hills Stage Stations and Distances

Sidney to Water Hole	12
Water Hole to Greenwood	12
Greenwood to Court House Rock	10
Court House Rock to North Platte River Crossing	8
Platte Crossing to Red Willow	10
Red Willow to Snake Creek	14
Snake Creek to Running Water	18
Running Water to White Clay Creek	12
White Clay Creek to Red Cloud Agency	6
Red Cloud Agency to Little Cottonwood Creek	6
Little Cottonwood to Big Cottonwood Creek	10
Big Cottonwood Creek to Water Hole	12
Water Hole to Horse Head Creek	20
Horse Head Creek to South Cheyenne River	7
South Cheyenne River to Buffalo Gap Ranch	10

The Trail split at Buffalo Gap Ranch. One leg went to Custer and the other leg to Deadwood via Rapid City and Sturgis.

Custer could be reached from Buffalo Gap Ranch over a 20 mile trail.

#### Buffalo Gap Ranch to Rapid City

Buffalo Gap to French Creek	13
French Creek to Battle River	12
Battle River to Spring Creek	9
Spring Creek to Rapid City	10

From Rapid City/ Sidney Stockade the trail cannot be called the Sidney-Black Hills Trail exclusively, because of the use of the trail by all other routes (Pierre, Bismarck, etc.) going through the region.

The stations along this passage of the route were not static; the trail from Sidney Stockade stretched west to 24 miles to Bulldog Ranch/Sturgis and then on 6 miles north to Whitewood/Crook City and then south 6 miles into Deadwood.

Sources: *The Sidney Telegraph* and Brown and Willard

The Red Cloud Agency was six miles from the White Clay Creek Station and was protected by the military stationed at Fort Robinson. The Red Cloud Agency was another one of the three main stations on the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The station consisted of several large stores owned by J.W. Dear and Frank Yates (ST July 15, 1876). Many travelers and correspondents wrote in their letters of the stopover at Red Cloud and the excursions they took from the Station. F.J.C., correspondent for the *Yankton Union & Press & Dakotian*, wrote:

...At Red Cloud we had to lay over until Monday. We put up with J.W. Dear, the gentlemanly trader at the agency where we had good fare and a clean bed. After breakfast we walked over to Camp Robinson where we found all lively with drill and inspection. The post is under the command of General McKenzie and everything is neat and orderly; there are about 7,000 Indians at the agency now, but all is quiet. After dinner we took a walk to the top of one of the high bluffs near the post where a nice view of the surrounding country was obtained. On our return we went to an Indian dance and called on Red Cloud, who by the way is not a bad looking Indian... (YUPD April 16, 1877).

Many travelers reported visiting Camp Robinson, the Indian settlements, and the bluffs surrounding the Agency.

North from the Red Cloud Agency, the trail gently rose out of the White River Valley and into the "Badlands" region. Little Cottonwood station was just six miles from Red Cloud and was considered a watering stop. The proximity of Little Cottonwood Station to Big Cottonwood Station (10 miles) impelled travelers to stay at Carney's Ranch, instead of camping at Little Cottonwood. Carney's Ranch, or Big Cottonwood, was in alkaline country and had fresh water "around the bend" (ST July 15, 1876).

The trail from Red Cloud to Water Hole Station can be described as "braided." The topography of the land allowed the freighter or stagecoach driver to

take whatever path he wanted and there were many he could chose from. The paths that were well traveled are the ones that are easily detected in the landscape of the area, from above the paths cross and intertwine to form a braided image of the trail on the landscape (Loosbrock and Wess n.d.).

From Big Cottonwood Station to Horsehead Creek Station there were several stations, or stopovers where a freighter or stage might stop. One of those was Waterhole, a stop about which not much is known. Lone Wells which was in a natural basin used as a corral and about thirty-five miles from Big Cottonwood. Slate Springs was considered a breakfast stop on the stage returning from Deadwood. Fawn Creek Station, Quartz Bottom, and many more existed. Through the years the path of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail shifted and because of this stations were created in many different locations. The stations might be built at a watering spot or an existing ranch would be utilized.

Horsehead Station was one of the more static stage and freight stations. Goods were available here from a ranch store, as well as meals. Both the Sidney and Cheyenne Routes used this station and from Horsehead to the South Cheyenne River it was just seven miles. The South Cheyenne River crossing was ten miles from Buffalo Gap Station. The Buffalo Gap Station was located along Beaver Creek and considered by many newspapers and travelers to be in one of the best cattle ranges in the country. George and Abe Boland established the Buffalo Gap Stage Station in 1874 or 1875 (NRHP, Sundstrom 1994).<sup>7</sup> The Buffalo Gap Station accommodated both travelers and livestock. Little else is known about Buffalo Gap Station other

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<sup>7</sup> Records and dates from this time are based on collective memory. There is little existing documentation on the station other than a few travelers who commented on the stop.

than it had a post office and apparently routed mail into all of the Black Hills.

According to Watson Parker and Hugh Lambert, the town of Buffalo Gap “in its early days it had...48 saloons and other places of entertainment on scale to match...”

(Parker and Lambert 1980, 50).

From Buffalo Gap, or Beaver Creek Station, the trail split: one leg went to Custer and the other to Deadwood via Rapid City and Sturgis. The path to Custer was about 23 miles long and passed through Cascade Springs and Pringle. The other leg of the trail departed from Buffalo Gap and ascended to French Creek fifteen miles north. The station was operated by John Watson and consisted of a barn, a post office, a saloon, and a blacksmith shop. The next station along the trail was Battle River, which is close to present-day Hermosa, S.D. Battle River Station had a ten room hotel and a log barn.

Nine miles north of Battle River was Spring Creek Station, from which the town of Maverick grew. Spring Creek was a stage stop at a ranch which provided food, water, and supplies. Little is known about this station other than it was the hangout of some “knights-of-the-road” such as Lame Bradley, Fly Speck Billy, and Lame Johnny (Klock 1979, 82).

It was ten miles north to Rapid River (Rapid Creek) from Spring Creek where originally a hay camp had been located from which sprung the town of Rapid City. The town of Rapid City, began as a very small settlement on February 20, 1876 and, by August of 1876, there were over two hundred settlers in the community (Klock 1979,

82-83).<sup>8</sup> John R. Brennan described his memories of the beginnings of Rapid City in a 1919 Holiday Greetings edition of the *Rapid City Journal*. Brennan wrote that by the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, the men of the community had already laid out street plans for six blocks and a town meeting was called and committees were setup to figure out how to induce prospective merchants and others to locate in their town. Brennan reminisced on the increase in building activity, the surveying of roads into Rapid City, of fighting off the Sioux, and the inducement of the Sidney Stage Company to travel into Rapid City by surveying a road between Buffalo Gap and Rapid Creek.

From Rapid City the trail cannot be exclusively called the Sidney Trail, because freight and stage companies from Bismarck, Pierre, and Sidney all used this route. The station primarily used by the Sidney freight companies along this route was Sidney Stockade, later known as Stage Barn Cave, located nine miles northwest of Rapid City close to the present town of Piedmont, S.D. There are very few records of this station and what little is known can be considered hearsay or collective memory. Collective memory in this case refers to information that has been passed down generation to generation and in most cases of events that have been exaggerated to give them significance.

From Sidney Stockade the trail ran northwest to the Brook Ranch, near Sturgis, and then on to Crook City. Crook City was the third main station for the Sidney freighters and stage lines: it was here that all the trails to Deadwood merged and used the same road to get into town. Crook City was located on Whitewood Creek and was the stopover site for freighters and stagecoaches going into Deadwood.

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<sup>8</sup> Before the surveying of the road from Buffalo Gap to Rapid Creek, the Sidney Stage Line traveled from Custer up to Deadwood and Lead.

There was no place, or even enough grazing land, for freighters to stay in Deadwood with their oxen so once they had delivered their goods they would once again return to Crook City to stay another night. Crook City was named for General George Crook who had camped at the site in 1875. It was one of the first towns in the northern Black Hills, founded in 1876, and had a population of 2,000-3,000 (Parker and Lambert 1980, 73). The *Crook City Tribune* only published one issue on June 10, 1876; but the failure of the paper did not reflect the growth of the town. A reporter passing through the town noted about 250 houses and that just about every one of them was a saloon; but there was also a church and a school (Parker and Lambert 1980). Crook City was located six miles north of Deadwood Gulch.

Deadwood was the end of the line or the beginning of the line, depending on what direction one was heading. The name Deadwood carries the same feeling of excitement today as it did back then. The town of Deadwood was created in 1875 and lies in a steep and narrow valley. The town has been one of the most publicized mining districts in the West; while the town did not produce more metal than the rest of the mining districts, its fame rests in the culture and characters that resided there.

The town of Deadwood gets its name from the mat of dead timber that once filled the valley. Frank Bryant, John B. Pearson, and a party of other miners were the first in the region. These first miners found gold and placed their claims above the gulch. It was the later miners looking for sites to claim that cleared the gulch of the dead timber and found a surprising discovery of rich placers. The townsite of Deadwood was laid out by J.J. William and others on August 26, 1876 (NRHP Lissanderello 1976). There was only one street, which was lined by tents and log

cabins. Miner's claims littered the valley and not a square of land was left unclaimed; miners could even be found working their claims in the middle of the street.

The town's first newspaper, *The Black Hills Pioneer*, was established on June 8, 1876. Six weeks after its first edition, it stated that Deadwood had over 2,000 residents. The town of Deadwood grew rapidly and soon the town was no longer contained by the valley as it pushed its way upward on to the canyon walls and up the sides of the Deadwood and Whitewood Gulches (NRHP Lissanderello 1976). As the growth of Deadwood and the gold dwindled, so did the use of the trail. By 1878, the number of individuals using the trail had begun to taper off and in 1879 the Cheyenne and Sidney routes were consolidated. The Sidney route's passenger traffic rapidly dwindled to 300 to 400 people a month (Mahnken 1949, 223). During this time, the freight business increased and many of the Sidney freight companies actually increased the size of their warehouses in Sidney. Some Cheyenne operations moved to Sidney and approximately 22,000,000 to 25,000,000 pounds of freight were moved over the route in 1878-1879 (Mahnken 1949). Freightng goods to the miners and stamp mills and other equipment to the mining companies was a very profitable business. Freight charges were usually two cents a pound, except in the winter months when they could be higher, and each freight train leaving for the Hills might carry up to 300,000 pounds. Freightng to the Black Hills eventually ended when the Chicago and North Western Railroad reached Pierre and the majority of the goods were freighted from Pierre, S.D. After 1881, the gold was no longer shipped south, but east to the

Missouri River points and all commerce with the Black Hills ended for the Sidney-Black Hills Trail by 1885.

The trail was used by locals for several years as a highway between towns, but was eventually replaced by railroad routes and other roads. Many of the stations became or functioned primarily as ranches and others faded out of existence as places of commerce.



## THE PAST TRAIL INTERPRETATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

What is history? What is the starting point of history? David Wishart wrote in *The Selectivity of Historical Representation* that the starting point for history is “actuality, the acknowledgement that events have occurred in the past just as they continue to occur today” (Wishart 1997, 112). History begins with the acknowledgement that there was a ‘real’ past; a past where individuals lived and died and where “there were countless experiences of that past” (Ibid). The historian does not have access to the past directly, but has access to the accounts of this past. The accounts available are normally only a fragment of the past that actually happened and a biased fragment of the occurrence.

The accounts of the past of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail used for this research are only a tiny fragment of the past that in actuality happened. Many of the historical accounts are an “imaginative reconstruction” of the events; reconstructions of the past where what little evidence of the events are used to produce facts; facts which are used to produce a written historical account. These written historical accounts can be (if available) compared to other historical accounts of the same event. Historical representations are selective views of events that occurred; the basis for this selectivity being the historian or geographer does not have full access to the past. The evidence, or relics used to form historical facts, are representations of historical events and these representations are not conclusive for the whole of experiences and events of all cultural and ethnic groups. For instance, accounts of how the Native Americans felt

about the events, the voices of women and minorities that traveled the trail and resided in the mining communities are few.

The historical account, as written, can in effect influence how the evidence and the facts of an event are eventually, and repeatedly, re-interpreted. In this chapter the written historical accounts of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail are explored through narration and a content analysis of the representations available from the time period of the trail's formation and primary usage (1870-1890). The evidence or relics of this time period are relatively scarce; what remains are journals, travel guides, advertisements, pamphlets, and newspaper articles on the trail and the effects the trail had on the material landscape. The interpretations of the representations of this time period form the basis for the history of the trail and a baseline for the study of all other interpretations.

### **Evidence and Representations**

The representations for this time period are organized according to the methodological framework laid out in chapter three: economic ambitions, environment, cultural strictures, and historical tools.

#### **Economic Ambitions**

The economic ambitions of the past culture are what shaped the physical and cultural environment of the landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The landscape of the trail was still at this time considered to be part of the "Great American Desert" and a relatively unattractive region for settlement. There were few streams and trees, "rowdy Indians," and it was by Anglo standards unsettled; a relatively "wide-open

space.” The economic ambitions of the government, newspaper editors, railroad companies, freighters and miners brought settlement to the region and thus were the primary shapers of the cultural landscape.

The ambitions of the local, state and federal government were the primary forces that started the evolution of the landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills from a region of open grassland to a transportation route. In 1873 the federal government had transferred over 10,000 Ogalala and their Cheyenne and Arapaho allies to a location along the White River and had been transporting annuity goods to Camp Robinson and the Red Cloud Agency by way of Cheyenne. The Cheyenne route crossed Indian Territory and was prone to attack; thus the trail being dangerous and not traversable year round due to weather conditions, the military went looking for a new route to the Red Cloud Agency.

The first evidence of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail comes from military correspondence and newspaper articles in 1874. On July 25, 1874 a letter from the Department of the Platte was sent to the commanding officer of Sidney Barracks to send out a company of men to explore the possibility of a route from Sidney that crossed by or near Court House Rock to the Red Cloud Agency. The next relic of correspondence is a letter from W. H. Jordon, Captain of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry reporting the arrival of Joseph Lawson, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry, at Camp Robinson. Captain Jordan wrote:

...Having left Sydney [sic] Barracks, Neb. On the 29<sup>th</sup> inst. To locate a road thence to this place Lt. Lawson informs me that he thinks he will succeed in finding a very good wagon road about 130 miles in length...

The letter by Captain Jordan was posted on August 4, 1874 and by September the anticipation of the trail was evident in news correspondence from Sidney. An *Omaha Weekly Bee* correspondent wrote on September 5, 1874:

The people...of Sidney are rejoicing. The reason is this: Some time since Lieutenant Lawson, of the Third Cavalry, surveyed a road to Red Cloud Agency from this point. Over this road it was proposed to carry all government freights for that place. After this road was located it was doubted whether it would ever be used. Now we are informed that the route as located by Lt. Lawson has been adopted, and already two carloads of freight have been shipped here for transportation to the above mentioned agency. This will supposedly, bring considerable business to this already lively town... (Etau, OWB Sept. 9, 1874).

This letter appeared in the *Omaha Weekly Bee* on the same day as Major General Ord, commanding officer of the Platte, reported to the AAG Division of the Missouri that he had sent a company of men to ascertain a route from Sidney to the Sioux Agencies and that such a route had been found and was about sixty miles shorter than the Cheyenne route.

The report of Major General Ord began a flurry of news reports on the new trail. The September 11, 1874 edition of the *Omaha Daily Herald* (a staunch supporter of the Cheyenne route) carried a letter from Col. Dudley, the commander of Ft. McPherson. Col. Dudley wrote a letter rebuffing the *Herald's* editor for continuing to report that Cheyenne route was the only route to the Black Hills. The rebuff included a brief history of the trail's exploration, the "exact" distances reported by Lt. Morton,

and a short promotion of the Sidney trail:

...Emigrants to the Black Hills, when allowed to go there, will save 108 miles of railroad transit, and a full 60 miles overland travel, over a better road, by leaving the Union Pacific railroad at Sidney, Nebraska, than at any other point..." (OHD Sept. 11, 1874).

Formation of the Sidney route was beginning to show an increase in activity towards the end of 1874. On December 15, 1874, P.W. Hitchcock, a U.S. senator of Nebraska, introduced a bill to build a wagon road from the Union Pacific Railroad depot in Sidney to the Red Cloud Agency and one hundred thousand dollars was appropriated for the building of the bridge and the trail (Buecker 2004). Further evidence of governmental ambition is limited to reports in the *Sidney Telegraph* of troops arriving and leaving Sidney via the trail, guard house reports from Camp Clarke, and reports on the improvements in Native American behavior because of an increased military presence.

The building of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail by the government lent to the settlement and investment in the landscape along the trail. The town of Sidney was the first to see this investment as the town evolved from a railroad depot to a outfitting and transportation point to the Black Hills. The establishment of the trail brought stations and stop-over points to the landscape of western Nebraska and South Dakota which can be considered the first settlements and population centers. The investors in this landscape are classified as local and non-local in this study. Local investors are the townspeople of Sidney, the residents of the landscape-such as ranch owners, and the men who ran trading posts in the region-such as J.W. Dear. Non-local investment is any and all other types of investment from outside sources,

primarily typified as businesses which sent capital and goods but never settled in the region.

Local investment was an integral part of the history and geography of the trail, for without this initial investment in the trail it is dubious Sidney would have developed into the population center that it did. One of the major investments in the trail was by Joseph Gossage, the editor and proprietor of the *Sidney Telegraph*. Gossage bought the *Telegraph* from Lawrence Connell in the spring 1874 and soon after changed the focus of the paper from social columns and tidbits of national news to local news and local promotion. The weekly social column in the *Sidney Telegraph* called "Here and There" kept the townspeople updated on the growth of Sidney, how many buildings were being erected, who had traveled through town, how much gold was being shipped from the depot, and how others viewed their trail. The *Telegraph* advertised for merchants, doctors, lawyers, freighters, and more. These advertisements were used to lure men off the trains that ran through Sidney and to proclaim the advantages of the Sidney route. The *Sidney Telegraph* was also a barometer of the excitement (or disappointment) that transients expressed about the trail and the Black Hills. Many of the articles published by Gossage kept to the flare of boosterism that was common in small town newspapers; meaning that even when use of the trail was declining and more men were coming from the Hills than going to, Gossage and the *Telegraph* remained positive and still portrayed the Hills as the "Land of Gold." Other local investments were made by the citizens of Sidney. Many of the first freighters to the Black Hills were townsmen (1875); the stations along the trail were many times a ranch house stocked and supplied by a Sidney merchant.

Investments were also made by traders such as J.W. Dear, an Indian trader at the Red Cloud Agency. Dear established the first stage company to operate on the trail and also built many of the first stage stations.

Much of the non-local investment can be attributed to Omaha businesses that furnished the capital to build the Camp Clarke Bridge and the freight companies that relocated from Cheyenne and other western points to Sidney. Edward Morton, an Omahan, established a hotel at Red Willow Ranch (ODR 4/25/1877). The Metropolitan Hotel in Sidney was completely furnished by Dewey & Stone in Omaha and the freight firm of Marsh & Stephenson was owned and staffed by Omahans. Many of the other businesses in Sidney and on the trail were either owned or were supported by way of Omaha (ODR 7/12/1877).

The Sidney Trail was also promoted and supported by the Union Pacific Railroad which delivered freight for the Hills to the Sidney Depot. The main business of the trail was not the transportation of people to the Black Hills but the transportation of goods. Local freighters, such as J.W. Dear and H.T. Clarke, were the first to run stages and wagons north into Indian Territory in 1875 and 1876. Later freighters such as Van Tassel and Marsh & Stephenson played a greater role in the movement of goods. These businesses survived because of the mining community's demand for goods.

The economic ambitions of miners and entrepreneurs were also influential on the culture that developed in this region. The town of Sidney became an epicenter for men converging on the Hills and the trail a route for these men to reach the Black

Hills. The miners raised the demand for transportation and goods; and in the *Sidney Telegraph's* "Here and There" column, Gossage printed news of how many tons of goods, wagons, and miners were traveling to the Hills. Gossage also wrote of large parties returning from the Hills and the news that they brought:

As Saturday last, a large party of "pilgrims" from the Hills, returned. The outfit numbered 49 men and eight wagons. Among the party was David Ettien, of Burlington, Iowa, an aged gentleman who brought with him 21¼ ounces of gold, valued at \$425. He says there is plenty of gold in the Hills and that he will return as soon as he can lay in his stock of goods. The majority of the party went in by the Sidney route in 7 days. They saw "peaceables" on two different occasions. (ST 6/3/1876).

The majority of information available on the miners who traveled the Sidney route was second hand news published in the *Sidney Telegraph*. Very few journals of the Black Hills miners have survived to this day. In the small mining community newspapers in the Black Hills the only information on the Sidney route was whether the stage arrived on time and who had arrived on the stage. Even from the small amount of information available on the miners one can interpret from the writings of Joseph Gossage, the photographs of the period, and what other literature available that the miners formed and shaped the economy of the Black Hills mining communities. Sidney's economy during this time period was shaped by the wants and needs of the miners and the entrepreneurs who set up businesses to serve the miners.

The economic ambitions of the miners, the freighters, the local and non-local investors, and the government influenced the physical landscape and shaped the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. In 1874 the military cut a trail



through the prairie of western Nebraska to the Red Cloud Agency and in doing so began a new period of human habitation in the region.

### **Environment**

The physical environment of the region of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail was described in by a book written by Edwin Curley in 1874. In *Nebraska: It's Resources and Drawbacks*, Curley wrote that the region of the trail was a wide open, unsettled space marked only by the landforms that had guided travelers west along the Platte River Valley. Curley described the region as void of human interaction and entirely shaped by nature; he left out the impacts of the Native Americans and prehistoric hunters, but he wrote what he knew about the landscape as it was in 1874. Imagine a prairie landscape with no roads, no buildings, no fences; a view of only the natural features of grass, trees, water, animals, and wind. This is how Curley described landscape, but this was not the actuality of the landscape in 1874.

One can learn from the history of America's expansion across the continent that this region was a well traveled route to the western coast and that in 1874 the United States military had begun exploring the Black Hills and routes into them. The primary force that changed the landscape in study during the time period of 1874-1880 was the Sidney-Black Hills trail; its formation by the military, its continual and heavy usage, and the stations and stops that became population centers. The first recommendation for building the trail from Sidney to Red Cloud Agency appeared in

a report by Sergeant Colonel James W. Forsyth. On March 7, 1874 he wrote:

Whilst discussing the question of supplying the troops at the agencies, Mr. Bosler, the beef contractor for the Brule's recommended the route that he used, leaving the railroad at Sidney Barracks. The distance to Red Cloud's Agency being 115-120 miles compared to 165 from Railroad via Fort Laramie.

The report also included a note of the route from the Red Cloud Agency to Sidney Barracks. The description of the trail leaving the Red Cloud Agency traveled south across the Niobrara River near the mouth of Piper Creek, a distance of about twenty-five miles. From the mouth of Piper Creek south to the North Platte River, about fifty miles, and crossing the river near Willow Creek at an old Indian crossing. From the crossing the route traveled south twelve miles to Mud Springs, a pony express station, and from there south twenty-eight miles to Sidney over an old Indian trail (Buecker 2004).

The route that was surveyed and established by the military ran a slightly different course from Camp Robinson to Sidney. In the “Annual Report Upon Explorations and Surveys in the Department of the Platte,” by Captain W.S. Stanton, the route of the trail was recorded as:

No. 31 Camp Robinson to Sidney BKS, NEBR.

<u>Cp Robinson to</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
White River	0.76	Crossing
Junction	0.90	Road to Red Cloud Agency and Black Hills
White Clay Cr.	6.31	Stream, Grass and Wood
Niobrara R.	12.93	Stream, Grass, no wood, Stage Ranch
Stage Ranch	11.95	
Snake Cr.	13.90	Stream, Grass, no wood, Stage Ranch
Red Willow Cr.	16.20	Water, Grass, no wood, Stage Ranch
Junction	6.87	Road to fork N. Platte River
N. Platte R.	6.28	wooded bridge, store, plenty of grass, no wood
Pumpkin Cr.	7.16	Grass, no wood
Greenwood Cr.	6.23	Crossing, follow creek
Junction	.38	Road to ford N. Platte
Stage Ranch	1.85	Upper road to Water Hole
Leave Greenwood	1.07	Crossing, water Grass and Wood along Creek
Water Holes	12.93	Stage Ranch; water in Holes, grazing, no wood, junction with upper road from Greenwood.
Sidney	14.00	on the Union Pacific Railroad

In Stanton’s comments he reports that the “country is rolling; the road in places sandy and heavy, and occasionally hilly; otherwise good route. Route destitute of wood from White Clay to Greenwood Creek...” (Stanton 1878).

The military reports on the route’s physical aspects are a good source for the physical environment, but these reports leave out the cultural aspects that influenced the physical environment. What type of equipment traveled over the trail? How long was the average trip? Was traffic light or heavy? When was the trail used the most?

For this information on the cultural aspects of the trail one needs only to read a cross-section of the *Sidney Telegraph* during 1876-1878. The equipment that traveled over the trail ranged from stagecoaches and buggies to small wooden wagons to Conestoga wagons and Concord coaches.

The accounts of people who rode a stagecoach into the Hills are numerous, as correspondents from eastern newspapers wrote home on how they traveled to the Hills. Many of the accounts were of stagecoach rides and influenced by booster press. One of the negative accounts of a ride to the Black Hills by way of Sidney comes from a reporter for the *Yankton Union & Press & Dakotaian*. The correspondent F.J. C. wrote:

With my last I left you at Sidney, Neb. As we had wedged ourselves in a small sized coach with nine passengers inside and two outside and about ten hundred pounds of baggage and express...Left Sidney at 10 o'clock, passed over rolling country with fair roads and at one o'clock made the first station and changed horses and were off again over similar country. The last part was rougher with scattering of pines on the hills...Caught sight of Scottsbluff and Chimney Rock...Here 'footing' commenced, the sand being loose and the stage was a good load for the team of four...Just as darkness was setting in we drew up to the station at the North Platte and changed teams...Between the Platte and Willow Creek station the road passes over a rolling country, covered with loose sand, through which we had to walk...[the correspondent described the rest of the trail as a continuation of this theme; walking and wedging of passengers in a stage. He ended his article by writing his recommendation to the traveler]...As to the Sidney route and stages, I will say that if there was no other stage line by which I could get out I would buy a wheelbarrow, load my baggage, and pull out by the Pierre route before I would go back by that route, for by doing so I would only have to pull my own baggage and no coach. The company running the stages seem only to care for money, regardless of the comfort of passengers, and overload their stages with passengers.... (YUPD 4/26/1877)

The end of the article is a promotion of the Yankton route, but the importance of this information lies in the account of the Sidney trail, which is described by many reporters the same way. While it is important to note the influence of boosterism, many reports in the *Sidney Telegraph* also report that the trail was rough and sandy in places and that passengers had to get out of the stage and walk or push the stage.

The importance of the Sidney route to the traveler did not lie in the ease of travel; the importance was in the quickness of the route. The correspondent for the *Yankton Union & Press & Dakotain*, in his article above also mentioned that it took four days to travel to the Hills, which was much quicker than the other routes. There are reports in the *Sidney Telegraph* of men reaching the Hills by horse in 28 hours, but these may be exaggerated accounts. The average time for a stage to reach the Hills from Sidney was 3-4 days. By freight wagon it was considerably slower because of the weight being hauled; accounts list this time from 2-4 weeks depending on weight being hauled and time of year. A typical freight train consisted of three or more lead wagons and three or more trail wagons drawn by oxen, or bulls (Bloch 1954, 249). Freight being hauled in the early spring was slowed considerably due to the possible muddiness of the trail and winter conditions could strand a wagon at a station for weeks.

Traffic over the trail was heaviest in the late spring through late fall. Traffic slowed during the winter months and wet spring months (ODR 3/21/1877). The stages left and returned to Sidney once a week in 1875, twice a week in early 1876 and trice a week by the fall of that year. The *Telegraph* reported that in 1877 stages left daily (ST 1/27/1877). The amount of freight hauled over the trail is immeasurable

and the weight of such transactions even more so. Many of the transactions were not kept track of by freighters and the *Telegraph* only carried this information early in the use of the trail. One can only assume the information became so common that it was no longer news to be published, unless it was an unusually large or strange cargo.

One of the accounts of the freight handled was printed in the *Omaha Daily Republican* on August 21, 1877. The correspondent for the *Republican* reported that the freight handled in the month of July 1877 was

...in carloads: Bacon 6, potatoes 4, corn 35, oats 10, machinery 5, beans 2, onions 2, wood 3, merchandise 34, total in pounds 2,556,467. Number of pounds in June 3,214,517. For the current month the receipts will be less than July, but after next month trade begins lively again. All the supplies for Red Cloud and Spotted Tail reservations are forwarded from Sidney, some idea of the immensity of which may be obtained when it is known for the fiscal year, '76,'77, the following consignments are officially reported: supplies, 1,745,677 lbs.; quartermaster's stores, 4,548,707 lbs.;...like all freighting towns, the receipts far exceed the shipments. Goods brought here are exchanged for the commodity, cash and the number of carloads of said commodity is rather hard to reach inround [sic] numbers... (ODR 8/21/1877).

From all evidence collected on the use of the trail it is evident that the trail was used heavily in the summer months, but that travel waned in the winter months. The amount of freight hauled over the trail amounted to the hundreds of millions of pounds and the number of passengers is unknown.

The stations and stops that were built on the trail route are an important aspect of how the trail influenced the culture of the landscape. These stations functioned as the first population centers in the landscape and the physical environment of the landscape lent to their placement in proximity to water sources. Some of these stations developed into thriving villages; stations such as Clamp Clarke

on the Platte River, Red Cloud Agency on the White River, Buffalo Gap on the Beaver Creek, and Rapid City. The development of Rapid City cannot be attributed only to its function as a station of the Sidney route as it was a site of convergence for many of the routes into the Black Hills mining communities. Many of the stations in the Black Hills or Dakota Territory also cannot be attributed only to the Sidney route, with the exception of Sidney Stockade or Stage Barn Cave, and thus it is much harder to decipher the influence of the Sidney freighters and stage travel on their locales.

The influence of the physical environment of this landscape is visible in the route of the trail and also where the stations were established. The impact of the physical environment on the culture of this landscape is evident in the reports, correspondence, and personal records of the many individuals who traveled and settled along the route.

### **Cultural Strictures**

The men and women who traveled and settled along the route were influenced by the physical environment, as well as the cultural strictures ingrained in them from their previous life experiences. Many of the individuals that influenced the historic representations of the trail are described as a rough bunch that lived a hard life in a harsh environment; these individuals being the miners, outlaws, bullwhackers, and others. But these were not the only individuals who settled in the region; there was also a refined class of men and women who set up shop, taught school, and charged themselves with “civilizing” the region. The cultural strictures of the individuals who traveled and settled in the region influenced how the region was interpreted and represented. Many of the men who came as miners had previous

experience from other mining communities and they brought their own culture. By contrast, many entrepreneurs came from the East and brought with them a culture entirely different. The cultures of these individuals clashed, conformed, and merged to create the culture of the past landscape.

The miners converging on the region brought with them a culture of survival and decadence. Sidney during this time period was not known as a dry town and was often reported as having liquor pouring out of every orifice. The *Sidney Telegraph* downplayed the role of saloons and boarding houses in the town, but journal accounts of Sidney reveal a different culture. In Rolf Johnson's diary he wrote on June 7, 1879:

Visited Joe Lane's Dance Hall last night in company with "Ash-Hollow Jack." It was a large wooden structure with smooth floor. One end was taken up by a bar behind which a noted young desperado called Reddy McDonald was dispensing liquid poison to the habitués of the place. At the other end of the room was a raised platform on which was seated the band consisting of two or three fiddlers and a cornet player. Along the sides of the room were benches, on the floor were dancers. Bullwhackers, cowboys, and soldiers, and gamblers with their partners the professional dance girls and prostitutes....Lane's dance hall is the popular resort in the city; it has been the scene of many frontier fights and border brawls, and the crack of the deadly six shooter had often been heard within its walls.

Sidney is a hard town in general and has been the theater of many a bloody frontier drama. Shootings and lynchings are a frequent occurrence...

Rolf John's journal also gives insight into the culture along the trail as he and a friend traversed the route in the spring of 1879. Later diary entries include a run-in with Boone May, a noted scout and "shotgun messenger" or guard to the Sidney-Deadwood Stage at Pumpkin Creek Station; an observation of the bullwhacker



commonly known as “Arkansaw Joe” at Little Cottonwood Station, and the tree where the hanging body of “Lame Johnny” was found at Dry Creek.

The account of the trail by Rolf Johnson includes both a sensationalized account of the events that happened along the trail and of the actual cultural environment. The mining culture of 1878 is epitomized in Johnson’s diary entries on Whitewood Gulch and the activities therein:

July 9

Pushed on this morning crossing the last mountain descended in Whitewood Gulch and the far famed city of Deadwood lay spread out below us.

It was an animating scene. The gulch alive with men and teams, miners cabins were scattered in the gulch and on the hillsides, sluice boxes and flumes were seen on every hand, passing on we came through Elizabethstown, Montana City and Fountain City, Chinatown. All suburbs of Deadwood; but it would be hard to tell where one town leaves off and the other commences...

July 10

Deadwood...has a population of about 4000. It has several brick buildings, churches, and school house and...Saloons, gambling halls, and bagnios are as numerous as the hair on dog’s back...Three dance halls are in full blast...three theaters are running...The streets present a lively experience. Bull trains and mule outfits, bullwhackers, muleskinners, miners with their pack animals, and cowboys with their broncos swarm everywhere. Everything is bustle and boom... (Bloch 1954, 257).

The ambitions of the miners influenced the landscape of the trail as they brought with them a culture of decadence and survival. Many a miner found himself a very rich man one day with a find of gold and a very poor man on the next after spending his find on liquor, gambling, and women. Mining and mining culture has had a residual

effect on the culture of the landscape in the Black Hills as many of the towns, roads, and establishments draw their names from this time period.

Another powerful group that affected the cultural landscape is the culture of the more “civilized” - as they called themselves - individuals. These individuals brought in churches and preachers, set up social clubs, and established schools and government. The editors of the newspapers in the region were just as likely to print news on the Shakespearian Club, town events, and church meetings as they were to print news on gold. The influence of these individuals is more evident in the historical relics due to the fact that their situation was more permanent than those of the miners, outlaws, and others who had more transient lifestyles.

The transient lifestyles of many outlaws added to their fame and added to the romanticized culture of the landscape. During this time period the West began re-imagining itself and making an image of the Mythic West that individuals wanted to reside in and explore. The account of Rolf Johnson of his trip to Deadwood along the Sidney trail, articles in the *Sidney Telegraph* and *Black Hills Pioneer* of outlaws robbing stagecoaches, saloon fights and gambling wins, and sightings of infamous men and women in the region are all examples of how individuals interpreted the events around them and added to the culture of the period. Many of these individuals, such as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Lamie Johnny, did exist, but the events attributed to them may not have. The amount of historical relics and evidence of these individuals amounts to a small pile, but their influence on the culture and history is too great to measure.

Other cultures noticed, but marginalized in relics, were those of Native Americans, recent immigrants and women. Native Americans were referred to as others; a culture that had to be dealt with, as outlaws, and a hindrance to the settlement of the region. The evidence of immigrant cultures is present in the *Sidney Telegraph* article's on a Danish man and his travels, a couple of Chinese men traveling to the Hills to set up a laundry business<sup>9</sup>, and several others. Women were usually mentioned to as teachers, bar hall girls, madams and prostitutes, or as a wife to a prominent businessman.

### Historical Tools

The study of this past cultural landscape can be furthered by looking at how this culture portrayed itself tangibly on the landscape by looking at the tools and signs used to represent the trail. The main forms of representation were through social columns and ads in the newspapers, railroad publications, and travel guides (see Fig. 5:2, 5:3, and 5:4). The social columns were a jackpot of information on the Sidney Black Hills Trail and the people in the landscape. They contain information about where the individuals traveled, how much gold and goods were flowing into and out of the Hills, where stations were and what they provided, who was freighting and how much it cost, and much more. Local newspaper advertisements for freighters and merchants provided local perceptions on the trail and non-local newspapers showed regional perceptions of the trail. Billboards were relatively unused, but

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<sup>9</sup> The recent scholarship of Liping Zhu, "Chinese Immigrants," suggests that the trail was one of the major routes which were used by Chinese immigrants on their way to the Black Hills. The researcher noted the continuous flow of immigrants through the arrivals listings of the stages and stage passengers in Deadwood newspapers such as *The Black Hills Pioneer* and *The Black Hills Daily Times* (Zhu 2003, 289-290). (For further information on the Chinese experience in the Black Hills see the journal, *South Dakota History*, Winter 2003).

building facades fulfilled the same role representing the importance of the town of Sidney and promoting the goods and services available. Railroad publications included promotions on their timetables and pamphlets which promoted the Sidney route as the shortest and safest route (see Figure 5:2). Travel guides were another important form of representation of the trail as towns aimed to bring commerce to their town and route. A routes publication in a Black Hills Travel Guide, such as Edwin Curley's *Guide to the Black Hills*, could substantiate a trail.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The cultures of individuals who settled, traveled and wrote about the Sidney-Black Hills Trail meshed together to form the cultural landscape of the trail. The influence of the businessmen in the towns had the most impact on the historical representation of the time, but their influence is related to their positions of power and not wholly to the actual culture that existed. These men may or may not have portrayed the culture as it actually was and what they portrayed was in fact an interpretation influenced by their cultural strictures. What can be deciphered from the study of past trail cultures is that like many regions of the United States these individual cultures clashed and conformed to create a distinct cultural landscape that differed from the surrounding plains culture.

In the findings, the representations of the trail are the most numerous in the counties of Cheyenne, Dawes, and Lawrence. This spatial distribution is grounded in the temporal formation of the landscape. During the time period of 1870-1890 these counties contained the largest population centers; Cheyenne County being the most

developed with the town of Sidney and thus having a larger number of representations attributed to it, Dawes County encompassing the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agency, and Lawrence County encompassing Deadwood. The development of these towns explain to the number of representations which were found for certain locations; the more developed a town was the greater ability its citizens had to shape the landscape through textual material. Thus the relics of this time period would logically be from the population centers with the largest number of permanent residents.

The significance of the study of the past cultural landscape is that it has formed a baseline from which all other studies of the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail follow. What was found was that a large number of representations were tied to the economic ambitions of freight and stage companies and the conditions of the trail's route; the results of the coding and analysis of the information lead to the conclusion that the past relics of the landscape portray the trail as a major economic and cultural force in the settlement and development of the region during 1870-1890. This was a past in which the importance of the trail and the cultural landscape was focused more on its use as a freight and transportation route and less on the individuals and characters that traveled the trail.

Figure 5:1 Past Analysis of Codes

Codes	Category	Sub-category	Number of Occurrence	County Codes		
EII	Freighter Ambitions		35	Cheyenne	51	
	Investor Ambitions	Local	22	Morrill	6	
		Non-local	19	Box Butte	3	
	Government Ambitions	Local	5	Sioux	3	
		State	5	Dawes	10	
		Federal	12	Fall River	1	
	Miner Ambitions		20	Custer	1	
	Other		17	Pennington	2	
			Total	135	Lawrence	11
	PII	Route	Conditions	36	Meade	1
Resources			20	Outside of Area	7	
Communities		Developed	31		Total	96
		Station	17			
		Other	3			
			Total	107		
CII	Citizens	Town	21			
		County	5			
	Outlaw	Anglo	6			
		Native American	8			
	Immigrant	Cultural Transition	5			
		Other	3			
			Total	48		
TII	Signs		2			
	News ads/listings		15			
	Social Columns		24			
	Buildings		1			
	Billboards		0			
	Other			16		
				Total	58	

**Sidney and Black Hills Stage Line**

**ONLY 28 ACTUAL HOURS OF TRAVEL TO CUSTER CITY!**

The nearest and most direct route to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies and Camp Robinson and Sheridan and

**THE BLACK HILLS!**  
*Is VIA SIDNEY and DEAR'S*

**OVERLAND STAGE AND EXPRESS ROUTE!**

**\$20.00 IN RAILROAD FARE!**

Stages leave Sidney for the North every Tuesday morning on the arrival of passenger train from the east, making the trip to Red Cloud in 17 hours and stages arrive from Custer City on Monday at 11 o'clock am giving passengers ample time for eastern bound trains

For information or transportation, apply to  
**J.W. Dear, Proprietor**  
**C.W. Dudley, Agent**  
 Sidney, Nebraska

Source: *Sidney Telegraph* March 4, 1876

Figure 5:2 Stage Line Advertisement

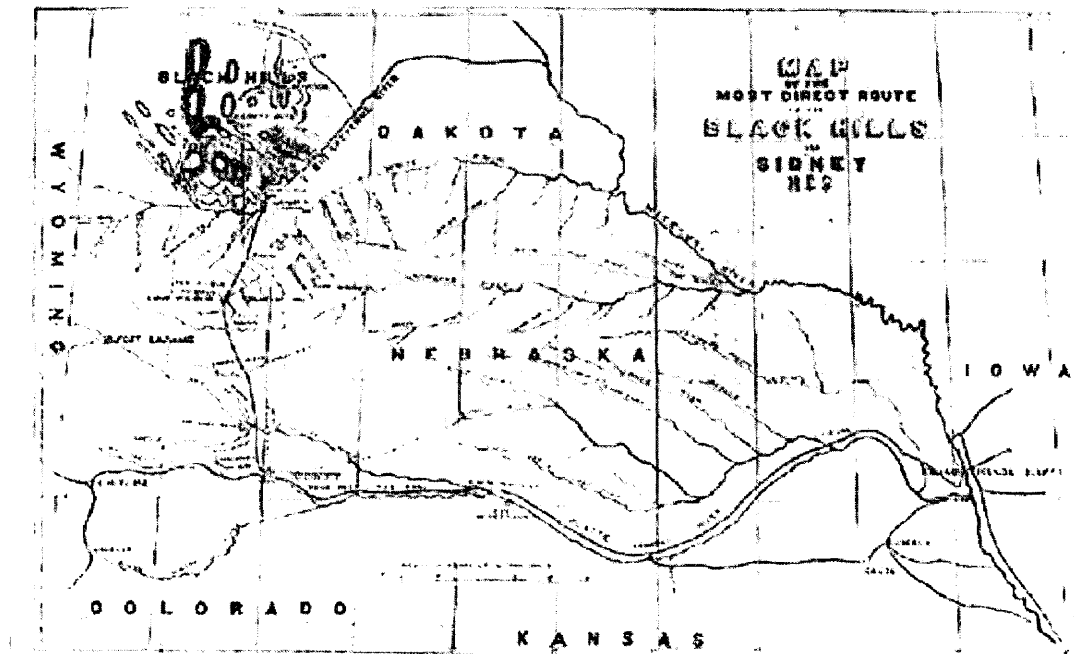


Figure 5:3 Map from the *Sidney Telegraph*

THE ONLY LINE  
TO  
**THE BLACK HILLS**  
OPEN EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.  
IS THE SPLENDID  
**South Side Route**  
via OMAHA and SIDNEY.

---

The **Only Route** not blockaded for weeks at a time by snow.

---

The **Only Route** passing the entire length of the Hills.

---

The **Only Route** not encountering the mires and blizzards of the Bad Lands.

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The **Only Route** carrying United States mail in winter.

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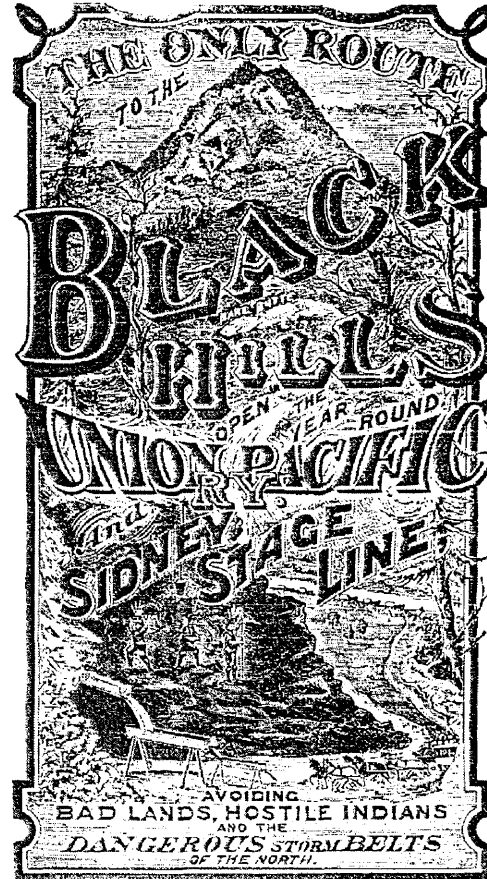
The **Only Route** now used by residents of the Hills.

---

The **Only Route** having the Missouri and other dangerous streams bridged.

---

**AVOID**  
BAD STORMS, BAD LANDS AND BAD FERRIES,  
AND TAKE THE  
OLD RELIABLE and ONLY PLEASANT ROUTE  
Via Omaha and the Union Pacific Railway.



*Courtesy of the Cheyenne County Historical Society*

Figure 5:4 U.P.R.R. Sidney-Deadwood Trail Pamphlet



*Chapter 6***TRANSITION TO THE PRESENT**

The lapse of time between the past landscape study to the present landscape study, 1890-1950, was not a time devoid of history. In fact it was a time when great changes occurred along the landscape: the building of rail lines and railroad towns, roads, schools, homes, and the transformation of the land into ranching and farming operations. The changes in the built environment are numerous and of interest, but the object of this study of the transitional period is to look at how the Sidney-Black Hills Trail was studied, observed, and represented between the time it no longer functioned as a transportation route and the time when the history of the trail became an object of historic preservation in the 1950s.

This time of transition between the two landscape studies of past and present is divided into two main forms of representation and presentation: the first is local interpretation and presentation and the second is academic studies on the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The local representations and presentations of the trail were influenced by newspaper article interviews with individuals directly tied to the trail, county histories by local historians and geographers, and memoirs of men and women who had seen the landscape as it transformed. The second group of interpretations and representations evident during this time are in the form of professional historical research: a book, a thesis, a dissertation, and two journal articles.

## Local Interpretation and Presentation

This transition time period of the landscape is an interesting study of the history of a landscape that many local individuals did not consider to be history. Many do not consider events that happened in the last thirty-fifty years to be history; history to them is an event or sequence of events that happened a long time ago (Post 2004). Yet there seems to be a calling for locals to write down what they know and to conduct studies for the future generations even if the events they are recording do not seem to be history, in reality the events of a few moments ago are history and one's interpretation of those events turn that history into heritage.

The early evidence of the local interpretations of the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail were quite limited for the period and this may be a reflection of the culture of the area. It was a time when history was history and its use was primarily limited to education. The earliest representation of local history on the trail comes from an *Omaha World-Herald* article on H.T. Clarke and his life experiences. The article was a promotional device for the Deep Waterways Movement in the early 1900s, but included a representation of the trail from a man who was directly and influentially related to the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail.<sup>10</sup> The article chronicled the development of the North Platte Bridge, where Clarke described how he received funding and how he advertised the trail. Clarke was quoted as saying:

The bridge furnished the shortest route into the Black Hills, from Sidney, which was on the Union Pacific... [explanation of why the government would not establish a postal service and how Clarke

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<sup>10</sup> The Deep Waterways Movement was a movement interested in the development of a continental navigation system that would connect the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, and in turn New York's sea port in a way that was deep enough for large scale shipping operations.

received the contract]. . . I had special envelopes printed which give an idea of the pony express. On the front of the envelope besides the government 3-cent centennial stamp there was this printing. 'Sidney short route to the Black Hills. The new sixty-one span truss bridge over the Platte River, forty miles north of Sidney, is now open for travel, and is guarded by the United States troops. Only 167 miles to Custer City, from the Union Pacific Railroad. Wood and water in abundance, and the finest roads in the world by this route. All mail sent in care of H.T. Clarke, Sidney, and Camp Clarke, Platte River Bridge, will be forwarded as directed. Sidney is now a good outfitting point. Large supply of grain, groceries, hardware and produce always on hand. Hotel accommodations good.'"(OWH 5/7/1911).

Clarke went on to describe several of the other promotions he used to express the services he provided and the travel along the trail. It is interesting to note that Clarke still described the trail as the best route to the Hills in his later reminiscences of the period and that his reminiscences were of the trail, not of individuals.

Other documents used to represent the local interpretations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and its history described the trail from a more humanistic viewpoint. An article in *The New Breeder's Gazette* in May 1928 described the history of Greenwood Ranch as:

...a landmark of pioneer days. Old log buildings hewn of large pines from the Hills still stand. The old log barn was built with port holes—for use in warding off Indians. The last outbreak occurred in '78 when the Schafer boys were killed by Indians and buried on the south hills above the big spring...The Black Hills Trail passes through the ranch on its way westward. Many of the tracks are still visible across the prairie... (Keenan 1929).

The article portrayed the ranch's history in terms of Native American attacks and the development of western Nebraska. Important to note is the shift from what the trail was used for to what happened along the trail.

The history and the interpretation of the Sidney Black Hills Trail in the 1930s-1960s was largely shaped by Paul and Helen Henderson. The Hendersons were local historians who lived in the Platte Valley region and were vitally interested in the history of emigrant trails that crossed through the area. The Hendersons read pioneer diaries, walked the entire length of the Oregon Trail, the Pony Express route, and the Sidney route. The Hendersons diligently recorded all of their travels and research in stories, pictures, and maps. Paul Henderson was initially interested in the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and became one of the foremost authorities on western expansion history. The Hendersons gave presentations on the trail's history, wrote articles, and were an important force in the movement to locate and mark historical sites along the trail. For the October 30, 1932 Morrill County Historical Association's monthly meeting, the Hendersons presented a paper describing the need to mark historical sites in western Nebraska and of the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The following is a small segment of the article presented:

...In 1874 gold was discovered in the Black Hills of So. Dakota and immediately a route was laid out from Fort Sidney to Deadwood. Freight wagons carrying thousands of tons of supplies, and stage coaches carrying hundreds of passengers passed over this route... This is a brief outline of the trail and a few of the places connected with them but it must be remembered when 500,00 people traveled over these trails with all the necessities they needed for their journey and their future homes in the far west; when fighting Indians was a daily occurrence and sickness prevailed throughout the journey it is needless to say that many more historical sites of which all trace are lost are thickly scattered along the way... it is no uncommon occurrence to travel along the ruts of these old trails today and find wagon irons of some unfortunate party that was robbed, killed and their wagons burned by the savages...(Henderson 1932)

The article went on to describe some of the many locations and sites the Henderson's believe should be marked. This representation of the trail once again brings to the

forefront the interpretation of the history of the trail as a history riddled by attacks by Native Americans and of a treacherous journey.

The local interpretation of the trail changed in this period from a representation of what the trail was used for to what happened to individuals along the trail. References to Native Americans as savages, the trail as treacherous, and the stations as saloons and brothels were common (Phillips 1939). This interpretation of the history of the Black Hills Gold Rush and the Sidney-Black Hills Trail has also influenced town celebrations that began during the Great Depression as a way to bring citizens into town to foster sales for the merchants. Two towns along the trail established annual celebrations to celebrate their heritage during the transitional time period. The Days of '76 in Deadwood (SD) began as a promotional in 1929 and Camp Clarke Days in Bridgeport (NE) in 1932. Both celebrations began through local incentives and drew from the heritage of the region to give significance and names to the events.

### **Academic Historical Research**

One of the most influential books on the Black Hills Gold Rush was published in 1924: *Black Hills Trails: A History in the Struggles of the Pioneers in the Winning of the Black Hills* was a compilation by Jesse Brown and A.M. Willard of stories and newspaper clippings from the time of the Black Hills settlement. Brown and Willard wrote of the experiences of the men and women who came to the Hills during the gold rush and the trails that fed the region. Under the influence of Joseph Gossage, their editor and publisher, the Sidney route was one of the trails highlighted in the book along with the

Cheyenne route, the Yankton route, and the Bismarck route. The book included articles taken directly from the *Sidney Telegraph* during 1874-1875. The section of the book covering the Sidney route also included the experiences of Brown, the names of men who traveled to the Hills, and many of the personal stories of freighters, miners, merchants, and the like. The section of the book on the Sidney trail is not as concerned with the route as it is concerned with the individuals who traveled the trail.

Other references to the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail were found in an article by Harold Briggs, "The Black Hills Gold Rush" (Briggs 1930). Brigg's primary concern in his article was the history of the Black Hills gold rush and his second concern was the documentation of the trails that opened the Black Hills to rapid settlement. The Sidney route is mentioned in the article briefly and is presented as primarily a freight route of little importance compared to the Yankton, Pierre, and Bismarck routes (Briggs 1930). Norbert Mahnken presented the history of the trail as more influential to the development of the Black Hills in his 1949 journal article, "The Sidney-Black Hills Trail" (Mahnken 1949). Mahnken's linear description of the Sidney route is the result of a comprehensive study of the newspaper articles, interviews, and government documents (Mahnken 1949). The significance of Mahnken's interpretation of the trail's history is in the emphasis he placed on the role of freighters. The freight companies and the role fulfilled by freighters seemed to be a static influence on the trail's history, while according to Mahnken the notion of outlaws, Indians, and all other influences were ephemeral. The last two studies completed during the transition time were a historical thesis and dissertation on the settlement of the Black Hills. James Osburn wrote on the Deadwood Trail and

Clarence Beckwith on the early settlements in the Black Hills (Osburn 1955, Beckwith 1937). The importance of these men's interpretations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is that there is a belittling of the trail to a freight trail of insignificance. Osburn and Beckwith's interpretations of the trail are influenced by their residence outside of the region and their focus on other aspects of the Black Hills gold rush.

The dichotomy of representation of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in academic research during the transition period can be attributed to the ambitions of the researchers. Researchers with direct ties to the trail seem to present the trail as more influential in the history of the Black Hills Gold Rush than do researchers with outside ties. Overall the scholarly representations seem to point to the interpretation of the trail as a freight route and marginalized the representations of individual experiences.

The study of the transitional time period has been important in bridging the fissure between the past and present cultural landscapes. By studying the transition, one can determine that many of the present representations have been influenced by local historical societies which began marking the trail in the 1920s and 1930s. The individual objectives of these groups and the markers they placed on the landscape are not entirely determinable as many of the records of these groups have been lost. Paul and Helen Henderson's article presented to a historical society stressed the need to mark these locations before they disappear; one can assume that the few markers placed were by liked-minded individuals. Three of the markers (in the form of monuments) from this time period were located during field research: a marker for the site of Camp Clarke, a marker near White Clay Station (but marking trail ruts) and a

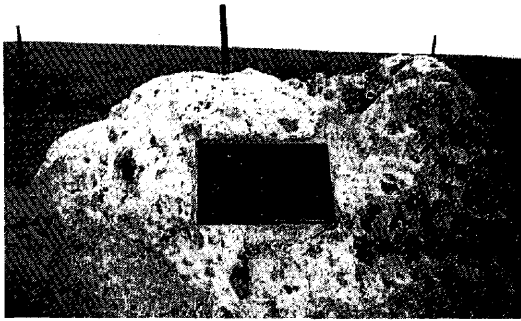
marker at the site of the Red Cloud Agency, all dedicated by local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (see figures 6:1, 6:2, and 6:3).

The few recollections of past experiences and of local histories show a shift in local interpretation from the trail as a road to the trail as a representation of events that had occurred to individuals, but these interpretations are not mirrored by professional historians who completed research on the trail. Academic interpretations point to the static interpretation of the trail as a freight route and the history tied therein. The split in the interpretations between the two groups is of significance to the present historical interpretations of the trail, as one will soon read, because many of the present historical representations are influenced by this split between the local and the non-local interpretations of events and how these events should be presented to the public. This separation between the two main interpretations of the trail during the transitional time foreshadows later representations of the trail on the cultural landscape.

The significance of studying the transitional cultural landscape between the past cultural landscape and the present cultural landscape was to show how the trail was interpreted and represented during a period of time when the trail was first being re-interpreted. This re-interpretation was an interpretation of the evidence and written historical accounts of the individuals who had had direct experience with the trail in the time period it was in active use; the books and articles (with the exception of Brown and Willard's) were not written from first hand experiences but were an interpretation of the stories they had heard, newspaper articles and journals they had read, and interviews with individuals who had traveled the trail. This re-interpretation



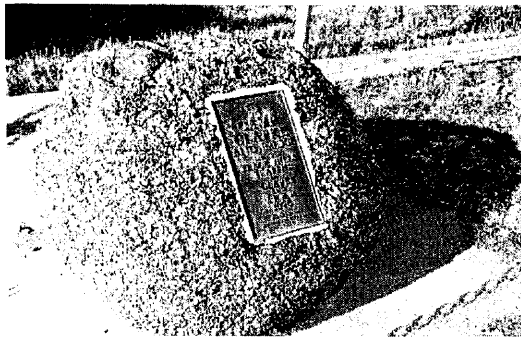
of history is heritage, a history infused with the values of the individuals who wrote their interpretation of the events and memorialized the sites they thought were significant aspects of the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail.



**Figure 6:1 The Sidney-Black Hills Trail**

“An important thoroughfare between Sidney, Nebraska and the Black Hills during the Years 1876-1880. Heavily traveled by stagecoaches, freight wagons and prospectors going between the railroad at Sidney and the gold fields.”

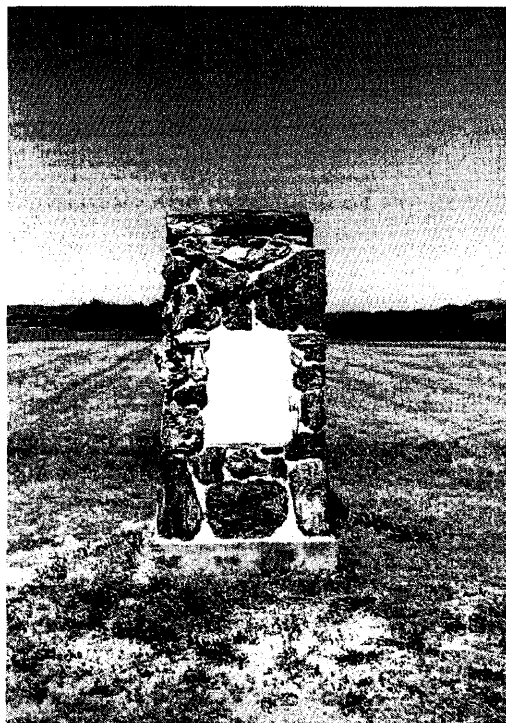
Monument was originally located along trail ruts north of Marsland, but is located along current Hwy. 71, as the highway has moved.



**Figure 6:2 Camp Clarke**

“Camp Clarke and Bridge Built for Black Hills Traffic by Clarke and U.P.P.R. 1876 marked by Katahdin Chapter 1932.”

Moved from original location along Hwy. 92 to present location along new Hwy. 92 – both locations are near trail ruts.



**Figure 6:3 Red Cloud**

Site of Red Cloud Indian Agency  
1973-1877

-  
Erected by  
Captain Christopher Robinson  
Chapter  
D.A.R.  
1932

The monument is in the historic location, which is in the middle of the site where the Red Cloud Indian Agency was located.

## **THE PRESENT INTERPRETATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

The present cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is a both product and a byproduct of history. The trail has been represented in the past, re-interpreted and presented in the transition, and has been once again interpreted and re-represented in the present; this cyclical process of interpretation and representation has formed the many layers of the cultural landscape of the trail. Each layer is a product of history, an accumulation of evidence and relics of that era, and a byproduct of history as the evidence and relics of that period are created from the preceding layer. The study of the cultural landscape of present (1950-2004) is an examination of the many layers of accumulation of relics and interpretations the Sidney-Black Hills Trail has gone through during the last fifty-four years. The layers of the present cultural landscape of the trail have been notably influenced by historical preservation legislation, the evolution of the preservation movement, and the heritage industry.

### **Evidence and Representations**

The roles of historical preservation legislation, the evolution of the preservation movement, and the heritage industry have had in the development of the cultural landscape will be explored through looking at the representations of the trail in books, buildings, travel brochures and tourist promotions, signs and historical markers, sites and historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. The representations for this time period are organized according to the methodological

framework laid out in chapter three: economic ambitions, environment, cultural strictures and tools.

### **Economic Ambitions**

The industry created by the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail on the cultural landscape of western Nebraska and South Dakota is but a small factor on the whole of the economic landscape of the region (with the exception of Deadwood), but the cultural landscape of the trail has been greatly effected by the economic ambitions of the government, local businesses and local and state tourist endeavors.

The government ambitions for the present cultural landscape can be found at all three levels of government: federal, state, and local. The federal government's impact on the preservation of the history and heritage of the landscape can be seen at all levels of the preservation movement, as it was the federal mandates that resulted in the formation of many state and local preservation agencies. Although the federal government regulates many of the state and local preservation agencies in this section on governmental ambitions, the researcher acknowledges this control but looks at what each level of government directly controls, preserves, and presents. The direct effect of the federal government's preservation policies can be seen by the preservation of historic sites, buildings, and places along the trail and the listing of these sites on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official listing of cultural resources worthy of preservation (NRHP 2/24/2005). The Register is part of the national program to "coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect

our historic and archeological resources” (NRHP 2/24/2005). A listing in the NRHP is a tribute to a historic place, recognizing the importance of that site to the community, state, and/or nation. An NRHP listing does not mandate the preservation of that site, but helps local and state governments, federal agencies, and others identify properties worth preserving and in planning decisions. The sites and historic districts that have been placed on the NRHP from the landscape in study are (listed by year of nomination): Fort Robinson and Red Cloud Agency (1960), Fort Sidney Historic District (1972), Court House and Jail House Rock (1973), Deadwood Historic District (1974), Camp Clarke Bridge (1974), Running Water Stage Station (1975), Lead Historic District (1985) Deadwood Draw (1992), Water Holes Ranch (1992), Sidney Historic Business District (1994), and Buffalo Gap Historic Commercial District (1994). Two of listings have also been designated as National Historic Landmarks: Fort Robinson and Red Cloud Agency in 1960 and Deadwood Historic District in 1961. Recognition of these sites appears not only on the listing for the NRHP, but also in many tourist brochures and signs designating the location and the site’s significance to the community and state. Other sites that are not deemed eligible by the NRHP can be found on the state register of historic places, but none of the sites listed on the South Dakota and Nebraska’s Register of historic places (with the exception of double listings) were connected to the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail.

Another federal program that has recent implications on the use of the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail on the cultural landscape has been the designation of U.S. Highway 385 through western Nebraska as a scenic byway under

the National Byways Program.<sup>11</sup> The National Scenic Byways Program was established through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and is regulated by the Federal Highway Administration. The National Scenic Byways “designation is awarded to routes that show the regional characteristics of the nation’s culture, history, and landscape” (FHWA 1995). To be considered for such status the route has to both meet state guidelines and have local recommendation. The objective of the National Scenic Byways Program is to designate routes that show regional characteristics of the nation’s culture and to promote local economies and tourism. The Scenic Byway is recommended and coordinated locally; nominated by the state’s Department of Transportation, and the designation is a recognition, not a regulation. The designation of U.S. Highway 385 in Nebraska is indicated in local and state brochures, local promotions, and on the landscape in the form of highway signs that mark the route as the “Gold Rush Byway” (see Fig. 7:20).

The placement of historical markers is another way the trail is marked on the landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. State governments regulate the placing of public historical markers in conjunction with local government agencies and historical societies. Nebraska and South Dakota both have passed legislative guidelines and have designated their respective state historical societies as the governing body of the markers program.

The South Dakota State Historical Society was first organized as the Old Settlers Association of the Dakota Territory in 1862 and became part of the state government in 1901 under the Department of History. Since 1901 the South Dakota

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<sup>11</sup> The designation does not extend into South Dakota.

Department of History has been reorganized several times; the important reorganizations that have affected the landscape in study were in 1973 and 2003. The abolition of the Department of History and the subsequent establishment of the Office of History in 1973 was due to new duties assigned to the state under the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Office of History was in 2003 reorganized under the new title of the South Dakota State Historical Society, Department of Tourism and Development. The South Dakota State Historical Society/Office of History (SDSHS) has been given the power and the duty to “stimulate public interest in historic preservation,” develop interpretive programs, manage the state historical marker program, and maintain the state Register of historic places (SD SL 1973, ch 14 & 5(11) and SL 2003, ch 272, & 8). Since 1951, the state of South Dakota has erected over 430 markers state-wide in conjunction with local agencies and organizations. Only one marker is directly related to the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, although there are many markers that represent the history of the gold rush and the individuals who participated in the Black Hills region’s settlement and formation. The one marker relating to the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is the Charles Nolin historical marker in Sturgis, SD. There are numerous markers in the region that relate to the history of the Black Hills gold rush, including markers commemorating the first gold discovery, Scooptown, Bear Butte, Deadwood, and Rapid City’s foundry.

The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) was established in 1878 and became a state institution in 1883. The Nebraska State Historical Society began its state historical markers program in 1957 and since then has erected over 430 markers in conjunction with local agencies and organizations. There are nine state markers that

directly reference the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and the sites in direct proximity.

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (and its Division of Travel and Tourism) and the NSHS together fulfill some of the same roles as the SDSHS Department of Tourism and State Development. All of these agencies are actively involved in the promotion and representation of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and its heritage. The trail is represented in the brochures they design and print, the grants they extend to preservation projects, and the programs they develop for local agencies.

Local government agencies work in conjunction with state and federal agencies in the establishment of historic places and historical markers, but local agencies can also be solely responsible for the establishment of interpretive centers and museums, tourism centers, and town celebrations commemorating the history of the period and trail. Most of the towns along the present cultural landscape have a museum that commemorates the Sidney-Black Hills Trail; beginning with the Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home and ending with the Days of '76 Museum in Deadwood. The Chambers of Commerce in Sidney, Bridgeport, Alliance, Custer, Sturgis, and Whitewood act as the tourist information sites. The towns of Crawford, Rapid City, and Deadwood have locations separate from the Chambers of Commerce which present and promote material with representations of the trail and the trail's history. The towns of Sidney, Bridgeport, and Deadwood have annual town celebrations that have direct references to the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. In Sidney the first annual "Gold Rush Days" were celebrated in June 2004, Bridgeport has been celebrating "Camp Clarke Days" annually since 1932, and Deadwood has been celebrating the "Days of '76" since 1929.



Government ambitions are not the only agents that have shaped the present representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail; local businesses and organizations in the region also add to the interpretation of the history and heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and to the representation of the trail on the cultural landscape. Many of the businesses in the landscape take their names from the trail's history and/or present an interpretation of the trail in their place of business. The Sidney McDonald's has adorned the walls of the lobby with pictures of Sidney during 1874-1980; under each picture is an interpretation of the scene presented by the photo and a tidbit of interesting heritage. The Pioneer Trails Museum in Bridgeport has murals painted on the façade of the building representing wagon trains and a portrait of H.T. Clarke. In Crawford's Lovers Leap Vineyard and Winery store a map of the trail hangs above a display along with a brief description of the trail and its importance to the town of Crawford. The High Plains Homestead, north of Crawford, uses the heritage of the trail to attract visitors. Stage Barn Crystal Cave, near Piedmont, SD, used the heritage of a nearby cave to name their touring business and draw visitors (Stagebarn Crystal Cave n.d.).

Local historical societies have also been active agents in the presentation of the heritage of the trail as they promote the preservation of the trail and its historical sites. Most of the historical markers erected in landscape have been erected due to local initiative and fund matching. The historical societies also hold meetings, give presentations, sponsor events, and bring in speakers to inform the public of the history of the area. These historical societies compile county histories and publish articles in local newspapers reminding the populace of the heritage their region enjoys.

The economic ambitions of the government agencies, local businesses, and organizations have all shaped the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail through their representations and interpretations of the trail's heritage. The heritage of the trail is represented through place names, historical markers, tourist brochures, and local businesses. The representations of the heritage of the trail have moved the trail, not physically, but mentally and culturally from its original location into the population centers close to the historic location of the trail.

### **Environment**

The physical location of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail remains today as it was one hundred and thirty years ago. Large segments of the trail are still visible as the ruts pass through vast pastures and grasslands; in other places the trail has been tilled by farmers and built over as towns and roads sprawl. The physical location of the trail has not changed over the course of history, but the mental and representational location of the Sidney-Black Hills has moved into the population centers along the landscape. An exception to this relocation of the trail would be the historical markers erected by the state historical societies which are usually located off a highway or road but in close proximity to the original location of the site or object being memorialized. A few markers have been placed by local historical societies and citizens at the location of the station and/or trail, such as the Sidney-Black Hills trail marker in Sidney, the Water Holes Ranch marker, and the Lonewell sign.

The present landscape is characterized by a built environment, meaning that many of the institutions, towns, and organizations were already present in the

landscape before 1950. There are cities, roads, land boundaries, and laws which have all affected how the physical and social environment of the landscape has evolved. In this section of the environment of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail the route of the trail will be examined by looking at the physical markings on (or very near) the actual trail, the location of the communities in the landscape that use the trail as part of their history, and how the representations were accessed. The location of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, as previously discussed, has not physically moved but the route of the trail has shifted over the transitional and present time period as the trail is represented in the towns and communities adjacent to the trail.

The route of the trail has been marked by historical markers and monuments erected by the Nebraska and South Dakota state historical societies. Some of these markers which have been placed on, or very near, to the actual route of the trail, will be discussed here. Those that have been placed within communities adjacent to the route of the trail will be discussed along with the communities that represent the present route of the trail. There are 23 markers, monuments, and signs that have been placed on the historical route of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. These signs and markers represent the actual route of the trail as it was situated, but that does not mean they represent the history of the trail textually. They are, in fact, a representation of heritage.

The markers, monuments, and signs are heritage because they mark the locations the present communities believe are significant. In this section the text on the monument is not considered as part of the route, but will be discussed in context of cultural strictures in the next. The historical markers, monuments, and signs that

represent the actual location of the trail are organized according to county. In Cheyenne County, Nebraska, there are two historical markers located on the trail. The Sidney-Black Hills Trail marker is located west of Sidney's central business district on Highway 30, near where the trail used to leave Sidney and enter Deadwood Draw. The second marker is located at Water Holes Ranch, just off the county road and in a fenced off pasture. (See Figs. 7:2 and 7:5)

In Morrill County the historical location of the route was represented by the historical markers for Camp Clarke and Court House Rock. The Courthouse Rock marker is located south of Bridgeport off Highway 88. The historical markers for Camp Clarke are located off of Highway 26, west of Bridgeport about three miles. There are two historical markers located there: one is the state historical marker for the Sidney-Black Hills trail and Camp Clarke and the other is a marker dedicated in 1932 by the local DAR chapter. Camp Clarke Ranch is on the opposite side of the road and the ranch is marked by a sign and also within the boundaries of the ranch where the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and the Oregon Trail crossed is a stone monument for both trails. (See Figs. 7:10 and 7:11)

There was only one marker located in Box Butte County marking the route of the trail through the county. This marker is located on Highway 2, west of Hemingford (Fig. 7:13). The majority of the markers and signs erected for the Sidney-Black Hills trail in Box Butte, Dawes, and Sioux counties have been erected by the Crawford Historical Society. In Dawes County a state historical marker has been erected on the site of the Red Cloud Agency. In the city of Crawford, on Main Street by the Crawford Library, there is a trail marker marking the location where the trail

traveled through the valley before the town of Crawford existed (Fig. 7:16). The Crawford Historical society has erected signs at the site of White Clay Station, Breakneck Hill, Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Horsehead Station, and at Junction. In South Dakota the Crawford Historical Society also erected a sign at the Lonewell station in Fall River County (Fig. 7:19). The signs erected by the Crawford Historical Society are either wood or metal with the site's name, no other information is presented on the sign, and all the markers are located off country roads or trails. In Dawes County along Highway 2 the local DAR chapter erected in 1949 a monument to the Sidney-Black Hill Trails along the ruts of the trail south of Marsland Junction and also at the location of the Red Cloud Agency.

In Fall River County, South Dakota, the site of the Buffalo Gap, or Beaver Creek Station, was marked by an unknown party. The buildings of French Creek Station, in Custer County, are still in existence and are used as part of a ranch operation. The station is marked by a wooden sign erected by a past landowner. In Rapid City, Pennington County, an old marker for The Founders Camp, marks the site of the original location of Rapid or Hay Camp a stop on the stage line. In Meade County, the landowners of Stage Barn Cave have erected a wooden sign designating the location and in Sturgis there is a monument to Charles Nolin where he died on the trail while delivering mail for H.T. Clarke (Figs. 7:20 and 7:21).

Communities not located on the historical route of the trail, but using the history of the trail as part of their own experience, both mentally and through representations are the towns of Dalton, Bridgeport, and Crawford in Nebraska. These towns did not exist at the time of the trail's formation and use, but have built an

identity using the heritage of the nearby region for the town. Dalton, located on Highway 385 north of Sidney, moved a cabin from the nearby Greenwood Ranch to a small park adjacent to Dalton's Prairie Schooner Museum (Fig. 7:7). The cabin was moved to the location in November of 1970 and a sign stating the significance of the cabin was attached at a later date (ST 11/4/1970). Another cabin from Greenwood Ranch was moved to the location of the ranch's present headquarters (2 miles north of the historic location) and a sign stating the significance was attached to the building (Fig. 7:8 and 7:9). Both these signs attached to the cabins were funded by the Cheyenne Historical Society and the local community.

Bridgeport uses the history of Camp Clarke for their annual Camp Clarke Days, the annual Camp Clarke Stampede rodeo. The town museum displays relics from Camp Clarke as the history of Bridgeport, and the town is the site for the "Trail City, USA" state historical marker (Fig. 7:12). Several organizations, the Camp Clark Raiders (a local black powder rifle club) and the Camp Clarke Villas, draw their names from the trail's heritage.

The city of Crawford draws from heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail through state and local historic markers situated in and around the town (Fig 7:16). One representation of the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is on the southern edge of town where the "Crawford" Nebraska State Historical marker has been placed. Other smaller signs have been placed in businesses such as the local winery, Lover's Leap.

The small towns of Piedmont, Tilden and Buffalo Gap in South Dakota reference the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in information available about the towns and surrounding area, but do not directly claim the trail's history as part of their own pasts.. The cities of Sidney, Bridgeport, Hemingford, Crawford, Rapid City, Sturgis, and Deadwood all either promote the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and/or have signs erected in their locales that present the heritage of the trail. The access of individuals, especially tourists, has played an important role in the location and placement of historical markers, signs, monuments, and information centers. The majority of State historical markers were located off of paved roads (I-80, I-90, state highways, and city streets) although several were located off of gravel roads. County historical markers were located in the middle of pastures, off roads that could be considered trails, embedded in fence posts and rocks, staked in front lawns, and nailed to trees. Of the monuments located two were off paved roads and the other off of a gravel road.

The majority of the state markers were located near trail ruts, where the swales could be seen or on the edge of the nearest town; but county markers were a bit different. County markers were located at the site, such as Water Holes, Lone Wells and Little Cottonwood Station; located by the nearest road which could be over two miles away, such as in the case of Little Cottonwood; and in the rare case situated in a location where a tourist would see it, but completely out of place, such as the Junction sign at High Plains Bed and Breakfast.

The presence of historical markers, monuments, and signs are a designation of a location as significant to the community and the region. The heritage these signs

present is the story of the trail and site the community wants the traveler, student, and citizen to know. The cultural strictures of the citizens, schools, organizations, and agencies influence the representation of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail not only through historical markers but also through promotional material aimed at tourists.

### **Cultural Strictures and Tools**

The cultural strictures of the communities in the present landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail are immensely difficult to ascertain and thus what follows in this section is a narration of the texts used to document the landscape. The texts are organized according to the type of presentation, county, and whose cultural strictures may be responsible for the interpretation. In some cases the responsibility of the text is clearly the influence of one individual or group, while in other cases the responsibility of the text is a conglomeration of many individuals and groups and the responsibility fuzzy; thus both the cultural strictures and the tools will be discussed in conjunction. Tools which are not textual will be discussed at the end of the section according to who is responsible for their placement. This section is organized accordingly: historical markers and signs, books and news articles, brochures and maps, and others.

Some of the most visible representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail on the landscape are through the placement of historical markers and signs. The historical markers erected by the each state's historical society in conjunction with local preservationists are the largest markers. The markers directly referencing the past of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in their texts were found in the counties of Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte, and Dawes in Nebraska and in Meade County in South Dakota.



The markers in Cheyenne County are “The Sidney-Black Hills Trail,” “Fort Sidney,” “Sidney-Cheyenne County,” and “Water Holes Ranch.”

Segments of the markers texts and the responsible parties for their composition are as follows:

#### **SIDNEY-BLACK HILLS TRAIL**

Gold was discovered in the Black Hills in August, 1874. By the spring of 1876, the Army had stopped enforcing a treaty which reserved the hills for the Sioux Indians. Miners soon began to pour into the gold regions. From 1875 to 1881, the 267-mile trail north from Sidney carried the bulk of the traffic to the mining towns of Deadwood and Custer. The Union Pacific Railroad brought men and supplies into Sidney. North from Sidney moved stage coaches, freight wagons drawn by oxen or mules, herds of cattle, and riders on horseback. During 1878-1879 alone, over 22 million pounds of freight moved over the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Gold shipments, worth up to \$200,000 each, moved south from the Black Hills to Sidney and the railroad. The trail's only major obstacle was the North Platte River. In the spring of 1876, a 2000-foot wooden toll-bridge, known as Clarke's Bridge, was constructed near the present town of Bridgeport. In October, 1880, the railroad reached Pierre, Dakota Territory, and most of the traffic to the Black Hills was diverted away from Sidney. (Sidney Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Landmark Council)

#### **FORT SIDNEY**

...Fort Sidney became a major strategic point on the Plains in the mid-1870's. With the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, the town of Sidney and the Fort became the major supply point. The trail to Fort Robinson and the Black Hills was of strategic importance during the Indian troubles of 1874-1877 in serving freight wagons and stage coaches. At the same time, Sidney was an important trail town and railhead in the picturesque cattle business of the Old West... (Sidney Kiwanis Club and the Historical Landmark Council)

#### **SIDNEY-CHEYENNE COUNTY**

In 1867 an Army tent camp was established near here to provide protection for Union Pacific Railroad construction crews. Three years later it became Fort Sidney, the nucleus for the town of Sidney, county seat of Cheyenne County. The rush to the Black Hills gold fields after 1875 confirmed Sidney's importance as a freighting center. The 267-mile Sidney-Black Hills Trail carried the bulk of traffic from the railhead to the mining towns. As railroads extended into northwest Nebraska and Dakota Territory, commerce on the trail diminished and finally ended about 1885. In its frontier heyday Sidney boomed with a colorful admixture of settlers, freighters, cowboys, and soldiers ... (Department of Roads and the Nebraska State Historical Society)

### **WATER HOLES RANCH**

Opened in 1877 as a stop on Dear's Sidney to Deadwood stage and freight line by J.F. Hollowell. A half-dugout half-frame building offered accommodations for the traveler. Buffalo wallows and two shallow wells supplied water. By 1885 the fortune seekers were replaced by pioneer cattlemen and homesteaders... (Sidney Historical Society 1970)

These signs, with the exception of the Water Holes Ranch marker, were placed by local agencies in conjunction with the Nebraska State Historical Society/Historical Landmark Council. All the markers reference the trail as a freight route traveled by men seeking gold; the heritage on these signs is of the majority. The history of Native Americans in the region is downplayed to "Indian troubles" and a reference to the end of enforcement of the Laramie Treaty. The Water Hole Ranch sign is of note because although it resembles a state historical marker, it is actually not. The sign was placed by the Cheyenne County Historical Society in 1970 and references the brief role of the site as a station on the Sidney-Black Hills Trail.

Other signs located in Cheyenne County were located at the Dalton Prairie Schooner Museum, Greenwood Ranch Headquarters, Legion Park, and the Sidney I-80 Rest stop. The sign attached to the Greenwood Cabin, at Dalton, refers to the previous location of the cabin on the ranch and its movement to its current location. The historical use of the cabin is not mentioned in the sign. The structure at

Greenwood Ranch Headquarters also has a sign affixed to the side stating the perceived history of the cabin:

THIS LOG CABIN WAS ORIGINALLY LOCATED 3 MILES FROM  
HERE IN WHAT WAS THE GREENWOOD RANCH STAGE  
STATION ON THE DEADWOOD TRAIL.  
THE STATION WAS OWNED AND OPERATED BY WIDOW ELIZA  
SMITH AND IT BECAME BETTER KNOWN AS “THE WIDOW  
SMITH’S STOPOVER.”  
THIS UNIT WAS THE CLEAN-UP CABIN FOR THE STAGECOACH  
DRIVERS AND ANYONE ELSE WHO DESIRED TO USE THE  
FACILITIES.  
IT WAS BUILT ABOUT 1876.

The party responsible for the sign is not known nor is the date when the sign was affixed. The sign presents the history of the cabin as a “clean-up cabin” and Greenwood station as “Widow Smith’s stopover” which is the local name for the station that is not referred to anywhere else (Cape and McRoberts 2004).

The last three signs located in Cheyenne County are located at Legion Park and at the I-80 Rest stop just east of Sidney. At Legion Park, the trail head of the “Sidney-Deadwood Trail” walking path is located and marked with a plaque stating the rules of conduct along the path. The walking path does not mimic the route of the original trail, nor does come in proximity to the trail ruts (see fig. 7:3). The walking path was named by students at the local grade school and the use of the name was contested by the Cheyenne County Historical Society because it did not follow the original route, but to no avail as the path was still named the “Sidney-Deadwood Trail” (Cheyenne County Historical Association Members 2004). At the rest stop, a mile east of Sidney, the Department of Roads has placed two signs referencing the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. One is affixed to the building and the other is a Nebraska State Historical Marker (figs. 7:4 and 7:6). The “Sidney-Cheyenne County” historical

marker presents the history as:

In 1867 an Army tent camp was established near here to provide protection for Union Pacific Railroad construction crews. Three years later it became Fort Sidney, the nucleus for the town of Sidney, county seat of Cheyenne County. The rush to the Black Hills gold fields after 1875 confirmed Sidney's importance as a freighting center. The 267-mile Sidney-Black Hills Trail carried the bulk of traffic from the railhead to the mining towns. As railroads extended into northwest Nebraska and Dakota Territory, commerce on the trail diminished and finally ended about 1885. In its frontier heyday Sidney boomed with a colorful admixture of settlers, freighters, cowboys, and soldiers... (Department of Roads and the Nebraska State Historical Society)

The sign affixed to the building states:

Flour was going for \$25 for a hundred pounds. Eggs were 75¢ a piece. The Black Hills Gold Rush was on, and there was money to be made by supplying miners.

Sidney was the railroad point closest to the Black Hills and from 1875 to 1879 was the southern terminus for freighting to and from the Black Hills.

Millions of dollars in gold came to Sidney in returning stages covered with 5/16 -inch thick steel armor. Muleskinners loaded their wagons in the railroad yard warehouse and headed out on the 250-mile trip through the heart of Indian Territory.

The Sidney-Deadwood Trail produced a number of notable features during its short life including a 2,000 foot wooden bridge across the North Platte near Chimney Rock and Pony Express Mail service between Deadwood and Omaha.

(Department of Roads)

The heritage presented on these signs are of the majority, of a positive history where an “admixture of settlers, freighters, cowboys, and soldiers” traveled through the “heart of Indian Territory” to bring supplies to Deadwood. Freighters and freighting, the lure of gold, dangerous Indian Territory, and miners are common threads expressed in the signs in Cheyenne County.

In Morrill County there are two historical markers located in close proximity to the trail route and one that is located within the town of Bridgeport that present the

heritage of the trail. The two markers located along the route are the “Court House and Jail Rocks” and the “Camp Clarke Bridge and Sidney-Black Hills Trail.”

Segments of the texts are as follows:

**Court House and Jail Rocks**

Courthouse and Jail Rocks are two of the most famous landmarks of westward migration. Nearby passed the Oregon-California Trail, the Mormon Trail, the Pony Express Trail and the Sidney-Deadwood Trail... (Nebraska State Historical Society)

**Camp Clarke Bridge and Sidney-Black Hills Trail**

Just north of here the Camp Clarke Bridge crossed the North Platte River. The bridge was built in the spring of 1876 by entrepreneur Henry T. Clarke to improve the trail from the Union Pacific Railroad at Sidney, Nebraska, to the gold mining towns in the Black Hills. The route first supplied the Sioux at Red Cloud Agency on the White River and the army at adjacent Camp Robinson; by 1876 the trail extended to Custer City and Deadwood in Dakota Territory. In 1878-79 some twenty-two million pounds of freight was shipped over the trail. Clarke's bridge was about 2,000 feet long with 61 wooden trusses. Tolls of \$2 to \$6 were assessed on the hundreds of freight wagons, stagecoaches, and riders that crossed. A hamlet known as Camp Clarke, with a hotel, store, saloon, and post office, sprang up at the south end of the bridge. A log blockhouse stood on an island in the river near the north bank. Although travel on the trail declined after 1880, the bridge continued in local use until about 1900. The site is on the National Register of Historic Places. (Bridgeport Community, Morrill County Visitors Committee, Nebraska State Historical Society)

The marker for Court House and Jail Rocks referenced the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, but the significance of the marker rests in the heritage of the rocks as a landmark for many of the trails that passed through the region. The Camp Clarke Bridge marker presents the heritage the town of Bridgeport and the Morrill County Visitors Committee wanted to present, a synoptic history of the settlement of the region. The 1932 DAR monument was moved from its original location on the old highway to its current location by the side of the “Camp Clarke Bridge” historical marker. This re-location of the memorial signifies a movement in the heritage of the trail to a more significant locale where it can be viewed by the transient public. In the

town of Bridgeport there is a third historical marker that references the history of the trail:

**Bridgeport, Nebraska "Trail City, USA"**

Bridgeport, founded in 1900 as a station by the Burlington Railroad, celebrated its centennial in 2000. The town is located on or near many historic trails of the West, including the Oregon, California, Mormon, Pony Express, and Sidney-Black Hills Trails. Courthouse and Jail Rocks, south of Bridgeport, were landmarks mentioned in many travelers' journals.

In 1876 Henry T. Clarke constructed a bridge across the North Platte River, three miles upstream from the future site of Bridgeport, to improve the trail from Sidney to the gold-mining towns of the Black Hills. Freight from Sidney and gold from the mines flowed across the bridge for nearly a decade. A village named Camp Clarke sprang up nearby.... (Morrill County Visitors Committee and Nebraska State Historical Society)

The marker in Bridgeport successfully brings the heritage of the Camp Clarke Bridge into the town of Bridgeport. The heritage of the bridge is also portrayed at the Pioneer Trail Museum where murals are painted on the outside of the building depicting the gold rush and a portrait of H.T. Clarke and through a large sign marking the current location of the Camp Clarke Ranch (fig. 7:15).

There is only one historical marker located in Box Butte County referencing the Sidney-Black Hills Trail; the sign is located on small gravel road turnoff and the text of the sign is as follows:

**THE SIDNEY-BLACK HILLS TRAIL**

Beginning in 1874 thousands of freight wagons and stagecoaches passed here along the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The route first supplied the Sioux at Red Cloud Agency on the White River and the troops at adjacent Camp Robinson. The southern terminus of the trail was at Sidney, Nebraska, on the Union Pacific Railroad.

The 1874 discovery of gold in the Black Hills soon gave the trail new importance. Within two years it had been extended to Deadwood and other settlements in the Black Hills. Until about 1880 much of the freight for these mining camps was shipped from Sidney over this route. The peak 1878-1879 trade was estimated at more than twenty-two million pounds. Three stagecoach stations were located along the trail in this region. To the south were Snake Creek Station and Halfway Hollow, while a few miles north

was the Running Water Station on the Niobrara River... (Box Butte County Historical Society and Nebraska State Historical Society)

The route of the trail in Box Butte County traverses a region devoid of population centers and thus this is the only sign that presents the heritage of the trail. The heritage presented on this marker is the same basic history used on many of the markers with the added locational information of local stage stations, which are not themselves marked.

The Crawford Historical Society has been one of the most active agents in marking the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail through northwestern Nebraska and parts of South Dakota. There is one state historical marker that represents the trail's history, "Crawford," but many small signs denote the stations and sites the historical society finds significant. The state historical marker portrays the Sidney-Black Hills Trail as having simply passed through the area. The local historical society has marked the White Clay Station, Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, and Junction with metal signs, stating their place names. It has also placed a historical marker (Fig. 7:16) on Main Street that includes a map of the trail with the following text:

Sidney-Black Hills Trail 1875-1881  
 Freight wagons, stagecoaches, and horsemen carried supplies, passengers, mail, and gold between Sidney, Nebraska and the gold mining towns in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Each of these signs, although brief in text, marks the location where the community, the historical society, and residents of the town believe significant history has happened and should be presented. The Crawford Historical Society has also been

active in marking the stations in other counties, such as Lonewell Station in Fall River County, SD.

Presentation of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in South Dakota through signs is limited with one historical marker presenting the trail, three others mentioning the trail, and three marking station sites. The South Dakota state historical marker is located in Sturgis, SD, next to the Charles Nolin Monument and tells the story of:

**Charles Nolin “Pony Mail Carrier”**

Charles “Red” Nolin, pony mail carrier on the Sidney-Deadwood trail, was ambushed, killed, and scalped here by Indians on August 19, 1876.

On this evening Nolin stopped on Alkali Creek, where the National Cemetery is now located. Here a party from “Hay Camp,” now in Rapid City, were spending the night before hauling hay on to Deadwood. Among these in the train were Jesse Brown, T.W. Leedy, Mrs. William Brian, Judge H.C. Ash, and Mr. and Mrs. Reason Rupe. Nolin was urged to stay over night because Indian War cries had been heard in the vicinity. He insisted on leaving as he had promised his mother in Nebraska that this would be his last ride.

The next morning his lifeless body was found here. His horse had been killed and the mail scattered. The freighters dug a shallow grave with their hayforks and covered the remains with rocks... (Erected 1976 by the Sturgis-Ft. Meade Bicentennial Commission and the South Dakota Bicentennial Commission).

The text of this marker indicates freighting ambitions and history the citizens of Sturgis find significant. It is also one of the first state historical markers to indicate the presence of women in the history of the trail. In Meade County there are two other signs. One is at Ft. Meade Museum where there is a sign with map stating “...These travelers would come from jumping off places of Bismarck, North Dakota; Pierre, South Dakota; and Sidney, Nebraska” which also includes a map (Fig. 7:25a and b) . The other is a wooden sign which the owners of the Stagebarn Canyon Stop have erected. The Stagebarn Canyon Stop is also known as “Sidney Stockades” and can only be viewed from the gravel road leading past the site (Fig. 7:20).



In Lawrence County, in the city of Deadwood's tourist station, there is one sign that mentions that individuals traveled over a trail from Sidney, Nebraska. There is a marker at the site of Lame Johnny's hanging tree in Pennington County, south of Rapid City, also known as Dry Creek Station. In Custer County there are two wooden signs marking the trail's location: one at the Buffalo Gap Stage Station, marked by the Minnilusa Historical Society; and the other on the old French Creek barn. A third marker was found in Custer at the 1881 Custer County Museum. The sign is located in front of a stage wagon actually used on the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and below a picture of the stage in use, it states that during the late 1800's this type of stage was the primary mode of transportation between Deadwood and Sidney (Fig 7:24).

The historical markers and signs present in the material landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail marks the location of the trail on the cultural landscape, but these signs are not the only tools which indicate its presence. The trail is also marked in the cultural landscape through books and news articles on the heritage of the route. The Sidney-Black Hills Trail has been noted in eleven books that feature the trail's route, resources, Black Hill's history, and the individuals who contributed to the culture of the landscape. All eleven books were obtained from locations along the trail where the average interested tourist or local could also obtain them. There were also two books with chapters that dealt with both the characters and the route of the trail, these being: *All Roads Lead to Deadwood* by Irma Klock and *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting* by William Lass. In each of these respective books the trail is presented as both a historical route with stations and

hardships, but the history of the trail is also presented through the stories of individuals and events that may have occurred along the route. Helen Rezzatto's *Tales of the Black Hills* provides an overview of the lives of "characters" who made the myths and legends of the Hills; the trail is mentioned in the sections on Joseph Gossage, Lame Johnny, the formation of Rapid City, and the Sidney Stage holdups. There is an extensive section on the rumor of Lame Johnny's holdup of the Deadwood Stage, how he supposedly buried the gold in the Hills, and his hanging on Dry Creek (Rezzatto 1989). The Sidney route is mentioned in *Gold, Gals, Guns, and Guts: A History of Deadwood, Lead, & Spearfish, 1874-1976* as the route which experienced the first stage hold up on the night of March 25, 1877 (Lee 1976). In *Happy as a Big Sunflower*, the adventures of Rolf Johnson, along with his diary, are compiled. Johnson's journals were reprinted in 2000 and contain the edited version of his adventures along the trail as well as commentary by the editor Richard Jensen (Jensen 2000). The other books featuring characters and events from along the trail were *Gold in the Black Hills* and *Deadwood: the Golden Years* by Watson Parker, *The Black Hills and their Incredible Characters* by Robert Casey, *Wild Towns of Nebraska* by Wayne Lee, and *Those Good Old Days in the Black Hills* by George Moses. The significance of these books to this study is that they focus on the individuals and events that allegedly occurred along the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, featuring hangings, stage coach holdups, gold robberies, horse stealing, and scalplings. These stories or "tales" add to the mythic culture of the landscape.

The Sidney-Black Hills Trail is also represented in county histories. David Strain wrote of the early transportation to Hay Camp in *Black Hills Hay Camp: Images*

and *Perspectives of Early Rapid City*, he briefly described the early days of Rapid City, relying mostly on photos from 1876-1886 with captions to encompass the heritage of the period. In *100 Years of Bridgeport* the author wrote that the "...The Sidney-Black Hills Trail did spawn a settlement, the forerunner of present day Bridgeport, in Old Camp Clarke at the river crossing to the west..." (Lummel 2000, 121) Also included are articles on the happenings at Camp Clarke such as "Chicken' a la 1876" which quotes an original source:

Amusement at the Camp Clarke encampment is scarce, and the soldiers stationed there have contrived their own. Among the favorite sports indulged in is daring one man to remain seated in an ordinary wooden kitchen chair while his comrades proceed to shoot out the legs out from under the seat. A dangerous pastime, certainly, and one that should be stopped by military authorities before some lad gets injured – or worse! (Lummel 2000, 46)

This article is a reoccurring feature in the *Bridgeport Newsblade*, as well as a topic in many personal interviews (G. Post 2004, L. Pospisil 2004).

In the *Sioux County History; the first 100 years 1886-1986*, a brief history of the trail is presented that includes mention of the trail route as well as the following statement that represents the heritage the Sioux County Historical Society promoted:

...Although not documented it is known that Calamity Jane held the ribbons on six horse teams both on the Sidney-Deadwood and Cheyenne-Deadwood Trails. There were many Stage-holdups, much violence and excitement during the life of the Trail which lasted about 10 years. Of course the road was used but the Stagecoaches were gone and soon the railroads were hauling the freight to more convenient centers. So passed another colorful era in the settling of the West and the demise of the red man. (Boyer 1986, 50).

This romanticized version of the history of the trail is evident also in "*Prairie Pioneers*" of *Box Butte County*, where "...At the Halfway Hollow site an Indian attack took place, on another occasion a double hanging occurred when two bandits failed in their attempt to rob the stages. Their career in crime closed as they dangled from upended

wagon tongues...” (Manion 1970, 1). The heritage presented in these county histories mirrors the tales of the trail published as fact in the majority of the county histories along the trail. County histories represent the heritage the historical societies, citizens, and local historians want to pass on to the next generation. They include articles clipped from local newspapers over time, pictures of families and businesses, and stories that have been told to generations of relatives; they are collective memory and a common history from which a community’s identity can be developed.

The Sidney-Black Hills Trail is also presented in the cultural landscape through tourist promotions. These range from local to regional to state publications. All of the publications considered for this study were obtained through local chambers of commerce, motels, eateries, and tourist sites. Tourist publications are an important factor in the representation of the trail in that they contain the information the local community or business uses to sell the location. The heritage presented can be both sensationalized and factual in its description of the location. The town of Sidney was the most prolific in the publication of tourist material, but the towns of Bridgeport, Crawford, Custer, and Sturgis also had publications that presented the heritage of the trail. Deadwood’s tourist publications do not mention the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, but of are note because they represent the heritage industry in the region. Deadwood’s major industry since 1980 has been tourism which has been brought in through gambling initiatives. The town of Deadwood uses its notorious history in promotions, facades, signs, letterings, menus, reenactments, and just about anything else they can think of. This use of the heritage is noted in several signs around the town which cite the landscape the tourist is viewing is not history, but a romanticized version of it (see

fig. 7:22). Tourist publications for Deadwood are immense, but are limited for the rest of the towns that use the trail in their promotional literature. Many of the same publications can be found at different locations along the landscape.

The publications from Sidney draw on the town's designation on the Register of Historic Places. In *A Walking Tour: Sidney Historic Downtown District* notes that the history of the trail is meshed with Sidney's one-time status as a rough-and-tumble western town:

During the Gold Rush Days, a daily shipment of gold from the Black Hills arrived in Sidney, and the lure of easy money made Sidney a rendezvous for desperate characters from all over the U.S. Buffalo Bill was scouting for the military, Calamity Jane had her first affair with a soldier at the Fort. It was said her motto was "Make Love and War," for which the U.S. Cavalry was grateful. Wild Bill Hitchcock, Sam Bass, Whispering Smith, Doc. Middleton and Butch Cassidy all showed up. Sidney was the home to Gentlemen Gamblers....There were 23 saloons in one block, with 89 establishments selling liquor. The town was wide open with gambling and soiled doves. Lawlessness and murder were common... (Cheyenne County Historical Associations n.d.).

The history of the trail is also promoted in the pamphlet for the *Fort Sidney and Post Commander's Home* as the brochure says:

...the discovery of gold in the Black Hills and the beginnings of the Sidney-Deadwood Trail brought a period of boom to the town. Between 1875 and 1880, thousands of gold seekers traveled north from Sidney to the Black Hills. During that same period Sidney Barracks became a receiving post for government freight to be shipped north to military posts and Indian agencies. Soldiers escorted large bull trains on the trail... (Cheyenne County Historical Association n.d.).

This dichotomy of representation between mythic and factual representation of the heritage is also present in other publications on the trail published by the Cheyenne County Historical Association and the City of Sidney. Most tourism publications on Bridgeport focus on the crossing of trails through the area of the town and the historic location of the Camp Clarke toll bridge (Morrill County Visitors Association nd).

*Journey Through Western Nebraska Travel Guide* published by the Cheyenne County

Visitors' Committee states that

... Camp Clarke Days – in Bridgeport is a community celebration that recognizes Henry T. Clarke, an early entrepreneur, who built a bridge across the North Platte River to handle the gold and supplies to the Blackhills [sic]... (1994).

Many of the publications promote the history of the trail as happening in the towns being boosted, reprint text from the historical markers, note the designation of a site on the NRHP, and use earlier literature to exaggerate myths about the trail.

The history of the trail is used in a promotion for the High Plains Homestead, a bed and breakfast operation north of Crawford, both in print and in the building facades (see fig. 7:17)( Kesselring 2004). The trail heritage is also used in a Nebraska Panhandle Tourism Collation (NPTC) publication of Military History in the Panhandle. The publication listed the location of the “Sidney-Deadwood Trail Historical Marker [as] The trailhead of the only supply line from Sidney, the nearest railroad, to Deadwood, South Dakota” from which uncountable tons of supplies were exchanged for gold (NPTC nd). The NPTC has also published a travel guide map that promoted several historical markers along the trail route as “a significant location along the trail...” (NPTC 2000). One other notable publication is the Nebraska's Byways Publication which included a brief history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail.

Tourism publications using the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in South Dakota were few. One publication was from the Custer County 1881 Museum publication which lists the Sidney-Deadwood Stage and a Sturgis Chamber of Commerce visitor's guide mentioning the trail as one of many that traveled through

the area. In a Stage Barn Crystal Cave brochure the history of the trail is briefly listed as "...part of the stage route from Deadwood, SD to Sidney, NE. A stage barn was located at the mouth of the canyon by the Deadwood-Sidney stage route...." (SBCC nd). The crystalline cave being promoted was actually not a part of the gold rush history.

Other publications that represent the Sidney-Black Hills Trail in the cultural landscape are the many maps which are published for tourists. The most significant of these maps is the "Outlaw Country Map and Guide to the Cheyenne-Black Hills Express Route and the Sidney-Deadwood Trail." The map is hand drawn, with notes and vignettes of the locations and outlaws with all present the history of the trail as a current feature on the landscape where the stations still exist and gold can still be found "in paying quantities." The following is segment of the introduction to "Outlaw County," which was printed on the back cover of the map:

...Why then, call it outlaw country? Maybe to only point out that not everybody struck it rich in the Gold Rush and that outlawry was neither a glamorous nor rewarding livelihood. Men such as "Dunc" Blackburn, Clark Pelton, "Big Nosed George" Parrott, "Persimmon Bill" Chambers, Sam Bass, "Lame Johnny" Donahue, and even Frank James took turns yelling "Throw down the box" adding their dubious infamies to the mystique of the Deadwood Trails...For the 30 to 40 robberies that occurred in '78 and '79 the "take" could not have been very rewarding. Maybe 50 to 60 thousand dollars was taken, most of that in three or four robberies and most of it recovered.... (Lloyd 1990).

The front of the map includes a sketched scene of a stage being robbed and scattered along the edges of the map itself are smaller scenes of hangings and robberies. The map is a representation of the Mythic West, but is fused with the American West as these stations and stops did exist (Lloyd 1990).

There are several other representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail which are not textual in nature but do represent the heritage the communities along the trail have brought into their towns from the surrounding landscape. The movement of relics to locations where they have more of a visual presence is of interest, because this is a movement of history and a representation of heritage. The relics presented are a relative small segment of the material which could be used to represent the trail and also these are objects which the dominant culture cared to preserve. Several buildings are presented as having a link to the history of the trail: the Fort Sidney Museum which is located in the Old Commanders House, the Greenwood cabin located outside of Dalton's Prairie Schooner Museum, Widow Smith's Cabin located at the new Greenwood Ranch Headquarters, the town of French Creek which is now a farmstead, and the stage station at the Rafter J. Bar Campground in Custer. Wagon and stage relics have also been strategically placed to give significance or "history" to a location, such as the wagon located outside of the Pioneer Museum in Bridgeport and the Deadwood stage located at the 1881 Courthouse Museum in Custer.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The representations from the present temporal layer of the cultural landscape reflect that the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail lives on in many of the towns along the historic location as heritage which can draw in tourists. In some locales the history is presented as factually as possible: in others the heritage presented is myth. The roles that historical preservation legislation, the preservation movement, and the



heritage industry have had in the development of the cultural landscape have been explored through looking at the representations of the trail in many forms. These include books, buildings, travel brochures and tourist promotions, signs and historical markers, sites and historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. What was found is that preservation legislation has had a significant impact on the preservation of sites along the trail in their markers, signs, and publications. Many publications and signs present the site as on the National Register of Historic Places or as having a historical marker. Historical markers have become tourist attractions, just because they have a historical marker.

The dichotomy of preservation between local and non-local presentations of the history of the trail continued from the transitional layer of representations as many local presentations drew from the more mythic presentation of events and outline the role of individuals, especially outlaws, along the trail. By contrast representations effected by non-local entities, such as the state preservation office, presented the history as still a freight route to the Black Hills.

There were limited findings listing the roles of women and minorities in the history of the landscape. The majority of listings of women are in reference to Calamity Jane, a woman bullwhacker, prostitutes, and Alice Gossage. Native Americans were still referred to as savages, red men, peaceables, and others; many historical markers simply stated history, leaving out negative portrayals.

For example, read the following lines from the Nolin historical marker:

...Nolin was urged to stay over night because Indian War cries had been heard in the vicinity. He insisted on leaving as he had promised his mother in Nebraska that this would be his last ride. The next morning his lifeless body was found here. His horse had been killed and the mail scattered. ...

And the Sidney-Cheyenne County Marker:

In 1867 an Army tent camp was established near here to provide protection for Union Pacific Railroad construction crews. Three years later it became Fort Sidney, the nucleus for the town of Sidney, county seat of Cheyenne County.

Who killed Nolin? Protection from whom? The heritage of Native Americans seems to be absent from the historical markers that present the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail, but there are historical markers in the landscape that present a small sliver of Native American history, and how they were treated, such as the historical markers at the Red Cloud Agency, Council Tree, and Bear Butte (Figs. 7:18, 7:26, 7:27, and 7:28). Yet there are relatively few compared to the markers dedicated to the men who invaded the Black Hills and the surrounding landscape. Even fewer are the historical markers and signs presenting the heritage of ethnic minorities, such as the Chinese, in the landscape. The only sign located with information on how the Chinese culture shaped the landscape is located in the “Badlands” sign in the city of Deadwood. The Chinese culture in Deadwood is also presented through a business sign, in signs and relics in the Adam’s Museum, and through recent scholarship, but the relatively small amount of heritage presented on the present cultural landscape understates the influence that the Chinese culture actually had on the milieu of Deadwood.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Figure 7:30 is a photo of the Chinatown Café sign, which one of the very few representations of the Chinese culture in Deadwood.

The coding and analysis of the information collected on the representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail lead to the conclusion that the heritage of the trail is being presented mainly in the counties of Cheyenne, Morrill, and Dawes in Nebraska and in Lawrence and Meade in South Dakota. The outside representation data used for this study are linked to state tourism publications. The state of Nebraska and the Nebraska counties were more active in the presentation of the heritage of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. The reason for this might be explained by the rural nature of the region and its location in the Platte River watershed where historically several routes traveled. The communities of western Nebraska draw from the history of the region as a part of a transcontinental transportation route making the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail a significant heritage to present. The story of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail is particularly linked to the history of the Union Pacific Railroad in Nebraska's development. By contrast, in the Black Hills region of South Dakota, the heritage presented is primarily tied to mining activities and mining communities. The history of the trail is not as significant to these communities because it was one of several trails that fed the region.

The dominant representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail of the present landscape were formed by local governmental and tourist ambitions, shaped by the cultural strictures of the citizens and historical societies of communities adjacent to the trail, and marked primarily by historical markers. Presented on the landscape are both the history and the heritage of the trail. The presentations of history are intertwined with the heritage of communities in the region: what they find significant about their

past, what they want to reveal about themselves, and how they want future generations to see the history of the landscape.

Figure 7:1 Present Representation Codes

Codes	Category	Sub-category	Number of Occurrence	County Codes	
EP	Local Business		50	Cheyenne	24
	Tourist Endeavors	Local	74	Morrill	22
		Non-local	39	Box Butte	8
		Other	1	Sioux	2
	Government Ambitions	Local	83	Dawes	17
		State	53	Fall River	4
		Federal	18	Custer	8
	Other		11	Pennington	7
				Lawrence	23
			Total 329	Meade	19
	PP	Route		34	Outside of Area
Communities		Developed	75		
		Declining	5		
		Nonexistent	4		
Access		Highway	69		
		Trail/off road	32		
		Rail line	3		
			Total 235		
CP	Citizens	Town	90		
		County	7		
		Institutional	6		
		Public School	6		
		College	4		
		Other	1		
	Organizational	Historical society	81		
		Chamber of Commerce	34		
		Other	4		
			Total 227		
TP	Signs		29		
	Historical Marker	Public	31		
		Private	7		
	Buildings		11		
	Brochures		27		
	Maps		15		
	Books		34		
	Other		25		
				Total 178	
				Total 154	

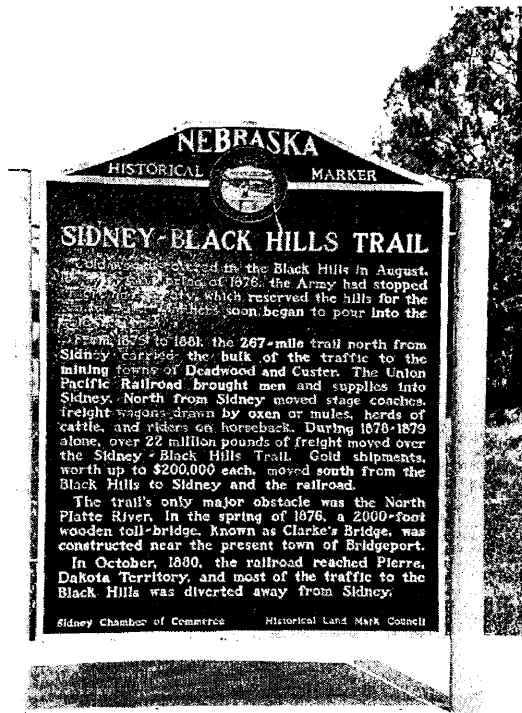


Figure 7:2 Sidney-Black Hills Trail

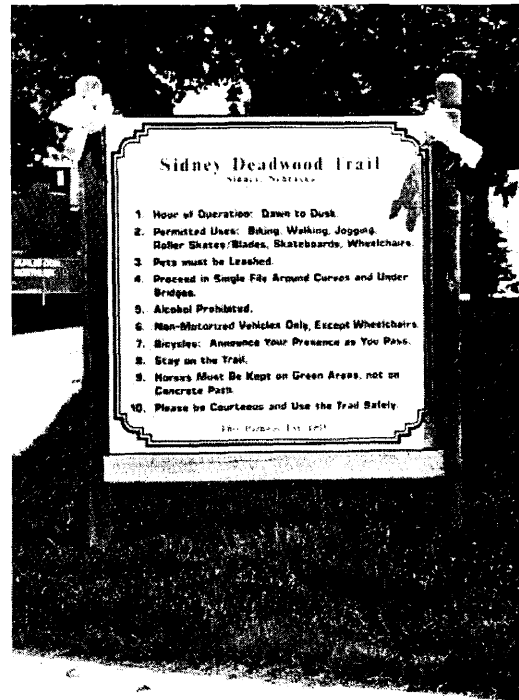


Figure 7:3 Sidney-Deadwood Trail

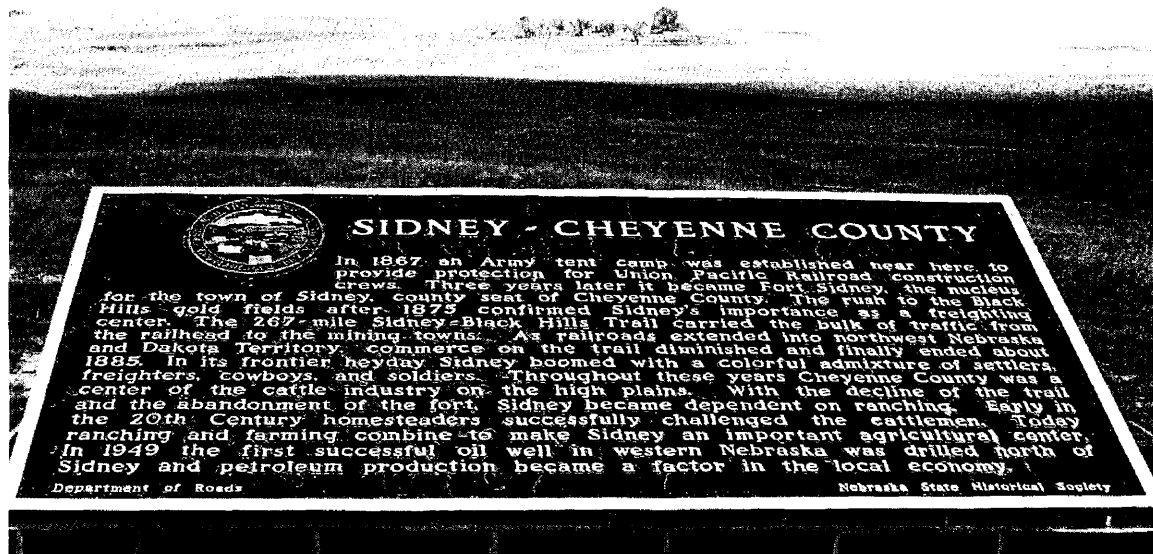


Figure 7:4 Sidney-Cheyenne County Historical Marker



Figure 7:5 Water Holes Ranch Historical Marker

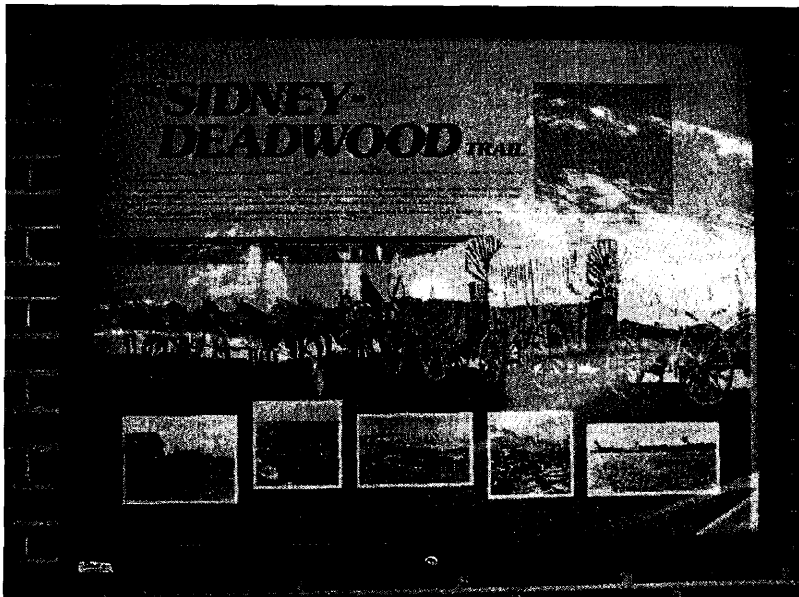
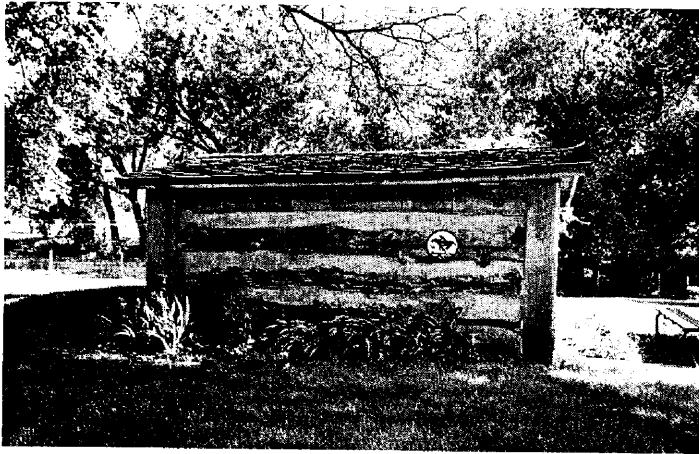


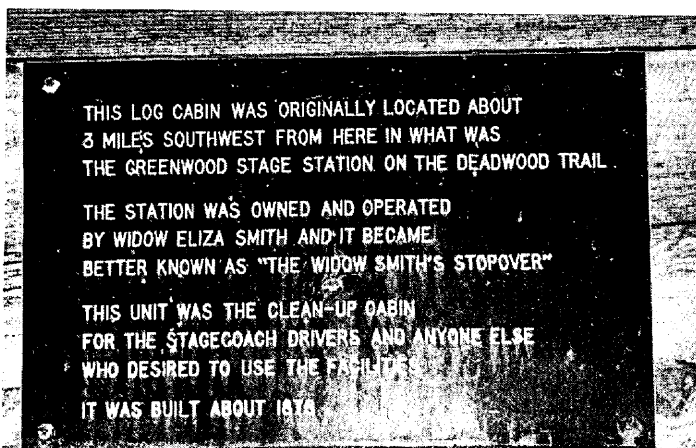
Figure 7:6 Sidney-Deadwood Sign (I-80 Rest stop)



**Figure 7:7 Greenwood Ranch Station Building (Dalton Museum)**



**Figure 7:8 Greenwood Ranch Widow Smith's Cabin**



**Figure 7:9 Sign on Widow Smith's Cabin**



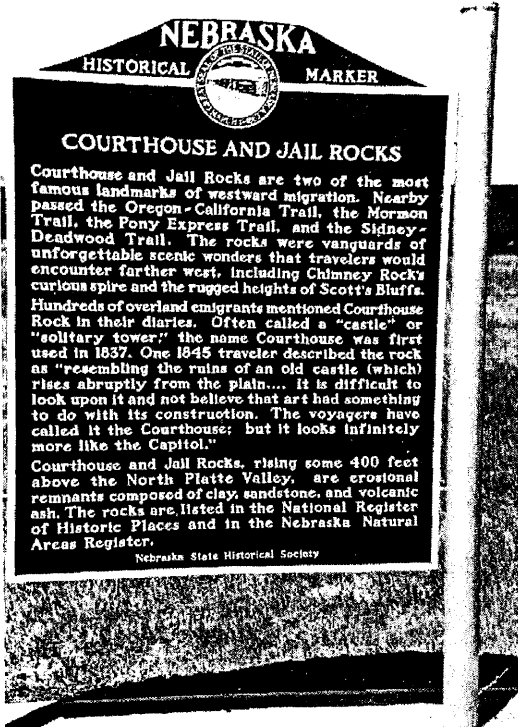


Figure 7:10 Court House and Jail House Rocks

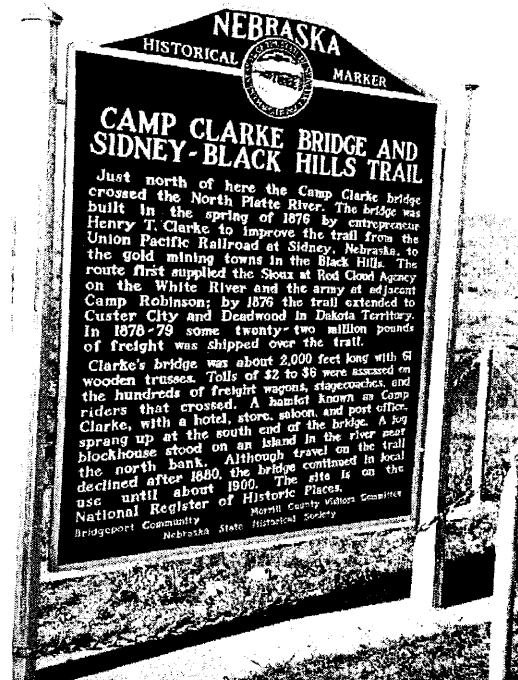


Figure 7:11 Camp Clarke Bridge and Sidney-Black Hills Trail

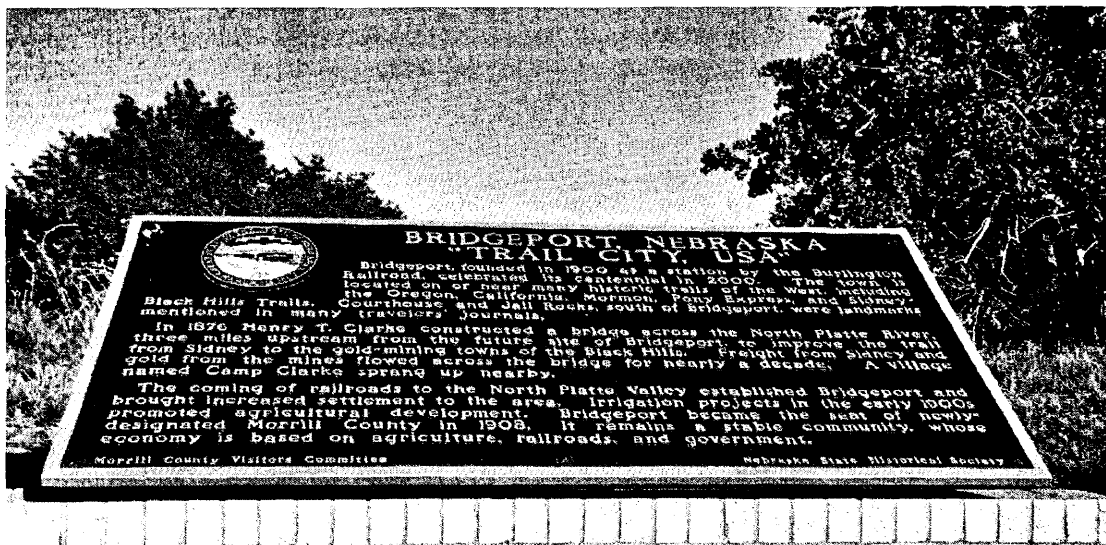


Figure 7:12 Bridgeport "Trail City, USA"

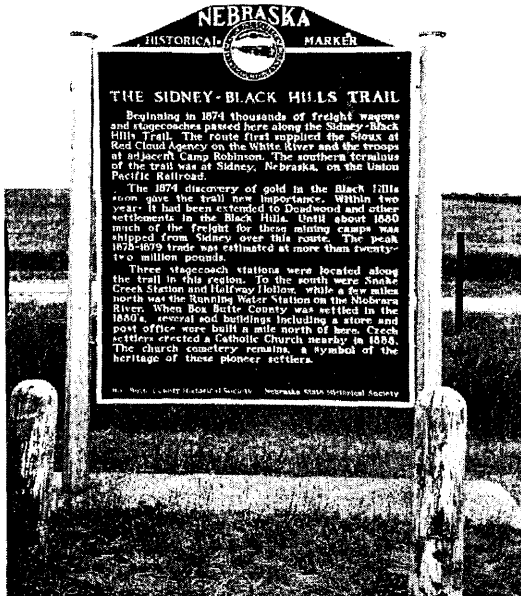


Figure 7:13 Sidney-Black Hills Trail (Box Butte Co.)



Figure 7:14 Red Cloud Agency

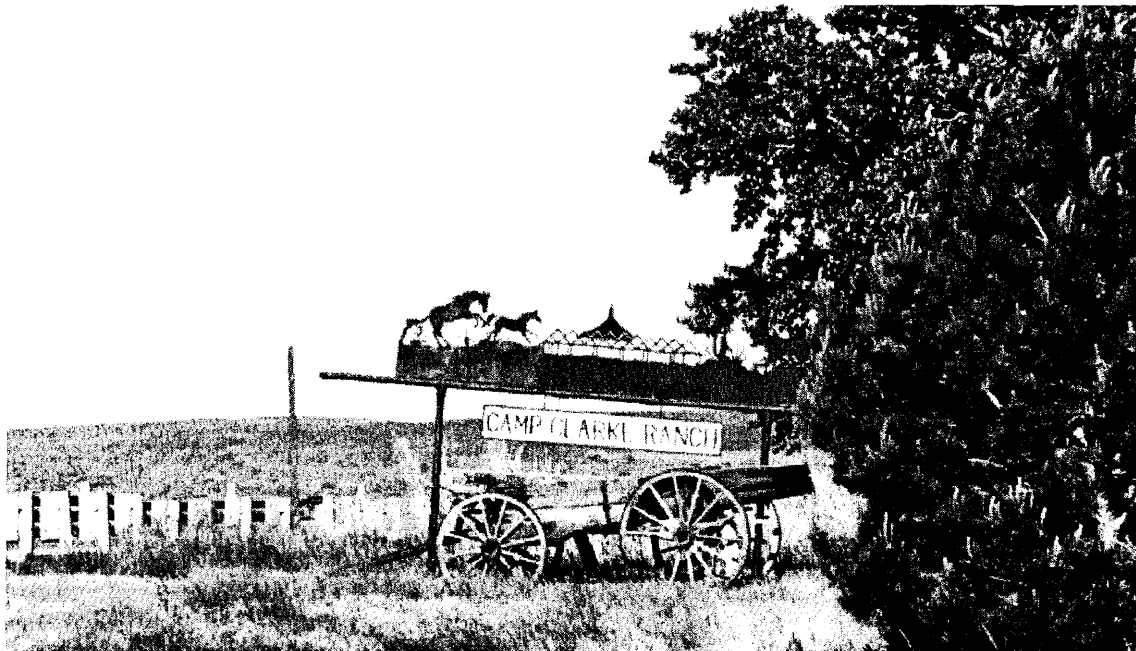


Figure 7:15 Camp Clarke Ranch Sign (west of Bridgeport, NE)

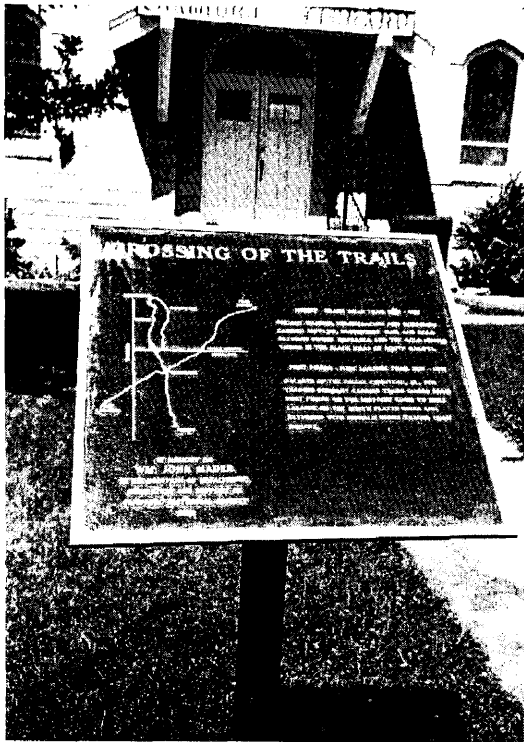


Figure 7:16 Crossing of the Trails  
(Crawford Historical Society)

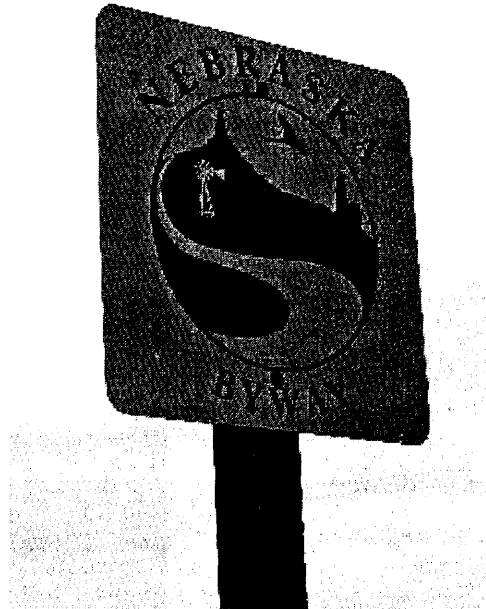


Figure 7:17 Nebraska Byways



Figure 7:18 High Plains Bed and Breakfast

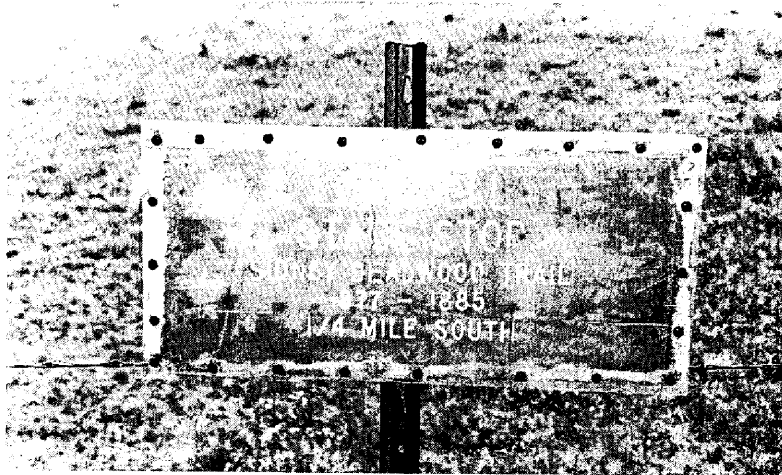


Figure 7:19 Lonewell Stage Stop

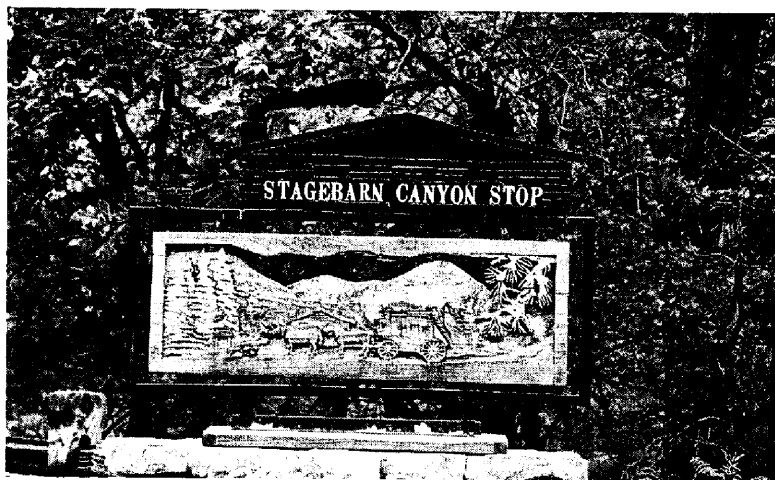


Figure 7:20 Stage Barn Canyon Stop

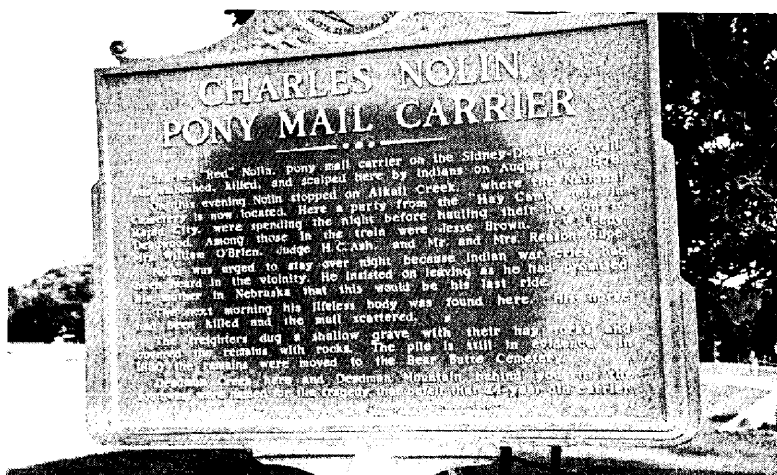


Figure 7:21 Charles Nolin



Figure 7:22 Holiday Inn Deadwood Signage



Figure 7:23 Custer Trading Post

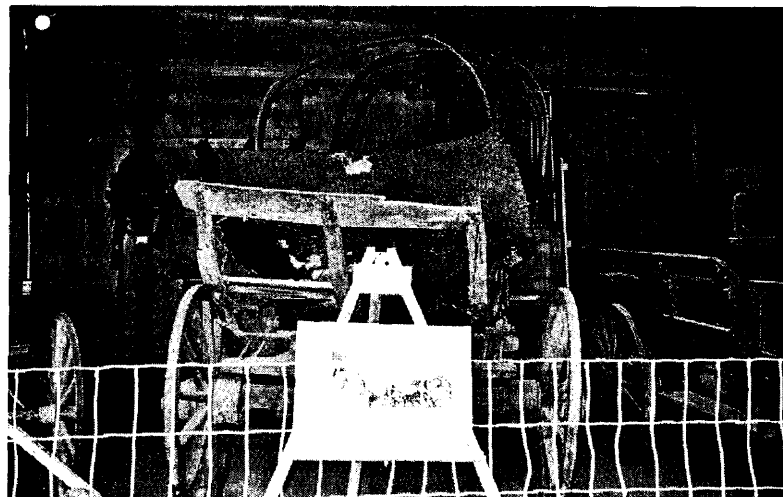


Figure 7:24 Custer County Museum: Deadwood Stage

CONVERGING GOLD TRAILS

Sturgis is called the "Key City" of the Black Hills for a very good reason. It was here that all three trails leading to the gold fields of Deadwood and Lead (pronounced Leed) came together. Fort Meade - Sturgis offered protection, food, lodging, and hospitality to the tired and weary travelers in wagon trains, stage coaches, and on horses, as they struggled to make their way.

These travelers would come from the jumping off places of Bismarck, North Dakota; Pierre, South Dakota; and Sidney, Nebraska.

Figure 7:25a Ft. Meade Sign

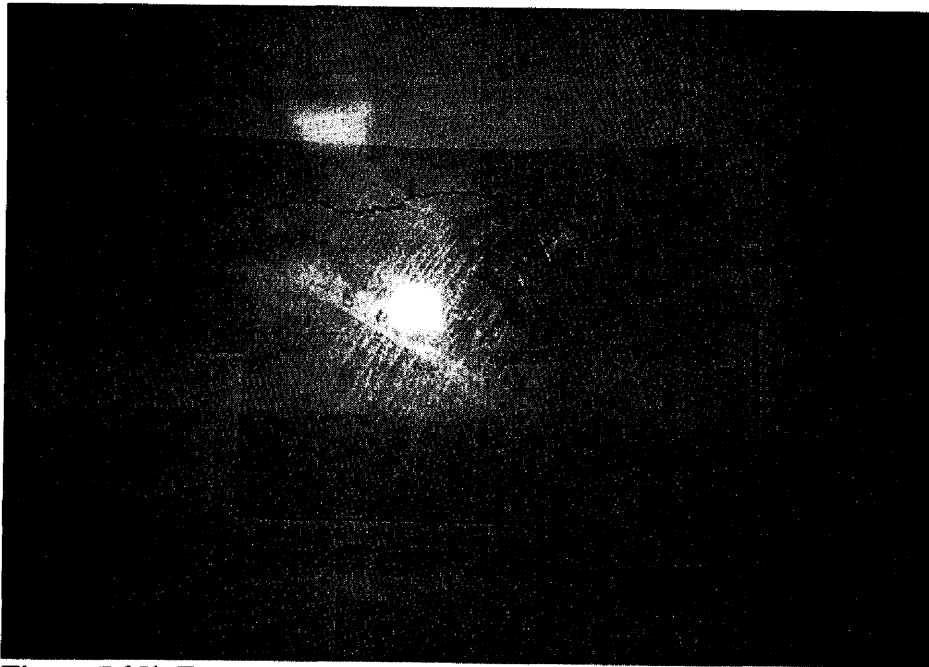


Figure 7:25b Ft. Meade map above Sign

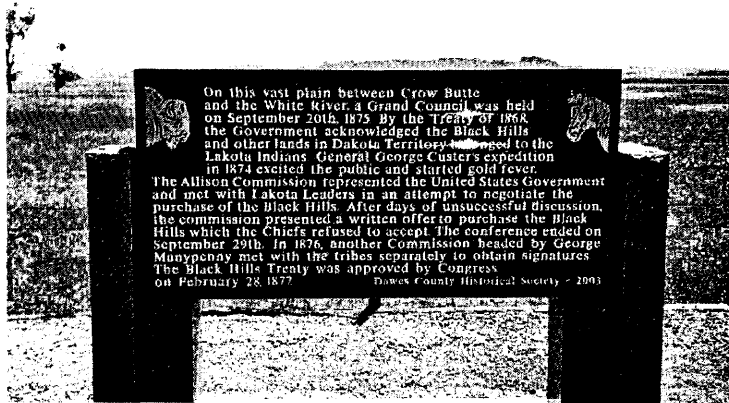


Figure 7:26 Council Tree Monument



Figure 7:27 Council Tree Marker

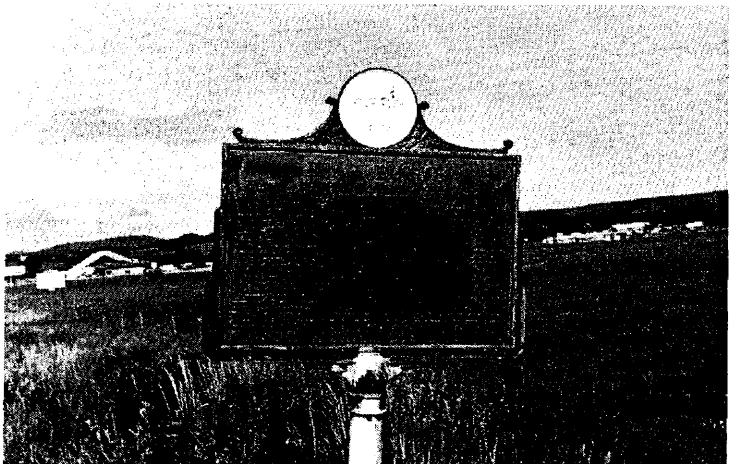


Figure 7:28 Bear Butte

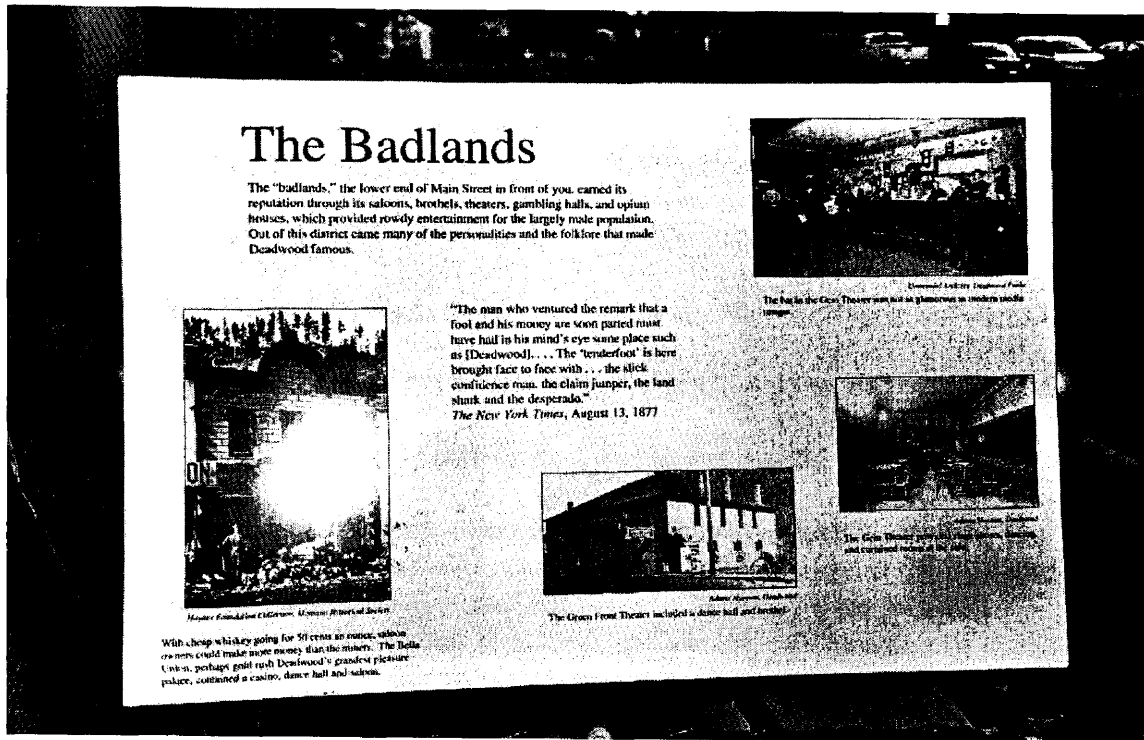


Figure 7:29 Deadwood's "Badlands" Sign

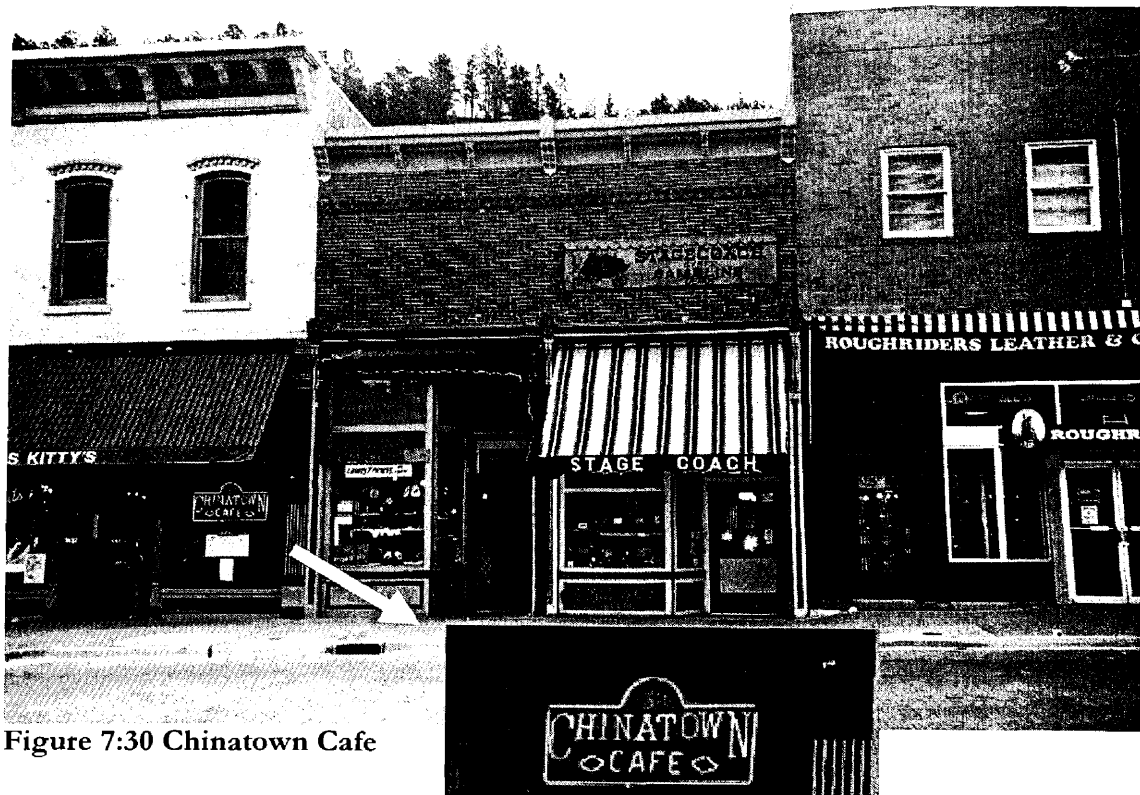


Figure 7:30 Chinatown Cafe



## CONCLUSIONS

At the very beginning of this thesis, there is a quote from *Everyman His Own Historian* which ties the findings in this study and the significance of research on a historic cultural landscape to the individuals who have shaped and formed the cultural landscape of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Carl Becker wrote:

Mr. Everyman, when he awakens in the morning, reaches out into the country of the past and of distant places... , pulls together... things said and done in his yesterdays and coordinates them with his present perceptions... Without this historical knowledge, this memory of things said and done, his today would be aimless and his tomorrow without significance.

This thesis had been an exploration into what everyman has pulled together from the past and what he has presented on the landscape; these presentations being objects from which a culture, a community, and individuals form their identities and give significance to their daily lives.

The objective of this research was to explore how the Sidney-Black Hills Trail was explored on the landscape historically, how the representations of the trail evolved over time, and how the heritage was being represented on the landscape in the present. What was found was that past representations of the landscape focused on the trail as a transportation route, its reliability, and the safety along the route. Present representations focused more on the events along the route. The change in representation may be the normal course of events, for while the landscape was forming, precedence was given to the establishment of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail as

“the” route to the Black Hills and the way to promote a trail was through its safety and convenience to the traveler and merchants. The trail’s use in the present landscape projects what the culture of the region could gain from the preservation of the trail’s heritage, whether the trail was promoted economically or morally, and to do this the information was to be presented in a manner that the present culture would find interesting. The cultural strictures of the past limited the information on what the Victorian era would have labeled as deviant behavior, such as dance halls and saloons, alcohol consumption, cursing, hangings and lynchings, and other perceived social ills. The present cultural strictures viewed this information as an interesting segment of past life. The change in representations is a reflection on the change in cultural strictures and in the economic landscape.

The economic landscape of the past was focused on the settlement of the region, whereas the present landscape is relatively settled. The primary force in the settlement of the region since the early 1900s can be attributed to the railroad and railroad functions, as many of the towns along the historic route of the trail were, and are, populated with railroad families; along with farmers and the supporting community. The trail was for a short period of time the main economic force that shaped the region and in the present landscape the heritage of the trail is an additive to the economy of the towns. Drawing visitors to drive the “Gold Rush Byway,” stop at the historical markers, and perhaps stop in their towns to buy gas or lunch is a goal (Degraffenried 2004).

The representations of the history and heritage of the trail also changed slightly through the temporal layers of the cultural landscape. In the past layer the

representations were primarily from the (present-day) counties of Cheyenne, Dawes, and Lawrence while the present layer of representations were primarily found in Cheyenne, Morrill, Dawes, Meade, and Lawrence. Changes in the spatial representations of the trail are attributed to the development of some population centers and the decline of others. The development of the historic towns of Sidney, Deadwood, and Sturgis led to a continuation of representation at these locales while the formation of the railroad towns of Bridgeport (Morrill) and Crawford (Dawes) led to a diffusion of the trail's representations from its historic location into these nearby population centers.

The culture of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail lives on in many of the towns along the historic location as heritage which can draw in tourists. Relics from the history of the trail, such as freight wagons, are placed near present representations of the trail; monuments from the transitional period have been moved closer to highways, and the trail's name has been used to name a walking trail that does not follow the original freight trail's route. Books published on the history of the Black Hills and the route focus on the "incredible characters," gold discoveries, and portray untypical events as typical occurrences. The mythic West of outlaws, Wild Bill Hickok, and dance hall girls live on in Deadwood on a daily basis in the summer months; bullwhackers, freighters, and miners give demonstrations during Sidney's Gold Rush Days.

This thesis explored the representations of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail and the impact it has had on the present cultural landscape of western Nebraska and South Dakota through a merger of relics, signs, monuments, and other representations. It explored how past interpretations of an event – history – were interpreted and

represented during a past layer of the cultural landscape, and how past representations have evolved and fused to the present layer of the cultural landscape. This work has examined relationship between the American West and the Mythic West and how they have combined on the present landscape to form heritage and an identity for a landscape, a traveler, and for the individuals who reside in the region.

The study of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail has been an exploration of the impact a line can have on a cultural landscape, a line that transcends time and has been interpreted by many people in different ways through different times. The line has been interpreted from its formation as a physical line on the earth as an early highway, through the many lines of its history, to its present cultural representations and interpretations. This line of study is an example of how history and heritage merge, the American West and Mythic West fuse, and how it can all be about a line.

## Future Research

While completing field research and analyzing the material for this thesis several other questions arose from the landscape and information collected:

1. How is Native American culture presented on historical markers throughout the region? The historical markers for this study marginalized the heritage of Native Americans and/or completely left it out of the text. The rationale for the absence of information is that present cultural strictures did not want to present a negative history of the Native American from Anglo interpretation, but what do viewers of these markers interpret from the absence?
2. How did the culture of Wild Bill Hickok evolve in Deadwood? Hickok was in the city for less than a week before he was killed over a hand of poker, but the legend of his demise permeates re-enactments, signs, memorials, monuments, statues, and publications. How did his life become so pervasive in the culture of Deadwood?

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