

# DEVILS TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY



Figure 1. Mato-tipi or Bear Lodge or Devil's Tower. Stereograph card. Originally published by A. [Albert] Pollock, Black Hills Views. The Library of Congress dates the image at between 1870 and 1910; the South Dakota Historical Society dates the "Black Hills Views" series from 1878. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division (Control #2019630463).

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# **DEVILS TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY**

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## Table of Contents

<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i> .....	<i>xii</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i> .....	<i>xiv</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	<i>xv</i>
<i>CHAPTER ONE: Emergence from the Plains: Geology of the Tower, 225 MYA-present. ....</i>	<i>1</i>
Geologic History and Stratigraphy.....	2
The Jurassic .....	4
Origins of the Tower .....	5
Little Missouri Buttes and the Tower.....	9
Erosion and Talus: Forces of Creation and Destruction .....	10
Geologic Challenges .....	11
Paleontology .....	15
Conclusion: Geoheritage and the Tower .....	15
Known Resource Types .....	17
<i>CHAPTER TWO: Native American Lifeways, 12,000 BCE to 1868 CE.....</i>	<i>22</i>
Towering Landmark, Challenging Environment.....	22
Archeology at the Tower.....	23
Paleoindian Period (11,500 to 7,500 years ago) .....	25
Protohistoric and Historic (1805-1880s).....	31
The Black Hills: Contested Land, Sacred Space .....	32
A Problem of Sources, A Problem of History .....	37
Native Americans and Paleontology.....	40
Origin Stories.....	42
Conclusion: Tribes and the Tower .....	56
Known Resource Types .....	57

<b><i>CHAPTER THREE: Colonizing the Black Hills: Exploration, Native Americans, and the Homestead Era in the Northern Plains, 1820-1892</i></b> .....	<b>60</b>
Settler Colonial Visions.....	60
Disposing the Public Domain .....	62
The Homestead Acts.....	64
Hazen, Powell, and Aridity in the West .....	65
The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 .....	69
Early Exploration and the Black Hills .....	71
Powder River Country.....	75
Custer’s 1874 Expedition to the Black Hills .....	76
Jenney’s 1875 Expedition, Mato Teepee, & Devils Tower .....	78
The Cattle Industry Comes to Wyoming .....	82
Settlers and Natives.....	88
Claims and Withdrawal.....	90
An Artist’s Journey, 1892 .....	97
Known Resource Types .....	100

<b><i>CHAPTER FOUR: The Natural Monument: The Antiquities Act and Accessing the Monument, 1892-1928</i></b> .....	<b>105</b>
The Progressive Era.....	105
The Antiquities Act of 1906.....	106
The Significance of the Tower.....	109
Roosevelt’s Proclamation .....	112
The Challenges of Management.....	113
Cyclists and Good Roads .....	116
Building the Road.....	118
The 1920s and Infrastructure Development .....	120
The Belle Fourche River and the Tetrahedrons.....	127
The Custodian’s Residence.....	131
The Entrance Road .....	132
Grazing and Devils Tower National Monument .....	132
Developing Infrastructure .....	133
Known Resource Types .....	135

<b><i>CHAPTER FIVE: The New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps at Devils Tower National Monument, 1933-1937.....</i></b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Joyner arrives at the Tower .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Joyner’s Community Connections.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Drought and Depression .....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>The New Deal.....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Proposed Expansion for Devils Tower National Monument.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW or CCC-ID) .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>CCC History at Devils Tower – Camp Life and Chronology .....</b>	<b>162</b>
The CCC Enrollees.....	167
<b>CCC-Era Development at Devils Tower .....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Known Resource Types .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER SIX: Modernizing the Monument: Mission 66, 1956-1966.....</i></b>	<b>195</b>
<b>The National Context of Mission 66 .....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Expansion proposal for Little Missouri Buttes.....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Mission 66 in Devils Tower.....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Mission 66 Construction at the Tower .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>Mission 66 Architecture at the Tower .....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>Conclusion: A Nationally-Designed Order .....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Known Resource Types .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER SEVEN: Climbing at Devils Tower National Monument: A Vertical History, 1898-2006 .....</i></b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Narrating the First Ascent, 1893-1920 .....</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Making the Vertical Technical, 1936-1940 .....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>The NPS and Climbers at the Tower.....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>The Parachutist .....</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Decades of Expansion and Regulation, 1940s-1950s.....</b>	<b>233</b>
University Climbing Clubs and the Mountaineer’s Week .....	235
<b>Emerging Ethics: From Aid to Clean to Sport Climbing, 1950-1990.....</b>	<b>238</b>
The 1950s: Aid Climbing .....	239
The 1960s-Early 1980s: An Environmental Ethic and Clean Climbing .....	241
The Late 1980s-1990s: Sport Climbing .....	242
<b>Managing the Vertical: Climbing Management Plan, 1995-2006.....</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Conclusion: The Sounds of Fracture .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Known Resource Types .....</b>	<b>251</b>

<b><i>CHAPTER EIGHT: Nature and Culture at Devils Tower National Monument, 1970-2022</i></b>	<b>256</b>
<b>NPS in the Environmental Era</b> .....	<b>257</b>
<b>Changing Management Concerns at Devils Tower National Monument</b> .....	<b>258</b>
<b>Intangible Assets</b> .....	<b>259</b>
<b>Burgeoning Visitation and Devils Tower National Monument</b> .....	<b>260</b>
<b>Special Visitors</b> .....	<b>260</b>
<b>Popular Culture on Two Wheels</b> .....	<b>261</b>
<b>Meet the Neighbors</b> .....	<b>262</b>
<b>Native Americans and the Tower Landscape</b> .....	<b>263</b>
<b>Conclusion: Nature and Culture</b> .....	<b>272</b>
<b>Known Resource Types</b> .....	<b>274</b>
<b>Sites Associated with Native American Era of Self-Determination</b> .....	<b>274</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER NINE: Previous National Register Listings, Determinations, and Recommendations</i></b> .....	<b>277</b>
<b>Resources Listed in the National Register of Historic Places</b> .....	<b>277</b>
Individual Aboveground Properties .....	277
Historic Districts.....	278
<b>Resources Previously Evaluated as Eligible for Listing in the National Register</b> .....	<b>280</b>
Individual Aboveground Properties .....	281
Historic Districts.....	281
Archeological Districts.....	282
<b>Resources Previously Determined or Evaluated as Ineligible for Listing in the National Register</b> .....	<b>284</b>
Individual Aboveground Properties .....	284
<b>Resources for Additional Evaluation or Consideration</b> .....	<b>286</b>
<b>Other Considerations</b> .....	<b>288</b>
Intangibles .....	289
<b><i>Selected Bibliography</i></b> .....	<b>290</b>

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Mato-tipi or Bear Lodge or Devil’s Tower. Stereograph card. Originally published by A. [Albert] Pollock, Black Hills Views. The Library of Congress dates the image at between 1870 and 1910; the South Dakota Historical Society dates the "Black Hills Views" series from 1878. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division (Control #2019630463).....	i
Figure 2. Map showing location of Devils Tower National Monument, in the northeast corner of Wyoming. (Courtesy NPS).....	xx
Figure 3. Devils Tower National Monument is located on the west edges of the Black Hills, in northeast Wyoming, to the southwest of Hulett, on the Belle Fourche River. (Courtesy NPS). ....	xxi
Figure 4. Map of Devils Tower National Monument. (Courtesy NPS).....	xxii
Figure 5. Geologic Time Scale. (National Park Service Geologic Resources Inventory, 2018).....	18
Figure 6. The name “Bear Lodge” is noted on this 1879 Geological map of the Black Hills of Dakota by Henry Newton. (David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries). ....	19
Figure 7. Spearfish formation from the Red Beds Trail, Devils Tower National Monument. Belle Fourche River at center. This striking formation is part of the “Race Track” through the Black Hills where Native American origin stories describe how a great race between earth’s animals took place. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022). ....	20
Figure 8. The Devils Tower formation from the vicinity of the Tower Trail. It is a unique geological formation with a great height of columnar jointing. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022). ....	21
Figure 9. The Belle Fourche Valley provided good hunting, just below the Tower Formation. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022). ....	58
Figure 10. Meadows to the NW side of Devils Tower/Bear Lodge. Lithic points, flakes, obsidian, and other archeological artifacts have been found in various places at Devils Tower National Monument. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).....	59
Figure 11. Tribal Territories as Assigned in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. The Lakota still consider much of the land in and near the Black Hills to be unceded. (Map compiled by Margo Berendsen, cartographer at the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center at the University of Wyoming. Used with permission and thanks).....	101
Figure 12. Exploration parties knew of the Lakota name for Bear Lodge. Close up of 1879 Geological map of the Black Hills of Dakota, by Henry Newton, E.M. Dept. of the Interior, U.S.G. and G. Survey, J.W. Powell, in charge. Geology of the Black Hills by Henry Newton, E.M. (Julius Bien, Lith. New York, 1879). (This historical cartographic image is presented courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries). ....	102
Figure 13. Early visitors to the Tower formation. Inscribed “Devil’s Tower or Bear Lodge (Mato Tepee of the Indians), on the Belle Fourche.” Photo by John C.H. Grabill of Sturgis, Dakota Territory, 1887. (Courtesy Library of Congress).....	103
Figure 14. Thomas Moran, The Devil's Tower from Johnstons, 1893, brush and ink and ink wash on paperboard. (Courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of John Holmes Maghee) .....	104



Figure 15. “Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming. Devils Tower, viewed from the East. Note the columnar jointing and flare at the base.” Keeping the road maintained was a challenge for custodians and crews. This photo is before the CCC carried out their improvements. (Photo by William Gamewell Pierce, 1932, Courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey). .....	136
Figure 16. The Old Settlers’ Picnic created an opportunity to gather, 1936. (Courtesy NPS).....	137
Figure 17. The Old Settlers’ Picnic from the parking lot, 1936. (Courtesy NPS).....	137
Figure 18. "Looking downstream at the back side of the row of tetrahedrons before placing the cables." Walter G. Attwell, Final Construction Report on Protection of Devils Tower Bridge, and Retevment Work on Belle Fourche River, November 25, 1930. (Courtesy NPS). .....	138
Figure 19. Newell Joyner Holding Owl. (No Date). Joyner likely used local fauna to educate visitors about park resources. (Courtesy NPS).....	188
Figure 20. Joyner Patrolling. Newell Joyner often patrolled the park and nearby area on his horse, Ranger. He is pictured here talking with an unknown person, but likely a local landowner. (Courtesy NPS).....	189
Figure 21. “Joyner kid helps build park.” Note workers in background, and the large size of stones for paving. (Courtesy NPS).....	190
Figure 22. CCC camp at Devils Tower National Monument. (Courtesy NPS).....	191
Figure 23. CCC Camp, looking toward the Tower formation. (Courtesy NPS). .....	191
Figure 24. “Custodian’s Residence.” (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022). .....	192
Figure 25. Visitor Center. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....	193
Figure 26. Fire Hose House. Near the Visitors Center at base of Tower. This structure is part of a Historical District for the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....	194
Figure 27. Entrance Sign and Ranger Station, 1956. This picture reveals how the entrance to Devils Tower National Monument appeared, after the CCC building projects and as Mission 66 got underway. Photo by Wayne Bryant (Courtesy National Park Service History Collection, Harper’s Ferry Center)..	214
Figure 28. Mission 66 Administration Building in the area by the Belle Fourche River. The modern stylistic elements of the Mission 66 era appear in this structure’s one-story, the large, low-pitched front gable roof, accents of brickwork, and a façade curtain wall. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....	215
Figure 29. Mission 66 Employee Housing. In this building, a multi-unit apartment with shared utility and storage spaces. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....	216
Figure 30. Amphitheater constructed during Mission 66. The seating capacity was expanded, and a structure to house audio-visual (AV) equipment was added. The fire pit previously existed as a focal point. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....	217
Figure 31. Mission 66 Campground and Day Use Area Historic District. National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument. (NPS/DETO “Determination of Eligibility for Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument,” 2021, p. 39).....	218
Figure 32. 1962 Drawing for the Belle Fourche River Development. This is the third version of the plan carried out during Mission 66. (NPS, ETIC Document, DETO 109 2028).....	219
Figure 33. Devils Tower Mission 66 Properties. (NPS/DETO, “Determination of Eligibility for Mission 66 Buildings & Structures at Devils Tower National Monument,” 2021). .....	220

Figure 34. Fritz Wiessner belays his partner on Devils Tower. He uses a hip belay, a technique creating sufficient friction to catch a following climber, by passing the rope around one’s hips. June 28, 1937. (Courtesy NPS).....252

Figure 35. Hopkins Rescue Party, 1941. Jack Durrance (far right) and companions plan an attempt to bring down stranded parachutist George Hopkins. They are gathered in the Visitor Center at the base of the Tower formation. (Courtesy NPS).....253

Figure 36. “No Climbing Above This Point.” Demonstrates a bit of the insouciance in climbing culture. (Courtesy NPS).....254

Figure 37. Numbers of Climbers at DETO, 1940 to 1990. Devils Tower became a climbing destination in the late 1970s. (Courtesy NPS).....254

Figure 38. Vertical.” Climbing Steward Andrea Carlomagno climbs El Matador route in 2016. Note wide stemming technique, & belay rope running through protection. Part of the Tower’s attraction are the sustained cracks and clean surfaces with few ledges to get in the way of a leader’s fall. (Courtesy NPS, Lucas Barth photo) .....255

Figure 39. Tower Formation with signage on respecting ceremonial objects. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).....275

Figure 40. Sacred Circle of Smoke. Japanese artist Junkyu Muto created this sculpture in 2008 as the third of seven “peace sculptures” to be placed at significant places around the world. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).....276

## APPENDICES

### 1. “Sacred Smoke,” Five Oral Histories of Bear Lodge

### 2. Ethnography, Affiliation, & Naming Bear Lodge

“History of Ethnography at Devils Tower National Monument,” by Dan Zizzamia, Montana State University, 2021.

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### 3. CCC Era Structures and Resources at DETO

By Dan Zizzamia

### 4. Fixed Climbing Protection on Devils Tower/ Bear Lodge

By Travis Carioscia

### 5. Relevant Existing Documentation

Determination of Eligibility Notification, Devils Tower National Monument, Traditional Cultural Property (1997); Eligibility Evaluation for DETO (48CK106), Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “The Archaeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument,” (May, 2000), pp. 81, 189-190; DETO Multiple Property Documentation Form (2000); Old Headquarters Historic District (1995/2000); Entrance Station (2000); Entrance Road (2000); Tower Ladder (2000); “Intermountain Region New Deal Resources: Research Findings for Devils Tower National Monument,” (Richardson, 2008); “Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at DETO” (NPS/DETO, 2021); SHPO letter Two Historic Districts (June 21, 2022); Tower and South Side Trails NR Registration Form (1996); DETO to SHPO “Section 106 Assessment” Dec. 12, 2018; Assessment of Actions Accessibility Improvement Project, Dec. 11, 2018.

### 6. Archeological Districts

“High Meadows Prehistoric Archaeological District” (18 Jan. 2001), and “Homestead and Early Tourism Historical Archaeological District” (30 March 20), NRHP Registration Forms, not signed. University of South Dakota Archaeology Laboratory. Forms located at Devils Tower National Monument Headquarters Office.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a Historic Resource Study (HRS) conducted for Devils Tower National Monument (the Monument, or DETO). Located in northeast Wyoming, this monument is exceptional due to its striking geological formation and its establishment as the nation's first national monument. An awe-inspiring physical phenomenon, Devils Tower (also known historically as Bear Lodge Butte, Bear Lodge, or Mato Tipila) has immense cultural significance that has evolved and changed as different peoples have experienced its landscape.

This Historic Resource Study (HRS) will assist monument staff in meeting requirements established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which directed federal agencies to assess, maintain, and manage the historical resources of park spaces. This HRS discusses significant historical contexts and identifies related historic resources, thus serving as a planning and management tool facilitating preparation of National Register nominations and Historic Structure Reports (HSRs). It contributes to the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) and enhances the monument's excellent interpretation program. This study also forms a basis for potential future Cultural Landscape Inventories or Cultural Landscape Reports.

This HRS addresses all historic resources over 50 years of age. The National Park Service identified several themes as a framework for this HRS, and we added a chapter on the geology of the monument and a chapter encompassing the 1970s to the present.

- **Geology of the Tower.**

The remarkable geological formation of the Tower is the compelling reason for the establishment of Devils Tower National Monument. Learning about the history of the earth is one of the scientific curiosities found at the Monument and qualifies it as a national monument. The Tower's environment shapes its subsequent human history.

- **History of the Black Hills and presence of Indigenous peoples.**

Native Americans traveled through and lived in the Northwestern Great Plains area for thousands of years. Many nations told stories of the Tower, and some of those involved origin stories for the tribe. For tribal peoples who revered Bear Lodge, the tower formation was a sacred site.

- **Homesteading in the area of Devils Tower.**

An era of exploration contributed to knowledge of Western landscapes and the resources found there. Euro-Americans came seeking gold and later established ranches utilizing the region's grassland resources. White settlers worked hard to develop agriculture in the Black Hills, but in the process, they displaced Native Americans from their homelands.

- **Establishment and Early Development of Devils Tower National Monument.**

Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, Theodore Roosevelt declared Devils Tower the first national monument in the United States. Local citizens in the Tower's vicinity supported establishing the Monument and associated their own history with Devils Tower. During the 1920s, the NPS continued to develop the infrastructure and regulatory functions of the federal government in national parks and monuments.

- The Great Depression & the CCC at Devils Tower National Monument.

New Deal programs and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) continued the federal government's major infrastructure developments at the Tower. Landscape architects, the NPS Rustic Style of architecture, and CCC construction laid the basis for the NPS landscape.

- Modernizing the Monument: MISSION 66.

Mission 66 (1956-1966) sought to expand tourist facilities to accommodate a significant surge in visitation and to protect resources after WWII. This was the most significant transformation of the Monument. Mission 66 modernized the Monument and exerted federal control over the landscape.

- History of Ascending the Tower.

As recreational rock climbing exploded in popularity from the 1960s, climbers viewed the stone feature as a site of sport, of prowess, and of competition. This perspective led to a cultural clash with a revival of Native American religious expression that perceived climbing the Tower as sacrilegious.

- Nature and Culture in the age of ecology and cultural revival, 1970s to present.

From the early 1970s, new value systems and movements challenged National Park Service management of parks and of Devils Tower. Park resources acquired new meanings. Environmentalism imposed additional regulations while the Tower entered popular culture iconography. Devils Tower caught the public imagination when the movie *Close Encounters* hit theatres, contributing to growing visitor numbers. Most significantly, Native American assertions of sovereignty demanded that managers include Indigenous culture in their management.

These themes define the historical contexts developed in this HRS. A context is a thematic essay that presents historical movements and eras. Contexts provide the background information informing how a resource illustrates or exemplifies a historical movement in North American history. Resources may include buildings, sites, landscapes, and other less tangible features that express meaning when placed in historic contexts. Managers use these interpretations to evaluate possible inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

This Historical Resource Study identifies Monument resources, including properties already listed on the National Register (Old Headquarters Historic District, Entrance Road, Entrance Station, Tower Ladder, as well as the Traditional Cultural Property designation), proposed historic districts (High Meadows Archaeological Historic District and an Early Tourism Historical District), resources previously identified as eligible for listing on the National Register (e.g., the Tower Trail, and two Mission 66 related districts), and multiple resources previously identified as ineligible for the National Register.

This study originated as a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and Montana State University's Ivan Doig Center for the Study of the Lands and Peoples of the North American West.

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Our Principal Investigator is Janet Ore who expertly navigated many hurdles to facilitate the project's completion. Angela Sirna served as our primary contact at the National Park Service, and we are grateful for her significant contributions to this project. We had invaluable assistance from interested NPS personnel who took the time to read chapters and give us very good advice on how they might be improved. Our helpful readers who provided insightful suggestions included Angela Sirna, Ellyn Demuynck, Krista Pollett, Russell Cash, Chanteil Walter, Jim Kendrick, Herb Dawson, and Caitlin Beesley.

Daniel Zizzamia was our primary researcher and author who created deeply investigated, detailed and thoughtful narratives. He produced the comprehensive draft that James Pritchard later extensively edited. Jacob F. Northcutt, Michael S. Reidy, and Travis Carioscia authored the chapter on climbing, and created the appendix on fixed protection at the Tower. For Chapter 8 on the 1970s, Molly Holz created an early draft, and Janet Ore and James Pritchard expanded on the theme. Austin Schoenkopf wrote sections of Chapter 8, and edited the bibliography.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study presents historical contexts associated with Devils Tower National Monument (DETO). First, we describe the Tower itself. The following five chapters elucidate themes, better known as historical contexts. The first theme describes how Native Americans occupied the region since about 13,000 years before present. Evidence is clear of their continuous presence in the area. Eras of exploration and settlement follow. The establishment of Devils Tower as the nation's first national monument, created by Theodore Roosevelt's executive order under the Antiquities Act, occurred in 1906. During the 1930s, development of the park continued with some twists unique to Devils Tower. The CCC era is of particular interest for National Park Service sites across the nation, and Devils Tower is no exception. MISSION 66 improvements transformed the monument and laid out a modernized, standardized park landscape in Devils Tower. The history of climbing also has a significant and unique place in the history of Devils Tower. Buildings and structures dating from 1973 are now of sufficient age to be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. We discuss the 1970s in several places in these narratives and offer a theme and historical context for the 1970s to the present. What is particularly significant for Devils Tower National Monument is how nature and culture come together in every age with the result that people perceive the Tower differently, draw various inspirations from it, and experience Bear Lodge/Devils Tower in unique ways.

### **Authority and Purpose of the Historical Resource Study**

This study assists the National Park Service's obligations under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This law requires federal agencies to create programs to identify and protect their historic features and properties. The NPS *Management Policy* contains a section on cultural resources and carries out its historic preservation objectives using the NPS *Cultural Resource Management Guideline* (NPS-28) and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation*.

A Historical Resource Study (HRS) provides a basic source of information when considering the historical and cultural resources within a park or monument. The purpose of the HRS is to identify park historical resources within a historical context. The HRS is a synthetic work drawing on various disciplines and kinds of information to compose the narrative contexts. It also speaks to various audiences wanting to know more about historical resources in a park, including managers and planners, cultural resource specialists, park interpreters, and the wider public. An HRS can serve as a basis for creating a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), a Historic Structure Report (HSR), or an entry for the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS). Historic contexts and identified historical resources discussed in an HRS can also provide a basis for identifying cultural landscapes. Later studies including a Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) or a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) may draw on an HRS.

## **Scope of the Historical Resource Study**

This study's goals focused on the production of a multi-chapter narrative history, providing contexts to aid in identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the significance of historic resources in Devils Tower National Monument (DETO). This study does not attempt to comprehensively evaluate historic resources or cultural landscapes. However, it does summarize such studies previously carried out and provide references to them. Future evaluations of historic landscapes can be determined by Monument staff and managers of the Cultural Landscape program.

## **Methods**

Methods employed in this study included the review of primary and secondary sources garnered from several places. The COVID-19 pandemic limited on-site research in archives as libraries and archives closed for a considerable period. National Park Service librarians and archivists and even the superintendent of DETO went out of their way to help us obtain primary materials, for example by scanning monthly and annual reports written by the Custodian or Superintendent of the Monument. Other primary materials included letters to and from monument personnel. . Many of those records are located at Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Our principal investigator visited DETO in-person early in our investigations (July 2020), taking many photos of the landscape and selected documents. Our authors utilized reports and archeological surveys of Devils Tower National Monument, created by NPS personnel and by contracted researchers, some of which are available to the public online.

Documents available through the NPS ETIC system (Electronic Technical Information Center) provided much information on structures, buildings, and roads. Documents including letters and reports in Record Group 79 (National Park Service) at the National Archives in Lanham, Maryland, proved useful. We consulted numerous newspaper articles, as well as many books and journal articles available from academic libraries. We also utilized a limited number of oral histories aimed at gathering information on Native American perceptions of the Tower.

Photographs presented here originated in digital collections, including the Library of Congress Digital Collection, the David Rumsey Map Collection, Wyoming State Historical Archive Digital Collection, the National Park Digital Archive and Photograph Collection, and the Western History Collection at the Denver Public Library. The photographs help illustrate over 100 years of history at the Monument and include a map of the region from early federal scouting missions. Maps of that era depict 'Mato Tipila' or Bear Lodge labeled clearly in the Northwestern portion of the Black Hills. Other photos of note include photographs of Superintendent Newell Joyner and his family, as well as photographs of the Tower itself over time. Janet Ore photographed images of monument documents and places in 2020.



## Documentary Research

We looked at reports and books found in the small library located at Devils Tower National Monument. Mount Rushmore National Memorial has an archival facility that houses many records associated with Devils Tower NM, but it was closed for renovations and further delayed by the COVID pandemic. We accessed important documents digitally, including letters between NPS officials and monthly superintendent reports, thanks to expert support and lots of digital scanning by park archivist and museum specialist Zane Martin and the professional assistance of Devils Tower Monument Interim Superintendent Russell Cash. Our principal writer Dan Zizzamia visited the National Archives (NARA) in College Park, Maryland, a month before the facility closed to research due to the Covid pandemic.

## Secondary Resources

A great variety of books and articles proved very helpful in assembling this Historical Resource Study (please see bibliography). Historians, archeologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, geologists, and geographers all publish in professional journals providing rich information sources. Other secondary sources included professional studies and reports conducted by various researchers for the Park Service.

Reports produced by the National Park Service to assess compliance and management needs of the parks provided another sort of secondary resource that is very significant. For example, the NPS “Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment” for Devils Tower National Monument (2019) assembled a great deal of disparate information in one place. This is an excellent resource for thinking about next steps for DETO in historic resource management.<sup>1</sup> Another example of a valuable compilation of information about historical structures at the Monument can be found in a 2004 assessment of historic structures at Devils Tower.<sup>2</sup>

Archeologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers have revealed a fair amount of information about prehistoric as well as historic era Native American habitation, travel, and use of resources within and near Devils Tower National Monument. In the 1930s, anthropologist Ralph Beals considered how ethnological information might be interpreted for the public at Devils Tower.<sup>3</sup> Also in the 1930s, local entrepreneur Dick Stone took an interest in Devils Tower and Native Americans of the region. He sought out their origin stories of the Tower and compiled an unpublished manuscript by 1935.

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, “Devils Tower National Monument Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment,” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, May 2019, <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/crsa-2019.pdf> accessed August 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Architecture 2000 P.C., “Historic Structure Report and Historic Structure Assessment, Devils Tower National Monument, Devils Tower Wyoming,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Intermountain Support Office, 2004. [IRMA #2267032].

<sup>3</sup> Ralph L. Beals, “Report on the Possibilities for Ethnological Exhibits at Devil’s Tower National Monument in Wyoming,” National Park Service, March 20, 1934. Dick Stone, “History of Devils Tower and Northeastern Wyoming Including a Number of Indian Legends. 1804-1934,” 1935; Wyoming State Archives; see also Shirl [Shirley Rathbun], *First Encounters: Indian Legends of Devils Tower*, Unknown Place: Sand Creek Printing, 1982.

Several archeological surveys revealed tools and projectile points around the Tower, indicating long periods when aboriginal peoples utilized resources, hunted, camped, and visited the Tower. In 1979, archeologist Bruce Jones led a team carrying out a professional survey at the Monument.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1990s, a team from the University of South Dakota accomplished an extensive survey of archeological resources at the Monument and evaluated those resources for possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>5</sup>

Ethnographers have made important contributions to our understanding of human relationships with the Tower. Hanson and Moore's 1993 study of ritual and recreational use of the Tower resulted partly from increasing Native American visits to the Tower for spiritual purposes.<sup>6</sup> In 1990, the National Park Service commissioned a study to "document those values held by Indian peoples who consider Devils Tower important to their cultural traditions," resulting in an invaluable 1997 ethnographic overview and assessment by Hanson and Chirinos.<sup>7</sup> This work was updated in 2008 by Harkin and Chapman, providing an informative document for understanding (among other things) issues with using oral histories and challenges for NPS-Tribal relations.<sup>8</sup> In considering the name of Bear Lodge/Devils Tower, White's work in 1998 examined ethnotoponymy, an ethnographic way of looking at cultural naming practices in relation to Devils Tower National Monument.<sup>9</sup>

For general ethnographical and ethnohistorical information on the Black Hills, we utilized an excellent study by Albers et al., "The Home of the Bison," produced by the NPS and the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota.<sup>10</sup>

### **Field Visits, and Remote Research**

Our Principal Investigator, Janet Ore, visited Devils Tower NM in July of 2020 as travel restrictions descended during the early days of the Covid pandemic. The principal author conducted much subsequent research for this Historic Resource Survey remotely, facilitated by NPS staff scanning materials and making them available to us digitally. The National Park

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce A. Jones, "Archeological Survey at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," 1979 Investigations, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, NE, December 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Brian L. Molyneaux, Nancy J. Hodgson, and Rachel M. Hinton, "The Archeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming 1997-1998," University of South Dakota, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffery Hanson and David Moore, "Ritual and Recreational Perception and Use at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming: An Applied Ethnographic Study," National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, March 17, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffery R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Harkin and Fred Chapman, "Update of Ethnographic Overview of Devils Tower National Monument," University of Wyoming Department of Anthropology, NPS Cooperative Agreement, June 13, 2008, 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> David R.M. White, *Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument Wyoming* (Santa Fe, NM: Applied Cultural Dynamics, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Patricia C. Albers, Christina Berndt, Elizabeth Brown, Yvonne Kelly, Vanessa Kittleson, Kim Rossina, Stacy Schlegel, Andrea Yardley, "The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographical and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park," The Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota, National Park Service, September 29, 2003.

Service maintains a digital resource base, known as Integrated Resource Management Applications (IRMA), which we utilized. Also, we employed the Electronic Technical Information Center (e-TIC) system of the NPS to locate records of interest. We accessed some pictures online at the NPS Historic Photograph Collection, made available by the NPS Harpers Ferry Center.

## ACRONYMS

BP	Before Present
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era (replaces <i>Anno Domini</i> )
CLI	Cultural Landscape Inventory
CRSA	Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment
DETO	Devils Tower National Monument
ETIC	Electronic Technical Information Center
GLO	General Land Office
HRS	Historic Resource Study
IMFA	Intermountain Field Area
MORU	Mount Rushmore National Memorial
MPR	Multi-Park Repository
MPDF	Multiple Property Documentation Form
MYA	Million Years Ago
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NM	National Monument
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRIS	National Register Information System
OIRV	Other Important Resources and Values
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TCP	Traditional Cultural Property
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
Tower	The Tower formation at Devils Tower National Monument
YBP	Years Before Present

## TERMS

Inyan Kara	A mountain and sacred place to the southeast of DETO
Očhéthi Šakówiŋ	Sioux (also <i>Oceti Yakowin</i> )
the Tower	The Tower formation at Devils Tower National Monument
Wakan Tanka	The Great Mystery
Wašíču	White people

## Graphics



Figure 2. Map showing location of Devils Tower National Monument, in the northeast corner of Wyoming. (Courtesy NPS).



Figure 3. Devils Tower National Monument is located on the west edges of the Black Hills, in northeast Wyoming, to the southwest of Hulett, on the Belle Fourche River. (Courtesy NPS).

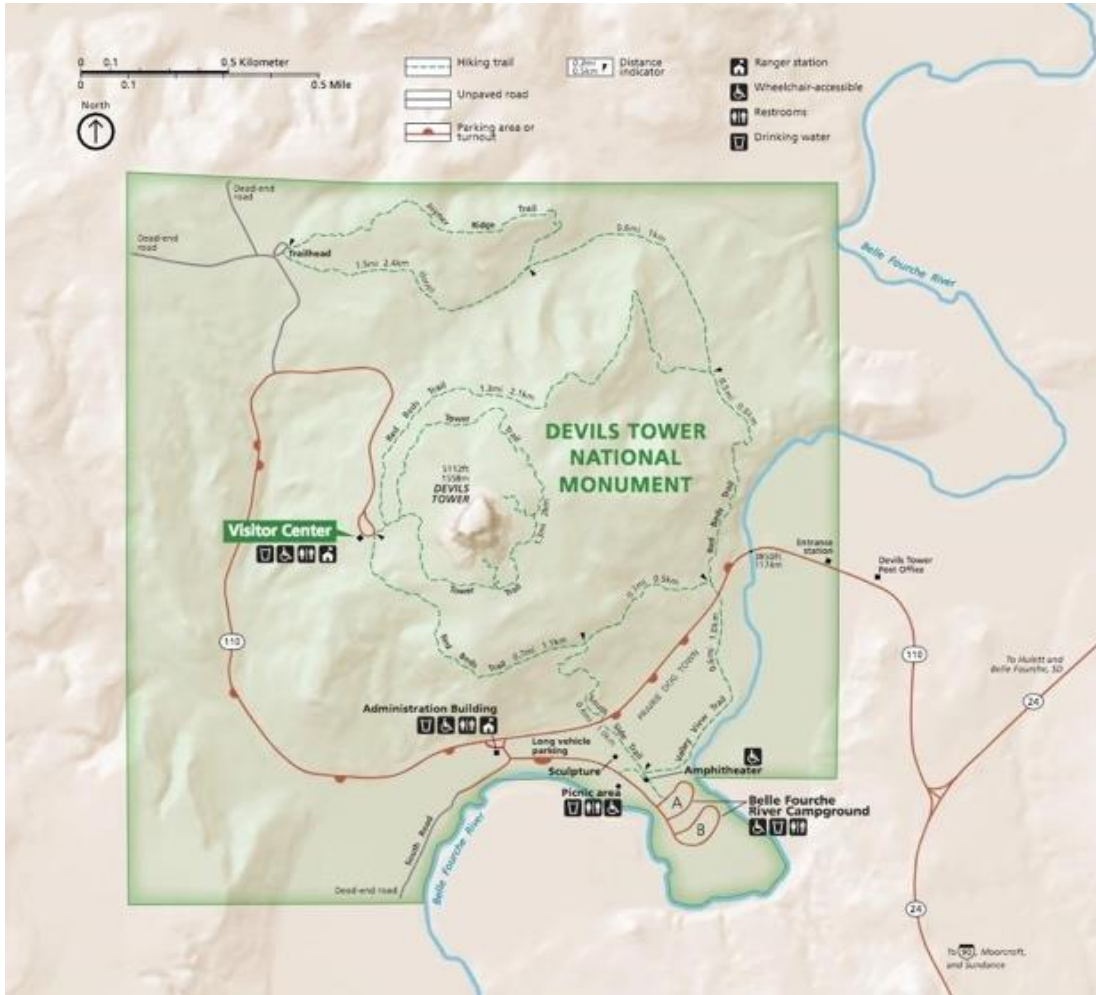


Figure 4. Map of Devils Tower National Monument. (Courtesy NPS).

## CHAPTER ONE: Emergence from the Plains: Geology of the Tower, 225 MYA-present.

People cannot help but wonder how this magnificent tower of rock came to exist. Two very different sorts of stories explain this grand geological phenomenon. This chapter describes the Western scientific view of the Tower's origins. In the second chapter, we will relate the Native American origin story of a great bear clawing at the forming rock and a divine rescue that resulted in the Tower formation's notable structure. The geological phenomenon of the Tower is the central, dominant resource of Devils Tower National Monument, and its exceptional physicality justified its designation as a national monument.

The geology of the Tower is particularly important because the Tower is a place where visitors can touch geologic time and because this remarkable geology shapes human interpretations and interactions with the landscape. Native Americans found particular meaning not only in the entire formation but in fossils too, while modern climbers find personal challenges among the remains of millions of years of earth history. More than an imposing formation of rock, the Tower takes on the role of a shrine, a particularly special place. As monument Superintendent Newell F. Joyner wrote of visitors in 1946, "They have gained inspiration. They have been drawn out of the mundane and fleeting affairs of man, measured in minutes, and for a while been lifted to the timeless realm of magnificent nature whose perpetuity of plan is but slightly and temporarily affected by the idiosyncrasies of man and the 'catastrophic' situations he develops."<sup>1</sup>

Today, this igneous monolith is one of the most recognizable landmarks on the Northern Plains. The Tower rises abruptly from its forested and grassy surroundings to 1,546 m (5,070 ft) above mean sea level. From the Belle Fourche River, it climbs 386 m (1,267 ft). The base of the Tower is about 244 m (800 ft) in diameter. Rising from the base, polygonal columns resemble logs of stone stacked vertically, the tallest example of columnar jointing in the world. The columns are arresting to behold and add to the mysterious nature of the Monument. It is this characteristic that ties many Native American sacred narratives to the Tower and attracts rock climbers. Like giant trees or a rock cleaved by the claw marks of a giant creature, the columns taper as they ascend to form the Tower along with their neighbors. The larger columns begin at about 1.8-2.4 m (6-8 ft) in diameter and taper to 1.3 m (4 ft) at the top. Collectively, the steep sides composed by these columns rise almost vertically for about 12-30 m (40-100 ft) and then begin to slope a bit more gently to create a narrow bench. As one's eye ascends beyond the bench, the sides of the Tower become steep once again and achieve angles of about 75° to over 85°. This continues until approximately 30 m (100 ft) of the summit where the angle becomes less acute and meets the rounded top edge of the Tower. This trip from base to top is about 183m

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument, A History* (National Park Service, Devils Tower Natural History Association, 2009), 12; see also Newell Joyner, Monthly Reports, 1946, DETO 1667, MORU MPR.

(600 ft) of vertical travel to a summit that is relatively flat. The summit is approximately 55 m (180 ft) from east to west and 90 m (300 ft) from north to south.<sup>2</sup> In 1907, as newspapers spread news of the creation of Devils Tower National Monument, one of the most widely circulated stories noted, “The top of the tower is large enough in area for a baseball team to play and is covered with scant soil formed from the disintegrated rock and bearing moss, cactus and ferns.”<sup>3</sup>

## Geologic History and Stratigraphy

The Monument is located on the northwestern edge of the Black Hills, and it shares its geologic history with that region.<sup>4</sup> The core of the Black Hills is composed of very old rock that lies atop ancient 2,500 million-year-old Archean basement rock. They are made up of Precambrian sediments (mostly Early Proterozoic from around 1,600-2,500 million years ago (mya) that were once 14 km (9 mi) underground.<sup>5</sup> These ancient sediments sat under the weight of younger Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic sediments. Resting deep below the earth’s surface under layers of younger sediments, intense heat and pressure metamorphosed the Precambrian sediments into rock. Around the same time, magma enveloped and infiltrated the Precambrian sediments that were becoming rock.<sup>6</sup> The sedimentary rocks that formed above these far more ancient sediments were largely the result of watery environments, and the successive seas that once covered the region became what is now known as northeastern Wyoming.<sup>7</sup>

The Cretaceous-Tertiary uplifting / mountain-building event / period that formed the Rocky Mountains known as the Laramide Orogeny (~70-40 mya) elevated these metamorphosed sediments along with the neighboring and intruded igneous rock (the magma). Over geologic time, erosion worked to expose the 105 by 200 km (125 by 65 mi) oval-shaped (elliptical dome) Black Hills that we see today. Encircling this ancient core are younger sedimentary layers that form concentric rings known to the Lakota as “The Racetrack.”<sup>8</sup> Today, the Black Hills area is an approximately 2 million-acre forested mountain range that occupies southwest South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming. Thus, at the core of the Black Hills sits Precambrian rocks that are

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<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, Natural Resource Program Center, “Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report,” Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/GRD/NRR – 2008/046, September, 2008, 1, 13.

<sup>3</sup>“Public Land,” Bisbee *Daily Review*, Arizona, May 10, 1907, pg 5.

<sup>4</sup> Charles S. Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” Department of the Interior, *Geological Survey Bulletin* 1020-1, 1956, 289-302, see 299.

[https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/deto/contents.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/deto/contents.htm), accessed October 2022; This volume was updated by the NPS and republished by the Devils Tower National History Association in 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Precise dating is extremely difficult in the Black Hills “due to the complex geology and lack of precise age control for the metasedimentary rocks of the Black Hills.” Geologic Resources Division, Natural Resource Program Center, “Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report,” Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/GRD/NRR – 2008/046, September 2008, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Geologic Resources Division, , “Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report,” 19.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 299.

<sup>8</sup> Linea Sundstrom, “The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 185-212.



surrounded by (encircled by) Paleozoic and Mesozoic sedimentary strata.<sup>9</sup> Standing like a sentry on the edge of the Black Hills, the Tower shares this geologic history. It is both a product of the igneous activity that occurred during the Laramide Orogeny and the erosive forces that were factors in uncovering the region's geohistory.

### *Permian through Triassic*

As the supercontinent Pangea was forming and the Middle Permian was coming to a close, "shallow marine clastics of the lower Spearfish Formation were deposited in the Black Hills and Devils Tower region."<sup>10</sup> At this time, what was to become the Monument was regularly inundated by shallow saltwater seas and periodic coastal environments and was characterized by a hot arid climate like the salt flats of the Persian Gulf region. Pangea had consolidated by the Early Triassic when the Spearfish Formation continued to be formed as the result of a transgressing sea, fluvial systems, isolated bodies of water, and high evaporation rates. The sediments of these ancient waters later became the lower sections of the four hundred feet of exposed red, yellow, green, and gray sedimentary rocks that surround Devils Tower.<sup>11</sup>

The oldest rocks that are visible within the bounds of the Monument are sedimentary rocks that were formed at the bottom of a shallow inland sea. Throughout the Triassic period (~225-195 mya), this sea was constantly in flux and inundated what was to become portions of the Great Plains and the western United States. The sand, silt, and clay that these waters deposited mixed with iron-rich minerals. As the sea receded, it left deposits of dark red sandstone and maroon siltstone interbedded with mudstone or shale. These deposits weather easily and crop out along the southern and northeastern parts of the Monument. They are most visible from the Red Beds Trail along the Belle Fourche River and represent what geologists call the Spearfish Formation. They are known for their red appearance which is the result of the oxidation (rust) of iron-rich minerals.<sup>12</sup>

The Red Beds and Joyner Ridge Trails allow visitors to experience geologic time by coming in close contact with the stratigraphy representing ancient environments. The Red Beds Trail is named after the Red Beds of the Spearfish Formation that are the oldest visible rocks within the Monument's boundaries. Unsurprisingly, these Red Beds are not limited to the Monument's grounds. They are a part of a sedimentary formation that is a layer 500-mile in circumference visible in places throughout the Black Hills that the Lakotas refer to as the "The Race Track" and consider a cosmologically central sacred space where a great race between the plains' four-legged and flying creatures took place, determining in the end that the Lakota could

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<sup>9</sup> Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report," 3, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report," 20.

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, "Geology of Devils Tower," 294; Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report," 3.

<sup>12</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, "Geologic Formations," <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/nature/geologicformations.htm>, accessed September 2020; Robinson, "Geology of Devils Tower," 294-295; Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/nature/tower-formation.htm>, accessed September 2020.

enter the Black Hills. Today, Native American youth participate in an annual Sacred Hoop Run, a relay covering over 500 miles in 5 days which celebrates this cultural origin story.<sup>13</sup>

## The Jurassic

When the Triassic came to an end, the continents composing Pangea began to disband and migrate to their present positions. At this turbulent tectonic time, what was to become the American West witnessed a period of uplift and erosion. A Jurassic seaway washed across the western interior of North America. This shallow sea was “bordered to the west by a rising mountain range caused by the Sevier Orogeny and to the east by the stable North American craton.” In their ancestral state, the Rocky Mountains blocked this seaway from flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. The Sundance Sea was an inland extension of the Arctic Ocean (“in some areas, the seaway may have been less than 500 km (300 mi) wide”) that periodically inundated the warm and dry Monument region.<sup>14</sup>

The Spearfish Formation sits below the Gypsum Springs Formation originating during the Jurassic Period. The Gypsum Spring Formation was also the product of the presence of a western sea. As this mineral rich sea retreated and evaporated, deposits of whitish gypsum were formed in its wake. This formation is visible as a thin (the thickness of the formation is between 15-35 ft) and almost continuous band around southwest to northeast sides of the Tower. It can also be found near the top of a hill on the eastern boundary of the Monument, a few hundred feet north of the Monument’s entry station. This white gypsum sedimentary layer provides a contrasting layer in between the Spearfish Formation red beds and the Sundance Formation gray-green shales.<sup>15</sup>

Like the periods preceding and following it, the Jurassic West (c. 195-140 mya) was characterized by shifting seas that came and went in response to climactic and geological processes. Deep marine environments created conditions for the formation of off-shore clay deposits that became gray-green shales. These Jurassic age shales were interbedded with fine-grained calcareous sandstones, fossiliferous limestones, and thin beds of red mudstone. Hidden within this sedimentary layer lay the fossilized remains of ancient sea life.<sup>16</sup>

At Devils Tower, the Sundance Formation exemplifies the Jurassic Period and consists of four members (from ancient to more recent) named the Stockade Beaver Shale Member, the Hulett Sandstone Member, the Lak Member, and the Redwater Shale Member. A member is a group of horizons and beds sharing common characteristics subdividing a formation. The interbedded sedimentary rocks incorporating ancient marine fossils represent the Stockade

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<sup>13</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Geologic Formations”; Mark Jenkins, “Devils Tower, Sacred Space,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 89 (Winter 2013): 232-237.

<sup>14</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report,” 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 295.

<sup>16</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed,” and “Geologic Formations,” park webpages.

Beaver Member of the Sundance Formation at the Monument.<sup>17</sup> In general, this member is not well exposed. The best exposures of the lower part of the member can be viewed “on the hill at the east boundary of the Monument and along the steep slope south of the Tower. The upper part is fairly well exposed on the south side of the ridge north of the Tower, near the north boundary of the Monument. The member has a thickness of 85 to 100 feet.”<sup>18</sup>

The Sundance Formation is also represented at the Monument by the Hulett Sandstone and Lak Members. The Hulett Sandstone is yellow and fine-grained and relates back to ancient sandy beaches (symmetrical ripples representing the movement of ancient sand are preserved in this rock). The Hulett Sandstone outcrops are resistant to weathering and are the almost vertical cliffs that appear to encircle the Tower’s base. The Lak Member also encircles the Tower. However, it weathers quite easily into rounded slopes that become covered in vegetation. It is composed of sandstone and siltstone and a small amount of gray-green sandy shale partings. It is most visible, “on the steep hill east of the Tower and northwest of the bridge across from the Belle Fourche River.” The Lak Member is predominantly yellow to yellowish brown with occasional shades of red.<sup>19</sup>

The youngest member of the Sundance Formation, the Redwater Shale Member, also encircles the Tower. However, the talus from the Tower often conceals its presence. Where talus is not present, the Redwater Shale is still poorly exposed because it also weathers easily and becomes covered in vegetation. It can be seen best on Fossil Hill in the northwest corner of the Monument. The Redwater Shale is composed primarily of light gray to dark-grey-green soft shale, but it is also contains yellow soft sandstone and fossiliferous limestone. Two beds of fossiliferous limestone from the Redwater Shale exist on Fossil Hill. In general, the Sundance Formation features marine fossils such as clams, oysters, and belemnites.<sup>20</sup>

## Origins of the Tower

While the Tower itself is igneous in origin (beginning as hot magma), geologists agree that relatively horizontal sedimentary strata surrounds the Tower. More specifically, the Tower sits near the middle of a collapsed dome containing gentle rolls, folds, basins, domes, and three faults. The Tower is “intruded gray, coarsely crystalline igneous rock that is harder and, therefore, more resistant to erosion than the adjacent, slightly dipping sedimentary rocks.” It is “polygonally jointed,” and the joints have “nearly vertical surfaces” that create the grooved appearance of the Tower. The Tower is composed of a rare crystalline igneous rock known as phonolite porphyry. Phonolite is a fine-grained igneous rock made up of mostly mineral

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<sup>17</sup> Charles S. Robinson and Robert E. Davis, *Geology of Devils Tower National Monument* (Devils Tower Natural History Association, 1995): 14-19; This was an updated version of Robinson’s 1956 work. Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 22.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 296.

<sup>19</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Park, “How the Tower Formed”; Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 22; Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 296-297.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 297-300; See also Justin S. Tweet and Vincent L. Santucci, “Devils Tower National Monument Paleontological Resources Inventory” (Non-Sensitive Version), (National Park Service, Fort Collins Colorado, August 2019).

feldspar, and a porphyry has coarse crystals mixed with fine-grained material. The weathered rock surfaces of the phonolite are a light or brownish gray. Lichens living on the rock face can also lend the phonolite a green, yellowish green, or brown color.<sup>21</sup>

The Tower intrusion formed after the close of the Cretaceous Period when the Western Cretaceous Interior Seaway (WCIS) had receded from this region of Wyoming. The watery west had come to an end, and the transition to the Tertiary (Paleogene) Period came with a burst of tectonic activity and volcanism that formed many of the West's most iconic places.

At the close of the Cretaceous Period, as the Earth entered the Tertiary Period (or Paleogene), the American West underwent an incredible transformation. After spending millions of years under and adjacent to shifting seas, the iconic mountainous topography of the West began to take shape. Up came the Rocky Mountains and the Black Hills. Ancient Precambrian basement rocks were thrust towards the earth's surface which may have created deep fractures in the crust that became pathways for intruding magma. Across the Black Hills, this initial phase of tectonism (62mya) caused the formation of stocks, dikes, sills, and laccoliths. "Near the end of the Eocene, magma approached or perhaps reached the surface. Devils Tower and Missouri Buttes were emplaced about 40 ma and 50 mya, respectively." The Tower began to form by magma (molten rock) intruding into the sedimentary rock layers discussed above. Erosion did the rest. The most obvious erosive actor was the Belle Fourche River and its tributaries which played a major role in revealing the Tower and continue to cut away at its south flank. Although there are no Cretaceous or Tertiary sedimentary rocks currently exposed at the Monument, they can be found exposed northwest of the Tower at the Little Missouri Buttes where Cretaceous strata and the Oligocene White River Formation are present.<sup>22</sup>

After well over a century of scientific research, geologists continue to debate precisely how the tower was formed. It could either be a "remnant of a volcano that reached the surface of the Earth or a small intrusion of magma that never made it to the surface." It may even have a similar geologic history as other intrusions on the north side of the Black Hills. "Some believe the tower is the remnant of a volcanic neck. Others believe the phonolite porphyry that comprise the Tower is the remnant of a laccolith or sill. Another view holds that the Tower is the remains of a lopolith; igneous material that once filled a shallow structural depression."<sup>23</sup>

The park newsletter presents three major geological possibilities on the origins of the Tower formation, which sum up the more detailed and nuanced explanations geologists offer for

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<sup>21</sup> R.F. Diffendal, *Great Plains Geology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), quotes on 91; Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed"; Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower Evaluation Report," 2.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Francis Zizzamia, "Making the West Malleable: Coal, Geohistory, and Western Expansion, 1800-1920," (PhD Dissertation, Montana State University, 2015); Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed"; Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower Evaluation Report," 1-3, quote on 22; William L. Effinger, "A Report on the Geology of Devils Tower National Monument," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Field Division of Education, Berkeley, CA, 1934, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Diffendal, *Great Plains Geology*, "remnant" quote on 91; Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower Evaluation Report," "some believe" quote on 1.

how the Tower formed and how the Tower relates to the surrounding geology. As early as the late 1800s, Euro-American geologists and explorers debated the origins of the monolith, but a more thorough explanation waited for more detailed analyses and new scientific tools and methods.<sup>24</sup>

In the late 1800s, geologists such as F.R. Carpenter (1888) and I.C. Russell (1896) proposed that the Tower is a volcanic plug, plutonic plug, or the neck of an extinct volcano.<sup>25</sup> They argued it was once part of an ancient volcano filled with magma that cooled and contracted, and the extinct volcano eroded away. Russell set this hypothesis against the idea of a laccolith, described earlier by G.K. Gilbert for the Henry Mountains (1877). One of the primary challenges to this theory is that there is little to no evidence of volcanic activity in the surrounding area. While it is possible that this evidence has simply eroded away, scientists would be more certain of this theory if there were more signs of volcanic ash, lava flows, and volcanic debris. Nevertheless, “[t]he volcanic-neck hypothesis is still favored by many geologists.”<sup>26</sup>

Doubts about the “plutonic plug” thesis arose soon after Russell’s contribution. Pirsson wrote in 1898 that Russell’s hypothesis lacked sufficient evidence and that the Tower was more likely a laccolith. A laccolith is a “large, mushroom-shaped mass of igneous rock which intrudes between the layers of sedimentary rocks but does not reach the surface.” The result from such an intrusion was a bulge that pushed from below the sedimentary rocks which later eroded away to reveal today’s Tower. In 1901, T.A. Jaggar argued that the Tower was a laccolith that was once an eastward extension of the Little Missouri Buttes. He believed that these two geologic features shared a common origin that began under the Buttes but that erosion had since destroyed the evidence of their connection. Writing in 1907, N.H. Darton and C.C. O’Hara also theorized that the Tower was an eroded remnant of a laccolith, albeit smaller in size than Jaggar’s and centered under the monolith or its talus.<sup>27</sup>

This theory had a competitive advantage over others in the early 1900s due to the considerable number of studies of laccoliths that were being performed in the American

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<sup>24</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed.”

<sup>25</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 13; Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 300-301; Effinger, “A Report on the Geology,” 10; F.R. Carpenter, “Notes on the Geology of the Black Hills: Preliminary Report of the Dakota School of Mines,” Rapid City, SD, 1888; I.C. Russell, “Igneous Intrusions in the Neighborhood of the Black Hills of Dakota,” *Journal Geology*, 4 (1896).

<sup>26</sup> G.K. Gilbert, “Geology of the Henry Mountains,” Department of Interior, U. S. Geographical & Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountains Region, Washington Government Printing Office, 1877; Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed”; Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” “hypothesis” quote on 13.

<sup>27</sup> V.L. Pirsson, “Description of the Character of the Igneous Rocks Making up Mato Teepee and the Little Missouri Buttes,” *American Journal of Science*, vol. XLVII (1894): 341-346; V.L. Pirsson and W.H. Weed, “Geology and Mineral Resources of the Judith Mountains, Montana,” 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, U.S. Geological Survey, pt. 3, 1898; “Lacolith” quote from National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed”; T. A. Jaggar, “Laccoliths of the Black Hills,” 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Report U.S. Geological Survey, pt. 3, 1901; N.H. Darton and C.C. O’Hara, “Description of the Devils Tower quadrangle, Wyoming,” U.S. Geological Survey, Geological Atlas, folio 150, 1907; Effinger, “A Report on the Geology,” 10-12; Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 13; Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 300-301.

Southwest.<sup>28</sup> The laccolith theory was also supported by William L. Effinger of the NPS Field Division of Education. In 1934, he wrote a paper concerning the “Geology of Devils Tower National Monument” that was “one of several prepared by a special research group employed under the Civil Works Program of 1933-1934.” The purpose of the report was to collect “pertinent information as will be helpful in the preparation of geological museum exhibits at Devils Tower National Monument and more specifically to outline the story to be interpreted by such exhibits. It is thus designed to aid museum preparators and Park Naturalists.” He concluded the report by stating, “it would seem most reasonable to believe that Devils Tower represents a remnant of a laccolith, probably rather small in comparison with others of the Black Hills, and separate from the Laccolith of the Little Missouri Buttes. It would seem probable that the duct through which the igneous material was injected lies beneath the tower or the talus.”<sup>29</sup>

During the summer of 1954, Charles S. Robinson explored the geology of the Tower as a part of a U.S. Geological Survey study in collaboration with the National Park Service. The bulletin that he produced was a part of a larger project analyzing the geology of the northern and western parts of the Black Hills region conducted by the Survey on behalf of the Division of Raw Materials of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.<sup>30</sup> In the 1956 bulletin pertaining exclusively to the Tower, Robinson noted that more work had to be done “before the mode of origin of Devils Tower may be proved conclusively.” Nevertheless, he hypothesized that the monolith was “a body of intrusive igneous rock, which was never much larger in diameter than the present base of the Tower, and which at depth (1,000 feet or more) is connected to a sill or laccolith type body.”<sup>31</sup>

In 2015, geologists led by Prokop Závada hypothesized that the Tower was similar enough to a butte formation in the Czech Republic to warrant a direct comparison. Using this comparative method, they proposed that the Tower was the result of a maar-diatreme volcano. These occur when magma meets groundwater beneath the Earth’s surface. Confined underground, the water becomes superheated and turns to steam that expands explosively to create a crater on the surface. A path to the surface now exists for the magma and the resulting crater becomes a home for lava (magma that is no longer underground) to pool and become a dome-like structure. Over many thousands of years, erosion worked away at parts of the dome to create the Tower. A similar hypothesis was proposed by Kiver and Harris in 1999, indicating that some geologists are now finding it possible that the Tower had an extremely violent past, followed by a long period of erosion.<sup>32</sup>

A 2008 NPS geological study of the Tower succinctly states the issue at hand with these competing theories: “While all of the origin hypotheses explain most of the observed features, no

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<sup>28</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed.”

<sup>29</sup> William L. Effinger, “A Report on the Geology of Devils Tower National Monument,” forward, 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 291.

<sup>31</sup> Robinson, “Geology of Devils Tower,” 301.

<sup>32</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed”; E.P. Kiver and D.V. Harris, *Geology of U.S. Parklands*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999); Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 14.

hypothesis explains all of the observed geologic data.”<sup>33</sup> It is an irony that evidence needed to conclusively support one of the theories probably has eroded away. Regardless of its precise origins, however, the columns themselves speak to the igneous origins of the monolith.

The tower formation is remarkable in exhibiting the largest example of columnar jointing in the world--the size and height of the columns is unparalleled. The columns, moreover, are unique to igneous rocks, forming when molten rock cools and contracts. As they cool, the rocks begin to crack in hexagonal patterns along stress points. Not all columnar jointing creates perfect hexagons, and at Devils Tower there are irregularities such as pentagonal columns and those of irregular shape. Geologists are unclear as to why columnar jointing variations exist, but one possibility at the Tower is its massive size. On the Tower, the columns are almost vertical in the middle and upper regions, but the joints are most well-developed in the middle of the monolith. “The larger columns measure 1.8-2.4 m (6-8 ft) in diameter at their base and taper gradually upward to about 1.2 m (4 ft) at the top.”<sup>34</sup> At the top, the columns taper upward and some unite, while at the base they flare out and merge.

### **Little Missouri Buttes and the Tower**

According to several geologists, the Little Missouri Buttes share their geologic story with the Tower. These four buttes sit about three-and-a-half miles to the northwest of the Tower and are named after the Little Missouri River that has its headwaters nearby. Two of the Buttes are higher in elevation than the Tower and can be seen in the distance when gazing to the northwest on Monument grounds. They are composed of the same rock and exhibit columnar jointing, but they, according to the NPS, “lack the definitive appearance and grandeur of Devils Tower.”<sup>35</sup>

The Little Missouri Buttes have the same phonolite porphyry composition, and research completed since the 1950s supports the theory that the two formations are the remains of a laccolith and that they shared a common magma source. In 1980, PhD student Don L. Halvorson and former president of the Devils Tower Natural History Association wrote his dissertation on the “Geology and Petrology of the Devils Tower, Missouri Buttes, and Barlow Canyon Area, Crook County, Wyoming.” This study supported a one-hundred-year-old theory that the Buttes and the Tower are necks of extinct volcanoes that were exposed by erosion.<sup>36</sup> Because of their shared origins and geology, some advocates argued for inclusion of the Little Missouri Buttes in the monument boundaries. Even though talks resurfaced in 1991 along with a legislative

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<sup>33</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 14.

<sup>34</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “How the Tower Formed”; quote from Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report,” 13; see also Dutton, Carl Evans, and George Melvin Schwartz, “Notes on the Jointing of the Devil’s Tower, Wyoming.” *Journal of Geology* 44, no. 6 (1936): 717–28.

<sup>35</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, “Little Missouri Buttes,” <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/missouributtes.htm>, accessed November, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Don L. Halvorson, “Geology and Petrology of the Devils Tower, Missouri Buttes, and Barlow Canyon Area, Crook County, Wyoming,” (PhD dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1980); Mary Alice Gunderson, *Devils Tower: Stories in Stone* (Glendo, WY: High Plains Press, 1988), 25-26.

package, the extension never occurred, and the Little Missouri Buttes remain outside of the Monument boundary.<sup>37</sup> They endure, however, as part of the Tower's geologic story.

## **Erosion and Talus: Forces of Creation and Destruction**

The erosion that revealed the Tower is far more straight forward. However, that very erosion is responsible for the mysteries surrounding its true geologic origin. As the NPS website for the Monument notes, "Ironically, the erosion which exposed the Tower also erased the evidence needed to determine which theory of Devils Tower's formation is the correct one."<sup>38</sup>

All evidence indicates that the Tower formed underground around 50 million years ago. At that time, it is thought that it was about two miles below the surface under layers of sedimentary rock. About five to ten million years ago, the Tower began to emerge from the Earth thanks to erosive forces. The primary erosive force was water which washed away the sedimentary layers on top of the Tower. As the softer sedimentary rocks dissipated, the harder igneous rocks of the Tower withstood the erosive forces and began to appear to rise out of the Earth.<sup>39</sup> And, these forces have not ceased. Every day, as precipitation in the form of rain and snow fall on northeastern Wyoming, the sedimentary layers below the Tower flow into the Belle Fourche River and travel downstream. This means that more of the Tower's base will be revealed year-after-year. At the same time, however, the Tower is slowly eroding and more pieces of it will eventually be added to the landscape over which it stands watch (though no one has observed a "significant column fall in recorded history").<sup>40</sup>

Rocks resting at the base of the Tower speak to the geologically slow disintegration of the monolith. Talus is the term geologists use for the apron of eroded blocks that appear to have tumbled from the Tower and the surrounding Hulett Sandstone. The rocks resting below the monolith are landslide material from the Tower and the Hulett Sandstone as well as coarse-grained sedimentary rock formed by volcanic processes that geologists refer to as alloclastic breccia. The talus extends out from the Tower's base approximately 335 m (1,100 ft). It is thickest close to the monolith (46 m / 150 ft) and quickly thins out away from the Tower. The rock fragments found in this mass of eroded material range from a few centimeters in diameter to 2.4 m (8 ft) in diameter and 7.6 m (25 ft) long. Geologists hypothesize that hidden within the talus are three outcrops of phonolite--radiating igneous dikes that were part of the formation of the original uneroded Tower.<sup>41</sup>

The 13-acre boulder field below the Tower is a result of its regular weathering and erosion. Rocks ranging in size from school buses to pebbles mostly end up on the west and south faces of the Tower as they are weathered (broke apart) by the elements. The west and south faces are subject to the most sunlight exposure and bare the brunt of storm systems. Cracks in the

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<sup>37</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument; A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: Devils Tower Natural History Association, National Park Service, 2007), 149-150, 155, 162, 199.

<sup>38</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed."

<sup>39</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed."

<sup>40</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "How the Tower Formed" and Geologic Formations."

<sup>41</sup> Geologic Resources Division, "Devils Tower Evaluation Report," 2.



Tower rock are a natural part of the columnar jointing that characterizes the Tower. Sunlight adds to the cracking of the columns through thermal expansion. Freezing temperatures and the movement of water into these cracks create conditions for frost wedging. This is when water freezes and expands in the cracks and forces them to get wider and can eventually create conditions for the rock to split. Vegetation can do the same thing by wedging roots into rock cracks. Regular weather events such as rain, hail, and lightning contribute to weathering the rocks of the Tower and in the boulder field. Finally, the wind plays a less dramatic part in weathering by smoothing and rounding the columns and boulders like a river does to rocks in its path.<sup>42</sup>

Erosion and its driving force gravity pull down rocks ranging in size from massive to miniscule. These boulders and pebbles then roll down through the boulder field crashing into their neighbors. Many of the largest rock residents of the boulder field settled in their homes long ago and are covered in lichen, soil, and various species of local vegetation. Some pieces of the Tower have even made it over a quarter mile from the formation.<sup>43</sup>

The erosion inherent to the geophysical reality of the magnificent rock column was one of its character-defining features. The essential and central resource of the monument, the Tower formation followed its nature forward entropy.

## Geologic Challenges

### *The Temptation of Granite*

While the tower is an outstanding natural wonder, some Americans also viewed it as a useful and practical geological resource. Early on in its history as a national monument, the Tower was subject to speculation about its granite deposits. Beginning in 1910, only four years after its national monument status, news spread that granite from the monolith was extremely valuable and might be mined in the near future. Below a picture of the Tower, the *Crook County Monitor* reported that the “mountain of granite...may ultimately have an important bearing on the great granite industry of the United States, and especially the west.” Three local men headed to the Tower: a sheriff, an alderman, and his brother-in-law who was “an expert granite man who has had thirty years’ experience in the famous granite quarries of Vermont.” So massive that it “is plainly discernable from the railroad at Moorcroft, a distance of fifty miles,” the Tower had been assessed by other experts. They claimed that “an inexhaustible supply of granite” lay tributary to the Tower and when paired with the granite contained within the monolith itself, the supply “equals in quality the millions of dollars worth of granite that has been taken from the quarries of Vermont and sent to nearly every quarter of the globe.” These experts also noted that the Monument was the only place in the United States where “granite is as good as the product of the Vermont quarries.” An intriguing ending followed this dramatic news story. The paper noted that the Tower was on a “forest reservation of the United States,” but by this time it had been a

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<sup>42</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Geologic Formations.”

<sup>43</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Geologic Formations.”

national monument for four years. Because it was simply a forest reserve, “it is thought arrangements may be made to open granite quarries there if it can be shown that such a move would be in the interests of the people as a whole.”<sup>44</sup>

Decades later, wondering about the practical potential of so much granite lured even those tasked with protecting the Monument. Given Monument Custodian Newell Joyner’s constant references to the need for better roads in and around the Monument, it was perhaps inevitable that he would (at least momentarily and theoretically) see the Tower in terms of its use to solve one of his greatest management problems. In his February 1933 report, Joyner remarked:

Recent computations show that the weights of the columns making up the Tower are from 440 to 4400 Tons, with an average columns weighing 2200 Tons. Because of the lack of sufficiently accurate measurements, the weight of the whole mass of the Tower is impossible to determine satisfactorily. Information supplied by the San Francisco Office points out that sufficient crushed rock could be obtained from one average column (2200 T) to surface a road 9 feet wide for a distance of 5 ½ miles; or a road 16 feet wide for a distance of 3.2 miles. Some of the largest columns would surface a 9-foot road 11 miles; a 16-foot road 6.4 miles! No wonder our visitors can only gasp at the size of the structure.<sup>45</sup>

This was such an interesting fact that the Wyoming State Department of Commerce and Industry picked up the report and carried it three years later in a two-page leaflet that it published in May 1936. “It has also been estimated,” the pamphlet read, “that a single column with an average diameter of ten feet and length of five hundred fifty feet would, if crushed, provide enough material to surface more than four miles of sixteen-foot highway. The entire mass of the Tower would provide sufficient surfacing for a sixteen-foot roadway nine times around the world.”<sup>46</sup> The hyperbole in this publication was palpable, and it revealed where some minds traveled when they looked to the Tower. It was not simply a majestic spectacle to behold, or a sacred landmark, or a place to ponder your insignificance amidst the forces of nature; it could be put to use for the future progress of the nation. The Tower could be considered a raw material ready to be applied to a conceivable need. The area and the nation required improved roads. Furthermore, this was during the Great Depression when the general philosophy was waste not want not, and the Progressive utilitarian frame of mind persisted as a powerful force.

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<sup>44</sup> Quotes from the *Crook County Monitor*, Sundance, WY, February 11, 1910, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Newell Joyner, Monthly Report, February 1933, DETO 1622, DETO Records, at MORU Multi-Park Repository, hereafter cited as MORU MPR.

<sup>46</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Reports, June 13, 1936, for the months of March, April, and May, DETO 1625, MORU MPR, copy at DETO. The pamphlet was attached to the report: State Department of Commerce and Industry, “Devils Tower National Monument: ‘Mateo Tepee’ Over 20,000,000 Years Old,” Cheyenne, Wyoming, May 1936.

### *Climbing*

Climbing the Tower can physically affect it as a geological feature. The columns of the Tower attract over 4,000 climbers each year desiring to test their mettle against a world-renowned site for crack climbing. By 1996, these recreationalists had embedded approximately 600 metal bolts in the rock face along with several hundred metal pitons. As of 2008, the Tower had about 220 named routes. Furthermore, the act of climbing has social and ecological detriments. As will be discussed later, many tribes consider The Tower sacred and climbing the Tower a desecration of their holy site. Additionally, the many climbers who scale the Tower disturb nesting raptors, compromise the integrity of the rock, and affect its soil, vegetation, natural quiet, and physical appearance. To address some of these issues, the park staff developed a Final Climbing Management Plan in 1995 (updated in 2006) that prohibited the placement of new bolts or fixed pitons. It did, however, allow the replacement of existing bolts and fixed pitons as required for safety. To honor the wishes of the tribes that revere the Tower, the NPS implemented a voluntary June climbing closure (a particularly sacred month for many associated Tribes) and began a more intensive interpretive program targeted on educating visitors about the cultural significance of the Tower to Native Americans. For ecological protection, NPS personnel identify nesting sites in the spring and the climbing routes within view or within 50 m (160 ft) on either side of the nest and close those routes for the remainder of the nesting season. The plan also sought to rehabilitate access and summit trails and repair damage that climbers had on the soil and vegetation over the years.<sup>47</sup>

### *Rockfalls*

While no major rockfalls have occurred in recent history, ample proof of the potential lies below the Tower. The sloping mass of talus fragments encircling the Tower, the massive boulder field, and the “window” (the name for the area where a large section of the Tower is eroded away) are all evidence of the eventual fate of the fractured and jointed world-famous igneous phonolite porphyry columns. The Hulett Sandstone is also responsible for occasional rockfall in the form of rectangular blocks that break off from the cliffs and precipitate landslides down neighboring hills. Falling rocks caused by climbing is also a concern, but no injuries have been recorded because of rockfalls making contact with visitors. However, climbers report some injuries when struck by Tower fragments.<sup>48</sup>

Park administrators express some concern about a column known as the “Leaning Column” on the first pitch of the Durrance Route (one of the most popular routes on the Tower that sees about 1,100 climbers each year). Local experiential knowledge was responsible for identifying this potential problem in 2004. A Tower guide had observed that the column was moving and reported it. In June 2005, the USGS studied the column to assess the character of the column and determined this 26-foot long, 40-ton column a potential hazard. The geologists estimated that the column could remain in place for a couple of years up to hundreds of years. If

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<sup>47</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 8.

<sup>48</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 1, 8.

the column failed, it would topple into the large flat bench below and could injure any climber or hiker nearby. It also has the potential to destabilize other columns or rocks in its path.

Thankfully, Devils Tower National Monument climbing rangers monitor the leaning column for evidence of failure such as fresh phonolite rock surfaces, and they keep a photographic record of any changes that they see on or around the column. Park staff have also painted the surface of the column to more readily observe any changes.<sup>49</sup>

### *Erosion*

The very same high erosion rates of the sedimentary strata surrounding the Tower that revealed its majesty and that lend colorful character to its base are also problematic for infrastructure developments at the Monument. The hills and slopes that surround the Tower are composed red, yellow, gray, and green shale sedimentary units from the Permian, Triassic, and Jurassic Periods. They are made up of siltstone and sandstone along with white gypsum. These rocks in particular are poorly cemented and are easily eroded by natural forces. The soft nature of these units make erosion a factor in deciding how and where to build roads and buildings. Existing structures such as the Administration Building and the Visitor Center are already situated on the Redwater Shale Member of the Sundance Formation, and Route 10 also crosses through several soft shale and siltstone units. Consequently, it is important that park officials consider the highly erodible character of these geologic units when planning and constructing new structures and when maintaining existing structures.<sup>50</sup>

Erosion had already been a problem for structures such as the drainage ditches and culverts for Route 10 (the main entrance road). Heavy runoff from the rolling hills around the Tower can send silt and eroded material into ditches and culverts. This plugs up these vital, though often overlooked pieces of infrastructure that keep the roads free of debris and too much water.<sup>51</sup> During the 1930s, CCC enrollees sloped and vegetated the Monument roads to “help in the lessening of erosion and its attendant problems along a road.” They also worked against the erosion issues caused by the “overgrazing of domestic stock” around the Tower.<sup>52</sup> Custodian Newell Joyner regularly fought against the erosive forces of the Belle Fourche River. In the early 1930s, he was constantly trying to improve the bridge to secure it against the river’s onslaught, and “in connection with recommendations for immediate action in the matter of the further improvements at the Bridge Protection Project, a provisional survey was made and sketch maps

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<sup>49</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 8-9.

<sup>50</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 1, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 9. “The preferred alternative (3) of the General Management Plan (NPS 2001) addresses the rebed erosion issue. The preferred alternative proposes abandonment of two of the existing culverts (plugged and buried in place) and redirection of runoff into a new paved drainage swale running along the edge of the road, then under the road via two new trench drains and one existing culvert that will be maintained in place (fig. 9). The project is designed to create a landform that more closely resembles natural conditions. See Jim Cheatham, Chief of Resource Management, Devils Tower National Monument, written communication, March 30, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1935, DETO 1624, DETO/MORU MPR.

drawn up to more readily show the tendency of erosional action of flood waters.”<sup>53</sup> As Joyner knew well, the war against erosion is unrelenting at the Monument.

Though not currently an issue at the Monument, Gypsum Karst creates unstable conditions in the Black Hills region. The Gypsum Spring Formation, which is present around the Tower, has caused engineering problems and sinkholes in South Dakota. Historically, one particular gypsum sinkhole played a role in the subsistence of area residents. The nearby Vore Buffalo Jump is a sinkhole formed as a result of the highly erodible and dissolvable gypsum layers characteristic of this region. Located about halfway between Sundance, WY, and Spearfish, SD, it is the grave of about 4,000 bison killed over a period of 250 years.<sup>54</sup>

## **Paleontology**

The Monument is not a particularly fossiliferous site and is not known for any spectacular or unique specimens. However, there are still fossils found across the Tower grounds and the surrounding areas. Emerging from the Redwater Shale Member of the Sundance Formation are ancient clams, oysters, belemnites, and other marine creatures from a bygone age. No fossils have appeared in the Spearfish or Gypsum Spring Formations. Work on a new sewage disposal line in 1996-7 brought to light some subsurface belemnites in close proximity to an archeological site. Monument staff are aware of surface deposits of ammonites and belemnites and casually monitor them with little fear of theft from visitors. Fossils regularly erode and weather out of the banks of the Belle Fourche River and emerge occasionally from surface outcrops. The most fossil rich area is the aptly named Fossil Hill that lies northwest of the Tower.<sup>55</sup>

## **Conclusion: Geoheritage and the Tower**

Under the Antiquities Act, the nation conserved the Tower because it was a geological curiosity that had the potential to contribute to scientific knowledge. It was, as the proclamation stated, “such an extraordinary example of the effect of erosion in the higher mountains as to be a natural wonder and an object of historic and great scientific interest.” Maintaining this site’s geological integrity is key to the goals of geoheritage and geoconservation. The term geoheritage refers to sites that are “important for reconstructing Earth History,” and the logic of their preservation follows from the same reasoning for preserving archeological sites that reveal

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<sup>53</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, April 1933, DETO 1622, DETO/MORU MPR.

<sup>54</sup> Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 9; Alvis L. Lisenbee, “Vore Buffalo Jump: Geology”; “The Vore Buffalo Jump,” *WyoHistory.org*, November 8, 2014, <https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/vore-buffalo-jump>, accessed November 2022. See next chapter for more details.

<sup>55</sup> Steven L. De Vore, “Archeological Investigations of Sewage Line Project and Assessment of Cultural Resource Inventories of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming,” Steward and Partnership Team Rocky Mountain System Support Office Intermountain Field Area National Park Service, Denver, CO, 1996, 22; National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, “Devils Tower National Monument Statement for Management,” July 1986: 6, MORU MPR; Geologic Resources Division, “Devils Tower Evaluation Report,” 9.

human history.<sup>56</sup> Geoconservation is the conservation of geological sites of value that contribute to the geodiversity of a geographic region. The geological mystery of the Tower has yet to be conclusively solved and a more comprehensive understanding of what forces and processes created the monolith would contribute to the greater cause of reconstructing the Earth's history.<sup>57</sup> The Tower looms large as the first national monument to be established for what it illustrated regarding the Earth's history and geological processes.<sup>58</sup>

And yet, the geology of the Monument landscape extends beyond its boundaries. Many consider the Little Missouri Buttes as sharing the same origin story, and other features of the Black Hills emerged around the same time in the Earth's history as the Tower. Furthermore, the Monument must contend with the economic geology of the region. Coal, petroleum, and uranium are prime examples of geological resources in the surrounding areas that place the landscape and values of the Tower in peril.

The Tower is not simply a monumentalist representation of the nation's geologic transformations. It has been and remains a sacred place and nexus for Indigenous people. The Tower is a landmark with overlapping meanings and values – a meeting place of cultures that coalesce at times and conflict at others. The Tower shares this in common with other geologic landmarks such as the sacred Australian site at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.<sup>59</sup> The idea of a Sister Park relationship (the NPS lists over 40 such existing connections) has been suggested for Uluru and Devils Tower. Formerly known as Ayers Rock (a settler colonial appellation, named after the Chief Secretary of South Australia), Uluru is a sacred site for Aboriginal Australians who have recently won a victory (2019) in shutting down the geological landmark to climbing.<sup>60</sup> In 1985, the Australian government gave back title to the land to the Anangu who jointly manage the park with Parks Australia. Park interpreters must take seriously the sacred narratives surrounding the site and take a course designed at Charles Darwin University to ensure that they accurately convey the meanings of those stories. For many years, the park asked people to voluntarily refrain from climbing the sacred landmark, but now visitors to Uluru must respect this site and honor Aboriginal tjukurpa (traditional knowledge and philosophy).<sup>61</sup> Devils Tower National Monument currently asks climbers to refrain from ascending the sacred site for one

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<sup>56</sup> Murray Gray, "Geodiversity, Geoheritage and Geoconservation for Society," *International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks* 7 (2019): 232.

<sup>57</sup> National Park Service, "America's Geoheritage," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/geology/americas-geoheritage.htm> and National Park Service, "Geoconservation," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/geology/park-geology.htm>, both accessed November 2022.

<sup>58</sup> National Park Service Geologic Resources Division, and the American Geosciences Institute, "America's Geologic Heritage: An Invitation to Leadership," (August 2015), 16.

<sup>59</sup> National Park Service, "Foundation Document: Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (September 2014), <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/foundation-documents/deto-fd-2014.pdf>; This document indicated some thought towards establishing a sister park agreement with Uluru National Park.

<sup>60</sup> Devils Tower National Park, "Foundation Document," 2014; On Uluru park's history, see: History of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/uluru/discover/history/>, accessed March 2021.

<sup>61</sup> Kennedy Warne, "Why Australia is Banning Climbers from this Iconic Natural Landmark," *National Geographic*, September 15, 2019. Originally published in April/ May 2018 *National Geographic Traveler*.

month of the year, but it contends with a notable level of noncompliance. Time will tell what course the U.S. government and its citizens will take with the country's first national monument.

## **Known Resource Types**

**The Tower.** It is significant as a geological landscape feature, illustrating the history of the earth. Two major interpretations of its origin appeal to people's scientific curiosity and to their search for meaning.

**Fossils.** A significant number and variety of fossils have been found within Devils Tower National Monument. They had special significance to Native American peoples and still attract people's fascination. Early park managers collected fossils for the purpose of nature interpretation, and at times park staff have been concerned about tourists casually collecting specimens from the grounds. (See also pages 40, 137).

**The Little Missouri Buttes.** These formations lie to the North and have a related geological history to Devils Tower National Monument. They were notable landmarks to travelers and have been proposed for inclusion in DETO.

## Graphics

Eon	Era	Period	Epoch	MYA	Life Forms	North American Events						
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic (CZ)	Quaternary (Q)	Holocene (H)	0.01	Age of Mammals	Extinction of large mammals and birds Modern humans	Ice age glaciations; glacial outburst floods					
			Pleistocene (PE)	2.6								
		Tertiary (T)	Neogene (N)	Pliocene (PL)		5.3	Spread of grassy ecosystems	Cascade volcanoes (W) Linking of North and South America (Isthmus of Panama) Columbia River Basalt eruptions (NW) Basin and Range extension (W)				
				Miocene (MI)		23.0						
			Paleogene (PG)	Oligocene (OL)		33.9						
		Eocene (E)		56.0		Early primates	Laramide Orogeny ends (W)					
		Mesozoic (MZ)	Cretaceous (K)	Jurassic (J)		Triassic (TR)	Age of Reptiles	Placental mammals Early flowering plants Dinosaurs diverse and abundant	Laramide Orogeny (W) Western Interior Seaway (W) Sevier Orogeny (W) Nevadan Orogeny (W) Elko Orogeny (W)			
										201.3	Mass extinction First dinosaurs; first mammals Flying reptiles	Breakup of Pangaea begins
										251.9		
										Paleozoic (PZ)	Permian (P)	Pennsylvanian (PN)
	298.9	Mass extinction First amphibians First forests (evergreens)	Antler Orogeny (W) Acadian Orogeny (E-NE)									
	323.2											
	Devonian (D)	Silurian (S)	Ordovician (O)	Fishes	First land plants Mass extinction Primitive fish	Taconic Orogeny (E-NE)						
							358.9	Extensive oceans cover most of proto-North America (Laurentia)				
	Cambrian (C)	Marine Invertebrates	Cambrian (C)	485.4	Rise of corals Early shelled organisms							
							541.0					
	Proterozoic	Precambrian (PC, W, X, Y, Z)	Archean	Hadean	4600	Complex multicelled organisms	Supercontinent rifted apart Formation of early supercontinent Grenville Orogeny (E)					
	2500					Simple multicelled organisms	First iron deposits Abundant carbonate rocks					
	4000					Early bacteria and algae (stromatolites)	Oldest known Earth rocks					
					4600	Origin of life	Formation of Earth's crust					
				4600	Formation of the Earth							

Figure 5. Geologic Time Scale. (National Park Service Geologic Resources Inventory, 2018).



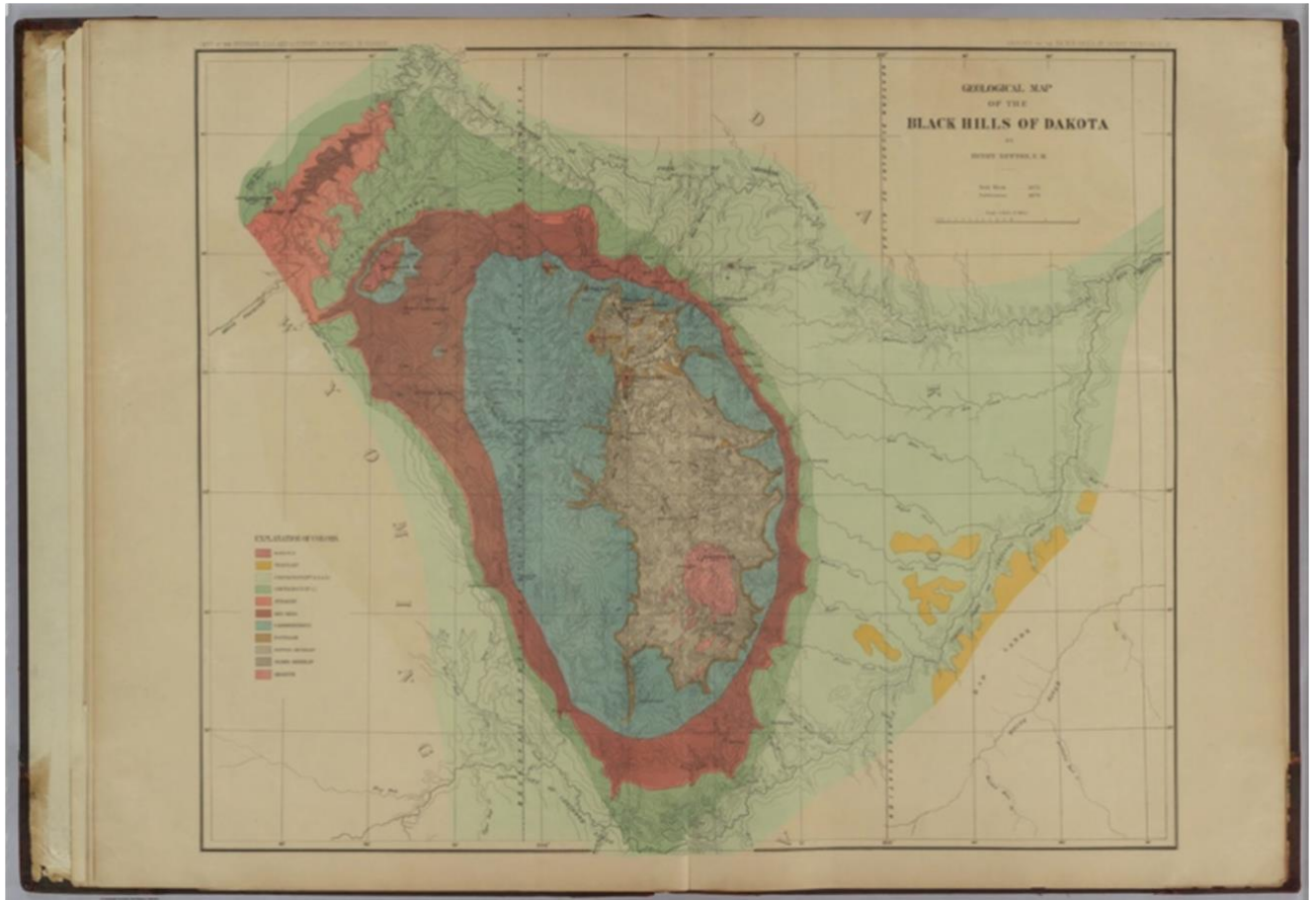


Figure 6. The name “Bear Lodge” is noted on this 1879 Geological map of the Black Hills of Dakota by Henry Newton. (David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries).



*Figure 7. Spearfish formation from the Red Beds Trail, Devils Tower National Monument. Belle Fourche River at center. This striking formation is part of the “Race Track” through the Black Hills where Native American origin stories describe how a great race between earth’s animals took place. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).*



*Figure 8. The Devils Tower formation from the vicinity of the Tower Trail. It is a unique geological formation with a great height of columnar jointing. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).*

## **CHAPTER TWO: Native American Lifeways, 12,000 BCE to 1868 CE**

### **Introduction**

The footprint of Devil's Tower National Monument on the vast western landscape is limited in scale; however, its significance as a sacred site and landmark on the Northern Great Plains at the northwest edges of the Black Hills reaches far beyond the Monument's borders. The Monument comprises 1,347 acres (.06% the size of Yellowstone National Park) amidst a western sea of hills, mountains, and grass. Yet the Tower formation has been a consequential part of a large and interconnected landscape since Paleoindian times as far back as 12,000 BCE. During the long time period people interacted with this remarkable landscape feature, they ascribed profound meanings to the rock tower, giving it deep cultural significance.

The many names Indigenous groups have given the Tower throughout history attest to its enduring importance to the tribes that viewed its rock columns. Traditional names including "Bear Lodge," "Bear's Tipi," "Tree Rock," and "Grey Horn Butte" provide a contrast to the more recent (and now controversial) appellation "Devils Tower."<sup>1</sup> Many Native American tribes feature this spectacular mountaintop in their cultures. This chapter discusses Native American habitation and lifeways in their ancestral homelands until 1868 and examines the great cultural significance that Devils Tower held for Lakota and other tribes in the Black Hills region. That cultural significance abides today as tribal groups remember their associations with the Tower.

### **Towering Landmark, Challenging Environment**

To discover the millennia of human occupancy at the Tower, archeologists must contend with the environment of the stone monolith which both influenced how ancient peoples lived in the region and what traces they left. Unmistakable in its prominence, the monolith's dramatic nature derives from its geologic character and steep slopes. It is a challenge to find any evidence of human activity and habitation where the land is so rugged and rocky. Consequently, it is primarily where soil has formed and where there are colluvial deposits in the "flat, well-drained meadows" that archeologists have located significant signs of human activity. These soils are "well developed, suggesting that they have been in place and relatively undisturbed for a long time" and that the Monument site "has the potential for a long cultural chronology."<sup>2</sup>

Paleoclimates affected the nature of the landscape and subsequent types of human activities in the northern Wyoming and western Black Hills region. During the Pleistocene (Ice Age), the Monument's climate was wet and humid which likely resulted in relatively heavy erosion around the Tower and along the local streams, creeks, and rivers. By the Altithermal (about 6,000-2,500 BCE), the climate had possibly become warmer and changed to dry semi-arid

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<sup>1</sup> David R.M. White, "Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming" (Santa Fe, NM: Applied Cultural Dynamics, 1998): 41, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Brian L. Molyneaux, Nancy J. Hodgson, and Rachel M. Hinton, "The Archeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming 1997-1998" (University of South Dakota, 2000): 3-4.



to arid conditions. During the post-Altithermal or Neoglacial, the climate shifted once again back to more humid conditions. However, the Tower experienced regular oscillations between dry and humid conditions from about 4-5000 years B.P. until today.<sup>3</sup>

Presently, the climate is characteristic of the northern plains. The Monument's climate is continental and, as any park employee will tell you, it is notable for its aggressive temperature and weather extremes. During the long winters, temperatures can get as low as -48°F, and the comparatively short summers can reach 110°F. Precipitation is limited and ranges between 16 to 20 inches. Within these ranges of climactic variability and extremes, archeologists note that the "unusual topography of the Tower creates microclimatic differences that may have influenced prehistoric activity." Some areas of the Tower were possibly more advantageous in terms of shelter for human occupation and may have been favorable locations to hunt or find wildlife. Some evidence indicates that prehistoric occupations were most dense on the east side of the Tower. For human activity, one relatively consequential transformation since the Pleistocene has been the historic spread of pine forests on the uplands. Archeologists think that the altered landscape does not reflect what ancient humans would have experienced or seen from the sites that dot the Monument. For example, with the current vegetation (abundance of pines), it is difficult to discern if a prehistoric site was indeed a prime location to view game and resources below.<sup>4</sup> Groups with knowledge of horticulture and possessing pottery may have passed through the Devil's Tower area. However, the environment was not well-suited for agriculture and likely did not attract culture groups keen on cultivation.<sup>5</sup>

### **Archeology at the Tower**

Using projectile points, archeologists have ascertained that people occupied the Monument from the Late Paleoindian Period to the Late Prehistoric (also known as Pre-Contact in some chronologies). During the Late Plains Archaic and Late Prehistoric, heavy occupation may have characterized the site. However, while abundant evidence indicates Paleoindian presence at the Monument, it is not comprehensive enough to create a complete chronology of Paleoindian activity. While the high meadow soils at the Monument are relatively stable, scientists found "no readily visible stratigraphy in the layers containing the cultural material." The large amount of carbonated wood in the soil from forest fires and controlled burning further complicated radiometric dating. Thus, archeologists relied on sites that dotted the region surrounding the Tower for a more complete vision of its deep human history. Nevertheless, the Tower landscape sits at a transition zone where the lifeways, climate, and ecology of the Black Hills and Great Plains overlap. As a nexus where nature and cultures met, the Monument "has

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<sup>3</sup> Geologic Resources Division, Natural Resource Program Center, "Devils Tower National Monument: Geologic Resource Evaluation Report," Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/GRD/NRR – 2008/046, September 2008, 14; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, "Archeological Survey," 4.

<sup>4</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, "Archeological Survey," 5-6, quote on 5.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce A. Jones, "Archeological Survey at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," 1979 Investigations, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, NE, December 1980, 5-7.

great potential of yielding information about human use of the resources of both environments through time.”<sup>6</sup>

Although lacking a complete chronology of human activity at the Tower, at least seventy documented archeological sites exist on the grounds.<sup>7</sup> NPS Intermountain Region Office (IMRO) archeologists believe that over time, erosional processes will reveal perhaps as many as two hundred sites. More information may appear when professionals reevaluate the sites included in a 1998 study that they incompletely sampled due to project constraints. Ongoing NPS archeological surveys and reassessments of the previously uncovered sites will undoubtedly lend additional insight into early human activities around the monolith and yield datable material for a more comprehensive chronology.<sup>8</sup>

Almost all the documented prehistoric era sites archeologists found were lithic scatters since the “manufacture and use of tools for hunting and food processing” represents the most visible sign of prehistoric hunter gatherer activity. A few of these sites lay near or were bisected by the Tower Trail (constructed during the CCC-Era) that receives a considerable amount of visitor traffic. Monument managers must be cognizant of these significant archeological sites because of their obvious importance to the tribes associated with the Tower. Besides the lithic scatters, the Tower has a hearth and two rock art panels on the granite. The rock art is “difficult to discern and consist of amorphous red ochre pigment.” However, these two rock painting sites are “direct evidence of prehistoric religious activities on the Tower itself.” Furthermore, the “large amount of lithic debitage indicates that stone tool making was an important activity here.” When visiting the Tower’s talus slopes and meadows, groups or individuals shaped tools from local materials or sharpened the tools that they brought. Authors of a 1998 archeological report believe that the sheer amount of cultural material at the Tower suggests that “there was much manufacturing activity here – perhaps more – than at habitations beyond the shadow of the Tower.”<sup>9</sup>

Big game hunters likely took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Monument environment. Streams, a few springs, and the flowing veins of the Belle Fourche River and Tower Creek thread through the Tower landscape. Humans and animals alike utilized these water sources. By attracting wildlife, this water made the Tower a good place to hunt. Additionally, the Tower’s geological character provided nooks, crannies, and cliffs that provided shelter and potential traps for hunters. The region’s high elevation overlooked well-drained and protected

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<sup>6</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 6, 25, 191-194, quote on 191; National Park Service, “Devils Tower National Monument Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment,” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (May 2019), 6, 18, <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/crsa-2019.pdf> accessed August 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 33-34.

<sup>8</sup> National Park Service, “Devils Tower National Monument Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment,” 18; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 191.

<sup>9</sup> National Park Service, “Devils Tower National Monument Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment,” “ochre pigment” on 18-19; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” “manufacture and use of tools” on 192; “direct evidence” on 193; “lithic debitage” on 193; “manufacturing activity” on 193.

meadows that likely harbored game. Paleoindian hunters would have used their short-range weapons to hunt on foot in such ideal topographic and ecological conditions.<sup>10</sup>

### **Paleoindian Period (11,500 to 7,500 years ago)**

Among archeologists, there is an ongoing discussion about time periods and how to place artifacts and cultural adaptations in history. In an important study for Devils Tower, Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton interpreted time periods utilizing chronologies for the Northern Plains created by Frison (1991), Kornfeld & Reher (1992) and others who place the Paleoindian period in a range from 12,000 to 6,000 years ago, and so here we follow Molyneaux et al.<sup>11</sup>

Archeological data from sites across the Intermountain West and Great Plains contain evidence of hunter-gatherers who called this portion of the continent home. The Black Hills contain Clovis points that archeologists have dated to around 11,500 to 10,600 years ago. A hundred miles south of the Monument, near Newcastle, Wyoming, excavations uncovered Clovis points and evidence of hunter gatherer lifeways at the Jim Pitts site. People used the stone blades to hunt megafauna.<sup>12</sup> During the Paleoindian period, the hunter and gatherers who occupied the region radiating from the Tower stalked mammoth, *Bison bison*, *Bison Antiqua*, *Bison occidentalis*, antelope, and smaller game while gathering edible plants and treasured herbs.<sup>13</sup> Folsom sites in the Black Hills and eastern Wyoming contain stone blades dating from 10,900-10,000 years ago. In eastern Wyoming (Niobrara County), the Agate Basin site dates from this period and contains a layered occupation sequence where separate beds of bison bones are buried.<sup>14</sup>

Archeologists divide the Paleoindian period by culture groups defined by specific tool sets and subsistence practices (technologies). Examples of these technologies are points or spearheads and buffalo jumps and corrals. According to Monument archeologists, one of the most significant finds “in terms of cultural activity related directly to the Tower is the stem of what appears to be an Alberta point.” This point is from the Late Paleoindian period around 8250 BC or within the range of 9,500-9,000 B.P. Unfortunately, the point received damage as a result of controlled burning performed at the Monument in 1998. However, archeologists believe that the site where they found the Alberta point illustrates how groups used the landscape during the Paleoindian Period. It was situated “directly above the most heavily occupied area of the high meadows” where one could easily observe the Belle Fourche River valley and uplands. A slightly older Agate Basin (or Hell Gap) point type also was found at the Monument. These

<sup>10</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 6-7. See also a helpful comparative chronology chart in Marcel Kornfeld, George C. Frison, and Mary Lou Larson, *Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers of the High Plains and Rockies* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010): 65.

<sup>12</sup> David J. Meltzer, “Overkill, Glacial History, and the Extinction of North America’s Ice Age Megafauna,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117 No. 46 (Nov. 2020): 28555-28563, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/ntecoindian/essays/pleistocene.htm>, [accessed when?]

<sup>13</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 7.

<sup>14</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument; A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: National Park Service, 2007), 17-18; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 7.

points are also from the Late Paleoindian period but date to around 10,000 BC or 10,500-9,500 B.P.<sup>15</sup> Together, the Alberta and Agate Basin points indicate that the Monument landscape contains evidence of human activity dating back at least 10,000 years.

### **Plains Archaic (7,500-1,500 years ago)**

The warmer, dryer period that came during what some have called the Altithermal (6000-2500 BC) or simply the Mid-Holocene Warm Period (7,000-5,000 years ago) in Wyoming probably played a role in diminishing existing forage for big game on the high plains. Apparently, conditions became so warm and dry that humans abandoned the Plains grasslands. However, the Hawken sites that sit approximately seven miles south of Sundance in the Wyoming section of the Black Hills tell a different story of resilience.<sup>16</sup>

Dwindling big game and fluctuating vegetation due to changing climate forced hunter gatherers to be increasingly dynamic in their utilization of local resources such as large and small game and plants. They also made use of communal hunting/killing strategies and often stuck close to rivers and predictable sources of water. The Black Hills may have been an “oasis-like feature” that supported the continued survival of certain bison species while other parts of the Plains had become uninhabitable.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the Monument landscape, “with its permanent water resources, may have been a refugium during this period.” Archeologists have found a few projectile points from this period in the area surrounding the Tower.<sup>18</sup>

An Oxbow point base represents the Early Archaic period and exemplifies the transition from Early to Middle Archaic tool adaptations. No evidence from the Middle Archaic period exists at the Tower, but neighboring sites near the Keyhole Reservoir (McKean Complex) and along the Belle Fourche River near Sundance show that hunting and gathering continued to be a ubiquitous strategy. Around this time (~5,500 BP), the dry conditions of the Altithermal began to give way to an increase in climactic moisture in the Black Hills. Groups living in the area during the Plains Archaic become more deeply enmeshed in the Black Hills environment by utilizing it intensively. The aggressive use of more diverse and abundant resources likely led to population increases and “denser and more seasonally sedentary occupations.”<sup>19</sup> These people refined the strategy of hunting and gathering, coordinating their movements to maximize their seasonal

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<sup>15</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 17-18; Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Alberta point” on 195; See description of an Alberta stemmed point at: <https://www.projectilepoints.net/Points/Alberta.html>; Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archeology of a Continent*, Third Edition (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2000), 97; Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” “high meadows” on 195; See description of Agate Basin Lanceolate point at: [https://www.projectilepoints.net/Points/Agate\\_Basin.html](https://www.projectilepoints.net/Points/Agate_Basin.html), accessed November 2022; Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 97; See Arthur K. Ireland’s 1986 Points Chronology at: <http://www.wyomingarchaeology.org/point-chronology.html>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 117, 122; George C. Frison, Michael Wilson, and Diane J. Wilson, “Fossil Bison and Artifacts from an Early Altithermal Period Arroyo Trap in Wyoming,” *American Antiquity* 41, no. 1 (Jan., 1976): 28-57.

<sup>17</sup> Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 117-118, 122; Frison, Wilson and Wilson, “Fossil Bison,” 55.

<sup>18</sup> Quote from Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 7, see also 196.

<sup>19</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 7-8.



collection of wild plants and their success in hunting migrating game herds. They continued communal hunts, kill sites, jumps, and corrals.

Regional Middle Archaic sites around the Tower indicate that wild plant processing took place and that groups used McKean (spear) as well as Duncan and Hanna (atlatl) type points. A marked increase in regional cultural activity occurred at the end of the Altithermal when the cooler and wetter climate made it possible for game and plant life to proliferate. As mentioned above, the Keyhole Reservoir sites provide evidence of this surge in human activity.<sup>20</sup> Archeologists speculate about the relative paucity of cultural material around the Tower at this time. The Monument landscape may simply have been an unsuitable place to live due to environmental or cultural reasons, or possibly the limited sampling of the area missed relevant materials from this period. Although the Monument has no Middle Archaic sites, the springs and topography of the Tower may have attracted human activity and occupation.<sup>21</sup>

A considerable amount of evidence shows people lived at the Monument during the Late Plains Archaic and the Late Prehistoric periods. Archeologists found Pelican Lake, Besant, and Avonlea point styles, but “such typological generalizations” do not necessarily “correspond to distinct cultural groups.” Significantly, the majority of them appeared in the same general location in the high meadows around the Tower. During the Late Plains Archaic, people further developed a sophisticated bison hunting culture in Wyoming that included communal hunting, specialized projectile points, intricately constructed bison corrals, continued use of jumps, and ritual observances (ex. Ruby site, Muddy Creek).<sup>22</sup>

### ***Late Prehistoric period (1,500 BP to AD 1805)***

In the Late Prehistoric period around five hundred years ago, Native groups developed buffalo hunting technology forty miles to the east of the Tower in the vicinity of Sundance, Wyoming. They used the Vore Buffalo Jump, a natural sinkhole, over a period of at least 250 years to kill around 4,000 bison. It contains a significant amount of buffalo bone and stone artifacts buried under layers of sediment.<sup>23</sup> Like the Late Plains Archaic, during this period technological change occurred on a sizable scale, and the climate remained relatively stable. Bow and arrow technology (using smaller points and light wooden shafts) enabled hunters to accurately target and take down game from a distance. Cultures such as the Besant crafted pottery and engaged in communal bison hunts, smaller game hunting, wild plant gathering, and

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<sup>20</sup>Carl M Davis and James D. Keyser, “McKean Complex Projectile Point Typology and Function in the Pine Parklands,” *Plains Anthropologist* 44: 169 (1999), 251-270, DOI: [10.1080/2052546.1999.11931919](https://doi.org/10.1080/2052546.1999.11931919).

<sup>21</sup>Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archeology of a Continent*, Third Edition (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2000), 123-24; Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 203, 8.

<sup>22</sup>Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 8, 124-128, quote on 196-197.

<sup>23</sup>Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 18; “The Vore Buffalo Jump,” WyoHistory.org Encyclopedia, November 8, 2014, <https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/vore-buffalo-jump>, accessed November 2022.

horticulture.<sup>24</sup> From the Late Prehistoric to the Plains Village era to the beginning of the eighteenth century, tribes moved about the West and found new places to settle.<sup>25</sup>

Archeologists studying Devils Tower National Monument have suggested that “a raw material source analysis may support the evidence in the oral traditions of former and current inhabitants of the region, including the Kiowa, Crow, Shoshone, Cheyenne and Lakota, that the Tower is an axis point in the regional cultural environment, as such, an important sacred place and habitation site.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, people traveled with their technologies, and knowing where their tools came from can tell us about their travel, their interactions with other people and places, and their cultural systems.

Of the lithic assemblages archeologists study, obsidian is one of the most thought-provoking tool materials. Analyzing the geography and lithic diversity of the materials used to produce tools found at the Monument could yield information about who visited the site and why. Lithic remains can tell us about the mobility and natural resource use of the toolmakers. They can also tell us about the relative significance of a site. “A comparison of lithic diversity,” Monument archeologists noted, “may help determine whether Devils Tower was a significant landmark in the geography of widely dispersed prehistoric hunters and gatherers in the region.” If many different peoples brought their unique tool sets and materials with them to the rock column, the Tower was likely a meaningful feature. The greater diversity of artifacts from nearby sites and the greater distance the objects had traveled strengthen the claim of the Tower’s cultural importance to Great Plains peoples.

Used for blades, points, and ornamentation, obsidian is central to such an analysis because it was “a greatly desired and widely exchanged lithic material.” Anthropologists are aided in their studies by a “signature” in the properties of this material that can identify its source. As historian Paul Schullery has noted, today’s Yellowstone National Park was “the site of one of North America’s first nationally influential industries.” Groups carried material from Yellowstone’s Obsidian Cliff long distances for trade, and the stones ended up as far away as Hopewell gravesites in Ohio and Ontario. The Monument’s comparatively small footprint and unique physical characteristics amplify the findings because a wide diversity of obsidian would not reach the area by chance. Molyneaux et al conducted neutron activation analysis on 19 of the 35 Monument obsidian specimens to determine the geography of sources represented at the Tower. When compared to other sites such as Keyhole Reservoir and Yellowstone National Park, those found at the Tower were perhaps more diverse given the presence of one atypical site (Mineral Mountain, Utah). With further analysis of remaining specimen, scientists may uncover more diversity.<sup>27</sup> Obsidian-based evidence speaks to the cultural significance of the Tower.

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<sup>24</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 8; On Shoshone and Crow pottery, see Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” quotes on 197 and 198.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Schullery, *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness* (Montana Historical Society Press, 2004), 13; Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 198-202, “a signature” on 198.

Material evidence of human activity is present across the entire Monument landscape. In fact, the earliest projectile points archeologists have uncovered came from the highest habitable area near the Tower and in the far corner of the Monument property. Ancient peoples affected the whole landscape as they utilized the Belle Fourche River valley and elevated positions around the Tower. The Monument's topography undoubtedly played a role in how groups and individuals strategically selected sites useful to them. Access to water, shelter, sacred sites, monitoring game and other humans, and proximity/distance from other groups must have entered the minds of the Tower's early residents. Molyneaux et. al. believe that early peoples inhabited the landscape around the Monument in two major ways – the Belle Fourche River adaptation and the Tower adaptation. The River adaptation took advantage of dry uplands, the floodplain and river valley, and the springs and small drainages associated with the Belle Fourche River and the Black Hills' western margin. Naturally, the “areas with the most efficient access to food and material resources, while providing the amenities necessary for habitation” would be the most well-represented in the archeological record. The River adaptation sites contain evidence of human activity from the Paleoindian period to the Late Prehistoric.<sup>28</sup>

The Tower adaptation, however, contains the most dense and largest sites at the Monument. Possibly because erosive forces are more active at sites closer to the river and other minor waterways, the lower-level sites have been destroyed or reduced in size. Yet, archeologists still puzzle over why these high-density sites exist at all in the uplands away from the prime resource locations of the floodplain. Several natural springs near the Tower adaptation sites could account for some degree of the upland density. Other attractions included the presence of Lakota Quartzite outcrops and the “commanding view of the river valley below” valued by hunters. The Tower itself could have provided protection from eastern Wyoming's harsh and chaotic climate. In particular, the “southeast and east sides within and along the talus” were shielded from “westerly and northerly winds and weather.” This environmental factor is “a positive advantage for the entire ecosystem, as these areas are cooler and more humid in the summer, and warmer, with less snow cover (from the lack of drifting and the slightly warmer microclimate), in winter.” Sioux narratives describing the tribes' use of the Tower told of camping there in the course of the winter during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

But besides the normal comings and goings of daily life for Paleoindian and protohistoric peoples, was the Tower a place of spiritual significance? Did people come to the Tower for purely religious activity? The geography of early occupation on Monument landscape suggests so. The extent of material on higher elevations compared to other areas such as comparatively sparsely occupied middle elevations, indicates “strongly that ideological factors were important.” As Molyneaux et al. conclude from their work on an archeological survey,

This evidence suggests that before white settlement in the area, Devils Tower served as both a place to live and a place to worship. If the lithic material source

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<sup>28</sup> Jones, “Archeological Survey,” 29-30; Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 202, 204-205.

<sup>29</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” quote on 205; Jones, “Archeological Survey,” 30.

analysis bears out, we may ultimately be able to interpret the cultural meanings of this monument archeologically as we can through oral traditions, as one of the axis points in the regional cultural environment.<sup>30</sup>

Yet, the Tower area contains “no direct evidence of prehistoric activity beyond the normal daily life of hunters and gatherers living off bison and other big game, processing available plant foods, and, judging by the presence of rock art, pursuing normal religious activities.”<sup>31</sup> However, it is entirely possible that peoples chose “to conduct their daily lives in the shadow of something they also held sacred.”<sup>32</sup>

One can wonder about the nature of such a magnificent landform in the lives of groups inhabiting this area during the Paleoindian and Protohistoric periods. For example, as an aberrant and exceptional landmark on the far edge of the Black Hills, the Tower rises out of the ground in a geographical and topographical setting that makes it impossible to miss. Along with other similarly majestic natural forms, this “monumental form” could provoke a “universal and timeless” human reaction. According to Molyneaux et al, “it is quite possible that aboriginal people across the Plains and beyond knew of this striking landmark long before the present-day tribes took shape.” Likely, hunter-gatherers were awestruck by the imposing landmark and spread word of its existence across the Great Plains and throughout the Rocky Mountains and the Black Hills. Possibly the landmark so transfixed those who encountered it that it assumed cultural significance from Paleoindian times to the present. Certainly tribal oral histories (as will be discussed below) indicate that the landmark was a source of inspiration for numerous tribes and the Tower represented an important cultural landscape since at least the time of early European contact.<sup>33</sup>

If we consider all of this, archeological evidence of the geography of habitation and worship across the Tower landscape makes perfect sense. Archeologist Brian Molyneaux and his team nicely summarize the geography of human activity at the Monument:

. . . the highest meadows afford the greatest number of benefits for daily life in prehistoric times. The Tower flanks provide commanding views of the Belle Fourche River valley and its resources. The meadows, nestled among talus boulders and sheltered by the Tower, provide level, well-drained habitation sites and work areas in all seasons. Springs and seeps attract game and provide water. Good-quality lithic sources are near at hand. Upland resources, the broad lower meadows, river terraces and the river valley are a short distance away. Above all, perhaps, the profound spiritual resource of the Tower itself is within reach.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” all quotes from 206-207, Emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 205-206.

<sup>32</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 207.

<sup>33</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” quote on 206.

<sup>34</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 207.

Ancient peoples utilized the entire Monument landscape for its distinct and varied properties that afforded advantages to humans who decided to occupy its eminent embrace. On the edge of the Black Hills, the Tower provided a haven for finding access to water, receiving sacred nourishment, locating, and working material resources, and hunting big game.

Many questions still exist about how the Tower figured into the lives of humans during these early periods on what are now Monument grounds. The archeological work performed at the Monument has been extensive, but more areas need exploring while retaining the landscape's integrity and respecting it as a sacred space. Furthermore, the Monument's legislative boundary limits archeological investigation. The adjacent private lands may very well contain treasure troves of information, but a NPS-funded study of the Monument's human past cannot easily incorporate them. How large a footprint is significant in assessing the human occupation of the Tower landscape? Is it measured in hundreds of feet from the Tower's base or in the miles from which it is visible in the distance? Lastly, like other tourist destinations throughout the West, the artifact pilfering that provoked the passage of the Antiquities Act was a regular practice that chipped away at the available diagnostic artifacts for assessing the deep human history of America's treasured sites.

### **Protohistoric and Historic (1805-1880s)**

The Protohistoric period is the time of transition between the Late Prehistoric and the Historic periods. At this time, goods and peoples (European cultural and material influences – including disastrous microbes) came to the Northern Plains from the south and east.<sup>35</sup> Material evidence from this era comes from trade goods and the spread of horses (introduced ~1650 CE). In general, hunting and gathering practices persisted throughout the northern Plains, but horses, guns, and trade with Europeans indisputably and irrevocably altered Native American cultures. Following contact, and even prior to the presence of Euro-American explorers and military personnel in the West, the North American tribes across the continent became either willing or unwilling participants in an evolving global economy.

In the Monument region, stone circles and timbered structures represent Protohistoric activities. However, as Tower archeologists note, “[w]hile the significance of Devils Tower was presumably undiminished during the Protohistoric and early Historic periods, there are no reported finds of metal artifacts, beads, or other trade goods and materials.”<sup>36</sup> They assume that the Tower's sacred nature did not necessarily diminish, but a number of reasons explain why people did not regularly occupy the site and why the area lacks certain types of material evidence. Euro-American visitors/tourists to the Tower have likely taken some of the most visible, recognizable, and desirable resources of more recent deposition. Additionally, organic materials associated with sacred ceremonies would not have left traces.

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<sup>35</sup> Marcel Kornfeld, Bruce Bradley, George C. Frison, and Mary Lou Larson, *Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers of the High Plains and Rockies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 8-9, quote on 197, 203-204.

Furthermore, before the 1870s cattle ranching in the Tower region and the full force of settler colonial dispossession and forced confinement to reservations, Protohistoric peoples had reasons why the Tower was not an attractive place to remain long enough to leave lasting marks/materials. As area tribes adopted the horse, used guns for hunting, and relied on metal rather than stone for tools, the Tower landscape had less to offer. Adaptive behaviors that had been consistently applied for millennia no longer held their seductive and comfortable sway.<sup>37</sup> Horses were revolutionary in the way they condensed time and allowed their human companions to travel far greater distances than they could have on foot. However, they also limited mobility in certain environments. Traveling with a horse around the geologically diverse and steep Monument terrain was rather challenging. Plenty of other, more accessible, areas provided options to take advantage of the Belle Fourche River valley.

Using the Tower as a source to mine lithic resources also became unnecessary when groups adopted metal tools. There was little need for one to remain at the Tower for extended periods of time. As the reach of Euro-American trade networks extended across the West, the Tower likely took on a different character to local cultures. As tribes adapted to life with horses, guns, and metal tools, they sought lands that aligned with the lifeways that emerged from these factors. The highly mobile individuals and groups that happened through the Tower region saw it less as a place to stay and more as a landmark to revere from afar and to visit for specific sacred rituals. As archeologists Molyneaux et al. put it: “While this gave the Tower relief from the rigors of settlement, it did nothing to lessen its primary impact, as a major landmark in cultural and spiritual geographies.”<sup>38</sup>

### **The Black Hills: Contested Land, Sacred Space**

The Tower sits within a larger sacred geography on the western edge of the Black Hills or *Paha Sapa* (or *He Sapa*), an ecological or “habitat island” with diverse and unique resources (flora, fauna, minerals) and majestic topography.<sup>39</sup> Ancient rock art and archeological sites attest to the fact that for thousands of years, the Black Hills drew humans to this lush location for food and spiritual fulfillment.<sup>40</sup> For many early Euro-American explorers, the Hills inspired figurative language representing them as a forested island or oasis in a sea of grass.<sup>41</sup> Specific features of this landscape have attracted and continue to connect Native American tribes to this geologically

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<sup>37</sup> Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 57.

<sup>38</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 207-208.

<sup>39</sup> Marcel Kornfeld and Alan J. Osborn, *Islands on the Plains: Ecological, Social, and Ritual Use of Landscapes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003): 5.

<sup>40</sup> Patricia C. Albers, Christina Berndt, Elizabeth Brown, Yvonne Kelly, Vanessa Kittleson, Kim Rossina, Stacy Schlegel, Andrea Yardley, “The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographical and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park,” The Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota, National Park Service, (September 29, 2003), 2-3; Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 166, 191; Linea Sundstrom, “Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills,” *World Archeology* 28 (2) 1996: 177-189.

<sup>41</sup> Albers et al., “The Home of the Bison,” 1, 3, 11.

and ecologically exceptional area. The conspicuous natural landmarks across the *Paha Sapa* such as the Tower, Wind Cave, Craven and Red Canyons, Bear Butte, Black Buttes, Gillette Prairie, Hot Springs, Buffalo Gap, Rapid Creek, Harney Peak (Black Elk Peak), the Race Track, and the mountain Inyan Kara are significant cultural sites that form a cohesive whole.<sup>42</sup> As the anthropologist Patricia Albers noted, the Hills are “not easily disaggregated into a series of discrete landforms and natural resources that can be isolated and inventoried.” The sacred places are “synergistic” in nature and form an integrated sacred geography. Early in the human relationship with the Black Hills, the area provided vital resources and shelter (the Hills are milder in the winter than the surrounding plains and steppes) that enabled Plains peoples to thrive.<sup>43</sup>

Sitting Bull referred to the Black Hills as a “treasure” and an essential “food pack of the people.” In times of drought and scarcity, the bison retreated to the reliably lush microclimate of the Hills for pasturage, and the Lakota followed. By the 1830s, the Black Hills were the dominion of the Lakota. As each year passed under settler colonial pressures during the nineteenth century, the Lakota realized that the Hills were crucial to maintaining sovereignty and security as a people. When the government threatened or withheld rations at the agencies and when natural conditions made traditional subsistence strategies inadequate, the Hills provided. Their ecological diversity ensured that the people always had something to eat. Areas around the Black Hills were also where bison continued to roam. But Lakota love for the Hills was not merely a product of its material resources. The Black Hills were sacred and sustained them spiritually. In traditional Native lifeways, spiritual and physical sustenance are not easily separated from each other, just as the Tower is not easily separated from the landscape of the Black Hills. The White Buffalo Calf Woman (from an ancient sacred narrative) revealed herself to the Lakota in the Black Hills to help the people when the bison were few and the tribe was in misery. It is “*the heart of everything that is*” and the “beating heart of the Lakota cosmos, where we [Lakota, Oceti Sakowin] emerged from red earth, took our first breath, and gained our humanity as Oyate Luta: the “Red People,” or the “Red Nation.”<sup>44</sup>

The Lakota did not have exclusive rights to the Black Hills, and other Indigenous nations roamed the region. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the Black Hills increasingly became a place of equestrian nomads, the Cheyenne became a dominant force. In the early nineteenth century (1820, 1830s), the Lakota were embracing equestrianism and visiting the Hills more frequently. There, they likely worked alongside and allied with the Cheyenne in their search for sustenance. These two allies faced off against the Kiowa and the

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<sup>42</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 23; Peter Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 207-222; Linea Sundstrom, “The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 (Fall/Summer 1997): 185-212.

<sup>43</sup> Albers et al., “The Home of the Bison,” quotes on 12 and 5; Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 133; Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes*, 207.

<sup>44</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 164-169, “food pack” and “heart of everything” on 191; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010), 74-76; Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019), 8.

Crow who began to withdraw from the Hills in the 1820s. From about 1805-1877, Arapahos, Cheyenne, and Lakotas were “the only populations regularly affiliated with the Black Hills.” By the 1850s, these tribes utilized the Black Hills for pursuing bison and seeking horse pasturage, taking advantage of the diverse adaptive strategies and food sources available there.<sup>45</sup>

In 1933, Gillette businessman and early Tower historian Dick Stone corresponded with the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution about the tribes in the Black Hills region. At that time, he noted that “different tribes of Indians were transient occupants of the Black Hills. These tribes were the Prairie Shoshoni, Comanche, Kiowa, Kiowa Apache, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Dakota. While occupancy by the Crows is less certain it is not impossible. That at a still earlier date the ancestors of the Navajo and Apache of Arizona and New Mexico probably stopped here on their way south.” Stone remarked that since the Tower was a part of the Black Hills, one could assume that these tribal associations extended to the sacred towering landmark. A number of regional tribes claimed that the Tower and Black Hills were in their territories: “Short Bull, a Sioux, said ‘This country belonged to my people.’ When told the Sioux claimed ownership, Young Bird, a Cheyenne, said, ‘The Sioux are the biggest liars on earth, it belonged to the Cheyennes.’ Chief Big Man, a member of the Crow tribe, claimed it for his people saying, ‘It belonged to the Crows but they were pushed back.’ Sage, an old Arapaho, said, ‘It belonged to the Arapahoes, my grandfather was buried there.’”<sup>46</sup> In part, this overlapping geographical relationship reflected the cultural assimilation and blending that regularly occurred when peoples intermixed for purposes of peace, survival, and kinship.<sup>47</sup>

“The development of a sacred landscape,” according to anthropologist Linea Sundstrom, “was a process of transferring old mythic locales to new points on the landscape and incorporating new beliefs borrowed from groups with whom they were coming into contact.”<sup>48</sup> Among Indigenous nations, the Tower bore a number of names such as “Red Fir Place” (Comanche), “Black Rock Mountains” (Kiowa), “Island Hills” (Cheyenne), “Black Hills” (Ponca, Omaha, and Arikara), and “*Paha Sapa*” (Sioux tribes).<sup>49</sup> According to anthropologist Patricia Albers, for the Cheyenne and Lakota (two of the most recent residents of the Black Hills region), “the land, sky, and waters were alive. They had an animate presence. Every life form was implicated in the existence of another. There was a basic unity to all that exists.”<sup>50</sup> This held for the Black Hills where their lives entwined with the physical and spiritual world.

The story of the Black Hills mirrored the story of the Tower. The Monument’s vital and contentious landscape continued as a site of contestation and a representation of the legacy of broken treaties that plague U.S. and Native American relations to this day. The history of the

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<sup>45</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 166, 168; Albers et al., “The Home of the Bison,” quote on 57, see 80-81.

<sup>46</sup> Dick Stone, “History of Devils Tower and Northeastern Wyoming Including a Number of Indian Legends. 1804-1934,” Wyoming State Centralized Microfilm Department, Wyoming State Archives, p. 94.

<sup>47</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 71; Linea Sundstrom, “Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills,” *World Archeology* 28 (2) 1996: 177-189.

<sup>48</sup> Sundstrom, “Mirror of Heaven,” 188.

<sup>49</sup> Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes*, 207.

<sup>50</sup> Albers et al., “The Home of the Bison,” 194.



Tower was intimately connected to the breaking of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty.<sup>51</sup> It promised the perpetual and unrivaled possession of the Great Sioux Reservation that encompassed most of the Black Hills, including the Tower and the western Hills (the Article 16 lands) where “no white person or persons” could settle. This story also leaned heavily on Lakota sources because they “recognized seven principal sacred places in and near the Black Hills” and were the “most recent native occupants of the Black Hills.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Tribes Associated with the Tower Region**

Tribes that lived in the Black Hills region included the Shoshone and early on their Comanche relatives, the Poncas on the southeast edge during the mid-eighteenth century, the Arikaras who often traveled to the Black Hills to hunt and trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Kiowas during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Cheyenne in the early 1800s. By the end of the 1830s, the *Paha Sapa* (Black Hills) lay at the heart of the Lakota’s territorial range. Today, the Lakota and the Cheyenne have perhaps the closest cultural association with the Tower, although the Eastern Shoshone, the Arapaho, and Crow also live in the region and share those cultural affinities.

Anthropologists, historians, and the National Park Service have identified as many as twenty-seven tribes and bands that have had some sort of cultural or historical association with the Tower. In their 1997 *Ethnographic Overview*, Hanson & Chirinos noted that at least six tribes lived in northeast Wyoming during historical times and had some degree of cultural association with the Tower, including the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, Lakota, and Eastern Shoshone. David R.M. White’s 1998 “Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument” listed 15 tribes, sub-tribes, and bands with some cultural association. In describing the Black Hills, in “Home of the Bison” (2003) Albers et al. named 16 tribes who lived in and moved through the region. Burton and Ruppert in 1999 suggested that consultation with tribes “revealed potential for more tribal groups to be added to the list of those having affiliation with the Tower.” The 2014 “Foundation Document” for Devils Tower named 27 tribes with potential cultural affiliation, and the 2020 “Cultural Landscape Inventory” for the Tower Trail included 26 tribes with a cultural affiliation (see appendices). The number of 26 associated tribes was echoed in Devils Tower National Monument’s 2020 “Resource Stewardship Strategy Summary.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Philip Burnham, *Indian Country, God’s Country: Native Americans and the National Parks* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000), 48.

<sup>52</sup> Sundstrom, “Mirror of Heaven,” 185.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffery R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9 (1997); D. White, “Naming Bear Lodge”; Albers et al., “Home of the Bison”; National Park Service, “Foundation Document: Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (September 2014), <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/foundation-documents/deto-fd-2014.pdf>; National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail, Devils Tower National Monumen” (Final Draft), (Department of the Interior,

Tribes with formal ethnographies that help document associations include the Sioux, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, and Eastern Shoshone, but others who did not live in the Tower's vicinity such as the Arikara, Dakota, and Mandan, Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Hidatsa, Iowa, Kiowa-Apache (Naishan Dene), Kootenai, Omaha, Pawnee, Piegan, Plains Cree, Ponca, Salish, Sarci, Turtle Mountain Chippewa, and Wichita also consider the landmark sacred. During the prehistoric and the historic periods, tribes prized the Black Hills, the Tower, and the Belle Fourche River that flows past the towering monolith for the abundance of bison, water, pasturage, hunting, and protection from the extremes of the high plains' winters. Indisputably, with its places for "vision question, funerals and prayer offerings," the Tower marked a sacred landmark for many tribes, and as monument ethnographers have noted, it "has been encoded as an important landmark in tribal narratives."<sup>54</sup>

The tribes discussed later in this chapter do not comprise an exhaustive or prioritized list of tribes associated with this sacred place. They are simply the tribes that existing Monument ethnographic reports and histories have examined. The lack of strong documentary evidence does not exclude tribes from rightfully claiming a connection to the Tower. After all, they lived in a world of oral traditions. Some tribes such as the Shoshone have prohibitions against sharing certain stories with outsiders, as do other tribes (see section below concerning the Shoshone). Many sacred narratives lack detailed geographic information that would make it clear whether they pertain to the Tower. They may contain analogous or almost identical motifs but fail to directly tie to the Tower.<sup>55</sup> This vagueness may arise because "the main body of these myth collections has been made since the Indians were confined on reservations, usually some distance from their original range," and it is a challenge to "secure specific information even about the location of camp sites."<sup>56</sup> In the past, a certain distance between narrator and chronicle may have been created as non-native anthropologists, historians, and others collected those stories.

Ethnographers of the Monument regard the tribes included below as those that "have lived at various times during the historic and perhaps the prehistoric period in the general region between the Black Hills and the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming." They shared what scholars

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National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, November 2020); National Park Service, "Resource Stewardship Strategy Summary: Devils Tower National Monument," (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, September, 2020), <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/rsss-2020.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Spring 1984), 4; Jones, "Archeological Survey," 7; D. White, "Naming Bear Lodge," 4; Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 105; Mary Alice Gunderson, *Devils Tower: Stories in Stone* (Glendo, WY: High Plains Press, 1988), 28; Jeffery Hanson and David Moore, "Applied Anthropology at Devils Tower National Monument," *Plains Anthropologist* 44, no. 170 (Nov., 1999): 53; Jeffery R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9 (1997), xi-xii, quotes on 5; See also Jeffery Hanson and David Moore, "Ritual and Recreational Perception and Use at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming: An Applied Ethnographic Study," National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, March 17, 1993.

<sup>55</sup> D. White, "Naming Bear Lodge," 4, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Ralph L. Beals, "Report on the Possibilities for Ethnological Exhibits at Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming," March 20, 1934, 2-3.

referred to as “the High Plains lifestyle” characterized by “equestrian bison hunting and nomadic pastoralism.” Their territories, therefore, were large, ever evolving, and overlapping, only clearly defined and imposed when the federal government acquired the Tower around 1851. It is an unnatural imposition of Western standards of evidence to attempt to pin down precisely which tribes resided/occupied the bounded territory of today’s Monument.<sup>57</sup>

The Tower served as a topographical/geographical and sacred landmark for Native American Tribes throughout the western Black Hills. The landmark oriented people in space and provided a psychic connection to the landscape as dramatic shifts in tribal territories and settler colonial dispossession threatened tribal senses of place and identity.<sup>58</sup> The Kiowa were a good example of how Indigenous groups retained this knowledge following displacement from the region. Recorded by General Scott in 1897, the Kiowa soldier I-See-Many-Camp-Fire-Places at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, tied a sacred Kiowa narrative with geographic knowledge in the Black Hills. “No Kiowa living has ever seen this rock,” he noted, “but the old men have told about it – it is very far north where the Kiowa used to live.” Its unique landmark character stood out even after it fell outside of living memory. “There is no other like it in the whole country,” he remembered, “there are no trees on it, only grass on top. The Kiowa call this rock “Tso-aa”, a tree rock, possibly because it grew tall like a tree.”<sup>59</sup>

By the 1860s, Tso-aa arose primarily within Sioux territory, Article 16 lands defined by the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty that sat adjacent to the Great Sioux Reservation (more on that below).<sup>60</sup> In 1932, when Dick Stone reached out to the Office of Indian Affairs about who was the “last tribe to own the Devils Tower,” the agency confirmed that it was “originally Sioux territory and was so recognized by article 16 of the treaty with the Sioux Nation of April 29, 1868 (15 Stat. L., 635).” According to the federal government’s interpretation of the treaty, the Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, and the Sioux ceded the territory on September 26, 1876, which Congress ratified on February 28, 1877 (19 Stat. L., 254).<sup>61</sup>

### **A Problem of Sources, A Problem of History**

By the historic period (at the very least), we have traditional historical evidence (written documentation from Euro-Americans based on varying degrees of properly interpreted and recorded conversations with Native Americans) for the Tower fitting in with many sacred oral traditions held by regional tribes. Late nineteenth-century explorers such Warren, Reynolds, Dodge, and H.L. Scott described how the Tower was cloaked in Native American myth. Since at least the 1930s, oral histories have been collected about the Tower. More recently, three histories

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<sup>57</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” quotes on 7; see also 29.

<sup>58</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 206.

<sup>59</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 125.

<sup>60</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 28.

<sup>61</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 175.

of the Lakota and the Black Hills region provide excellent coverage of mid-to-late nineteenth century Native American connections to the Tower region.<sup>62</sup>

Challenges arise in analyzing Native American history that are purely due to the nature of professional historical study and the ways in which fields such as history, ethnohistory, and archeology often operate regarding sources. The methods that these fields employ are problematic due to their origins and who disproportionately constitute their practitioners. They are “Western” and “Euro-American” ways of categorizing and making sense of the world. This embeds values and culture that appear logical and timeless.

The chronological structure in this document reflects this traditional scholarship mainly to make the document accessible to an audience familiar with this form. Nevertheless, we want to note that terms such as “prehistory” and “prehistoric” are anachronisms that mark an artificial division in time that valued some sources over others. Here, we will call upon the Yellowstone National Park historian Paul Schullery for his insight:

I find myself in agreement with historians and archeologists who are uncomfortable with the term 'prehistoric' when applied to American Indians. It is a European concept of North America, indeed a European concept of what matters most about the passage of time. To say that all those thousands of years of human activity, all those lives and thoughts and accomplishments, came before 'real' history is to imply that nothing meaningful happened here until Europeans...arrived and started writing things down...What Native Americans did in their elaborate and compelling belief systems in terms of maintaining knowledge and tradition was for generations dismissed by most whites as superstition or folklore, even though it carried much of what history should carry—the weight of accumulated knowledge and wisdom that allows a culture to sustain itself and thrive.<sup>63</sup>

Capturing the same spirit, Tower ethnographers put it slightly differently: “The major difficulty associated with the use of Native American sources, particularly myths and legends, is the timeless quality that often characterizes these media. While timelessness may help keep a cultural theme relevant, it can constitute a limitation when applied to chronological concerns.”<sup>64</sup>

Tower historians and ethnographers face this challenge because oral histories and oral traditions are crucial to understanding the deep history of this landmark. Tribal members from tribes such as the Shoshone regularly repeat that they do not desire or are prohibited from talking about their relationship to the Tower. The tensions are clear when looking at the statements of a Kiowa Tribal member in 2008. The individual emphasized that “Oral tradition is a central part of who we are” but that “Oral traditions and songs should be kept confidential.” The individual stated that “Tribes have been removed from many of these sites for two centuries, but they still

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<sup>62</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> Paul Schullery, *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness* (Montana Historical Society Press, 2004), 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 4.

have connections to them,” and “Preserving the culture, language, tradition, is a sacred endeavour.”<sup>65</sup> Historians and ethnographers (especially non-Native) studying the human past at the Tower are set against the realities of being forbidden from accessing vital information that is essential to understanding the vibrant human connections to this sacred place. They must respect the wishes of the tribes that have called this place home and revere the Tower as a sacred space. The purpose of this study is not to take or steal sacred stories or reveal sacred sites, especially those that one tribal member referred to as “stories that belong to their children.”<sup>66</sup>

This does lead to what Tower ethnographers Hanson and Chirinos refer to as a “cultural paradox.” The NPS needs precise knowledge about the sacred sites to protect and manage the ritual areas. Native Americans are aware of this requirement, but “these locations are by religious custom not supposed to be revealed, and that Indian people would be acting in a culturally inappropriate manner by doing so.” Thus, by adhering to their cultural responsibilities and religious norms, the tribes risk the integrity of the sites. Once again, the solution is a “very close collaboration between Native people and the NPS” and that “the NPS permit Native Americans to be included in protection and management issues.”<sup>67</sup>

Even when Native Americans connected to the Tower speak about this relationship, they have expressed concern that they are not actually heard. Without a comprehensive and lived understanding of their religion and spirituality, one risks interpreting the sacred narratives and knowledge incorrectly.<sup>68</sup> Misinterpretation is one thing; there is also the problem of false sacred narratives concocted by Euro-Americans. Some of these stories, like the ones described above about how Native Americans did not occupy the Black Hills, are tools of dispossession. At the Tower, one individual committed the sin of spewing what one Yellowstone historian has called “white baloney.”<sup>69</sup> In an April 1924 letter, Stone admitted that he had amended a story about the Tower because of how European audiences perceived it. “In the original Indian legend,” Stone explained, “of the four maidens perished on top of the rock so to make a happy ending you will note the change I have taken the liberty to make. One lady in France wrote ‘what a tragic ending’ so the change as mentioned was made.” This type of false narrative and myth-making made Stone remorseful, and he shifted toward more accurate oral histories. In a letter to John P. Harrington at the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1937, the Monument’s custodian Newell Joyner noted that a white storyteller “concocted” the ending of a legend “erroneously” applied to the Kiowa when he forgot the original. A local newspaper then picked up this “white baloney” and “reprinted numberless times.” Later he revealed the identity of this storyfaker as Dick Stone.

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<sup>65</sup> Michael E. Harkin and Fred Chapman, “Update of Ethnographic Overview of Devils Tower National Monument,” University of Wyoming Department of Anthropology, NPS Cooperative Agreement, June 13, 2008, 36-37. This is an informative document for understanding issues with using oral histories and challenges for NPS/Tribal relations.

<sup>66</sup> Harkin and Chapman, “Update of Ethnographic Overview,” 31. For an exploration of the role of “storytakers,” see Rosalyn R. LaPier, *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), xxxviii, xli, 99-118.

<sup>67</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” xii.

<sup>68</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 1.

<sup>69</sup> Lee H. Whittlesey, *Storytelling in Yellowstone: Horse and Buggy Tour Guides* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 12-23.

His penance for this sin, Joyner remarked, was that Stone committed himself to the incredible undertaking of accurately transcribing as many diverse Native American stories of Devils Tower as he could compile.<sup>70</sup>

Problematically, Tower ethnographers of the 1990s note that “in terms of the overall ethnographic data presented, much of the descriptions of traditional ritual activity at Devils Tower came from a single source, Stone’s interviews during the early 1930s.” His oral histories and sacred narratives lack the specificity needed to date them and provide details about ritual activity at the Monument. This “vague and imprecise” information from conventional sources only nebulously documents ritual activity that occurs today on Monument grounds.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, ample evidence indicates that the Tower was and remains a sacred landmark for the tribes discussed below. Troublesome as they are, Stone’s vague oral histories and sacred narratives reveal a considerable amount of detail about how regional tribes used the Tower.<sup>72</sup> This report cautiously relies on these sources. For further information on these sacred narratives, consult the available secondary literature published about the Monument’s history.<sup>73</sup> Finally, five short oral interviews, provided as an appendix, demonstrate that these traditional stories are very much alive and a current part of Native American culture on the Northern Great Plains.

### **Native Americans and Paleontology**

The Western Indigenous peoples held rich repositories of knowledge about the fossilized remains that littered the landscape. It is likely that Native Americans were the first to find and make sense of North American fossils. Native American fossil knowledge has long been interpreted as “legend” or “myth.” Their perspective on fossils was colored by their view of time. Though one must be cautious to generalize, Native Americans often adhered to a cyclical view of time. The tribes that encountered fossils in the West often saw them not as inert matter but as remnants of a living past that periodically interjected itself into the present. At times, they considered fossils to be the remains of creatures that lived out of sync with the correct pattern of life and were therefore destroyed. Fossils taught life lessons and were material evidence for Native American cosmology.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 44.

<sup>71</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 23.

<sup>72</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 206-207.

<sup>73</sup> Ralph L. Beals, “Report on the Possibilities for Ethnological Exhibits at Devil’s Tower National Monument in Wyoming,” March 20, 1934, 1-5; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 21-22; Stone, “History of Devils Tower”; White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 33-39; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, x, xi, 49-57.

<sup>74</sup> On Native American knowledge and the science of paleontology, see Lawrence W. Bradley, “Dinosaurs and Indians: Paleontology Resource Dispossession from Sioux Lands” (PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2010); Allison M. Dussias, “Science, Sovereignty, and the Sacred Text: Paleontological Resources and Native American Rights,” *Maryland Law Review* 55, no. 84 (1996): 98-100, 107, 84-159; Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), xxii, xxxii.; Even in Mayor’s work that seeks to correct this maligning of Native American knowledge, she uses western science as a benchmark for knowledge and

For example, a member of the Sioux tribe named Afraid of Horses had in his possession “a piece of bone, perfectly petrified, containing a molar tooth 3 inches or more in diameter.” The fossil tooth, explained Afraid of Horses, “had belonged to a ‘Thunder Horse’ that lived ‘away back’ and that then this creature would sometimes come down to earth in thunderstorms and chase and kill buffalo.” The “Thunder Horse” could be a benevolent representative of the “Great Spirit” sent to Tribes in times of need:

His old people told stories of how on one occasion many, many years back, this big Thunder Horse had driven a herd of buffalo right into a camp of Lacota people who were about to starve, and that they had killed many of these buffalo with their lances and arrows. The “Great Spirit” had sent the Thunder Horse to help them get food when it was needed most badly. This story was handed down from the time when the Indians had no horses.<sup>75</sup>

These relics of the past coexisted with the present in this interpretation of the fossils. They were not inanimate objects; Native peoples interpreted them as the remains of living beings that periodically intervened in the lives of Native Americans.

In the Northern Plains, the coincidence of fossils that were clearly creatures of flight with those that were aquatic creatures in the western Cretaceous deposits seemed to indicate to the Sioux that a battle took place between “Thunder Birds and Water Monsters.” The Cheyenne found further evidence of this epic conflict in the form of *belemnites* that resembled the petrified arrow point of the Thunderbird’s lightning. Plains Tribes also frequently used *Baculites*—Cretaceous marine fossils related to *Ammonites* that contain fractal patterns resembling buffalo—as “buffalo-calling stones” to summon buffalo each spring.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, Indigenous cultures often regarded fossils as *medicine*. As Allison Dussias stated, “[i]n traditional Native American culture, the term ‘medicine’ means more than simply the curing of disease and the healing of injuries. It encompasses ‘that which is mysterious, holy, sacred, and supernatural.’”<sup>77</sup> For example, the field of Custer’s folly, Little Bighorn, likely had a number of Native Americans battling under the protection of fossils. *Ammonite* fossils – sea dwelling creatures with spiral chambered shells – were found in the medicine bag from one of Custer’s Crow soldiers, White Man Runs Him, and the Sioux Chief Gall who helped defeat Custer possessed an *Ammonite* necklace. Another example comes from the Pawnee man Young Bull who recalled the use of a fossil bone for healing purposes and “[w]hen smallpox arrived on

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uses the word “legend” in her title; Bjørnar Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 11; Black Elk, John Gneisenau Neihardt, and Raymond J. DeMallie, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, (Albany, NY: Excelsior Editions, State University Press of New York, 2008), 155.

<sup>75</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, *The Titanotheres of Ancient Wyoming, Dakota, and Nebraska*, Vol. 1, U.S. Geographical Survey (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929), xxi.

<sup>76</sup> Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*, 209-10, 221-28, quote on 221.

<sup>77</sup> Dussias, “Science, Sovereignty, and the Sacred Text...,” 108.

the Great Plains, recounted Young Bull, the bone helped the Pawnees.” The race of giants destroyed by a deluge had powers that remained in their bones after death. The Pawnee could draw upon those powers by using the fossil bones of these great creatures as *medicine*.<sup>78</sup> It is possible that the peoples who occupied the region prior to the late nineteenth century period of sustained dispossession used fossils located on Monument grounds for such purposes and understood their supernatural potency.

## Origin Stories

### Sioux and the Tower

Since 2012, at least two Native American superintendents have lead Devils Tower, both enrolled members of the Rosebud Lakota Sioux (Dorothy FireCloud and Reed Robinson). The tribal affiliation of these individuals seems fitting since ethnographers Jeffrey Hanson and Sally Chirinos indicate that the “ethnohistoric data on the Lakota provide the strongest and clearest association with Devils Tower and adjacent environs. The tower has been encoded in Lakota ideology, ethnoastronomy, and ethnogeography, and has been an important ritual place to them.”<sup>79</sup> Yet, since Indigenous peoples understood the landscape through kinship and natural features, the Lakota interacted with other peoples at the monolith.<sup>80</sup>

The Lakota represent the largest of the seven traditional divisions of the *Oceti Xakowin* (Ochethi Sakowin) or Seven Council Fires that also include the Dakota or Santee Sioux (Mdewakanton, Wahpeton, Warpekte, Sissetons), Ihanktonwan (Yankton), and the Ihanktonwannai (Yanktonai). The Lakota themselves further divide into seven bands or subtribes: the Hunkpapas (“head of camp circle entrance”), Minneconjous (“plant by water”), Oglalas (“scatter one’s own”), Sans Arcs (“without bows”), Sicangus (“burned thighs,” hence the French term *Brules*), Sihasapas (“Blackfeet”), and Two Kettles (“two boilings”).<sup>81</sup> Historian Nick Estes (affiliated with the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) notes, “The Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota nations never called themselves “Sioux”— that term derives from an abbreviation of “Nadouessioux,” a French adoption of the Ojibwe word for “little snakes,” denoting the Ojibwe’s enemies to its west. Instead, they simply called themselves the “Oyate,” the “Nation,” or the “People,” and sometimes the “Oyate Luta” (the Red Nation); as a political confederacy, they called themselves the “Oceti Sakowin Oyate” (the Nation of the Seven Council Fires).”<sup>82</sup>

The Lakota maintain a sacred relationship to the Black Hills that include Devils Tower National Monument and *Inyan Kara* in northeastern Wyoming. The terms typically applied to the Tower are *Mato Tipi* (Bear Lodge) or as Amos Bad Heart Bull called it, *Mato Tipi Paha*

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<sup>78</sup> Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*, 270-71, 173-75, quote on 174.

<sup>79</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 17. Our understanding has expanded since an early ethnographer noted: “Of the tribes which at one time or another were in this region, only the Sioux are reported to have given special reverence to unusual natural features of this nature. Bear Butte in South Dakota, however, is the place where such religious associations occurred.” Ralph L. Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 1.

<sup>80</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 40.

<sup>81</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, ix; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 13; White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 33.

<sup>82</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 69.



(Bear Lodge Butte). At least one Native source stated the Lakota name for Devils Tower was Grey Eyes Butte. According to oral history and ethnoastronomy, the Black Hills including the Tower were part of a sacred landscape where the *Oceti Xakowin* went to fast, pray, and worship *Wakan Tankan* (the Great Mystery). It was a “homebase” for the Seven Council Fires since “prehistoric” times around 3,000 or more years ago. It was also the country from which the “Oceti Sakowin emerged as a nation, a people, and gained its humanity.”<sup>83</sup>

However, contemporary historic and ethnohistoric research suggests that the Lakota and Sioux relationship with the Black Hills and the Tower are more recent. Documentation points towards an original homeland in the Great Lakes Region, likely around southwestern Minnesota. In this early period, the Dakotas were the “foremost Sioux division,” later superseded by the equestrian powerhouse Lakotas. The westward migration occurred in the late 1600s, though some evidence indicates that peoples ancestral to the Lakota occupied the Red River Valley as early as 1010 AD. Pushed westward from their woodland homes in what is now central Minnesota by their well-armed fur-trading enemies in the late seventeenth century, Siouan speaking tribes headed to southwestern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa, and the eastern Dakotas. By 1750, the Lakota had obtained horses and had adapted them well to the Plains environment. They occupied portions of what are now South and North Dakota and were pushing ever westward into Wyoming. By the mid-eighteenth century, some Lakotas made their way across the Missouri River and became entirely nomadic equestrians by the 1770s. Migrating westward and adopting the horse fundamentally altered Lakota lifeways. Lakotas had a strategic geographic home that allowed them to trade for firearms from the European sources in the East and proximity to other tribes to the West that they could raid. The Black Hills become a part of the Lakota story by around 1775.<sup>84</sup>

Ethnographers and historians have marked 1775-6 as the time when the Black Hills began to become elemental to Lakota life. The source for this precise date was a winter count (a pictorial calendar or history) interpreted to a U.S. Army officer by Oglala leader American Horse in 1879. Historian Nick Estes sees this claim as a damaging misreading of the winter counts and a problematic use of Indigenous knowledge used to cast the Lakota as aggressive imperialist latecomers. The truth was far more complex and the geographical range of the peoples of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate was vast. Black Elk’s famous life story places him in the Powder River region where he considered his people’s roots to be deep in time.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 13-14; Amos Bad Heart Bull, text by Helen Bish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press, 1967); On Grey Eyes Butte, Billy Kingfisher, personal communication, email February 5, 2021; “emerged,” see Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 10-17; Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 3-4; Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 50-53; Raymond J. DeMallie, “Sioux until 1850,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, Vol. 13, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 727; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 49; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 14-17.

<sup>85</sup> Ralph Beals questioned even this date noting, “Mooney indicates that the first Sioux reached the Black Hills in 1775 but this cannot refer to more than wandering bands. His interpretation that the Kiowa were driven out of the Black Hills not long after this by the Sioux is certainly incorrect, for much of his own evidence contradicts this, while Grinnell makes it plain that the Cheyenne did not give up the region east of the Black Hills to the Sioux until

Evidence suggests that the Black Hills were in the hands of the Cheyenne and Crow around the War of 1812. But the Lakota's fortunes changed soon after this conflict as both bison herds and trade flourished. In the early nineteenth century (circa 1820s), the Lakota were moving towards the Black Hills, the Platte River, and the Powder River. Around this time, they were securing control over the Hills, and they had become dominant in the region by 1825. The abundance of traditional historical evidence (written documentation) about the relationship between the Sioux and the Black Hills indicates that they were profoundly embedded in the region by the middle of the nineteenth century. The Black Hills, as Elliott West remarked, had become the powerful Lakota's "spiritual and geopolitical center."<sup>86</sup>

The Tower figures into the story of the Sioux, the Lakota specifically, through the oral histories / interviews conducted by Dick Stone in the 1930s. They reference the Tower as a place of worship where one could fast and connect with the "Great Spirit." An account also references a conflict with the Crow at the Tower where a "holy bear" rescued the pin-downed Sioux who were there to worship. Another account from 1934 by One Bull (nephew of Chief Sitting Bull) related the many ways that the Sioux used the Black Hills and Tower region. He indicated that his grandfather lived near Sylvan Lake in the Black Hills during the winter because the "cold winds were kept out by the hills." In fact, One Bull stated that the Sioux liked to camp "along the river that runs by the base of Bears Tipi" because it "was fine winter country" where they could rest and hunt animals such as buffalo, deer, elk, bear, and mountain lion. Here, the women would "make the skins up into clothes." They caught beaver in the streams, and fur traders traveled long distances from their trading posts with "oxen and stone boats" to buy the furs and skins. Sitting Bull visited Bears Tipi for several days and then returned to his people. At times, he would help others get there like his best friend Foolish Horse. Once, Sitting Bull went to Bears Tipi to worship with Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, Gall, and Spotted Tail. These men put in a claim, according to One Bull, "but the government denied them the right to put in the claim." One Bull also believed caves existed under Bears Tipi, but he did not know much about them other than that they were not explored. Lastly, he noted that people gathered lodge pole pines in the Missouri Buttes for tipi poles.<sup>87</sup>

In 1934, Stone also interviewed Chief White Bull, a Minneconjui and another nephew of Chief Sitting Bull. When he was born in 1850, the tribes considered Bears Tipi (regarded as part of the Black Hills) as belonging to the Minneconjui, Hunkpapas, and Itazipcho. Chief White Bull was clear that they did not worship the Tower itself but worshiped their God through rituals such as the Sun Dance at Bears Tipi. Only "honor men" could go there for three to four days (four days and nights being the longest amount of time) to pray and sleep "on beds made of sagebrush

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almost 1850." Beals, "Report on the Possibilities," 4; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 92-93, 166-69; Sundstrom, "Mirror of Heaven," 179; Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 69; John G. Neihardt, *Black Elks Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 154-157; Albers et al., "The Home of the Bison," 47-49, 82; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 49; Even the sceptic Beals was willing to submit that the Sioux were in the Black Hills by the 1850s. Beals, "Report on the Possibilities," 5; Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 16-17; West, *The Contested Plains*, 66.

<sup>87</sup> Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 98-101; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 49-51.

and fasted, taking neither food or water.” Years ago, his band occasionally wintered at Bears Tipi (when he was fourteen and eighteen), though they regularly chose different spots throughout the Hills to winter over the years. Chief White Bull believed that their presence at the Tower was how “the arrows and scraping knives came to be found there.” When he was four, Mexicans came to the area to sell Arapaho blankets and ended up trading beads, knives, and Mexican bridles for powder and ammunition. Bears Tipi was also a place for hunting antelope, buffalo, and deer and where black bears and grey wolves prowled. There, a number of “old Sioux chiefs who lived a long time ago” lay buried.<sup>88</sup>

A compelling account from a 1934 interview with Old Bull notes that “About 118 years ago our people lived there [the Tower] and one time they built homes with old rotten logs and they named the year by that, ‘The year homes were built with rotten logs.’”<sup>89</sup> This placed Old Bull’s story around 1816. The No Ears winter count of 1817 that called the winter “they made lodges of dead wood” supported the date, though gave no location.<sup>90</sup>

### **Cheyenne and the Tower**

Ralph Beals’ 1934 ethnographic assessment determined that the Cheyenne “indubitably occupied the Devil’s Tower region for some time.” Prior to their occupation of the Tower region, they were agriculturalists and potters who made their home in the headwaters of the Mississippi, the area around Lake Superior, or the woodlands of southeastern Minnesota.<sup>91</sup> In the 1700s, Dakotas with British guns pushed them west, and they became allies of the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras along the Missouri River where they lived in earth lodges and kept dogs for transportation. Pressed by tribal warfare, they gradually moved westward and arrived in the Black Hills region by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>92</sup>

Historical documents reveal that in 1795 the Cheyenne lived along the Cheyenne River in what is now South Dakota. In 1804, a map from the Lewis and Clark Expedition shows them on the north fork of the Cheyenne River near the Tower region. In 1805, Lewis and Clark also noted that the Cheyenne “have no settled place, they rove to the S.W. of the Ricaras, and on both sides of the Cout Noir or black hills, at the heads of Chien River.” In 1997, NPS ethnographers interpreted this to mean that the Cheyenne ranged from Belle Fourche to the Cheyenne River, which would have included the Tower region. Lewis and Clark also indicated that the Sioux who were occupying the Missouri River region had driven the Cheyenne to the Black Hills. However, while some Cheyenne were moving farther west into the Powder River Basin, other bands remained in agricultural villages along the Missouri.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 102-104.

<sup>89</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 103-104.

<sup>90</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 16.

<sup>91</sup> Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 3, quote on 38.

<sup>92</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 38; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 111; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19.

<sup>93</sup> Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 3-4; “No settled place” quote from Thwaites in Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” but see also Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online:

<https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>, access November 2022; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 11. Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 38.

Later cartographic evidence supports the presence of the Cheyenne in the Black Hills during the early 1800s. Stephen Long's 1823 map situates them well within the Black Hills. In part, their increasing dependence on buffalo led the Cheyenne incrementally westward. They occupied the Platte around 1820, and by 1828, the "chief camps of the Cheyenne were reported to be in the western Black Hills in Wyoming, that is, precisely in the Devil's Tower region." Cheyenne agriculturalists also continued to exist in permanent villages along South Dakota's Grand River and the Cheyenne River. The Belle Fourche River was valuable to the Cheyenne for its abundance of grass, firewood that sustained their winter villages, and the hills that sheltered them from the harsh Northern Plains winds.<sup>94</sup>

Samuel Parker's 1838 map does not contain reference to the Cheyenne but rather reveals a gap in territory in the Black Hills bordered by the Oglala Sioux to its East and the Crow to the west. Likely by the 1830s, they had left the region for the area between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers. Driven in part by their accumulation of sufficient horse power to become equestrians and hence nomadic, the Cheyenne split into Northern and Southern divisions by the 1830s. The Southern Cheyenne moved to Arkansas River valley of Colorado and Kansas. Here they allied with the Arapaho and Kiowa. In time, after dispossessing the tribe of its lands, the federal government resettled them in "Indian Territory" or the current state of Oklahoma where many still reside. Other Cheyenne reside at the Northern Cheyenne Reservation located in southeastern Montana and close to their eighteenth and nineteenth-century lands. When the Cheyenne divided, the Northern Cheyenne occupied the North Platte and Powder River country. Ranging across northeastern Colorado and into the Powder River Basin of Wyoming to Montana, they became allies with the Lakota and Arapaho. For example, around 1820 when they were camped along the Powder River, the Northern Cheyenne joined forces with the Lakota to fight the Crow. Additionally, oral history places the Northern Cheyenne planting corn within the Black Hills in the 1830s when they also camped along the Powder River and North Platte tributaries. This pattern of habitation along the Powder River continued into at least the 1860s. The two divisions maintained little contact after they separated, but Brave Bear of the Southern Cheyenne brought warriors to assist the Northern Cheyenne in their fight against Custer in 1876. By 1910, the two Cheyenne reservations (Montana and Oklahoma) contained about 3,000 individuals.<sup>95</sup>

Sacred narratives also tie the Cheyennes to the Tower. It was a "holy place" where they went to "worship the Great Spirit; as did many other tribes before the white man came." Being a sacred place, the Cheyenne "braves" felt comfortable bringing their families.<sup>96</sup> A Cheyenne story featured the practices and burial of a prominent culture hero at the Tower. Before the Cheyenne had horses, a man by the name Sweet Medicine, the founder of warrior societies, tribal governments, and a conduit for teaching special laws and customs, lay dying in a camp near *Na Kovea* or "Bear's Lodge." After living four generations and giving his people the Four Sacred Arrows, he knew his time had come. Sweet Medicine told his people to build him a cedar pole

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<sup>94</sup> Beals, "Report on the Possibilities," "chief camps" on 4; Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 11-12.

<sup>95</sup> Beals, "Report on the Possibilities," 38; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 38; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19; Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 11; Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 111.

<sup>96</sup> Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 113.

hut covered with grass and bark where he could lay on a bed of grass. Here Sweet Medicine prophesied “the coming of the horse; the disappearance of the old ways and the buffalo, to be replaced by slick animals with split hoofs the people must learn to eat – cattle. And he told them of white men, strangers called Earth Men who could fly above the earth, take thunder for light; men who would dig at the earth and drain it, until it was dead.”<sup>97</sup> Sweet Medicine remained in the hut and passed in the shadow of the Tower. This tale is slightly controversial among the Cheyenne, as story-teller John Stands in Timber indicated; some believe that Sweet Medicine died in another extremely sacred site on the northeast edge of the Black Hills just west of Bear Butte (near Sturgis, South Dakota).<sup>98</sup>

Dick Stone recounted another poignant and pertinent story from the Cheyenne. When attempting to revisit a prior interviewee who he had met the year before, he was told that the person had gone on “The Long Trip” (meaning that they died of pneumonia). Instead, Stone was introduced to Limpy, “an old medicine man who was at the fight between Custer and the Indians.” As a young boy, he was in the Battle of Rosebud and then Little Bighorn/Greasy Grass a week later.<sup>99</sup> When asked about “Bears Tipi,” his thoughts carried him to “the days when his people wandered free and happy over the hills and prairies.” Retrieved from his profound reflections, Limpy remarked that “There are some things we don’t like to talk about, that was a very holy place to us.” Stone reminded him that the stories were gradually becoming lost as Limpy’s generation was passing from the Earth. Acknowledging that the “young people are not interested in the old stories” seemed to change his mind, and he agreed so long as he could have other elders with him to help him tell the story straight. Limpy feared that if he did not “tell it straight,” he would be “punished.”<sup>100</sup>

Unfortunately, when Stone and his interpreter returned to hear about the Tower, Limpy was unable to travel, and another took his place--Medicine Top who heard it from his father and who prayed to the “Great Spirit” to help him “tell the story straight and true.” Stone noted that while many of the Cheyenne came to the tipi to hear Medicine Top tell his story, “none but the old men had seen this place.”<sup>101</sup> This occurred in 1933, and clearly although the younger generation had been distant from this sacred place (the Tower), it held powerful sway over the Cheyenne elders who exercised caution in explaining its sacred nature. Even though the reservation period had cut the Cheyenne off from sacred sites such as the Tower and created a generational gap, the sacred power of the Tower held power for the tribe.

Medicine Top told Stone the following story:

The Cheyenne version of the origin of the Tower is somewhat different. According to their legend, there were seven brothers. When the wife of the oldest brother went out

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<sup>97</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 38-39. Similar language in John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 40.

<sup>98</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 12.

<sup>99</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 115-116.

<sup>101</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 116.

to fix the smoke wings of her tipi, a big bear carried her away to his cave. Her husband mourned her loss deeply and would go out and cry defiantly to the bear. The youngest of the brothers was a medicine man and had great powers. He told the oldest one to go out and make a bow and four blunt arrows. Two arrows were to be painted red and set with eagle feathers; the other two were to be painted black and set with buzzard feathers. The youngest brother then took the bow and small arrows, told the older brothers to fill their quivers with arrows and they all went out after the big bear. At the entrance of the cave, the younger brother told the others to sit down and wait. He then turned himself into a gopher and dug a big hole in the bear's den. When he crawled in he found the bear lying with his head on the woman's lap. He then put the bear to sleep and changed himself back into an Indian. He then had the woman crawl back to the entrance where the six brothers were waiting. Then the hole closed up. After the Indians hurried away, the bear awoke. He started after them taking all the bears of which he was the leader. The Indians finally came to the place where Devils Tower now stands. The youngest boy always carried a small rock in his hand. He told his six brothers and the woman to close their eyes. He sang a song. When he had finished the rock had grown. He sang four times and when he had finished singing the rock was just as high as it is today. When the bears reached the Tower, the brothers killed all of the bears except the leader, who kept jumping against the rock. His claws made the marks that are on the rock today. The youngest brother then shot two black arrows and a red arrow without effect. His last arrow killed the bear. The youngest brother then made a noise like a bald eagle. Four eagles came. They took hold of the eagle's legs and were carried to the ground.<sup>102</sup>

Ethnographers Hanson and Chirinos believe that the Cheyenne "presence in and around the Black Hills, the Belle Fourche and Cheyenne rivers, and the Powder River country, combined with the encoding of Devils Tower into their ideology and the belief by some Cheyenne that Sweet Medicine died at Devils Tower, argues strongly for a Cheyenne attachment to Devils Tower." In their estimation, however, little direct evidence placed them within the bounds of the current Monument.<sup>103</sup>

Yet, of the more than twenty tribal groups that consider the Tower sacred and the "number of origin myths that have been recorded," the Cheyenne sacred narrative "has taken on something of an official status, largely through its prominent display at the visitors' center and its representation in postcard and poster form." By privileging and commercializing this one tribe's account of the Tower, suggests one critic, the deep and multifaceted Native American history of the region is truncated and trivialized. The Cheyenne sacred narrative is set against (and almost in juxtaposition to) the hard western science of geology that, by implication of the display and general interpretation, accurately explains its origins.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 2-3.

<sup>103</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 17.

<sup>104</sup> John Dorst, "Postcolonial Encounters: Narrative Constructions of Devils Tower National Monument," in *Postcolonial America*, Richard King, ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 310-311, quote on 309. See also Wendy Rex-Atzet, "Narratives of Place and Power: Laying Claim to Devils Tower," 45-70 in *Imagining the Big*

### Arapaho and the Tower

Arapaho historical connections to the Tower region are similar to those of the Cheyenne in that they migrated from the East. However, scholars are less certain about the early migration and movements of the Arapaho because they are “archeologically invisible.” Some speculate they were present in the Red River area of North Dakota and western Minnesota, but this information is ambiguous. Arapaho stories tell of migrations long ago across the Bering Strait and eventually into the Lake Michigan region. Tradition also recounts that the Sioux drove them from their home in western Minnesota. Possibly Europeans and Ojibwe with guns forced them out of their agricultural villages in the East. Linguistically, the Arapaho were close allies of the Gros Ventre who considered the Arapaho one of their five aboriginal bands. Ethnohistorians have used this connection to hypothesize that the Arapaho originated in central Saskatchewan among the Gros Ventre near the forks of the Saskatchewan River. In the mid-eighteenth century, they migrated south to the Missouri River, and the tribe made it further south to the North Platte and Cheyenne Rivers by the late eighteenth century. In 1794, a tribe by the name of the “Caminabiches” was reported to be living near their allies and friends the Cheyenne along the branches of the Cheyenne River close to the Black Hills. This was the Arapaho tribe that lived along the Platte River in 1795.<sup>105</sup>

In 1805, Lewis and Clark noted that the “Canenvich” (Arapaho) had made their homes above the headwaters of the Loup River, a major tributary of the Platte River. The explorers also referred to a tribe called “Castahana” or “Gens des Vache” who overlapped with the “Castahana” and occupied the region between the headwaters of the Loup River and the Bighorn River. These could have been the Southern Arapaho who were known to have independently moved from the Platte to the Arkansas River by 1816 and comfortably settled into the southern plains by 1820. The Northern Arapaho remained closely allied with the Cheyenne and occupied an area ranging from the South Platte in northeastern Colorado to the Powder River country of Wyoming.<sup>106</sup> Possibly, the Arapaho migration to the Black Hills preceded the Cheyenne.<sup>107</sup>

In 1991, non-Native ethnohistorical sources documented and analyzed by NPS ethnographers failed to tie the Arapaho directly to the Tower. However, the 1934 ethnographic analysis performed by Ralph Beals notes that in the “later historic period,” it is possible that the “Cheyenne and Arapaho (with whom they were always friendly and frequently camped together) to have shared a common range with the Black Hills as the center.” Due to their close ties, Beals

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*Open: Nature, Identity, and Play in the New West*, ed. Liza Nicholas, Elaine Bapis, and Thomas Harvey (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 46-52.

<sup>105</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” “invisible” on 12; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 35; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 106; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19.

<sup>106</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 12-13.

<sup>107</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 35.

concluded, “the Devil’s Tower may be considered to be almost as much in their territory as in that of the Cheyenne.” Their close ties with the Cheyenne perhaps related to a desire to have allies assist in securing and protecting their trade routes and horse herds. Probably, Arapaho territory lay primarily west of the Cheyenne River, and Arapaho hunters and horse traders likely traveled to the Tower region. The Arapahos called the Tower *Woox-niii-non*, “Bear’s Tipi.” The Arapaho ranged thousands of miles as traders, buffalo-hunters, and equestrians with enormous herds. They traded for guns, ammunition, kettles, and knives, and from Mexican traders, blankets, flour, beads, and silver bridles. By 1826, some of the Arapahos and Cheyennes departed the Black Hills for the south around the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. Yet, in 1854, Mexican traders continued to engage with the Arapahos and sold blankets to them along the Belle Fourche River. In 1876, as the reservation era dawned and dispossession proceeded apace, many Arapahos settled in central Wyoming on the Wind River Reservation.<sup>108</sup>

Native testimony revealed the deep ties to the Tower among the Arapaho. In 1932, Dick Stone visited an 81-year-old Arapaho man on the Arapaho Reservation near St. Michael’s Mission in Ethete, Wyoming. Through an interpreter, Otto Hungary, Sage related to his audience a “story [that] had been handed down for a long time, it was very old and had never been changed.” It had been passed down from his grandfather “Drying-up-hide” to his father “Straight-old-man” to Sherman when he was nine years old (~1859). According to the story, his grandfather, “Drying-up-hide” had a “strange power over animals” and was buried close to “Bears Tipi” where he used to use his skills to hunt and trap buffalo, deer, and antelope. Sherman told Stone and Hungary a sacred narrative about the Tower that his grandfather passed down to him.<sup>109</sup> The tribe undertook both economic and funerary activities at the monolith.<sup>110</sup>

### **The Crow and the Tower**

Contemporary Crow people live on their reservation within ancestral lands in southern Montana. Two divisions existed among the Crow – the River Crow located around the Yellowstone River and the Mountain Crow in the Bighorn Mountains). At times, the Mountain Crow camped near the Tower where game was bountiful along the Belle Fourche River. Their traditional territory / ancestral lands included the region “bordered on the north by the Yellowstone River in eastern Montana; on the south by the headwaters of the Powder River in Wyoming; and on the west by the Absaroka Mountains in Wyoming and Montana.” The Crow were once a part of the Hidatsa tribe that inhabited agricultural villages along the Missouri River. How, why, and precisely when the Crow migrated during the Late Prehistoric or Early Historic period is a topic of debate (c. AD 1400 has been proposed). Medicine Crow, a Crow historian, states that they left life among the Hidatsa under the Crow chief No Vitals around the turn of the seventeenth century. Ethnohistorical evidence derived from non-Native sources indicate at least two distinct migrations: the first around 1675 with the Mountain Crow moving from the Awatixa

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<sup>108</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 13, 17; Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” quotes on 4 and 4-5; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 106; White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 29; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 35-36.

<sup>109</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 36-38; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 109-110.

<sup>110</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 17.



Hidatsa, and the second of the River Crow circa 1725. Archeologists speculate on an earlier possibility based on “Crow pottery” that places them in northern Wyoming in the fifteenth century. The Crow controlled the Black Hills and the Kiowa during much of the eighteenth century.<sup>111</sup>

By the early 1800s, a period marked by Lewis and Clark’s journey and its wealth of information about Western peoples, the Crow were well-established as equestrian bison hunters occupying what would become southern Montana and northern Wyoming. Documents from Lewis and Clark Expedition and trappers in the West reveal that around 1805, the tribe ranged long distances to trade, hunt, and raid. By the winter of 1807-1808, trapper George Drouillard detailed the immense winter camps constructed by the Crow “along Clark’s Fork of the Yellowstone, west of the Pryor and Bighorn ranges in Montana; along the Bighorn and Shoshone rivers in northern Wyoming; along the Little Bighorn River in Montana; and along the upper reaches of the Tongue River, bordering the eastern slopes of the Bighorn Mountains, possibly near present-day Sheridan, Wyoming.”<sup>112</sup>

Direct ethnohistorical evidence primarily places Crow territory to the west of the Tower. However, like many other equestrian tribes, their trading expeditions took them across the region and into the Black Hills. More specifically, they maintained relations with their ancestral group the Hidatsas and the affiliated Mandans and regularly ventured to the east and likely past the Tower region to visit their villages. Furthermore, evidence collected by Dick Stone strengthens the Crow connection to the Tower. When recalling his memories of “Bears Tipi,” Old Bull, a Sioux informant, noted that “There was a war between the Crows and the Sioux right close to Bears Tipi and about ten Crows were killed.” Crow Chief Max Big Man confirmed conflict around the Tower when he remarked in 1932 that the Tower was not “originally in Sioux country,” but rather that “it belonged to the Crows but? They were pushed back.” Stone added that some of the Crow warriors went to the Tower to attack the Sioux. Even though the Sioux dominated the Monument region, the Crow periodically controlled it via conquest. The Crow presence around the Tower and the antagonistic relationship between them and the Sioux appeared in General W. F. Raynold’s journals from 1859. On July 20, 1859, he remarked that soon after locating the Tower, their Sioux interpreter and guide Zephyr Recontre was fearful and decided to leave the party because they were “now out of the Sioux country, and will soon be among the Crows.”<sup>113</sup>

Stone stated that little knowledge of the Tower existed among the Crow and that only “some of the real old people have been there.” In 1932, Stone interviewed a 117-year-old Crow woman named “Kills-coming-to-the-birds” whose birth summer it was and who had been “a grown woman when the stars fell in 1833,” likely the unusually brilliant November 1833 Leonid

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<sup>111</sup> Fagan, *Ancient North America*, “bordered on the north” on 131-132; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” “crow pottery” on 9; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 31; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19.

<sup>112</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 9-10.

<sup>113</sup> Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 3; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 10; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” “there was a war” on 103, “pushed back” on 123, “Out of the Sioux country” as quoted in Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 65.

Meteor Storm. After receiving a gift of silver from Stone, she stated, “Yes, I was there and saw them chasing a bear. We had gone there to worship and feast.” Chief Max Big Man added that the Tower was called “Bears Tipi,” or “bear lodge because so many bears lived there.” The Crow interpreted the unique character of the Tower “rising high up in the air” as a sign that it was “put there by the Great Spirit for a special reason.” They went there to worship and fast and to construct “Dream houses” which Big Man assumed would still be visible since “the ruins of these should be there yet as they were built out of stones.”<sup>114</sup>

Crow names for the Tower include “Bears House, Dabicha Asow” and “Bears Tipi.” Another conversation that Stone had at a Fourth of July and birthday celebration held at the Crow Agency was with Mrs. White Man Runs Him. She noted that Indians would try to throw arrows over “Bears House,” but none could ever succeed. Crows, she added, also fasted and prayed there by making houses that were “about as long as a man, with rocks in which they would lie down with head to the east and feet to the west” like the rising and setting sun.<sup>115</sup> Lastly, she indicated that the Little Missouri Buttes were called the “Two Buttes.”<sup>116</sup> In the end, as ethnographers Hanson and Chirinos concluded: “The Crow were familiar with the Devils Tower region, incorporated it into their ideological patterns, and apparently utilized the tower area for ritual purposes.”<sup>117</sup>

### **The Kiowa and the Tower**

Though the Kiowa now live far from the Tower in south central Oklahoma, they have an incredibly interesting history with the massive rock. Typically considered a southern Plains nomadic tribe, they once resided in the north. Possibly, the Kiowa were among the first known people in the Tower region and were recognized as the Kiowa-Apache (sometimes referred to as the Plains Apache)--perhaps a division of the Apache or a description of a closely allied group of Apache and Kiowa. In 1934, Beals believed that the Kiowa were in the Black Hills region at the start of the nineteenth century but that they did not originate in this region. Rather, based on linguistic analysis, they had moved up from the south, and then after a hundred years in the north, the Kiowa migrated back south to where they now reside in Oklahoma. However, some believe that they came from the north in a place of “great cold and deep snows” at the sources of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers (now western Montana) using dogs and sledges with the Kiowa-Apache. They were hunters and not agriculturalists. One day on a hunting trip, a dispute erupted among the Kiowa. The ownership of an antelope udder (a delicacy) triggered a conflict between two rival chiefs that fractured the tribe. The defeated chief was angry and led his people to the northwest where they were never to be seen or heard from again. The victorious chief

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<sup>114</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 123-124.

<sup>115</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 32.

<sup>116</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 124.

<sup>117</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 17.

(along with his udder) led his people to the southeast where they crossed the Yellowstone River. Around 1700, they met the Crows, lived among them, and acquired the horse.<sup>118</sup>

According to recent analyses of oral tradition and documentary evidence, the Kiowa once inhabited the Black Hills and the surrounding territory. Documentary evidence placed the Kiowa (by the names of “Pioyas” and “Cayoguas”) in the Black Hills region in 1742 and 1794. Knowledge generated from the Lewis and Clark Expedition also situated the Kiowa near the Black Hills. According to their 1805 journals and Clark’s 1810 map, they resided southwest of the Black Hills near the headwaters of the Cheyenne River and along the North Platte River. Cheyenne oral tradition validates this documentary evidence: the Kiowa lived near the Black Hills and along the Little Missouri, Powder, and Tongue Rivers when the Cheyenne arrived in the region. Near the end of the 1700s, other tribes (possibly the Dakota and Cheyenne) began to drive the Kiowa and the Kiowa-Apache from the Black Hills. When they retreated, they brought with them memories of the landscape and some Crow children so that the connection and languages remained between the tribes. For many years after their migration south, Kiowa fathers commonly visited the Crow with their young children so that they could stay for two or three years to learn the Crow language and sustain the friendship between the tribes. Thus, the Kiowa likely lived in the Black Hills region for much of the eighteenth century and began to drift slowly southward towards Oklahoma in the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>119</sup>

Like the other tribes discussed in this section, the Kiowa possessed sacred narratives about the Tower. Their name for the monolith is quite different from the more common variants of “Bear Lodge.” The Kiowa call the Tower *T’sou’a’e* (or “aloft on a rock”). Generations after they occupied the Black Hills and the Tower country, the Kiowa retained historical memories and oral traditions tied to the area. They were friends with the Crow and called the Black Hills *Ts’oukhou k’oup* or “Black Rock Mountain.”<sup>120</sup> The anthropologist John P. Harrington researched the Kiowa during the 1930s and found that “the origin memories of American Indian people reveal none anywhere, “as bright – and remote –” as the Kiowa memories of their days in the Black Hills and at Devils Tower.”<sup>121</sup> The stories endured even if no specific evidence placed them in the Monument.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Alfred Chelpah Sr., Irene Poolaw, Houston Klinekole Sr., Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Pamela Innes, Deborah Bernsten and the University of Oklahoma, “Plains Apaches.” *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart, <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.na.085>, accessed February 2021; Beals, “Report on the Possibilities,” 3; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, “deep snows” on 34; James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Washington, DC, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1898), 152, [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46479/46479-h/46479-h.htm#GENESIS\\_AND\\_MIGRATION](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46479/46479-h/46479-h.htm#GENESIS_AND_MIGRATION), accessed November 2022; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 233; Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 131-132. Fagan notes late 1600s for horses.

<sup>119</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 34; Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, 152-56; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 10-11.

<sup>120</sup> Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, 6-7.

<sup>121</sup> As quoted in Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 34; John P. Harrington, “Kiowa Memories of the Northland,” *So Live the Works of Men*, ed. D.D. Brand and F.E. Harvey (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939), 169-170.

<sup>122</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview” 11, 17.

The Kiowa have several origin stories for Mato Tipila. Here is the version most commonly heard and often used for interpretation, as related by historian Ray Mattison in 1956:

According to the Kiowas, who at one time are reputed to have lived in the region, their tribe once camped on a stream where there were many bears. One day seven little girls were playing at a distance from the village and were chased by some bears. The girls ran toward the village and when the bears were about to catch them, they jumped to a low rock about three feet in height. One of them prayed to the rock, “Rock, take pity on us – Rock, save us.” The rock heard them and began to elongate itself upwards, pushing the children higher and higher out of reach of the bears. When the bears jumped at them they scratched the rock, broke their claws and fell back upon the ground. The rock continued to push the children upward into the sky while the bears jumped at them. The children are still in the sky, seven little stars in a group (the Pleiades). According to the legend, the marks of the bears’ claws may be seen on the side of the rock.<sup>123</sup>

### **Shoshone and the Tower**

Several bands of Shoshonean-speaking people occupied the Great Basin and Rocky Mountains where, during the Late Prehistoric or early historic periods, they adapted to their environment by adopting a Plains cultural lifestyle. Archeologists believe that these groups occupied the Bighorn-Powder River area by at least 1500 AD. Possibly their territory included the northwestern Plains from Wyoming to Canada prior to obtaining the horse. Sites found across northern and southwestern Wyoming indicate that the Shoshone occupied the region well into the eighteenth century. In the early 1700s, they were in the Black Hills along with the Kiowa and Crow.<sup>124</sup> Evidence from the historic record in 1742 places the Shoshone (then referred to as “Serpent” or “Snake” by Europeans) south and west of the Mandan villages in North Dakota. At this time, they were “a very powerful equestrian tribe” that likely lived in the vicinity of the Black Hills. By 1807-1808, Shoshones reportedly lived with the Crow at the confluence of the Bighorn and Shoshone Rivers. The available data suggests that the Eastern Shoshone took advantage of their mobility and ranged from west to east between the Bighorn Mountains and the Black Hills during the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For a time during the 1830s, the Crow restricted Shoshone territory to the Green River area. By the following decade, however, the Shoshone made peace with the Crow and extended their territory to again include the Powder River-Bighorn Mountains region.<sup>125</sup>

During the mid-nineteenth century, the Shoshone consisted of four or more independent bands that would gather and disperse depending on seasonal necessities such as bison hunting and other economic and social activities. The Wind River was the place where the bands

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<sup>123</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 1-2.

<sup>124</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 19.

<sup>125</sup> Fagan, *Ancient North America*, 131-132; Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 7-9.

customarily congregated in the late spring. They dispersed in the fall, and some wintered in the Powder River valley in the headwaters or farther downstream.<sup>126</sup>

The available ethnohistoric data supporting Shoshone presence around the Tower are not conclusive. However, they were undoubtedly present in the region, occupying the Powder River valley, camping among the Crow, and building villages near the Black Hills. Likely, the Shoshone have a history with the Tower encoded in their ethnogeography, and it played an important part in their religion as a traditional site used for rituals. Some scholars believe that they traveled from the Wind River territory to the Tower for reasons related to their belief system. Lastly, a Shoshone elder noted that a horned spirit named “Bear Scratched His Way up There” lives at the Tower and can grant “supernatural powers.” This elder believed that the Shoshone rock art depicting this spirit could have been the inspiration for white men misinterpreting its significance and naming it Devil’s Tower.<sup>127</sup>

In 1991, consultation with the Eastern Shoshone revealed a “strong traditional association between their tribe and Devils Tower.”<sup>128</sup> They “did not want to be known,” and consequently they have been careful to leave no traces of their activity at the Tower. They also explained that once the reservation era began and the federal government was cracking down on Native American religious practices, they were fearful of retribution for leaving the reservation to practice their religion at sacred sites on federal land. As a result, no formal “traditional” documentation of their presence and spiritual connection to the Tower exists.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, with sparse documentation, little is known about the Shoshone beliefs and rituals pertaining to the Tower. When queried by NPS-sponsored researchers, Shoshone representatives have stated that they are culturally prohibited from revealing specifics about their connection to the Tower. They have, however, identified rock art that they believe proves their connection to the Tower. Related to the rock art is a sacred narrative known only by the title “Ten Sisters and the Bear” that reportedly explains the origins of the Tower. Today, many Eastern Shoshone live on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and share a conviction that they are connected to this sacred place.<sup>130</sup>

However, Shoshone peoples’ contemporary use of the Tower reaffirms the tribe’s ties to the sacred landscape. They visit the Tower for fasting, undertaking vision quests, and seeking songs for rituals such as the Sun Dance. Reportedly, tribal members direct Shoshone religious activities and prayer to nature spirits called *puha* towards mountains and “hillocks or solitary rocks” with rock art. Shoshone lore also often revolves around bears that, at times, even perform the Sun Dance.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 7-9.

<sup>127</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 39.

<sup>128</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 9.

<sup>129</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” xii

<sup>130</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 17, 23, 29-30, quote on 58; Harkin and Chapman, “Update of Ethnographic Overview,” 20.

<sup>131</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 39-40.

### **Arikara and the Tower**

Some of the more recent official ethnographic analyses of the Tower do not include the Arikara. However, evidence suggests that they also have a connection to this sacred place where men fasted and prayed and others took advantage of the abundant game. The Arikara have a number of sacred narratives possibly related to the Tower.<sup>132</sup>

### **Conclusion: Tribes and the Tower**

For millennia, peoples inhabiting the broad reaches of the North American West have revered the Tower as a sacred space. It is a landmark on the Northern Plains that carries mythological or sacred meaning for Native Americans. The history described in detail in this chapter represents an overview of the abundant evidence demonstrating an extended period of Native American presence and the religious significance tribes ascribed to the Tower. As many as twenty-seven tribes have some sort of historical or cultural association with the Tower. Euro-American concepts of land tenure that define territory by who controls it do not necessarily apply to the tribes. Territories overlapped and shifted over decades and centuries as groups vied for territory, dispossessed one another, allied, warred, raided, intermarried, and established new ties of kinship. Nestled amidst the harsh extremes of the Northern Plains, the Black Hills are an “ecological island” where resources and environmental conditions attracted many groups to its rich hunting grounds and sheltering retreat. Unforgettable in its awesomeness, the Tower provided a striking landmark for navigating the physical and spiritual worlds and provoked the imagination of inquisitive minds.

As tribes incorporated the horse and adopted nomadic lifeways, they covered vast territories, experiencing a wider swath of the western landscape. When the horse changed the mental and physical landscape of the region, the Tower became less enticing as a place to dwell but more of a sacred place to visit. Bison were central to this story, sharing a long history with peoples of the Plains. In the nineteenth century, ties to this animal even became legally linked to territorial claims. When the Lakota signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the agreement conditionally granted them lands that included the Tower as “unceded Indian territory” where “no white person or persons” were to be permitted to settle. Lands to the southeast were conditional on the viability of the hunt “so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase.” Trade affected the bison populations as the growing industrial economy created demand for products derived from their corpses such as their leather for industrial machinery. Trade also brought European guns, manufactured goods, and diseases to the tribes over four centuries. Initially, those trade items, accompanied by viruses and bacteria, traveled along well-worn routes that had brought valuable trade items across the continent such as obsidian from Yellowstone National Park.

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<sup>132</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 30.

After the waves of European American explorers and settlers dispossessed the Plains' Indigenous peoples, the dominant American culture and its established histories erased or ignored the long and rich connections that regional tribes had to the Tower. As discussed later in this document, it was not until the 1980s and early 1990s that an American Indian revival forced more comprehensive studies of the Tower's significance to tribal groups. When the booming popularity of rock climbing clashed with supportive Native American federal legislation, the NPS had to recognize the Tower's spiritual meanings and take steps towards grappling with balancing the use of the Monument. What happened between the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and today's painstaking efforts at balancing multiple uses becomes the subject of following chapters.

## **Known Resource Types**

**Archeological sites.** Archeologists determined 19 sites as eligible for listing under the National Register of Historic Places and 42 not eligible. Many of these are lithic sites, and archeological surveys have found other resources both prehistoric as well as historical, including rock art panels, a hearth, and a cabin site.

**Archeological Districts.** A 2001 archeological survey by Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton recommended two districts to preserve historic resources-- a Homestead and Early Tourism Historical Archaeological District and a Devils Tower High Meadows Prehistoric Archaeological District. (See Chapter 9).

**Traditional Cultural Property.** In 1993, the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places determined Devils Tower National Monument eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property, and the NPS has managed it as such since 2019.



## Graphics



*Figure 9. The Belle Fourche Valley provided good hunting, just below the Tower Formation. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).*





*Figure 10. Meadows to the NW side of Devils Tower/Bear Lodge. Lithic points, flakes, obsidian, and other archeological artifacts have been found in various places at Devils Tower National Monument. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).*

## **CHAPTER THREE: Colonizing the Black Hills: Exploration, Native Americans, and the Homestead Era in the Northern Plains, 1820-1892**

The Northern Plains of the American West compose a vast and rugged region characterized by climactic extremes and indescribable beauty. Devils Tower (also known as Bear Lodge, Bear's Lodge, Mato Teepee, Mato Tipila) is a relatively small topographic feature amidst the vast Great Plains. As shown in the previous chapter, the arresting nature of the Tower made it a renowned landmark among the First Peoples who inhabited North America. From the 1860s into the 1880s, several important developments unfolded in and near the Black Hills that changed the lifeways of Native Americans. During the period of Euro-American exploration, expeditions of discovery made the West legible and knowable in a geographical sense for the newcomers, enabling the westward expansion of Euro-American gold miners and settlers. The 1851 and 1868 Treaties of Fort Laramie attempted to make peace between Native peoples and Euro-American newcomers, and yet these treaties fell apart with encroachment of miners and others into the Black Hills. Throughout the ensuing period of settlement, the Tower kept its centrality as an outstanding landmark in the Northern Great Plains.

### **Settler Colonial Visions**

In the nineteenth century, the American West participated in a global movement where white EuroAmericans spread out rapidly to exploit resources in lands inhabited by aboriginal peoples. This form of empire sought more than mere enrichment from Indigenous wealth. Its central goal was the acquisition of Native lands and the resettlement of EuroAmericans onto these newly-conquered terrains. To complete this, the newcomers had to displace or eradicate Native groups. The process involved both the land-hungry settlers and their violent actions and the larger complicity of governments. Scholars have labeled this “settler colonialism.” It was an ongoing structure of power, domination, and oppression intended to marginalize and displace Native people from their traditional lands. A transnational phenomenon, it centered on establishing communities of EuroAmericans and removing Indigenous inhabitants. This usually necessitated violent eradication of Native inhabitants. The process also sought erasure of Native cultures and the evidence of their customs and traditions on the land or in the historical record. Indigenous peoples actively resisted their subjugation and removal. Despite white efforts, they did not disappear, and the settling process never completely eradicated their presence. The history of Devils Tower reprised the larger structure and processes of settler colonialism on a micro scale.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1999 and Patrick Wolfe's foundational article “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” the literature informing the concept of settler colonialism has grown vast. Recent works use settler colonialism fruitfully to interpret what Lorenzo Veracini, an Australian scholar, calls a “global settler revolution.” It provides a useful analytical tool with which to understand both the European/American colonizers who swept into Wyoming as part

In the nineteenth century when increasing numbers of Euro-Americans entered the region that became Wyoming, settler colonialism contained an internal conflict. In one ideal, EuroAmerican expansion brought the Manifest Destiny-inspired hope of extending civilization to the wilderness. As the United States entered the capitalist revolution and industrialization, a competing desire grew to maintain the West as a semi-wilderness refuge away from the corruption of Eastern civilized spaces. Both visions featured the West as a vast empty landscape, devoid of Native inhabitants and malleable to white Americans' remaking. Fur traders "opened" the West by expanding geographical knowledge and connecting the region to national and global markets with furry commodities. This set the stage for "civilization" to control the region that many early white trappers disdained. Living in the wilderness and engaging in capitalist extraction of natural resources meant bringing colonial power to the "frontier." Today, this tension still exists in how Wyoming has tried to present itself and, more importantly, how the National Park Service defines its purpose.<sup>2</sup>

In pursuing their business, the fur traders showed other interested parties the potential of the West. If commodities like furs could cross the wilderness then cattle could surely amble across the terrain alongside wagons. These animals could even be partners in empire laying the foundation for colonizing the land and settling the region. In 1832, Benjamin Bonneville crossed the continental divide at Wyoming's South Pass with wagons. The purpose of his journey is subject to some debate, but the War Department's directions for his "leave of absence" were quite clear. It was to be a general reconnaissance that included noting the climate, soil, and natural resources of the Rocky Mountains and beyond and making contact with Native American tribes for trade and assessing their capacity to make war. According to historian of western exploration William Goetzmann, "Bonneville was to serve the cause of national expansion." Indeed, Bonneville's journey illustrated the possibility of traversing the rugged country using

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of westward expansion and the Indigenous peoples who resisted their displacement and cultural eradication. Recently, scholars have complicated the concept, pointing out its limitations and its totalizing momentum. Indigenous scholars such as Ned Blackhawk in *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History* (2023) especially have shown the scholarship's overlooking of Native agency that both resisted and shaped the settlers' developments. Yet current works continue to find explanatory power in settler colonialism, including most recently, Vericini's *The World Turned Inside Out: Settler Colonialism as a Political Idea* (2021). Margaret Jacobs, a prominent, internationally recognized scholar of Native American history and the American West, uses settler colonialism to extraordinarily good effect in her Bancroft Prize-winning book *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (2009). More recently, and no less powerfully, Jacobs employs the concept in *After One Hundred Winters: In Search of Reconciliation on America's Stolen Lands* (2021). Native scholars such as Kim TallBear of the University of Alberta use the term carefully and precisely in their dissections of settler culture and history. This scholarship is especially important for national park histories as the National Park Service exists within the larger construct of settler colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home...Ranching, Farming, and Homesteading in Wyoming, 1860-1960* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office Planning and Historic Context Development Program, Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources, 2011), 3-4, 13 [Derived from Cassity's 450 page Multiple Property Documentation Form "Ranches, Farms, and Homesteads in Wyoming, 1860-1960 (2010)]; William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (November 1986): 577-597; Claire Strom, *Profiting from the Plains: The Great Northern Railway and Corporate Development of the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

wagons.<sup>3</sup> Only a decade later, the first emigrant train made its way through what would become the state of Wyoming. Prior to the Civil War, about five-hundred-thousand emigrants crossed its landscape on their way to goldfields, greener pastures, and places to worship without condemnation.

Although few of these emigrants stayed, their livestock and wagons made physical marks on the land and their presence required infrastructure. Military installations emerged to protect emigrants, and businesses developed that catered to the steady stream of travelers and constant presence of soldiers. Fresh meat was essential for the long-term operation of a military installation. Consequently, military explorers such as John Fremont noted in 1842 that “the country, which supports immense herds of buffalo, is admirably adapted to grazing; and herds of cattle might be maintained by the posts.” Along with livestock that kept their owners on an expanding search for forage beyond the trail, livestock drives accompanied the emigrant trails. Indeed, entrepreneurs drove large herds (quite possibly numbering in the millions from 1842 to the Civil War) of cattle and sheep along the emigrant trails years before the more famous trails from Texas developed.<sup>4</sup>

Emigrants and explorers were partners in making the West legible and accessible to agents of settler colonialism. By traversing the land, using and documenting its resources, and mapping its surface, these agents of the expanding U.S. empire made places such as Wyoming welcoming to future white ranchers and homesteaders. The Oregon-California Trail gave way to the Overland Trail in 1867 when the military followed the telegraph line south to this thoroughfare where freight wagons followed well-worn grooves in the dirt to their western destinations. Soon after, the transcontinental railroads such as the Union Pacific dominated the transportation frontier and become forces of nature and god-like in their power to change the face of the West (dictating settlement patterns, increasing the flood of immigrants, and controlling commerce).<sup>5</sup>

## **Disposing the Public Domain**

How best to dispose of the public domain (make public land private and of value) was one of the most pressing problems of the early republic. The Land Ordinance Act of 1785 bestowed a rectangular system of surveying and partitioning land upon the growing national landmass of the United States. The Act’s intent was to spur land ownership of these one-mile square sections and the development of the six-mile square township plats. By permitting citizens to purchase a section representing 640 acres at one dollar per acre, the legislation placed the public domain into productive hands. However, the price tag of \$640 was prohibitive for most, and when the Land Act of 1796 doubled the purchase price, it devastated this American dream for everyday citizens. These pieces of legislation illustrate the debate at the heart of land

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<sup>3</sup> Quote from William Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 148-149; Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Fremont, as quoted in Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 9.

law in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; should land go to speculator who would sell it off for a profit or should it go directly to settlers intent on “improving” it. The most powerful voice in this fight for the future of American land tenure was Thomas Jefferson. He believed it essential to the successful functioning of democratic institutions that American citizens be given every opportunity to easily obtain their own portion of the public domain and become independent producers. Jefferson proposed that the federal government grant every adult fifty acres of land so that they might become the foundation of a “freehold democracy” where yeoman farmers would not be beholden to others (creditors or the market) for their thoughts and survival.<sup>6</sup> Land ownership would ensure independence and freedom.

The 1800 Harrison Land Act reduced the required minimum land purchase to 320 acres and allowed financing (down payment plus four years to pay off the debt). By the time of the Louisiana Purchase, legislation had further reduced the minimum to what would be enshrined in the Homestead Act – 160 acres. Euro-Americans who settled the American West in the mid-to-late nineteenth century owed a debt of gratitude to Napoleon Bonaparte. With what one popular historian described as “the best land bargain ever made,” the United States acquired France’s Louisiana territory for \$15 million (or 4¢ per acre), and the imperial drive westward across the expanding *terra (in)cognita* of North America began in earnest.<sup>7</sup> Armed with a set of beliefs about this expansive territory, Jefferson dispatched Lewis and Clark to follow the headwaters of the Missouri River and delve deeper into the uncharted West. Two particularly persistent dreams motivated Jefferson’s rush to explore: the search for the “Western Sea” that would provide a convenient course across the continent and a confirmation of his suspicions of a garden-West that would support a republic of yeoman farmers. It was this expansion of territory that brought the portion of what was to become Wyoming where the Tower sits under the influence of the United States and Jefferson’s dreams.<sup>8</sup>

This model did not succeed as the federal government desired although the nation continued to expand in size. The actual effect of the land laws dominating western expansion in the early nineteenth century often supported speculators at the expense of Jefferson’s yeoman freehold farmers. Many citizens demanded reforms and got some relief with the Land Act of 1820. This Act reduced the price to \$1.25 per acre and made land available in smaller parcels as low as 80 acres. The hope was that these amendments would make land easier to obtain for the common citizen.<sup>9</sup>

Euro-Americans colonized Wyoming using the Pre-emption Act of 1841, which “proved to be one of the most important and most used pieces of legislation” for the state’s settlement.

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<sup>6</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 9-11; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 13; See also Charles A. Cerami, *Jefferson's Great Gamble: The Remarkable Story of Jefferson, Napoleon and the Men Behind the Louisiana Purchase* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> David Sievert Lavender, *The Way to the Western Sea: Lewis and Clark across the Continent* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); John Logan Allen, *Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991); Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 20; Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 12.

The Pre-emption Act allowed squatters to legally purchase 160 acres for \$1.25 per acre once they proved that they had made “improvements” to their squatter site. This addressed the ongoing issue that arose when people settled on land in the public domain but not technically opened for settlement or available for purchase. Since what they were doing was illegal, later migrants kicked many off land that they had spent time “improving” and making agriculturally viable. Speculators took advantage of this situation by grabbing up large swaths of land and holding on to them until the time was ripe to turn a profit. In the meantime, these lands were essentially useless to the federal government’s colonizing project. The 1841 Act allowed squatters to legitimize their actions and “improvements” and file for the land that they had settled upon. With the passage of this Act, Congress and the federal government made a statement about the priorities of the expanding nation.<sup>10</sup> Profit was good, but settler colonialism was better.

## The Homestead Acts

The Homestead Act and other associated legislation were instrumental for settlement during the homestead era. The Homestead Act (1862) built upon the Jeffersonian dream of an agricultural republic for America’s productive landscapes in places like the Black Hills. With it, Lincoln endorsed Jefferson’s vision and granted citizens (or anyone who had filed to become a citizen) 160 acres to prove up and pay only \$10 for the title.<sup>11</sup> The settler had to “improve” the land and reside on it for five years. The government and many hopeful citizens did not abandon this dream even when the arid frontier thwarted settlers from succeeding in an environment that did not live up to its fertile tales. Rather, Congress repeatedly amended the Homestead Act in attempt to save a dying dream. Two significant amendments that provided the life support for this dream were the Timber Culture Act of 1873 and the Desert Land Act of 1877. The Timber Culture Act required settlers to plant 40 acres of trees on their quarter section for ten years. This upheld the theory of western climactic change whereby trees would bring rains to make the region a garden.<sup>12</sup> Four years later, it was clear that another Act needed to deal with the stark realities concerning life in the West. The Desert Land Act of 1877 admitted that certain areas were arid and required larger plots to successfully farm. It allowed for homesteads of 640 acres that homesteaders had to irrigate within three years. Again, this Act failed to reconcile with the realities of the West where it was virtually impossible for an individual to irrigate that large of a

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<sup>10</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 21; Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Robert V. Hine, and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 109, 333-336; Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”*: A New History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 140-145; Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, Rebecca S. Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 13; W. Eugene Hollon, *The Great American Desert Then and Now* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975): 144; C. Barron McIntosh, “Use and Abuse of the Timber Culture Act,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 65, no. 3 (1975): 347-362.

plot. Another important change for West was that by 1880, the Homestead Act expanded to include lands not yet surveyed.<sup>13</sup>

Railroads such as the Northern Pacific poised to sell land granted them by the federal government promised a region blessed with beautiful scenery, a healthful climate, fertile agricultural soils, and abundant resources.<sup>14</sup> As the desert disappeared from maps when the railroads entered the West, the discrepancy made a resurgence in the minds of settlers who encountered the aridity of the West firsthand. Although capable of sustaining agriculture in certain western locales, the land was not the Edenic garden depicted in booster or railroad publications. Faced with the hard truths about western agriculture, many settlers and commentators questioned the boosters' vision of the West. Horace Greeley's advice to "Go West" came under criticism. As reported in 1874, one young man took Greeley's advice and headed West only to find thieves, card cheats, and danger—a train almost ran over him.<sup>15</sup> Another article from 1876 plainly stated, "Horace Greeley's advice to 'Go West' was a glaring swindle. The fact that the Indians have been living West all their lives and are still poor, with scarcely enough clothes to hide their nudity, proves this."<sup>16</sup> The sanguine words of boosters and advocates of western migration and settlement began to seem like lies to many migrants who heeded their call and embraced their advertisements.

As historian Richard White claims, powerful interests like the railroads subsidized and advanced the agricultural frontier too rapidly. This led to massive failures, both ecological and economic, and forced adaptations to the hard realities of farming in arid and semi-arid areas. Drought dehydrated the watery wishes of western settlers and boosters. Optimistic climate change theories became sand and desiccated soil falling through the hands of helpless farmers. Some saw the struggle of Western settlers and sought to remedy it through reckoning with the region's arid nature.<sup>17</sup>

### **Hazen, Powell, and Aridity in the West**

In 1875, General William Babcock Hazen had some choice words about the nature of the West. In 1880, he became the chief signal officer for the War Department in charge of scientists and other amateur weather observers in the West. In the *North American Review*, Hazen explained that Americans should consider the region somewhere in between a garden and a

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<sup>13</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 14; Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune," 150-152; David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 211; John Wesley Powell, *The Arid Lands*, ed. Wallace Stegner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), xvi; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> For an example of the boosting literature published by the railroads, see Jay Cooke, "The Northern Pacific Railroad: Its Route, Resources, Progress and Business; The New Northwest and Its Great Thoroughfare," (Jay Cooke & Co., 1871); W. C. Riley, *The Official Northern Pacific Railroad Guide, for the Use of Tourists and Travelers over the Lines of the Northern Pacific Railroad* (St. Paul, MN: W.C. Riley, 1891).

<sup>15</sup> "Going West. The Checkered Experiences of a Young Man Who Took Horace Greeley's Advice," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 28, 1874; See also: "Told by the Sufferer," *The River Press*, January 19, 1887.

<sup>16</sup> *Spirit of Jefferson*, February 29, 1876.

<sup>17</sup> See also Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), Chapter Two.

“valueless waste.” The West beyond the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian--the general line down the middle of the Great Plains marking the transition from more humid to more arid-- was a land of extremes. “Nothing can surpass the fruitfulness and beauty of this section in seasons of plenty, – which has given rise to much beautiful but partial description,” Hazen observed, “– nor its desolation in drought.” Irrigation was a necessary practice for any successful agricultural endeavor. For example, “[a]t military posts,” Hazen reported, “gardens have, only by irrigation, been made possible.”<sup>18</sup>

Consistently considering himself correct and infallible, Hazen firmly rejected the hopes of naturally improving western climates. “The very popular theory that the rainfall is increasing in that country, and that it is due to the effects of civilization,” Hazen stated, “is not supported by accurate measurements. The natural laws that govern these phenomena are too broad and general to be affected by the slight results of civilization already found there. The wish is the father to the thought.” Notably, however, Hazen believed what many irrigation advocates claimed, “[t]here is no fault of soil anywhere. The fault is in the want of water.” On the basis that the West lacked adequate rainfall, he refuted the old Jeffersonian dream of the yeoman farmer and the agricultural republic. “And the old song of ‘Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm’ will no longer be true,” Hazen warned, “unless we take farms incapable of cultivation.”<sup>19</sup> Hazen resisted the hopeful vision of the edenic West by simply settling it, but he did not undermine the faith in the soil’s productive capacity that later captured men who used science and the power of industrial society to irrigate and to take advantage of these rich soils.

After serving six years as a soldier along the Northern Pacific line, Hazen concluded that the lands around the tracks and possibly the entire West were useless for agriculture. Hazen explained that “facts” gathered in the West by individuals such as Lorin Blodgett and institutions such as the Surgeon General of the Army had “incontrovertibly proven” that the lands of the West were useless because of an “insufficient fall of rain” that was constant and unchanging.<sup>20</sup> The Northern Pacific Railroad had manipulated Blodgett’s data to make its lands seem scientifically suited for settlement. Hazen, however, admitted that a period of “anomalous” wet weather during 1872 and 1873 had “misled hopeful people” and “encouraged settlements” that were “now being abandoned all along the line.”<sup>21</sup> He sought to tell “the true character of the country” and stem the “tide of immigration” washing over the West. Boosters artfully created “puerile inventions” that were “supported by the name of the national government” to fool “the

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<sup>18</sup> Edward S. Cooper, *William Babcock Hazen: The Best Hated Man* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 277-290; David M. Emmons, *Garden in the Grasslands: Boomer Literature of the Central Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 163-164; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, “General William Babcock Hazen,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 20, no. 4 (1942): 338; General W. B. Hazen, “The Great Middle Region of the United States, and Its Limited Space of Arable Land,” *North American Review* CCXLVI (January, 1875): quotes on 1, 2, and 7.

<sup>19</sup> Cooper, *William Babcock Hazen*, 241; Hazen, “The Great Middle Region,” 17, 22, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Hazen, *Our Barren Lands*, 6-9, 33, 35, 41; Hazen, “The Great Middle Region,” 3, 16-17, 21; see also Charles Robert Kutzleb, “Rain Follows the Plow: The History of an Idea” (PhD dissertation, University of Colorado-Boulder, 1968), 21, 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> Hazen, *Our Barren Lands*, 46-47, quotes on 16, 48-49.



poor, the lowly, the widow, and the orphan” into wasting their time and money on a hopeless venture.<sup>22</sup> Hazen clearly rejected these hucksters.

One of Hazen’s most poignant examples of farm failure was at Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory. A letter written to Hazen explained the conditions that all attempts at agriculture confronted in this country. This “most worthy gentleman” believed that “farming in Dakota is a total impossibility” and that “[i]t is a monstrous fraud and a great wrong for interested parties to induce immigration to this territory.”<sup>23</sup> Those who were already there, such as the “Rhee Indians” had no choice but to participate in this failed venture. The agency farm at Fort Berthold was “a dead failure” and “swallowed up the chief part of the appropriation” to the Native Americans in this region.<sup>24</sup> The civilizing potential of agriculture could not take effect in such an environment. As an imposed measure upon the Native Americans, it amounted to a crime against these peoples who were not duped by the railroads but rather relegated to an impossible existence by the deluded hopes of the government.

As more and more settlers, prospectors, and scientists made their way West and data about the region accumulated, it became clear that Hazen was not the only voice in the desert-West declaring its dismal future. John Wesley Powell’s *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States* (1878) served as the government document of the late nineteenth century that defined a different vision of the West. Powell outlined a plan that would alter government land policy and the future of western settlement. Many historians have noted his foresight but eventual failure in the face of optimistic resistance to his vision of environmental limits.<sup>25</sup>

John Wesley Powell recognized that the Homestead Act and its amendments were insufficient and incongruous with the arid nature of the West. In his *Report*, he expressed his specific concerns with what he defined as the “Arid Region.” It began “about midway in the Great Plains” and contained “the great Rocky Mountain Region of the United States, and it embraces something more than four-tenths of the whole country, excluding Alaska.” Using precipitation data from the Smithsonian and from Charles Anthony Schott, Powell pronounced that “[t]hese lands will maintain but a scanty population.” With only a “small portion” of the Arid Region irrigable, Powell made one of his most scandalous statements regarding the use of the majority of the lands in “pasturage farms.” Instead of the traditional 160-acre plot allotted in the 1862 Homestead Act, Powell saw the West’s best prospects in pasturage farms of “at least 2,560 acres.” These pasture lands would not be fenced, and they should “conform to the topography” rather than consist of the long-standing rectangular survey sections.<sup>26</sup> On the basis

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<sup>22</sup> Hazen, *Our Barren Lands*, 46, 51-2.

<sup>23</sup> Hazen, *Our Barren Lands*, 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> Hazen, *Our Barren Lands*, 24-25.

<sup>25</sup> Norris Hundley Jr. “Water and the West in Historical Imagination,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1996): 5-31; Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1954; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), vii-viii, xvi; Donald Worster, *A River Running West: The Life of John Wesley Powell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mark Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 45-51; Powell (ed. Stegner), *The Arid Lands*, xiii-xxxi.

<sup>26</sup> Powell (ed. Stegner), *The Arid Lands*, quotes can be found on 9, 11, 15-16, 30, 32-33, 40-41, 58.

of the West's aridity, Powell's recommendations would have completely revised the land system adopted by the Federal Government.<sup>27</sup>

Those interests clinging to a vision of the garden-West aggressively countered Powell's plan for overhauling the American West's existing settlement patterns.<sup>28</sup> As one of his admiring biographers stated, he "believ[ed] in a modified Great American Desert" and "would resist with all his energy the tide of unreasoning, fantasy-drawn settlement and uncontrolled exploitation that William Gilpin and other advocates of manifest destiny explicitly or implicitly encouraged."<sup>29</sup> But the dream of a garden-West was too powerful and pervasive in the American imagination to undermine.<sup>30</sup> Science and Powell's rival Ferdinand V. Hayden supported a changing West where anything was possible. To take action on Powell's recommendations was tantamount to attacking America's exceptionalism and natural progress.

Powell wished to reconcile the current land system with the practical application of agriculture in the West. The plan in his *Report*, however, benefitted ranchers and cattlemen more than homesteaders and agriculturalists. Major Stephen Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1820 revealed a "Great American Desert," providing ample room for cattlemen to operate in the West without the interference of countless agriculturalists dotting their range.<sup>31</sup> In 1881, Charles Dana Wilber had noted that the wealthy cattle interests would always favor the image of the desert because it favored their aims to retain large tracts of land.<sup>32</sup> The powerful Western ranching lobby dominated the public imagination until the Civil War's conclusion, and they entered the region with minimal intrusion from agriculturalists.<sup>33</sup> Along with Powell, ranchers often rejected Wilber's "rain follows the plow" prophesy.<sup>34</sup>

Motivated by the winter blizzards of 1886-7 that decimated open-range cattle herds and a drought in 1887, Congress formed an Irrigation Committee and assigned Powell authority to conduct an irrigation survey of the West. Unfortunately, Congress appeared to make Powell too powerful in the eyes of western irrigation interests who were impatient for him to finish his survey of the West's water resources.<sup>35</sup> Powell's dominion over the future of western settlement was unsettling to many Americans. These western interests moved fast, and their Congressional representatives cut Powell's funding and in effect killed his irrigation survey.

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<sup>27</sup> Powell was likely inspired by Mormon practices for water stewardship: Worster, *A River Running West*, 353-354.

<sup>28</sup> Emmons, *Garden in the Grasslands*, 176. Geographer Scott Kirsch shows how Powell fits into the context of settling and dispossessing the West: Scott Kirsch, "John Wesley Powell and the Mapping of the Colorado Plateau, 1869-1879: Survey Science, Geographical Solutions, and the Economy of Environmental Values," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 3 (2002): 548-572.

<sup>29</sup> Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Worster, *A River Running West*, 359.

<sup>31</sup> Hollon, *The Great American Desert*, 131.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Dana Wilber, *The Great Valleys and Prairies of Nebraska and the Northwest*, (Omaha: Daily Republican, 1881): 144.

<sup>33</sup> Hollon, *The Great American Desert*, 131.

<sup>34</sup> Emmons, *Garden in the Grasslands*, 147, 186-198; Kutzleb, "Rain Follows the Plow," 156.

<sup>35</sup> Dupree, *Science in the Federal Government*, 232-234.; Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 596-599; Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, 328-338.

## The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868

As the U.S. government, capitalists, and the land-hungry made plans to exploit and settle the interior West, they faced the reality that Native Americans controlled the region. To implement their imperial visions, Americans needed to remove the West's Indigenous inhabitants. One method relied on treaty making. Although the 1851 Ft. Laramie treaty reserved a vast extent of land for the Lakota and other tribes, whites continued to encroach upon the Northern Plains. In 1868, tribal and federal officials met a second time at Fort Laramie to seek resolution of issues between Plains peoples and the newcomers. The overland trails (and their militarization) constantly threatened the sovereignty of western tribes and sparked regular conflict across the region. The U.S. Government recognized the need for a treaty that assured Native Americans that it would punish "bad men among the whites," abandon certain military installations and trails, and grant secure title to a wide territory (encompassing the Tower). In exchange for these promises, the treaty required the tribes to allow railroads to develop across the West and through their territories. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty took great pains to ensure that the Lakota did not interfere with the railroads. Article XI of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty demanded that the Lakota "withdraw all opposition to the construction of the railroads being built on the plains" and that the tribe permit construction of these railroads across their reservations in exchange for federally defined compensation. With a growing web of railroad lines crisscrossing the continent, waves of settler colonials crested over the continent and forced federal action as confrontations between Indigenous peoples and Americans became commonplace.<sup>36</sup>

At first, the federal government and military appeared to adhere to the terms of the treaty. For example, in 1868, when a group of settlers sought to colonize the Black Hills, a contingent sent by General Alfred Terry ushered it out of the region.

Grant's Peace Policy under which federal officials drafted the 1868 Treaty was, according to historian Pekka Hämäläinen, "designed to do to Indigenous America what Reconstruction was to do to the South: swiftly modernize its people and absorb them into a single national body." Not only did the federal government expect Native Americans to adopt Euro-American style agriculture, it also coopted Indigenous peoples into the ranching industry with the treaty's first annuities. Capitalists brought herds of Texas cattle to the Great Sioux Reservation that pulled tribes in the continental cattle trade and diminished their reliance on buffalo.<sup>37</sup> Some Lakotas had experimented with Euro-American agriculture on the difficult northern plains and had begun to acculturate. Others accepted annuities but desired to adopt only that which was advantageous and assimilable to their culture and means of subsistence. A good example of this was the desire to have cattle delivered live so that tribal members could hunt in a

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<sup>36</sup> 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty – Article XI; Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 296; notes the Washita River slaughter delivered to the Cheyenne by Custer in 1868.

<sup>37</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 269.

manner imitating a bison hunt. Adopting cultural elements they wanted, to some degree the Lakota crafted their own modernity.<sup>38</sup>

Established by the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty, the Great Sioux Reservation existed in a tension between sovereignty and control. Lakotas living on and around the reservation understood it as an Indigenous realm under their control. The federal government understood it as a tool of confinement and a crucible to forge Americanized farmers. It used resources and annuities as tools to manipulate the reservation population. To the dismay of government officials, many tribal members resisted this pressure and ranged far beyond this pseudo-sovereign space.<sup>39</sup>

Several clauses upended any sense of security that the Lakota leaders initially gathered from the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The document did not secure their sovereignty since the government could build roads through their reservation, surround their reservation with military installations, and insist that the agency be built on the Missouri River. Perhaps the worst blow concerned the hunting territory of Article XI that was conditional upon the clause, “so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase.” The transcontinental railroads impaired the buffalo’s ability to survive on the Plains by blocking their access to vital seasonal range and by bringing hunters to the West to harvest their hides. With the death of the buffalo, tribal sovereignty waned. Even if the “unceded” Article XVI land in which the Tower sat remained an area free of the white intruders, the remaining treaty territory came under siege. The federal government could break up the reservation for settlement and transportation networks, and with the extinction of the buffalo herds, Indigenous hunting grounds became ceded territory. West of the Tower, the Powder River Country served as their last retreat and sovereign space.<sup>40</sup>

Following more bargaining, government officials allowed modifications to the 1868 Treaty. To the dismay of some army generals and western news outlets, Lakota Sioux chief Red Cloud and Brule Sioux leader Spotted Tail could have their agencies (primary point of contact with the U.S. government) where they desired. Red Cloud’s agency (Oglala) would lie on the upper Cheyenne River near the Black Hills – a comfortable distance from white power and influence and close to the remaining bison herds in the unceded Powder River Country. Placing the agency in this location also declared Lakota ownership of the Black Hills and the region’s vast resources. In 1871, the House of Representatives made an earth-shattering change, deciding that the federal government would no longer make treaties with Native American nations. It became easier for the government and the railroads to dispossess tribes of their remaining lands.

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<sup>38</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 297.

<sup>39</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 300-306.

<sup>40</sup> Quote from Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 310-311, see also 298. The Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868) can be found at National Archives/ Milestone Documents/ [Treaty of Fort Laramie \(1868\)](#). See cartographer Carl Sack’s interesting exercise with maps of the lands involved in the Fort Laramie Treaties, “Invisible Nation: Mapping Sioux Treaty Boundaries,” from his talk at the Nelson Institute for Culture, History, and Environment Symposium at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 11, 2017, <https://northlandia.wordpress.com/2017/02/18/invisible-nation-mapping-sioux-treaty-boundaries/>, accessed June 21, 2023.

It was imperative that the Lakota place their agency outside reservation boundaries along the North Platte within a day's ride of Fort Laramie and with easy access to Article XI lands where they must hunt to retain the territory.<sup>41</sup>

### Early Exploration and the Black Hills

As Euroamerican explorers and speculators advanced into the interior West, pressuring the Indigenous inhabitants, Americans began to become aware of the Black Hills country and its spectacular Tower. The monumentality of the Tower rock jutting from the landscape may have captured the notice of white travelers since the eighteenth century. As early as 1742-43, French explorers from Montreal, Pierre Gaultier and Sieur de la Verendrye, may have come close to the Bighorn Mountains near present-day Sheridan (January 1743).<sup>42</sup> Possibly with the help of a "friendly Indian who acted as guide and interpreter," the brothers travelled up the Missouri and through the Black Hills and explored the Assiniboine, Upper Missouri, Yellowstone, and Big Horn Rivers.<sup>43</sup> Some historians have interpreted Verendrye's journals to indicate that they saw the Tower and named it "Montagne Gens des Chevaux" (Mountain of the Horse People); others believe that this was actually Bear Butte, another Black Hills sacred landmark.<sup>44</sup>

Many tales of Euro-American exploration in the West begin with Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. What they knew of the Black Hills or "Cote Noir" was limited and given to them by Native American reports of the region. In their journals, they used the terms "Black Hills," "Black Mountains," and "Cote Noir" for the same area, and at times, the names simply served as placeholders for all of the eastern outlying mountain ranges of the Rockies.<sup>45</sup> Yet, some in the party had come quite close to the Tower area of the Black Hills. For instance, in 1804, Jean Baptiste Lepage joined the expedition, and he had been to the Black Hills and the Little Missouri River. Though unclear precisely where he roamed, Lepage likely helped Clark construct his Western map. Referencing the Tower's sacred narratives and its original Native American names, the expedition literature noted that the Black Hills "abound in Bear of every kind."<sup>46</sup>

During the Fur Trade era, agents/explorers such as Wilson Price Hunt may have made their ways through the Black Hills (1811) and within sight of the Tower as they passed by the Missouri Buttes. Likely, John Jacob Astor's other agents also travelled through the Hills. However, like the Spanish who kept most of their geographical knowledge a closely guarded

<sup>41</sup> Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 311-316.

<sup>42</sup> T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming*, Second Edition, Revised (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 8.

<sup>43</sup> David R.M. White, *Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument Wyoming* (Santa Fe, NM: Applied Cultural Dynamics, 1998), 22; Charles H. Carey, "La Vérendrye Journals and Letters," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1927): 389-93; Dick Stone, "History of Devils Tower and Northeastern Wyoming Including a Number of Indian Legends, 1804-1934," Wyoming State Archives, 32-33.

<sup>44</sup> White, "Naming Bear Lodge," 21.

<sup>45</sup> Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, et al., October 1, 1804 entry (Ordway), and undated Winter 1804-05 entry (Clark), in *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ed. Gary Moulton (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press / University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries-Electronic Text Center, 2005), <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/journals.php?id=1806-09-04>.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, Clark, et al. *The Journals*, November 3, 1804 entry (Whitehouse), and undated Winter 1804-05 entry (Clark); Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 37.

secret, the Astorians were a tight-lipped bunch who mostly held their cartographic information close or preferred to offer up tall tales about the landscapes they trod. The reasons for this were three-fold. One, the Astorians were in a competitive business for a lucrative resource – castoreum, found in the castor sacs of beaver. While beaver mixed castoreum with urine to mark territory, humans highly valued it as a tincture in some perfumes (described as wild and leathery, animalistic). Swedes included it in a special schnapps known as Bävsnaps (vanilla tones), and today it flavors certain whiskeys. To reveal where the Astorians went, what they found, and how to get there would have been bad business. Two, trapper culture extolled the ability to spin yarns and tell fantastical stories. Three, many fur trappers were illiterate and unable to leave any written records of their exploits. Yet, we know that numerous trappers and traders like Jean Vallé (1803-04), François Antoine Larocque (1805), Manuel Lisa (1809), George Droillard (1807-08), John Colter, John Dougherty (1810-16), Jedidiah Smith (1823), Bill Sublette, and Edwin Denig (1833-55) made their way through the Black Hills.<sup>47</sup>

In 1820, the military sent out Stephen H. Long of the Corps of Topographical Engineers (1820-23) to continue the reconnaissance began by Lewis and Clark. Long’s map contained the Black Hills, but it located them in the wrong place. As members of the First Dragoons Expedition in 1834, Colonel Henry Dodge and Enoch Steen travelled into the West and constructed a map that contained a range of mountains labeled “Black Hills.” Missionaries such as the Father Pierre Jean De Smet (1840s) and Samuel Parker (1838) journeyed into the Black Hills and left maps of limited value in locating the Hills. In general, few early explorers placed the Black Hills in the right location on their maps.<sup>48</sup>

### **Warren’s Expedition to the Black Hills**

By middle of the nineteenth century, Euro-American explorers were getting closer to the Tower and knowingly violating treaty rights. The first map to both accurately place the Black Hills and to indicate the existence of the Tower was the result of the Gouverneur K. Warren’s western expeditions. The 1857 map derived from this expedition employing the geologist Ferdinand Vandeverer Hayden showed “Bears Lodge” in relation to a correctly placed Black Hills. The expedition set out from Fort Laramie on September 4, 1857, in the direction of the Black Hills.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 38-41, 55; White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 29-30, 42-44.

<sup>48</sup> Long became one of the most significant purveyors of the idea that the West was a desert and unfit for agriculture. Daniel Zizzamia, “Restoring the Paleo-West: Fossils, Coal, and Climate in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” *Environmental History* 24, Issue 1 (January 2019): 130–156; Richard H. Dillon, “Stephen Long’s Great American Desert,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 111, no. 2 (1967); Lt. Enoch Steen, Map of the Western Territory showing route of dragoons under command of Col. Henry Dodge,” c. 1835, <https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/9838>, accessed December 2022, Note “Buffalo Country” labeled in more than one area; White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 22-23.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Alice Gunderson, *Devils Tower: Stories in Stone* (Glendo, WY: High Plains Press, 1988), 59; see also James D. McLaird and Lesta V. Turchen, “Exploring the Black Hills, 1855-1875: Reports of the Government Expeditions,” *South Dakota History* 4, no. 3 (1974): 281-319.

Warren's goal was to "determine the best route for continuing the military road between Mendota and the Big Sioux westward to Fort Laramie and South Pass" and to examine the Black Hills.<sup>50</sup> Yet like many exploring parties, its task was to find out all it could about the lands the men traveled through. With his cadre of thirty soldiers of the Second Infantry and assortment of scientists, Warren assessed the Hills to "ascertain everything relating to the agricultural and mineralogical resources of the country, its climatology, its topographical features, and the facilities or obstacles which these latter offer to the construction of rail or common roads."<sup>51</sup>

Entering the Black Hills via Beaver Creek, the group made it as far as Inyan Kara (to the southeast of Devils Tower NM). There the travelers took in the spectacular view of the landscape below using a "powerful spy-glass" to see "the "Bear's Lodge" and "Little Missouri Buttes," which they believed to be geologically related to Inyan Kara. Before ascending the mountain, Warren and his men met a "very large force of the Dakotas, who made such earnest remonstrances and threats against our proceeding into their country that I did not think it prudent for us, as a scientific expedition, to venture further in this direction." The Sioux were displeased with Warren's party for potentially interfering with their bison hunt.<sup>52</sup>

Forty lodges of Minneconjous put a halt to Warren's progress. Soon, Hunkpapa and Sihasapa peoples joined the encampment. These three bands had been participating in a gathering at Bear Butte for a communal buffalo hunt. Warren turned back and traveled about forty miles before Chief Bear's Rib and his companion overtook the party. After demanding that they stop, the two men discussed terms for peace. In the end, they decided that Chief Bear's Rib would travel with Warren for a distance to provide protection in exchange for Warren's promise that he would tell the president and other whites that they could not trespass on these lands and that they would continue to engage in hostilities with the Crow despite the 1851 Ft. Laramie treaty.<sup>53</sup>

NPS historian John Daugherty provides an insightful interpretation of the events that concluded Warren's Expedition and how the Sioux stalled white settlement until the 1880s:

Lieutenant Warren's encounter with the Sioux brings up an interesting point. The hostility of the Sioux nation to white encroachment prevented settlement around Devils Tower until about 1881. In fact, the Sioux probably protected the huge monolith from private acquisition and exploitation more effectively than the Federal government during this period. But, after suffering a series of defeats after the Little Bighorn, the

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<sup>50</sup> Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 62; G.K. Warren, Report of Lieut. G.K. Warren, Topographical Engineers to Captain A. A. Humphreys, Topographical Engineers, in charge of Office of Explorations and Surveys, War Dept. Washington, D.C. Nov. 24, 1858. Senate Executive Documents 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 35<sup>th</sup> Congress, p. 625.

<sup>51</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: National Park Service, 2007), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 62-63; quote from Warren, Report of Lieut. G.K. Warren, p. 625; John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Spring 1984), 4-5; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 22; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 60-61.

<sup>53</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 60.

Sioux were driven from the Black Hills region which allowed cattlemen to settle northeastern Wyoming in the 1880s.<sup>54</sup>

In his diary, Warren referred to the Tower as “Mato Tepi” in a drawing that showed the Tower on the “North Fork of Sheyenne River.” Labeled “Bears Lodge” on the map, the Tower itself appeared in the right place west of the Belle Fourche River. The Warren Expedition topographer, P. M. Engle, sketched out a “view from Inyan Kara” that labeled the Tower as “Mato Tipi or Bear’s Lodge.” From the available evidence (Warren’s diary is only partially published), members of Warren’s party likely made it to the Tower. At the very least, they were the first to put the Sioux name for the Tower on a map.<sup>55</sup>

### **Raynolds’ Expedition to the Black Hills**

In late June of 1859, William F. Raynolds’ party exploring “the headwaters of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, and of the mountains in which they rise” [aka the Yellowstone Expedition] was at Fort Pierre supplying the expedition and delivering goods to local Native Americans. The group included Jim Bridger, Ferdinand V. Hayden, another thirty-man military escort, an artist, topographers, meteorologists and some civilians. They were to perform a reconnaissance of the region paying special attention to wagon routes, climate, regional Native tribes, and mineral resources. About 140 miles from Fort Pierre, the party encountered an area where the “whole country traversed is entirely unfit for the residence of whites, although the soil aside from its lack of moisture, might be pronounced good.” This was a common refrain for many explorers in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Like Long, Raynolds saw that stretches of the West were uninhabitable for those white Americans hoping to pursue an agricultural existence. It did not help that they encountered temperatures exceeding 100° and brackish water essentially unfit for consumption.<sup>56</sup>

The farther west that they traveled towards the Black Hills, the land became a bit more forgiving. By early-to-mid July, they arrived at Bear Butte, where they camped. There, a beautiful rainbow glowed over their tents, and around them they saw a landscape awash with evidence of Native American occupation and religious activity such as the Sun Dance.<sup>57</sup>

By July 18<sup>th</sup>, Raynolds and his men observed far in the distance up the “valley of the Shyenne [Belle Fourche River]...the singular peak of Bear Lodge, rising like an enormous tower, and from its resemblance to an Indian lodge, suggesting the origin of its title.” The next day, five men attempted to reach the Tower, but failed. Undeterred, the next day (Wednesday July 20<sup>th</sup>), topographer J.T. Hutton and the expedition’s Sioux interpreter Zephyr Recontre once again attempted to reach “Bear Lodge.” By early afternoon (3pm), the two individuals returned to camp and reported seeing the Tower as “an isolated rock on the bank of the river, striking from the fact that it rises in a valley.” Raynolds further noted how easy it could be to miss the

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<sup>54</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 5.

<sup>55</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge,” 24-26; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 64; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 61-62.

<sup>57</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 60-61.



landmark. He remarked that from the north, it was “by no means forming a prominent landmark,” and “it was not brought in contrast with the surrounding heights.” The most visible topographic features were the Little Missouri Buttes, “by far the loftiest points in sight.” In fact, in the early days of colonization, many Europeans and Americans who traveled north of the Tower spotted the Missouri Buttes but missed the monolith sitting about four hundred feet lower.<sup>58</sup>

Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden accompanied Reynolds as the company’s geologist and produced a map published in 1868 (delayed due to the Civil War). In this map and his supplementary report, Hayden described the geological structure of the Black Hills and noted the presence of gold.<sup>59</sup> His report presaged the coming wave of white exploitation in the Black Hills region.

### **Powder River Country**

As whites shifted their attentions to the Black Hills, the region’s Native peoples attempted to secure their holds on their treaty-defined territories and resist settler expansion. The Lakota led by Sitting Bull (Lakota Sioux leader) and Crazy Horse (war chief of the Oglala Lakota) spent a considerable amount of their time in the Powder River Country. This was an imprecisely defined area just west of the Tower and east of the Big Horn Mountains. It had once teemed with buffalo, but overhunting and ecological pressures exacerbated by climatic change, the railroads, ranching, and settlement had rapidly reduced the herds. Nevertheless, while Sitting Bull rejected the 1868 Treaty as a document defined by treachery, the remaining buffalo were critical to Lakota survival and sovereignty under federal law. The 1868 Treaty vaguely defined the unceded Article XVI lands that contained the Powder River Country (and Bear Lodge/ Devils Tower). In fact, the document failed to include a northern boundary. If one expanded the logic of possession as defined for Article XI lands, “so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase,” the Powder River Country and wherever the bison roamed northward had the potential to be Lakota territory. If the Lakota were to survive and maintain their sovereignty, they had to constantly expand their territory and overlap with the dwindling buffalo herds that other tribes also coveted.<sup>60</sup>

For a time, the strength of the Lakota and other regional tribes had made it difficult for the federal government to control the Yellowstone country and impose its order on the landscape. But in 1871, the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR) outfitted surveyors accompanied by eleven hundred soldiers, scouts, and beef herders into Lakota lands to explore the Yellowstone Valley. Aware of the expedition’s early stages, the Lakotas recognized a violation of the 1868 Treaty and sent over one thousand warriors from the ten thousand strong (Lakotas, Cheyenne, Arapahos) Sun Dance gathering along the Powder River up the Yellowstone. They

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<sup>58</sup> Quotes from Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 64 and 65, and from Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 26, and 62.

<sup>59</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 22-23; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 64.

<sup>60</sup> “Some ten thousand Lakotas – Hunkpapas, Oglalas, Sicangus, Minneconjous, Two Kettles, Sisasapas, and Sans Arcs – and thousands of their Cheyenne and Arapaho allies had lived there for more than a decade, hunting the buffalo for robes and meat and gradually draining the herds.” Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 322-326, 330-336.

hazed the expedition as it proceeded through the Yellowstone Valley, and for three months the NPRR survey parties suffered under the threat of Native American power. In 1873, the NPRR launched a second expedition aimed at completing the railroad survey. General Sherman commanded a substantial protective contingent consisting of “79 officers, 1,451 men, 353 civilian engineers, 27 Indian scouts, 275 wagons and ambulances, and more than 2,000 horses and mules.” Among those numbers were Custer’s Seventh Cavalry. This highly militarized reconnaissance was more than a simple fill-in-the-gaps expedition into the Yellowstone region. It was also a forceful affirmation of United States military might that would triumph over the hostile Native American threats. Contemporaries believed that once the NPRR finished its route, the Army would have complete access to the Lakota realm, and their days as a sovereign menace would be numbered. But, by actively harassing this surveying party, Sitting Bull at least temporarily dashed the hope of railroad-imbued supremacy.<sup>61</sup>

Lakota hegemony and intelligence were at the heart of two failed attempts to survey the Yellowstone region for the NPRR. Yet, the year 1873 brought another surprise for the railroad that resonated beyond the Yellowstone and into the Black Hills. In 1873, banks failed, fifty-eight railroads went bankrupt, railroad-associated industries such as iron foundries failed, public debt leaped, wages tanked, and jobs evaporated. The crash ensued when Jay Cooke and Company (financier of the NPRR) defaulted on its loans. The NPRR itself became stalled outside of Bismarck, North Dakota, and the economy of the United States lay in tatters.<sup>62</sup>

At this time, gold began to glitter like a beacon from the Black Hills. When miners began to enter the Black Hills in defiance of federal treaty designations in the 1850s, some reported finding material evidence of gold mining activities (rusted shovels, sluice boxes) dating from 1803. By mid-1868, Wyoming Territorial Secretary Edward M. Lee informed the Wyoming Legislature that the Big Horns and the Black Hills were gold-bearing regions. The only cloud obscuring the extraction of this treasure was the presence of Native Americans in the region. Lee confided in these lawmakers that in due time, Americans would solve this people-based problem and throw open the region to the extraction of untold wealth.<sup>63</sup>

### **Custer’s 1874 Expedition to the Black Hills**

In 1874, the Custer expedition propelled the coming tide of white exploitation and tribal dispossession in the Black Hills. In early July 1874, led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, a military contingent left Fort Lincoln, traveled along the edges of the Great Sioux Reservation, and arrived at a tributary of the Little Missouri River on July 15. The “Black Hills Expedition” or the “Custer Expedition” proceeded to the Black Hills from the north and Inyan Kara Mountain by late July. The size of the military contingent was considerable, and expedition’s aims became a matter of debate and speculation. It was composed of about 1,000

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<sup>61</sup> M. John Lubetkin, *Before Custer: Surveying the Yellowstone, 1872* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015); Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, quote on 338, see 338-341.

<sup>62</sup> White, *Railroaded*, Chapter 2; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 340.

<sup>63</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 59, 64.

men (at least over 900; 951), 110 wagons (6 mules each), approximately 1,000 cavalry horses, 300 head of cattle, a Rodman canon, and three Gatling machine guns. Custer invaded Sioux treaty lands with a large military force to assess its value, catalog its resources, and look for sites for military installations. Based on previous maps made by Warren, Hayden, and Reynolds, Custer ordered his own map made during his 1874 invasion of the Black Hills. To make the Black Hills legible for the state, topographer Colonel William Ludlow produced a map of the region. Two years later, his map of the 1874 foray into the Hills was commercially published as the *Colton Map of Wyoming and the Dakotas*. As with previous maps that had used slight variations of the name “Bear Lodge,” Ludlow’s map included the Tower and labeled it “Bear Lodge.”<sup>64</sup>

Custer likely knew of the Tower (since the expedition map included the feature), but he made no reference to seeing it in his letters to his wife, Libbie Custer. Perhaps fires set by the Sioux impaired his view of the Tower from Inyan Kara. Tower historian Dick Stone noted “The Little Missouri River flowed through a country from which the Indians made every effort to keep the white man. This was their most cherished hunting ground and although there was fighting between the many tribes for the possession of it they were all fighting together in defense of it when invaded by the white man.” Custer’s Black Hills Expedition met little resistance save for fires supposedly set by the Lakotas. Fortunately for the foolhardy Custer, most Lakotas were hunting in the west.<sup>65</sup>

Although gold was not the driving purpose behind the expedition, Custer enlisted two “experienced miners,” and some hoped that the expedition would turn up more than fossils. As early as August 12, 1874, news of gold spread far and wide along with Custer’s own words describing the abundance of the precious metal. This set off a series of events that proved catastrophic for the Sioux and other regional tribes. Beset by the pressures and desperation of a national financial panic (1873), prospectors and settlers began to flood into the Hills seeking their fortunes or a plot of land to farm. By late fall of 1874, the Black Hills gold rush had become a pox upon Paha Sapa.<sup>66</sup>

Acknowledging the reality of federal treaty obligations, the Army attempted to keep these Euro-American trespassers out of the region with no success. Determined to press into the unceded territory, miners captured and removed from the Hills by the soldiers returned a short time after. The troops could only keep a fraction of this invasion force at bay. Others advocated for a legal path. They pressed the government to purchase the Black Hills or convince the Sioux to cede the territory so they could legally mine the Native Americans’ sacred landscape.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> White, “Naming Bear Lodge, 26; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 24.

<sup>65</sup> On letters to Custer’s wife, see Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 57-58, quote on 58; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 342-343.

<sup>66</sup> G. B. Morey, “Newton Horace Winchell, the George Armstrong Custer Expedition of 1874, and the “Discovery” of Gold in the Black Hills, Dakota Territory, U.S.A.,” *Earth Sciences History* 18, no. 1 (1999): 83; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 342.

<sup>67</sup> Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 67; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 24.

## Jenney's 1875 Expedition, Mato Teepee, & Devils Tower

If the nation was to purchase the Black Hills, it needed to officially assess them for their value. Under this pretext, the federal government established the Jenney Expedition and supported it with 400 troops from Fort Laramie under Colonel Richard Irving Dodge (infantry, six companies of calvary, civilian support staff, 397 mules, 75 wagons, and 130 head of cattle). The surveying party also consisted of miners and laborers, sixteen men of science including an astronomer, engineer, botanist, and topographical assistant. Also known as the Jenney-Newton expedition, the venture acquired its name from the geologist Walter P. Jenney who was assisted by Henry Newton (both from the Columbia School of Mines in New York) and a miner named W. H. Root. They departed Fort Laramie on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1875 and spent the summer exploring the Black Hills. Jenney did his part in spreading news of the expedition's travels and findings by sending out letters published in regional newspapers such as the *Cheyenne Daily Leader*. In these, he reservedly echoed Custer's gold claims that the hyperbolic and booster-minded western press amplified.<sup>68</sup>

Geologists Henry Newton and Walter Jenney were attentive to the Native American name for the Tower. Like those that came before, they made use of the Lakota name "Mato Teepee," often translated as "Bear's Lodge." The Lakota name dominated maps (especially among geologists) for the next quarter-century. Some exceptions included a military engineer named G. L. Gillespie who used both "Bear Lodge" and "Devil's Tower" on his 1876 map. A missionary named Reverend Peter Rosen went so far as to offer supposed Indigenous origins of the name "Devil's Tower." In 1895, Rosen remarked that "*Okeheedee-Paha*" was the Lakota name for the Tower, and it meant "the Bad Spirit." Likely this was a "forced translation" from English to Lakota. Rosen also attempted to back up his translation with the supposed belief among Native Americans that the "stone god" made the Tower his home.<sup>69</sup> Clearly, European and American western reconnaissance had ushered in settler colonial conquest with dreams of golden wealth and marked by renaming the land.

However enticing and exciting to military men and miners, the presence of gold was not sufficient pretense for violating the terms of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. Compelled by his Peace Policy, President Grant ordered the army to remove any outsiders who attempted to trespass on these lands. Nevertheless, prospectors and settlers circumvented this federal obstruction and entered the Hills. The Army caught some and removed them. Others slipped through the cracks, and entire industries developed in the region anticipating and pressuring for the opening of the Black Hills to extraction and settlement. The Great Sioux Reservation did not extend across the Wyoming border to embrace the western Black Hills where a Wyoming

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<sup>68</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 24-25; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 67, 69; *The Yankton Daily Press* predicted "Dakota Mines to Eclipse the World," while the *Bismarck Tribune* declared "Gold Enough to Pay the National Debt."

<sup>69</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 26; Ray H. Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument – A History* (Omaha, NE: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Region Two, December, 1, 1955), 4-5; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, 70; White, "Naming Bear Lodge," 27; Peter Rosen, *PA-HA-SA-PAH: or the Black Hills of South Dakota, a Complete History* (St. Louis, MO: Nixon-Jones Printing, 1895).

newspaper reported “the richest gold discoveries lay.”<sup>70</sup> However, a large area west of the Wyoming border was unceded land, in the understanding of the Lakota. The Tower sat in a precarious place where rumors of gold circulated, misunderstandings about this unceded land permeated relationships, and ineffectual government restrictions contributed to a landscape of conflict.

The name “Devils Tower” has led some to consider Colonel Richard Irving Dodge as the Tower’s first white Euro-American visitor (although he was only one of over 400 members of the Jenney-Newton Party, topographer J.T. Hutton had visited in 1859 with Reynolds’ Yellowstone Expedition, and early maps identified the tower formation). In 1875, Dodge commanded the military escort for a U.S. Geological Survey party that visited the monument, and at this time the new name appeared. Dodge popularized the name “Devil’s Tower” in his 1876 book *The Black Hills* that blended Newton’s geological notes and Dodge’s personal experiences from the Jenney expedition. Theodore Roosevelt, Wyoming locals, and those who composed the Act declaring the Tower the nation’s first national monument used this name (slightly modified due to a grammatical error that made it “Devils Tower”) in an official government document that cemented the name in a manner contrary to typical cartographic practice. At first, Dodge applied the earlier appellation and referred to the Tower as “Bear Lodge Butte.” He made no reference to any other names, which was expected since at least six earlier maps labeled the Tower in some similar form. In his book, however, Dodge intentionally decided that he would coin the name “Devil’s Tower” and justify this name by stating that Native Americans called it “The Bad God’s Tower” (though he provided no Indigenous term from which he derived his translation). According to Dodge’s logic, his name was simply an adaptation of the accurate Native American term for the landmark. Likely, his (as Dodge put it) “Mexican Cheyenne half-breed” guide named Romeo told him about the name in English.<sup>71</sup>

### **An Agricultural Vision for the Black Hills**

The era of exploration marked the Black Hills and the Tower as part of a greater landscape, one legible and understandable to the Euro-Americans who followed in the wake of the expeditions. Like geological formations such as Scott’s Bluff in Nebraska, the Tower provided an easily distinguishable landmark, and thus presented a practical point for wayfinding. And just as Native Americans understood the Tower in their origin stories, it entered into imagination for white settlers who sought to live in the Northern Great Plains landscape.

From the time of the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, white settlers encroached on the Northern Great Plains and the area around Mato Tipila (Devils Tower). Through the establishment of ranches and neighboring towns, they transformed the landscape with a cattle-dominated grazing economy and white colonization. Recent scholars understand “settler

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<sup>70</sup> G. B. Morey, “Newton Horace Winchell,” 86; Quote from the *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, September 7, 1874.

<sup>71</sup> Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 70-73; Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 5; White, “Naming Bear Lodge, 26-27; National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail, Devils Tower National Monument” Final Draft, (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, November 2020), 21.

colonialism” not only as an event but a process whereby the transgressors, supported by structures of power, overwhelmed and occupied conquered territories. In the Black Hills, settlers identified the Tower as a significant landmark in a landscape meaningful to the new lives and society they actively created. Yet at the same time, settlers dispossessed Native peoples of their lands and mode of living and attempted to erase their associations with the land.

Not only gold occupied the minds of the military explorers Custer and Dodge; they also ardently supported permanent settlement, the essential core of a settler colonial process. To that end, both remarked on the fabulous fertility, wondrous resources, and healthful climate of the Black Hills. In his press dispatch in late August 1874, Custer was full of hyperbole stating, “No portion of the United States can boast of a richer or better pasturage, purer water” and “[b]uilding stone of the best quality” in “inexhaustible quantities.” The pasturage was so vast and robust that Custer’s “beef-herd, after marching upwards of 600 miles, is in better condition than when I started.” The place provided “wood for fuel and lumber sufficient for all time to come” and frequent rains with no signs of freshets nor drought. In Custer’s opinion, it would be a wonderful place to grow grain, especially wheat. The Hills also contained a wide variety of useful minerals such as iron, plumbago (graphite), and gypsum.<sup>72</sup>

“There appears no reason why the Black Hills should not be a most magnificent agricultural country,” Dodge asserted in 1876. He even went as far as stating that he could “pronounce the climate of the Black Hills well-nigh perfect.” Sure, some areas did not have long enough growing seasons, but the region’s soil was fertile. Regardless of the realities and probable future of farming in the Hills, Dodge continued, “there can be no doubt of its immense value as a grazing country.” The ecological island of the Black Hills, Dodge explained, hid “Splendid grass, pure water, excellent shelter from storms – nothing is wanting to fill all the requirements of a first-class stock farm.” The region’s future contribution to the nation was clear. “It will,” Dodge forecasted, “before many years, furnish beef and mutton, butter, cheese, and wool for a nation.” Tellingly, when concluding his section on gold, Dodge stated, “The valleys will confer wealth, not so much through the gold in them, as from their agricultural and stock-breeding qualities.”<sup>73</sup>

Though well watered and vegetated, the Hills themselves would be a poor place for “stock ranches of immense herds,” Dodge opined. The “outlying plains country,” however, was well-suited for large stockowners. “Hundreds of thousands of cattle and sheep,” Dodge stated, “can be subsisted and wintered on the foot-hills and contiguous plains.” The Tower, “one of the most remarkable peaks in this or any country,” lay on the fringes of the Hills where the land, as Dodge described it, was ideal for ranching. Indeed, the lands surrounding the Tower were dotted with ranches and covered with cattle – some of whom regularly strayed to graze upon the Monument landscape for many years following its establishment.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1874, p. 16; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 49-53.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Irving Dodge, *The Black Hills: A Minute Description of the Routes, Scenery, Soil, Climate, Timber, Gold, Geology, Zoology, Etc. with An Accurate Map, Four Sectional Drawings, and Ten Plates from Photographs Taken on the Spot* (New York: James Miller, Publisher, 1876), 56-58, 107.

<sup>74</sup> Dodge, *The Black Hills*, quotes from 56-58, and from 95.

### Wyoming Territory

Even with the Homestead Act (and associated land laws) and the transcontinental railroads encouraging the colonization of western territories, Wyoming was not particularly attractive to settlers in the 1860s. In fact, early opposition to the creation of Wyoming Territory (out of a part of Dakota Territory) argued that it had little agricultural potential. Nevertheless, Congress authorized the territory in 1868 and officially organized it in 1869. At this time, the same year that the first transcontinental was completed, Wyoming did not represent an agricultural or ranching destination with its population primarily along the southern portion where the railroad ran from east to west. As of 1870, the Territory included 8,726 people with 8,509 of them over the age of ten (hardly a place to raise a family). Only one-hundred-sixty men and one woman “engaged in agriculture.” Outnumbering humans, approximately eleven thousand cattle and six thousand sheep lived on farms and twenty-five thousand on the open range.<sup>75</sup>

Settlement proceeded gradually in the years following the establishment of Wyoming Territory, mostly along the Union Pacific line. Until 1876, the only land office in the Territory was in Cheyenne. Before Wyoming became a territory, the only option for landseekers was preemption. Homesteading could only occur on surveyed land, and land could not be surveyed prior to territorial status. The boundaries that resulted from these early preemption claims were measured in metes and bounds, and drainages often shaped the pattern of settlement. In the arid West water was crucial, and settlers sought it out around Cheyenne and Fort Bridger, the Laramie Plains, and the Powder River Basin.<sup>76</sup>

In the mid 1870s, the press used the booster words of Lieutenant Gouverneur Warren to encourage settlement which he regarded as healthful, adequate for raising wheat and vegetables for private use, and productive for grazing. Warren’s comments were somewhat prescient since during the 1870s settlers came to the territory and put together small and diversified farms and ranches.<sup>77</sup>

A series of events heralded a shift in the territory’s fortunes. In 1876, a new land office opened in Evanston that could process more legal claims. Homesteading could expand at a faster rate. At the same time, the federal government was forcibly removing Sioux from their territory in the Powder River Basin and anywhere outside the bounds of the Great Sioux Reservation. This dispossession proceeded despite the treaties and assurances made by the federal officials and significant victories over the U.S. Army such as the Sioux War (1865-67) and at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. These military triumphs confirmed the federal government’s colonizing perspective that the Sioux should be contained. Lastly, an environmental disaster shifted ranching practices in the region. An 1876 spring storm of hail and freezing rain near

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<sup>75</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 16.

<sup>76</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 17-18.

<sup>77</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 18.

Cheyenne wiped out up to half of some flocks of freshly shorn sheep. For many sheep herders, this made them question their choice of stock and decide to raise cattle instead.<sup>78</sup>

When Congress created the Wyoming Territory in 1868, Native Americans occupied the Wind River Valley and the Powder River Basin, and white settlers inhabited areas along the UPRR line in the southern portion of the Territory. Farms and ranches began to crop up, but they were few and diverse, and it was not clear if sheep or cattle would be the primary domesticates to accompany the decentralized white agriculturalists. But, after a decade, the tide turned as expansionists coerced and deceived Native Americans out of their lands, and white settlers began to dot the landscape as Wyoming “established itself as a pre-eminent hub of cattle ranching, with sheep a secondary pursuit.”<sup>79</sup> The territory had emerged as a place of rail transportation and where transatlantic cowboy dreams developed in the minds of investors from New York to Edinburgh.

During the 1870s and early 1880s, sheep and cattle generally coexisted on the Wyoming range. It took very little capital to enter the sheep business, and Wyoming had plentiful and nutritious grasses for these woolly creatures. The territory also had a major transportation artery in the south – the Union Pacific Railroad – that could ship wool across the country. This allowed an ethnically diverse group of individuals to become sheep herders (Irish, Scottish, English, Hispanic). By the early 1880s, good grazing land with access to transportation routes was becoming difficult to find.<sup>80</sup>

The success of the sheep business signaled to cattle herders, capitalists, and politicians that the landscape of Wyoming Territory was particularly well-suited for livestock. Guided by profit-minded humans, cattle made their way from Texas to the territory in search of vast stretches of the public domain upon which to feast. As early as 1877, a Cheyenne newspaper noted, “large herds of cattle are moving this way from Texas.” It was not only successful sheep that illustrated the nutritious nature of Wyoming’s abundant grasses, but the thriving populations of bison that had once roamed the land in incredible numbers. The cattle industry or “beef bonanza” descending upon the territory was one of the first intranational colonial extractive industry in this region of the West.<sup>81</sup>

## **The Cattle Industry Comes to Wyoming**

Between 1866 and 1884, drovers herded approximately five million cattle north from Texas. At first, many of these drives went through the Territory, but it soon became a destination. Two main trails took Texas cattle to or through Wyoming Territory. One was called the Goodnight-Loving Trail that made its way west from Texas to Cheyenne and on to Lusk. The other trail was the Western Trail or Great Western Trail. It began somewhere around Bandera, Texas and led its way north and west to Pine Bluffs, across the North Platte, into the Powder

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<sup>78</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 18. [“There were in Wyoming’s five counties in 1877 a total of 68,279 sheep and 90,094 cattle. . . . the vast majority . . . located in the southeast corner of the territory” (19)]

<sup>79</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 21-25.

<sup>80</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 21-22, 24-26.

<sup>81</sup> As quoted in Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 27, see also 28-29, 31.



River Basin and to Montana. Another branch from the Western Trail led through to east and west of the Black Hills. Herds traveled around 15 miles per day and typically comprised between 2-3 thousand cattle, a dozen cowboys each with 4-6 horses, and a chuck wagon.<sup>82</sup>

From 1870 to 1880, cattle populations in the Territory rose rapidly. The Texas system of ranching took hold, and what was once a relatively modest population of cattle at 11,130 head leapt to 278,073 head. Enabling this expansion was the forced removal of the Sioux from the Powder River Basin. This involved not only physical force and violence but also legal force that wiped away their title to the land and allowed whites to enter the area and take possession of it officially. The area once legally controlled by the Sioux was now open to agricultural and cattle colonization. At the same time, larger ranchers quickly overtook, bought out, and displaced small outfits. This process furthered the settler colonial process of dispossession in the Powder River area as many of the smaller ranchers moved to that region when pushed from their homes elsewhere.<sup>83</sup>

The early, small-sized cattle operators (ranchers) lived in dugouts and sod houses. In time, exceptionally lavish ranches existed – many foreign owned – that contained many examples of wealth and distinction. These ranches separated the lower laborers from those of elevated station in the hierarchy of ranching. Class and nativist antagonism existed between those of lowly positions in wealth and society and the cattle barons and their ilk. Strong undercurrents of mistrust and disdain characterized these relationships.<sup>84</sup>

The 1880s proved to be a watershed in Wyoming cattle ranching. Consolidation and incorporation of ranches began to dominate the character of livestock management. Outside capital from England and Scotland played a central role in concentrating cattle power into fewer hands. Distant capitalists sought profits, while those living as a part of the territory's landscape privileged their freedom and the open spaces that they roamed. The soulless profits of the investor were at odds with the values of the ranching culture that upheld standards of neighborliness and mutual respect. Divisiveness also emerged between the large-scale and small-scale ranches that represented different ways of livestock management. The small-scale operators more often used fences that inevitably blocked the large-scale operators out of perceived common areas such as water ways and springs.<sup>85</sup>

It was a dramatic transition in the early 1880s; larger outfits took huge swaths of land and fenced some of the best grazing land, including (illegally) a considerable amount of the public domain. Big operators typically desired an unrestricted public domain, but when they needed access to water or domination over a particular landscape, they welcomed the option of fencing. Furthermore, when breed-specific consumer desires developed, it became important to keep certain cattle segregated for selective propagation purposes. Amidst legal challenges and on-the-

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<sup>82</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 31-32, 34-35; see also Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 222.

<sup>83</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 40-41, 37-38.

<sup>84</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 56-62, 65.

<sup>85</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 48-51, 53-55, 65.

ground arguments, tensions rose between the small and large graziers. At this time, the Wyoming Stock Grower's Association gained considerable political power in the territory and privileged the interests of the large-scale operators over those of farmers and small-scale operators.<sup>86</sup>

A challenge that arose near the Tower was how large-scale ranches periodically made use of existing land laws such as the Homestead Act to claim lands for their benefit and consolidate large properties at the expense of "legitimate" homesteaders. One of the big ranchers' alleged strategies was using land laws to gobble up parcels that contained access to waterways so that they could control one of the core resources of the arid West. They could gain control over vast acreages by laying claim to relatively small areas with access to water. Clearly, the largest companies dominated the land and essentially abused the land laws in some ways to accumulate so much land and power.<sup>87</sup>

A problem around the Tower was the "pervasive neglect" from the Texas system that prevailed in Wyoming. The system operated best in wide open spaces where the public domain was undivided and unfenced. Unmonitored and unattended until the semi-annual roundups, the cattle moved as they pleased. In the early history of the Monument when it was unfenced, the ranches that surrounded the Tower regularly allowed their cattle to roam, graze, and winter on the reserve.<sup>88</sup>

By 1868 when Wyoming became a territory, the Tower region lay within a very large Laramie County. In 1875, the Fourth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Wyoming carved out Crook County, named in honor of General George Crook, a significant player in military campaigns against Native Americans throughout the West. The act establishing the county contained an important note concerning Native American land and the Great Sioux Reservation. It read, "if by reason of any treaty with the Sioux tribe of Indians and any act of Congress any part of the Territory of Dakota shall be included within the limits of this territory, the same shall form and constitute a part of the aforesaid county."<sup>89</sup> This, however, never occurred, and in 1911, Crook County shrank to its current size of a little less than three thousand square miles. Gradually the county began to fill up with settlers. Euro-Americans riding through the region considered much of the land around the Tower far better suited for ranching than farming. The high plains were a hard place to practice traditional forms of agriculture. As one historian of Devils Tower remarked, by the 1870s, "the vicinity around Devils Tower was comparatively safe for settlers."

Those taking the Texas Trail like Jess Driskill who settled west of the Tower in 1879 drove their cattle through the wide pass that exists between the Missouri Buttes and the Tower.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 67-71.

<sup>87</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 66-67.

<sup>88</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 41-42.

<sup>89</sup> I.S. Bartlett, *History of Wyoming* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918), 516.

<sup>90</sup> Quote from Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 7; Brian L. Molyneaux, Nancy J. Hodgson, and Rachel M. Hinton, *The Archeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming 1997-1998*, University of South Dakota, 2000, 9.

Today, some of those early ranches remain in Crook County under the control of their descendants.<sup>91</sup> One of the earliest and closest ranches near the Tower was the Campstool Ranch. Around 1882, J.C. Ryan established the ranch, and about 1909, Jess Driskill purchased it from the bank. It lies just east of the Tower and is still managed by Ogden Driskill, a fifth-generation rancher and politician who also owns the Devils Tower KOA campground.

Sometime near 1882, Driskill and his brother purchased 2,700 head of cattle and created the T + T Ranch just northeast of Hulett. In time, they owned between 30,000 to 36,000 head, and Jess bought out the business from his brother. A potentially apocryphal story recounted by his granddaughter involves horse theft by Native Americans. According to this story, Native Americans ran off every horse but one. After some searching, “Jesse finally found his horses at the Sundance Corrals (so named because the Indians held sundances there) on the Belle Fourche River.” He subsequently shot one of the Native Americans he found there and was dismayed that the others got away. Jess proceeded to scalp the man that he gunned down and “carried the scalp on his saddle for a couple of months as evidence or as a warning!” Driskill was also one of the fifty-four cowboys from the Black Hills to participate at Teddy Roosevelt’s inauguration as a “Rough Rider.” Apparently, he even roped a police officer (whom he angered and injured), and Roosevelt was supposedly “delighted and shouted, “Bully! Do it again!”<sup>92</sup>

Though a handful of larger ranches arose near the Tower, small-scale farmers, ranchers, and loggers from the Midwest settled the land around Hulett, northeast of the Tower, around 1881. They laid out the townsite fifteen years later, and it remains the closest town to the Tower.<sup>93</sup> Larger outfits like the 101 occupied the area closer to Moorcroft, land ideal for cattle ranching. From 1889 to 1892, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad extended to Moorcroft and on to Sheridan, making Moorcroft “the largest cattle-shipping point in the U.S. and ...an important shipping point until soon after the end of World War II.”<sup>94</sup> Ranchers were key players in the regional politics and dominated the Wyoming landscape of the towns surrounding the Monument.

By 1884, Crook County had the required 500 residents to officially organize. The following year, the first officials took office to manage the county. Much of their early work concerned roads and taxes. But soon after, disaster struck the region and decimated the cattle industry that helped to build the county. In the winter of 1886/87, a destructive series of storms and severely low temperatures brought death to the high Plains. It was the end of an era for many large outfits and cattle barons. Smaller holdings began to take their place, and by 1890 the county population was 2,338. That same year, Weston County divided from the southern part of Crook County. The growth of counties like Crook and Weston propelled the territory into statehood on July 10, 1890, under the governorship of Francis E. Warren.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Crook County Historical Society, Crook County Wyoming, *Pioneers of Crook County, 1876-1920* (Pierre, SD: State Publishing Company, 1981), 6.

<sup>92</sup> Crook County Historical Society, *Pioneers of Crook County*, quote on Jesse, 154-55, on Roosevelt, 156.

<sup>93</sup> On Hulett, see Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 9-10.

<sup>94</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 7; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 32.

<sup>95</sup> Crook County Historical Society, *Pioneers of Crook County*, 7

### **The Winter of 1886-87**

If eastern Wyoming's environment could nurture a lucrative cattle industry, it could also bring about its demise. In the 1880s, the industry boomed, consolidating power into fewer and fewer hands in a little less than fifteen years, contrary to the Jeffersonian ideal that permeated western land law. Wyoming Territory became internationally known for its cattle industry as it attracted investors from across the Atlantic.<sup>96</sup>

But mother nature decided the fate of Wyoming's ranchers. The winter of 1880-81 was a bellwether for the disaster to come. Near Cheyenne, a severe winter storm struck leaving cattle struggling to find food and shelter. Ranchers reported heavy losses and learned some lessons including that fencing and feeding may be crucial to Wyoming cattle ranching. Despite the fears expressed by contemporaries concerning overgrazing and overstocking the range (though some considered this an impossibility), more cattle continued to pour into the Territory where winter feeding was not yet a common practice. By the mid-1880s, the Wyoming cattle industry was at a fragile tipping point of irreconcilable social differences and overtaxed range, feed, and water resources.<sup>97</sup>

Then came the devastating winter of 1886-1887. An exceptionally dry summer that strained available forage preceded Nature's frosty fury. In the aftermath of the brutal winter, cattle carcasses littered the landscape of Wyoming Territory. Claims of 80 to 90% losses were a dramatic rebuke of the idea that ranchers could leave cattle to their own devices in the chaotic climate of this western territory. "The Crook County assessor reduced the count of cattle by 45 percent," but since the winter storms were particularly severe in the east of the Territory, the county suffered greatly. The losses decimated many smaller outfits and crippled many of the large outfits as well. As historian Michael Cassity put it, "The cattle kings had been dethroned and their empire shattered."<sup>98</sup>

After the storms of the 1880s, ranching changed dramatically and came to resemble the practices of the smaller operators. More fences kept in prized bulls and kept out other bulls; growing hay became commonplace since graziers could not depend on the open range year round. – More ranchers cultivated wheat and erected structures to house machinery and store the hay. Frances Wagner King observed a transformation "of the rancher proper into the rancher-farmer" who took less risk in raising cattle. Fencing and cultivating winter feed precluded ranchers from using their property for summer grazing. Thus the practice "Green River Drift" emerged whereby ranchers moved their cattle from winter pastures on the ranch to summer locations in the mountains, often the public domain. Big outfits failed to rebuild their herds after the winter of 1886-87. In debt, the ranchers had to sell at below market prices to get the monies required to pay the bankers, and this left them with little to recreate their large-scale enterprises. Protecting their investments, some banks developed loans that required ranchers to engage in quality winter feeding.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 71.

<sup>97</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 71-75.

<sup>98</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, quotes on 76 and 77.

<sup>99</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 95-96.

The disaster cleared the range for the coming of homesteaders and agriculturalists to settle in the Territory. From 1870-1880, the number of farms in the Territory increased from 457 to 3,125 agricultural pursuits. As these settlers carved out space on the Wyoming landscape, they soon confronted a threat from the large operators. Late nineteenth-century ranchers, and many historians since, considered the small farmer, homesteader, and rancher to be a plague upon the natural development of the Territory. To them, the land of Wyoming was made for large-scale ranching. It was inadequate for the small-scale landholding legislated in the Homestead Act that characterized the milder climate of the Midwest. Wyoming was arid and climactically erratic. The land laws that encouraged small-scale settlement and agricultural pursuits took land away from environmentally responsible and economically viable ranching operations, they claimed.<sup>100</sup>

Such arguments oversimplified a complex process and contained factual omissions. Many homestead claims in territorial Wyoming did not fall under the Homestead Act, and therefore the 160-acre limit did not constrain their size. Homesteaders claimed acreage in unsurveyed lands, making them ineligible under the Homestead Act. Other claims measured by metes and bounds often adhered to watercourses, or some other land law such as the Preemption Act, or the Desert Land Act of 1877.<sup>101</sup>

After the winter of 1886-87, the situation for cowboys who were once left in the cold and barred from acquiring land by ranching operators seemed to improve. They and their families began to claim pieces of Wyoming for themselves. By the end of the 1880s, the power of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association had dwindled along with its membership. It still attempted to keep control, though often ineffectively. Class tensions remained an elemental feature of the Wyoming landscape. Large ranchers brought what remaining power that they had to bear upon cowboys, small ranchers, and homesteaders. They cut wages and restricted the freedoms of their cowboy employees. The large ranchers also became brutal in their tactics to eliminate cattle rustling, lynching some folks and even resorting to lynching a woman for allegedly taking cattle in trade for prostitution. But politics of the Territory were shifting with every additional homesteader and small-scale rancher who entered the region. The power of the large outfits waned after another severe winter hit in 1889 and after Wyoming gained statehood in 1890 allowing citizens to elect officials.<sup>102</sup>

### **“A World of Small Farmers”**

A dramatic shift had occurred. From about 1890 to 1910, Wyoming no longer functioned as a cattle kingdom but was a “world of small farmers,” sheep graziers, and settlers. Contrary to a national trend in urbanization, those moving to Wyoming sought the countryside to settle on a farm or a ranch. Prior to the Civil War, farming was much as it had been since “biblical times” – with similar tools and technologies and practices. Labor-saving technology like the McCormick reaper existed, but it was exceedingly expensive and reserved for large farms that specialized in a

<sup>100</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 77, 79-80. But “in the decade of the 1890s, the number of cattle in Wyoming had dropped by about 40 percent while the number of farms and ranches almost doubled” (96-97).

<sup>101</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 80-83, 97.

<sup>102</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 83-85.

monoculture. Most farmers had a diversified set of crops that produced enough for their own consumption, and they sold the surplus.<sup>103</sup>

Writing in 1918, Wyoming historian I. S. Bartlett believed that Crook County was “particularly adapted to agriculture.” He reasoned that its average elevation of four thousand feet and average annual precipitation of twenty-four inches made the area agriculturally viable. “Years ago,” Bartlett mused, “when farming in many parts of Wyoming was unthought of without irrigation, the farmers of Crook County were gathering abundant crops, watered only by the natural rainfall. Wheat, oats, rye, corn, garden vegetables and small fruits can all be raised with profit in this county.” Besides growing these crops, according to Bartlett, Crook County residents also engaged in stock raising. In 1910, it supported 76,175 head of cattle, 202,216 sheep, and the county “was one of the foremost counties in the state in the number of horses, the value of live stock in that year running well over three million dollars.” Five years later, the state census recorded 5,117 residents in the county, making it thirteenth in the state for population.<sup>104</sup>

In many parts of the United States, the Civil War was a watershed for farming. War demands (human bodies, materials, and food) created a severe farm labor shortage. As a result, labor-saving technologies made their way on to farms, and the shift from diversified subsistence agriculture to specialized commercial agriculture began to unfold. Faced with an environment where they had to purchase new machinery to compete in a new market, agriculturalists grew a much larger specialized crop. The farmers had to increase the scale of their operations to pay off the incredible debt they incurred from purchasing the new equipment. By increasing the scale of their operations (buying land), the agriculturalists went into further debt. Drowning under this flood of debt, farmers became deeply enmeshed in the national (market) economy along with all of its attendant caprice and chaos. This pushed many farmers off their land. In places like the Midwest, some farmers moved further west to places like Wyoming where they could still homestead land.<sup>105</sup>

The shift in Wyoming also meant adaptation to amended agricultural practices such as irrigation (and later dry farming). As more settlers came to the state, by necessity settlement moved from the rivers, streams, and creeks to the flatlands with the assistance of irrigation.

## Settlers and Natives

Ranching, homesteading, and dispossession were intimately intertwined. Removing Native Americans was necessary prior to re-making the land as “free,” in the “public domain,” and available to white settlement. A recent homesteading history problematically described the process this way: “Whether driven by notions of Manifest Destiny or religious conviction, by simple self-interest or more elevated ideas of national development, the migration was unstoppable, surmounting all obstacles, physical, climactic, and human.”<sup>106</sup> The crimes of

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<sup>103</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 89-90.

<sup>104</sup> Bartlett, *History of Wyoming*, quotes on 516.

<sup>105</sup> Cassity, *Wyoming will be your New Home*, 90-92.

<sup>106</sup> Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History*, 92.

dispossession seemed inevitable, thus stripping homesteaders, ranchers, politicians, and Native Americans of agency. In fact, however, dispossession and homesteading were active choices. There was nothing inevitable about the federal government's refusal to honor treaties and to force peoples from their lands to expand an inland empire. Recently historians have introduced the idea of "settler colonialism" as a continuing process of dispossessing Native peoples of land they occupied, and removing or assimilating them.<sup>107</sup>

Historians have attempted to address the direct role that homesteading and homesteaders played in dispossession. Their conclusion was that it worked differently depending on the time and place. In Nebraska, Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, they determined that homesteading played little to no role in dispossession because removal preceded homesteading by several years to decades. But the colonial impulse impelled the 1862 Homestead Act, including the land laws that preceded it, and the broken treaties prior to 1862 or prior to a significant settler colonial surge into a state. This assessment refuted the submersion of homesteading into "the larger colonialist premise" and the assumption that it was "complicit."<sup>108</sup> Homesteading, however, was undoubtedly embedded in a larger historical process that depended on dispossession.

These authors believed that Dakota Territory represented a place where "homesteading was an important driver of dispossession." Its Native American population and proximity to the Tower makes this history a relevant case study in analyzing how homesteading played a role in dispossession in the region proximate to the Monument. In the Dakotas, "would-be homesteaders actively agitated for further dispossession." The 1887 Dawes Act and the 1904 Land Allotment Act were government tools used to break up reservation lands in the service of settler colonialism. Earlier, executive proclamations could accomplish this process. In far western North Dakota, President Rutherford Hays extinguished Arikara, Gros Ventre, and Mandan titles to the land in 1880.<sup>109</sup>

As the 1880s came to a close, impatience and anticipation grew as the nation rapidly expanded into the West through the network of railroads connecting cities and towns. By 1887, a nearly complete network of lines lay east of the Missouri River, and the railroads were eager to expand. However, the Great Sioux Reservation established by the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty stood in the way of what many settlers and capitalists perceived to be national progress flowing through the Northern Great Plains.<sup>110</sup>

### **Dividing up the Great Sioux Reservation**

Following the Dawes Act (1887), Congressmen and railroad executives pondered the possibilities of dividing up the Great Sioux Reservation. They argued that the reservation

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<sup>107</sup> Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 39-41, and passim.

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains*, 91, 94, 123.

<sup>109</sup> Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains*, quote on 94-95, see also 111-115. On Indigenous resistance to Dawes Act, see Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 157-161.

<sup>110</sup> Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains*, 114.

obstructed an important transportation corridor and an area that productive homesteaders could settle. This sentiment had been gaining steam ever since the battle of Little Big Horn [Battle of the Greasy Grass] when many Americans believed that the Sioux were a threat to the “advance of civilization” and advocated opening their lands to white settlement.<sup>111</sup>

In 1889, an agreement between the Sioux and federal government broke up the Great Sioux Reservation. The legislation passed in Congress on March 2 was “An act to divide a portion of the reservation of the Sioux Nation of Indians in Dakota into separate reservations and to secure the relinquishment of the Indian title to the remainder and for other purposes.” The law divided the Sioux into six distinct smaller reservations and gave the remaining land to the public domain. Presidential Proclamation 295 (February 10, 1890) further completed the process of fragmenting and reducing the “the Great Sioux Reservation of the Sioux Nation.” President Benjamin Harrison was satisfied that the required (under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868) three-quarters of the Sioux Nation consented to the reduction and terms of the Proclamation. The text of the Proclamation revealed the direct relation to the Homestead Act: “All the lands in the Great Sioux Reservation outside of the separate reservations described in the said act...shall be disposed of by the United States, upon the terms, at the price, and in the manner therein set forth, to actual settlers only, under the provisions of the homestead law.” By 1890, the federal government cleared Indian title to almost all of North Dakota and about two-thirds of South Dakota. In the years between 1889 and 1910, Sioux reservation land continued to diminish through ten more land cessions and the regular infiltration of white settlers onto tribal lands.<sup>112</sup>

Concurrently, railroads expanded in the late nineteenth century. Lines developed that branched out from the major arteries of the transcontinental railroads and filled the gaps in-between. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad was one such line that formed a network through the center of the Great Plains and snaked upwards into northeastern Wyoming. Between 1889 to 1892, the Burlington Route pushed its way to Newcastle, Moorcroft, and on to Sheridan. At certain points along this route, the Tower was visible to train passengers. This increased visibility may have factored in the subsequent government protection of the Tower.<sup>113</sup>

## Claims and Withdrawal

### The Graham Cabin

In the frenzy of white settlement and Native American removal, Euro-Americans inevitably eyed the lands surrounding the massive Tower. Pressure from settlers attempting to colonize it eventually impelled its protection. Thus, few traces of homesteading remain in what became the Monument. Charles Graham, a Texas cowpuncher, had come to the region around

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<sup>111</sup> Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains*, 114-115. On Code of Indian Offenses and Major Crimes Act, see David Truer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019), 151-158, 247-248.

<sup>112</sup> As quoted in Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains* 116-117, see also 114-115 and 117-123.

<sup>113</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 32; Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 7.



1882 and worked for the Currycomb Ranch, a large ranch west of the Tower. In February of 1890, he filed a preemption application for 160 acres that included the Tower.<sup>114</sup>

In August 1890, the Commissioner of the General Land Office (GLO) took decisive action and withdrew the Tower from the settlement by issuing an order to reject all claims on lands embracing the Tower. The Commissioner wrote a letter stating, “it appears that a great national wonder locally known as the ‘Devils Tower’ technically called the ‘Bear Lodge Butte,’ is...being sought for speculative purposes.” The letter then indicated that the Tower would be withheld from settlement until the government performed an investigation.<sup>115</sup>

In July 1891, Graham attempted to back up his claim by noting “improvements” to his homestead that included an “unfinished house and a stable and corral upon the land.”<sup>116</sup> In the 1960s, Seasonal Ranger-Naturalist John Thorson and five “helpers” (Supervisory Park Ranger Aaberg, Seasonal Ranger Lloyd Williams, Seasonal Ranger Terry King, Bob Hartzell, Fred Hartzell) undertook an excavation of the site. While preparing a reprint of Mattison’s 1955 Monument history, Superintendent James F. Hartzell desired to find the old cabin site again so that they could “make an organized search of the site for any relevant material which might indicate the age of the cabins and the period of their occupancy.” The cabin remains were “known to many local residents of the area,” and nearby a sandstone wall had names and dates from 1893 to 1929 carved into it. Custodian Newell Joyner knew about the cabin site and noted its location on a sketch map in 1932. Graham’s structures were situated within one hundred yards of the old approach road that existed until the new road was built in the 1930s. The remains sat in a ravine between the Tower and Spring No. 2. The carved sandstone wall lay at the entrance of the small gully about 23 meters from the old Tower road.<sup>117</sup> The site was northwest of the Tower and north-northwest of the visitor’s center and parking lot.<sup>118</sup>

The 1962 survey of the Graham Cabin site (48CK84) revealed its well-preserved state. The CCC did not disturb the site when the men cleaned up the Monument, and fires seemed to have avoided the area. The decay was typical of “a long period of slow and undisturbed decay.” The park staff also located many cultural remains (some of which were datable) such as glass bottles, tin cans, shoes, hardware, and expended cartridge shells.<sup>119</sup> Hartzell noted in his monthly reports for July and August that the site was located near Spring No. 2 and two of the cartridges were from a .44 caliber Henry repeating rifle. He wrote a formal report and researched the other

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<sup>114</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 32; John Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 5-6; Letter General Land Office to Dick Stone, July 16, 1932, in Dick Stone, “History of Devils Tower and Northeastern Wyoming Including a Number of Indian Legends, 1804-1934,” pdf 78, Wyoming State Centralized Microfilm Department, Wyoming State Archives.

<sup>115</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 5-6; Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 8; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 32.

<sup>116</sup> Letter General Land Office to Dick Stone, July 16, 1932; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 79.

<sup>117</sup> James F. Hartzell and John M. Thorson, “The Graham Cabin at Devils Tower,” Interim Report of Work Carried out During 1962; Bruce A. Jones, “Archeological Survey at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” 1979 Investigations, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 1980, 12, 35-44; Steven L. De Vore, “Archeological Investigations of Sewage Line Project and Assessment of Culture Resource Inventories of Devils Tower National Monument Crook County, Wyoming,” 1996, 12; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 158-159.

<sup>118</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 47.

<sup>119</sup> Hartzell and Thorson, “The Graham Cabin at Devils Tower,” 48.

items found within the Graham Homestead Cabin.<sup>120</sup> Old stumps dotted the area, indicating “evidence of cutting by man.” The better-preserved of the two buildings had a corner still standing, measured 14'6" x 13' 9", and contained evidence of a stove or hearth. This lower structure was built using 6" logs, while the upper cabin indicated more care and used larger logs. Quite possibly used as a dump/stable/outbuilding, the upper cabin measured 12'9" x 16' prior to excavation, and 11' 6.5" x 13' 8" once excavators located the bottom logs and found the 2' door frame. They also found Belemnite fossils as they dug beneath the foundation.<sup>121</sup> A sewer line constructed in the 1990s “weaves between both depressions.” By 2000, the neighboring vegetation had been stripped resulting in greater erosion of the site. When archeologists completed the original assessment for the sewer line project, they noted that “the site lies inside the survey corridor and has not been formally tested, the park staff will avoid the site during the placement of the sewage disposal line.” The archeologists quoted from Jones’ 1995 inventory of his 1991 assessment which concluded that the “site is believed to have been completely exhausted by the 1962 excavations and was estimated in 1979 to have no remaining archeological integrity as an historical resource, save for its basic location information.” But they admitted that “it remains technically unevaluated for National Register eligibility due to insufficient assessment information.”<sup>122</sup>

Park staff hypothesized that the corral was situated in a nearby meadow below the cabin site but found no remains. Plausibly, the corral was one of the two structures that have already been unearthed. Unfortunately, during the 2000 survey, the sewer line construction disturbance was relatively fresh and parts of the nearby survey site were destroyed.<sup>123</sup> Erosion plagued the site and limited archeological testing because the reseeding of the area had not yet fully matured. These researchers determined that the site is “potentially eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A, B, and D at the local level of significance in the context of early homesteading and the struggle to keep the tower as a national treasure rather than private property.”<sup>124</sup>

Beyond the sites’ fairly intact integrity, a compelling justification for its eligibility is its proximity to the neighboring historic graffiti site. Inscriptions on this sandstone rockface are nearly contemporaneous with Graham’s occupation. This indicates that this area of the Monument remained a locus of visitor activity from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The inscriptions also are clearly related to the original Tower road from which visitors could see and access the sandstone block. The inscriptions begin in 1891 and end abruptly in the mid-1930s when the park rerouted the access road in 1935. They are also close to the Graham

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<sup>120</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent’s Monthly Reports, July and August, 1962, DETO 1650, MORU MPR.

<sup>121</sup> Hartzell and Thorson, “The Graham Cabin at Devils Tower,” Interim Report of Work Carried out During 1962; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “The Archeological Survey,” 49.

<sup>122</sup> Quotes from De Vore, “Archeological Investigations,” 15-16; Bruce A. Jones, “1991 Archeological Inventory and Evaluative Testing at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming” Division of Cultural Resources, Rocky Mountain Region, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, NE, May 19, 1995, 11-12; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “The Archeological Survey,” 47.

<sup>123</sup> De Vore, “Archeological Investigations.”

<sup>124</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archeological Survey,” 48, quote on 49.

Cabin which, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was likely still standing or at the very least still recognizable as a former structure.<sup>125</sup> As anyone who has traversed the West knows, structures remain standing for some time after they are abandoned, unlike the very humid and rot-addled East.

Though traces of his time near the Tower remain, Graham did not stay long at his homestead. The GLO determined that Graham had not filed the claim in good faith; he had not lived on or worked the land but desired to sell it to another interested party. Once in possession, he intended to hand it over to the Currycomb outfit. This was a relatively common practice for ranches looking to expand their holdings and gain control over crucial water sources such as the artery of the Belle Fourche River and its various tributaries.<sup>126</sup> Control over water in the West meant control over territory, and for ranches it was essential to keep their stock alive and robust.

After concluding that he likely was pursuing the Tower unscrupulously, the GLO cancelled Graham's claim on January 28, 1892. Graham decided not to appeal the decision, and it became final in June. However, the GLO let him choose another piece of land in the Bear Lodge Mountains where he could apply the time he claimed to be living near the Tower to the homestead patent.<sup>127</sup>

#### **Carlisle-Kent's Claim and local resistance to privatizing the Tower**

Graham was not the only individual to make an attempt to take control of the Tower. In August 1890, a Miss Carlisle-Kent of England filed a preemption claim on 160 acres where the Tower stands at the Land Office in Douglas, Wyoming. A widely circulated report concerning her claim began with a description of the Tower and its surrounding landscape. The "illimitable arid and treeless plain" of Wyoming was periodically interrupted by hills and mountains and its "famous" natural scenery. Standing on top of Mount Harney in the Black Hills, according to the reporter, "you can see half way across the State of Wyoming, and the only obstruction which meets your vision as you gaze to the North and West is the Devil's Tower or Bear Lodge [probably 100 miles]." The story then compared the Tower to the "phenomena in the Yellowstone Park" and the Giant's Causeway in Ireland. This "awe-inspiring monument of nature's handiwork" was "without a precedent" and "mysterious."

The surrounding Wyoming lands were less remarkable. The article noted that the "land in the vicinity is arid and fit only for grazing." Agriculture in the region was limited to some wheat, oats, timothy, and small grains. Other crops tended to fail in the unrelenting aridity and climactic variability of northeastern Wyoming. The infertility of the land, according to the reporter, gave Crook County residents pause when pondering Carlisle-Kent's claim. This surprise was amplified "[b]y tacit consent of the community it was intended that this land should remain public property." The claimant kept the preemption claim a guarded secret for a time, but when it became "generally known, an indignant protest has gone up from every part of the community at

<sup>125</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, "Archeological Survey," 49, 36-51, 125-27, 67-76.

<sup>126</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 32-33; Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 5-6.

<sup>127</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 6; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 33; Letter General Land Office to Dick Stone, July 16, 1932; Stone, "History of Devils Tower," 78-79; Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, "Archeological Survey," 10.

the audacity of this English woman.” The local residents were adamant that the land not become private property. That Carlisle-Kent was “a foreigner” who allegedly “took out her naturalization papers only a short time earlier for the express purpose of filing on this land” made her unpopular with the community.<sup>128</sup> They promptly set forth to foil this fraudulent attempt to acquire their local prize by writing to the Land Department in Washington and to Senator Moody of South Dakota (because at the time Wyoming did not yet have a representative). These locals hoped that the Tower would instead become the centerpiece of a new national park.

Carlisle-Kent supposedly sought to “secure this ground and convert it into a private park, and charge visitors an admittance fee.” The “fame of Devil’s Tower is chiefly local,” according to the article, but “visitors come hundreds of miles every summer to see it, and the number is increasing every year.” Once the railroads made “travel into this section easier and speedier,” the number of visitors from afar would surely increase. The reporter believed that by the following summer, the Burlington and Missouri and the Elkhorn branch of the Chicago and Northwestern would “pass within the shadow of this obelisk.” The article indicated that the popularity of this place had driven a number of individuals to file on land enveloping the Tower. However, the article incorrectly stated that they “have abandoned their purpose because of the strong opposition met with, and no one ever went so far as to attempt to prove up on it.”<sup>129</sup> As noted above, Graham was attempting to do so concurrently with Carlisle-Kent.

Carlisle-Kent was a forty-five-year-old, well-traveled “woman of considerable culture and refinement” and a temperance advocate from Lancashire, England. Carlisle-Kent moved to the United States in 1887 (with the exception of a few months in 1888) and lived with her nephew in Crook County who was “an extensive stock grower and the owner of several hundred acres of land” in the area.” The article noted that “[t]heir ranch is reputed to be one of the finest in the State of Wyoming, and is famed for its hospitality, chiefly among the cattle and horse men of that vicinity, many of whom are English.”<sup>130</sup> This was the tail end of the western ranching boom as it was still recovering from the brutal winter of 1886-7 and the shocks and setbacks in an inherently unstable and unpredictable economic model. In the 1870s and 1880s, foreign capital from England and Scotland flowed into the West and funded many large-scale ranching outfits. Likely Carlisle-Kent’s nephew’s ranch was a remnant of this speculative boom. Possibly she sought to invest in the Tower as an alternative form of income for herself and the ranch after the hard times of the late 1880s.

The unusual end of Carlisle-Kent’s life was met with equally unusual headlines. “Eccentric Woman Dead – Unique Feminine Character Who Has Held Ranch Near Wyoming Line,” read the March 11, 1904, *Black Hills Union and Western Stock Review*. The paper described Miss S. Henrietta Carlisle-Kentas “one of the strongest and most unique feminine characters of Wyoming.” On her ranch “near the Devil’s Tower,” she kept “kept scores of dogs of all breeds.” Carlisle-Kent also owned “several hundred head of horses and cattle.” In an

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<sup>128</sup> “Mustn’t Have the Devils Tower: Wyoming Citizens Stirred Up by an English Woman’s Scheme,” *The Sun*, New York, August 17, 1890, p. 20.

<sup>129</sup> “Mustn’t Have the Devils Tower,” *The Sun*, New York, August 17, 1890, p. 20.

<sup>130</sup> “Mustn’t Have the Devils Tower,” *The Sun*, New York, August 17, 1890, p. 20.

unfortunate turn of events, her life was cut short by a playful nip on the face that resulted in the removal of the end of her nose. In the subsequent weeks, blood poisoning followed, and she passed away. Reports assumed her estate valued between \$30,000 and \$50,000 went to her niece (Miss Hancock) and principal heir who was summoned from Ireland. Following her final wishes in her will, her dogs and “several of her choice horses,” were to be “chloroformed to prevent their falling into the hands of strangers.”<sup>131</sup>

Graham and Carlisle-Kent’s attempted land grabs were two of the most prominent assaults on the heretofore robust local resistance to privatizing the Tower. As the railroad approached and transportation began to improve in the region, threats to this home-grown defense mounted in the early 1890s. The scrutiny that the GLO applied to Graham’s claim and the letters to politicians that flowed to Washington following the Carlisle-Kent affair served as ample evidence for the need for federal protection. Thus, according to the 1890 article concerning Carlisle-Kent, locals discussed a “strong effort” to protect the Tower, and “some eminent men” approved setting it aside as a national park that would encompass “[a]n area two miles in width by five miles in length” including “Bear Lodge and the Twin Buttes on the Little Missouri River.”<sup>132</sup>

### **Withdrawal of the Tower from Settlement**

Recognizing the Tower as a special sort of federal landscape involved “withdrawal from settlement,” or withdrawal of a parcel of land from the opportunity for people to claim the land under one of the Homestead Acts or other legal means. The term “reserve” or “reservation” implied that the land had a special purpose. Withdrawal from settlement was an important mechanism by which officials established national forests. In early 1892, GLO Special Agent L.S. Hanchett sent a letter to Wyoming Senator Francis E. Warren describing the “great natural curiosity” that was the Tower. In February of 1892, Warren wrote a letter to the Commissioner of the GLO, Thomas Carter, to enlist his help in protecting the Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes from “spoilation.” After several weeks elapsed, the GLO used the Forest Reserve Act of March 3, 1891, to set aside 60.5 square miles that enveloped the Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes as a forest reserve.<sup>133</sup> At this time, no other adequate means existed to protect these natural features for their own sake. However, utilitarian-minded policy such as the 1891 Forest Reserve Act encouraged the protection of watersheds. Carter, therefore, noted the importance of the Belle Fourche River and added that the Tower was a landmark with historical significance to the early settlement of the region.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Black Hills Union and Western Stock Review*, South Dakota, March 11, 1904.

<sup>132</sup> “Mustn’t Have the Devils Tower,” *The Sun*, New York, August 17, 1890, p. 20; see also “*Anaconda Standard*, Montana, September 27, 1890, p. 7; *Evening Star*, Washington DC, August 13, 1890, p 8; other papers in Minnesota, Michigan, California, Georgia, Virginia and Louisiana reported on this.

<sup>133</sup> Reporting on this reservation: *Meeker Herald*, Colorado, February 27, 1892.

<sup>134</sup> Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

On March 5, 1892, the GLO officially withdrew Sec. 7 and 18, T. 53N., R. 65W., Sec. 12 and 13, T. 53N., R.66W and “certain adjoining lands...from settlement, entry, or other disposition.” The stated purpose of the “withdrawal was to protect the land pending its reservation for forest or park purposes.” The protected status of the land where the Monument rose remained in force until Congress passed the Antiquities Act and established the reservation September 24, 1906. At that point, all the lands not included in the Monument were “released from such withdrawal.”<sup>135</sup>

In June 1892, not long after federal authorities withdrew this large swath, field agents inspected it and reduced to the acreage to 18.75 square miles that included the Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes. On July 1, 1892, a month after the GLO reduced the Tower’s protective buffer, Senator Warren introduced a bill (S. 3364) to establish “Devils Tower National Park.” Warren took the advice of the GLO and proposed that the size of the park at 18.75 square miles or 11,974.24 acres embracing the Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes. The bill did not gain any traction in Congress. It was read twice by its title and sent to die with the Committee on Territories.<sup>136</sup>

This protection sought to keep the land from private individuals attempting to secure it under federal law. The 1891 Forest Reserve Act did not yet have any provisions for management and administration of such areas. It was not until the Organic Act of 1897 that forest rangers received the power to manage reserves. That same year, Frank W. Mondell became the assistant commissioner of the GLO, and news circulated about the 5.5 mile by 11 mile “Devil’s Tower timber reservation” being “enclosed and stocked with wild game.” In 1898, GLO Commissioner Binger Hermann formalized the withdrawal of the Tower from the public domain and the opening of the unprotected portion to settlement.<sup>137</sup> As the century came to a close, the conservation of natural resources became part of the Progressive Movement (more about this in the next chapter). In the Turnerian sense, the frontier was closing, and the rapidly industrializing nation was beginning to feel a sense of loss and anxiety as society seemed to accelerate beyond rational control.

In the 1890s, the Tower was not an easy place to get to for most people. The railroad had not yet made inroads into the area, so it was a challenge to get to the monolith. One had to travel along unimproved roads and trails on horseback, wagon, or buckboard. Even from somewhere as close as Hulett, it was an arduous journey. According to a resident of the town, to get to the Tower in the 1890s one had to ford the Belle Fourche River seven times. For some time, it remained a local attraction for Euro-Americans who enjoyed camping and picnicking at the Tower. Most of these visitors sojourned once or twice a year and spent a night or two near the

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<sup>135</sup> Letter General Land Office to Dick Stone, July 16, 1932; Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 77-79.

<sup>136</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 8; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 33.

<sup>137</sup> Quote on wild game from *Custer Weekly Chronicle*, South Dakota, November 13, 1897; Daugherty, *Devils Tower*, 7; Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 8; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 33; news about opening parts for settlement: *Caldwell Tribune*, Idaho, June 18, 1898.

towering geologic feature. A large natural spring that flowed from near the base of the Tower beckoned visitors.<sup>138</sup>

### **An Artist's Journey, 1892**

Thomas Moran's journey to the Tower illustrated the arduous nature of travel to the remote regions of Wyoming during the homesteading era. In 1892, close friends Moran and photographer William Henry Jackson ventured into the West toward Yellowstone and the Tetons. Wyoming officials had tasked them with creating something "new and startling" for the state's entry into the 1893 Columbian Exposition World's Fair in Chicago. The leg of the trip dedicated to the Tower was so peculiar and worthy of a story that Moran decided to write a magazine article about it.<sup>139</sup>

The two visual artists encountered their first obstacle in selecting a suitable embarkation point. Moorcroft, Wyoming, was the most advantageous because it was the "nearest point to the tower on the railroad." However, they could not find an "outfit for the trip" in this town. Instead, they had to travel an additional twenty-eight miles to Gillette, Wyoming which Moran described as "a declining town of the character usually found at the end of a railroad section during construction." The men were informed that the trip from Gillette to the landmark would be easy; one day to the Tower, one day at it, and one day back. They "could either stop at night or get what was needful" at ranches along the way. However, it seemed like nobody knew precisely how far it was to the monolith. The distances ranged from sixty to seventy-five miles. Supplied with this knowledge, Moran and Jackson proceeded with blankets and their art supplies-- Jackson's "photographic apparatus" and Moran's "sketching outfit".<sup>140</sup>

Their team soon tired after twenty miles of travel, and Moran and Jackson began to question their rush to get on the road. They were roaming through cattle country, which presented its own set of problems. Moran lamented that "[a] map is a sorry guide to follow in a country devoted to cattle-raising, where roads branch out everywhere and seem to end nowhere." The residents of Gillette had assured them that they would not miss the 101 Ranch that sat twenty-eight miles from the town. It would be an oasis where they could "refresh ourselves and feed the horses." But, after finding an abandoned ranch house and asking a herder for directions, tired and hungry, they summited four substantial hills to find the 101 along the Belle Fourche "in a lovely grove of cottonwood trees." It turns out that the 101 was thirty-five miles from Gillette and situated about halfway to the Tower. It was a "corporation ranch with a superintendent" that reminded Moran of "a well-kept and prosperous farmers' house in the East."

Moran and Jackson hoped that they could push hard and make it the rest of the way to the Tower by nightfall. They assumed that they would then stay at "some ranch on the Belle Fourche near the tower." First, however, Moran and Jackson required refreshment for themselves and the

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<sup>138</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower*, 10; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 33-34.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Moran, "A Journey to the Devil's Tower in Wyoming, (Artists' Adventures)" *The Century Magazine*, vol. XLVII (November 1893, to April 1894), 450; Gunderson, *Devils Tower*, quote on 97.

<sup>140</sup> Moran, "A Journey to the Devil's Tower," 450.

horses. The superintendent of the 101 rejected their request noting “that he did not keep a road-house.” He also refused to help them with directions to the Tower, adding only that they were welcome to let their horses graze on the surrounding grass. Following this “rather chilling” encounter, a young man informed them that they could get directions to the Tower from a man at a neighboring ranch across the Belle Fourche.

At this “very poorly furnished” log house, a young woman greeted Moran and Jackson and relayed directions to them from a man in the back room of the house, though they did not know how far it was to the Tower. They were to follow the wire fence for about a mile through the swamp until they met a road where they would keep right past the “old derrick until we reached the second creek [Cabin Creek].” From this creek they were told that they would see the road leading down to the Belle Fourche. What Moran and Jackson found along the way told of the region’s history. The first road that they met was “excellent” and ran over gently sloping hills up to where they passed the derrick. Concerned about places where they “had calculated to refresh ourselves and our horses,” Moran noted that they “passed many ranch houses, all of logs, but in every instance deserted.”

Once they reached Cabin Creek, they were unsure as to where to go so they chose the most well-trod path that led in what seemed the right direction. As they descended a divide, Moran and Jackson caught “a glimpse of the tower through a rift in the mountains about twenty-five miles away, rising pale and immense against a clear sky.” Soon after, a tremendous storm broke upon them that frightened the cattle grazing nearby into a “perfect stampede” for shelter and that stopped their horses cold in their tracks. The storm brought “ice-balls” that pelted the men who were wearing summer clothing and “thin felt hats.” The horses were also subject to this assault as the night gathered and the “landscape was covered with them to the depth of four inches.” Hail gave way to cold rain as the men “shivered and shook” until the wild weather subsided.

Until then, the men had enjoyed firm roads that had been dry for weeks. But the rain altogether altered their travel experience. An “inch or two” of slick gumbo covered the road. The moistened clay of northern Wyoming was “the blackest, stickiest, most India-rubberlike mud that exists on earth.” Adhering to everything and burdening every step, the gumbo made even the simplest travel a challenge. They spent a miserable night stumbling through the sticky mud unable to get their bearings. The next morning, they decided to return to the derrick and Cabin Creek and follow the Belle Fourche to the Tower. They knew that farms and ranches lay along this path, and they came across an accommodating ranchman who fed them and directed them to the best path to the towering landmark. Sure enough Moran and Jackson came upon a “fertile valley studded with the houses and fields of prosperous farmers and ranchers.” Local residents instructed them to call upon the hospitality of Johnson’s which was surely a “place of entertainment for travelers.” “An English gentleman who was given to horse-raising owned the “luxuriously furnished home.” They could see the Tower twelve miles in the distance, and Moran sketched the view from this horse ranch. After viewing the Tower, “a grand and imposing sight, and one of the remarkable physical features of this country,” the men spent the night at the



nearby ranch of two horse-raising Englishmen named Burke and Mackenzie before making their way back to Gillette.<sup>141</sup>

Moran and Jackson's trip revealed the foreign investment and economic distress in the area. An English person owned each ranch that Moran and Jackson visited. A relatively recent bust had resulted in many farms and ranches being abandoned. However, signs of life appeared in the fertile valley that they visited as they approached the Tower. Moran's story illustrated the inconvenience inherent in attempting to travel to the Tower as a tourist in the 1890s. The inconsistent assistance along the road, extreme weather, and rugged landscape made each mile all the more arduous. Yet a year later, a considerable crowd gathered at the monolith to observe the Fourth of July and see Rogers climb its vertical columns. As would become clear to the National Park Service and early Monument managers, the Tower was not an easy place to access yet sometimes it was a hard place to leave.

### **Conclusion**

The massive rock monolith rising above the Belle Fourche River stood within a landscape transformed by federal land policies and white settlers' unstoppable desire to exploit the American West. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Native Americans belonged to a landscape where a formidable and revered tower emerged from the plains. Yet by the end of the century, the Tower rose above a very different landscape. Tribal peoples no longer gathered and hunted at its base or performed sacred ceremonies in its shadow. Instead, a landscape of white settlers surrounded the Tower; ranches with cattle replaced the vanished buffalo, towns of white families stood where Native villages once lay, and agriculturalists displaced the hunter/gatherers. The traces of Indigenous peoples faded as settler colonialism imprinted upon the land. Local Euro-Americans laid claim to Bear's Lodge imposing their own name, practices, and meanings onto the awe-inspiring stone column. Taking it from the Native Americans, they in turn sought to protect it from other private exploiters by reserving it in public ownership. The geological monument transitioned into a place owned and loved by the tribes' dispossessors.

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<sup>141</sup> Quotes from Moran, "A Journey to the Devil's Tower," 97-106.

## Known Resource Types

**The Tower formation.** The Tower remained a significant landmark on the Northern Plains landscape during this time of cultural and environmental transformation.

**Graham Cabin site.** An early homestead filed in 1890 within today's Monument grounds. The area around the Tower was used in early ranching activities, and at least two people took actions seeking to make a homestead claim there.

**Springs.** Natural springs comprised important water resources for travelers as well as settlers, and people noted them during this time period. People made efforts to develop at least one of the springs located in today's national monument.

**Roads.** From 1884, Crook County started to improve county roads, which helped make Bear Lodge/Devils Tower more accessible. A primitive access road leading up to Graham's cabin and the area near the Tower formation was in place by 1890. The National Park Service realigned this access road in the 1930s, and people tended to stay on the road, not visiting nearby cliffs where historic graffiti can be found.

## Graphics

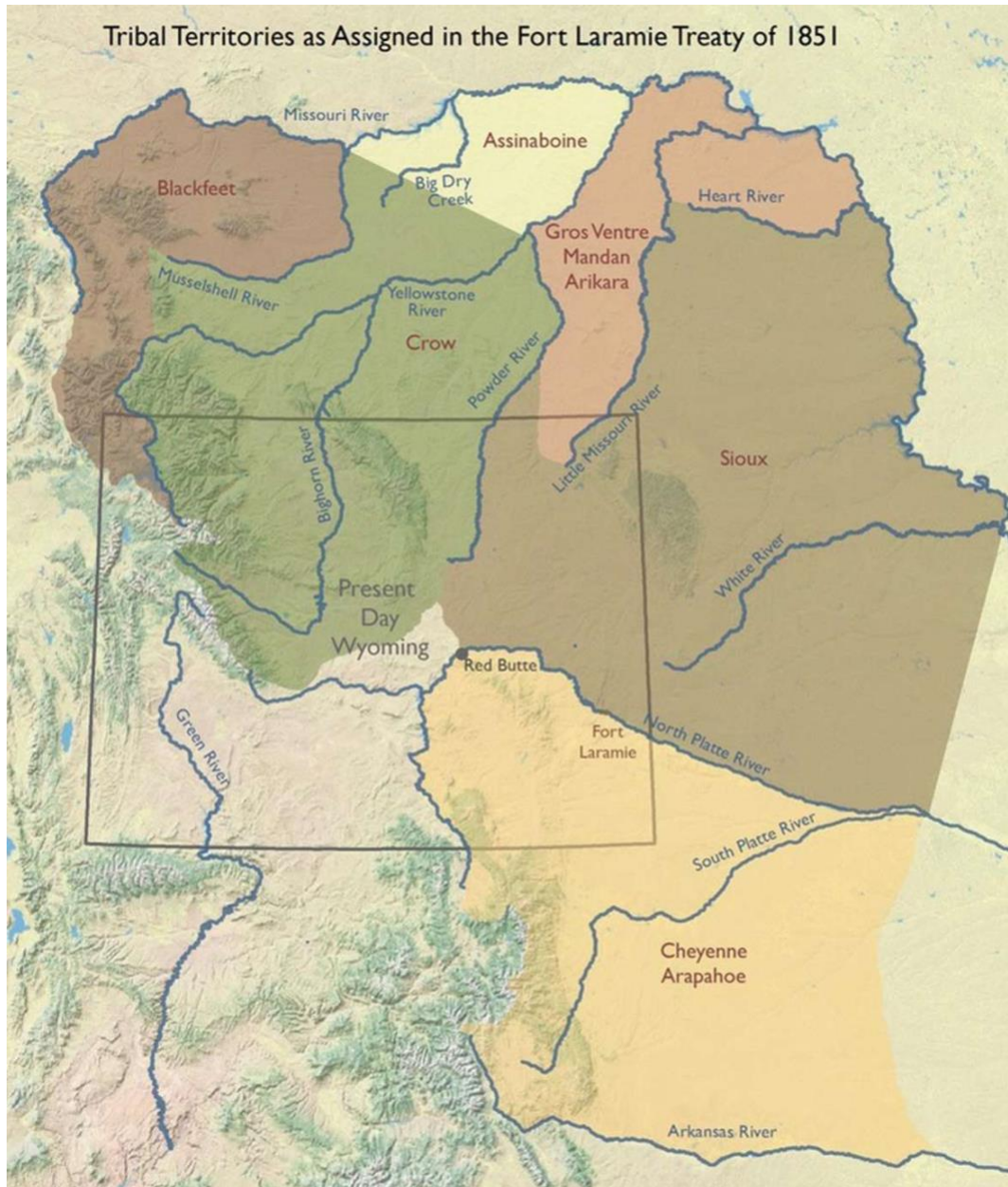


Figure 11. Tribal Territories as Assigned in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. The Lakota still consider much of the land in and near the Black Hills to be unceded. (Map compiled by Margo Berendsen, cartographer at the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center at the University of Wyoming. Used with permission and thanks).

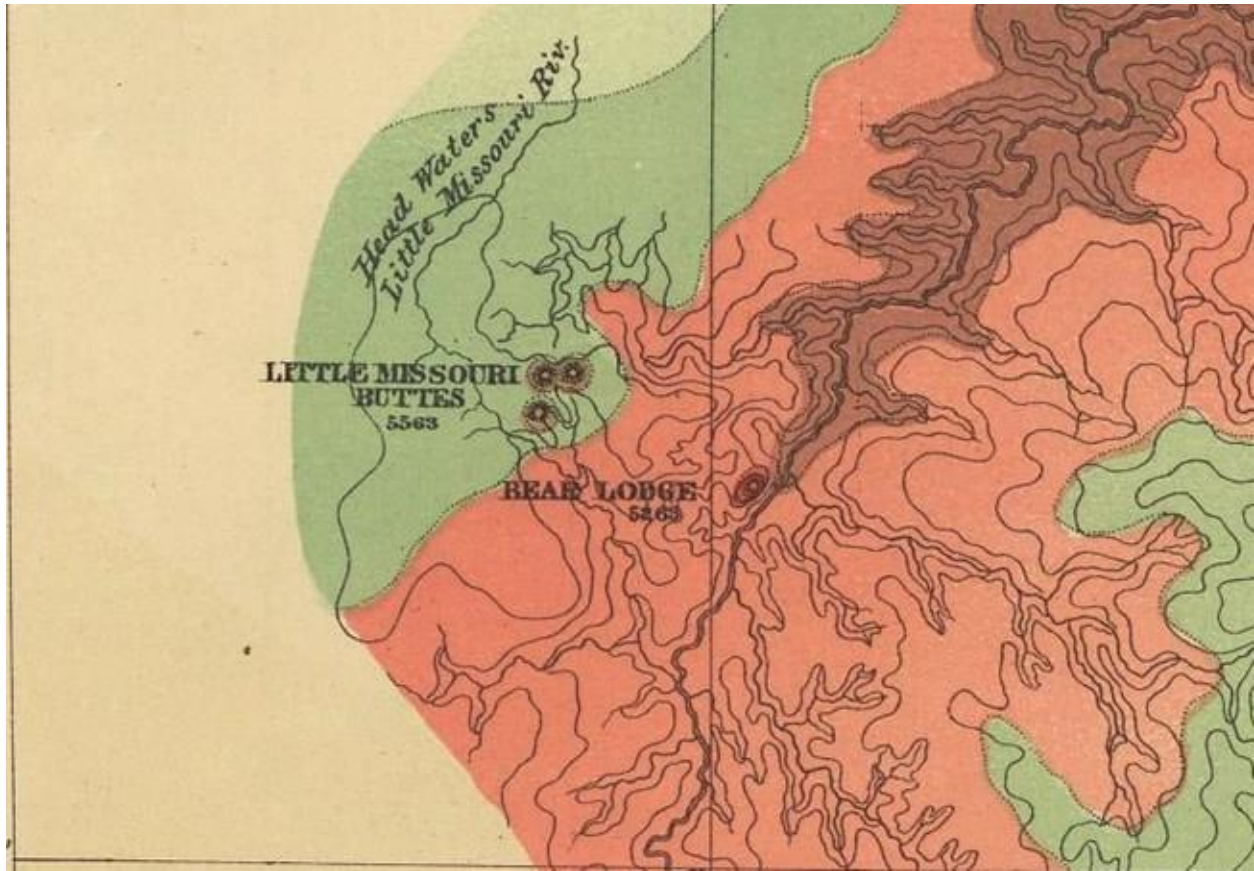


Figure 12. Exploration parties knew of the Lakota name for Bear Lodge. Close up of 1879 Geological map of the Black Hills of Dakota, by Henry Newton, E.M. Dept. of the Interior, U.S.G. and G. Survey, J.W. Powell, in charge. *Geology of the Black Hills* by Henry Newton, E.M. (Julius Bien, Lith. New York, 1879). (This historical cartographic image is presented courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries).



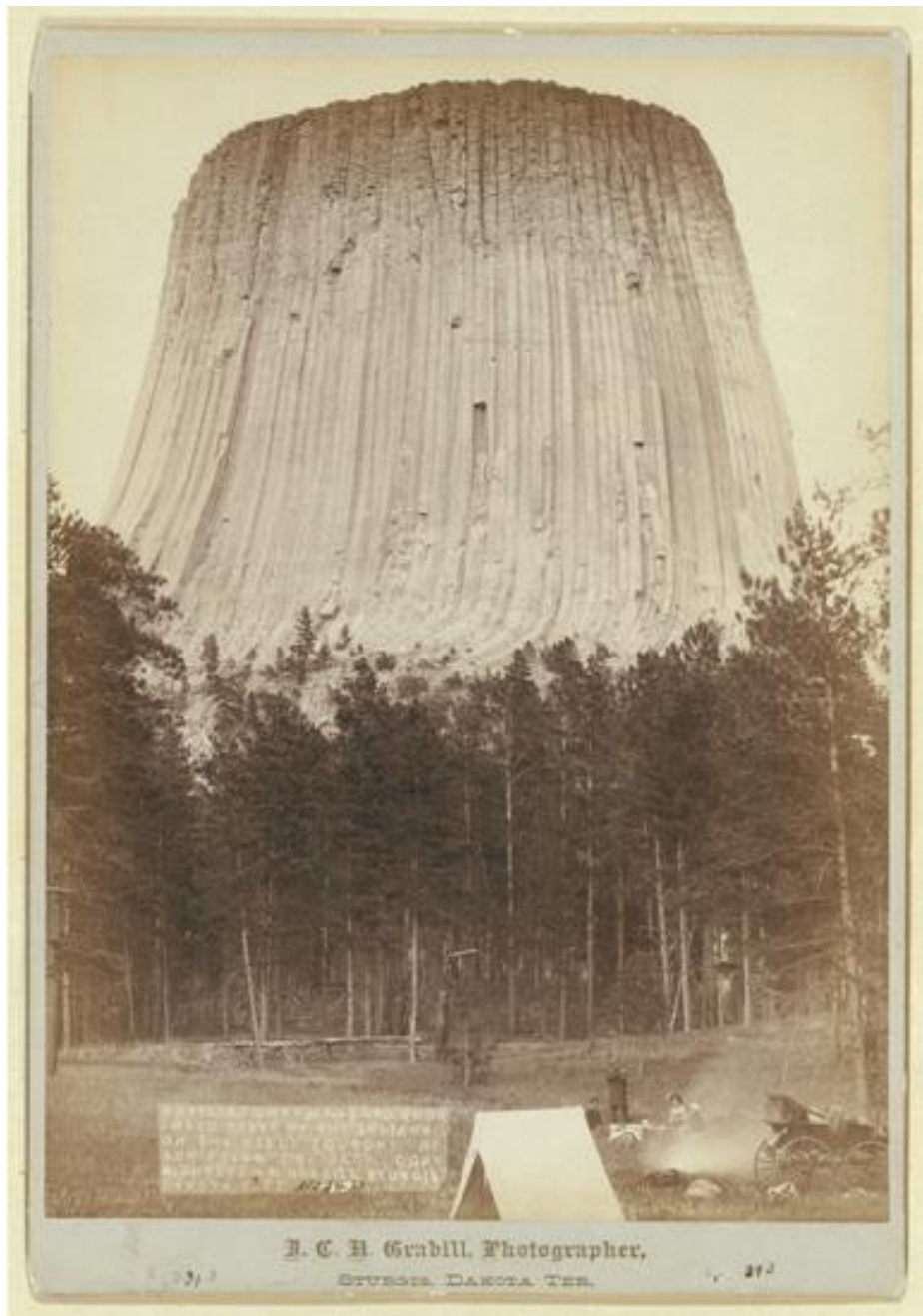


Figure 13. Early visitors to the Tower formation. Inscribed "Devil's Tower or Bear Lodge (Mato Tepee of the Indians), on the Belle Fourche." Photo by John C.H. Grabill of Sturgis, Dakota Territory, 1887. (Courtesy Library of Congress)



Figure 14. Thomas Moran, *The Devil's Tower from Johnstons*, 1893, brush and ink and ink wash on paperboard. (Courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of John Holmes Maghee)

## **CHAPTER FOUR: The Natural Monument: The Antiquities Act and Accessing the Monument, 1892-1928**

On September 24, 1906, Theodore Roosevelt signed the proclamation establishing Devils Tower National Monument, America's first declared monument. Under the 1906 Antiquities Act, the "President of the United States is hereby authorized, in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be National Monuments." At that time, Devils Tower National Monument fell into the category of "historic or scientific interest." It was, according to the official proclamation, "such an extraordinary example of the effect of erosion in the higher mountains as to be a natural wonder and an object of historic and great scientific interest." Placing the site under government protection, the nation would preserve this "lofty and isolated rock situated in Crook County, Wyoming" for future generations because of its unique geologic history.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of the Progressive Era, Roosevelt's proclamation introduced a new sort of federal regulation of the Tower and its immediate area.

With this designation, the federal government exerted its authority to conserve natural and archeological sites in the interest of the public good. At Devils Tower, the Park Service developed basic infrastructure including the access road and attempted to control the river's flow with large concrete tetrahedrons. Yet overall, federal control of the Monument proceeded slowly. After its creation in 1916, the newly established National Park Service placed a custodian (later called a superintendent) at Devils Tower National Monument. But with a limited budget, NPS improvements intended to protect the resource and to accommodate growing tourism were not extensive. Though under federal authority, the Tower remained a place mostly oriented to local people. Interested citizens of Wyoming created a solid basis for public support of the Monument. Within this context, the young National Park Service nationwide and at Devils Tower began to mature and establish its legitimacy as a federal agency.

### **The Progressive Era**

The origins of America's first declared national monument were set deeply within the Progressive Era, a time of reformist impulses in American society during the later 1800s and early 1900s. Progressives believed in the positive power of government to improve society and conditions of life for people. They employed a utilitarian philosophy and practical approaches. No longer slaves to fate, pragmatists claimed, "people are the agents of their own destinies," able to experiment and "find scientific solutions to social problems."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America: Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," September 24, 1906, <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o293443>, accessed August 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 237; Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 371-372.

Experts and professionals led this new Progressive order. They were specially trained, educated, and credentialed in their field and applied the day's most cutting-edge knowledge to the ills plaguing American industrial society. They saw the dark side of industrialization as it appeared in filthy and crowded cities and landscapes stripped of their resources and natural beauty. Progressives sought to alleviate a wide set of social ills, including poor housing, child neglect and poverty, environmental degradation, urban sanitation, corporate negligence, and political misconduct.<sup>3</sup>

Some Progressives focused on natural conservation in particular. Early efforts to preserve elements of wilderness grew out of Romantic interests in the natural sublime, an awareness of the disappearing Western frontier, and anxieties concerning the character of modern life. For figures like Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's character was at stake. Wilderness came to represent a sacred space of renewal under siege by modern technologies, urbanization, and industrial capitalism. Shrinking natural resources also concerned Progressives. By applying professional expertise and scientific supervision to the problems of conservation and preservation, many were confident they had solutions that guaranteed social progress and an equitable future. As historian Char Miller remarked, "Through a sustained application of this progressive balm, the nation's forests would be regenerated, its battered lands reinvigorated, and its prehistoric past reclaimed – heroic work for a modernist generation."<sup>4</sup>

Aesthetic preservation and utilitarian conservation had social consequences. In the case of preservation, as historian Mark David Spence explains, "uninhabited wilderness had to be created before it could be preserved, and this type of landscape became reified in the first national parks." This process required the removal or exclusion of Native peoples and regulated the use of local commons by legislating "correct" uses of the environment.<sup>5</sup> Around Devils Tower, the federal government had forcibly removed Native Americans to reservations, and it was many years before they returned with their cultural practices. In the meantime, tourism became a primary use of the Tower's landscape with the establishment of Devils Tower National Monument. Progressive values of control and improvement shaped the early history and landscape of the Tower.

### **The Antiquities Act of 1906**

Devils Tower National Monument illustrates the first practical application of a powerful tool for the preservation of geological, historical, and cultural resources. The 1906 Antiquities Act responded to a growing perception that the U.S. government needed to serve the public good

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<sup>3</sup> Char Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates: A Century of Controversy* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Quote from Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), quote on 15; See also Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).



by protecting the remains of ancient civilizations contained within its borders. Late nineteenth-century journalists, politicians, and archeologists witnessed collectors pillage regions rich in relics such as the Southwest. The efforts of local and state governments and organizations seemed ineffective at staving off this tide of thieves. True to Progressive form (sharing common ground and framing with conservation and preservation), many in the East began to believe that the only way to save these western treasures was to apply the might and control of the federal state. Driven by the archeological community in years of effort, Congress passed the Antiquities Act of 1906 meant to protect and preserve historic and cultural sites for study by professionals.<sup>6</sup>

Months after the legislative actions of the Fifty-ninth Congress, on January 2, 1907, news began to spread about the Antiquities Act's passage. The Act was the culmination of that "which the institute [Institute of American Archeology] and all other scientific bodies of the country had been working for many years." One reporter noted that the Act protected "all historic and prehistoric ruins situated upon lands owned or controlled by the government." The story made no mention of invoking the Act for science though it listed the Tower as one of its first Presidential uses. It identified the Act's purpose as stopping "ruins being despoiled by vandals and exploited for commercial purposes all over the southwest and invaluable material lost to science every day."<sup>7</sup>

Of worry was the "profane relic hunter." The Act would put a stop to those "who would mar and disfigure and destroy the precious mine of antiquities in the arid southwest." The "scientists of the government" were "highly elated" since "[f]or a quarter of a century, the commercial collectors have had pretty much their own way in the ancient ruins, and have carried away loads upon loads of valuable curios, but now this is to stop and the ruins of a long dead and forgotten race are to be preserved for the country and coming generations." The deep history of the nation lay in the "almost inexhaustible supply of antiquities is still to be found in the mysterious canyons and silent caves that were peopled with races that knew many of the arts of civilization before the Indian came to hunt or the white man to trade."<sup>8</sup> The ancient, civilized peoples who once populated the American landscape were crucial to the nation's exceptional history. They were not to be confused with the "Indian" that "the white man" warred with throughout a few hundred years of settler colonialism. Presumably these Native Americans were not "civilized" and therefore not worthy of shared past worth preserving and treasuring.<sup>9</sup>

Three years after Congress passed the Act, news circulated describing how it differed from the designation of national forests and national parks. The land categories that the Antiquities Act covered included "historic landmarks, prehistoric structures and other objects of

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 70-71; Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument; A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: Devils Tower Natural History Association, National Park Service, 2007), 45.

<sup>7</sup> "Public Land," *Evening Star*, Washington DC January 2, 1907, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Kentucky, May 16, 1907, p.7; *Waterbury Evening Democrat*, Connecticut, April 30, 1907, p.10.

<sup>9</sup> Newspapers nationwide conveyed details about the Antiquities Act, including the *Lamar Register*, Colorado, February 6, 1907, The *Dakota County Herald*, Nebraska, January 22, 1909, and the *Wausau Pilot*, Wisconsin, January 26, 1909.

historic and scientific interest situated upon lands controlled or owned by the United States.” One story gave a basic description of the Tower and ended with the statement, “[i]t is associated with many Indian legends and more than one fierce battle has been fought around it by the savages.”<sup>10</sup> This article explicitly stated about all of the possible causes for preservation under the Antiquities Act, but it failed to specifically address the scientific reason listed in the president’s Devils Tower proclamation – erosion. Instead, the reporter noted its qualities as a “conspicuous landmark” and assumed Native American significance.

The Antiquities Act originated in a post-Frontier West and a firm belief in the vanishing or vanished “authentic” Indian trope. Politicians and scientists would not have celebrated the heritage of Native Americans while they were actively at war with them. Only after their defeat could settler colonials contemplate the value of the continent’s ancient human history. Furthermore, as historian Hal Rothman asserted, “[t]he demise of prehistoric culture gave Americans confidence in their destiny.” They could rest assured that the conquered and past peoples had been cleared away for the sake of the nation’s Manifest Destiny. At the same time, Americans prized nature’s monuments for what they conveyed about America’s greatness. As Rothman summarized, “the closing of the westward frontier and an awakening to the idea that Americans could exhaust the natural attributes of the continent, xenophobia that held that the American West had natural and cultural attributes as spectacular as those of Europe, and the Progressive-era desire for scientific management and centralized authority over the resources of the nation” all played into the gestalt of the age.<sup>11</sup>

In practice, through this Act, Roosevelt took a decidedly new path when it came to the West’s public lands. Previous presidents desired to dispose of the public domain as rapidly as possible. Homesteaders, ranchers, miners, railroads, and capitalists could best use the public lands. But the recklessness of this *laissez faire* pattern of thought became plainly visible to late nineteenth-century observers. Heedless Americans and corporations pilfered forests, abandoned homesteads and ranchland, and denuded mining landscapes. Unrestrained capitalism was folly, and Roosevelt sought to remedy its excesses.<sup>12</sup> The West would be colonized wisely.

In 1905, Roosevelt delivered his Fifth Annual Message to Congress, and he directly attributed the Progressive impulse as owing to Edmund Burke’s belief that “[m]en are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains on their own appetites.”<sup>13</sup> By prescribing the proper use of public lands, Progressives would fetter freedoms and alienate humans from their environment through rationalization and bureaucracy. Conservation and preservation would bring some people closer to nature while violently tearing others away from it. Both preservationists and conservationists (often at odds about how best to treat public lands) lent their support to the Antiquities Act.

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<sup>10</sup> *Evening Star*, Washington DC, February 18, 1909.

<sup>11</sup> Hal Rothman, *America’s National Monuments: The Politics of Preservation* (University Press of Kansas, 1994), chapters 3 & 4, [www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/rothman/contents.htm](http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/rothman/contents.htm), accessed November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 70-71.

Burke's charge may have been Roosevelt's moral object and intention, but it also created agencies like the Forest Service (1905) and legislative tools like the Antiquities Act that gave Roosevelt unprecedented powers over humans and nature. His critics found his path to progress deeply troubling and contested the creation of legislation such as the Antiquities Act. Due to its broad scope and manipulative wording, the Antiquities Act imbued the president with unparalleled executive authority over the continent. Virtually anything in the public realm was fair game if it could fit the broad canopy of "objects of historic or scientific interest." Its only significant limitation was that monuments "shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected."<sup>14</sup> This proved to be a debatable constraint when two years after the Act's passage, Roosevelt declared all 800,000 acres of the Grand Canyon to be a national monument.

As historian Hal Rothman noted, "The Antiquities Act, in fact, is the most important piece of preservation legislation ever enacted by the United States government."<sup>15</sup> Or, as Monument historian Jeanne Rogers remarked, Roosevelt transformed the Act "into one of the greatest tools of land protection ever penned in the United States."<sup>16</sup> It provided "flexibility in the preservation process" and a legal place to quickly add lands to the protected public domain while working out the messy politics of preservation. The Antiquities Act was an "easy way to accelerate the preservation process."<sup>17</sup>

### **The Significance of the Tower**

Designating the Tower as the first national monument sent a signal about the breadth and potential of the Antiquities Act. The legislature did not set aside the Tower because of its association with Native cultures or archeological importance although these were justifiable reasons to remove it from potential private acquisition. Many believed that the Act dealt exclusively with culturally significant sites in the Southwest. Instead, Roosevelt designated the Tower for its contributions to geological science. According to the official proclamation, the Tower was "such an extraordinary example of the effect of erosion in the higher mountains as to be a natural wonder and an object of historic and great scientific interest."<sup>18</sup> Its science, not its sacred nature or anthropological significance, justified its declaration as the first national monument. The rationale laid the groundwork for how American tourists, white locals, and government agents such as NPS staff would interpret and manage the monument. This set a precedent for preserving much more than ancient dwellings or potshards. The nation deemed

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<sup>14</sup> "Antiquities Act of 1906," see National Park Service Archaeology Program, <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/anti1906.htm>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 70-72; Rothman, *America's National Monuments: The Politics of Preservation*, Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Rothman, *America's National Monuments*, Introduction.

<sup>18</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America: Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," September 24, 1906.

worthy of protection the monumental natural features representing the continent's deep history and the nation's greatness.

Under the General Land Office (GLO), the Tower existed in an administrative limbo state. It was neither a national park nor a national forest reserve. Until Congress established the national monument classification, as Hal Rothman noted, "Devils Tower was an anomaly." The Antiquities Act gave the Tower a home among protected public lands and set a precedent for the president's capacity to expansively execute the Act's ambiguous clauses concerning what and how much it could protect.<sup>19</sup>

Many monuments including the Tower remained unattended and unprotected for decades after their establishment. Under local control, they experienced depredations such as vandalism, looting, and illegal grazing. Yet the Tower retained its status as a monumental icon and recognition as an emblematic American landmark.<sup>20</sup>

Even before 1906, Americans who encountered Devils Tower understood its magnificence and exceptional nature. Beginning in 1892, news stories with titles such as "Beats the Eiffel Tower" emerged to describe "[o]ne of nature's strangest freaks, one of the greatest wonders of the world." Reporters recognized the Native American ties to the Tower, stating that "the Sioux Indians call it, the Matee Tepee, or the Bear's Lodge." They also remarked on the hidden nature of this "freak of nature" with "fertile valleys" nearby.<sup>21</sup> Many of these articles detailed the physical stats of the Tower and compared its height to the Eiffel Tower. "The tower is a gigantic column," one story reported, "a monster obelisk of lava, which rises to a height of 1,727 feet, almost twice the height of the Eiffel tower."<sup>22</sup>

The common geological origins and proximity of the Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes contributed to proposals designating a special land status for these remarkable landscape features. In 1892, with prompting from Wyoming Senator Francis E. Warren, the General Land Office (GLO) facilitated the establishment of 60.5 square miles surrounding the Tower and Little Missouri Buttes as a forest reserve under the Forest Reserve Act of 1891. The GLO soon sent someone into the field to assess its actions and subsequently reduced the size of the Devils Tower Forest Reserve to 18.75 square miles in June 1892. After consulting with the GLO about the best sized plot for his ambitious plan, Warren then attempted to turn this forest reserve into a national park called Devils Tower National Park. He introduced Senate bill S. 3364 in July 1892, but after it went to the Committee on Territories, it died.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Quote from Rothman, *America's National Monuments: The Politics of Preservation*, Chapter 4; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 47-48.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 74; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> *Alpena Weekly Argus*, Michigan, August 28, 1892.

<sup>22</sup> Barbour Country Index, Kansas, 12-28-1892. At least 13 other newspapers published similar articles, in West Virginia, Michigan, Montana, Texas, Kentucky, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

<sup>23</sup> Nearby forest lands still in the federal domain on July 1, 1907, became part of the Bear Lodge National Forest with 136, 784 acres. In 1908 this land was combined with part of the Black Hills National Forest to become the Sundance National Forest. Today the lands are included in the Black Hills National Forest. See Richard C. Davis, *National Forests of the United States*, Forest History Society, September 29, 2005.

Published articles following a monumentalist theme made their way across the nation into the following year.<sup>24</sup> These directly compared the Tower to human-made structures in countries long recognized for their high culture, advanced science, and accomplished engineering. A natural feature of equal stature, the Tower displayed America's deep geological heritage. Referring to the monolith as a "tower" or a "lodge" implied intentional creation. In 1893, the Tower rivaled "London's Big Tower" or "Wembley Tower" under construction in London and similar in structure to the Eiffel Tower but 28 meters higher. Not to be outdone by this international contest of monumental engineering, the U.S. press retorted, "[t]his huge structure, however, will be far less imposing than the Devil's tower of volcanic rock." Furthermore, the reporter noted, the Tower "is only one of the natural wonders of the great northwest, but it overtops by hundreds of feet the tallest structure man has built."<sup>25</sup> Examples followed: "Some of the world's greatest buildings are the church of Notre Dame in Paris, 217 feet high; St. Peter's, Rome, 433 feet; the Washington monument, 554 feet; the great pyramid of Egypt, 479 feet; Rouen cathedral, 492 feet; Strasburg cathedral, 467 feet; Invalides in Paris, 345 feet; Cologne cathedral, 521 feet; the pantheon in Paris, 279 feet; the tower of Madison Square garden, New York, 340 feet."<sup>26</sup>

More hyperbole fueled the international competition for exceptional monuments in 1894. J.W. Buel's *Glimpses of America: A Pictorial and Descriptive History of Our Country's Scenic Marvels* generated the rhetoric.<sup>27</sup> Newspaper articles with titles such as "The Devil's Tower: Most Remarkable Natural Formation in the World" quoted directly from Buel's text.<sup>28</sup> The Sioux regarded this "marvelous monument of the ages" called "Devil's Tower" "with superstitious dread" and named it "Mateo's Tepee." It was, according to Buel, "supposed to be the haunt of a were-animal, who possessed the power of becoming a bear or man at pleasure." This "stupendous obelisk of vitrified stone" was visible from approximately forty miles and "naturally excites" wonder in those who set their eyes upon "this amazing tower." Buel believed an inquiry into the origins of the Tower to be "irresistible." One unusual theory that he offered was that the Tower was once a volcanic island in a western sea. The "supposition supported by such evidences as the finding of sea-shells and bones of extinct sea-creatures all about over the ground, and deeply embedded in the earth throughout the section." Otherwise, Buel noted, it was simply of volcanic origin and gradually grew in situ like many of the fascinating features of Yellowstone National Park. One thing was for sure, though, Buel was confident that this natural monument would never be scaled. "The walls are almost vertical," he explained, "with a slightly vertical slope, to give it a more graceful contour, and though there are occasional rifts in the sides, no human being, however skilful [sic] as a spire-climber, can ever accomplish its ascent."

<sup>24</sup> Articles repeated the same content as 1892 stories, in Montana, South Dakota, Kansas and in the *Arizona Republican*, Arizona, January 18, 1893, p. 4; as well as the *Lake Charles Commercial*, Louisiana, February 4, 1893.

<sup>25</sup> *Belmont Chronicle*, Ohio, March 9, 1893.

<sup>26</sup> *Helena Independent*, Montana, January 14, 1893, p.7.

<sup>27</sup> J.W. Buel's *Glimpses of America: A Pictorial and Descriptive History of Our Country's Scenic Marvels* (Philadelphia, PA: Historical Publishing Company, 1894) <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/60051/60051-h/60051-h.htm>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>28</sup> *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, Kansas, August 23, 1894; *Herald*, California, June 22, 1894, p. 5.

Curiously, he published his account a year after local ranchers Willard Ripley and William Rogers had successfully ascended the Tower.<sup>29</sup>

Fascination with this feature did not fade as the United States entered the twentieth century with a Progressive reformer as president. A little over a decade after Buel's promotional piece of travel literature, Congress passed the Antiquities Act and protected the Tower as the centerpiece of America's first national monument and a scientific wonder.

### **Roosevelt's Proclamation**

On September 24, 1906, Roosevelt signed the proclamation designating the Tower as the first national monument. In his fifth term and an important member of the House Committee on Public Lands (he would later become chairman), Wyoming Representative Frank W. Mondell, played a key role in drawing the president's attention to the monolith. Mondell lived in Newcastle, Wyoming, situated along the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad sixty miles south of the Tower. An adept politician and advocate for his state, Mondell recognized the national and local significance of having this Wyoming landmark become the first national monument. The GLO weighed in on the dimensions of the reservation, setting aside 1,152.91 acres instead of the 18.75 square miles of the forest reserve upon which the Tower had sat since 1892. Following the guidelines of the Act, the GLO delimited the minimum area required to properly protect the Tower. The politicians decided to exclude the Little Missouri Buttes from the reservation – a decision that would incite controversy and repeated attempts to add them to the Monument. The remaining portion of the reserve opened to settlement two years later (1908).<sup>30</sup>

By keeping the Monument small and by choosing a site with the backing of a powerful congressman, Roosevelt assured that his decision would go uncontested; Mondell would fight for the Tower in Wyoming and in Congress. Furthermore, Mondell, as a member of the House Committee on Public Lands, could advocate for funding to support the Monument, a crucial factor since the Act had no provisions for congressional appropriations for national monuments.<sup>31</sup> These considerations enhanced the probability of success for the national monument model in general and for the Tower in particular.

The Tower and the Antiquities Act marked significant successes for Roosevelt and Mondell. But locally, the actions garnered little discussion, debate, or celebration of the designation.<sup>32</sup> Only by May of 1907 did news spread far and wide that Roosevelt had reserved “a popular geological formation in northeastern Wyoming, as a national monument and a federal reserve.” A news article stated, “[n]early 2,000 acres of land are also set aside with the tower.

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<sup>29</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Rogers and Ripley Stake Ladder,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/first-fifty-years-stake-ladder.htm>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 45-47; John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Spring 1984), 8-9; Ray H. Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History* (Omaha, NE: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Region Two, December, 1, 1955), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 48.

This reserve will be under the care of the general land office of that district, no entries will be allowed on it, and every effort will be made to protect the tower from injury”—an overestimate in size and level of federal protection. The article also described the top of the Tower as “large enough in area for a baseball team to play.” It recounted that two men had scaled the monolith at the “risk of their lives.” They were “Jack Rogers . . . an old cowpuncher,” and Arthur Jobe, “a clever young mining engineer for the Homestake Mining Company.” Included was the tale of a “Miss Kent” who had attempted to homestead on the land before the federal government subsequently denied her entry.<sup>33</sup>

This story provided the core for fabrications that spread about the Tower. These included a fantastical description of the first ascent and an example of a “white-baloney” imagined story concerning the Sioux and the Tower. A reporter stated that “Jack Rogers, an old cowboy” ascended the Tower by using “a number of lassos, which he threw over projecting points of rocks, afterward climbing the ropes.” The Tower had long been a landmark and could “be seen from the Burlington railroad, 80 miles away, when the sun is shining.” The reporter also incorrectly explained, “Devil’s Tower is the famous “Inyan Karya” of the Sioux Indians, where the evil spirits dwelt.” Along with the Sioux, “other northwest Indians” regarded the “mountain as haunted, and it was a place of terror to them.” Thus, the Native Americans “gave it a wide berth in their hunts.”<sup>34</sup>

Another widely distributed story illuminated how Roosevelt understood the Antiquities Act. He rejected the assumption that the Act’s sole purpose was to shield the Southwest’s archeological sites from vandals and pothunters. Titled, “Set Apart by Roosevelt: Natural and Prehistoric Wonders to be Protected,” the article indicated that the June 1906 act protected four tracts of land “for the preservation of American antiquities of historic and scientific interest.” Significantly, Roosevelt first chose to preserve two geological heritage and scientific sites that spoke to the history of the continent – Devils Tower and Petrified Forest. Accompanying the natural sites were two archeological sites once occupied by “prehistoric” peoples – El Morro, and Montezuma Castle.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, the Progressive president recognized the exceptionalism of the nation’s awesome natural phenomena along with its ancient civilizations.

### **The Challenges of Management**

As the first national monument, Devils Tower set the precedent for managing this new type of protected land. Using his considerable amount of executive and legislative power, Roosevelt had created a space based on nation-state monumentalism. Yet once they had created it, neither Roosevelt nor the GLO knew how to manage it and the other new properties. Hal

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<sup>33</sup> “Public Land,” *Bisbee Daily Review*, Arizona, May 10, 1907, p. 5. At least 14 other papers carried similar stories, including papers in Nebraska, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois and Washington D.C.

<sup>34</sup> *Daily Democrat*, Oklahoma, August 6, 1907; *Iowa State Bystander*, Iowa, July 12, 1907.; on “white baloney” stories purporting to convey Native American stories, see Lee H. Whittlesey, “Native Americans, the Earliest Interpreters: What is Known about their Legends and Stories of Yellowstone National Park and the Complexities of Interpreting them,” *George Wright Forum*, 19, no. 3, (2002): 40-51.

<sup>35</sup> *Coalville Times*, Utah, January 25, 1907. At least 5 other regional publications in Nevada, Utah and Idaho covered this story.



Rothman remarked, “the Act also contained the assumption that the public would obey its dictates simply because it was the law.”<sup>36</sup> The monuments in the classification (some later achieved national park status) remained largely unsupervised until the 1930s. The looters that the legislation intended to repel continued their depredations decades after many monuments entered “protected” status.<sup>37</sup>

The Tower followed the pattern of neglect and received minimal oversight until the early 1930s. Five years after the passage of the Act, the chief clerk of the GLO lamented that, “It is only a question of time when [the national monuments] will be secretly attacked and pillaged piecemeal, until there is nothing left to preserve.” These government bureaucrats and agents lacked the funds, personnel, and institutional planning required to be effective stewards. With the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916, not much changed for the monuments except for a few sites that epitomized the “scenic monumentalism” that the first NPS Director Stephen T. Mather and his capable assistant Horace Albright prized. “During the late 1910s and early 1920s,” according to historian Hal Rothman, “political realities and the view of the leaders of the NPS made national monuments into second-class areas.”<sup>38</sup> Indeed, monument status initially little changed the Tower management. GLO Special Agents effectively administered the site, managing it for some time even after the NPS was established.

After designation, Special Agent of the General Land Office, E. O. Fuller of Laramie, WY, (who worked out of the Sundance office) acted as the custodian of the Monument and stayed in that position from 1908-1919. The job entailed preventing vandalism, looting, and unauthorized occupation and settlement of the Monument lands. Early in Fuller’s tenure, a Wyoming news story alerted him that miscreants were vandalizing the Tower by removing pieces of it. The news soon spread to the national stage and to major cities such as New York and Washington D.C. The media coverage suggested that the Tower would be doomed if authorities failed to immediately protect it from plunderers. The GLO responded by ordering Fuller to put up signs warning visitors not to assault the Tower, likely to little effect.<sup>39</sup> Fuller’s appointment was not full time, nor did he live very close to the Monument. Nevertheless, he visited from time to time to ensure that locals and visitors adhered to the rules and did not destroy trees or damage the Tower and its adjacent natural and geologic features.<sup>40</sup>

With lax oversight and no planning at the Monument, boosters moved to exploit opportunities it presented. In 1911, Congressman Mondell advocated for the construction of an iron stairway that would take tourists from the Tower’s base to its top. He even introduced the bill H.R. 8792 to obtain appropriations for this stairway. It made it as far as the Committee on Appropriations before fizzling out. Mondell attempted to secure funds for this ambitious project two years later (H.R. 88), and his efforts met the same fate. The expected astronomical cost of

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<sup>36</sup> Rothman, *America’s National Monuments*, Introduction.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 67, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 74-76, “question of time” on 74, “monumentalism” on 75; Hal Rothman, *America’s National Monuments*, Chapter 6.

<sup>39</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 12-13; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 48-49.



such an infrastructure project likely caused the bill's demise. But perhaps legislators recalled the the international embarrassment of Niagara Falls' commercialization. For a time in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, Americans recognized the Falls as the nation's top natural wonder. However, unregulated private efforts to capitalize on Niagara degraded its character to the point that European writers used it as an example of American democracy's failure. These criticisms and the impossibility of redeeming this iconic monument to American greatness helped pave the way to the national park idea that would take root in the West. An iron stairway would have treated the environs of the Tower in ways similar to the questionable sorts of development that had grown around Niagara Falls.<sup>41</sup>

Mondell's tourist-boosting iron stairway proposal prefigured the more practical need for good roads. For early tourists, the railroad provided the primary means of getting to northeastern Wyoming. But by 1915, Mondell attempted to advance bill H.R. 165 in Congress for the construction of roads at the Tower. Three Crook County legislators who also desired to have a road built to the Tower supported Mondell's proposal to the Secretary of the Interior. The Crook County legislators from the thirteenth Wyoming Legislature wrote Mondell in February of 1915. "It has been the hope of interested citizens," they informed Mondell, "that the State of Wyoming would construct a road to the base of the Tower, but we find this cannot be done for the reason that the State has no right to construct such work upon the Government Reserve. And on the other hand, we find from the United States Custodian in charge of the property that at present there are no Federal funds available for purposes of road building." A county road was the nearest approach road to the Monument, and they hoped that it "could be connected with a government road across and upon the Government Reservation" so that visitors could safely reach the Tower. They estimated the cost of building such a road to be around seven hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>42</sup>

A few months later, Mondell contacted the County Surveyor to get precise details concerning the road's cost and route. The surveyor's response included a plat and a map showing the proposed approach to the Monument coming from the northeast corner and leading to the picnic grounds just west of the Tower. "The approximate cost," explained the surveyor, "of clearing and grubbing, grading and ditching, culverts, and one small bridge for a road bed 16 feet wide would be \$1500.00." At that time, he stated that the road was "almost impassable" and that a good road was needed to provide access to "one of the wonders of the world." It would also allow more tourists to visit the spring located "on the south of the plateau" that was "one of the best live springs in the County."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 13-14; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 53; Runte, *National Parks*, 5-9.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from three representatives from the Thirteenth Wyoming Legislature from Crook County to F.W. Mondell – February 19, 1915, re: road access to Monument, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as NARA).

<sup>43</sup> Letter from the county surveyor to Frank Mondell, July 24, 1915; Mondell to Assist. Sec. Interior, May 1, 1915, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

In 1917, Mondell again attempted to get roads built at the Tower (H.R. 60). But, like the tourist-centered stairway, for the time being, the roads project went nowhere.<sup>44</sup> Federal authorities ignored Mondell's proposals in large part because they lacked funding to support national monument infrastructure projects. Pressure for good roads would only mount, however; automobiles were just beginning to become a central part of American life. Whether a blessing that democratized these treasured places or a curse that corrupted these once wild places, automobiles and their requirement of good roads transformed the national parks.<sup>45</sup>

### **Cyclists and Good Roads**

Before the automobile, however, there was the bicycle. Cyclists advocated early and often for improved roads, and their movement carried all the way to Devils Tower. In the early 1870s, the bicycle became a practical mode of transportation and a recreational vehicle for touring around parts of the West. In places like Yellowstone National Park, bicycles grew so popular by the end of the nineteenth century that the park began to regulate their use. The same year that the Yellowstone artist Moran and photographer Jackson labored to enjoy the Tower's majesty 1894, regional bicyclists planned a trip that would terminate at the monolith. News out of Belle Fourche, South Dakota reported that local bicyclists were taking steps to form a Black Hills division of the League of American Wheelmen. The original organization was the Belle Fourche Bicycle Club, and it organized a summer tour "through the most magnificent sections of the Black Hills and western Wyoming." Every interested "wheelman in the Hills is urgently invited to join the party." But the president of the club warned that individuals must pay their way, and they would not tolerate "scorching." The majority would decide the pace, as the trip was "for pleasure and recreation and not for the purpose of making a time record."<sup>46</sup>

The bicycle craze that developed derived from the independence and freedom of mobility that this new mode of transportation offered. While the fervor liberated women's dress, it also provoked potent public demand to improve roads. Organizations such as the League of American Wheelmen and the Belle Fourche Bicycle Club gave power to the movement for better roads. The National League for Good Roads emerged in 1892, and Congress created the Office of Road Inquiry. Advances in automobile technology occurred rapidly during this period, and by 1910, cars were sufficiently well-constructed to take on the demands of distance touring. However, even with the pressure of the American Wheelmen, local authorities failed to improve roads enough to make them passable by these new motorized vehicles. Rainy weather made conditions even worse, turning roads like those around the Tower into hazardous gumbo.<sup>47</sup>

Advocates pushed for decent western roads just as boosters demanded admission of private automobiles into national parks. The official policy of the Department of the Interior had been to prohibit automobiles in the parks. By 1907, this policy began to erode as motoring clubs

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<sup>44</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*, volume 2 (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1997), 256.

<sup>46</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 259-260; quotes in *Hot Springs Weekly Star*, South Dakota, June 24, 1892.

<sup>47</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 263-265.

and interest groups such as the American Automobile Association began to pressure legislators and the Department of the Interior for better roads and access to the nation's wild reserves. That year, Hot Springs Reserve allowed automobiles, followed by Mount Rainer National Park in 1908, General Grant in 1910, Crater Lake in 1911, Glacier National Park in 1912, Yosemite and Sequoia in 1913, Mesa Verde in 1915, and Yellowstone in 1915. With the opening of the nation's first national park, Yellowstone, to private automobiles on August 1, 1915, a new era of tourism dawned.<sup>48</sup>

As soon as automobiles entered the parks, tourists demanded better roads on the public lands, and administrators struggled to tackle new problems and generate suitable restrictions. The traveling public required good roads to get to the parks, and now the parks had to create adequate infrastructure for these dangerous and demanding mechanical devices within their borders. Automobiles were a significant management and fiscal challenge. Partnerships to construct park roads emerged between the Office of Public Roads and the Forest Service and soon after with the Department of the Interior.<sup>49</sup>

A year after Yellowstone let in automobiles, on August 25, 1916, Congress established the National Park Service. The Organic Act of 1916 that created the Service clearly stated what became a tangled contradiction. The NPS's "purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."<sup>50</sup> The so-called dual mandate set up a conundrum, preservation versus development, and in the Service's early days, tourist enjoyment took political precedence. For the park system to grow and for the NPS to succeed, Director Stephen Mather and Assistant Director Horace Albright needed to increase visitation. The public had to care about these places, and for its survival, the NPS needed data to show that the public cared. Good roads to access the nation's scenic and historic places were the answer. Adequate infrastructure could attract advocates for the fledgling agency.

A month prior to the passage of the 1916 Act, at a July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic at the Tower, 153 visitors signed a petition they sent to Congressman Mondell. In it, they expressed their desire for Congress to appropriate \$20,000 for a tourist resort at the Tower that included an access road and bridge over the Belle Fourche River. They declared that "it is surely one of the most ideal places for a resort in the state [with] fine water and grounds." The river crossing had long plagued locals and tourists attempting to visit the Tower. Entering from the east required visitors to ford the Belle Fourche. During the spring and summer months, travelers faced unpredictable and

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<sup>48</sup> National Park Service, "*Historic Roads and the National Park System*," [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/roads/shs2.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/roads/shs2.htm), accessed November 2022; Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 267.

<sup>49</sup> Laura E. Soulli re, *Historic Roads and the National Park System: Special History Study* (Denver, CO: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, October 1995).

<sup>50</sup> National Park Service, "Organic Act of 1916," <https://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/management/organic-act-of-1916.htm>, accessed November 2022.

sudden rises in the river, trapping them until waters subsided.<sup>51</sup> The petitioners remarked that they had to walk a mile and a half on a trail that was too “washed out, filled with logs and rocks” to get close to the Tower.<sup>52</sup> Local requests for the full \$20,000 appropriation for a useable road that would allow bridge construction never materialized in the 1910s.

### **Building the Road**

Although the Monument became part of a larger geography of tourism – packaged as one of several attractions in South Dakota and Wyoming, in 1916, its available federal funds for roads were scant.<sup>53</sup> Recognizing that the \$200 allotment was insufficient, Assistant Superintendent Joe Cotter asked “the local county authorities” if they could “cooperate in this work by putting up part of the necessary funds.”<sup>54</sup> The county chipped in \$100 towards the Monument road project even though the NPS stipulated that the road lie entirely within the reservation bounds. Superintendent of National Parks Bob Marshall concluded, “I suggest that you pay particular attention to the washing of the road by the winter rains and the arrangement of culverts, and also that the grade be cut down as much as practicable in order that automobiles and other vehicles may make the trip without danger and inconvenience.”<sup>55</sup>

In 1917, the NPS assumed responsibility for the Monument, and Crook County partnered with the Service to build a three-mile-long road from the river up to the Tower. Until then, Congress had neglected the national monuments by making grossly inadequate appropriations for their protection and maintenance. Work construction began in June 1917 and took ten days and approximately \$400 to complete. The road had a grade of less than 10% and was “a much better road than the old. Automobiles can now be run the full length of the road up to the foot of the tower.” The surveyor Nils Nilson considered the river crossing to be “one of the very best” and identified a good location to build a bridge. The work itself consisted of mostly side-hill with only two small fills and five culverts needed. Nilson concluded that “[w]e hope to get a little more money next year we can then put the road in fine shape.”<sup>56</sup>

Horace Albright was pleased with the Monument’s road, but he wanted more details about its construction. Nilson responded with the following details: “The maximum grade of Devils Tower National Monument road is 8% and down to level. In surveying this road I did not

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<sup>51</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 55.

<sup>52</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 14-15; *Letter from Hulett citizens to Frank Mondell*, July 5, 16; Mondell to Secretary of the Interior, July 12, 1916) RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>53</sup> 1916 Federal Aid Road Act for “the construction of rural post roads,” see USDOT, “Contributions and Crossroads,” <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/candc/timeline.cfm>, accessed August 2023; Robert G. and Elizabeth L. Rosenberg, “Let Us Ramble: Exploring The Black and Yellow Trail in Wyoming,” December 27, 2020, <https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/let-us-ramble-exploring-black-and-yellow-trail-wyoming>, accessed August 2023; John Clayton, “Before the Numbers: Naming Wyoming’s Highways,” May 29, 2021 (<https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/numbers-naming-wyomings-highways>), accessed November 2022.

<sup>54</sup> *Assistant Superintendent Joe Cotter NPS to Mr. Blatt, Crook County Surveyor* (8-29-16) re: allotment of funds for the Monument; RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>55</sup> Reply from Blatt to Cotter (9-26-16); Reply from Robert B. Marshall, Superintendent of National Parks (10-6-16), RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>56</sup> Nils Nilson (County Surveyor) to Acting Superintendent Cotter, July 9, 1917, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

have time to run the level any more than to pick out the best route and the lowest grade. I intended to not exceed 7% but in two places I had to make it 8%. This road after leaving the level land is a side hill road and is graded to the width of 12 to 16 feet wide with drainage ditch at the upper side it has not been resurfaced since. The road should be resurfaced and graded up from one end to the other and the grade should be made wider, and the brush and some timber should be cleared away from the sides for at least 20 feet.” He concluded that another \$500 from the NPS paired with a like sum from the County would create a “model highway” from the State Highway to the Monument Road. Albright agreed and noted that he would put in for \$500 for FY 1918.<sup>57</sup>

The following year, crews improved the road and developed the spring at the base of the Tower to make it more functional for visitors. The plan was to “resurface and widen the grade, renew the ditches and remove brush and timber from the roadway for a distance of twenty feet” and to “repair and improve the road bed in any way needed.”<sup>58</sup> Mid-July haying “demanding the attention of the people” delayed the project, and Nilson noted that, “I may not be able to get the men just now but will go ahead as soon as possible.” High water from the Belle Fourche River kept the crew from making the crossing on Monument grounds.<sup>59</sup> The road was 12 to 16 foot wide and three miles in length and was at an eight percent grade heading towards the Tower. Once construction ended, in 1918, Nilson described the progress: “The road is now graded to the width of 20 feet or more and on the upper side ditches are provided to take the water, trees and brush has been cleaned away from the roadway for the same distance, and the grade is reduced to less than 9% in the steepest place, the average grade is about 5%. The surface of the road is hard and smooth, the center is about 12 inches higher than the sides, the material is a hard stiff clay which sheds water very well so the road dries quickly after a rain.” Monument visitors traveled this road on horses, horse-drawn buggies, and automobiles, but they still had to ford the Belle Fourche River to make their way to the Tower. “The people are very grateful to the Department for the work done on this road,” Nilson reported, “it is now very easy to go to the foot of the tower in auto or carriages, it is considered one of the best roads in the county.”<sup>60</sup>

Albright also asked Nilson to report on the status of the Monument in September 1918. He responded that the “timber is growing fine and so is the grass” and visitation to the Monument was consistent during the summer. It was especially active at the Tower on Sundays when visitors “come for long distance to enjoy the beautiful scenery near this wonderful freak of nature.” The road that the NPS and Crook County recently constructed at the Monument was “greatly appreciated as one now can go with cars and rigs to the foot of the Tower.” The “ideal camping grounds” at the Monument lay on the southwest side of the Tower where there was “a park containing several acres of level and shaded by pine trees.” Nilson also emphasized the importance of the spring. “There is a fine spring at the foot of the tower,” he stated, “a little west of the south side which is a great convenience to the visitors, the water is soft, clear and cold and

<sup>57</sup> Nils Nilson to Griffith, September 8, 1917, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>58</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 55; quote in Letter from Nils Nilson, June 11, 1918, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>59</sup> Board of County Commissioners to Horace Albright, July 29, 1918, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>60</sup> Nils Nilson to Director National Park Service, September 12, 1918, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

comes out in a fine stream of probably eight or ten gallons per minute.” It could be improved, he added, by “putting in a pipe 16 or 20 feet long and run the water out in a trough or box so stock could not tramp it up so much.” Nilson also saw that visitors “realize that nothing must be destroyed or injured in the Monument, as there is no evidence of young trees or anything else being molested.”<sup>61</sup>

The following year, in July 1919, Nilson reported back to Mather concerning the state of the road and Monument improvements. He emphasized the need for continuous road maintenance including cleaning out the side ditches and installing a few steel culverts (5 or 6) (wood if funds do not permit the use of steel) and ten to twelve inches and sixteen to twenty feet long. Nilson added that the grade could be “improved by cutting down banks and filling in over the culverts and other low places.” The existing road terminated at the “park or picnic ground.” The issue, however, was that the popular spring was “about 750 feet from here over very rocky ground, rocks ranging from about the size a man can handle with his hands to great boulders that must be blasted in order to move them.” Nilson believed that “it would be very desirable to extend this road to the spring so that the visitors could drive to the spring in dry seasons or years like this some people haul water from here and it is very inconvenient to have to carry big cans and barrels over this rocky ground.” About \$300 [\$4-500 according to Mondell] would be necessary to extend the road. Already, workers had installed a water trough at the Monument, and it “is very much appreciated by everybody.”<sup>62</sup>

### **The 1920s and Infrastructure Development**

Benign neglect characterized Monument management in the early 1920s. While national monuments represented a new type of federal landholding, administrators exerted a marginal level of federal control. Because they lived distant from the Monument and had no ranger force for support, custodians could not effectively protect the site. Signs marking the boundaries of the Monument did not appear until thirteen years after its establishment. Periodic work continued on the roads, but the Tower remained open to defacement with little done to regulate or accommodate visitors. In the summer of 1920, both the county and NPS maintained the road. The county “spent several hundred dollars to get a good road connected with the Devils Tower road. In order to get a right of way from the main road to the National Monument we had to put up two miles of fence at a cost of about \$350.00 and we have done lots of work on this connection, we put in 6 culverts in the monument using county planks which has not been charged to the Service.” To complete the road work, Nilson “had the county tractor to go over it

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<sup>61</sup> Nils Nilson to Horace Albright, Sept. 26, 1918; Mather to Mondell, October 2, 1918, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>62</sup> Nilson to Mather, July 21, 1919; Mondell to Mather, August 5, 1919; Cammerer to Mondell, August 6, 1919; Cammerer to Nilson, August 8, 1919, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

with grader and drag.” He later added that maintenance of the road was a constant challenge and that it needed additional 10 to 15 culverts.<sup>63</sup>

For approximately two years (1919-1921), the Monument managed without a custodian. Finally, in 1921, federal improvements began when a local took the helm for a salary of \$12.00 a year. A Crook County Commissioner from Hulett named John M. Thorn was to act as the foreman for maintenance and construction and as the office clerk handling the bureaucratic paperwork needed for managing payrolls and purchasing materials.<sup>64</sup> The precise nature of the presence of NPS personnel at the Monument escaped Gillette businessman Dick Stone’s watchful eye. He wrote to the NPS about a Wyoming newspaper reporting on the installation of a ranger at the Tower the previous winter. Stone wanted to know if a ranger could ensure that tourists cleaned up after themselves and that crews properly maintained the trails and road.<sup>65</sup>

Thorn assumed control after Nilson’s death. Previously, the NPS looked to Nilson to report on the Monument and manage infrastructure projects. In May 1922, Thorn wrote to NPS Acting Director Arno Cammerer to inform him that “Mr. Nilson was taken sick last fall and died.” As one of the County Commissioners, Thorn received the correspondence sent to Nilson from the NPS. He added, “I am well acquainted with the road at the Devils Tower will say that the road is very much needed as everybody has to carry water quite a distance for camping and other use. If you still want the road built I can . . . do all of the road building if satisfactory.”<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Cammerer continued to call upon Stone for updates since he had some trouble getting Thorn to respond to his letters. In one instance, Stone reported that the road was passable, but “indeed very rough due to the many washes caused by the rain running across the road. Some of these washes are deep enough to break car springs.”<sup>67</sup>

In 1922, the agency financed the construction of a log shelter to provide refuge for Monument visitors in bad weather. Two years earlier, Nilson expressed the need for such a structure to Cammerer. He thought “it would be very good plan to build a log cabin near the foot of the tower on what is called the picnic grounds.” Nilson explained that many visitors stay overnight and “some times storms come up, and it would be very convenient and nice to have some shelter at such times.”<sup>68</sup> The structure was a three-walled cabin constructed of logs and with a roof composed of wood shingles. This shelter cabin (DT-2, also identified as 48CK1499) sat on the west side of the Tower formation at the junction of the parking area and the beginning

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<sup>63</sup> Historic Photographs of the Tower can be found in RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 57; Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates*, 74; quotes from Nilson to Mather, June 30, 1920; Nilson to Cammerer, July 17, 1920, and Nilson to Cammerer, July 31, 1920, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>64</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 57; A. Demaray to Mrs. Spring of Ft. Collins, CO, January 15, 1931, RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

<sup>65</sup> Dick Stone to “Commissioner of Parks”, May 4, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>66</sup> John M. Thorn to Cammerer, May 9, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>67</sup> Stone to Director of NPS, June 30, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

<sup>68</sup> Nilson to Cammerer, July 31, 1920, RG 79 Box 585 File 630, NARA.

of the trail leading to the tower. Built in the rustic style and referred to as a “refuge cabin, it was moved to the utility area in 1933 and burned in 1954.<sup>69</sup>

Periodically, the “refuge cabin” sheltered trespassing stock that regularly grazed the Monument grounds. Since the late nineteenth century, ranches surrounded the Tower, and cattle ambled their way onto the lands protected under the 1906 Antiquities Act. Prior to the passage of the Antiquities Act, ranchers asked the government if the Devils Tower (Forest) Reserve was available to “be leased for grazing purposes and of course fencing it.”<sup>70</sup> When the NPS began to manage the Monument, consistent illegal grazing had affected the reserve’s vegetation which ran counter to the conservation, preservation, and tourism objectives of the new agency.<sup>71</sup> By 1922, neighboring ranchers continued to request “a grazing permit to run cattle.”<sup>72</sup> The NPS’s response was pleasant but unfavorable. Acting Director Cammerer stated that he could consult with the custodian but that “we are not favorably inclined at this writing to consider grazing in an area where the people are coming in increasing numbers, as we understand is the case with the Devils Tower National Monument, which is one of the greatest scenic attractions of the country.”<sup>73</sup> Custodian Thorn’s response was firm. Cattle would make the Monument a haven for flies around the spring and a “very filthy place to camp.” Thorn concluded that, “there should not be any permit for stock allowed at all.” However, he added, “the only way to keep stock off entirely would be to have a ranger there or fence.”<sup>74</sup> Cammerer was not optimistic about fencing the entire area but offered the possibility of enclosing the spring.<sup>75</sup> By 1924, complaints ensued from local merchants that “[t]here is not a bunch of grass a flower or bush that escapes the ravages of range stock.” Furthermore, “even the building erected by the Govt. is nothing but a shed for cattle in summer, therefore cannot be used by tourists to camp in.”<sup>76</sup> This complaint, coming from a local, concerned Cammerer, and he reached out to Thorn and Dick Stone for solutions.<sup>77</sup>

Fencing the Monument was an act overtly exerting federal control. Fences marked a boundary between public and private and between federal and local control. They helped define a park—protected federal land-- by including the scenic or historic features and excluding privately-owned domestic animals. Thorn clearly understood the need, especially as “the spring

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<sup>69</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 58. Referenced as “refuge cabin” in 1923, little evidence remains. Plans for DT-2 are in park files, according to author? “Old Headquarters Area Historic District” National Register of Historic Places Nomination (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, April 2000), 7. A 1931 image of a “log cabin as Ranger Station” might be the refuge cabin, photos in RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

<sup>70</sup> Dorrington to D.H. Mercer, January 8, 1902, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>71</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 58.

<sup>72</sup> J.S. Lebo to Arno Cammerer, May 20, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>73</sup> Arno Cammerer to J.S. Lebo, May 27, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA; Arno Cammerer to John M. Thorn, May 27, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>74</sup> John Thorn to Arno Cammerer, June 12, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>75</sup> Cammerer to Thorn, June 17, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>76</sup> John Davis to Arno Cammerer, March 30, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>77</sup> Cammerer to Thorn, April 5, 1924, Cammerer to Stone, April 5, 1925, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.



at the camp grounds has always been the main watering place for stock.”<sup>78</sup> The refuge cabin attracted trespassing stock; horses and cattle used the shelter cabin for shade and “as nobody cleans up after them the building is unfit for tourists or campers to use.” Stone suggested placing bars across the front to keep livestock out. Cattle also affected people’s access to this spring. The tank regularly overflowed, keeping the ground continually wet. It was “impossible to get around the spring without getting the shoes badly soiled from the cattle litter.” Stone did not believe the vegetation suffered much from the low numbers of cattle. He concluded that the complaining merchant must be a newcomer because the oldtimers want “all this country left open for the range cattle running at large.”<sup>79</sup> When Cammerer questioned the merchant (Davis) about who owned the errant cattle, he backed down from his allegation. He did “not want to name anyone as they are big outfits and it would make enemies for me. They have land adjoining the Reserve and just turn them loose.”<sup>80</sup>

Cammerer’s response to Davis revealed the influence of local politics on early Monument management and infrastructure decision making. When Cammerer responded to Davis’s interest in the future bridge across the Belle Fourche, he explained, “I would have some hesitancy in recommending that the bridge be put in unless there was some assurance that unsatisfactory conditions on the reservation, as far as cattle are concerned, would be bettered; in fact, eliminated.” In a letter to Thorn, Cammerer stated that “we don’t want to invite people to a place where there might be danger from trespassing cattle, or where the conveniences such as shelter and fresh water springs available for their use are littered and mused up by trespassing cattle, due to lack of cooperation of the cattlemen.”<sup>81</sup>

The influence of rancher interests hampered efforts to control access to the Monument. If Thorn could not at least bar the shelter cabin and fence the spring without “opposition from the surrounding cattlemen we might as well give up advertising the Devils Tower as a scenic accent of interest, nor would there be any need of putting in a bridge,” asserted Cammerer.<sup>82</sup> Stone noted that the largest outfit near the Tower was the Campstool Ranch run by the Driskill Brothers. He never saw more than fifteen head at a time on the Monument, he stated, and they generally stayed hidden in the underbrush and were “perfectly harmless.” Furthermore, water was not a problem since visitors can readily “get plenty of clean water at the spring because the water runs out of a pipe into the trough or small tank.” Stone hypothesized that Davis (an old cow puncher and recent homesteader) held a “grudge against some of those running cattle near his place” and was trying to force them out of the Tower area. As for Thorn, Stone considered him an old-timer who likely sided with the cattle interests.<sup>83</sup> For much of the Monument’s early history to the 1950s, cattle remained a tricky issue for the staff to navigate when they relied on the good will of neighbors.

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<sup>78</sup> Thorn to Cammerer, April 11, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>79</sup> Stone to Cammerer, April 12, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>80</sup> John Davis to Cammerer, May 8, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>81</sup> Cammerer to Thorn, May 19, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>82</sup> Cammerer to Stone, May 19, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

<sup>83</sup> Stone to Cammerer, May 24, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 901-1, NARA.

Custodian Thorn faced an administrative balancing act of bringing the new protected area under federal control while remaining sensitive to the locals' sense of Tower ownership. He labored to clean the Tower's spring, improve the Monument roads, and constrain visitor use of the area by regulating camping. The Tower had long been a place for locals to picnic and camp, and they did so wherever it suited their fancy. Thorn designated a specific part of the Monument grounds for camping. He sought to protect certain viewsheds, to minimize damage from camping, and to reduce fire danger.<sup>84</sup>

The Tower was a favorite spot for picnickers and campers, and despite the bare-bones nature of the Monument infrastructure, visitation continued to rise. During the 1920s, the numbers approximately doubled from 7,000 to 14,720.<sup>85</sup> Just outside of the Monument's east entrance sat a general store run by George Grenier and behind it was a log dance hall--a favorite place to for the community to gather, sing, and dance. On Monument grounds, locals organized a yearly picnic on the Fourth of July (Old Settlers' Picnic beginnings) when baseball games, picnics, rodeos, horse races and dances took place. They held rodeos in a meadow of the Belle Fourche River valley where a makeshift fence of wagons, buckboards, trucks, and cars enclosed the events.<sup>86</sup>

Some community members saw commercial opportunity in the federal space. A torrent of requests sought NPS permits for concessions at the Monument. Enterprising concessioners offered to build restaurants, gas stations, hotels, and recreational facilities at the Tower. Yet, the NPS consistently declined these requests, believing that any permanent developments of this type should exist outside the monument's boundaries.<sup>87</sup>

During the 1920s, the Gillette businessman, Tower enthusiast, historian, ethnographer, and photographer Dick Stone regularly corresponded with NPS managers and administrators. Stone also reported on the work of White Eagle, "an Indian writer from this locality," who had been "been traveling in the South for the last two years exhibiting motion pictures advertising the Custer Battlefield Hiway [sic]. One of the reels showed his trip on horseback from Hardin, Mont. to New York and also views of the Devil's Tower."<sup>88</sup> Tales and performances of the romanticized old West were pervasive in this early part of the Monument's history. Entrepreneurs and publicists profited from Native American legends and stylized acts reminiscent of Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

In letters from 1922, Stone revealed the Monument's landscape and infrastructure needs. Two new toilets filled "an absolute need." Informative signs explained the Tower restrictions. The spring, however, was in poor shape by July. "This spring is on the south side of the Tower and gushes out from beneath a low rock on the side of a small hill. The water is caught in a small

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<sup>84</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 58.

<sup>85</sup> George Grenier, who ran a general store outside of the east entrance of the Monument grounds, kept a visitor register beginning in 1925.

<sup>86</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 58-59.

<sup>87</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Dick Stone to Director NPS, April 1, 1924, RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

basin about five feet in diameter, from this basin the water is piped to wooden tank as shown in the enclosed picture. A few logs have been placed over the catch basin, which may be seen in the picture back of the tank almost in the dark shadow, and all the work necessary would be to clean out this basin.” Like many Tower visitors, Stone enjoyed the strong flowing spring, and he “heard many interesting discussions as to the source of supply of the water. While I am unable to say as to the quality of the water I know it is very cold, soft and very agreeable.” Overall, to Stone, the Monument was a wonder. “To those lovers of Nature, whom the Tower finds true through intimate acquaintance,” Stone waxed lyrical, “she gives a warm friendship. True, loyal and strong in her strength she ever welcomes these few.” The Monument should encompass the Missouri Buttes, he opined, since “there is a vast store of interesting study here for the geologist. The adjacent hills are thickly strewn with cephalopod fossil. Wild flowers grow in great profusion, of all colors and shades.”<sup>89</sup> Stone was a true advocate for the Tower.

At the same time, Stone continued to note the dismal roads leading to this wonder. When speaking to tourists, he was happy to hear that many enjoyed their visits. Nevertheless, he stated, “I am afraid I had not better repeat the remarks about the roads.” In Crook County, Stone added, they were some of the very poorest roads. In a July letter, he concluded that the necessity of fording the river regularly made it impossible to get to the Tower. The Monument required a bridge. “Perhaps the Government,” he hoped, “will build a bridge at this point. Floor leader Mondell wrote me that he hoped to be instrumental in getting an appropriation made for this purpose. If this could be accomplished perhaps the Wyoming Highway Dept. would cooperate by taking over the road between the reserve and the present state road.” In August, he reported that travel to the Monument was “very heavy this summer in spite of the fact that very little is known about it.” He saw twenty-one cars that “were unable to cross the river on account of high water, several cars flooded on trying to get through and had to be pulled out.” NPS Acting Director Cammerer was sympathetic to the plight of these tourists, and he sent Stone’s photographs of the Tower and river to Chief Civil Engineer George E. Goodwin to assess the best location for a bridge.<sup>90</sup>

The rising popularity of the Monument and the persistent problem of crossing the Belle Fourche River drew increasing attention from local legislators. Wyoming Senators Warren and Kendrick expressed their support for a bridge. In part, locals tired of the inconvenience of dealing with the unpredictable Belle Fourche swayed the legislators. For example, in 1923, a petition with seven pages of signatures from Wyoming and South Dakota residents asked the Secretary of the Interior for assistance in building a bridge. In December 1923, the Custer Battlefield Hiway Association sent resolutions from residents and tourist to NPS Director Stephen Mather appealing for a bridge. Even former Governor of Wyoming Robert Carey, the

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<sup>89</sup> Dick Stone to Director NPS, July 24, 1922, see also letter dated July 10, 1922; RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

<sup>90</sup> Dick Stone to Director NPS, August 22, 1922; Arno Cammerer to George E. Goodwin, August 30, 1922, RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

Association noted, had a “very expensive accident with a new Buick car” when he tried to ford the river. But even with the senatorial support, this petition failed.<sup>91</sup>

In 1924, Dick Stone commented that poor road conditions had beleaguered his regular trips to the Tower the previous year. He noted that “no repair work was being done,” and the road “was in poor condition.” He hoped that he “will live long enough to see the bridge built across the river and the road within the boundaries graveled” and saw ample material to do the job for a “minimum of expense.” “Much of the road leading to the Tower is gumbo and in rainy weather it is indeed hard to travel. Once the writer slipped off the road when it was wet and spent two hours in getting the car back in the road, gave up the trip and came back.” Stone also considered roads outside of the Monument and hoped the Bureau of Public Roads might better the approaches.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, in 1928, the federal government allocated funding to secure the bridge infrastructure project at the Tower. For too long, the unpredictable river had constricted travel, stranding drivers for hours on the opposite bank or stalling vehicles as they attempted to cross the stream too rapidly. Sudden rainstorms turned roads to sticky gumbo, miring cars in the slick mud. Some locals took advantage of this regular situation and charged a fee for towing cars from the mud and water with a team of horses.<sup>93</sup>

In 1928, the Bureau of Public Roads designed and constructed the bridge across the Belle Fourche River, a major improvement to support federal goals. The NPS had recognized that Monument must be accessible to automobile tourists. The structure was a Parker Steel Truss bridge with a polygonal top chord for strength. The bridge was 150 feet long with 27 and 25 feet of access at either end (150-foot wooden east approach).<sup>94</sup> The structure liberated visitors from the river’s vagaries, opening the Monument to a burgeoning automotive tourist landscape.

### **Making the Monument a Destination**

During the 1920s and the early 1930s, the National Park Service continued to develop its administrative capabilities and to grow a national audience and constituency for national parks and monuments through the encouragement of automobile tourism. The development of infrastructure at Devils Tower National Monument formed a solid basis for welcoming visitors into the following decades. To maintain the bridge across the Belle Fourche River, a major effort ensued to engineer and control the river using triangular concrete structures. The Great Depression and a major drought cycle presented challenges for administering the monument. A competent, energetic, and long-serving superintendent arrived at DETO in the person of Newell Joyner who organized improvements for the access road, water systems, and more. He also laid the groundwork for interpretation at the monument by starting collections for a museum. As was

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<sup>91</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 15; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 61; Custer Battlefield Hiway [sic] Association, Sheridan, WY, to Stephen Mather, Dec. 22, 1923, RG 79, Box 585, Folder 650-04 (1), NARA.

<sup>92</sup> Dick Stone to Director, National Park Service, April 1, 1924; RG 79 Box 585 File 503, NARA.

<sup>93</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 61.

<sup>94</sup> Kathy McKoy, “Entrance Road,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2000), Section 8, p. 3.

the situation at some other parks, proposals to enlarge the Monument were not successful during this period, limiting the extent of federal influence. The arrival of New Deal funding for Devils Tower National Monument in the early 1930s provided a critical boost for the enhancement of the monument's functionality in welcoming visitors, and the NPS created plans used by the CCC shortly thereafter.

### **Automobility and Devils Tower Infrastructure**

The nation's increasing automobility realigned management goals in the national parks including in America's "second-class sites" like Pipe Spring, Carlsbad Cave, and Devils Tower National Monuments.<sup>95</sup> As the agency established itself after 1916, Americans were embracing the freedoms provided by car ownership. Middle-class Americans hit the road, seeking authentic experiences in nature through their windshields. Committed to preserving national parks and monuments, the Park Service realized that it needed to accommodate the growing auto tourism; it would develop for "public enjoyment" and so protect resources. Agency management and design shifted to incorporate infrastructure for motor tourists.

Although construction of Devils Tower's entrance road after 1917 supported visitors in cars, the erection of its bridge in 1928 overtly recognized the reality of auto touring. Nature, however, continued to thwart infrastructure for vehicles. Tourists and Monument managers soon realized that the bridge's placement miscalculated the river's natural tendencies. Within a year, high water washed out its east approach. Re-routing the road was not a viable option, so NPS managers and engineers sought a cost-effective way to save the newly constructed bridge.<sup>96</sup> They chose to tame the wild Belle Fourche River. In line with NPS policies to manage nature for the benefit of tourists and with the optimistic perspective of engineers in the American West, they believed they could control nature by regulating the region's disordered rivers.

### **The Belle Fourche River and the Tetrahedrons**

The damaging flood had resulted from an upstream ice blockage that caused the river to overflow its banks and change its channel. The National Park Service soon constructed a new east approach 85 feet in length, supporting it with timber trusses and adding large rocks to hinder erosion. As a preventative measure, Devils Tower National Monument Custodian John Thorn labored during the spring thaw as the "dynamite man" to break up the river ice before it could damage or destroy the bridge.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Hal Rothman, "Second-Class Sites: National Monuments and the Growth of the National Park System," *Environmental Review* 10, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 44-56; David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

<sup>96</sup> Lysa Wegman-French and Ben Brower "Historic Resource Survey: Belle Fourche River Tetrahedrons," National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Support Office, September 29, 1995.

<sup>97</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 11; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 61; "Effective River Control by Concrete Tetrahedrons," *Engineering News Record* 115 (October 3, 1935): 470-471; Walter G. Attwell, "Final Construction Report on Protection of Devils Tower Bridge, and Retention Work on Belle Fourche River" Account No. 501, Season 1930, RG 79 Box 585 Folder 650-04, NARA; Report of the Director of the National Park Service, "River channel change and retention, Devils Tower Monument," 1931, 124.

Engineers assessed the stream's nature to develop strategies for preventing bridge damage. For forty miles upstream, the Belle Fourche River meandered in a series of S bends and large, relatively shallow pools that could measure a hundred feet wide and a quarter mile long. These regularly froze to the bottom during weeks of 30° below zero weather. Problems arose when a warm rain followed February or March snow falls. The forty miles of river that sat dormant during the winter now rose overnight, sending 15 to 20 feet high ice and rock flows downstream at high speeds and tremendous force. During the 1929 flood, the last bend before the bridge cut in the direction of the highway embankment. That year, the spring thaw carried a 25-ton rock to the bridge.<sup>98</sup> By analyzing the river's flow and behavior during this high-water event, engineers determined that a cutoff across the final bend would end the erosion threatening the bridge.<sup>99</sup>

They planned to protect the bridge and its approaches by digging a new channel to divert the river and ensure its banks would not erode by using river control features known as tetrahedrons. The first use of the triangular tetrahedron type was on the Colorado River in the Palo Verde Valley in 1924. Its second in 1927 on the Santa Clara River (California Highway Commission) served as the inspiration for Devils Tower National Monument. Utilized in the first half of the century, tetrahedrons typically protected vulnerable banks from unrestrained river currents by diverting flows and by dissipating the energy of the river. A row of tetrahedrons in the river current ran parallel with the riverbank that managers desired to protect.<sup>100</sup>

As part of the control scheme, crews dug a new 8-foot wide and 1,800-foot-long river channel at a cost of 23.7 cents per cubic yard. Brush mats and felled trees protected parts of the old riverbank from erosion. The new channel was "excavated on a tangent from the center of the bridge to the second bend in the river below." Forty horses working in teams of four removed 11,400 cubic yards of sandy material later used to construct a dike along the east side of the new channel.<sup>101</sup>

With few construction companies in the remote area, the NPS itself undertook the project with local day labor and good teams of stock to help with material hauling and excavation. Given the "dire conditions of this farming community" during the early days of the Great Depression, the community welcomed the employment. At one point, twenty teams worked on the job. The final construction report noted, "There was no work of any kind within several hundred miles of this project. The farmers were well equipped with good stock and tools; so with plenty of efficient stock and labor available, forty excellent horses and fifteen men were employed under the foremanship of Custodian John M. Thorn."<sup>102</sup> Taking advantage of dry weather, four-horse plow teams and team scrapers carved out the channel.

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<sup>98</sup> "Effective River Control," 470-471.

<sup>99</sup> "Effective River Control by Concrete Tetrahedrons," 470-471.

<sup>100</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 11; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 61; "Effective River Control," 470-471; NPS correspondence concerning this article is found in RG 79 Box 2154 Folder 501-02, NARA; Wegman-French and Brower, "Historic Resource Survey."

<sup>101</sup> Attwell, "Final Construction Report." Curiously, another estimate suggested \$0.15 per cubic yard.

<sup>102</sup> Attwell, "Final Construction Report."

As the second part of the river control scheme, workers placed concrete tetrahedrons along the Belle Fourche River.<sup>103</sup> Using wood forms, a crew created the tetrahedrons one after the other on site. At Devils Tower, these stout structures measured over 8 feet high and 9 feet wide with their 12-inch square legs resembling large triangles or open pyramids. Connected by 1-inch steel cables, the structures sat so their edges ended up about 6 feet apart. In 1930, 39 tetrahedrons lined the Belle Fourche's east bank just south of where the entrance road crossed the river. Aside from weathering and erosive forces, the tetrahedrons have not been altered.<sup>104</sup>

The plan included a revetment (a facing protecting an embankment). According to the *Engineering News Record*, “the revetment would be heavy enough to turn the spring ice jam, with its scouring effect, into the new channel and would simultaneously affect the deposit of sand and silt in the slack water behind the barrier, so that diversion would be continued and finally effected within a few years period.”<sup>105</sup> To help achieve the goals of diverting the low-water flow, expedite desired erosion, widening and deepening of the new channel, the upstream face of the tetrahedrons featured hog-wire fencing up to the middle cable. Four feet of rose brush matted along the fencing, and abutting the brush was a four-foot-tall earth dike. Sandbags topped the earthen dikes protected by riprap to retard erosion. By the third season, the diversion was complete and even by the first year the tetrahedrons “succeeded in accomplishing...more than was expected.” The hog-wire fencing worked as planned and collected brush, leaves, and river debris that created a dam in front of the tetrahedrons. Four feet of silt developed over the entire old channel, and ice worked to erode the new channel to a satisfactory width. The one deviation from the plan was a happy accident. Rocks became embedded within the ice forming upstream, which the thaw carried downriver to the revetment work. The ice jam that resulted along the tetrahedrons simply deposited more material for the row of tetrahedrons. Or, as a contemporary observer noted, “nature reinforced the skeleton concrete barrier with a rock bar on the upstream side.”<sup>106</sup>

In 1933, recently arrived Custodian Newell Joyner decided the tetrahedron line needed extending to ensure that a third channel would not develop. He feared that “the river is now naturally showing a tendency to meander.” In ten years, he estimated, it would “give rise to a third channel which will again endanger the bridge approach.” He let NPS Chief Engineer Frank A. Kittredge know about this issue. Completed in June 1933, the “Additional River Bank Protection” plans called for the construction of 32 more tetrahedrons that went in in October.<sup>107</sup>

The tetrahedrons played a crucial part in managing the Belle Fourche. The new human-made channel eliminated meandering and altered the river's angle to a more acute descent. Instead of twisting and turning and gradually losing elevation, the new channel was one-half to

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<sup>103</sup> Photographs of tetrahedron construction can be found in Attwell, “Final Construction Report,” 1930.

<sup>104</sup> Wegman-French and Brower, “Historic Resource Survey.”

<sup>105</sup> “Effective River Control by Concrete Tetrahedrons,” 470-471.

<sup>106</sup> “Effective River Control by Concrete Tetrahedrons,” 470-471.

<sup>107</sup> Quotes from Monthly Superintendent Reports, March 1933, (see also May 1933), DETO 1622, copy in DETO Archive; Wegman-French and Brower, “Historic Resource Survey”; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 90; See also Custodian's Report, December 1934, DETO 1623, copy in DETO Archive.

one-third the length and flowed faster than its natural antecedent. Without the longer ambling route, the new linear channel increased the stream's velocity and its erosive potential. Tetrahedrons were a technofix to the problem caused by rechanneling the river; they diminished the water's amplified erosive force to protect the new channel's banks.<sup>108</sup>

The NPS considered the tetrahedrons an engineering success. A 1935 *Engineering News Record* referencing NPS Chief Engineer Frank A. Kittredge and Associate Engineer W. G. Atwell concluded that five years after the structures' placement, the river was responding as they had hoped. The tetrahedrons were "successful in turning the river into a new channel and stopping threatened erosion of the entrance highway." They resisted ice jams and diverted all high water, excepting major flood flow, to the new channel. As anticipated, the structures enlarged the channel from the original 8 ft dug out in 1930 to the 85 ft channel that existed in 1935. The old channel backfilled to a height of 6 ft and became overgrown with "willows, cottonwoods and brush."<sup>109</sup>

After the Keyhole Dam's construction in 1952 that eliminated flooding, the tetrahedrons lost most of their functional purpose at the Monument.<sup>110</sup> An interpretive sign on the entrance road's west side explains the origins of the large concrete triangles that visitors see in the bottoms along the Belle Fourche River.<sup>111</sup>

In a 1995 historic resource survey assessment of the tetrahedrons, the authors noted that they "maintain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association." However, they did not deem the tetrahedrons eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, arguing that "these tetrahedrons were not important elements in providing access, nor in altering the natural landscape" nor unique or special in design. They reflected a common erosion solution with the same materials and design as other similar projects across the nation.<sup>112</sup>

Yet, the tetrahedrons illuminate an administrative response to the transportation needs of an automobiling public and to the confidence that engineers could control nature. Though the dual mandate included conservation, in reality, the Park Service sided heavily with the imperative to provide for the "benefit and enjoyment of the people." Automobile access to the magnificent Tower, and to all such natural parks, was crucial for the fledgling government agency to garner public support. Taxpayers needed to see the wonders of America and fall in love with the nation's majestic and historical landscapes.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Wegman-French and Brower, "Historic Resource Survey."

<sup>109</sup> "Effective River Control by Concrete Tetrahedrons," 470-471.

<sup>110</sup> Wegman-French and Brower, "Historic Resource Survey."

<sup>111</sup> Toni Rae Linenberger, "The Keyhole Unit," (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1996), <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=468>, accessed August 2023.

<sup>112</sup> Wegman-French and Brower, "Historic Resource Survey."

<sup>113</sup> Preservation was more of an emphasis later with the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act. However, strains of preservationist sentiment permeated the minds of early National Park advocates and became increasingly prominent among rising interest groups in the 1930s such as the Wilderness Society that was founded in 1935. See Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in The National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Wegman-French and Brower, "Historic Resource Survey."



### The Custodian's Residence

While engineers grappled with the Belle Fourche River, park administrators moved to assert more authority over the Monument. An important step was placing a full-time custodian in the park itself to assure greater protection and monitoring. For that, the agency needed housing. After John Thorn, (from 1921 to 1931) the first full-time custodian, George C. Crowe, briefly held the position (1931-1932). A permanent residence for him that would also serve as a checking station became the objective of NPS Junior Landscape Architect Howard Baker and an engineer from Wind Cave National Park. These men identified suitable materials such as logs at the Tower and determined the best site for the custodian's residence to be "across from the parking lot from the shelter cabin at the base of the Tower."<sup>114</sup>

In summer 1931, workers modified the shelter cabin with a flagstone porch for temporary use as an office. However, the structure's green timber soon caused large cracks (some as large as two inches) between the logs that carpenters filled with split log chinking.<sup>115</sup>

In late May 1931, NPS Landscape Architect Howard Baker inspected the Monument to address the "most important object" – the siting of the Custodian's residence (to be built using the 1931 appropriation). He considered two location possibilities. The first lay to the south of the Monument and had the advantage of being close to "a spring on the side of the base of the Monument." However, Baker eliminated this option because the residence also had to serve as a checking station. Monument roads remained incomplete, and "[t]he road location being an unsettled factor."<sup>116</sup>

The site that Baker chose lay on a "little bench" that would also "make a fine location for a checking station." Baker recognized that the custodian's residence was only a temporary solution to the lack of on-site housing for Monument personnel. He noted that, "this so-called Custodian's residence is undoubtedly too small to serve many years as such," and therefore it was prudent to situate the structure to enable it to serve another function (as a checking station) in the future. In fact, as Baker remarked, the site "seems the most logical place for a checking station, as one has just entered the Monument."<sup>117</sup> Ultimately, the building known as the "Custodian's residence" arose near the base of the Tower formation.

This reconnaissance trip also assessed the availability of logs for the structure. Baker noted "some suitable logs for use in the building in the forest on the Monument" and on nearby private lands. He remarked that two pit toilets had been moved and the parking space grounds at the end of the road "were in a very presentable condition."<sup>118</sup>

Work proceeded during the fall, and by October 1931, the custodian's residence was fully complete. Even before Washington had approved the contract, the "contractor had already started

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<sup>114</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 12; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 63-64.

<sup>115</sup> Newell Joyner, Devils Tower National Monument Custodian's Report, July 28, 1931; Original DETO records including Custodian's and Superintendent's Reports are held at Mount Rushmore National Monument, MORU Multiple Park Repository, (hereafter cited as MORU MPR).

<sup>116</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, May 27, 1931, DETO 1620, MORU MPR. This file (Catalog #1620) contains excellent photographs of the Custodian's Residence under construction, and the completed building.

<sup>117</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, May 27, 1931.

<sup>118</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, May 27, 1931.

work on the foundation in a minor form, at his own risk.” Built by Mr. Cummings of Deadwood, the log structure exhibited the NPS Rustic architectural style. Set on a native-stone foundation, it featured a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and a bedroom. Though naturalistic in appearance, the house anticipated modern technologies. It contained plumbing to connect to a planned water system and roughed-in electrical wiring for a generator to provide energy later to the dwelling.<sup>119</sup>

### **The Entrance Road**

For the custodians gradually asserting more federal presence in the monument, the condition of its roads was a continual headache. From 1927 to 1933, they gave serious thought to extending the existing entrance road into a driving loop around the Tower.<sup>120</sup> Although plans laid out possibilities for this, it failed to materialize on the ground.

The entrance road, Baker concluded in 1931, would have to remain in its original configuration. “I doubt the advisability,” the landscape architect explained, “of doing much more than realigning and improving the present location.” The work required (and cost) to clear and excavate the new road did not justify easing the slight excessive gradient of the existing road.<sup>121</sup>

Overall, Baker found the Monument’s approach roads unsatisfactory. Baker observed, “In regard to the 12-mile approach to the national monument from U.S. Highway No. 16, the need of a new road is self-evident. The present approach is over a meandering road which follows section and property lines at random to such an extent that one member of the party remarked that we had seen the Tower from all sides except the top.”<sup>122</sup> Like visitors since Moran, Baker commented on the road’s impassible nature during wet weather when hazardous gumbo developed along narrow stretches with steep grades.<sup>123</sup>

### **Grazing and Devils Tower National Monument**

A more delicate issue for custodians was enforcing boundaries on the federal land that locals considered theirs by use. The ensuing drought in the early 1930s exacerbated the problem of trespass. The Monument existed as an island in a ranching landscape, and livestock regularly broke through fences to forage on the ungrazed Monument grasses and well-watered places along the Belle Fourche River. Sometimes, ranchers purposely placed their cattle on Monument grounds. For example, tempted by the lush grasses of the Monument, in the early 1930s, Buzz Driskill and John Martin drove 500 head of cattle onto NPS property. Angry, Custodian Crowe

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<sup>119</sup> Quote in Devils Tower NM Custodian’s Report, July 28, 1931; Unfortunately for the Crowes, there were five children in their family and since there was not enough room in the house, they used a tent for additional space; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 65; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 12; Devils Tower NM Year 1931 Custodian’s Report, September 3, 1931, MORU MPR. See also “Old Headquarters Area Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination.”

<sup>120</sup>McKoy, “Entrance Road,” section 8, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Report, May 27, 1931.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 64; Joyner, Custodian’s Report, May 27, 1931.

<sup>123</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 64.

tried but failed to drive the cattle off the reserve. Driskill finally relented, acknowledging that he and Martin likely faced arrest if they did not remove the cattle from protected federal land.<sup>124</sup>

By February 1932, Crowe confidently claimed that “[g]razing has been reduced to a minimum this winter on the Devils Tower National Monument, through the friendly cooperation of neighboring ranchers.” They seemed responsive to his explanation of important national monument objectives. “The idea of the preservation of the natural beauty of the Reserve,” Crowe said, “and reseeding of the native grasses for the enjoyment of the tourists has been put over by tactful conversations on the subject.” In particular, Mr. Driskill of the Campstool Ranch changed his attitude. “He is now very cordial and only occasionally have a few head of his stock drifted into the Reserve.” The cattle interlopers fed on the needles of young pine trees and “bedded down close to the sandstone buffs or rim rock 200’ above the bridge.” The calves make their way to the flat and feasted upon the wild rose bushes that grew along the river, and horses wintered on to the “higher benches of the Reserve.” Despite increased rancher cooperation, Crowe believed it necessary to enclose the Monument with a “rustic fence, cattle-guard and attractive Entrance gateway.”<sup>125</sup>

### **Developing Infrastructure**

Gaining control of boundaries accompanied Monument administrators’ efforts to develop campground improvements, buildings, and other infrastructure to support tourism and NPS staff. During his short tenure as Monument custodian, Custodian George Crowe exerted considerable effort to promote the Tower and secure funding for basic infrastructure. In 1931, NPS Assistant Landscape Architect Baker identified the water system as a priority for improvement since both the residence and campground should meet sanitation standards. About 2000 feet from the new residence, “a good spring from which a water system could be developed” if pressure could be created to elevate the water above the campground. Baker also stated that the Monument needed a stable that could house two horses and a garage built using local logs that could fit a single car and a blacksmith shop. Baker regarded the local timber to be well-suited for building the rustic log structures favored by the NPS at that time.<sup>126</sup>

Roads continued to be an issue of concern. Crowe tried to interest the Highway Commission and the Governor in building a better road from the Custer Battlefield Highway, but federal legislation required 90% of the approach road lie on the public domain which precluded building on adjacent patented land. Crowe worried about the road’s dangerous grade east of the store and post office. He rationalized spending federal funds on road construction that would help local, out-of-work farmers whose crops had failed and the county which had few funds for road maintenance.<sup>127</sup> Gradually, however, Devils Tower joined the region’s growing automobile network. In the late 1920s, the completed Custer Battlefield Highway (Hiway) between

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<sup>124</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 64.

<sup>125</sup> Crowe to NPS Director, February 15, 1932; Folder 901-1, Box 585, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>126</sup> Quote from Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, September 3, 1931, DETO 1620, MORU MPR; See also the Baker Report, Folder 660-05, Box 2158, RG 79, NARA; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 65.

<sup>127</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 66-67.

Spearfish, South Dakota and Gillette, Wyoming, came within seven miles of the Monument. The state improved Highways 85 and 16 into Sundance, and the recently paved U.S. Highway 14 to Alva provided access to the south.<sup>128</sup>

Crowe also revisited the nature and location of permitted uses of the Tower landscape such as camping. Baker had indicated that he believed that the campground established by Thorn was too small and in an undesirable location at the end of the approach road. Crowe considered this and located a site south of the existing campground about a quarter mile away from the residence that could be connected to the water system and the approach road.<sup>129</sup> The Monument had two pit-toilets, and Baker believed that two more would be necessary to “accommodate some of the large crowds he [Crowe] has at various times.”<sup>130</sup>

Incorporation into the motoring landscape helped bring Devils Tower into a widening tourist economy, but the Monument remained a spartan park. In 1932 when Crowe left for a position with Yellowstone National Park, its assets consisted of a Ford truck, three buildings, and the Tower itself. With no garage or even carpentry or auto repair tools available, the Monument lacked the basics to aid the new custodian.<sup>131</sup> As the only full-time NPS employee at the Tower, in 1932, Newell F. Joyner became solely responsible for maintaining the fledgling infrastructure and limited machines.

## Conclusion

The nation’s first national monument, Devils Tower originated in an era of federal government expansion. Wielding his executive powers, Theodore Roosevelt, the quintessential Progressive, created a new type of federally-protected property. The combined impulses of conservation and preservation enabled the reservation of a federal landscape to enshrine an outstanding geological phenomenon. The Tower immediately took an unusual place among America’s scenic wonders. Though representing federal authority, Monument officials and Congressional legislators struggled to bring the Tower under federal control. Monument infrastructure and landscape regulation developed slowly as the federal government figured out how to achieve its goals while protecting landscape features. In the 1920s, residents of northeastern Wyoming considered the Monument a local resource despite the evolving federal presence. Many local people supported its establishment and early development into the 1920s, including Dick Stone and Wyoming Representative Frank W. Mondell. The Monument continued as a gathering place for regional patriotic events, casual tourism, and community gatherings. Creation of the National Park Service in 1916 and its supervision of the Monument moved the Tower toward wider tourist development, more defined boundaries, and increased federal oversight. Devils Tower began to assume the outlines of a significant tourist destination.

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<sup>128</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 17; 1931 Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 83.

<sup>129</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 65; Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Report, July 28, 1931, MORU MPR.

<sup>130</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Report, September 3, 1931, MORU MPR; Baker report, Folder 660-05, Box 2158, RG 79, NARA; Water supply system correspondence and plans from 1933-42.

<sup>131</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 68-69.

## Known Resource Types

**Infrastructure:** The National Park Service's facilitation of public access to the Monument was an important outcome of this period, achieved by improving the access road, building a bridge, and protecting that bridge by building tetrahedrons at the river.

**The Entrance Road:** Originally laid out in 1917, the entrance road forded the Belle Fourche River until construction of the 1928 bridge (replaced in 1980). Elements of its original route and design remain.

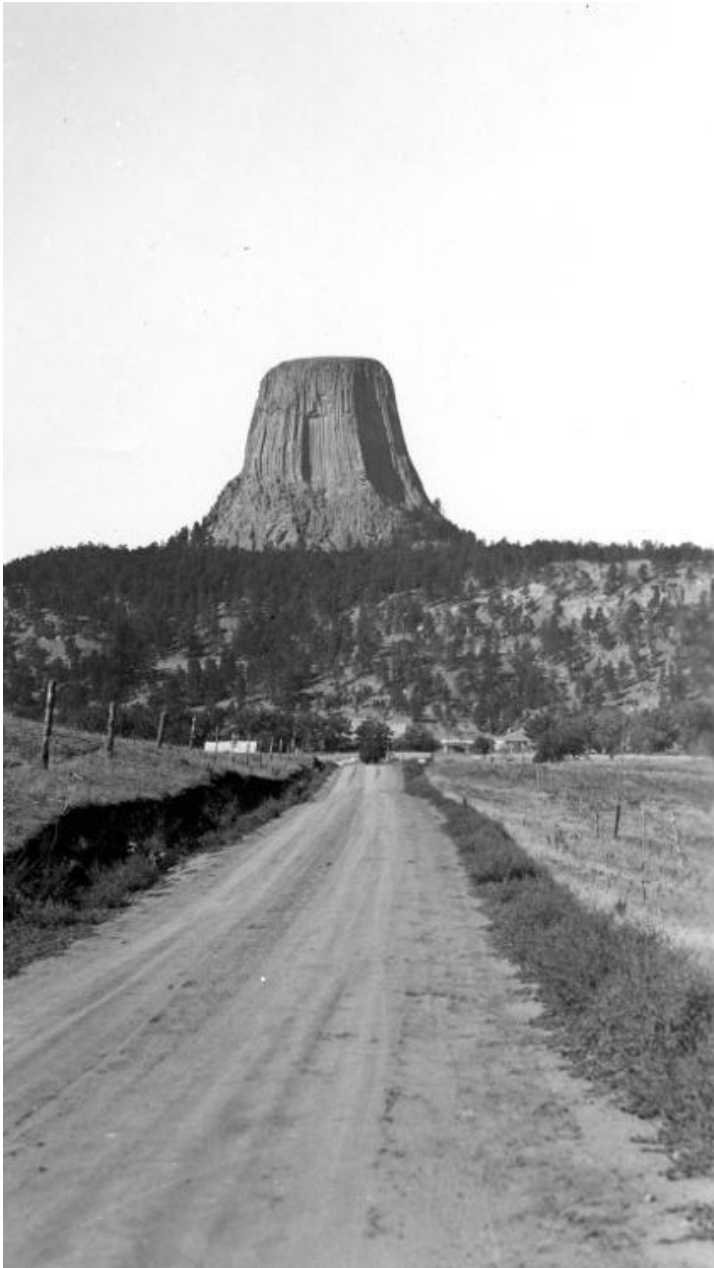
**The Custodian's Residence** was one of the first buildings constructed at DETO, designed and built in the already developed NPS Rustic style.

**Springs and water system:** These significant natural and cultural resources were utilized from an early date in the Monument's written history. Parts of the water system's essential infrastructure were first built in the early 1930s.

**Fences:** One of the earliest improvements to the National Monument, fences were put up to keep cattle away from a site that the NPS and the public imagination transformed into a national geological shrine. Fences overtly delineated the boundaries between federal and private control. It is unknown if any portions of the original fence remain.

**Tetrahedrons:** To preserve the significant infrastructure investment made in the bridge over the Belle Fourche River, the NPS built concrete structures to stabilize the riverbanks and direct the flow of water. This rather unique effort in a national monument signifies an engineering approach to controlling rivers widely embraced at the time.

## Graphics



*Figure 15. "Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming. Devils Tower, viewed from the East. Note the columnar jointing and flare at the base." Keeping the road maintained was a challenge for custodians and crews. This photo is before the CCC carried out their improvements. (Photo by William Gamewell Pierce, 1932, Courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey).*



*Figure 16. The Old Settlers' Picnic created an opportunity to gather, 1936. (Courtesy NPS).*



*Figure 17. The Old Settlers' Picnic from the parking lot, 1936. (Courtesy NPS).*



*Figure 18. "Looking downstream at the back side of the row of tetrahedrons before placing the cables." Walter G. Attwell, Final Construction Report on Protection of Devils Tower Bridge, and Revetment Work on Belle Fourche River, November 25, 1930. (Courtesy NPS).*



## CHAPTER FIVE: The New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps at Devils Tower National Monument, 1933-1937

### Introduction

The basics established by the 1920s, in the next decade, Devils Tower National Monument transformed in its first influential phase of modernization. New Deal monies and labor gave the Monument's custodian opportunity to enhance the Tower's tourist-oriented accommodations, to build its fundamental infrastructure, and to assert control over the landscape. Principles of picturesque design guided Monument projects, establishing a rustic park aesthetic that harmonized with Nature. The New Deal gave the Monument landscape its essential shape that it carried into the future.

The agent for the Tower's New Deal maturation was the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), youths and local men skilled in construction trades who brought NPS plans to fruition. Their labor produced distinct park landscapes like Devils Tower that tried to balance Park Service goals of conserving natural resources while making parks accessible to tourists. The CCC improvements mostly enhanced the "public enjoyment" goal. According to park superintendents in 1937, the trails, picnic grounds, and campgrounds that the CCC developed were responsible for the 25 to 500 percent park visitation increase across the nation. At Devils Tower National Monument, yearly visitation nearly tripled during the 1930s, from 11,000 in 1931 to 32,951 in 1941.<sup>1</sup>

The CCC emerged from a discouraging time in America's history. The Great Depression and the drought years dealt a devastating blow to Americans. Many westerners suffered greatly as the environment that once sustained them seemed to cast them out along with the soil that raged across the land in great storms. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal supporters proposed solutions with the underlying belief that state-directed planning could re-energize the economy and reestablish a more sustainable relationship with the land. By helping to build new structures and infrastructure and encouraging industrialization and centralization, the New Deal transformed Wyoming and Devils Tower. Yet, the federal efforts did not come easily; the nature and environment of eastern Wyoming regularly defied governmental attempts to regulate and control it. Ironically, the New Deal's state-directed and standardized control adopted a natural aesthetic—the Rustic style—to express its federal presence in national parks. The Monument's CCC landscape represented these modernizing and nationalizing impulses of the New Deal.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (National Park Service, 1985), 131; Ray H. Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History* (Omaha, NE: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Region Two, December 1, 1955), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1361; Michael J. Cassity, *Building up Wyoming: Depression-Era Federal Projects in Wyoming, 1929-1943* (Cheyenne, WY: Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources, 2013), 5. On the New Deal helping to refashion the national landscape, see Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University

Leading the New Deal transformation of Devils Tower was the energetic and extremely capable “Lead Custodian,” Newell F. Joyner, who arrived at the Monument in 1932 and guided the Monument through its most precedent-setting years. Joyner first found employment with the NPS in Yellowstone National Park as a Ranger-Naturalist. Following his experience at the nation’s first national park, Joyner returned to college in Lincoln, Nebraska, and not long after, he took the position at the Monument.<sup>3</sup> His long tenure (1932 to 1947) overlapped with the entirety of the New Deal, and he directed the most significant restructuring and development that the monument had experienced. The New Deal era was “a period that perhaps more than any other in U.S. history witnessed the transformation of public space by the federal government.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, under Joyner’s leadership and with CCC labor, the landscape at Devils Tower underwent “the most significant period of the Monument’s development prior to World War II.”<sup>5</sup>

The New Deal and the CCC enabled Joyner to develop the Tower but also to ease local unemployment (a matter that worried him) and contract with regional companies to help with construction. Federal grants and CCC laborers completing essential infrastructure projects contributed to the park and to the community.<sup>6</sup> In 1955, National Park Service Historian Ray Mattison remarked that at the Monument, “Practically all of the improvements on the area at the present time are the results of their [the CCC’s] efforts.”<sup>7</sup> Historian John Paige noted that CCC laborers advanced forestry and park development by decades and “[t]he extensive development and park expansion made possible by the CCC was in large part responsible for the modern national and state park systems.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Joyner arrives at the Tower**

Newell Joyner’s long administration as custodian at Devils Tower opened a new era at the Monument. A conscientious manager, Joyner energetically strived to make the Monument a first class NPS property. He wrote detailed monthly activity reports and constantly sought equipment by asking for surplus from other parks such as Yellowstone. Joyner understood the need for good boundary surveys and topographical maps. In reports from 1932 and 1933, he argued that without such cartographic tools, it was impossible to effectively enhance the Monument’s infrastructure. Good roads, trails, and solidly built structures required accurate

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Press, 1985); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Spring 1984), 16; Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument; A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: National Park Service, 2007), 68; Joan Joyner Bourke, *Newell Fodge Joyner* (Self-published biography, December 1996); Newell Fodge Joyner papers, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Center.

<sup>4</sup> Neil Maher, *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Kathy McKoy, “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, July 24, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 17

<sup>7</sup> Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> John C. Paige. *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 129, 132; Robert Fechner, “What the CCC is and Does,” Washington, DC, 1936.

knowledge of the land, and up-to-date maps enabled Joyner to pinpoint the bounds of his authority. For example, in May 1932, Joyner inspected the boundary and found sections of fences often existed as much as a furlong or 220 yards inside the reserve. He also located another group of springs and determined that two more bends of the Belle Fourche River lay within the Monument; the reserve was larger than he had originally supposed.<sup>9</sup>

In April 1932, soon after he arrived at the Monument, Joyner was already working to improve the Monument road. Joyner rebuilt four wooden culverts and installed three new culverts at critical points along the road. Without a road grader, his maintenance efforts often proved futile. Consequently, Joyner constructed a “makeshift grader from a wooden float and two I-beams salvaged from a discarded road grader, powered by a team of horses.”<sup>10</sup> He replaced the tin roof of the open-pit toilets with a shingled roof and coated part of the toilet walls with creosote stain to enhance their appearance. Using leftover logs from the construction of the custodian’s residence and “rocks and boulders of varying size,” Joyner marked the limits of the campground parking area and nearly doubled its size. Seeing a need to clean up the Monument, he burnt 50 piles of brush.<sup>11</sup> Soon, Joyner connected the Tower to the wider scientific community. On July 10, 1932, he installed a weather bureau substation using equipment from a discontinued station to precisely record weather data at the Tower.<sup>12</sup>

### Joyner’s Community Connections

Wisely, Joyner recognized the importance of strong relations between the Monument and local communities. In the early years of the Great Depression, he worried about the region’s residents as drought destroyed crops and drove locals from their lands. He saw the economic reciprocity; the Monument could employ local residents who, in turn, could buy from local merchants. In 1933, residents faced what they considered the “worst drought conditions in Wyoming’s history.” As Monument historian John Daugherty has noted, “The impact of Devils Tower on the employment situation in Crook County indicates how important parks can be to the local economy. The administration and developments in national parks may have a profound effect on the surrounding region.”<sup>13</sup>

Joyner understood the sense of ownership and place that the Tower inspired in the surrounding towns and ranches. In 1932, the “old timers” around the Tower organized into the Northern Black Hills Pioneer Association that limited its membership to those who had resided

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<sup>9</sup> See Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Annual Report, Year 1932, DETO 1621; Custodian’s Reports are located in DETO Records, MORU Multi-Park Repository (hereafter cited as MORU MPR); Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 17, 24; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 72, 78, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, April 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, April 1932; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, July 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR.

<sup>13</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 72, 79, 87, “worst drought” on 83; “employment situation” in Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 20-21; Joyner notes in October 1932 that a Dude Ranch near a good trout stream was being built and drawing labor from South Dakota since it was on the southeast corner of the County. It was little help to the residents near the Monument. Devils Tower NM, Custodian’s Report Year 1932; see also April, September, and October 1932 reports for concern about local residents.

in the area for at least 35 years. The Association formally continued the previously casual practice of sponsoring an annual celebration in late June or early July (often around July 4<sup>th</sup>) called the “Pioneers’ Picnic” at the Tower that included speakers, music, and games.<sup>14</sup> On June 19, 1932, the picnic of the Northern Black Hills Pioneer Association brought 125 cars to the parking area and the adjacent road. In total, 529 people and 151 cars attended. Shortly after the event, a local newspaper published content from talks given by some of the “pioneers.” A Black Hills resident for over 44 years, Harry J. Chassell recounted the area’s early history and told of large cattle ranches owned by English people operating along the Belle Fourche River. With stock pantries and cellars, such hardy local folk were unphased by the “inconvenience” of the Great Depression, according to this writer, and they got along just fine without money.<sup>15</sup>

In his July report, Joyner provided a photograph of the overflowing parking area and noted that on July 3<sup>rd</sup> the Monument had hosted even more tourists. The celebration on the 3<sup>rd</sup> was the first annual Devil’s Tower Pow-Wow. Ironically, it had nothing to do with the Native Americans but was a general celebration for the local white residents who played baseball, barbecued meat, and competed in track meets for horse riding, fishing, swimming, and dancing.<sup>16</sup> The caption for his photo concluded: “The above photo gives an insight as to our parking and administrative problems on a day of large attendance.”<sup>17</sup>

Even in times of drought and depression, residents remained steadfast and continued the Old Settlers’ Picnic. The Superintendent’s Report for 1934 described in detail the popular festivities:

On the occasion of the annual Old Settlers Picnic in June, 1933 we had 1,250 visitors, which was a record crowd. In 1934 on the same occasion, we had 2,325 picnic visitors. Our inadequate [sic] facilities at that time necessitated considerable preparation of a temporary nature as well as the employment of eight men, of whom five were mounted, to handle the traffic. We were able to park everyone so that they could leave at any time they wished. So far as I know there wasn’t a fender scratched. Local papers complimented us on our organization which enabled visitors to enjoy a pleasant day. What further complicated our problem was the moving out of some three hundred cars in a little over a half hour over a oneway road, at the same time permitting the entrance of some thirty cars. This movement was caused by the fact that the nearest place suitable for a ball game [sic] was over a mile from the picnic ground. I am happy to state that there was no drunkenness on this occasion, a fact which should make this celebration an outstanding one.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 84; Mattison, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 84-85.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 82-83.

<sup>17</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report July 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR; “At a gathering held at the Tower on June 19<sup>th</sup>, the Northern Black Hills Pioneer Association was formed, their annual meetings to be held at the Tower. There were 529 persons registered on that day, coming in some 151 cars.”

<sup>18</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, December 1934, DETO 1623, MORU MPR; Unfortunately, July 4<sup>th</sup> at the Monument was met with a violent episode at the Tower.

The custodian enhanced facilities that supported such local events which also benefitted increasing numbers of motor tourists. In July, he had four tables and two stoves built and installed in the campground for picnickers and campers. These “public camps” were becoming increasingly popular, and Joyner made plans “to increase the camping area and at the same time make it as nearly perpetual as a camping ground can be, in accordance with the memorandum of June 14<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by an article entitled, ‘a Camp Ground Policy’ by Dr. E.P. Meinecke, of the Department of Agriculture.” New signs marked the entrance of the Monument, the boundary, and U.S. Highway #16.<sup>19</sup> The Monument lent visitors horses from the reserve to ride around the Tower or visit the neighboring Missouri Buttes.<sup>20</sup>

As had previous custodians, Joyner advocated for better roads, necessary for the increased visitation and for local economic interests. When Highway #16 to Hulett and Alva via the Tower became a state highway in 1933, he forecast a dramatic increase in travel to the Monument. It “will also have a tendency to permit the visitor to stay at the Tower longer without fear that a sudden rain will make the roads difficult to travel,” he noted.<sup>21</sup> The agency understood the need for an approach road to the Monument leading from the newly graveled Highway 16. Joyner estimated that when the road was completed it would increase visitation by 500% (within five years, 800-1000%).<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, in the early 1930s the roads remained regularly impassible during snow and rain.<sup>23</sup>

Joyner was disappointed with the state highway construction. When he looked at the road’s exact location, he noticed that it would still isolate the Tower because 1,500 feet remained between the highway and the Monument boundary. He began the process of reaching out to officials to see what could be done.<sup>24</sup> In December, 1932, the Crook County Commissioners advised him to take up the issue with the State Highway Commission.<sup>25</sup>

### **Joyner and Cattle Grazing**

Like Custodian Crowe, Joyner grappled with trespassing cattle. Their past presence had alerted Joyner to logical trails. A “series of trails made originally by cattle or game” that connected and formed a “good trail from the store to the headquarters area . . . at the base of the tower.” Traces of this trail from the site of the Old Thurman Café ascending the foothills below the southwest corner of the Tower still exist. This was only trail over which “a horse can be ridden during muddy weather or up which a man can walk without slowing up or stopping to

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<sup>19</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, July 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR (see photos).

<sup>20</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Reports, see months of May, June (with article), & July (with photos) 1932; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, May 1932; Joyner, Monthly Report, March 1933, Office of the Custodian Reports, DETO 1622, MORU MPR.

<sup>22</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, September 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 27-28.

<sup>23</sup> Joyner directly remarked on how roads impacted visitation in June 1932; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 80, 74; See also Kathy McKoy, “Entrance Road,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2000) Section 7, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR.

<sup>25</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, December 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR.

rest.” It was also a short cut compared to any other existing trail. Its “scenic points otherwise unavailable to the tourist” gave it added benefits.<sup>26</sup>

By April 1932, however, Joyner understood the role of cattle at the Tower in a less productive light. As the Monument lacked a continuous and precisely located boundary fence, cattle trails were relatively common. The problem, Joyner explained to NPS administrators, was Wyoming law. “Wyoming grazing laws,” Joyner noted, “are to the effect that a man is not responsible for any damage that stock may do to another’s property unless a legal fence (four wire) surrounds the property where the damage was incurred.” Livestock could roam everywhere except those areas properly fenced. Joyner’s only option was to “quietly shape public opinion around here.” Driskill continued to be accommodating with Monument managers, but he requested that NPS administrators address this seeming contradiction between Wyoming law and NPS policy. In the meantime, Joyner continued to find stray horses on the Monument and to hire cowboys to corral them despite NPS regulation that explicitly stated that, “Livestock found improperly on the monument lands may be impounded and held until claimed by the owner and trespass adjusted.”<sup>27</sup>

Winter conditions exacerbated the problem of wandering cattle. “Fences in this country, if they exist, are but poor excuses for some cattle.”<sup>28</sup> The river bottom on Monument grounds “lies in the direct path of the natural migration of the animals along the river.” The wandering stock gathered near the Tower in numbers up to 25, and the “ranchers have cooperated as well as could be expected.” Joyner recognized that prohibition of stock on the reserve had only occurred as a “concentrated effort” for one previous winter. The year 1932 was only the second that the ranchers had to adhere to this rule, while “only a few years ago this was the feeding ground for stock from certain ranches.” He realized he had to “stick it out as long as the ranchers.” The only real solution was to fence the reserve “at the earliest possible convenience.”<sup>29</sup>

Joyner’s patience began to wear thin. “With nearly 1,000 head of cattle being fed within a mile of the reserve,” Joyner remarked, “and stock-tight fences surrounding the reserve being

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<sup>26</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Annual Report, Year 1932, DETO 1621, MORU MPR.

<sup>27</sup> Joyner to Director of the NPS, April 15, 1932, Folder 901-1, Box 585, RG 79, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NARA). Horace Albright responded, “As you yourself observe, our livestock and impounding regulations while effective in law are practically impossible to put in execution, the cost of impounding and feeding stock for the necessary time prior to advertisement for sale usually being more than the value of the stock itself.” He added by providing the full rules for grazing: “The running at large, herding, or grazing of livestock of any kind on Government lands in a monument, as well as the driving of livestock over the same, is prohibited, except where authority therefor has been granted by the custodian in charge of such monument or by the Director of the National Park Service. Livestock found improperly on the monument lands may be impounded and held until claimed by the owner and the trespass adjusted.” Those found guilty could face up to a \$500 fine, six months in prison, and having to pay all court fees. Albright also noted, in response to Driskill’s question, “In cases of conflicts between State laws and Federal laws, the Federal law will prevail. Furthermore, Joyner was authorized to “make arrests for the violation of the rules and regulations governing the monument and to take the offender before the nearest United States Commissioner over any territory.” Albright to Joyner, April 30, 1932, Folder 901-1, Box 585, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>28</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Annual Report, Year 1932; on Paramount Pictures filming, see Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 83-84. Film faked a story of 5 climbers dying on the Tower – Joyner was not amused, writing “I was somewhat put out by their faking the story...”, Newell Joyner, Monthly Report, February 1933, DETO 1622, MORU MPR.

<sup>29</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Annual Report, Year 1932; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 81-82.

absent, it is not to be wondered at if there are from ten to fifty head of cattle on the reserve most every day.” The ranchers seemed to be cooperating “in spirit,” but the cattle had their own plans and “insist on coming in to get some grass even tho’ they be chased out twice a day.” The solution, according to Joyner, was simple. To ensure continued positive relations with the locals, cattle and rancher alike, “[t]he only answer to the problem is for the government to construct an auto-gate and good barbed-wire fence around the reserve.”<sup>30</sup> In February, Joyner helped a local rancher fix his fence that was close to the Monument boundary. “I have found,” he noted, “that this is the only way in which such repairs will be made.” That month, he also drew up a report, map, and “justification of government construction of fences to end difficulty to stock trespass and to mark boundary for administrative purposes.”<sup>31</sup>

Landscape Architect Howard Baker agreed with Joyner that the project was “one of most importance to the adequate protection of the Monument” because “the neighboring ranchers invariably insist upon grazing their cattle upon the Monument due to the abundance of feed.” “If these cattle remain to feed upon the Monument grasses,” Baker explained, “all the small vegetation, including the wildflowers, will soon be gone, which seems to me an absolute defeat of the Monument purpose.” Even if Joyner dedicated his entire day to prevent this trespass, they would be in vain. Baker concluded, “[w]ith these points in mind I recommend that this project be given preference if any further funds should be available.”<sup>32</sup>

With a little help from the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal programs during the winter of 1933-34, \$3,400 of PWA project (FP 343) funds went to fencing five-and-a-half miles of the Monument boundary. The fence consisted of four-strand barb wire on posts set a rod apart, “eight steel gates, twelve wire gates, and two twelve-foot wooden cattle guards.” Local residents soon damaged the wooden guards with their stock and horse-drawn vehicles, and the Service replaced with them with concrete and railroad ties. New signs reminded visitors to close the gates.<sup>33</sup>

### Joyner and Monument Infrastructure Projects

While addressing the big headaches, Joyner undertook smaller improvements. He moved the partition in the office room and installed a Celotex ceiling. The previous paper-covered board

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<sup>30</sup> Newell Joyner, Monthly Narrative Report, January 1933, DETO 1622, MORU MPR; Joyner also noted: “Cattle continued to be a problem and prompted the custodian to comment at length in his 1933 report. He estimated that nearly 1,000 head of cattle were being fed within one mile of Devils Tower, and he now drove up to 50 head off the reserve per day.” Daugherty also notes challenges with local timber harvesting and hunting: Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 19; Newell Joyner, Monthly Narrative Report, April 1933, Office of the Custodian Reports, DETO 1622, MORU MPR: “One day was spent on horseback, in the driving off of horses which were trespassing on the reserve. There were a number of other instances where a personal interview or telephone call remedied the situation. But the problem will never be solved and done away with until we have installed auto gates and a suitable fence around the reserve.”

<sup>31</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, February 1933, DETO 1622, MORU MPR. Joyner also noted, “The situation was bad during the first half of the month, with severe storms driving the cattle through the inadequate fences to the protection of the rim-rocks on the reserve.”

<sup>32</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report Year 1931, DETO 1620, September 5-8, 1933, MORU MPR; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 90-91.

<sup>33</sup> Quote from Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 91; Custodian’s Reports, December 1934, DETO 1623 MORU MPR.

ceiling lost a tremendous amount of heat. With these modifications, Joyner made the office considerably warmer. He also slightly enlarged the slab ice-house, constructed and installed a rodent-proof shelter box for storage in the “temporary shelter-stable,” and moved the salvaged stringers and 2x4s from the bridge improvement project to the headquarters area.<sup>34</sup>

Making the Tower building warmer was especially important in 1933. Bitter cold descended upon eastern Wyoming that winter and kept Joyner confined to the office and attending to minor improvements on the Tower grounds. In February, Joyner quoted a photographer from Cody named Charles Beldon who “informed the AP that it was so cold the cowboys were having to roll their cigarettes with their leather mittens on, and that they were having to feed prestone to the hens to keep them from laying frozen eggs.”<sup>35</sup>

As spring approached, Joyner chafed at agency delays of his plans. “No representative of the Landscape [Division] had visited the Monument to discuss the plans on the ground for over a year” which led to inefficiencies in planning and delayed projects. He concentrated on the ever-problematic road maintenance. He borrowed a “light grader – surplus equipment from Yellowstone” to work the road in the winter and spring. The result, Joyner reported, “with the exception of a couple of spots which are still mud-holes (being situated in protected spots in heavy timber) our road is in a condition to be more or less unaffected over any extended period by approaching spring rains.” But he could not rectify the Monument approach road which was in “such poor condition that few people would come clear in to visit this phenomenon this past month.”<sup>36</sup>

To Joyner’s relief, Landscape Architect Howard Baker’s 1931 visit presented the “opportunity to formulate definitive plans concerning future developments, and thereby assures that the expenditure of our meagre funds will be only for those features which will be permanent.” Together, the men moved projects forward. They decided on the equipment shed site and construction after receiving its final plans. They selected the bench below the Custodian’s residence for a service area instead of the campground which they moved north of the house. They discussed an enlarged parking area and how it “must be done carefully to save the fine yellow-pines around the present inadequate parking area.” Lastly, they traversed the site of the proposed road and considered trail locations.<sup>37</sup>

Plans solidified, the men lacked the money and manpower to undertake the projects. Disappointing news struck the community in the spring of 1933 regarding the allotment of Emergency Conservation Work funds to the Tower, according to Joyner:

Considerable hope was originally held by local residents for help from the Emergency Conservation Work – but as the program developed, with Wyoming’s Quota at 500 [based on population], a different attitude is coming into existences [sic]. Since receipt of your

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<sup>34</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, January 1933, DETO 1622, copy in DETO Archive.

<sup>35</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, February 1933, DETO 1622, copy in DETO Archive.

<sup>36</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, March 1933, DETO 1622, copy in DETO Archive; Joyner also spent some time discussing the approach road and the road to Hulett with the Hulett Community Association.

<sup>37</sup> Quotes from Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, April 1933, DETO 1622, copy in DETO Archive.



memoranda explaining the additional requisition of 700 experienced woodsman, I have hastened to explain that point to those dissatisfied persons.

Your letter explaining necessity of eliminating smaller projects of the Emergency Conservation Work, including the Devils Tower Project, was off-set by rumor that there will be a project undertaken in the near-by Bear Lodge National Forest.<sup>38</sup>

Despite this, work continued on the approach road to the Monument. In April, the State's maintenance crew's "small amount of work done so far has been of inestimable value." The state added "1,200 feet spur from the highway to the Monument boundary" to the project. This was crucial for Joyner and the Tower since "when graded and graveled" it will "fulfill all conditions necessary to enable the Service to consider the construction of a suitable road within the reserve."<sup>39</sup>

Planning for big undertakings, Joyner simultaneously completed small improvements. In May 1933, the Monument received a telephone line to aid fire protection, administration, and simple communication between the Monument and its neighbors, nearby towns, and long-distance trunk lines.<sup>40</sup> Joyner placed a wooden culvert along the main road to drain a mud hole. Using an old trail, laborers constructed a temporary road from the Custodian's residence to the Service area. That May, they moved the stable away from the north side of the Custodian's residence where they planned the new campground to west of the Custodian's residence in the new service area. This "temporary building" was also improved to "more nearly meet the need of proper protection and facilities for our horse." A seep-hole near the Custodian's residence provided water in the event of a fire.<sup>41</sup>

Draftsmen completed Joyner's request for a topographic map of the Monument under T.J. Murphy by Christmas of 1933. The men arrived unannounced in November and prepared a map on the scale of four hundred feet to the inch showing five-foot contour intervals. Joyner was satisfied with the result and noted that it would "be a great help."<sup>42</sup>

The plans for the Museum, Administration, and Comfort Station units were finished in May 1934. The problem that Joyner faced was that the estimate came to \$9,500 while the sum available was only \$7,200. "Numerous efforts were made," Joyner explained, "without avail, to solve this problem without decreasing the size of the building." Bids were well over the amount

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<sup>38</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, April 1933.

<sup>39</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, April 1933; Joyner also repaired some signs at the Monument that had been used as target practice.

<sup>40</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 25; Newell Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Reports, March and May, 1933, DETO 1622, copies in DETO Archive.

<sup>41</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 25; Daugherty adds: "There is no available information that would indicate the date of the barn's construction, except between 1922 and 1931." Joyner, Custodian's, Monthly Report, May 1933. By the end of May, Joyner was feeling quite isolated: "I must admit also that I had a "hankering" to see a Park Service uniform in some other setting than Devils Tower National Monument and talk with someone who has problems of the same nature as we do here----it would be possible for a person to get in a rut here month after month without any opportunity to take leave!"

<sup>42</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 1934, DETO 1623, copy in DETO Archive.

allotted the Monument. However, the Tower soon received an additional \$3,400 for the project, which Joyner deemed sufficient.<sup>43</sup>

### **Drought and Depression**

By the early 1930s, external catastrophes overwhelmed Joyner's efforts to bring the Monument more firmly under federal control and to open it for public enjoyment. By 1933 and 1934, Joyner observed the simultaneous disasters of drought and depression harming the Tower region. "The drought conditions," explained Joyner, "affected this grazing region with the result that there is less than one half the normal number of stock." Vegetation at the Monument suffered; Joyner noticed dying pines and autumn-like conditions in June and anticipated "the most serious effects will not be noticeable until this coming summer."<sup>44</sup> The environment had become hostile to the livelihood of many locals and to the Monument's ecology.

Powerless to influence the looming disasters, Joyner tried to assist local residents by channeling Monument funds to hire workers from the community. "The work at the Devils Tower," Joyner explained, "has enabled many families to procure the minimum requirements of food and clothing which they would have been hard put to find otherwise." The "plight of residents of this agricultural region," he noted, was "severe" during the summer of 1933. When the New Deal released funds for emergency public works projects, the Monument hired approximately 200 men during that fall and 25 in the winter, spreading the work around by changing crews. In November 1934, entrance road and water system projects "enabled us to build up a crew which during December averaged over seventy men." In the seventeen months before Joyner's December 1934 report, the agency employed 338 different men representing 7% of the county's residents, or 30% of the wage earners. With the possible exception of military service, never before had local citizens worked so closely with the federal government.<sup>45</sup>

The Dust Bowl that brought the closer local-federal interactions at the Tower was "the inevitable outcome of a culture that deliberately, self-consciously, set itself that task of dominating and exploiting the land for all it was worth," claims historian Donald Worster. For him, the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression's economic crash rationally accompanied one another. The ecological disaster that swept the West was the product of the internal logic of capitalism, industrial farming, and the unrelenting "expansionary energy" of the United States as it attempted to absorb and exploit an ecological order characterized by extremes.<sup>46</sup> Drought cycles characterized the West and Great Plains, but the 1930s, aridity was prolonged and intense. Economic destitution exacerbated the suffering of agriculturalists. For years, many had settled on marginal land, exploited life-giving soil, and replaced the native vegetation with cash crops like wheat. As drought set in and the crops withered, the soils lost their vegetative protection that had held it in place. Windstorms swept through these farms and gathered these untethered soils and turned them into dust composed of dirt, or "soil out of place." By May of 1934, storms blew

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<sup>43</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, December 1934.

<sup>44</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, December 1934.

<sup>45</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, December 1934; See also Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 26-27.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

dust from Montana and Wyoming eastward towards the Dakotas where they gathered more dirt. In total, about 350 million tons of former soil trekked east towards cities such as Chicago, Buffalo, Boston, and New York. There it settled on already troubled urbanites. As the soil migrated out of the Great Plains, so too did the people. A tragic exodus took place across the West as many abandoned rural areas to seek opportunity in regional cities.<sup>47</sup>

Only the federal government held enough authority to address the magnitude of the Great Depression. In the face of this suffering, the New Deal fed life-sustaining funds into communities across the West. As historian Mary Murphy points out, amid the twin disasters of economic depression and drought, with the help of the New Deal, westerners exhibited an incredible amount of hope and perseverance. The director of the Farm Security Administration's Historical section believed that his photographers captured the essence of western character: "You could look at the people and see fear and sadness and desperation. But you also saw something else too. A determination that not even the Depression could kill. The photographers saw it – documented it." His philosophy aligned with the New Deal narrative that while nature and human mistakes might have caused the disasters, American ingenuity and hard work would raise the nation from the depths and mend its wounds.<sup>48</sup>

As environmental historian William Cronon observed, at least two narratives explain the history of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Worster's history of the Dust Bowl argued that capitalism had run amok across the West, and the land and the people paid the price. Ignoring natural limits and embracing an economic system built on greed and profit, humans had degraded a relatively pristine western environment. Historian Paul Bonnifield interpreted the catastrophe differently; communities across the plains fought valiantly against nature to survive.<sup>49</sup> Worster narrated the Fall, whereas Bonnifield's story was how humans redeemed the Fallen world.

Like other mountain states, the hard times in Wyoming did not begin in the thirties but rather about a decade earlier. In the 1920s, the state's population increased 16%, but 100 banks closed their doors. An agricultural depression characterized the decade as farmers shifted to larger-scale industrial and scientific agriculture that relied on a volatile national market. After demand shrank following World War I, banks collapsed as ranchers and farmers faltered and defaulted on the loans used to expand their enterprises. Even amidst the catastrophic bank closures that flowed from "the Great Contraction," officials and the public remained optimistic as comparatively Wyoming experienced fewer significant ill effects of the 1930s' droughts and

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<sup>47</sup> Quote from David Montgomery, *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), x; Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 13; Egan, *The Worst Hard Time*; Douglas R. Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago, IL: Nelson Hall, 1981).

<sup>48</sup> Roy Striker as quoted in Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times*, 8, see also 12.

<sup>49</sup> Mathew Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979); Cronon, "A Place for Stories."

depression. In the 1930s, only 27 banks shut down. For agriculturalists, the 1920s were not a prosperous decade, and the 1930s were simply more of the same for a resilient people.<sup>50</sup>

Coal mining suffered similarly in the 1920s as mechanization reduced the number of workers needed in Wyoming mines and as demand slackened. Even the up-and-coming oil industry dwindled due to the transition to producing gasoline for automobiles, stagnant and declining oil prices, overproduction, technological advancements, and the consolidation of the industry under Standard Oil. Like other states throughout the West, Wyoming also experienced the growing pains characteristic of urbanization. More people flocked to towns and cities that did not have the infrastructure to handle the influx and manage their expectations. Cities and towns struggled to provide adequate roads, good education, and proper sanitation. The economic and ecological disasters were even worse on Wyoming's Wind River Reservation (Shoshone Agency until 1937) where the overwhelming pressures of aggressive settler colonialism and official neglect made the simple act of living on the land unsustainable.<sup>51</sup>

As the Great Depression set in, Wyomingites coped by eating more garden vegetables and wild game meat and holding fast to the idea that voluntarism (private charity) would see them through the crisis, an approach they relied on during the 1920s hardships. But they soon realized that the Great Depression represented devastation of a much greater scale. Some understood it as resulting from the West's role as a natural resource colony of the East.<sup>52</sup> As the wounds of the Great Depression festered, officials began to see the error in their understanding of their citizens' plight. Wyoming industries had become entangled in national markets, and only national support could address the dramatic downturn. The functional division of local individualism and collectivism no longer performed in a world where the local was inseparable from the national. In December 1933, the state government decided to cooperate with the New Deal, and the public quickly fell in line.<sup>53</sup>

## The New Deal

Roosevelt's New Deal created programs to restore the United States and put an end to the agony caused by the Great Depression. These efforts to shore up the economy reached Wyoming, especially its agricultural sector. To stabilize the banking sector on which Wyoming businesses relied, Congress passed a bank holiday and a number of regulatory actions and laws.

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<sup>50</sup> T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); T.A. Larson, "The New Deal in Wyoming," *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (August 1969), 251-53; Jonathan Raban, *Bad Land: An American Romance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 244; Michael J. Cassity, *Building up Wyoming: Depression-Era Federal Projects in Wyoming, 1929-1943* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources, 2013), 13-18, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 18-25, 29-33; Dudley A. Gardner and Verla A. Flores, *Forgotten Frontier: A History of Wyoming Coal Mining* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); George Pryde, "The Union Pacific Coal Company 1868 to August 1952," *Annals of Wyoming: The Wyoming History Journal* 25 (July 1953): 190-205.

<sup>52</sup> Larson, "The New Deal in Wyoming," 253; Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 38, 45; The "Plundered Province Thesis" established by Bernard DeVoto sees the West as an exploited colony of the East; Douglas Brinkley and Patricia Nelson Limerick eds., *The Western Paradox: A Conservation Reader: Bernard DeVoto* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Claire Strom, *Profiting from the Plains: The Great Northern Railway and Corporate Development of the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Larson, "The New Deal in Wyoming," 255, 258.

In June 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) created the National Recovery Administration (NRA). Its purpose was to regulate industries across the United States to raise prices, set wages, and control production standards. Prior to it being declared unconstitutional in 1934, the NRA had a mixed effect in Wyoming and often fell short of New Dealer's expectations, particularly in agriculture where the NRA's underlying principles conflicted with the realities of Wyoming's farms and ranches. Periodic drought (1933, 1934, 1936) had already led to foreclosures and massive debt for agriculturalists across the state. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 (AAA) attempted to alleviate these ills, but it often failed to help those who needed assistance most. The New Deal also came to help on Wyoming's Native American reservations where tribal members suffered a great deal during the Great Depression. Engaged in what amounted to an "enforced agricultural economy," the state needed improved irrigation systems like the Wind River Irrigation Project. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) used Works Project Administration labor to restore crop and grazing land and prevent erosion.<sup>54</sup>

New Deal intellectuals understood that people needed money to spend for its economic reforms to work. During the first 100 days of Franklin Roosevelt's first term, it created programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC or ECW) to put people to work. National parks and monuments like Devils Tower especially benefitted from this program. In 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) helped Wyoming construct big projects like highways and dams across the state that employed large labor forces. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) completed smaller, more localized projects, including regional and local road construction and grading, sanitation, electrification, school construction and maintenance, the repair of civil and community structures, and the development of airports.<sup>55</sup>

With the injection of New Deal funding and an expanded labor force, the Tower entered its first influential wave of development. "In the last half of 1933 and through 1934," Monument historian John Daugherty explained, "numerous improvements and construction projects were executed that set a pace of construction activity that would only end with the beginning of World War II."<sup>56</sup> The early 1930s were a momentous time for the expansion of the Monument's infrastructure.

The early New Deal infrastructure work at Devils Tower in 1933 and 1934 placed a heavy burden on Newell Joyner. The sole full-time employee, he was responsible for general Tower maintenance, construction project supervision, and basic clerical duties. Too harried to complete his reports, he said, "we have been extremely busy with projects under the PWA, CWA, and ERA. This period of activity has been extremely interesting and the developments are now reaching a point where we can present most of the minimum requirements as far as standard conveniences for our visitors are concerned."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the New Deal, see Sarah T. Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 64-68, 112-113, 170-173.

<sup>55</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 68-104, 171; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 88. For more on how the New Deal helped to refashion the landscape of the nation, see Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*.

<sup>56</sup> John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 88-89; Quote from Joyner, Custodian's Report, December 1934.

In August 1933, federally funded crews quickly began work on manageable projects at the Tower, including a new log NPS rustic-style equipment shed. Joyner reported, “This log structure 41x25 feet with concrete floor was constructed by force account and since it houses the shop has been of great use to us since before the shingles were put on. It was built in accordance with plans No. DT3003A with \$1820.00 available.”<sup>58</sup> In the Monument’s western portion, ERA crews developed two springs to provide water for fire protection. Concrete boxes and 700 feet of one-inch pipe fed a 4000-gallon concrete tank that gravity-fed into barrels on a truck to deploy on fires. Joyner and his staff felt a greater sense of security as a result. During the summer, ERA workers also “brushed out and repaired some old trails for use as fire truck trails. The total length made useable by such work was approximately one mile and now gives us ready access to practically every point on the monument.”<sup>59</sup>

Planning and execution of bigger, long-sought improvements commenced in the early New Deal. Originally, designers planned a new parking area with log curbs for 148 cars. Landscape architect Baker noted that, “[w]e have tried to save as many trees as possible and have, therefore, showed curbs around some of them that came within the parking strips.” He and his assistant Attwell also staked out and made plans for a service road leading from the entrance road to the Utility Area<sup>60</sup>

By October 1933, construction of the 100-car parking area was underway. A new light grader and tractor facilitated the rock excavation and fill work. The Monument also received three, one-yard horse-drawn dump wagons and a dozen five-foot fresno scrapers from Yellowstone National Park. By spring 1934, laborers had removed the 1922 shelter cabin and completed the final grading and graveling.<sup>61</sup>

Road improvement was the Monument’s most troublesome issue, and early New Deal efforts focused intensely on transportation. For the entrance road, in 1933, Joyner received \$18,000 three miles of road construction and bridge protection improvements. This work was labor intensive with side-hill cutting, through cutting, and rough grading of the road using fifty head of local horses that pulled fresnos and dump wagons. The Monument completed a mile-and-a-half of the 22-foot road featuring a maximum grade of 6%.<sup>62</sup>

Concurrently, work began on the first three miles of State Highway No. 516, the approach road to the Monument from U.S. Highway No. 16. Grading and graveling continued into 1934. Joyner believed that it “was a great factor in the increase of visitors.” “When we complete our graveling by July 1, 1935,” Joyner reported, “this will result in an all-weather road from the tourist routes entirely to our headquarters area at the base of the Tower and should be

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<sup>58</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 25; Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

<sup>59</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 25; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 90; Quote from Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

<sup>60</sup> George C. Crowe, Custodian’s Annual Report, Year 1931, DETO 1620, MORU MPR.

<sup>61</sup> A Fresno scraper is a device pulled by horses, used in constructing canals and ditches. Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, December 1934; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 90; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 25-26.

<sup>62</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 90.

the cause of a further large increase in visitors next summer.” The oiling of almost the entire length of U.S. Highway 16 also helped funnel traffic into the Monument.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, in 1934, New Deal monies accomplished what Monument custodians had desired for years. A \$25,200 allotment ensured the entrance road’s completion “including grading of the balance, finish grading and graveling of entire road, completion of parking area grading, and necessary bridge repair items.” The effort required sixty-eight head of stock. Joyner had to operate his own stable at the Monument owing to the “scarcity of feed in this country.” Joyner contracted with J.J. Dooling of Gillette, WY, to furnish and stockpile crushed rock to surface the road.<sup>64</sup> In 1935, entrance road improvement included a small relocation to remove a curve that realigned the road between the east boundary and the east approach to the bridge.<sup>65</sup>

Along with road enhancements, the New Deal gave the Tower a new water and sewer system, a “rather expensive project.” The first phase was a temporary water system for the Custodian’s residence. In November 1934, more funds--\$9,600—allowed completion under difficult circumstances. The five feet deep excavation went through a significant amount of solid rock. Joyner was grateful to have secured an ERA project that provided the labor to tackle such a job. The system, Joyner reported:

will consist of a twenty three hundred gallon concrete catchment basin; a 2 HP engine and pump until delivering 15 gallons per minute with pressure of 125 pounds; nine hundred feet of 1 ½ inch GI pipe from the catchment basin to the reservoir with a difference in elevation of 120 feet; a twenty-thousand gallon concrete reservoir situated at a level sixty five feet above the residence and parking area; a four inch GI main 900 feet long from the reservoir to the nearest boundary of the campground; a three inch branch line with fire plug situated midway between the Ranger Station and Administration Building; branches to the Administration Building and Ranger Station; four hundred feet of two inch line through the camp ground; two thousand feet of six inch sewer line with connections to the Ranger Station and Administration Building; a concrete septic tank with filter trenches.<sup>66</sup>

By December “most of the excavation had been completed, cement poured, and a start made in the laying of pipe.”<sup>67</sup>

Civil Works Administration crews were vital not only to building up the Monument but also for its protection. In March 1934, burning operations off-reserve sparked a grass fire that destroyed timber and invaded the Monument’s west side. Eighteen CWA laborers deployed to

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<sup>63</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

<sup>64</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

<sup>65</sup> “The plans also indicate that the road met the entrance road at the east boundary was “State Highway” and was a graveled road.” McKoy, “Entrance Road,” section 8, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

<sup>67</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, December 1934.

the fire, vanquishing it in a half hour. The loss to the timber of the Monument was minimal. Joyner remarked that if they were “thirty minutes later it is quite probably a good part of the timber on the west half of the Monument would have been destroyed or damaged.” He decided not to penalize the negligent neighbor for two reasons. The first was that this individual had been instrumental in extinguishing fires on the reserve in the past when no permanent Custodian served at the Tower. The second was that punishing the man “would do nothing toward cementing our relationships with local residents.” As he had shown before, Joyner was sensitive to the federal-community relationship.<sup>68</sup>

New Deal employees protected the Monument in another way. More tourists and the large number of on-going projects created considerable mess. The CWA and ERA crews undertook clean-up work “in connection with various construction activities of the past.” Their labors resulted in adding “materially to the appearance of the National Monument.” They also obliterated a mile-and-a-quarter of abandoned road “in so far as could be accomplished without planting.” The appearance of the Tower’s landscape was on Joyner’s mind, and he consistently aimed to maintain the Monument’s natural appearance. This led him to carefully consider the prairie dog village “with the idea of possible recommendation relative to control and predation.”<sup>69</sup>

Joyner sought opportunities to expand the monument’s interpretive capacity, including a museum. During the early New Deal’s numerous agency reorganizations, Joyner established relations with state relief administrators. He met with Will G. Metz, State Emergency Relief Director, in Cheyenne to discuss future work on new and ongoing projects at the Monument.<sup>70</sup> Metz granted Joyner the authority to proceed with a Museum Preparation Project and a Survey of Biotic Communities, state projects employing individuals with the advice of Metz and the Western Field Headquarters. The projects began on April 17, 1934.

Joyner had long desired a museum that focused on the Tower’s geological origins, but New Deal priorities had placed it on a back burner. In 1935, he noted a productive visit from Arthur Woodward from the Berkeley Office in March but lamented that “[v]ery little has been accomplished on this work because of the lack of someone person who has no other problems to deal with.” Along with several enrollees, Joyner cataloged, numbered, and accessioned specimens and attempted the partial restoration of “several fossil bones of the *Diplodocus* type of Dinosaur which were found locally.” Though not for public viewing, Native American artifacts made up a portion of the Monument’s holdings. “We have finally gotten all of our Indian Material in one place and where it can be readily seen.” Joyner clearly collected enough “Indian Material” that he had some trouble keeping track of it.

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<sup>68</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, December 1934; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 92.

<sup>69</sup> Quotes from Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, December 1934.

<sup>70</sup> Newell Joyner, “Report of F.E.R.A. or S.E.R.A. Accomplishments,” January 28, 1935, Folder 619, Box 2156, RG 79, NARA.



The characteristically extreme climate conditions of the West were at play during 1935. Drought plagued the region during the early part of the year but was relieved by June.<sup>71</sup> “[I]n fact,” remarked Joyner, “the vegetation was the rankest I have ever seen it here. To quote the old timers “the grass was the best that it had ever been.” The effects of the Great Depression and drought were also easing by November 1935. Joyner reported, “I do not believe there is as great need as there has been in the past. A brighter outlook in connection with farm and ranch work, better weather conditions, some small timber operations as well as our ECW program and road construction by the State Highway Dept. and various WPA projects is responsible.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Proposed Expansion for Devils Tower National Monument**

New Deal programs and their infusion of funds and labor gave the National Park Service its first significant wave of park development, and a part of this focused on hardening or extending boundaries. At the Monument, Joyner began to consider expanding the reserve to include the Little Missouri Buttes.<sup>73</sup> In August 1932, Joyner wrote to Horace Albright that there was “considerable feeling that at least a part of that large reserve [Devils Tower Timber Reserve] should be again set aside, to include the Little Missouri Buttes and adjacent territory, in the Devils Tower National Monument.” The expansion had support from citizens in Hulett, Moorcroft, Sundance, and Gillette, Wyoming and Belle Fourche and Spearfish, South Dakota. These citizens believed a larger Monument benefitted the region and game populations, and local residents were “willing to part with their land for nominal sums.” Joyner justified expanding the Monument if “they were to acquire outstanding objects of scientific or historical interest.”<sup>74</sup>

But other than these values, Joyner considered lands in this “proposed area of 8,000 acres” generally worthless. He explained: “At present only a part of the land is of any value, that valuable portion constituting the small cultivated acreage and some grass-land for pasture. There are a number of springs, a lake, and a few wet-weather creeks embraced within the area...there is only one painted house to my knowledge, five unpainted and unoccupied houses, and several cabins which have been abandoned.” Administratively, controlling this area had advantages. The Monument could better manage local forests to prevent fire hazards and control insect invasions. Joyner had been dismayed with reckless, local lumber operations that failed to clean up their operations. He wanted the Tower set within a larger and beautiful landscape that included the surrounding forests. “The beauty of the Tower,” he explained, “lies to a great extent in its setting which is chiefly that of the forests.” The larger reserve would also better protect the local mule deer populations from depredations by destitute residents.<sup>75</sup>

Joyner believed the expansion could ease some of the tensions between the Monument and local ranchers. Obtaining and fencing the lands adjacent to the Tower leased to cattlemen

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<sup>71</sup> See North American Drought Atlas (<https://iridl.ldeo.columbia.edu/SOURCES/.LDEO/.TRL/.NADA2004/.pdsi-atlas.html>) and NOAA Climate Data Online (<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cdo-web/>), both accessed August, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> Quotes from Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1935, DETO 1624, copy at DETO Archive.

<sup>73</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 30-31.

<sup>74</sup> Joyner to Horace Albright, re: Monument extension, August 25, 1932, File 602, Box 585, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>75</sup> Joyner to Horace Albright, August 25, 1932.

could prevent stock trespassing. A larger Monument with more personnel could control problems with his human neighbors. For example, at least two residents who bootlegged moonshine ran their product through the Monument. Joyner believed that “[i]f this area was larger, if there were more than one ranger here, there would not be the feeling that a little acreage was attempting to control the residents of a much larger area. This problem arises not only in the matter of bootlegging but grazing, vandalism, fire protection, etc, etc. In other words, an increased area would give a prestige in the matters of administration.”<sup>76</sup>

In keeping with the New Deal program’s emphasis on tourist enhancement, the expanded area could attract more recreating visitors who passed through the area. The Little Missouri Buttes afforded travelers spectacular views of the Belle Fourche River, Bear Lodge Mountains, Black Hills, Big Horn Mountains, and the Tower. Cold and refreshing springs could service another campground “offering sites for people to set up camp for a week or two.” In alignment with the Monument’s mission, Joyner justified including the geologically-related buttes because they told a more comprehensive geological story of the entire area.<sup>77</sup>

The response from Horace Albright was frank and to the point. “I have no objection,” he explained, “to your quietly sounding out sentiment regarding this proposed addition to the monument and think it wise for you to proceed cautiously along this line, but I can say quite positively that if an extension is made of the monument, it will only be done on the very insistent demand of the Wyoming people and it would be best to let sentiment in favor of the addition grow rather than force the development in any way.” Albright was cautious about Wyoming support because the “general attitude toward the National Park Service is not at all satisfactory and it would bring us an enormous amount of misery if we should be found publicly suggesting further extensions of our territory in Wyoming other than those that we have been promoting for years.”<sup>78</sup> The message was clear. Do not agitate Wyomingites. Albright had other plans in the works that took priority.

Joyner relented, “I shall abide by your instructions, permitting the movement, if any, to grow from within without any suggestion whatsoever from any representative of the Service.” However, he added, without some prodding, it was unlikely that any movement to expand the Monument would grow beyond the few unorganized citizens who had expressed interest.<sup>79</sup> With that, the matter died for another couple of years. Yet, the rationale for expansion remained, albeit with an increased sense of caution.

Public support for incorporating the Little Missouri Buttes continued, however. The postmaster at Moorcroft, Mr. A. J. Macy, wrote to Joyner in June 1935 “asking if we were at all interested in such an enlargement, and if so there were a number of conservationally-minded individuals whom he felt would get behind a movement to call this to the attention of the Federal Government in Washington.” As the Monument custodian and an NPS employee, Joyner explained, he could not himself initiate land acquisition, and the NPS and the Monument had no

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<sup>76</sup> Joyner to Horace Albright, August 25, 1932.

<sup>77</sup> Joyner to Horace Albright, August 25, 1932.

<sup>78</sup> Albright to Newell Joyner, September 5, 1932, re: Monument extension, File 602, Box 585, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>79</sup> Joyner to Horace Albright, Sept. 11, 1932, File 602, Box 585, RG 79, NARA.

funds for it. Nevertheless, Joyner did emphasize his personal enthusiasm.<sup>80</sup> The two areas had historical connections. When the Government Land Office withdrew the Tower from entry in 1892 and designated the Devil's Tower Timber Reserve, the Little Missouri Buttes lay within the reserve. With Monument status in 1906, the government opened the remaining lands beyond the 1,152 acres surrounding the Tower. Joyner believed, "This resulted, as has so often happened, in the misuse of the land by small operators attempting to eke a living from this land which is chiefly of no value agriculturally and most of them have been forced to give it up." For the good of these poor sods who attempted to settle there and to ensure the protection of the Tower's ecology and geology, the Monument should have the Buttes.<sup>81</sup>

NPS Director Arno Cammerer opposed the idea. In July 1935, Associate Director A. E. Demaray visited the Tower and determined that only by declaring a Recreational Area Unit could the NPS acquire and control an expanded Monument footprint. According to Joyner, enthusiasm for the expansion was rampant throughout the region. He attended a meeting of Wyoming and South Dakota commercial clubs that expressed their "unselfish enthusiasm" for the project. A committee formed to advocate for Monument enlargement, and it secured "the approval of the Resettlement Administration, the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, the Congressional Delegations of Wyoming and western South Dakota, the State Government, the county government, and the landowners." Yet, even with this consideration and support, the proposal faltered due to lack of funds.<sup>82</sup>

The issue of annexing the Little Missouri Buttes did not die, however. In 1939, Joyner reported that the Crook County Agricultural Planning Board supported adding them to the Monument. Originally projected at 54 sections, 33 sections seemed more practical in the face of local opposition. For instance, in 1940, a local opponent named Mr. Edsall accepted Joyner's suggestion of a smaller land acquisition. Inside the agency, Joyner continued to press for the expansion, trying to convince Landscape Architects T.C. Vint and Howard Baker when they conducted an onsite evaluation of the Monument boundaries. The proposal went nowhere at the time and lay dormant until the 1950s.<sup>83</sup>

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps and NPS Leadership Remake the Tower Landscape**

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) "was a pet project that Roosevelt brought with him to the White House, a project he hoped would serve the cause of conservation, and conservation in his mind meant development."<sup>84</sup> Committed to hiring the unemployed to improve nature, Roosevelt had executed a similar project in 1931 when he was governor of New York. It primarily undertook forestry projects including reforestation, firefighting, insect control,

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<sup>80</sup> Quote from Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, November 1935; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 31; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 92.

<sup>81</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, November 1935.

<sup>82</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 31; Quotes from Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, November 1935; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 92-93.

<sup>83</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 31-32.

<sup>84</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 69.

roads and trails, and recreation facilities development. With unemployment reaching twenty-five percent in 1933 (and even worse among the nation's youth), Congress passed the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act on March 31, 1933. The ECW evolved into the CCC, also known as Roosevelt's "Tree Army." Mainly providing work relief, the program also included the slightly contradictory goals to develop and conserve natural resources. Coordinating this unemployment program took the cooperation of four departments – War, Agriculture, Interior, and Labor. The Department of Labor and Veterans Administration selected the young men for the CCC ranks, and the Army Reserve provided officers to manage the camps. The Army's authority and part in the CCC broadened when NPS Director Horace Albright and Forest Service Chief Robert Stuart expressed concern about their agencies' lack of manpower. The Army operated and supervised the camps, while the Forest Service and the National Park Service gave the men worthy projects.<sup>85</sup>

The distribution of tasks to various agencies allowed the CCC to mobilize quickly to priority projects. Yet, sometimes the situation left doubt as to which branch was in charge at the job site. The Monument's Custodian Newell Joyner took an active role in the planning and execution of CCC projects.<sup>86</sup> But occasionally NPS engineers and administrators questioned his authority. For example, on August 17, 1935, the acting Director of the NPS, Hillory A. Tolson responded to a letter from the Chief Engineer Frank A. Kittredge concerning the need for an engineer to take charge of certain projects. Kittredge believed that the reconstruction of the timber approaches to the Monument's bridge and the oiling of the entrance road should be "placed in the hands of an engineer to avoid duplication of responsibility and the likelihood of undesirable things creeping in." But an engineer (H. M. Stewart) split his time on projects in Devils Tower National Monument and Wind Cave National Park. Tolson thought it "undesirable...for an administrative official of a park or monument ... to have technical engineering details and responsibilities imposed upon him when he is not trained as an engineer." Joyner should be involved in "the general plan and progress of any engineering work being carried on" where he was the administrator. Joyner's role, Tolson pointed out, was to determine Monument needs and whether it required a permanent or new engineer to oversee existing projects.<sup>87</sup>

The New Deal quickly innovated on its programs' bureaucracy, and Roosevelt sought effective leaders for his prized projects. Roosevelt chose the labor leader Robert Fechner to direct the ECW, and the movements of the CCC that began in the East and moved rapidly across the nation. In light of extraordinarily high unemployment numbers, the ECW used specific criteria to fill ECW positions. As historian Neil Maher noted, "Franklin Roosevelt's gendered

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<sup>85</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 1-4, 10-11, 53-58; The ECW was renamed the CCC in 1937 after the press continued to refer to it as the Tree Army; Robert Fechner, "The Civilian Conservation Corps Program," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 194, no. 1 (November 1, 1937): 129-40; Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 70; Donald C Swain, "The National Park Service and the New Deal, 1933-1940," *Pacific Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (1972): 312-32.

<sup>86</sup> On January 1, 1949, the title of custodian of a national monument was changed to superintendent throughout the NPS, although at some locations the title changed in 1946 or 1947.

<sup>87</sup> Hillory A. Tolson to Frank A. Kittredge, letter, August 17, 1935, Folder 621, Box 2157, RG 79, NARA.

view of labor also determined which men could enroll in the CCC. In a conscious effort not to interfere with employment opportunities for male breadwinners, who were the primary focus of most New Deal legislation, those wishing to join the Corps had to be single and eighteen to twenty-five years old.”<sup>88</sup> The men who composed the camps of 200 came from families on relief. To alleviate their burdens, the CCC provided the enrollees food and lodging and sent \$25 of their \$30 per month to their families. African Americans were eligible for the CCC but served in segregated camps. Legislation opened registration to “a small number of World War I veterans, Native Americans, and what the CCC called ‘Local Experienced Men,’ [LEM] all of whom could be married and over twenty-five.” Early on in the program, the Park Service began to hire college students to fill roles as specialized technical advisors.<sup>89</sup>

The enrollees at Devils Tower had to enlist for a single six-month enrollment period with the possibility of enrolling for a second term. As the program continued, the maximum number of enrollment periods expanded to upwards of two years. In 1935, the administration broadened the ECW in size and extended the age range to 17-28. To curb costs and to make the CCC a permanent government program, Roosevelt began reducing the size of the CCC in 1936. Fechner instructed the Park Service to start limiting the number of their camps and their size to 160 men. By 1937, even as Congress approved three more years of the CCC, the NPS considered what these reductions meant for the projects they had planned or initiated. By the early 1940s, WWII cut into recruitment as higher paying national defense jobs” and military training in the CCC program lured away the young men and threatened completion of park projects.<sup>90</sup>

While the parks did have the CCC labor, they applied the men’s muscle to the NPS master plans that outlined park development goals for the next six years. The Park Service Washington Office Divisions of Forestry and Planning had official control over approving or denying projects based on the “type of work, funds to be expended on structures and equipment, need for skilled labor, and impact on the land.” “Landscape architects, foresters, engineers, and historical technicians” reviewed plans affecting natural and cultural resources “to ensure protection from damage or overdevelopment.” Ultimately, however, responsibility for planning and on-the-ground work fell to each park superintendent or custodian.<sup>91</sup>

Five percent of the total United States male population joined the CCC during its tenure, and the NPS made effective use of the productive capacity of the program. “The Park Service,” according to CCC historian John Paige, “saw the program as a way to accomplish conservation and development within the national parks and to assist in the creation and enlargement of a nationwide state parks system.” By its end in 1942, the CCC had a total of 2 million enrollees run through its ranks who worked in 198 camps in 94 National Park Service areas. The CCC was

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<sup>88</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 11-12; Quote from Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, 82.

<sup>89</sup> Quote from Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, 82; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 11, 19, 45-46, 73-74; John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), chapter 2.

<sup>90</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 72, 128-29; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 17, 21-25, 77, quote on 30-31.

<sup>91</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 38-39, 40, quote on 38-39. On the NPS and the CCC in Wyoming, see Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 137-147.

a widely popular program that contemporaries ranked as the “third greatest accomplishment of the New Deal Program.” In fact, the CCC successes bolstered public opinion about the New Deal and helped Roosevelt advance his other measures. Even when support for Roosevelt and the New Deal became politically toxic in Wyoming, the Civilian Conservation Corps remained quite popular.<sup>92</sup>

“The response to the establishment of the ECW/CCC was enthusiastic,” according to Cassity, and “[c]ommunities across Wyoming, and the nation, clamored for camps and enrollees to be located near them.” By August of 1933, there were thirteen hundred CCC camps across the nation with twenty-four camps in Wyoming, the majority supervised by either the National Park Service or the Forest Service. In 1935, the state’s camp numbers reached a peak at thirty-two, but within two years the number dropped to fifteen as Roosevelt’s Second New Deal funded current projects but not additional work. The NPS and its custodians and superintendents were happy to have the boys in green improving park infrastructure, but local communities were also thankful to see the boys at play and patronizing their businesses.<sup>93</sup>

### **Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW or CCC-ID)**

Though considered a success in achieving its goals of work relief and conservation, the CCC selectively employed its labor force and its community beneficiaries. The agency segregated companies by race, and the companies chosen for Devils Tower included only white men and not Native Americans. The CCC primarily deployed Native Americans for work on reservations. The Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW or CCC-ID) “allowed reservation Indians to direct their own work in separate camps.”<sup>94</sup> The IECW was a separate program where local agencies selected laborers, exempted camps from some of the military aspects of typical CCC life, and assigned primarily reservation-based projects. Tribal members did not have to adhere to the standard CCC age range (though they had to be physically able), could return to their homes whenever needed, and could live either in a camp or at home on the reservation. Unlike the NPS, the reservations and the new bureaucracy that developed to assist with this program did not have master plans already awaiting implementation. This resulted in plenty of confusion and waste at the start of the CCC-ID. Once the program began to get its footing, most of the projects related to forestry, agriculture, or range development. In the end, 85,000 men served in the CCC-ID across seventy-two reservations [78 by one historians count] to protect forests, improve grazing and agricultural land, construct telephone lines, and build dams and reservoirs.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Quotes from Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 126 &132; Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 127; T.A. Larson, “The New Deal in Wyoming,” 259-260.

<sup>93</sup> In 1933 there were under 5,000 enrollees in Wyoming. The numbers jumped up again in 1939 to 27 camps. Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 70-71, 80, 191a, quote on 70.

<sup>94</sup> Calvin W. Gower, “The CCC Indian Division: Aid for Depressed Americans, 1933-1942,” *Minnesota History* 43, no. 1 (Spring, 1972): 6; Quote from Roger Bromert, “The Sioux and the Indian-CCC,” *South Dakota History* 8 (Fall 1978): 344.

<sup>95</sup> Gower, “The CCC Indian Division,” 6-7, 12; Donald L. Parman, “The Indian and the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *Pacific Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (February 1971): 43-44, 54.

The successes of the CCC-ID, however, were uneven and varied from reservation to reservation and from project to project.<sup>96</sup> In the case of the Sioux, the effectiveness of the program was debatable. The Rosebud Tribal Council criticized it as of limited use and done primarily for large cattlemen who benefitted from the dam projects built using Native American labor. Ultimately, the CCC-ID worked like temporary life support and did little to nothing to change the impoverished nature of reservations. In the late 1970s, one historian saw the New Deal program through rose tinted glasses: “the CCC-ID kept many poverty-stricken Indians from starving and supplied hundreds of enrollees with skills and proper work habits necessary for off-reservation jobs. That the corps gave the Sioux confidence and a new outlook on life became evident by the great exodus of Indian men from the reservation to military service and private industries. Moreover, it helped reverse the downward drift of the Sioux and gave them something to cling to during the desperate years of the 1930s.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, Indian Commissioner John Collier intended to restore tribal governments and self-rule, to revitalize Native American culture and religion, and to make the fifty-two million acres of tribal lands productive for those who desired to remain on the reservations. For those individuals who wished to leave the reservation, Collier also hoped to give them tools to be successful. In the end, however, the most significant effect of the CCC-ID may have been to encourage an exodus of young men from reservations across the nation.<sup>98</sup>

Ironically, had the Tower remained on Native American land adjacent to the Great Sioux Reservation—lands part of the Sioux Treaty Lands or “Indian Territory” under the 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties, the CCC-ID would have lived and worked in this sacred space.<sup>99</sup> The landscape would have looked very different if that had occurred, a 1930s study suggested. In 1934, just as the CCC was getting off its feet, the NPS hired anthropologist Ralph Beals to explore the nature of Native American claims concerning the Tower. Although Beals stated that he found no evidence that any tribes had been in the area long enough to develop cultural ties to the Tower, anthropologists since the 1930s argue that tribes indeed had significant cultural relationships with the Tower.<sup>100</sup> Even if these lands had remained in Native American hands, likely NPS and CCC officials would have hesitated to apply funds to tribal objectives and to the Indian Service leaders who may not have initiated projects meeting agency goals of conservation and general employment.<sup>101</sup> Though perhaps not obvious, the Monument’s CCC-Era landscape was a political, racialized, and gendered place that privileged one vision of the land over others.

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<sup>96</sup> Parman, “The Indian and the Civilian CCC,” 55.

<sup>97</sup> Bromert, “The Sioux and the Indian-CCC,” 355-356.

<sup>98</sup> Parman, “The Indian and the CCC,” 41, 56.

<sup>99</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010), 63-66.

<sup>100</sup> Ralph L. Beals, “Ethnological Report: Devil’s Tower National Monument,” U. S. National Park Service, March 20, 1934; Peter Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

<sup>101</sup> Gower, “The CCC Indian Division,” 12.

### **CCC History at Devils Tower – Camp Life and Chronology**

Wyoming's climate challenged the CCC and affected how the federal government administered it. In 1933, the program did not operate during the winter, leaving Wyoming camps open for one enrollment period. By the fourth enrollment period, one hardy camp in Yellowstone National Park remained year-round, but CCC director Robert Fechner preferred temporary lodging for state camps. In the Northern Great Plains and the Mountain West's extreme cold, weather made it unsafe and very difficult for enrollees (many of whom came from milder climates) to live in the military-style canvas tents typical of temporary lodging. By 1935, portable wooden structures became more common, and while they were not permanent structures, they were a step up from canvas tents. Cost motivated the change. Designed to only last about eighteen months, the tents were expensive to put up and take down. In 1934, the Army decided to phase out tents in favor of easy-to assemble, prefabricated sturdy buildings with interchangeable parts for barracks, administration buildings, recreational facilities, or mess halls. Mass production of these buildings began in 1935, and by 1936, Fechner ordered that they become standard for ECW camps.<sup>102</sup>

A combination of enrollee muscle, local labor, "local experienced men" (LEMs), and local materials/supplies typically built this CCC infrastructure. Ties to the community proved crucial in maintaining positive politics and relieving some degree of regional unemployment. Because CCC camps housed upwards of two hundred men, the camps were sizeable. A characteristic camp had "11 buildings including 4 barracks, a mess hall, a recreation hall, an infirmary, officers' quarters, truck garages, latrine, and shower buildings. The recreation hall, not included in tent camps, was 20 by 140 feet and contained writing and reading rooms, a library, and a lecture hall. Cooking and heating stoves, fire extinguishers, and lighting plants were purchased for the permanent camps."<sup>103</sup> A historian of the CCC and the NPS described the camps as follows: "A standard camp was formed in a rough "U" shape, with recreation halls, a garage, a hospital, administrative buildings, a mess hall, officers' quarters, enrollee barracks, and a schoolhouse, all constructed of wood; it numbered approximately 24 structures. Each building fronted a cleared space that was used for assemblies and sports activities. The exteriors of the structures were sometimes painted brown or green, but more often the wood was creosoted or covered with tar paper. Some camps were wired for electricity."<sup>104</sup> Actual camps sometimes varied from this standard, but the basic plan gave uniformity to camps nationwide.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 72; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 18, 70-71; 20,000 of the buildings were used in 1,500 locations.

<sup>103</sup> Alison T. Otis, *The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-42* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1986), chapter 12, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/ccc/ccc/chap12.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/ccc/ccc/chap12.htm), accessed August 9, 2023; quoted in Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 72.

<sup>104</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> Detailed architectural drawings and blueprints can be found in Otis, *The Forest Service and the CCC*, chapter 12.



In June 1934, Newell Joyner applied for a 200-man camp to undertake goals of the Monument's master plan.<sup>106</sup> In April 1935, supplies and equipment began to arrive, and by June 16<sup>th</sup> workers were constructing the Tower's CCC camp, NM-1-W.<sup>107</sup> In early May, Resident Landscape Architect Howard Baker reported that "Captain Painter, in charge of E.C.W. camp location from Fort Warren, Cheyenne, Wyoming, with Custodian Joyner selected a camp location. We have prepared a plan showing the layout for this camp."<sup>108</sup> Wyoming CCC Company 8444 from Guernsey, Wyoming, helped ready the camp for its future occupants.<sup>109</sup> A CCC camp newspaper described the enrollees as, "very fine boys and efficient, they underwent untold hardships trying to develop the camp with the material at hand."<sup>110</sup> Company 3851 from northeastern Oklahoma completed the camp the first week of August.<sup>111</sup> According to historian John Daugherty, plans for the CCC camp "included a headquarters building, a hospital and storage building, a messhall, a bath house, a latrine, quarters for officers and foremen, and five buildings to be utilized as barracks."<sup>112</sup>

With a strength of 190 men, Company 3851 had a brief stay at the Tower. Nevertheless, Joyner considered them "of a type readily adaptable to the work we contemplated here."<sup>113</sup> These men ushered in the Tower's CCC era as they participated in projects from August to the last week of October 1935. According to the CCC camp newspaper, the enrollees improved the site by "leaps and bounds till by the time they had been here for six weeks our camp was on[e] of the best in the District."<sup>114</sup> Soon after, however, most of the men deployed to the Grand Canyon and or Guernsey. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the 219-strong Company 2555 out of southern Kentucky that required some "breaking in" replaced them.<sup>115</sup> They came from a coal-mining region, and some were "extremely young," which made the group as a whole less adaptable than Company 3851. The Kentuckians had "an altogether different psychology than we have previously met, but by the end of the month they had become acclimated to life in the camp and to the work projects and had gained an idea of the methods on the various projects."<sup>116</sup> As southerners, these men had to adapt quickly to a frozen north that turned out to be "one of the coldest winters that Wyoming has had in a long time."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> On Joyner's applications for a CCC camp, Folder 619, Box 2156, RG 79, NARA; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 94.

<sup>107</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, November 1935.

<sup>108</sup> Howard W. Baker, "Report to the Chief Architect through the Custodian of Devil's Tower National Monument by May 9 and 10, 1937," DETO 1626, MORU MPR.

<sup>109</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 94. As far as is evident from the available documents, the Monument only hosted white CCC Companies.

<sup>110</sup> "Monument Mirror," August 10, 1936, Company 2555, Camp NM-1, Devils Tower National Monument, Vol. 1. No. 1X. p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935; "Monument Mirror," August 10, 1936.

<sup>112</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 29.

<sup>113</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935, DETO 1624, MORU MPR.

<sup>114</sup> "Monument Mirror," August 10, 1936.

<sup>115</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935; "Monument Mirror," August 10, 1936. Joyner reports 219 men, while the camp newspaper reports 192 enrollees.

<sup>116</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935.

<sup>117</sup> "Monument Mirror," August 10, 1936.

To compensate for the young men's inexperience, in April of 1933, the CCC decided to allow for the hiring of LEMs—local experienced men. This move ensured successful projects and garnered support from local communities and their unemployed men with trade/technical experience.<sup>118</sup> Joyner noted that the Tower was “extremely fortunate in securing a group of LEM's practically everyone of whom is capable of acting as a leader in the field.”<sup>119</sup> “Whatever degree of efficiency we have attained in the work here,” he said, “is due largely to the availability of such a fine group of LEM's.” One notable local to fill the position of Junior Foreman was George F. Grenier, known for “operating a store just outside the entrance to the Monument.” Some of the most experienced foremen came from previous postings at Yellowstone, and one had “served in various foreman positions here [at the Tower] for the past two years under CWA, ERA, and PWA.”<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, only so many LEM positions existed, and since CCC men regularly came from other states, applying their labor to Tower did little to ease the burden of drought and unemployment plaguing Crook County.<sup>121</sup>

Turnover occurred frequently in the Tower camp. On April 1, 1936, Joyner said goodbye to “most of the enrollees returned to their homes in Kentucky, only about 66 remaining in camp.” About two weeks later, on April 14, “about 98 enrollees, all Ohio boys, were moved into this camp.” According to Joyner, this group was far more suitable. “The new ‘rookies’ are very good workers and most of them have had at least some high school work; just the reverse of the past two groups.” By July, another 40 Ohioans made their way to camp.<sup>122</sup> As work picked up, Joyner took clear leadership, dedicating much of his time to supervising maintenance and construction.<sup>123</sup>

On August 10, 1936, with high spirits, the CCC enrollees put out a retrospective edition of Company 2555's publication “Monument Mirror.” They were clearly proud of the improvements they had made to the Monument and to their camp over the past year. They created “one of the nicest library rooms in the district,” laid stone walks, installed a drinking fountain in the middle of the camp, placed curtains in the recreation hall, painted the floors of the mess hall, painted the walls (albas-tone), floor (smoke gray) and ceiling (albas-tone) of the infirmary, and they were in the process of painting walls and ceilings of the rec hall.<sup>124</sup> They also painted the canteen walls a pea green, the chairs black and tin, and the stove silver.<sup>125</sup> By the end of August, to attend to their educations and their work on “Monument Mirror,” the men remodeled the barracks school room and partitioned it into three rooms: “one for the shop, one

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<sup>118</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, Chapter 2.

<sup>119</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935.

<sup>120</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, December 10, 1935.

<sup>121</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 80; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 10, 1936, p. 3. The numbers for the first round of enrollees from Ohio are slightly different from Joyner's estimate of “about 98.” The CCC enrollees indicated that the group was “80 strong” in April with 40 more added in July.

<sup>123</sup> Newell Joyner, Monthly Report, June 13, 1936 (for the months of March, April, and May 1936), DETO 1625, MORU MPR; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 97; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 32.

<sup>124</sup> “Albas” refers to English roses, white to medium pink in color. “Monument Mirror,” August 10, 1936, p. 1, 5.

<sup>125</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 10, 1936, p. 5.

for the newspaper staff and class room and the other as a construction and writing room.”<sup>126</sup> A “company owned generator” fed from a gasoline tank buried underground powered lights in the camp.<sup>127</sup>

Through the fall, the CCC boys labored on camp improvements. By September 24, 1936, the enrollees observed that, “[t]he rip-roar and noise around the Tower is about ended.” Using a Studebaker 3-ton truck, the men hoisted rocks and laid them to complete the walks, “which are to beautify our camp,” from Headquarters to No. 3 barracks and to the Infirmary. Workers installed a new sewer meant to “keep waste matter from backing up and covering the floor in the bath-house” neared completion.”<sup>128</sup> Even while young men moved out of the camp, the improvements continued. The last week of October, Company 2555 was busy “around the camp making ready for the movement.” Planners considered the “large program of improvements” quite costly as they “estimated that eight thousand feet of lumber” will be used for the projects. Lt. Reeder, Doctor Mowry, and Mr. Frink planned a number of “improvements” including: completing the walks, erecting a reading room, adding baffle-boards to all of the windows, rearranging the fire buckets in the barracks, erecting a pantry in the kitchen, painting the insides of the barracks, rewiring the barracks to cut the wattage on the light plan, planting shrubs in the company area, erecting a new partition in the supply room, enlarging the light plant, sealing the pump house, and put up a clothes line and organize a company laundry. The enrollees did not appreciate one measure to modify the barracks taken by Captain Allen, however. Allen ordered the barrack floors covered with a “thick layer of sawdust.” The result, lamented the enrollees, was that “they are now very unsanitary.”<sup>129</sup>

### **Company 3887**

By late October 1936, a new company came to occupy the Monument. Composed of twenty-five men from Wyoming and one-hundred-fifty men from Oklahoma, Company 3887 replaced Company 2555. Upon arriving, the newcomers spent “some weeks in camp getting it in shape” and then applied their labor to Monument priorities.<sup>130</sup> In mid-December, Company 3887 was settling in nicely and publishing its own paper titled, “Devils World.” The camp underwent several improvements including finishing the reading room and anticipated construction of new lockers and barracks painting. The school room where they attended classes and lectures, held company meetings and church services, and watched motion pictures in number 3 barracks received new paint and benches for the entire company. The 130 CCC men who remained at the Monument labored to make “the park a better and more beautiful place.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 31, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Emergency Conservation Work (ECW), Office of the Director, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936, Box 246, RG 35, NARA.

<sup>128</sup> “Monument Mirror,” October 21, 1936, Vol. 1. No. II. p. 4; “Monument Mirror,” September 24, 1936, Vol. 1. No. X, 3-5.

<sup>129</sup> “Monument Mirror,” October 21, 1936, quotes on p. 1, 2, 5.

<sup>130</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 99; See also Laurence Hallum’s 1937 DETO scrapbook, located at DETO Archive.

<sup>131</sup> Quote from “Devils World,” Company 3887, Camp NM-1, Devils Tower National Monument, Vol. 1 no. III, December 18, 1936, p. 4; see also “Devils World,” January 14, 1937, p. 1.

Even the harsh Wyoming January of 1937 did not deter the enrollees from work projects. According to “Devils World,” “[t]he boys have been finding out, the past few days, just what winter in Wyoming can be like.” One particularly cold day with temperatures below zero when the boys hunkered inside, the enrollees got a lesson in firefighting in the Recreation Hall. In an incredible feat of manufacturing, in five days, five enrollees built 150 lockers! To “brighten up” their barracks and make them feel “more like home to all of us,” they painted their ceiling light cream, the walls buff, and added light blue trim. They redecorated the mess hall, installed built in benches in the rec hall, and hoped to decorate the interior of the bathhouse with aluminum paint.<sup>132</sup>

While busy during the frigid season, the young Oklahomans took pride in their accomplishments at Devils Tower. In their camp newsletter, they articulated their understanding of their work’s purpose; they were building a better park as they received training beneficial to them. “Next summer hundreds of tourists will leave DTNM in a happy and satisfied state of mind because they have seen one of the outstanding wonders of Nature. Happier still perhaps, because the park has been made more comfortable and beautiful by the efforts of the CCC boys this winter.”<sup>133</sup>

Improving the park and training the enrollees, however, meant constant maintenance and problem solving. The CCC camp used coal as an energy source, and about 50 tons of it was “scattered over ground and slaked. The grindstone motor released its exhaust directly into the inside of the garage. The technical service oil and gas house and the Army oil house did not have sand barrels or “No Smoking” signs nor did the garage. The gas pump from the underground tank was in the same house as the motor oils. An inspector noted that these “deficiencies will be corrected.”<sup>134</sup> He also observed the work vehicles’ degraded state. The Monument’s technical service used ten trucks and the Army two; all were in good condition in 1936.<sup>135</sup> But, by the July 8<sup>th</sup> 1937, three trucks only displayed in fair condition, and one of the Army trucks was in the shop.<sup>136</sup>

Construction, even with the purpose of work relief, required tools and machinery that Devils Tower had long lacked. The New Deal gave the Monument opportunity to acquire them. In 1935, Joyner returned the portable trail compressor that he had borrowed from Rocky Mountain National Park because the Monument finally had one of its own.<sup>137</sup> This trail compressor came with “many small tools [and] the following pieces of heavy equipment: 4 – 1 ½ Ton Convertible Dump Ford V-8 1 – 3 ton convertible dump Studebaker, 2 – 1 ½ ton stake body

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<sup>132</sup> “Devils World,” January 14, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>133</sup> “Devils World,” January 14, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>134</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937, Folder Wyoming NM-1 Devils Tower (1), Box 246, RG 35, NARA.

<sup>135</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936, WY NM-1 (2), Box 246, RG 35, NARA.

<sup>136</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937.

<sup>137</sup> The centrality of petroleum in tourist spaces became a common feature of building and structuring the national parks in the post-WWII period. Mark Boxwell and Will Wright, “Postwar Play and Petroleum: Tourism and Energy Abundance in Rocky Mountain National Park,” *Journal of Tourism History* 9, 2-3 (2017): 119-138.

Ford V-8, 2 – ½ ton Pickups, Ford V-8, 1 – Allis-Chalmers 40 Crawler-Type Tractor, 2 – 20 Cletrac crawler-type tractors.”<sup>138</sup> In 1936, the Monument added the following to its toolbox: one Stanley “45” combination plane, one floor scraper, an automatic drill, electric lantern, a welding station, 3-ton chain hoist, and a heavy-duty socket wrench set.<sup>139</sup> Sometimes, the men had too many tools. In 1937, the camp inspector listed six nine-foot cross-cut saws and one Multnomah power drag saw with a gasoline engine that had been with the camp for a year and never used.<sup>140</sup> The parks such as Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone formed a tools exchange network that spread equipment throughout the Service.<sup>141</sup>

Primarily, however, the New Deal goal was to put as many men to work as possible. At times, some officials felt that they had too many men. In fact, Forest Service and Park Service officials did not believe that the two-hundred-man quota for CCC camps was necessary. Most of the jobs in the forests and parks did not require such a large labor force. Nevertheless, they complied with the wishes of Roosevelt because the program itself was such a windfall for both agencies. With so many available human bodies, muscle powered the CCC, not heavy equipment. If the stored caloric energy of a CCC camp could complete the job, there was no need to purchase equipment like diesel-chugging earthmovers.<sup>142</sup>

### The CCC Enrollees

The CCC era at the Monument was a transformative time for both the enrollees and the Tower. Under the magnificent geological feature, they worked hard, learned lessons, taught visitors, fought fires, and experienced the surrounding communities. During their relatively brief stay, the CCC labored to modify the Monument’s landscape in significant ways. The CCC enrollees were not simply soldiers in the government’s fight to modernize the Monument and control the natural world during the New Deal. As they followed orders to modify it, the men became a part of the Monument. As it physically transformed their bodies, their labor embedded in the structures and landscape that they changed.<sup>143</sup>

At a most base level, the young men intersected with the Tower environment by simply protecting their bodies from the elements. The cold Eastern Wyoming winters constantly threatened them, and it occasionally caused work stoppages and slowdowns for the enrollees and the superintendent. For example, staggeringly low temperatures in 1936 put a sharp halt to the CCC’s 1935 momentum. January and February brought below zero temperatures. “This long cold

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<sup>138</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1935.

<sup>139</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, March 4, 1936 (for the months of December 1935, January 1936, and February 1936), DETO 1625, copy in DETO Archive; Joyner, Monthly Report, June 1936.

<sup>140</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937.

<sup>141</sup> An exchange with Yellowstone in 1933 was noted; Joyner, Monthly Report, December 1933, DETO 1622.

<sup>142</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 12.f

<sup>143</sup> On the connection between human labor and nature, see Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012); Neil Maher, “A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.” *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (2002): 438; Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

spell,” Joyner reported, “placed the work of the CCC at a complete standstill for the first two weeks of the month [February]...this is the longest cold spell we have had since our weather station was established in July, 1932.”<sup>144</sup>

A poem/song found in the August 31, 1936 edition of “Monument Mirror” nicely expressed the environmental challenges encountered by enrollees.<sup>145</sup>

I've reached the land of burning Heat.  
Where nothing grows for man to eat.  
The wind it blows with scorching heat.  
Wyoming land is hard to beat.  
O, Wyoming land, Sweet, Wyoming land.  
As on the burning soil I stand,  
I look away across the plains  
And wonder why it never rains.  
We have no wheat, We have no Oats  
We have no corn to feed the [illeg]  
Our chickens are too poor to eat,  
The pigs go squealing thru the street.  
The hoppers ate the wagon box  
Our fortunes ship is on the rocks  
We do not live, we only stay,  
We are too poor to get away.

Although administrators pushed safety, the men's bodies occasionally broke down in response to pressures from the environment. A safety committee met weekly, concerned with adequate fire protection measures and equipment, guardrails, seatbelts, and governors on the trucks, and suitable eye protection.<sup>146</sup> To protect themselves and the camp, in 1936, the CCC enrollees had ample firefighting materials such as 14 ladders, 16 water buckets, 23 fire extinguishers, 5 water barrels, 2 sand barrels, 200 feet of garden hose, and one lonely fire alarm.<sup>147</sup> In 1937, they had 1 ladder to each building, 17 fire extinguishers, 7 water barrels, 37 water buckets, 3 sand barrels, and 1 fire bell.<sup>148</sup> The nearest local fire department was approximately 60 miles away, so the CCC enrollees depended on themselves to fight any fires that occurred in their camp and around the Monument.

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<sup>144</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Monthly Report, March 4, 1936.

<sup>145</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 31, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936, Folder Wyoming NM-1 Devils Tower (2), Box 246, RG 35, NARA; Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937, WY NM-1 (1), Box 246, RG 35, NARA; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 100-101; See also Laurence Hallum's 1937 scrapbook, located at DETO Archive.

<sup>147</sup> Emergency Conservation Work, Office of the Director, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936, WY NM-1 (2), Box 246, RG 35, NARA.

<sup>148</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937.

Illness and injury threatened the enrollees and their production. Sickesses like the flu that hit enrollees hard during the January and February of 1937 halted work progress.<sup>149</sup> Injuries were a regular feature of laboring on the Monument landscape. “On March 10, 1936,” Joyner reported, “we were unfortunate to have an accident happen to our ECW Senior Foreman (Landscape) John Helmick. Mr. Helmick was injured while prying on a large rock with a bar. The injury being hernia.”<sup>150</sup> Another accident occurred on June 25<sup>th</sup> where an “ECW Senior Foreman (Forestry) was injured while fighting a forest fire about 5 miles south of Sundance, Wyoming. While walking over a rocky ledge along the fire line, Mr. Baldwin slipped and injured his right knee.”<sup>151</sup> On August 31, 1936, the CCC enrollees reported that “[t]he casualties of this month have not been as many as those of last month. By this is meant time off or lost time casualties. The number of men coming in for treatment is about the same as those of last month and these are mostly caused from dropping rocks on fingers, toes, legs, and arms. Joe Zarachowicz accidentally cut his leg on a cross-cut saw one week ago Friday.”<sup>152</sup> Overall, however, Joyner lauded the Tower’s solid safety record and indicated how little time was lost to accidents.<sup>153</sup>

Devils Tower National Monument was not free of tragedy. “A very serious accident occurred on March 8, 1936, 50 miles wester of the Devils Tower,” Joyner stated, “in which eight enrollees of our ECW camp were involved. Four boys were killed and four boys were seriously injured.” The enrollees had come down with the mumps, and the Commander decided to send them to Fort Mackenzie in Sheridan, Wyoming for treatment. For reasons unknown, on the way, the Company ambulance “left the road on a straight-away upon approaching a bridge. The ambulance was completely demolished.”<sup>154</sup>

The CCC experience was not always salubrious. Company 2555’s sanitation and water appeared adequate. The infirmary and officer and technician quarters had flush toilets that drained into a septic tank. The latrine was clean and screened. But it sat in an undesirable location at the center of a square bordered by the camp buildings. The wastewater from the kitchen ran through grease and soap traps and flowed into soakage pits where the earth absorbed it. Workers removed garbage daily, but throughout the day it lay on an unscreened, concrete rack. In the kitchen and mess hall, the ventilators had no screens, and the cooks wore “soiled trousers and stripped from the waist up, and without caps.”<sup>155</sup> A year later in Company 3887’s camp, conditions deteriorated further. The bath house had missing valve handles, the latrine pit

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<sup>149</sup> “Devils World,” February 6, 1937, Company 3887, Camp NM-1, Devils Tower National Monument, Vol. 1. No. 3. In both “Monument Mirror” and “Devils World” there was a regular section concerning what was going on in the infirmary. This is a rich repository of enrollee injuries.

<sup>150</sup> Newell Joyner, Custodian’s Report June 13, 1936 (for the months of March, April, and May 1936), DETO 1625, MORU MPR, copy at DETO.

<sup>151</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, June 1936, DETO 1625, MORU MPR, copy at DETO.

<sup>152</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 31, 1936, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, June 13, 1936; Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, June, 1936.

<sup>154</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, June 13, 1936; Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 32; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 97.

<sup>155</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936, RG 35 Box 246 WY NM-1 (2).

was almost full and fly-ridden due to a poorly-fitting screen door, and the urinals were dirty. Kitchen conditions resembled Company 2555's: bent and uncovered cans with garbage rested on an unscreened rack, cooks working in dirty linen, a kitchen stove broken "for some time," the ice box preserving milk and meat for only two days. The laundry service out of Gillette, Wyoming, was "very unsatisfactory" and unable "to properly handle camp laundry." Consequently, all of the sheets in camp were badly soiled.<sup>156</sup>

Obtaining adequate drinking water became a problem by July 1936. The water from the well (See Appendix 3, CCC Structures, #42) that supplied the CCC companies was for all practical purposes unpotable. "Exceptionally hard," it had a "mild laxative effect" when consumed. Tourist demands and fire protection occasionally cut off the other water source, the spring, from the CCC camp. In the winter, its line was prone to freeze. The Landscape Architect rejected a proposal to bury the 2,100-foot pipe because he deemed it "undesirable." Conditions were so intolerable that the Army threatened to withdraw the camp in late October 1936 if the Monument did not remedy the situation. Soon after, administrators made plans to drill a new artesian well. But enrollees failed to have this fresh water until the couple of months before departing the Monument. The improved water supply served staff and visitors far more than the boys who laid the lines.

The camp made efforts to provide recreational opportunities. Like youths in the rest of the nation, the youths enjoyed a "picture show" twice a week. For indoor recreation, the camp had a piano, pool table, 8 sets of checkers, 2 sets of chess, dominos, cribbage, ping pong table and equipment, 2 footballs, 2 bullseyes and 4 darts, 1 baseball game. Out of doors, the men had equipment for baseball, softball, croquet, tennis, badminton, football, volleyball, basketball, soccer, boxing, horseshoes, medicine balls, and a shot put. Some of the men were quite athletic, and Company 3887 had six skilled boxers who won six out of eight sub-district tournaments. CCC enrollees took leave on weekends, and thoroughly enjoyed occasional recreational trips on Company trucks to the Black Hills. Clearly, CCC leaders thought about occupying the enrollees with wholesome activities. Likely maintaining such leisurely pursuits took effort. In 1937, they could not use the pool table, and "[p]ractically nothing has been spent for recreational equipment or for any camp refinements during the last eight months."<sup>157</sup>

The young men's bodies preoccupied the CCC administrators, and they regularly touted the healthy, bodily effects of CCC handiwork as a central benefit of the program. Laboring in the national parks could "restore the enrollees to physical health."<sup>158</sup> Assistant Forester C. M. Granger noted in 1933 that, "[a]n average of ten pounds gain in weight, deep tans from the waist up, restored spirits, testify to what it has done for the enrollees."<sup>159</sup> In 1937, Robert Fechner stated that the youths gained between 9 to 30 pounds and reduced the death rate. "As health and

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<sup>156</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937.

<sup>157</sup> ECW, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936; ECW, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 100-101; See also Laurence Hallum's 1937 scrapbook, located at DETO; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 66-97; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, chapter 8.

<sup>158</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 126.

<sup>159</sup> C. M. Granger, "'ECW and CCC.'" *Journal of Forestry* 31, no. 7 (November 1933): 763.



safety are taught and practiced in the camps, death rates, sickness rates, and venereal disease rates have gone down.”<sup>160</sup> The CCC sought to develop and improve both the landscape and the nation’s masculine bodies.<sup>161</sup>

Improved minds accompanied bodily health. Enrollees could receive a well-rounded (purely voluntary) education while at the Monument.<sup>162</sup> The camp offered courses in arithmetic, writing/spelling, American, Wyoming, and Oklahoma history, geology, meteorology, barbering, cooking/baking, forestry, dwelling construction, landscaping, civics, journalism, leadership, athletics, weaving, tool sharpening, blacksmithing, auto mechanics, leatherwork, taxidermy, first aid, wood burning and carving, typing, and conservation (a compulsory course taught by Joyner himself). Some applied skills that they learned at Devils Tower. For example, both Company 2555 and 3887 practiced journalism in their camp newspapers, “Monument Mirror” (2555) and “Devils World” (3887). The papers included sections on current events, company news, camp and Monument improvements, infirmary news, local news, school notes, sports, poetry, and comical sections titled “Did You Know?,” “Jokes,” “High Spots,” and “We Wonder.”<sup>163</sup>

A great benefit for these boys during the Great Depression’s lean times was the well-balanced nutrition the camp provided. The enrollees enjoyed meals that included fresh and canned fruit and vegetables, eggs, cereal, creamed ham, pickles, liver and onions, roast veal, cole slaw, salmon, clam chowder, doughnuts, spaghetti, beans, bacon, farina, honey, bread/toast, cheese, Irish stew, roast beef, baked ham, and for desert chocolate cake or pudding, vanilla cake, vanilla cream pudding, strawberry shortcake, apple pie, coconut pudding, pineapple pie, or ice cream.<sup>164</sup>

It seemed that CCC enrollees were hesitant to apply their newly enhanced bodily natures and keener minds to “conquering” the Tower formation itself. No written record available indicated that any of the enrollees attempted to climb the Tower.<sup>165</sup> Perhaps they were well-disciplined men informed by their superiors of drastic consequences if they attempted it, or perhaps they did not think it a worthy endeavor.

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<sup>160</sup> Fechner, “The Civilian Conservation Corps Program,” 139. See also Fechner, “What the CCC is and Does.”

<sup>161</sup> Joseph M. Armengol, “Gendering the Great Depression: Rethinking the Male Body in 1930s American Culture and Literature,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 23 (2014): 59-68; Colin R. Johnson, “Camp Life: The Queer History of ‘Manhood’ in the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1937,” *American Studies* 48, no. 2 (2007): 19-35; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*; Jeffrey Ryan Suzik, “‘Building Better Men’: The CCC and the Changing Social Idea of Manliness,” *Men and Masculinities* (October 1999).

<sup>162</sup> Fechner believed that the CCC was primarily a work program and gave only reserved support for education programs. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 83-88; Parman, “The Indian and the CCC,” 47.

<sup>163</sup> Alfred Emile Cornebise, “Heralds in New Deal America: Camp Newspapers of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *Media History Monographs* Vol. 2, No. 1; Alfred Emile Cornebise, *The CCC Chronicles: Camp Newspapers of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004).

<sup>164</sup> ECW, Camp 2555 Inspection Report, July 15, 1936; ECW, Camp 3887 Inspection Report, July 8, 1937.

<sup>165</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 101.

### CCC-Era Development at Devils Tower

CCC laborers and Joyner lived at the Monument where the environment permitted certain plans and resisted others. Laboring and planning at the Monument was a lived experience situated in space and time. As historian Linda Nash notes, “[i]t is through practical engagement with the world, not disembodied contemplation, that human beings develop their plans.”<sup>166</sup>

Because he had a wife and a growing family, Joyner needed appropriate accommodations at the Monument, and this became an early focus of the CCC’s efforts to alter the existing landscape. The custodian’s residence remodel (See Appendix 3, #20) began in 1935 and finished before the CCC enrollees left in 1937. The crews enlarged the structure to more comfortably house Joyner and his family and updated it with modern conveniences. The Monument environment was more than only a natural or tourist site. It was also a domestic landscape lived-in by the very individuals transforming it. They had to reconcile their New Deal and NPS values with the embodied experience that allowed Joyner and his men to perceive the possibilities and limitations of imposing order upon the Monument’s nature.

Across the nation, the sweeping transformations made to NPS landscapes with CCC labor and LEM skills had a distinct character that derived from the simultaneous goals of conserving natural resources while making parks accessible to tourists. Landscape developments were unique to each park and designed to blend in with the natural landscape as much as possible. In the same year (1935) that Devils Tower National Monument received its first CCC camp, the NPS published *Park Structures and Facilities*, a comprehensive CCC-funded volume edited by Albert H. Good.<sup>167</sup> In this document, Director of the NPS, Arno B. Cammerer wrote in 1935, “In any area in which the preservation of the beauty of Nature is a primary purpose, every modification of the natural landscape, whether it be by construction of a road or erection of a shelter, is an intrusion.” Therefore, designs had to keep each “intrusion” to a minimum so that they were “attractive to look upon” and appeared “to belong to and be a part of their settings.” Cammerer explained that for years the NPS had been “attaining a constantly improved technique of design and execution for the structures that are required for safe, convenient and beneficial public use of these parks.” Indeed, the CCC work helped to stimulate progress in this area “with its [the ECW’s] steadily increasing and sound emphasis on development of recreational facilities.” It was not easy for the superintendents, professionals, LEMs, and CCC enrollees to make all the extensive improvements that the parks required, and so they learned a lot on the job. “Stimulated by the problems this work has presented,” Cammerer continued, “competent architects have produced designs—and seen them converted into reality—that denote a real advance in this somewhat specialized field.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, the CCC ushered in a new era of park

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<sup>166</sup> Linda Nash, “The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?” *Environmental History* 10 no. 1 (January 2005): 68.

<sup>167</sup> William C. Tweed, Laura E. Soulli re, and Henry G. Law, “National Park Service: Rustic Architecture 1916-1942,” (National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, February 1977), 92.

<sup>168</sup> National Park Service, Branch of Planning, *Park Structures and Facilities* (1935), foreword by Arno B. Cammerer, [http://npshistory.com/publications/park\\_structures\\_facilities/index.htm](http://npshistory.com/publications/park_structures_facilities/index.htm), accessed August, 2023.

structures in the nation's parks and monuments built in a style informally referred to as "Parkitecture" and more formally as the National Park Service Rustic style.<sup>169</sup>

### NPS Rustic Style

The upper echelon of park administration articulated the philosophy behind the NPS Rustic. For example, in the "Apologia" that came soon after Cammerer's statements in *Park Structures and Facilities*, the authors (Cammerer, A.E. Demaray, and Conrad Wirth,) addressed the challenge of balancing development with retaining natural beauty. "LAMENTABLE IS THE FACT," they mused, "that during the six days given over to Creation, picnic tables and fireplaces, foot bridges, toilet facilities, and many another of man's requirements even in natural surroundings, were negligently and entirely overlooked." To remedy this oversight, the authors lamented that they may have had to play "the jester in Nature's unspoiled places" and embrace that "structures, however well designed, almost never truly add to the beauty." Nature was perfection, but parks had to accommodate visitors with an area where they could rest, recreate, and enjoy nature's wonders.

Since every structure was an "intruder," constructing and designing them required "artistry" and "self-restraint" to conserve parks "as nearly as possible in their natural state." The use of "natural materials" and an appreciation of the "remote past" (English, Dutch, French, Spanish, pioneer, fur trapper, or even Native American) were characteristics of the NPS's "rustic" architecture. "Successfully handled," the authors proclaimed, "it is a style which, through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of rigid, straight lines, and over-sophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings and with the past." Nature, not human-made structures, was to be the centerpiece of the parks. "Since structures exist in parks through sufferance," the authors added, "it follows that it is highly desirable in every area to keep down the number of them."<sup>170</sup>

Devils Tower's utility area illustrated this NPS philosophy. On October 7, 1935, Joyner submitted plans for the "Location and Grades for Proposed Equipment Shed, Oil and Gas House, Parking Space and Barn for the Utility Area," (DT-3105, Sixth ECW Period Projects nos. 15, 21, 22, 32, 34, and 54, Camp NM-1).<sup>171</sup> On November 7, 1935, NPS director Conrad Wirth expressed concern about the plans (no. DT-3015) "on the grounds that he [Wirth] feels there is too much development for the size of the area." Wirth requested that the Monument submit further justification to change his mind.<sup>172</sup> Luckily, Chief Landscape Architect Thomas Vint convinced Wirth of the value of Joyner's projects (Appendix 3, #4). The utility area was, in fact, "very small" and "adequate for all the needs at Devils Tower National Monument." It already

<sup>169</sup> "PARKitecture in Western National Parks," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/exhibits/parkitect/index.htm>, accessed August, 2023; "Parkitecture, The NPS Rustic Style," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/architecture/parkitecture.htm>, accessed August, 2023.

<sup>170</sup> National Park Service, *Park Structures and Facilities*, apologia.

<sup>171</sup> Newell Joyner to Conrad Wirth, October 9, 1935, Folder 620, Box 2156, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>172</sup> Memorandum to Mr. Vint, November 7, 1935, Folder 600-03, Box 2155, RG 79, NARA.

contained the machine shop (Appendix 3, #16) and barn (Appendix 3, #8), and ECW had authorized plans for the equipment shed (Appendix 3, #10, #11) and the gasoline and oil house (Appendix 3, #13).<sup>173</sup> Placating Wirth, the designs hid the utility building's concrete retaining walls (Appendix 3, #12). By July 1937, the resident landscape architect reported that despite the considerable construction in the utility area, it looked "pleasing" and "undisturbed."

The new buildings harmonized with the Tower's natural beauty. Park architects conceived structures "with a view to subordinating it to its environment," taking advantage of "any natural screening that may exist," and using signs to direct visitors to elements of the built environment. Structures exhibited natural colors, horizontal planes, knotted logs, properly sized and placed rocks, rugged handcrafted character, and planting along the foundation to "bring to the building that agreeable look of having sprung from the soil."<sup>174</sup> Park historian and historic preservation specialist Linda McClelland called these the principles of "naturalistic or informal landscape design."<sup>175</sup>

Rooted with the birth of the first national park in 1872, the rustic style grew from a romanticism about nature. The iconic western park, Yellowstone, blended both romanticism and pioneer mythology in its architectural style and set the tone for future management decisions and development visions. Building structures that balanced the needs and expectations of tourists with the conservation of nature was a constantly evolving process. The "formative period" of rustic design, when landscape became a defining influence, occurred soon after the establishment of the NPS and continued until 1927. It achieved maturity from 1927-1932 as NPS architects designed structures "to harmonize with the environment."<sup>176</sup>

By Roosevelt's first term and the start of the New Deal, "the NPS had specific development plans in its files to run through fiscal year 1939." With plans to preserve park landscapes, they were ready for the expansion and federal monies. Initially, "[t]he skills required in rustic construction were thought to be too complex for efficient execution by young and generally unskilled enrollees." With proper supervision over the years, CCC enrollee labor gradually developed the landscape and building structures. The design philosophy that guided them "matured under the direction of [Chief Landscape Architect] Tom Vint" and emphasized "non-intrusive design" and the idea "that each structure be individually designed for its specific site." With the CCC draw-down starting in 1935, the period of "rustic architecture" drew to a close, and "modern" visions began to creep into the minds of the NPS architectural staff that rapidly expanded during the New Deal (1935-1942). A significant reason for the decline of

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<sup>173</sup> Thomas C. Vint, Memorandum for the Director, November 19, 1935, Folder 620, Box 2156, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>174</sup> National Park Service, *Park Structures and Facilities*, apologia. An update was published in 1938: Albert Good, *Park and Recreation Structures: Part I--Administration and Basic Service Facilities* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1938).

<sup>175</sup> Linda Flint McClelland *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places, 1993).

<sup>176</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, Chapter II; Tweed, Soulli re, and Law, "National Park Service: Rustic Architecture 1916-1942," ii-1, 18-47, 68, 105-106, quote on 68.

labor-intensive “rustic architecture” was the difficulty in building and maintaining it in the face of increasing visitation.<sup>177</sup>

Rustic architecture sentimentalized the process of settler colonialism by embracing and romanticizing one of its iconic cultural forms – the log cabin. Themselves sites of dispossession, the national parks are places where this mythologized settler architecture remains prominent. Occupying the “frontier” (through the Turnerian frontier process/place) included the log cabin as a crucial step for “pioneers” to “settle,” “improve,” and “civilize” the land and themselves. By romanticizing this cultural icon, the tools and materials necessary for its construction, and the process of advancing settlement, NPS officials implicitly suggested who should visit the parks: those implicated enough in the structures of settler colonialism to feel that these buildings represented a shared national heritage that Americans should glorify as heroic and natural. NPS landscape architects embraced a settler colonial narrative that celebrated (or at the very least romanticized) the violent dispossession that made the parks possible and that made the evolving concept of wilderness so enticing for many nineteenth-century Americans.<sup>178</sup>

### **The Dual Mandate**

During the New Deal surge in development, rustic architecture revealed the tension at the heart of the NPS. The modernizing and nationalizing impulses of the New Deal meant that parks would build additional intrusive structures embodying the rustic aesthetic; they would attempt (at least in principle/philosophically) to improve the natural world by subordinating nature (the environment). Historian Richard West Sellars put it this way: “In viewing recreational tourism effectively as the highest and best use of the national parks’ scenic landscapes, and developing the parks for that purpose, the Service took a ‘wise use’ approach to the parks.” The “double mandate” (as Stephen Mather described it – also described as the dual mandate) of both preserving natural wonders and putting them to public use was, in reality, an awesome and underappreciated challenge. NPS leaders stood strongly behind a philosophy that prioritized public use and recreational tourism while trying to also address concerns raised by biologists about the state of nature in the parks. The CCC era was a period particularly rife with contradiction and conflict over the “dual mandate.” Enrollees’ labor sustained traditional NPS

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<sup>177</sup> Tweed, Soullière, Law, “National Park Service: Rustic Architecture 1916-1942,” quotes on 74, 76-77, and 90, see also 88-94, 96-97, and 104-106. On rustic style and DETO, see McKoy, “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission.” See also: McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, Chapters V and VI; Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Linda Flint McClelland, “Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks”.

<sup>178</sup> Alison K. Hoagland, *Log Cabin: An American Icon* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 2-10, 115-138, 196-226; Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4, (December 2006): 387-409; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); See also Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2002).

goals, yet undertook utilitarian and “wise use” projects that favored parks as “scenic resources” for public use.<sup>179</sup>

Devils Tower National Monument was no different. Projects that revolved around the visitor experience were elemental to the CCC’s efforts. One such project was the creation of informational and directional signs to help visitors orient themselves and appreciate the Monument (Appendix 3, #34). Another such project was the administration building (Appendix 3, #19) that housed offices and facilities for Monument staff and contained the Tower museum, an information booth, and visitor comfort stations (the building became the Visitor Center in the late 1950s). Constructed in the rustic architecture style in 1935, it required maintenance throughout the CCC era to deal with freezing pipes, to repair premature wear on the museum’s floors, and to remedy log shrinkage. As with all Tower structures built during this period, they had to be maintained. Without constant attention, the natural world will reclaim infrastructure.

The campground (Appendix 3, #35) was a critical piece of infrastructure for enhancing how visitors interacted with the Monument landscape. Drafted in 1935, work on the project began in earnest only in 1937. From its roads to its campsites and surrounding vegetation, the campground design followed the standards included in *Park Structures and Facilities* and detailed by E.P. Meinecke (often called meineckizing). It was a 15-spur campground with a one-way loop and individual camping spurs screened from the highway by “considerable planting.” By the time that the CCC era ended at Devils Tower National Monument, the campground still required comfort facilities, camp stoves (Appendix 3, #31), waste disposal units (Appendix 3, #32), and a considerable amount of resodding and planting to screen the campground.

A new picnic area privileged the Monument’s beauty, in keeping with the prevailing aesthetic (Appendix 3, #30). Joyner and Howard Baker first identified an acceptable area for visitors to picnic. For a number of years earlier, picnickers dominated a privileged part of the Monument landscape that sat between the Tower and the headquarters area-- truly a beautiful place to picnic. But the picnickers and the facilities required to accommodate them obscured the view of the towering monolith. An alternative area had better access to the comfort facilities in the administration building, obviating the need for additional structures such as a picnic ground shelter (Appendix 3, #29). It could connect easily to the water supply, lay close to the parking area, and presented a pleasing pastoral quality with an “abundance of grass, shrub and tree growth.” To make the area even more attractive, the CCC enrollees crafted nearly one hundred log and plank table and bench combinations (Appendix 3, #28) that reflected the NPS rustic aesthetic.

Less obvious than the attractive log structures but just as important to support the maturing park was infrastructure. The ever-increasing number of visitors to the Monument and the annual Old Settlers’ Picnic placed growing demands on the water and sanitation systems. In 1934, the inadequacies of the system were evident to the chief engineer and Joyner. But by April 1935 Joyner reported that a newly operational water and sanitation system (Appendix 3, #39)

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<sup>179</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in The National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), quote on 88-89, see also 93-94, 101, 133-134.

was ready for use and would be “appreciated by visitors as well as the employees.” To meet new needs arising from CCC occupation at the Monument, in 1937, enrollees finished an additional reservoir (Appendix 3, #41) that increased the previous concrete storage reservoir from 10,000 gallons to 22,000 gallons.

Trails more overtly marked the NPS goal of catering to tourist enjoyment. Joyner recognized that visitors desired to explore the Monument by foot. To facilitate this and to keep the natural landscape free from harm, NPS planners designed a trail system. Most important was the CCC-built Tower Trail (Appendix 3, #37). In 1935, Joyner articulated the need for such a route: “At the present time a large majority of the visitors cannot make the trip [around the Tower] because of physical condition, clothing, length of stay, and lack of directing trail.” Completed in 1937 with the help of regional geologist Wegemann and CCC muscle, the one-mile loop Tower Trail allowed all manner of visitors to achieve what Joyner referred to as a “thorough understanding of the size and beauty and phenomenon of Devils Tower.” Meanwhile, the Red Beds Trail (or 4.5-mile “nature trail” as it was referred to at the time, Appendix 3, #38) remained in the planning phase during the CCC era. Joyner sought opportunities to share his fascination with the natural world. He regularly referenced the state of geological knowledge concerning the Tower and made notes about the natural phenomena surrounding him. From the attention he paid to the Monument museum and the trail routes, he wanted visitors to enjoy and learn about natural features of the Tower landscape.

Roosevelt desired to make the national parks accessible for those who did not exhibit the physical prowess of the model CCC enrollee. He favored increased access to these natural areas in part because of his own physical handicap resulting from polio and his belief that interacting with nature benefited the health of the country. When conservationists criticized the CCC for developing rather than preserving the parks’ “natural conditions,” Roosevelt emphasized accessibility as elemental to these protected places. A little over fifteen years after the National Park Service began, the core tension of the 1916 Organic Act emerged at the heart of CCC developments in the 1930s. This historic document stated the following: “The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>180</sup>

The CCC formed under a different set of objectives that privileged human use of park spaces. The extensive construction and environmental changes wrought by the CCC did not maintain the parks’ “natural conditions.” As Sellars puts it, “[m]uch of the CCC work conflicted with Fauna No.1’s call for “farsighted” policies to ‘minimize the disturbance of the biota.’” At the same time, the increased attention directed towards national parks and Roosevelt’s CCC drew out both supporters (everyday tourists) and critics (wilderness advocates) of the CCC in the

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<sup>180</sup>Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*; “Organic Act of 1916,” National Park Service, [www.nps.gov/grba/learn/management/organic-act-of-1916.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/management/organic-act-of-1916.htm), accessed August, 2023.

parks. According to historian Neil Maher, “Corps work projects across the country set off a national debate that expanded the meaning of conservation beyond the efficient use of natural resources to include as well concern for human health through outdoor recreation, for wilderness preservation, and for ecological balance, all of which became central to postwar environmentalists.”<sup>181</sup> CCC presence made the 1930s a crucial decade for working through how national parks reconciled construction and landscape development within the “dual mandate.” Not only did the CCC’s labor in nature alter the parks physically, it altered the nation’s relationship with the land.

The increasingly central role that the automobile played in American culture also transformed how humans experienced park landscapes across the nation. For NPS officials, considering automobiles became fundamental to crafting park infrastructure and the visitor experience. Yellowstone National Park historian Aubrey Haines noted this new priority: “[t]he re-orientation of park management to meet the needs of the casually attired, self-reliant automobilist who dominated the years between the great wars came out of Stephen Mather’s firm conviction that the national parks belonged to everyone.” At the same time that many national parks received increased federal support through the New Deal, the automobile became more central to American life and tourism. Consequently, national parks largely developed in response to and in tandem with automobiles. Historian David Louter notes, “Automobiles supplied not only the vehicle by which middle-class Americans got back to nature but also the vehicle by which they knew nature itself.”<sup>182</sup>

Sitting in his office in a relatively remote section of eastern Wyoming, Joyner recognized how vital good roads were to the success of Devils Tower National Monument. He regularly referenced progress made towards better regional and approach roads (Appendix 3, #1) to the park and credited them with increases in visitation. Joyner put CCC muscle to work improving the Monument’s entrance road (Appendix 3, #2)t. This included grading, graveling, oiling, paving, bridge repair, erosion control, the installation of culverts, roadside bank sloping, and the construction of entrance pylons. The design of these last two projects reflected the natural aesthetic advocated by the NPS. Landscape Architect Serrano noted that roadside bank sloping was a “very important” project that needed to “harmonize” with the natural surroundings but also minimize erosion and facilitate revegetation. Serrano considered the entrance pylons crucial and had the regional geologist examine them to ensure that they fit with the surrounding geology. Serrano recognized that travelers would encounter the Monument landscape first through the pylons in an intimate way (from their automobile). With the Tower rising in the distance, the

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<sup>181</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, quote on 100; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, quote on 10; Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 3-5, 48-50.

<sup>182</sup> Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 1; Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of our First National Park*, Revised Edition, Volume ? (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1996), quote on 347; Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington’s National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), quote on 4-5.



pylons framed the monolith for the on-the-ground visitor appreciation of the carefully-curated NPS natural aesthetic.

Catering to automobility, Joyner used CCC labor to construct roads in the utility area (Appendix 3, #5), and oil the parking area (Appendix 3, #27). But he too may have harbored doubts about this priority as did Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. In 1935, Ickes addressed the National Park Service Conference of State Park Authorities and stated, “I am not in favor of building any more roads in the National Parks than we have to build; I am not in favor of doing anything along the lines of so-called improvements that we do not have to do. This is an automobile age. But I do not have a great deal of patience with people whose idea of enjoying nature is dashing along the hard road at fifty or sixty miles an hour. I am not willing that our beautiful areas should be opened up to people who are either too old to walk, as I am, or too lazy to walk, as a great many young people are who ought to be ashamed of themselves.”<sup>183</sup>

### **Maintaining the Monument**

The CCC received much attention for its distinctive rustic structures and infrastructure. But just as crucial were its efforts to maintain the parks and the improvements that the men fashioned with their hands. Environmental historian of the CCC Neil Maher defines landscape as “‘nonhuman nature altered by human labor,’ landscape represents the nexus of interactions between society and the natural environment, between culture and nature.”<sup>184</sup> CCC accomplishments at the Monument and the values that the enrollees inscribed on the land required constant maintenance.

A major component of the labors of Roosevelt’s “Tree Army” (the CCC) was the nurturing and protection of forests across America. This included preventing and fighting fire, warring against insect infestations, and managing water’s impact on forest resources. According to CCC historian John Paige, “[w]hen the ECW was established in 1933, the greatest threat to the parks was forest fires.” The New Deal expenditures of funds and human resources made it possible for the Forest Service and NPS to enact full programs of fire suppression and to educate enrollees in firefighting. Prior to the ECW, Director Albright had asked for emergency funding of up to five million dollars for a five-year program to fight pine beetles infesting western parks. He was not confident that even this would be enough money to save the trees. With the start of the ECW, hope returned, and more resources came available to save the forests from these miniscule marauders.<sup>185</sup>

In 1935, after Joyner requested permission, Devils Tower National Monument’s CCC fire management program was the first to go outside project boundaries to perform protection work. His request spurred Director Cammerer to “seek a broad agreement by which the Park Service

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<sup>183</sup> As quoted in Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 105.

<sup>184</sup> Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*, 6-7.

<sup>185</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 98-102, quote on 100; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 100. For more on the history of fire policy, see Stephen J. Pyne, *America’s Fires: A Historical Context for Policy and Practice* (Durham, NC: Forest History Society, 2010); Hal K. Rothman, *Blazing Heritage: A History of Wildfire in the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

itself could determine if the conservation work justified going beyond park boundaries.” In the first two years of the CCC program, policy prohibited park managers from using their enrollees to fight fires or perform forest protection work beyond their parks’ borders. But it soon became clear that to effectively control fires and insects, personnel had to ignore boundaries lines that nature itself did not respect. Fires and insects did not stop at the edge of parks. Joyner’s problem was especially acute since the territory of his domain was quite constrained. To fulfill the NPS and CCC objective of protecting forests, he had to venture beyond the Monument’s fences.<sup>186</sup>

In spring 1936, Joyner noted that “private despoiling of timber has been occurring since August, 1935” on private land near the Monument’s north boundary within a half mile of the headquarters area. The despoilers cut ties, failed to clean up their slash, and harvested only fifty percent of the logs they felled. “To prevent over-infestation of Ips [beetles] and reduction of fire-hazard,” Joyner explained, “permission has been obtained for use of CCC enrollees in cleaning this up.” Joyner concluded with a superlative statement: “No greater single move has been made for the protection of our essential forest-cover than this project.”<sup>187</sup> Contemporary publications and commentary from Forest Service and NPS officials stated that fire and insect control was vital to manage the nature of the parks. Some admitted that humans had already altered the natural world, so it was necessary to continue doing so into the future. Others questioned this logic and understood fires and insects as natural features of the forests that the agency should leave alone to preserve natural conditions in the parks.<sup>188</sup>

By the summer of 1936, an active fire season sent the enrollees into action. “On June 24, about 9:30 P.M.,” Joyner reported, “we received a call to assist in fighting a fire in the Barlow Canyon, about 3 miles northeast of the Devils Tower National Monument. Forty-three man-days of CCC labor were spent in extinguishing the fire. The fire covered about 10 acres of timber on private land.”<sup>189</sup> Joyner joined the enrollees at the fire, but another followed on its heels. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, Joyner received a call from Sundance, Wyoming about a forty-acre fire five miles south of the city on private land. This fire took eighty-five enrollee man-days to extinguish. “The CCC boys,” Joyner beamed, “were highly praised because of the splendid organization in working together and for the extinguishing of the fire in a short time.”<sup>190</sup>

The enrollees regularly wrote about their firefighting duties in their camp newspapers. On August 10, 1936, they stated, “fire season is nearly over, that is if thirteen forest fires can be considered sufficient for this camp, and the extremely hot weather is almost over.”<sup>191</sup> On August 31, 1936, they reported that, the “White Tail fire is the sixteenth fire the Devils Tower camp has fought this season.”<sup>192</sup> The men’s fire work included fire prevention such as “forest cleanup.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Cassity, *Building up Wyoming*, 137; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 20-21.

<sup>187</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Report, June 13, 1936.

<sup>188</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 126-131.

<sup>189</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, June, 1936.

<sup>190</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, June, 1936; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 98-99.

<sup>191</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 10, 1936, Company 2555, Camp NM-1, Devils Tower National Monument, Vol. 1. No. 1X. p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 31, 1936, Company 2555, Camp NM-1, DETO, Vol. 1. No. X. p. 3.

<sup>193</sup> “Monument Mirror,” August 31, 1936, p. 4-5.

Company 2555 had youths hard at work in forest clean-up work with the help of a “fitful Cletrac.” Its newsletter noted that President Roosevelt declared the week of October 4<sup>th</sup> “Fire Prevention Week” to “emphasize the elimination of the existing fire hazards and to end the loss of life and destruction of property caused by fires over the United States.”<sup>194</sup>

Fire and forestry preoccupied the young men at the Monument, activities that shaped the Tower environment in ways less overt than building construction. In the winter of 1937, the men cleaned up the Monument “to prevent fires and make the place more attractive” when the weather was too cold for other work.<sup>195</sup> Fire hazard reduction diminished in summer.<sup>196</sup> Serrano reported a “limited amount of work” of sawing and cutting wood accumulated from forest clean-up activities that was stockpiled for fuel. The CCC enrollees spent their energies on forest fires, attacking three small fires outside of monument boundaries. To stay prepared, the CCC enrollees trained in firefighting and fire prevention throughout the season.<sup>197</sup> They continued fire education and mitigation on 110 acres of wooded area by sawing, cutting, and stacking for use as fuel, and “[h]uge piles of down material accumulated from previous clean up activities.” Enrollees served posts as fire guards at the Monument.<sup>198</sup> The CCC war against natural fire represented one of the unifying features of CCC life in nature. Across the nation, CCC enrollees battled against the fierce force of fire and risked their lives to minimize the effects of natural and human-induced conflagrations.

Recognizing the fire risk of dead trees, administrators kept alert for infestations of the Black Hills Beetle. In 1934, the entomologist J.C. Evenden of the USDA Forest Insect Laboratory in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, made a trip to the Monument and, although “not making any detailed survey [he] agreed with us that although constant vigilance will be necessary to keep the Black Hills beetle from getting a start, we have nothing to worry about at this time.” Nonetheless, under the Civil Works Administration, Joyner treated all trees confirmed or suspected of harboring the beetles “by cutting and peeling, and where possible, by burning.”<sup>199</sup> He based his insect control treatments on Evenden’s recommendations.<sup>200</sup>

In 1937, drought and disturbance made the Monument’s trees more vulnerable to attacks by “ips and beetle.” The result, according to Serrano, was “[t]he trees have been dying in alarming number the most serious losses being within and around the headquarters area.” The NPS Forestry Division requested sawyers fell ten trees “for inspection “to determine the cause of death.” Following forester prescriptions of artificial watering to “minimize further tree loss,”

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<sup>194</sup> “Monument Mirror,” September 24, 1936, Company 2555, Camp NM-1, DETO, Vol. 1. No. X. p. 4-5.

<sup>195</sup> “Devils World,” February 6, 1937, Company 3887, Camp NM-1, DETO, Vol. 1. No. 3. p. 5.

<sup>196</sup> S. Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect on Devils Tower National Monument, Resident Landscape Architect, Branch of Plans & Designs, June 20, - July 20, 1937,” DETO 1626, MORU MPR, copy at DETO. Nevertheless, The CCC camp inspector provided a summary of the work that the enrollees were engaged in across the 1150 acres of the Monument on July 8<sup>th</sup>, including “Projects: Fire hazard reduction.” ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Report, July 8, 1937.

<sup>197</sup> S. Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect,” July 20, - Aug 20, 1937, MORU MPR.

<sup>198</sup> S. Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect,” August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937, MORU MPR, copy at DETO.

<sup>199</sup> Joyner, Monthly Report, December 1934, DETO 1623, MORU MPR, copy at DETO.

<sup>200</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 95-96.

Joyner ordered the enrollees to apply this simple measure to “minimize further tree loss.” Serrano noted, “this practice will be continued during the remainder of the dry season.”<sup>201</sup> As in other national parks, during its tenure at the Monument, the CCC “tree army” fought the tiny forces of forest destruction, the suspected agent of “recent heavy tree loss.”<sup>202</sup>

Controlling nature proved especially difficult in 1937 when the Monument faced a “critical situation” caused by an “[e]xtremely heavy infestation of Mormon [sic] Crickets.” Moving in from adjacent private lands, the voracious bugs had invaded one hundred and fifty acres of the reserve, creating an immediate crisis. In hordes, the crickets rapidly consumed grass, shrubs, and oaks. Joyner could do little since it was “impossible” to get poison and “dust guns from factory and very difficult [to] secure dusting powder for control work.” He resorted to manual mitigation, using CCC labor to dig trenches ahead of the “migration streams” and to kill the fat, hungry crickets with “oil spray or burner” as they dropped into the ditches.<sup>203</sup> “The destructive Mormon crickets did not spare the Monument area over which they swarmed in unbelievable numbers,” reported Serrano. The CCC men gave “successful effort . . . to divert the flow from the headquarters area.” Although “the rest of the monument ground were heavily infested, . . . [t]he obvious damage to vegetation is very slight and the deposition of eggs for next year’s hatching is perhaps the greatest damage done.”<sup>204</sup> Officials had cause to worry about the upcoming year. Grasshoppers and Mormon Crickets attacked in two stages – the first wave consumed everything in its path and laid eggs; in the second wave, the hatching unleashed another wave of devastation.<sup>205</sup> The CCC’s intrusive improvements to the Monument threatened the integrity of the “natural” landscape that the NPS sought to protect. But so too did Nature itself. Presenting an idealized landscape required labor to both create harmonious architecture and to destroy natural threats to the romanticized environment.<sup>206</sup>

To defend the Monument’s picturesque terrain, Joyner utilized CCC muscle to hold back natural forces. The youths engaged in erosion control, such as “the flattening of the gully banks to an angle of repose to minimize erosion and facilitate natural revegetation.”<sup>207</sup> The men used “dead timber and other material accumulated from forest cleanup activities” to erect about 164 temporary check dams in “gully bottoms.” In these efforts, the crews followed the “accepted policy of maintaining park areas in as natural a state as possible.”<sup>208</sup> Accordingly, seeding, sodding, and tree planting the slopes proceeded carefully. Enrollees collected native grass seed for denuded construction sites and tree seeds for erosion control in ravines.

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<sup>201</sup> Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report,” July 20, - Aug 20, 1937.”

<sup>202</sup> S. Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect,” August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937.

<sup>203</sup> Joyner to the Director National Park Service, Telegram May 30, 1937, Folder 883-09, Box 2159, RG 79, NARA.

<sup>204</sup> S. Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect,” June 20, - July 20, 1937.

<sup>205</sup> Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times*, 74-76.

<sup>206</sup> Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>207</sup> S. Serrano, “Supplement to Monthly Narrative Report to the Chief Architect on Devils Tower National Monument,” August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937, copy at DETO Archive.

<sup>208</sup> S. Serrano, “Supplement to Monthly Narrative Report,” August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937.

Planting and resodding contributed to the natural aesthetic. It restored disturbed places to uphold visitors' expectations of experiencing undisturbed Nature. For example, "badly torn by construction," the headquarters area (Appendix 3, #18, #23) underwent resodding, fine grading, and tree and shrubs. Serrano noted that the area now looked "very natural and undisturbed." CCC enrollees worked better than Nature, "accomplish[ing] in a few months that which would have taken natural process many years to accomplish." Vegetation helped obscure artificial features necessary for modern efficiency such as adding trees and shrubs to the parking area island (Appendix 3, #25). In 1936, Joyner noted that, "The appearance of the parking area is very much better since these improvements have been made."<sup>209</sup> He planned for "considerable planting" to screen the 15-spur campground from the highway. Devils Tower National was a constructed landscape built to give visitors the illusion that it emerged from and harmonized with Nature.

Controlling the Monument environment meant wrestling the Belle Fourche River. The river was a constant threat to the Monument's bridge and the infrastructure along its banks. Plagued by fears that the inadequately constructed bridge would succumb to the river's powerful flow and thus isolate significant sections of the Monument, Joyner reconstructed the bridge with concrete in 1935 (Appendix 3, #45). It replaced a wooden structure made of native green timber that was vulnerable to high water, floating logs, ice, and rapid rot. But Joyner had not mastered the Belle Fourche once and for all. The bridge still needed protection from cribbing, rock riprap, and rock basket revetment that moderated the river's flow (Appendix 3, #43, 44). Water proved elusive to control. The CCC boys fought the Belle Fourche to save portions of their camp and the entrance road.

### **Maintaining the Landscape**

The Monument's picturesque landscape required constant maintenance in a harsh environment. Like his fight against freezing pipes in the administration building (Appendix 3 #39), Joyner and his men had to battle the cold and snow for control over their changes to the land. The snow and freezing temperatures that regularly descended upon the Monument created challenges for maintenance. During the 1935-36 winter, employees removed snow using a blade or bulldozer. Road construction impinged on effective maintenance. "Our problem was complicated this year," Joyner explained, "in that there were shoulder stakes on the road in a number of places which we did not wish to destroy because of their need shortly in connection with the completion of our Fine Grading and Road-bank Landscaping projects." To save these shoulder stakes, crews could not entirely clear parts of the roads, and this left snow and running water that they had to remove from the roads.<sup>210</sup> "Running water," Joyner remarked, "was checked so that it would not wash or cut into the road."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, June 13, 1936.

<sup>210</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, March 4, 1936.

<sup>211</sup> Joyner, Custodian's Report, June 13, 1936.

Summer brought another set of challenges for construction projects. The human presence and heat could delay work and maintenance required to make park improvements. For example, during the Summer of 1937, multitudes of tourists and the summer weather sidelined enhancement efforts until fewer humans occupied the Monument and the weather was milder. This included work on the campground, resodding the cut slopes along the entrance highway, and moving and transplanting trees and shrubs. High traffic areas like the campground and entrance highway were not ideal places to labor when visitors flocked to the Monument, and newly-planted vegetation shriveled in summer temperatures.<sup>212</sup>

Travelers to the Monument mandated continual upkeep.<sup>213</sup> These human visitors also caused damage to structures through negligence and regular use. A “careless smoker” sparked a fire in the parking area that burned twenty square feet in 1935.<sup>214</sup> Simple ambulation could damage such as occurred in the combination administration building and museum. Its floor had “not withstood usage very satisfactorily,” and in July 1937, crews replaced it with a dark brown linoleum. Materials mattered. The romantic log structures so loved for their rustic style needed careful attention. The natural material shrank as it dried, and occasionally craftsman had to fill the gaps with mastic. (Appendix 3, #19).

As they had for years, in the 1930s, administrators struggled to protect Monument grasslands from cattle wandering in from surrounding ranches. In 1935, the CCC enrollees labored to combat the damage done by these domestic wards. One of their first tasks “consisted of correction of conditions brought about by overgrazing of domestic stock on this reserve in the past years before the advent of a permanent Custodian, and the excessive utilization of the same trails by these stock.”<sup>215</sup> Inadequate fencing and a naturally attractive and ungrazed grassland with river access made the area irresistible for hungry cattle. Inconsistent cooperation by ranchers and the lack of a fence around the Monument grounds made for an awkward and exasperating situation where Joyner had to regularly chase cattle off of the reserve and contact locals about removing their strays.

Fires, water, insects, weather, humans, and domestic stock comprised environmental challenges to maintaining the Monument. Joyner and the CCC addressed the problems by following the NPS aesthetic outlined by park officials in the 1930s. They undertook resolutions that blended these structural features into the surroundings, attempting to make them one with the environment. The CCC and park staff constantly managed nature to make the park appear natural.

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<sup>212</sup> Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report,” July 20, - Aug 20, 1937,” 1626 DETO yr1937.

<sup>213</sup> Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel, “Hail the Maintainers,” *Aeon Magazine* (April 2016), <https://aeon.co/essays/innovation-is-overvalued-maintenance-often-matters-more>, accessed August 9, 2023.

<sup>214</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1935, DETO 1624, MORU MPR.

<sup>215</sup> Joyner, Custodian’s Monthly Report, November 1935; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 95-96.

### Running out of Time

Even with the surplus equipment and laboring bodies, the CCC companies at the Tower could not accomplish everything envisioned by Joyner and the NPS. Begun in 1935, the projects formed an ambitious list and raised hopes for extensive reconstruction. According to a 1937 inspector, “[f]rom information given by the project superintendent, about twelve months will be required to complete the work now approved.”<sup>216</sup> But the camp lasted only a few more months.

Despite completing important improvements, by 1937, CCC efforts diminished, leaving work unfinished. NPS Landscape Architect Sam Serrano observed that the CCC Camp strength “continued to be below normal with an average of about 125 men working, making approximately 95 available for field work.” “The C.C.C. Camp at Devils Tower National Monument,” Serrano stated, “is scheduled to be abandoned on Sept. 30. So unless orders to the contrary are received soon the close of the current period will mark the terminus of the C.C.C. activities at Devils Tower.” The problem, Serrano observed, was that “the camp is being removed prior to the completion of numerous projects many of which are vital to the proper development of the Monument area.” His hope was that the Monument would soon host another CCC camp to finish the work.<sup>217</sup>

When Serrano heard of the proposed camp abandonment, he dedicated himself to “assisting in the completion of several important projects” and visited the site more frequently.<sup>218</sup> Yet, as he feared, the CCC could not finish many of its tasks before it disbanded: construction of diversion ditches, horse trail betterment and maintenance, camp stoves, road obliteration, razing undesirable buildings, an incinerator, electric power house, power line construction, relief and type map construction, topographic surveys, a cattle guard (at entrance driveway to Thorne’s), and garbage disposal units. The CCC enrollees accomplished much in the Monument, but some projects did not come to fruition at that time.<sup>219</sup>

The CCC era in Devils Tower transformed the Monument and its landscape, establishing a definable aesthetic and expectations for national park experiences. Earning respect for its picturesque aesthetic, the CCC remained loved in Wyoming despite souring sentiment concerning the New Deal.<sup>220</sup> Joyner too lamented the absence of the young men and their energetic contributions to the Monument’s landscape. In 1938, he described his loneliness to Frank R. Pinkley, the Superintendent of the Southwest National Monuments. The CCC camp had been “abandoned,” he said, and by 1939, an ERA crew had “practically completed the CCC camp obliteration.”<sup>221</sup> Likely most of the camp was gone in 1940 since no housing was available

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<sup>216</sup> ECW, Office of the Director, Camp 3887 Report, July 8, 1937, MORU MPR.

<sup>217</sup> Quotes from S. Serrano, Monthly Narrative Report, July 20-Aug. 20, 1937, MORU MPR, and August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937, copy at DETO Archive.

<sup>218</sup> S. Serrano, Supplement to Monthly Narrative Report, August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937, Copy at DETO Archive.

<sup>219</sup> Serrano, “Monthly Narrative Report,” August 20, - Sept. 20, 1937.”

<sup>220</sup> Larson, “The New Deal in Wyoming,” 259-260, 271.

<sup>221</sup> Joyner to Frank R. Pinkley, letter, January 13, 1938; Joyner to the Director, memorandum, June 8, 1939, Folder 207-02.3, Box 2153, RG 79, NARA.

for the “new clerk and new maintenance man.”<sup>222</sup> In March 1941, Joyner had a “cook shack” removed, probably the CCC camp mess hall. In late 1942, Joyner supervised a final clean-up of the CCC dump and camp site so that he could donate salvage to the war effort.<sup>223</sup> The youths and camp disappeared from Devils Tower, but they left behind a modernized landscape and a reputation for successfully uniting young men’s bodies with naturalistic design.

## Conclusion

During the CCC Era at Devils Tower National Monument, the New Deal’s modernizing and nationalizing impulse fused with the naturalistic aesthetic articulated in NPS master plans and documents such as *Park Structures and Facilities*. With the benefit of CCC labor and funds, young men from distant places built and maintained new infrastructure to better accommodate visitors and NPS staff. Guided by New Deal and NPS visions, the youths undertook fire protection, water management, and the planting and transplanting of vegetation. The buildings and infrastructure they erected expressed the prevailing NPS Rustic Style of architecture. They built structures that harmonized with their surroundings and landscapes that looked undisturbed, uncultivated, and native. When the CCC departed Devils Tower in the fall of 1937, an end came to this influx of muscle and monies. But the Monument landscape they created remained as the basis for all later phases of development. With the CCC, Monument administrators gained much of the control they had sought since the site’s origination. Little changed in the war years--lean times for all Americans. Neglected in this period, the Monument’s CCC environment faced the challenges of the post-World War II recreation boom. As discussed in the next chapter, Mission 66 was Park Service’s response to these new circumstances.

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<sup>222</sup> Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument*, 33.

<sup>223</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 134.



## Known Resource Types

Six resource types are associated with development at Devils Tower National Monument during the CCC era, 1931-1937. See also: Appendix 3.

**Motor Roads:** With plenty of manpower available, the NPS undertook significant road improvements during the New Deal era. In 2000, the National Register of Historic Places listed the Entrance Road for its association with park development and transportation, landscape design, and public works development associated with the New Deal. Its period of significance is 1934-1950.

**Trails:** Encouraging tourism meant developing trails for tourists to experience park sites. At Devils Tower National Monument, CCC crews constructed the Tower Trail.

**CCC Camp:** Housing all the Civilian Conservation Corps workers involved building a military-style camp with barracks and associated infrastructure. The camp was closed down and all the buildings removed.

**Viewpoints/Overlooks:** The Tower gained improved roads with pullouts and several viewpoints around the Tower Trail.

**Campground:** Visitors to DETO could stay overnight at a developed campground near the base of the Tower where the Visitor's Center and the Picnic Area were located.

**Administrative/Visitor Contact Areas** (Visitor Center, Picnic Area): The Visitor Center, Picnic Area, and parking lot lay near the base of the Tower. The Custodian's Residence, the Fire Hose House, and the Visitor Center comprise the three structures in the Old Headquarters Area Historical District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Graphics



*Figure 19. Newell Joyner Holding Owl. (No Date). Joyner likely used local fauna to educate visitors about park resources. (Courtesy NPS).*



*Figure 20. Joyner Patrolling. Newell Joyner often patrolled the park and nearby area on his horse, Ranger. He is pictured here talking with an unknown person, but likely a local landowner. (Courtesy NPS).*



*D.T. 36 CER 104*

*Figure 21. "Joyner kid helps build park." Note workers in background, and the large size of stones for paving. (Courtesy NPS).*





Figure 22. CCC camp at Devils Tower National Monument. (Courtesy NPS).

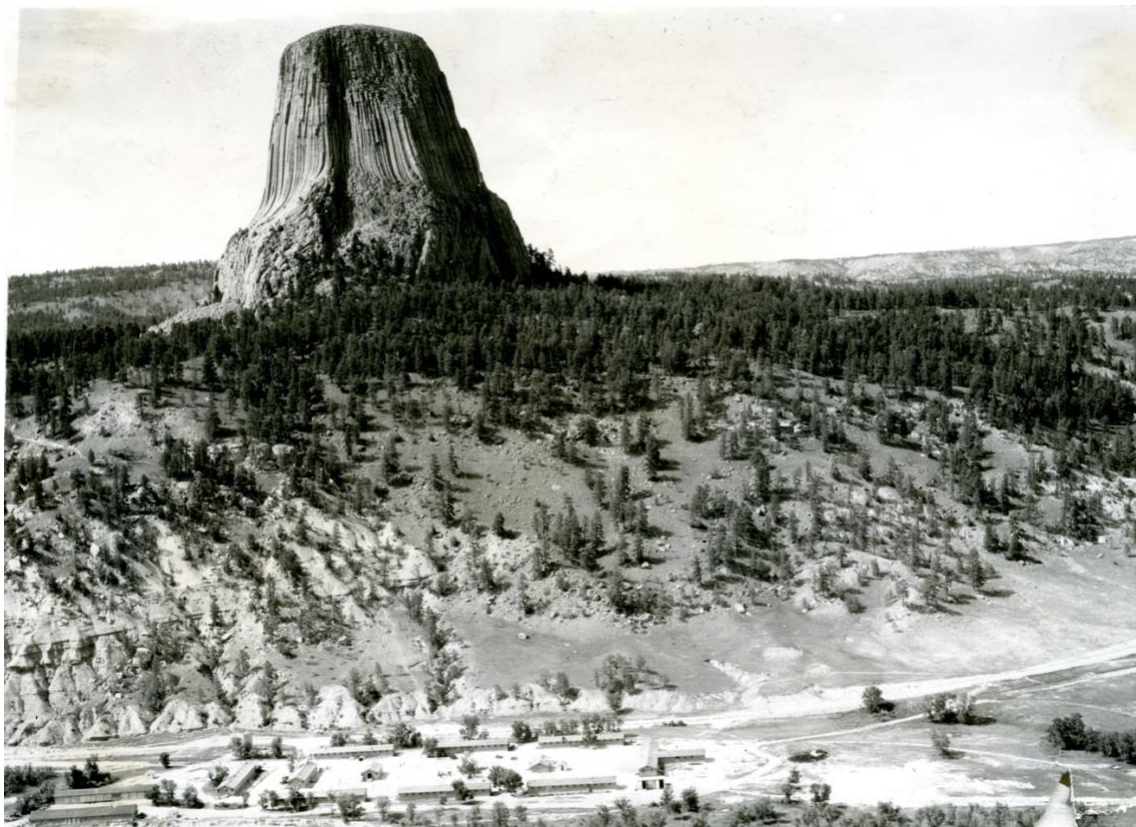


Figure 23. CCC Camp, looking toward the Tower formation. (Courtesy NPS).



Figure 24. "Custodian's Residence." (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022).





Figure 25. Visitor Center. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).



*Figure 26. Fire Hose House. Near the Visitors Center at base of Tower. This structure is part of a Historical District for the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).*



## CHAPTER SIX: Modernizing the Monument: Mission 66, 1956-1966

Twentieth-century development and modernization in the national parks came in two main waves. The mid-1920s was the first time that “Congress began making generous appropriations for the development of public facilities in national parks, particularly for park roads.” The flood of funding that came with the New Deal added to this beginning. An intermezzo to this symphony of structural improvements was an appropriations drought that descended upon the NPS during WWII, but soon after Congress agreed to fund the ambitious plans encapsulated within Mission 66.<sup>1</sup>

The Mission 66 Era initiated the National Park Service’s “presentation of a new way for the American public to experience national parks.”<sup>2</sup> It was, as Linda Flint McClelland notes, “a multimillion-dollar program designed ‘to meet the needs of a much greater number of visitors and at the same time safeguard fully the wilderness, scenic, scientific and historic resources entrusted to the National Park Service.’”<sup>3</sup> In fact, the “Mission 66 program was the largest construction program in the history of the agency.”<sup>4</sup>

In NPS properties like the Tower, Mission 66 landscapes and structures represent the “last major period of intense activity and profoundly new ideas to find expression in a systemwide program of national park development.” Within Devils Tower National Monument, the Park Service advanced Mission 66 as a coherent and planned development effort that capitalized on the national program. During this period, Congress added the southern part of the Monument, known then as the Belle Fourche River Area, for the purpose of creating an updated administrative area, utility facilities, employee housing, and a new public campground with an amphitheater for interpretive activities. This modernizing force that swept the parks dramatically shaped the Tower imparting its present configuration. The modernization rhetoric and structures that emerged from this period are clear representations of how places like the Monument “are reservoirs of national identity, history, and imagination as well as ecosystems.”<sup>5</sup>

### The National Context of Mission 66

In the post-war era, especially from 1945 into the 1960s, the American public embraced the invitation to experience national parks and monuments. Visitation blossomed at crown jewel parks like Yellowstone, at battlefield parks including Gettysburg, and at national monuments such as Devils Tower National Park. To address the burgeoning crowds seeking necessary

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<sup>1</sup> Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 3. In NPS memos, a usually capitalized MISSION 66 conveyed determination.

<sup>2</sup> Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retondo, Len Warner, Rodd L. Wheaton, John D. Feinberg, and Carly M. Piccarello, “National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources,” National Register of Historic Places Multiproperty Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, August 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 462.

<sup>4</sup> Carr, et al., “Mission 66 Era Resources.”

<sup>5</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, quote on 15.

amenities travelers expected at national parks, the National Park Service (NPS) embarked on a ten-year building program. Big and bold in concept, the comprehensive re-imagining of the agency stimulated NPS communications to print the project's title in all capital letters, MISSION 66.

NPS Director Conrad Wirth provided visionary leadership as Mission 66 remade (some would say rejuvenated) the national park system. Wirth had followed in his father's footsteps to become a park planner and manager. He studied landscape architecture at Massachusetts Agricultural College under Frank A. Waugh and, with the help of a recommendation by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Wirth went to work for the NPS in 1931. From the start, he held a central position in parks administration known as the "chief land planner." As the Great Depression took hold of the country and the CCC became a central feature of public landscape management and modification, Wirth became the director of the NPS's activities in state parks. He was in charge of this large program involving thousands of employees throughout the days of the CCC. Following a hiatus for park development during World War II and after the Korean War's conclusion in 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower began to seriously consider the positive economic and social effects of funding for public works. Sensing this sea change, Wirth got to work and along with his staff started bringing Mission 66 to life.<sup>6</sup>

Wirth had to respond to the increasing numbers of visitors as the American nation suburbanized, embraced outdoor recreation, and connected through the interstate highway system. The United States population jumped from 132 million in 1940 to 180 million in 1960 ; in the West, the population doubled from 14 million to 28 million. Income also leapt from \$1,300 to \$4,700 as people moved to the cities and out into the suburbs. The suburbs were a product of the pent-up demand for housing that developed during the war and the desire of the returning troops to purchase their own little part of the American dream. Like the rest of the nation, the parks likewise suffered with this dearth of housing options after the war. The sub-standard and insufficient housing options in parks across the country played a central part in motivating the modernization enacted by Mission 66.<sup>7</sup>

Automobiles and outdoor recreation increasingly claimed a preeminent place in American life as the five-day work week increased leisure time and disposable income rose. Parks across the West became far more accessible along the spreading networks of the interstate highway system that also supported growing western cities and faster automobiles. As Mission 66 historian Ethan Carr explained, "the history of the modernization of national park landscapes must be seen in the context of the modernization of the American landscape generally, including contemporary trends in housing subdivisions, commercial and corporate "centers," and interstate highway engineering."<sup>8</sup>

Catering to the automobile, Congress passed the 1954 Federal Highway Aid Act that included a three-year program to fund park road construction.<sup>9</sup> NPS administrators like Wirth

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<sup>6</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 47- 54.

<sup>8</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 47-54.

<sup>9</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 462.

fully understood the revolutionary change that flowed from such transformative legislation. For the sake of saving and rehabilitating the parks and to ready the parks for the inevitable influx of visitors resulting from such a radically expanded road network, he set to work to obtain his own Congressional funding for modernizing the nation's system of parks.<sup>10</sup>

By 1950, ninety-nine percent of visitors traveled to the parks in their personal automobiles or “drive-yourself” rentals. The parks faced the monumental challenge of finding space for the torrent of traffic that sought places to park and to acquire basic services. Exponentially increasing visitation flowed from the growing American automobile culture and improved access granted by the expanding interstate highway system. Estimates predicted that by 1966 the parks would see annual visitation of at least 80 million.<sup>11</sup>

Wirth confronted this challenge with an unprecedented development program. “The National Park Service’s Mission 66,” he remarked, “might be fairly described as a renaissance.”<sup>12</sup> To be completed by the fiftieth anniversary of the agency’s birth (1916), this ten-year program (1956-1966) planned to reinvigorate the national parks and restore them to their former glory as representative spaces of the nation’s heritage. Wartime and Cold War neglect and the rapidly increasing pressures placed on the parks by automobile tourism forced the NPS to revise the ways in which it designed and operated the parks. The facilities that automobile tourists required and expected were far different from those needed when visitors came by stagecoach and train. The New Deal infrastructure that first expanded, reinforced, maintained, and reconceived park landscapes in response to cars’ growing popularity (especially with the help of the CCC) was outdated and decaying.<sup>13</sup>

The park system and its visitation had grown tremendously by 1955. In 1926, the service managed 51 parks, but by 1955, the number had surged to 181. By that year, annual visitation to the parks increased from 2.3 million in 1926 to 50 million. During the early 1950s, the national parks suffered from an onslaught of high-profile public criticisms of their crumbling post-War conditions. Criticism concerning the management of the parks was not new; it had existed since the founding of the first national park in 1872 (Yellowstone). Disapproving voices rose in greater numbers during the New Deal as development and public works programs took off in the parks. In the 1950s, however, NPS officials often supported and shared these post-War critiques. They could not deny the troubling evidence of neglect and the crisis that confronted them as part of their daily duties. In 1953, western historian Bernard DeVoto penned the most famous of these attacks when he wrote “Let’s Close the National Parks,” in *Harper’s*. He concluded that Congress had to either fund the NPS with \$250 million or reduce the national park system to a size suited to its meager budget. The Army could patrol the shuttered parks until Congress

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<sup>10</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 5; Quote from Joseph Wood Krutch, “U.S. is outgrowing its parks,” *US News and World Report* 38 (June 10, 1955): 78-80; Carr, et al., “Mission 66 Era Resources,” passim; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 463.

<sup>12</sup> Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), Chapter 9, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/wirth2/chap9.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/wirth2/chap9.htm), accessed August, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, chapter 9; Charles Stevenson, “Shocking Truth About Our National Parks: A Report on the Use of Park Areas and Supporting Funds,” *Landscape Architecture* 45, no. 2 (1925): 57-60.

moved to adequately fund and protect them. NPS officials like Wirth contributed to such assessments by playing the role of dedicated professionals working under conditions of extreme scarcity and voicing their heartfelt concern for the parks. Following WWII, geographical, social, and political revolutions occurred that impelled dramatic changes in how the public and NPS officials understood how they should manage the national parks. Wirth was well-positioned and well-suited to lead in such circumstances.<sup>14</sup>

When it came to conceiving the Mission 66 program, Wirth believed that bigger was better, to convince these critics and Congress of the project's worth. He realized that the NPS had to compete with other high modernist Cold War projects like massive dam and reservoir projects that the Department of the Interior had embraced. Mission 66 would be the NPS's high modernist equivalent to competing grand schemes of the postwar period. Furthermore, politicians more easily cut smaller programs, making them vulnerable to the whims of annual assessments. If the program were grand in scale, it would encompass many states and get the attention of legislators across the country. It would also require a full review of the project by Congress. And, lastly, in the long run, it would be more economical in terms of contracting the work necessary to transform the parks.<sup>15</sup>

By late June 1955, Wirth required each NPS unit to create its own Mission 66 prospectus. Based on each park's master plan, these documents ended up representing the "diverse ideas of what constituted the best and most suitable plan for park development and public use." Updating the master plans was crucial, since many park administrators had ignored them during WWII and the Cold War. According to Wirth, these master plans would guide each unit in managing their resources in ways that responded to the social, technological, and geographical changes occurring in Cold War America.<sup>16</sup>

Post-war park planning needed to confront directly the central role that cars now held in national park tourism, which interest groups such as the American Automobile Association promoted. Mission 66 sought to enhance and expand the auto infrastructure. This NPS initiative served a certain segment of the American population that traveled to the parks in their private automobiles. A particular type of tourist bemoaned by preservationists and the "commercial ventures" in and around the parks benefitted from this influx of funds and the expansion of park infrastructure. By providing such access, Mission 66 was a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. Crafted in anticipation of massive increases in tourist traffic, it supplied the necessary infrastructure for ever more automobilists to enter the nation's parks and national monuments.

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<sup>14</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 463; Carr, *Mission 66*, 54-55, 60; Bernard DeVoto: "Let's Close the National Parks," 1953, in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, Chapter 4, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/anps/anps\\_4d.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/anps/anps_4d.htm), accessed August, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 182-183; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, Chapter 9.

<sup>16</sup> Quote from Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, Chapter 9; Carr, *Mission 66*, 72-73.

Visitation statistics soared during the two decades following 1955, from 14 to 146 million in the national parks and 5 to 17 million at the national monuments.<sup>17</sup>

One possible remedy for burgeoning visitation to the parks was to limit the number of visitors. Though Wirth believed that the public was “loving the parks to death,” he rejected this option; development was the answer to saving the NPS system. Through planned improvements, the NPS could preserve nature and wilderness in the parks without limiting visitor access to these national treasures. Massive tourist construction was a means of justifying preservation. More importantly, Mission 66 tourist development was a high modernist method to control the movement of visitors and keep them from overwhelming the backcountry and wilderness areas. The persistent challenge, as historian Richard Sellars described it, was that “park development was locked with preservation in a state of perpetual tension – both supportive and antagonistic.”<sup>18</sup>

To implement the modernist control, Wirth recognized that Mission 66 goals demanded much beefed-up personnel. He advocated for the addition of 750 seasonal and permanent employees and a crucial interpretive role for ranger-naturalists and naturalists. These NPS employees protected park environments by maintaining infrastructure, performing scientific research, and supervising visitors. These men (Wirth is clear about stating “The national parks must be served by competent, well trained, dedicated men...”) also helped visitors appreciate and understand the landscapes in which they were immersed. Expanded interpretation was central to many development projects. “Effective presentation of the park scene and its interpretation,” Wirth noted, “must justify all public use developments.” Yet, Wirth’s support for science was often lacking, and planners rarely studied the effects of Mission 66 projects on the environment, and science rarely informed development.<sup>19</sup> In the end, Wirth concluded that Mission 66 must “provide for beneficial enjoyment in ways that will leave these wilderness, natural, scientific, and historical areas unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>20</sup> Apparently development could accomplish this in a fortuitous manner rather than purposefully through scientific research and collaboration.

In the end, Mission 66 revolutionized and altered the character of many national parks despite, and possibly because of, its lack of attention to scientific issues. Mission 66 historian Ethan Carr summarized these dramatic developments; 70 new “units” of the park system came into being between 1956 and 1966. The National Park Service constructed or reconstructed over 2,700 miles of roads and over 900 miles of trails. Many parks received adequate water, sewer, and electric service for the first time. Crews built hundreds of park residences, comfort stations, and other public use property types. The Mission 66 program expanded and professionalized

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<sup>17</sup> The American Automobile Association was an ally to Stephen Mather in creating the NPS in 1916. Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 183; Carr, *Mission 66*, 87-88; quote from Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 156, see also 157.

<sup>18</sup> Dayton Duncan, “Are we Loving our National Parks to Death?” *New York Times*, August 6, 2016; Carr, *Mission 66*, 104-105; quote from Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 181.

<sup>19</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 168-173, 183.

<sup>20</sup> Conrad Wirth, “Mission 66 in the Headlines,” *National Park Magazine* 32, no. 132 (1958): 8-9, 36-38.

National Park Service employees by establishing two new training centers for park staff, the Albright and Mather training centers. Above all, the Mission 66 program funded more than 100 visitor centers, a new park facility invented by the agency's planners and architects that lay at the heart of the revised park master planning goals. Modernist advances in park architecture forged a new identity for the agency. Although controversy beset the development and redevelopment of national parks at this scale, by the end of the Mission 66 program, Wirth had accomplished much of what he envisioned. The reinvention of the National Park Service – and to some extent the national park idea – met the urgent demands of postwar American society.<sup>21</sup>

With these growth statistics never again matched, many NPS employees regarded Mission 66 as a Golden Age. It was an exciting time of prosperity and growth with the noble goal of making the nation's treasures accessible to the army of admirers flocking to the outdoors in the postwar period. Mission 66 represented the fulfillment of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright's vision for the NPS – to make the parks available “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” It was also, as Richard Sellars notes, “a high point of what might be termed the ‘landscape architecture approach’ to national park management, when, under landscape architect Wirth, development of the parks for recreational tourism dominated national park affairs and went largely unfettered by natural resource concerns.”<sup>22</sup>

A decade-long construction frenzy in the parks, Mission 66 had its critics. Used to the NPS Rustic style of architecture, many visitors identified the log cabin look with nature itself. The modern aspects of Mission 66 design contrasted starkly with surrounding nature, they claimed. Other critics including western author Ed Abbey thought that the Park Service pandered to tourists and that more facilities (modernist or not) diminished the parks' wild natures. Yet America's families that arrived in droves appreciated the abundant, efficient comfort stations, the well-planned campgrounds, the short interpretive trails, and the well-placed parking lots near centralized visitor centers. They accepted the benefits of the controlled landscape that enhanced their access and enjoyment to the nation's spectacular natural and historic parks.<sup>23</sup>

### **Expansion proposal for Little Missouri Buttes**

In his national program to exert more control of national parks, Wirth took advantage of the federal momentum to rationalize park boundaries. Mostly through purchases, park superintendents acquired inholdings, those troublesome private properties lying within the parks. Sensing a time of opportunity, they also looked beyond existing borders for new tracts that ecologically or historically fit within their mission statements. Aligning with national Mission 66 goals, in 1955, advocates proposed expanding Devils Tower National Monument to include the Little Missouri Buttes. This coincided with the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration planned at the

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<sup>21</sup> Carr, et al., “Mission 66 Era Resources”; Carr *Mission 66*, pp 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Quotes from Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 202; “Horace Albright believed Mission 66 to be one of the “noblest conceptions in the whole national park history,” ranking in importance “with the creation of the National Park Service itself.” Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 205; See also Carr, et al., “Mission 66 Era Resources.”

<sup>23</sup> Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

Tower. Guests at a dinner held to organize the event gave almost unanimous approval for the prospect of expanding the Monument. Ninety individuals from the local communities were present along with a handful of NPS and government officials. One local, Mr. Thurman, the owner of the Thorn property, an inholding within the monument, even stated that he would welcome the government purchasing his property. The Monument also hosted a well-attended public gathering to gauge interest in Sundance. Worried that the state of Wyoming would lose control over hunting jurisdiction in the proposed extension, the Wyoming State Game and Fish Commission opposed the expansion. In 1956, the NPS formally reconsidered the expansion after lawmakers modified the 1955 legislation for the 114-acre southern addition to include a feasibility study for the Buttes.<sup>24</sup>

During the following two years, Superintendent McIntyre and his successor James Hartzell lobbied to keep the extension alive but found no political appetite for the proposal at the federal level. Then in 1959, Senator James E. Murray of Montana, who was then the chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, introduced another bill to incorporate the Little Missouri Buttes into the Monument (S. 826). By this time, the extension encountered resistance from the Wyoming Farm Bureau and the Wyoming Woolgrowers Association. These interest groups lobbied against the bill, and soon the Sundance Commercial Club also withdrew its support. Under these local and regional pressures, S. 826 was dead on arrival.<sup>25</sup>

In the early 1960s, the Tower's Superintendent Hartzell recognized the prospect as still viable, but he held a conservative view as to its future and recognized the dramatic effect that it would have on park planning. The Monument's 1961 Master Plan noted that while the Tower was the "most significant geological feature," the grounds did not have "sufficient surrounding area to present an adequate geological and scenic foreground and background for the Tower." Extending the boundary to include the Little Missouri Buttes, the study concluded, "would greatly enhance the area's values and visitor enjoyment of them."<sup>26</sup> The following year's Master Plan went even further to remark on the shared geological story. To include the Buttes "would afford an opportunity to present a more nearly complete and detailed geologic story," since "geologists point to the Buttes as an example of an intermediate stage in the geological processes which formed the Tower." Beyond this obvious geological reasoning, the Buttes were also ecologically similar and included archeological resources such as teepee rings, rifle pits, and stone artifacts.<sup>27</sup> In a 1964 proposal for a petrological report on the Tower, the authors stated, "If it can be demonstrated in detail that Devil's Tower and the Little Missouri Buttes are closely

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<sup>24</sup> "Missouri Buttes Boundary Addition," dated September 28, 1956 and December 17, 1962, with maps indicating the expanded borders that would include the Missouri Buttes. Included are proposed parking overlooks, picnic areas, and campgrounds. Monument and Region Two Staff, "Master Plan for the Preservation and Use," Volume III, General Park Information, Section A., Park Origin, May 1963, ETIC DETO 109 D48 [207152].

<sup>25</sup> John Daugherty, *Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Spring 1984), 49-50.

<sup>26</sup> Monument and Region Two Staff, "Master Plan for the Preservation and Use," Chapter 1, Objectives and Policies, November 1961, ETIC DETO 109 D48 [207152].

<sup>27</sup> Monument and Midwest Region Office Staff, "Master Plan for the Preservation and Use," Chapter 2, Visitor Use in Brief, March 1962, ETIC DETO 109 D48 [207152].

related, then a forceful case could be presented by the National Park Service, on geological grounds, for the future addition of the Little Missouri Buttes to Devil’s Tower National Monument.”<sup>28</sup> The shared geohistory was a scientific justification for increasing Monument grounds. If both the Tower and Buttes were intimately linked, then it made sense to protect them together.

Despite this geological evidence, park expansionists lost the battle to include the Little Missouri Buttes in the Monument, but they did gain small victories under the Mission 66 imprimatur. Congress expanded the boundaries slightly in 1955 to build the new administrative zone and campground.<sup>29</sup> In 1965, the NPS purchased the last inholding within the park, the Thurman property. It encompassed eighty acres with a café and tourist cabins. The site of the former tourist accommodations is located a short distance up the access road from today’s Mission 66 administration building. Subsequently, demolition crews removed the small café and tourist cabins. Only stone stairs on the west side of the road leading to an overgrown trail and a line of trees demarcate the site. As designed, Mission 66 efforts solidified federal control of the Devils Tower landscape.

### **Mission 66 in Devils Tower**

Following the visionary goals of Wirth’s Mission 66 program, each park produced a prospectus for proposed development during the ten-year period. These plans followed the dual mandate—protection of resources and enjoyment of visitors—while implementing Mission 66’s restructuring of the service and efficient reordering of park landscapes. Staff at Devils Tower undertook this work with a clear understanding of the park’s mission. In the April 1952 Master Plan, for instance, park officials identified geology and natural history as the Tower’s primary importance. “Devils Tower is significant because the symmetry, color, and magnitude of the tower,” administrators explained, “are an unsurpassed manifestation of the forces of nature.” The Monument transported the minds of visitors to the depths of geologic time and enabled them to, as Aldo Leopold wrote, “think like a mountain.” During his administration, Monument Custodian Newell Joyner felt that visitors “unexpectedly thrilled at the magnificence” of the Tower formation. “They have been drawn out of the mundane and fleeting affairs of man, measured in minutes, and for a while been lifted to the timeless realm of magnificent nature . . . .” It was one of the world’s wonders, a natural park most important for its awe-inspiring monumentality.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> William B. Wadsworth, “A Comprehensive Petrologic Investigation of Devil’s Tower, Wyoming and some Possibly Related Intrusives,” c. 1964-65, ETIC DETO 109 D77 [229660].

<sup>29</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, “Statement for Management,” (July, 1986), 15-17, 20, MORU MPR; Jeffery Hanson and David Moore, “Applied Anthropology at Devils Tower National Monument,” *Plains Anthropologist* 44, no. 170 (November, 1999): 53-60.

<sup>30</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949); “Master Plan Development Outline, Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” April 1952, ETIC DETO 109\_D48 [207152]; Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument, A History* (National Park Service, Devils Tower Natural History Association, 2009), 12; see also Newell Joyner, Monthly Reports, 1946, DETO 1667, MORU MPR.



Thus, protecting this column of rock was the park's primary objective. In the early 1950s, a "nature trail" or Tower Trail encircled the base of the Tower; near it lay the Custodian's Residence and the CCC-built administration building where a small museum educated visitors on the geology, flora, and fauna of the Monument. Roads and parking areas fronted these structures, and a campground and picnic area abutted the Tower-base facilities. Recognizing the potential destructiveness of the dramatically increased visitation, Mission 66 recognized that such infrastructure so close to the monolith could destroy the park's resources. The Tower's administrators called for "[a]n adequate campground for public use and additional quarters for permanent personnel." These facilities needed an unobtrusive placement away from the Tower, pulling visitors' and staff's heaviest activities from the Tower's base.<sup>31</sup>

Even before Mission 66 officially began in 1956, monument officials had moved to acquire suitable property along the Belle Fourche River on which to construct these badly-needed amenities. On August 9, 1955, Congress authorized the acquisition of 114 acres on a horseshoe bend in the river for an up-to-date campground and administrative facilities. At this site, visitors could continue their enjoyment of the natural surroundings while reducing their pounding of the monument's natural features. By November, staff began planning for these construction projects on the newly acquired land in the southern portion of the Monument.

With development of the new property underway, park staff wrote the official NPS planning document titled "Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument." From the start, the authors reinforced the dual mandate of the NPS as the core principles that underlay every step taken under Mission 66. Yet development was central for this "forward-looking program." Mission 66 at the monument "...intended to develop and staff these priceless possessions of the American people so as to permit their wisest possible use; maximum enjoyment for those who uses them; and maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources that give them distinction." These goals required unprecedented construction in Devils Tower as it did in other national parks. They needed essential infrastructure for the expected 80 million visitors who would be enjoying the national parks system by 1966. These included "[m]odern roads, well planned trails, utilities, camp and picnic grounds, and many kinds of structures needed for public use or administration." Like the New Deal projects, Mission 66 sought to "improve" the parks in ways that made them more attractive and accessible to tourists while also maintaining what made each national park space special and unique.<sup>32</sup>

Monument planners adhered to the Mission 66 premise of "enjoyment-without-impairment" where "outmoded and inadequate facilities will be replaced with physical improvements adequate for expected demands but so designed and located as to reduce the

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<sup>31</sup> Carl R. Swartzlow, "Master Plan Development Outline, Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, Introduction," April 1952, ETIC DETO 109\_D48 [207152].

<sup>32</sup> National Park Service, "Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument," Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, 1957, D-28, MORU MPR; See also Jayne Aaron, "Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument," Draft (January 2021), U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming.

impact of public use on valuable and destrictable [sic] features.” New park organization protected visitors and resources with high-quality facilities and expanded park personnel. With a projected completion date by the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service, the authors reiterated national endorsement for Mission 66 and its massive expenditures. It “has received enthusiastic endorsement by the President of the United States and his Cabinet, and well received by the Congress and the Nation at large.” By the end of this decade of improvement, administrators at Devils Tower expected a revolutionized national park service capable of fulfilling its dual mandate in ways that were impossible in existing conditions.<sup>33</sup>

The Mission 66 prospectus for the Monument began by restating the significance of the site. All plans about preservation rested on the features relating to the park’s mission. The document briefly noted its historic importance. “For centuries,” the place “played an important role in the legend and folklore of Indian tribes in that region;” the Tower was a “landmark to explorers and stalwart travelers pushing their way west from the Black Hills region;” it was the nation’s first national monument designated by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. The authors gave glancing reference to Native American meanings of the Tower. Some speculated, the prospectus said, “on what must have been its great influence upon nomadic tribes which for centuries lived and hunted, loved and died in its towering shadow.” Written in the Mission 66 era, the monument’s 1962 plan acknowledged a potential cultural significance of the rock formation. It was an “easily identifiable landmark” that was a “gathering spot” for both Native Americans and settlers. “Archeological remains and legends,” the authors explained, “indicate that Indians were frequent visitors here.” The use of “legends” in place of “history” revealed the settler colonial framework that justified the dispossession of this land. The monument belonged to “white men” who “met here for picnics and celebrations as early as 1885.”<sup>34</sup>

The park’s most important feature, however, was the Tower itself. It was a scientific curiosity. “The Monument’s most significant value lies,” the authors explained, “perhaps, in its contribution to a fascinating chapter in man’s knowledge of the history of the earth as recorded in rocks of the Tower, and its environs.” “Early settlers” may have been ignorant about the Tower’s formation, but they were inspired by the “unique rock formation” and “arranged to keep it in public ownership for the use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people.” The “Mission” of Devils Tower National Monument was to “provide visitors with the opportunity to understand and appreciate one of the World’s unusual geologic and topographic examples of columnar rock formations and to gain a better knowledge of the geological processes that have helped to shape the earth’s surface.” The Monument was thus set aside by “white men” for the appreciation of its unique geological character. The priority for park managers remained the Tower’s geologic wonder, and they did not consider that Native Americans maintained their culture and their claim on the place. They assumed that once upon a time (as they used romantic language to describe this relationship), tribes roamed what was to become the Monument, but that time had passed and so had those very peoples. Geology (western science) was now the primary consideration for

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<sup>33</sup> Quotes from NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

<sup>34</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

preserving conditions around the Monument – they relegated everything else to the field of speculation.<sup>35</sup>

To both enjoy and protect this “great natural phenomenon” for this and future generations, the park’s Mission 66 document placed top priority on improving access and efficient mobility. Creating trails and roads would allow visitors to experience the Monument from near and far, to understand the nature of the Tower, and to feel inspired by its environs. Interpretation with signs, markers, exhibits, and contact with “trained and experienced park rangers and naturalists” would articulate the rock tower’s significance. This ordered landscape would “result in constructive, orderly enjoyment of its fragile and irreplaceable natural treasures without subjecting them to destructive forces.”<sup>36</sup>

Automobiles at the small park were a particular problem needing resolution. The place was in danger of being loved to death with the “tremendous increase in automobile travel” that brought thousands of travelers there each year. Facilities were necessary to “adequately care for and handle ever-increasing numbers.” Park planners worried about the effect of these automobilists on the environment surrounding the Monument (the viewscape) vital to its inspirational qualities and “climactic beauty.” It was necessary to keep “undisturbed and in good order the natural growth of pine forest, mosses, flowering plants and native shrubs around its base, constant care, revegetation of denuded areas and general good housekeeping must be maintained.” In managing traffic, the document authors placed high priority on continuing the Monument’s representative ecological composition as they embarked upon Mission 66.<sup>37</sup>

Preservation, however, vied with enjoyment. Automobiles allowed the multitudes to take in the grandeur that drew them to the place. The aims outlined in the Monument’s Mission 66 program included making the “most spectacular views of the Tower” more accessible by automobile through the “construction of surface roads.” Also, engineers sought to adjust the “dangerous angle” of the Belle Fourche River bridge approach to align it better with the entrance highway. This required modifying the bridge location and realigning the entrance highway. A new design would create overflow parking where the old campground once lay. Smoother access included trail enhancements. The Mission 66 vision included relocating and reconstructing the Tower Trail (“present loop trail around the Tower”) and constructing new short trails to enhance the visitor experience of viewing the Tower and its neighboring flora and fauna.<sup>38</sup>

Protecting the natural resources of the Tower from the burgeoning crowds included protection from a perennial threat in arid environments: fire. The Mission 66 prospectus explicitly expanded a fire control program that included seasonal personnel and facilities “increased in proportion to the increase in area visitation,” especially important in spring and fall

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<sup>35</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument”; Monument and Region Two Staff, “Master Plan,” November 1961, Forward.

<sup>36</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

<sup>37</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

<sup>38</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.” Not all of the preliminary ideas came to fruition. For example, a 1,000 car parking area depicted in an early sketch made it off paper and onto the ground. Architects and landscape architects revised drawings of planned construction for DETO several times over the 10 years of Mission 66.

when fire was at its most “hazardous.” Clearly, Monument managers believed that the expanding human presence on the landscape was a key factor in conflagrations, a danger at the forested Monument. Supporting fire protection, the Mission 66 program included additional staff to support the soil moisture program and “other protection services and facilities.”<sup>39</sup>

Following national Mission 66 goals, monument planners gave top priority to moving the crowds away from significant and fragile resources, in this case, the Tower itself. Serving as a museum and visitor center, since at least the CCC-era, the Rustic style administration building at the base of the Tower had been the hub of park interpretation and visitor education. The Mission 66 prospectus called for the construction of a new administration building “away from the critical area at the immediate base of the Tower.” This would also allow for a bigger museum to “more adequately explain the geology and natural and human history of the Tower” but placed away from close proximity to the Tower. Beefed-up interpretation could reach the bigger audience as facilities moved to the fore country. With some revamping, the “circle trail around the tower” (Tower Trail) could become a self-guiding with a “descriptive leaflet” and interpretive signs along its route. The prairie dog town needed roadside exhibits that “describe the importance and habits of these interesting creatures.” Recognizing the popularity of campfire talks, the prospectus noted that a campfire circle was “being installed near the new campground on the banks of the Belle Fourche River.”<sup>40</sup> With Mission 66 funding, the Monument hoped to have additional personnel to give regular “informal talks, conducted trips, campfire programs and other interpretive services.” Situating visitor education in controllable areas helped protect the central resource, the Tower.

### **Mission 66 Construction at the Tower**

Implementation of Mission 66 goals at Devils Tower got underway as soon as the national program officially began. By 1955, the park was ready with plans. Purchase of inholdings and boundary extensions were important components of Wirth’s vision, and Devils Tower acquired a 114-acre parcel on its southern edge along the Belle Fourche River in 1955. Almost all Mission 66 construction occurred there, effectively creating a new park landscape featuring a division between the Tower and its existing New Deal structures and the modern visitor-oriented, southern entrance area—a microversion of larger parks’ separation of the backcountry and forecountry. Within the southern addition, planners separated the park personnel areas from the campers’ facilities. Construction priority rested on administrative areas; in 1956, crews began erecting ranch-style residences, two on a cul-de-sac and one near the new administration building (1959) that faced the road. Nearby, in 1960-62, a utility building for the facilities division arose. The park added a 6-unit apartment in the housing area near the ranch houses that same year. Employee housing lay to the west of a new 52-site campground. Before the campground’s completion in 1961, workers had constructed an amphitheater and fire circle in 1957 that helped define the visitor-oriented end of the new property. A picnic area with tables,

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<sup>39</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

<sup>40</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

grills, comfort station, and shelter abutted the road leading into the two loops of camp sites. Concurrent with structural construction, crews laid the infrastructure for both the administrative area and the planned campground: water and sewer pipelines, two pumphouses (1958), a 50,000-gallon storage reservoir, and new access roads and parking lots to support the development.<sup>41</sup>

The park's south side near the river transformed with Mission 66 construction, but changes to the CCC-built district at the Tower's base also reflected the program's modern design ideals. First and foremost was removal of facilities that marred the naturalistic experience and potentially damaged the environment. With the new facilities in the southern administrative area, crews pulled park functions away from the Tower's base. They eliminated the utility area there and closed the campground, letting it revegetate. This allowed for additional parking; in 1963, removing the CCC-era flagstone walks increased the number of spaces. (Some of these flagstones became steps to the Thurman cabins.) Other alterations at the Tower's base followed modern design principles of efficient flow of tourists and cars, of easy, walkable access to resources, of carefully staged viewpoints, and of visitor recreation. Between 1961 and 1967, workers widened and paved the entrance road, parking lots, walkways, and overlooks with asphalt and made trails more accessible. In 1958, laborers completed the remaining section of the Tower Trail, realigning segments and widening it to the NPS five-foot standard before surfacing it with asphalt. The South Side Trail also received improvements (though not asphalt), and in the mid-1960s, a new section tied it to the Red Beds Trail.<sup>42</sup>

Almost no part of the monument's forecountry missed Mission 66 development, although less dramatically than the new south zone. Like other parks, designers paid special attention to entrances. At the Tower's only entry point, officials had planned for a new entrance kiosk (completed 1956), road alignment, and bridge, which they fulfilled by the mid 1960s. New interpretive signage appeared along roadways, pullouts, and viewpoints.<sup>43</sup>

With new construction and removal of unwanted facilities near the Tower, officials estimated the cost of the entire Mission 66 program at the Monument at \$620,000. The majority of this budget went to roads and trails, \$407,500; utilities \$23,200; buildings \$173,000; and miscellaneous ("Signs, fences, picnic tables, campfire circle, etc.") \$18,500.<sup>44</sup> With these projected monies between 1956 and 1962, administrators sought to transform Devils Tower, to create a modern, zoned landscape that ordered people's interactions with nature, and to provide badly needed amenities for increased park personnel while meeting the dual mandate.

As the monument's Mission 66 prospectus argued, the need for this massive construction was dire. Managers projected that by 1966, 200,000 visitors would arrive annually to enjoy all that the park had to offer. "Their sojourn here," the authors added, "will afford the greatest possible satisfaction both among the stalwarts who can't leave until they have conquered the Tower and looked out upon surrounding plains from its summit, and among those who pass this

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<sup>41</sup> Aaron, "Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings at DETO."

<sup>42</sup> Kathy McKoy, "Tower Trail and South Side Trail," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, January 18, 1996), Section 8, p. 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Aaron, "Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings at DETO."

<sup>44</sup> NPS, "Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument."

way simply to admire and delight in its great scenic beauty, or its great geological interest.” The conclusion of this document made manifest the management priorities in completing the Mission 66 program. The features would not be altered in any way and “[a]ll developments and improvements will be consistent with preservation and protection of the area as typified by the removal of developments from the base of the Tower, where they now interfere with public use and impair the scenic quality of the surroundings.” The Monument would be protected for future generations and its infrastructure altered in ways that enhanced the enjoyment of visitors.<sup>45</sup>

Mission 66 at Devils Tower supported what the Park Service identified as the monument’s primary significance: a geographic wonder to behold and conquer. Park managers did not understand the monolith as sacred space. To Native Americans, however, traveling to the park was not in the service of ascending its cracked exterior, enjoying the visitor facilities, pondering its geology, or taking in the scenery. It was a sojourn with a deeply sacred purpose, one rooted deep in tribal histories. This development era created the modern landscape without considering tribal perspectives. After the 1970s, managers would be faced with reconciling the modernized park with the rising demands for inclusion from American Indians.

### **Mission 66 Architecture at the Tower**

Devils Tower’s transformed landscape reflected the Park Service’s shift to a starkly new park architecture. Before World War II, the rustic structures of the CCC era had created a distinctive naturalistic appearance that epitomized national parks. After 1945, however, the architectural profession, including those who worked for the NPS, became enamored with modern architecture. It projected the ability to improve society through efficiency, ration, and technology. The movement placed emphasis on the honest expression of industrial materials like concrete, glass, and plywood and industrial building methods such as prefabricated or standardized units. Minimalist in appearance, these styles often utilized glass curtain walls and open or zoned interiors. When Conrad Wirth centralized NPS design services into the Western and Eastern Offices of Design and Construction (WODC and EODC) in 1954, park architects shifted to planning structures and landscapes along the principles of modernism. This style came to epitomize Mission 66 in the national parks. Agency designers softened the harshness of industrially inspired design by using low profiles, stone veneers, wood siding, and muted paint colors. Such structures met the Mission 66 goals of providing an unobtrusive presence in the park landscape.<sup>46</sup>

A small park, Devils Tower did not receive the Park Service’s dramatic new architectural center piece, the visitor center. These were often the only buildings architects customized. Most structures—administrative, utility, and residential—arose from standardized plans. Cost efficient and quick to erect, such structures used commonly available building materials. Mission 66

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<sup>45</sup> NPS, “Mission 66 for Devils Tower National Monument.”

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000); Carr, *Mission 66*; Gwendolyn Wright, *USA: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

residences consciously replicated suburban ranch houses desired by park employees. At the Tower, three single-family houses designed by WODC and built between 1956 and 1958 reflected the service's basic residential requirements expressed in its 1957 "Standard Plans for Employee Housing" publication. Identical save for reversed plans, two of the single-story, rectangular, wood-sided houses with shallow gable roofs and attached garages lay on a small cul-de-sac, another post-war design element adopted from suburban developers. The other identical home sat near the new administration building, a 1958 structure that may also have resulted from a standardized plan, though styles of this building type varied more than residences. Its low profile, wide, shallow gable roof, wood siding, and façade glass curtain marked it as a typical Mission 66 modern design. As common in all Mission 66 parks, the 1962 utility building lay close to the administration building. Built of concrete block with a flat roof and row of work bays, the structure looked like its counterparts in parks throughout the US. The design of the Tower's new campground with its two loops too echoed the layout of these sites in other moderately-sized parks. The three comfort stations in the picnic area and campground, the amphitheater and fire circle, entrance kiosk, and interpretative signage all followed standardized plans.<sup>47</sup>

Modern architecture and landscape design, coupled with the cost effectiveness of common building materials and stock plans, gave a visual homogeneity within each park and among all the parks as a whole. Standardization of design regulated the movement of visitors and accustomed them to interacting with facilities in all national parks. Park officials removed vernacular structures such as the Thurman café and cabins that cluttered the efficient uniformity that characterized modern landscape architecture. Like so many national parks, by the mid-1960s, Devils Tower looked like and operated as a part of a centralized national system.<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusion: A Nationally-Designed Order**

In the space of ten years, Devils Tower National Monument underwent its most significant construction program. With Mission 66 complete, in 1967, the park featured a smoothly flowing transportation system, segregated areas for park employees and administration, an up-to-date campground and comfort stations, and an accessible set of trails and viewpoints. The amenities helped resolve the problems created by Americans' rush to enjoy the national parks. With its southern visitor zone, monument development did protect the colossal rock formation—the resource—by drawing the heaviest tourist and employee usage to the river. It also homogenized the landscape by utilizing standardized design that characterized the national program and by eliminating remaining elements of the older, vernacular environment. Mission 66 imposed a nationally designed order on the park that sought to control and channel visitor experiences. Modernization more tightly bound this small patch of public land to the influential federal state.

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<sup>47</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 167-173. For complete descriptions and statements of significance for DETO's Mission 66 buildings, see Aaron, "Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings at DETO."

<sup>48</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 141.

## **Known Resource Types**

### **Descriptions & Information on M66 Structures at Devils Tower<sup>49</sup>**

#### **Administration and Maintenance Buildings**

Administration building (1958-59) (Building #23). This rectangular building has a shallow front-gable roof over a wall of windows and measures 50 x 28 feet or 1,400 square feet. Park documents indicate the price of the building construction at \$34,720.50, and \$35,881.07 with furniture and fixtures.

Utility building (1960-62) (Building #22). Designed for equipment maintenance and storage, this useful and essential structure in the Belle Fourche River Area was part of the 1958 master plan. Construction started in June of 1960 and ended by December in 1962. At a cost of \$69,900, this seven-room building measuring 3769 square feet included a shop area, office, restroom, furnace room, a storage room for flammable substances, a warehouse, fire cache and several garage bays. The building was heated and insulated in the work rooms and furnished with the equipment necessary for maintenance work.

Entrance Checking Kiosk. Existing by May 1956, it was replaced by a “permanent Entrance Kiosk,” indicated by a drawing dated March 28, 1961.

#### **Park Employee Housing.**

Six-unit Apartment (1960-61), Building #21. Conceived as part of the master plan in February 1958, the structure was in place by April 1963. This apartment structure is located in the Belle Fourche River Area and was constructed at a cost of about \$51,000. Measuring 115 x 24 feet, it featured four efficiency apartments (about 350 square feet), two one-bedroom apartments (about 460 square feet), and shared storage and laundry rooms.

Three Individual residences (1956-57) (Buildings #5, 6, and 24)

Building 5. Residences were constructed in a popular one story ranch style.

Building 6. Constructed by 1965, this structure is a mirror image of #5.

Building 24. This was constructed as a residence. As of 2022, it is now used as office and administrative space.

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<sup>49</sup> Additional information on structures and buildings of the Mission 66 era can be found in Aaron, “Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument,” January 2021. See also National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail, Devils Tower National Monument,” Final Draft (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, November 2020).



## **Campgrounds**

A campground (52 campsites, with restrooms) was constructed near the Belle Fourche River with two loops of driveway access. This replaced the campground at the base of the Tower.

## **Amphitheater, Fire Circles, and Picnic Areas**

### **Amphitheater & walkway**

The 150-seat amphitheater constructed in 1957 was enlarged in 1989 to seat 200, at which time the AV booth and seating surfaces were replaced. The fire pit is original. In 2018, a low stone wall was added along the access paths to parking area and to the campground to restrict prairie dogs to the northeast side.

The Picnic Area was created with 15 picnic sites. The area has a 20 x 48-foot concrete pad with a substantial shelter built in 1970s and replaced in 1985. A parking lot was added on the south side of the road.

## **Comfort Stations (Buildings #18, #19, and #26)**

These structures appeared rather spare and utilitarian compared to Rustic Style comfort stations of the 1930s. Restrooms built during Mission 66 at the Monument included two in the campground and one at the picnic area. These were built in 1961 with upgrades to plumbing and lighting in the 1990s and 2000s. Comfort station #18, for example, was constructed in the campground by the NPS in 1960. It was built as one story, with three rooms, measuring 15 x 24 feet, or 360 square feet.

## **Park Roads**

The 1961 version of the Devils Tower master plan reflected the Park Service's view on the proper function of roads in the monument: "The road, trail and parking systems must be adequate for access but should be so located and so limited in extent that they do not intrude on or destroy the basic natural history, scenic values and peaceful atmosphere of the area."<sup>50</sup> Of the total budget for Mission 66 at Devils Tower of \$622,200, a good proportion (\$407,500) was spent on new roads to the administrative area and campground and to improve existing roads and trails.

Pull-outs at Prairie Dog Town and other places judged as likely locations for viewing and photography of the Tower were constructed during Mission 66.

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<sup>50</sup> Monument and Region Two Staff, "Master Plan for the Preservation and Use," Chapter 1, Objectives and Policies November 1961, ETIC DETO 109 D48 [207152].

A parking lot for large RVs was added on the south side of the campground access road, 500' from main park road. Near this lot, the Mission 66 projects paved a drive of about ¼ mile leading south into the employee housing area.

The access road was widened at the entrance checking station. The bridge across the Belle Fourche River was replaced with an adjusted alignment.

The Visitor's Center Parking Area was expanded during Mission 66, construction lasting from early August to October 1963, at a cost of \$48,589.98. This project also replaced log curbing which had deteriorated over time. Originally accommodating 70 cars, the new expanded lot had room for 98 cars and 4 trailers, or 106 cars.

### **Trails**

The Tower Trail was reconstructed, and in places relocated, during the Mission 66 era. In 1961, about a third of the trail was resurfaced. By 1967, the entire trail had been resurfaced. For more information, see Chapter 9, Previous National Register Listings.

### **Utilities**

Mission 66 construction projects brought power, water, and sewer lines to the employee housing, maintenance, and administration building area and to the campground and amphitheater. In 2007, the Monument replaced pipes for the water supply.

Pumphouses (1958). Evidence suggests that two modern pumphouses approximately 9 x 11 feet in area were constructed by 1958. One of these is relatively remote, sitting upslope towards the Tower, northwest of the main utility buildings. By September of 1951, the pumphouse at Spring #1 had two pumps. The standby was a 3.5 horsepower engine installed in 1939, while the new prime mover used a 1.5 horsepower engine installed in 1951. In 1965, planners drew up a plan for the modernization of the water system, and the project was complete by March 1967. Pipes connected water sources on the Tower's flank all the way down to the utilities area. Early accounts are unclear about the location of springs. Some early maps indicate springs, although without numbers.<sup>51</sup>

### **Mission 66 Historic Districts**

In 2021, architectural historian Jayne Aaron proposed two Mission 66 districts for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The first, a Mission 66 Administrative and Residential Area, included the administration building, the maintenance/utility building, three residences and the apartment building, and the two pump houses (although one is located up the slope a ways). Also included in the district were the road, parking lots, recreational vehicle pads, and recreational field. The second district encompassed the Mission 66 Campground and Day-Use Areas Cultural Landscape: two comfort stations at the campground and one at the picnic

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<sup>51</sup> Three documents found in the ETIC system have information and maps about the development of the water system, including pump houses and locations of the springs: ETIC DETO 109 2029 "Water Resources," May 3, 1962; ETIC DETO 109 3134 "Modernization of Water System," May 11, 1965; and ETIC DETO 109 3134A "As Constructed Drawing," March 1967.

area, the two-loop campground drive, the picnic area, access road and day-use parking area, as well as the amphitheater with its audio-visual equipment structure and fire pit. See Chapter 9, Previous Listings, for more information.

Most Mission 66 structures do not qualify for listing on the National Register as individual structures. However, when considered together as a cohesive body of work (as a district), they possess emergent properties augmenting their historical significance. Devils Tower National Monument's Mission 66 development represents the comprehensive national planning that went into Mission 66 development and the standardized landscapes that resulted.

The Determination of Eligibility finds the Devils Tower Campground and Day-Use Area and the Mission 66 Administration and Residential Area eligible for listing as a Cultural Landscape according to Criteria A and C, in areas of conservation, planning and development, and entertainment and recreation. Criteria A specifies significant contributions to broad patterns of history. The district was associated with Mission 66 and its development of the National Park System, which contributed to the historical development of these protected landscapes. This district is considered eligible under Criteria C, as the structures embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The period of significance for Mission 66 buildings and structures at Devils Tower National Monument begins in 1955 when the Belle Fourche River property expanded the boundaries and enabled the entire project, and extends to 1966, the end of the Mission 66 program. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office concurred that these properties are eligible for the National Register on June 21, 2022.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Bethany Kelly to Russ Cash, email, June 21, 2022, "RE: National Register Nomination for Two Historic Districts at Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County" (DBPR WY 2022 495) MORU MPR.

## Graphics



*Figure 27. Entrance Sign and Ranger Station, 1956. This picture reveals how the entrance to Devils Tower National Monument appeared, after the CCC building projects and as Mission 66 got underway. Photo by Wayne Bryant (Courtesy National Park Service History Collection, Harper's Ferry Center).*



*Figure 28. Mission 66 Administration Building in the area by the Belle Fourche River. The modern stylistic elements of the Mission 66 era appear in this structure's one-story, the large, low-pitched front gable roof, accents of brickwork, and a façade curtain wall. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).*





*Figure 29. Mission 66 Employee Housing. In this building, a multi-unit apartment with shared utility and storage spaces. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).*



*Figure 30. Amphitheater constructed during Mission 66. The seating capacity was expanded, and a structure to house audio-visual (AV) equipment was added. The fire pit previously existed as a focal point. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020).*



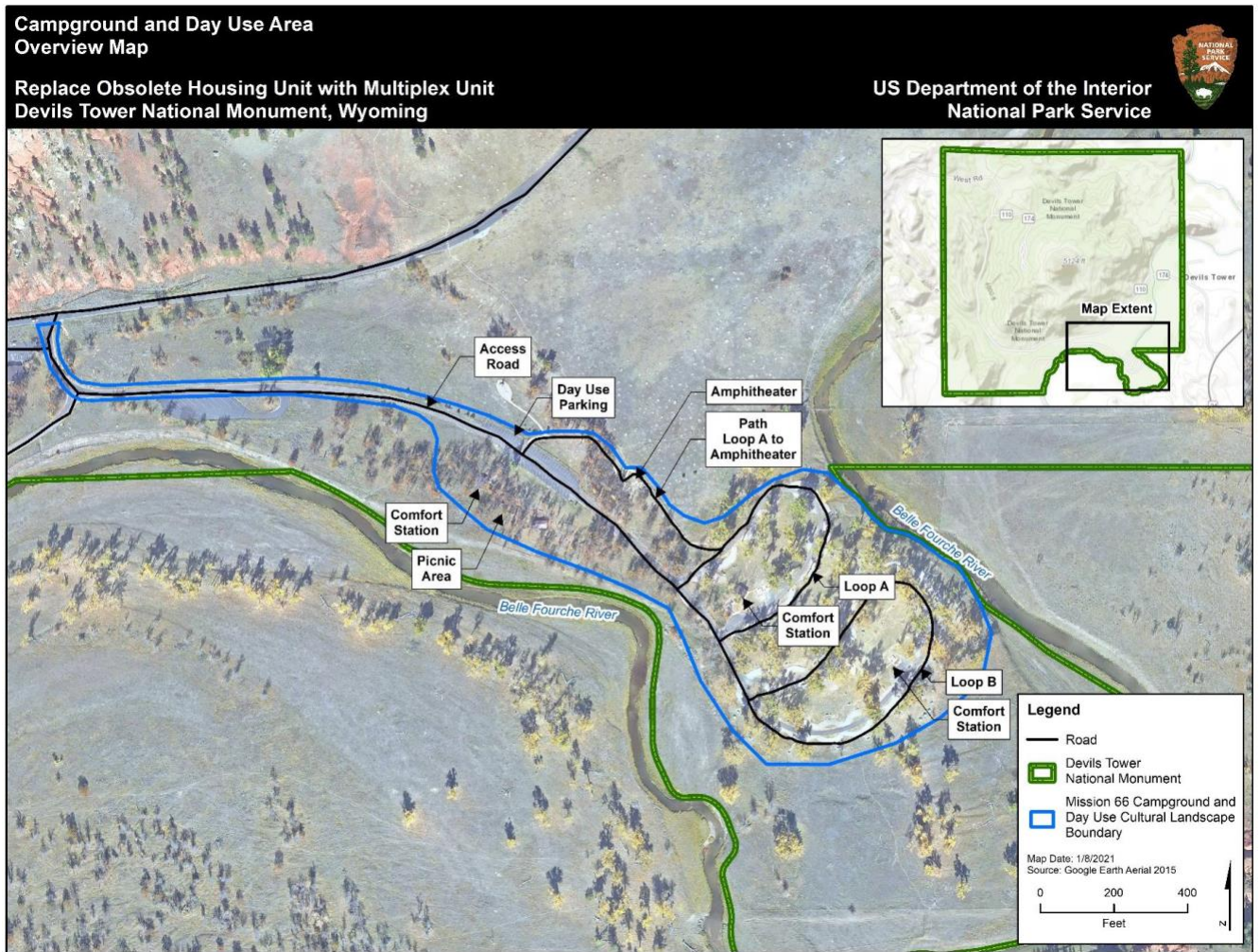


Figure 31. Mission 66 Campground and Day Use Area Historic District. National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument. (NPS/DETO "Determination of Eligibility for Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument," 2021, p. 39).



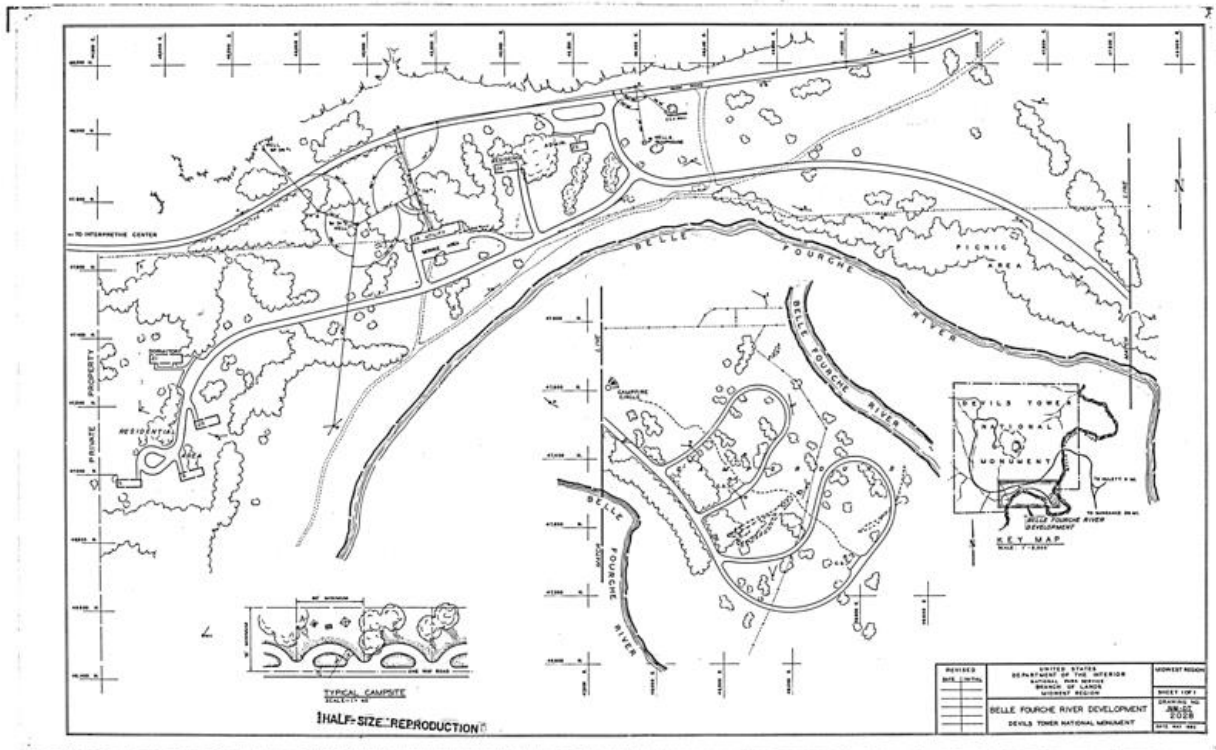


Figure 32. 1962 Drawing for the Belle Fourche River Development. This is the third version of the plan carried out during Mission 66. (NPS, ETIC Document, DETO 109 2028).

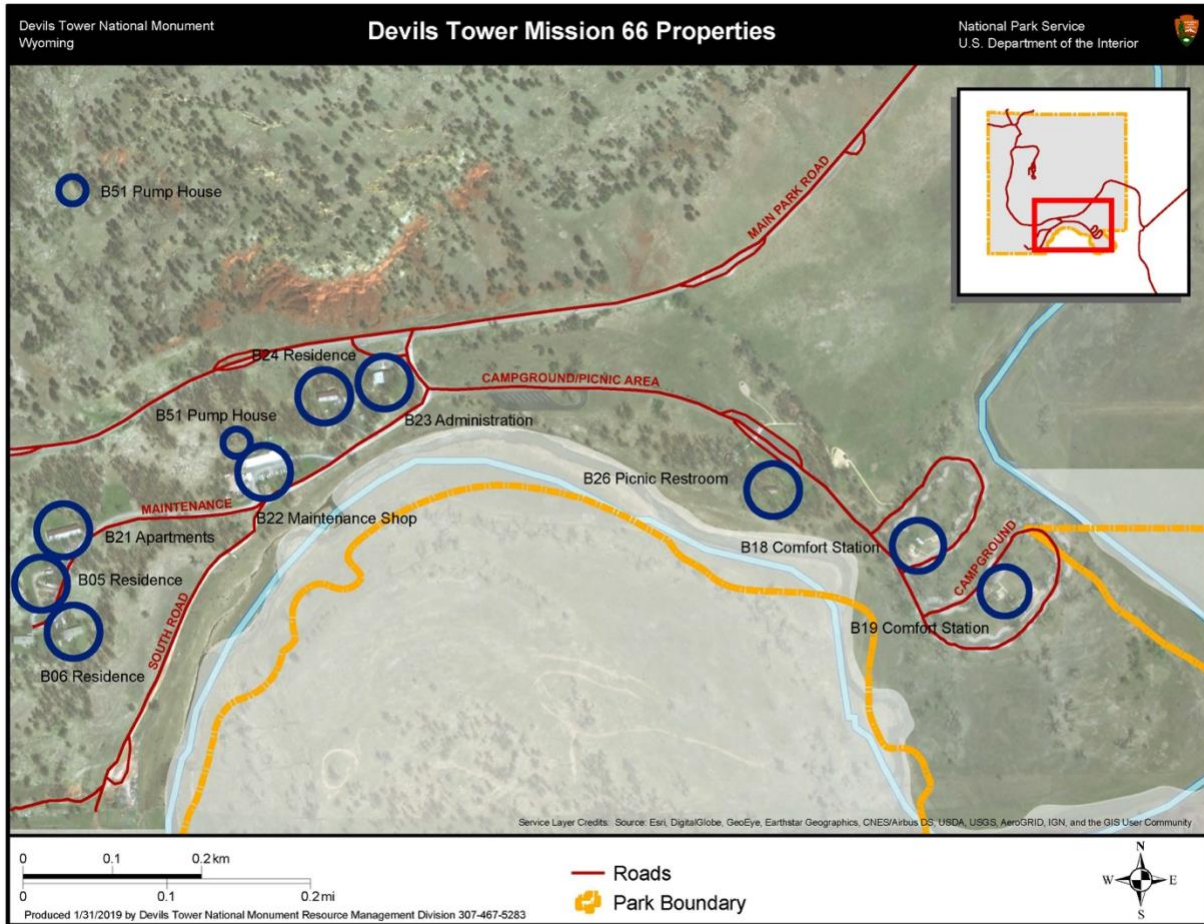


Figure 33. Devils Tower Mission 66 Properties. (NPS/DETO, "Determination of Eligibility for Mission 66 Buildings & Structures at Devils Tower National Monument," 2021).

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: Climbing at Devils Tower National Monument: A Vertical History, 1898-2006**

Jacob F. Northcutt, Michael S. Reidy, and Travis Carioscia

From the arrival of white settlers to eastern Wyoming, the challenge of the Tower's physical majesty has lured climbers up its columned walls. When recreational climbing emerged in the twentieth century and then mushroomed in the post-World War II consumer revolution, the Tower became an icon for a thriving climbing community. The participants imposed new meanings on the landscape: nationalistic expressions of dominion, sporting values of derring-do, an evolving relationship between mountaineers and the National Park Service, refinements of climbing technique, finesse and technologies, and importantly, a cultural clash with Native Americans. The climbers' activities on the cliffs subtly changed the Tower and left traces of the culture's shifting values embedded on the rock faces. Part of a powerful new outdoor recreation craze, climbing culture encountered revived Native American claims to the Tower as sacred space. Two very different visions of human relationships with Devils Tower emerged.

### **Narrating the First Ascent, 1893-1920**

A spirit of nationalism accompanied the first white climbers who successfully summited the Tower. The first ascent of Devils Tower supposedly took place on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1893. But the entire spectacle began weeks earlier. Willard Ripley and William "Bill" Rogers, two ranchers from Hulett, Wyoming, had teamed up to make the ascent. The two first attempted to fly a kite with a rope attached to it over the Tower. Not surprisingly, that failed.<sup>1</sup> They then began the painstaking process of building a ladder along one of the prominent cracks leading up the tower formation by driving wooden pegs into the crack and nailing boards across them. This process took several weeks of hard labor with Ripley and Rogers each taking turns driving the pegs. They must have completed the peg ladder by the end of June, after which they likely climbed to the top to make certain that Rogers could successfully complete the ascent during the planned Fourth of July celebration.

Both Rogers and Ripley likely had been on top of the Tower prior to the Fourth of July ascent. Newell Joyner, the 1930s monument superintendent, reported that Ripley was "undoubtedly the first man to stand on the Tower." He possibly received this information from

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument A History* (Devils Tower National Monument, WY: National Park Service, 2007), 34-35.

Alice Hepler, Ripley's wife.<sup>2</sup> On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the *Hot Springs Weekly Star* reported that Rogers had already climbed the Tower. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the *Custer Weekly Chronicle* reprinted this report.

Regardless of whether Ripley and Rogers had been to the Tower's summit before the Fourth of July ascent, the climb was the culmination of two days of patriotic festivities. Throughout the months of May and June leading up to the event, local newspapers announced the celebration with a blend of excitement and anticipation.<sup>3</sup> Newspapers promised "A Monster Celebration Old Settlers' Picnic" with food, fireworks, dancing, and especially climbing.<sup>4</sup> Most papers claimed it would be the first time anyone had summited the Tower. Newspapers throughout the United States, from the *Evening World* in New York City to the *Anderson Intelligencer* of South Carolina, copied these reports.<sup>5</sup>

Patriotic celebrations like the one at the Tower occurred widely across the American West during this period. They often included baseball games, rodeos, horse races, picnics, and dances. The special feature of this celebration was planting the American flag on the top of the Tower. Indeed, this was the focus of almost all of the newspaper accounts that covered the event. For example, the article in the *Custer Weekly Chronicle* announced that on July 4<sup>th</sup> "the stars and stripes [would be planted] on the highest point [of the Tower]," while another local paper reported after the climb: "HE ACCOMPLISHED THE FEAT. — One of the Largest Crowds Ever Assembled in this County. — ROGERS PLANTS THE STARS AND STRIPES — On the Summit of the 'Devil's Tower'."<sup>6</sup> In all of these reports, the planting of the flag afforded the narrative arc while the climb provided the hook.<sup>7</sup>

Though the reports varied in their estimates, between 800 and 1500 "anxious people" gathered along the banks of the Belle Fourche River to witness the Fourth of July ascent.<sup>8</sup> In preparation for the climb, Rogers' wife had sewn an Uncle Sam suit for him to wear. What the spectators saw when they trained their scopes on the Tower was a man clad in red, white, and blue scaling the vast vertical terrain of the Tower with an American flag in tow.<sup>9</sup> The feat that they witnessed was so dizzying, so disorienting, and so anxiety-producing that one newspaper later reported that it was a wonder that not one of the spectators had fainted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Newell F. Joyner, "Devils Tower Climbed: First Technical Climb of Devils Tower," June 28, 1937, [www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/firsttechnicalclimb.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/firsttechnicalclimb.htm), accessed August, 2023; Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> For promotions and advertisements, see "A GRAND FOURTH," *The Gazette*, Sundance, WY, May 19, 1893, and "DO NOT FAIL TO CELEBRATE THE FOURTH," *The Gazette*, Sundance, WY, June 23, 1893.

<sup>4</sup> *Sundance Reform*, July 1, 1893, and *Sundance Reform* No. 52, July 6, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening World*, New York, May 23, 1893, p. 4; *Evening Star*, Washington DC, May 29, 1893, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> "HE ACCOMPLISHED THE FEAT," *The Gazette*, Sundance, WY, July 7, 1893. Twenty-five years later, the "stars and stripes" was still the main topic of the story. See "Swings Old Glory from the Top of the Devil's Tower," *Sheridan Post*, Wyoming, August 11, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, on the same day that the Tower was climbed, so too was Inyan Kara, a mountain in the Black Hills. Not surprisingly, an American flag was planted on top there as well. See *Sundance Reform*, Sundance, WY, July 7, 1893.

<sup>8</sup> "HE ACCOMPLISHED THE FEAT," *The Gazette*, Sundance, WY, July 7, 1893.

<sup>9</sup> "A Remarkable Feat," *Daily Sun*, Cheyenne, WY, July 11, 1893.

<sup>10</sup> "A Remarkable Feat," *Daily Sun*, Cheyenne, WY, July 11, 1893.

Stories disagreed about what happened after Rogers descended. As with most first summits, conflicting narratives abounded. Some reported that Rogers climbed the Tower again, while Rogers' brother-in-law, Knowles, said that three other men climbed the ladder that day. Most reliably, one story told of a group of boys going up the Tower after Rogers, including a young boy named Cyral Miller. Miller had walked from his home in Spearfish, South Dakota, ascended the Tower after Rogers, and then returned the sixty miles back home to Spearfish.

In the years following this ascent, groups of Euro-American settlers continued to gather at the Tower every Fourth of July to celebrate the birth of the nation. Throughout the 1890s and into the early decades of the twentieth century, these Old Settler picnics became a staple at the Tower with people from all over Wyoming and South Dakota taking part in the festivities. These enjoyable events were integral to community building and helped reinforce a narrative of American progress in the Black Hills. The picnics also functioned as occasions to reenact the first Tower climb.

On July 4, 1895, two years after the first ascent, Linnie Rogers, the wife of William Rogers, successfully climbed to the summit of the Tower, making her the first of many Euro-American women to climb the Tower.<sup>11</sup> Like the first ascent, she carried an American flag, which she planted in the summit meadow. Echoing the nationalistic tenor of the first ascent, newspapers promoted her venture alongside promises of "Indians on Display, Fireworks, Dancing, Live Music."<sup>12</sup> While she spent only approximately twenty minutes on the summit, she made sure to re-install an American flag on the summit.<sup>13</sup>

Similar discrepancies as to who climbed the Tower on the first ascent occurred in reports of the ladder used that day. Rogers supposedly dismantled the lower section after he climbed so that other people would not use it. However, on July 22, 1906, Arthur Jobe, an engineer for the Homestake Mining Company, climbed the Tower eleven years after Linnie Rogers.<sup>14</sup> According to *The Washington Times*, he used only part of the ladder as the lower section had burned away.<sup>15</sup> Two years later, a group of men from the Belle Fourche area climbed the Tower. By this time, the ladder Rogers used had been dismantled again, so these men installed their own pegs as they climbed.<sup>16</sup> Babe "the Human Fly" White likely used the ladder for the last time in 1928. After his ascent, White recommended the route be shut down because of the danger it posed to the general public. Heeding his recommendation, the bottom 100 feet of the ladder were then removed (again).<sup>17</sup> Between an estimated twenty-five to fifty people used the upper portions of the ladder after Rogers' initial ascent. The bottom section was burned, rebuilt, torn down, and reconstructed on several occasions. Today, the upper section of the stake ladder still exists. Park

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<sup>11</sup> *Laramie Boomerang*, May 30, 1895, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Crook County Monitor*, July 10, 1895.

<sup>13</sup> *Laramie Boomerang*, May 30, 1895, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Lead Daily Register*, August 1, 1906.

<sup>15</sup> "Surmounts Tower of Frowning Rock," *The Washington Times*, August 12, 1906.

<sup>16</sup> "Young men Climb the 'Devil's Tower,'" *Bon Homme County Independent*, July 30, 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Terry Rypkema and Curt Haire, *A Climbers Guide to Devils Tower National Monument* (1977), Self-published.

staff refurbished the upper 170 feet of the ladder in 1973, and in 2000, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>18</sup>

The period preceding the first ascent was part of the heroic age of alpinism when climbers from Great Britain and Europe brought the sport of mountaineering to the Rocky Mountains. While many frowned on young men of the upper classes taking heedless risks on far away summits, climbers exploring peaks in the Canadian and American Rockies found “just the sort of glorious conspiracy of excitement and derring-do that appealed to a certain type of educated man in the Victorian era.”<sup>19</sup> A mix of motivations impelled people to climb mountains and scale rock faces.

Told and retold in the local and national newspapers, stories of the first ascents of Devils Tower must have been exciting to read. But more significant was how they were told – and why. At the time of the first ascent, most newspaper reports emphasized the homegrown nature of the ascent. More recently, guidebook authors and mountaineering historians have discussed the first ascent as a stunt meant to drum up money and fame for Ripley, Rogers, and the region. Indeed, climbing historian Chris Jones has argued the ascent was “one of those colorful episodes that abound in the history of the West.”<sup>20</sup> In these narratives, characters like Rogers and Ripley were different than later climbers who possessed modern technologies, techniques, and ethics that distinguished them as authentic climbers rather than mere stuntmen. As they sought to make such distinctions, however, these writers failed to see how later climbers and mountaineers were the heirs of the frontier narrative articulated by historian Frederick Jackson Turner.<sup>21</sup> In a speech delivered at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1898, Turner declared that the American frontier had closed, precipitating a worry about what would shape the American character in the future. Strenuous and challenging activities like climbing have long been perceived as invigorating and character building. Understood this way, Rogers and Ripley existed within a climbing culture with other Euro-American climbers at the Tower.

From its inception, climbing at the Tower accompanied U.S. colonial processes in the trans-Mississippi West. In this framework, the first ascent, like later climbs, was full of political symbolism and meaning. Viewed through the lens of imperial expansion, the decision to wear an Uncle Sam suit and plant the “stars and stripes” on the summit was not just a coincidence; it was a political statement. The first ascent of the Tower by Rogers—and Ripley—in 1893 was a regional event with strong nationalistic overtones. Internationally, climbers from several countries informally competed to be the first to summit particular peaks.

Planting a country’s flag on top of a mountain represented nationalism or colonialism. National rivalries surfaced among European climbers during the golden age of mountaineering; on the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865, Edward Whymper and his British

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<sup>18</sup> Kathy McKoy, “Tower Ladder,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, June 26, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Chris Jones, *Climbing in North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 169.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 169.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 31-60.

party pried up rocks and let them drop down toward an Italian party below. In the case of Devils Tower, planting the flag also represented the larger colonial processes taking place in the Black Hills region during the nineteenth century.

As mountaineering historian Peter Hansen argued, achieving summits involved thinking like a state.<sup>22</sup> In the contested terrain of the North American West during the second half of the nineteenth century, ascents of mountains—including rock spires— were political acts. At the turn of the twentieth century, the federal government forced the Lakota and other Northern Plains tribes off their ancestral homelands and onto reservations as settlers claimed and renamed their spaces, ultimately reimagining them as “American.”<sup>23</sup> The United States conquered the North American West through symbolic gestures as well as violent confrontations. Climbing – and claiming – physical features like the Tower was one of the ways the United States and its citizens expressed their dominion over the Black Hills.

The 1893 ascent of the Tower by Rogers and Ripley occurred within the larger struggle for control of the Northern Great Plains in the second half of the century. It served as the precursor to the subsequent technical climbs. As much as twentieth-century mountaineers have attempted to distance themselves and their sport from stunts like Rogers and Ripley’s, the 1893 ascent opened the history of technical climbing at the Tower. Though later climbers undoubtedly viewed themselves as heirs of the European tradition of alpinism rather than this vernacular tradition, they followed the footholds of these pioneers when they climbed the Tower. Over the next few decades, a sport and a culture of climbing grew and found expression at Devils Tower National Monument.

### **Making the Vertical Technical, 1936-1940**

After the 1893 and 1895 climbs, efforts to climb the Tower in the first decades of the twentieth century were sporadic at best. While an occasional youth looking for accolades or a self-promoter seeking fame (and money) climbed the stake ladder in the early decades of the century, it was not until the late 1930s that rock climbers began to express their interest in climbing the Tower without the ladder.<sup>24</sup> Unsurprisingly, the first climbers to press the Park Service to climb the Tower came from the East which had a history of North American climbing and mountaineering.<sup>25</sup> Nor was it surprising that the first technical climbs occurred when they did.

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<sup>22</sup> See Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 22-27.

<sup>23</sup> On claiming, see Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> An interesting episode of note during this period was a “hobo” by the name of Truman who in 1921 sought \$600 for an ascent of the Tower. See “To Climb Devil’s [sic] Tower,” *Bighorn County Rustler*, Basin, WY, May 13, 1921.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice Isserman, *Continental Divide: A History of American Mountaineering* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016); and Laura and Guy Waterman, *Yankee Rock & Ice: A History of Climbing in the Northeastern United States* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1993).



Outdoor recreation boomed in the United States during the interwar years with cars and highways serving as the conduits through which Americans gained access to the emerging network of state and national parks – and monuments. These new technologies, coupled with investment by federal, state, and municipal government in expanding and strengthening interstate road systems, resulted in an exponential interest in—and access to—outdoor recreation. During the interwar period, middle-class Americans flocked to the woods, hills, and mountains in search of experiences that rejuvenated their spirits and eased their growing anxieties as modern, urban peoples. Not only was nature tourism psychologically good for people, but many national leaders saw outdoor recreation as a way to build a stronger, more robust citizenry.<sup>26</sup>

At the Tower, these larger developments played out in the construction of a scenic highway that connected the Tower to other important recreation sites in the West. First proposed in 1919, the Custer Battlefield Scenic Highway (CSH) linked the Tower with Yellowstone National Park to the west and Glacier National Park to the north.<sup>27</sup> Local boosters in the growing towns of the Black Hills region enthusiastically supported this development, as many saw the highway as a pathway to both relevance and revenue.<sup>28</sup> Along with the highway came a vigorous campaign to promote the different sites along the way, including the Tower.<sup>29</sup> Its completion made access to the Tower more convenient and a visit more compelling.

The first technical rock climbs at the Tower took place within the larger milieu of state supported automobile tourism and outdoor recreation during the interwar period. Today, “technical,” means any reliance on ropes, pitons and devices including nuts, stoppers, and cams designed to increase the safety of climbers. Practicing climbing technique on a big rock next to the ground is bouldering, and since it is unroped, it qualifies as non-technical climbing. Mountaineers will clamber up slopes of a mountain until they reach a “technical” section where they will rope up. “Aid climbing” means that climbers put their weight directly on a rope or any equipment to ascend. “Free climbing” indicates that although climbers use devices temporarily jammed between rocks (e.g., nuts and cams) and a rope (threaded through those devices) to provide protection against a fall, they rely on their skill and effort to ascend higher while not pulling on the rope. A very small fraction of climbers engage in a “free solo climb,” meaning they use no rope, so it is non-technical in a sense, yet requires a high level of skill and is extremely dangerous.

At Devils Tower, technical climbing challenges presented themselves immediately as the rocks rose up directly. Like other outdoor activities during the interwar period, rock climbing was a sport that many perceived as promoting physical health and social virtue. By the 1930s, the

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<sup>26</sup> On automobile tourism in the interwar period, see Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 19-53.

<sup>27</sup> “One of Nature’s Wonders in Wyoming is Devil’s Tower on Site of the Custer Hiway,” *Sheridan Enterprise*, Sheridan, WY, November 8, 1919.

<sup>28</sup> See “Boost the Scenic,” *Crook County Monitor*, Sundance, WY, October 2, 1919; “May Lose Highway,” *Crook County Monitor*, Sundance, WY, October 16, 1919; and “Custer Battlefield Highway Booster Makes Visit to City,” *The Times*, Sundance, WY, December 17, 1919.

<sup>29</sup> See “Custer Battlefield Highway A Memorial to Custer,” *Sheridan Enterprise*, Sheridan, WY, September 2, 1920.



best climbers in Germany and Italy were national celebrities. During this time period, a network of clubs and groups formed to promote the sport.<sup>30</sup>

In many ways, the Tower's physical geography and its location in northeastern Wyoming influenced these dynamics. Whereas groups like the Sierra Club originated in relative proximity to venues like Yosemite Valley and brought elite groups of people to those places during the interwar period to climb, the Tower lay distant from any major metropolitan area. As a result, the first technical climbers at the Tower were on their way either to or from some other place; it was a stop along the way rather than a destination in its own right. Also, it did not offer a diversity of terrain for climbers of varying skill level and interest. All of the climbing at the Tower was similar in its unrelenting steepness. Thus, it did not attract alpinists or mountaineers, other than the most elite, during this early period of technical climbing.

### **Fritz Wiessner and the First Technical Ascent of the Tower**

By the 1930s, the Tower caught the attention of accomplished alpinists. As a leading climber during the interwar period, it may be that Fritz Wiessner saw one of these tourist maps as he drove home to New York on the Custer Battlefield Highway in 1936. Having spent the summer climbing in the alpine environments of the Canadian Rockies and Coast Range, he might have been intrigued by the pure rock environment of the Tower. A German-born climber who moved to New York City in 1929, Wiessner was an exceptionally talented free climber, successfully negotiating sections where previous climbers had placed their weight on pitons to ascend. In particular, he was known for his skill in climbing "wide," body-width cracks.<sup>31</sup> Though he had climbed in the Himalaya and other "Great Ranges," he had also made numerous first ascents in the Shawangunks, a rock climbing area near New York City.

The Park Service rejected Wiessner's initial request to climb the Tower, made in the summer of 1936. The agency argued that climbing the Tower conflicted with its mission to protect it as an "important geological formation."<sup>32</sup> The first entry concerning Devils Tower in the *American Alpine Journal* concerned this rebuff of Wiessner. In an opinion piece, an unidentified writer wondered why "bona-fide climbing" would be prevented at the Tower as it was "simply an exploitation of the recreational facilities of the parks." The author wrote:

To preserve our national wonders for future generations is a laudable ambition, but unless these natural wonders have some value, esthetic or recreational they are of no value to this or future generations. An intelligent man is instinctively a doer and has little patience with contemplative inaction. Are intelligent people to be driven away from the national

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<sup>30</sup> For physical health and social virtue see Sutter, *Driven Wild*. On clubs, see Joseph E. Taylor III, *Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climbers & Nature at Risk* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). On celebrity status, see Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 175.

<sup>31</sup> Waterman, *Yankee Rock & Ice*, 94-101.

<sup>32</sup> William P. House, "Devils Tower," *American Alpine Journal* (1938): 131; See also miscellaneous information in Folder 857-06 (Devils Tower/Travel/Mountain Climbing), Box 2158, RG 79, Mount Rushmore Multipark Repository, (hereafter cited as MORU MPR).

parks and monuments? Are our national parks to be devoted to morons and Cook's Tourists? <sup>33</sup>

By contrasting an “intelligent man” with “those of sufficiently low intelligence to be led like sheep,” this writer extended an inherited view of climbers as superior citizens—physically, intellectually, and morally.<sup>34</sup> He asserted that climbing should be allowed at Devils Tower National Monument (and all other national parks and monuments) because climbing had positive social, intellectual, and physical effects. Rock climbing at the Tower in the 1930s emerged from the social, political, and economic forces at work in the nation during this period. Climbing was a sport of the elite, and Wiessner's climb showed that climbing was primarily for the educated classes. It highlighted the tension between recreation and conservation at the parks and monuments during this period.

Wiessner's initial rebuff set off a series of letters and appeals by the American Alpine Club (AAC) to gain permission from the Park Service for Wiessner and his team to climb the Tower.<sup>35</sup> One letter came from Joel Fischer, president of the AAC. It emphasized Wiessner's (and his partners') climbing accomplishments—including the coveted first ascent of Mount Waddington the year before. Fischer assured the Park Service that “this party, of course, will not drill any holes in the rock or leave any ropes or ladders hanging or in any way deface the rock.” He added: “They are of the opinion that the rock can be climbed legitimately, that is, without the use of any of the special apparatus used on the only previous ascent.”<sup>36</sup> This appeal to resource sensitivity certainly resonated with park managers who viewed the Tower as a geologic wonder to be looked at rather than climbed. When Wiessner wrote a formal request to Park Superintendent Newell Joyner in May 1937, the Park Service granted him permission.<sup>37</sup>

In June of 1937, Wiessner arrived in the Black Hills with two climbing partners, Lawrence Coveney and William House, to make the first technical ascent of the Tower. In contrast to Rogers' ascent, this climb was to be little publicized, another request made by the Park Service.<sup>38</sup> In an article written by House in the AAC's annual journal, he recounted that, from below, it looked like a few *courte échelles* – a technique where one climber steps on the shoulders of another – along with some severe crack climbing would lead to the top. On the first day, Wiessner and company attempted the lower sections of the southeast corner, but the climbing was much more difficult than they had imagined as the first section of cracks were

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<sup>33</sup> “Devils Tower,” *The American Alpine Journal* 1, no. 1, (1937): 107. The author may have been Wiessner himself.

<sup>34</sup> “Devils Tower,” *American Alpine Journal* 3, no. 1 (1937): 107.

<sup>35</sup> Letters in Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR).

<sup>36</sup> Joel E. Fischer to National Park Service, May 4, 1937, Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR).

<sup>37</sup> In this exchange about climbing the Tower we witness the development of climbing in North America more generally. The sport had advanced from attaining the summit by any means possible to attaining the summit with as minimal use of artificial help possible.

<sup>38</sup> A. E. Demaray to Joel E. Fisher, May 13, 1937, Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR). In spite of these instructions, there was some coverage of this climb in the national news media. See “Devil's Tower Scaled Without Rope Stakes,” *The Bismarck Tribune*, June 29, 1937, p. 2.

“stoutly guarded by a gooseberry bush.” Realizing they needed to find a different way, the team “dejectedly made [their] way down to the cars.”<sup>39</sup>

The following morning found them back at the base of the same crack system. Using the *courte échelles* technique, Coveney supported House on his shoulders who soon placed a piton in the crack as an anchor. Up these bodies climbed Wiessner, first over Coveney and then onto House’s shoulders, where, standing on his tiptoes, he could just reach the gooseberry bush. From there, twenty more feet of climbing brought them to the base of a decapitated column. Wiessner once again took the lead, climbing around the column and then thirty-five feet to the base of “the most evil looking crack” that House had ever seen. House described Wiessner’s climbing technique:

With back against the wall, his hands, arms, hips, knees and feet making all possible use of the crack itself, he moved slowly and with obvious effort. Twenty feet up he drove in a piton and continued almost without a rest. Still climbing slowly he seemed to move with greater ease and confidence even as he wriggled up what looked to us like the most difficult part. Incredibly he kept going, forcing himself up the crack with a power and rhythm that was beautiful to watch.

Most accounts, including the Monument’s website, made special note of the one piton that Wiessner placed in the crack for protection. In reality, it was actually one of several used during the climb.<sup>40</sup>

From the top of this difficult section, Wiessner belayed his companions up, at times literally pulling them with the rope. From there, a scramble led them to the top where they shared a can of grapefruit juice and set off firecrackers that House had secretly stashed in his rucksack. In total, the climb took four hours and forty-eight minutes. They made rough measurements of the size of the summit meadow by pacing it from end to end, and they collected samples as they went, including all of the different types of plants they could find and one Mormon cricket. As House admitted, there wasn’t much to it, as the idea of contributing to science was “given feebly as one of the justifications.”<sup>41</sup> After collecting the samples, they scurried back down the initial sections and placed additional pitons and carabiners to rappel the steepest sections they had ascended. In spite of their agreement with the park managers to not leave any gear in place, they left behind these pitons and carabiners along with the two pitons used on the ascent. After the ascent, Wiessner deposited other material at the Monument’s museum, including his shoes, a piton, a carabiner, and a piece of rope.

The ascent was an overwhelming success for both the Park Service and the climbers. As far as the Park Service was concerned, no one in the climbing party was injured, and thus it avoided the bad publicity that would have come had something gone awry. For the climbers, not

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<sup>39</sup> House, “Devils Tower,” 131-35.

<sup>40</sup> Wiessner later said that he wished he had not placed the piton, as he thought it was not needed. Devils Tower National Monument, “First Technical Climb,” [www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/firsttechnicalclimb.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/firsttechnicalclimb.htm), accessed November 7, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> House, “Devils Tower,” 135.

only did they make the first technical ascent of the Tower, but more importantly they showed that rock climbing techniques, if employed by trained individuals, were not as risky or dangerous as previously suspected. Wiessner, Coveney, and House demonstrated to the Park Service—and to other climbers—that rock climbing was a legitimate activity that could be undertaken safely at the Tower. They staked a claim for future rock climbers, and in doing so, added yet another group competing for access at the Tower.

### **Jack Durrance and the Second Technical Ascent**

The following year, Jack Durrance led the next group of climbers to visit the Tower. Durrance has become a legend at the Tower in part because his route is the most popular route at the Tower. On September 8, 1938, Durrance and his team climbed what has since become known as the “Durrance Route.” Like Wiessner, this ascent also included fixed pitons.<sup>42</sup> On June 27, 1938, Durrance requested permission to climb the Tower with the support of Joel E. Fisher, then the Treasurer of the AAC, who assured the Park Service that Durrance too would not deface the rocks with pitons or spikes or use the climb for publicity.<sup>43</sup> Like Wiessner’s climb, the team accomplished this ascent almost in secret, the only witnesses being those who happened to be visiting the Monument that day.

The report of the second technical ascent closely followed the narrative arc of the first technical ascent written by House the previous year; initial failure led to internal doubts, then to success with a sustained discussion of the difficulties involved. Durrance and his party of four arrived at the Tower on September 6, 1938. As with Wiessner’s ascent, Joyner requested that the party gather soil and rock samples should they reach the top. Again, this justification infused the climb with a purpose beyond mere recreation. According to Durrance, Joyner doubted that this mattered, however. Though Joyner was supportive of the attempt, he did not believe the team would make it to the top. Likewise, Durrance had his own doubts after their first attempt on September 7<sup>th</sup>. He and Butterworth started up the lower sections with the intention of following Wiessner’s original route. But from below, the first hundred feet of the route looked far too risky. As Butterworth recounted, “deciding that reaching the piton would be quite difficult and the rest of the crack dangerous, that spot was abandoned and other possibilities looked into.”<sup>44</sup> After spending the morning attempting Wiessner’s route, the two traversed left, eyeing a crack system that began on a leaning, decapitated pillar. The weather turned from sun to storm, and a downpour of hail put a stop to their attempt. Drenched and feeling defeated, Durrance and Butterworth sheepishly slumped back to the base where Joyner was waiting. In a gesture that revealed the emerging relationship by park managers and climbers, Joyner offered Durrance and Butterworth the Monument’s museum for the night, so they might dry themselves and their gear.

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<sup>42</sup> Steve Gardiner and Dick Guilmette, *Devils Tower National Monument: A Climber’s Guide* (Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Joel E. Fisher to Department of National Parks, June 30, 1938, Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR).

<sup>44</sup> Harrison Butterworth, “A New Route on Devils Tower,” *The American Alpine Journal* 3, no. 3, (1939): 360-61.

Like Wiessner's party the year before, the second day brought success. Durrance and Butterworth climbed the leaning pillar at the base of the route and then ascended what is now known as the "Durrance crack" by placing pitons in the lower section until the crack became too wide near the top. Like Wiessner, they left these pitons in the crack.<sup>45</sup> After passing these difficulties, they followed another system of broken cracks, after which they made a slight rappel downward using a piton Wiessner had placed the year before. An easy scramble led Durrance and Butterworth to the summit where they discovered a cairn built by Wiessner.<sup>46</sup> They too collected soil and flora samples as well as a piece of a flagpole.<sup>47</sup> They then began their descent using the rappel piton left by Wiessner. The Park Service sent everything they brought down from the summit to Washington to be placed in the Department of the Interior Museum.

An interesting and unexplored nationalist feeling crept into Durrance's account that he submitted to Joyner the following year. His report began by admitting that his team had no way of comparing its own abilities with those of "Maestro' Wiesmann" and that they had been discouraged by the account of the first successful summit as published in the *Appalachia* and *American Alpine Journal*. Yet Durrance felt strongly that an American should climb the Tower. "I can not resist saying confidentially to you, sir," Durrance ended his report, "that I'm proud we have proved that Americans can also climb."<sup>48</sup> Later that October, when writing Joyner again, Durrance thought better of this and requested that the park not include his boasting.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, Durrance's letter, like the Uncle Sam suit worn by Rogers, demonstrated the strong relationship between climbing and U.S. nationalism in the early years of climbing at the Tower.

## The NPS and Climbers at the Tower

This new and growing relationship between rock climbing and the National Park Service after the first technical climbs defined climbing at the Tower throughout the twentieth century. Climbers first had to get permission from the National Park Service who were the federal managers of the Tower. Hopeful climbers wrote to the top brass in Washington, D.C. presenting their credentials and references. In part, this permission was necessary because the Park Service had no immediate way of rescuing the climbers if they got into trouble.<sup>50</sup> Thus they wanted to ensure that climbers had the skills to safely ascend and descend. More importantly, however, the first technical ascents showed the willingness of the Park Service to allow climbing on the Tower, and Superintendent Joyner did not attempt to restrict them. Instead, he welcomed—and

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<sup>45</sup> Rypkema and Haire wrote in 1977 that there were fixed pins still in the Durrance Crack (pitch 2), as well as in pitches 3 and 4. See Rypkema and Haire, *A Climbers Guide*.

<sup>46</sup> Durrance to Arno B. Cammerer, September 12, 1938, Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR).

<sup>47</sup> The origin of this flagpole is unknown. It may have been the original one placed there by Rogers in 1893, but it also might have been the pole Linnie placed in 1895 or another pole planted there in 1927.

<sup>48</sup> Durrance to Arno B. Cammerer, September 12, 1938, Folder 857-06, Box 2158, RG 79 (MORU MPR).

<sup>49</sup> Wiessner did not become an American citizen until 1939. See Isserman, *Continental Divide*, 221.

<sup>50</sup> Similar dynamics were at play in other national parks. On attitudes towards climbing at Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park, see Ruth M. Alexander and Catherine Moore, "People and Nature on the Mountaintop: A Resource and Impact Study of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park," (Rocky Mountain Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit, Rocky Mountain National Park, and Colorado State University, 2010).

supported—these men throughout the process, and they consistently praised Joyner for his help. Wiessner made a point to blame the Park Service headquarters in Washington, not Joyner, for his initial snub in 1936.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Durrance detailed in his report to the NPS in Washington and in his published account that Joyner had been more than helpful and accommodating.<sup>52</sup>

In part, climbing became a fixture at the Tower in the years after these climbs because federal land managers, like Joyner, saw climbing as an activity with the potential to restore Americans' vigorous, pioneering spirit. In a society racked with anxiety over rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, outdoor recreation became a way to instill the values of self-reliance and determination in a new generation of white, middle-class Americans.<sup>53</sup> Rock climbing became legitimate activity on America's newly created "public" lands, including Devils Tower National Monument, partly because it was seen as encouraging a robust development of character and physical health in citizens.

The rise and interest in climbing throughout the United States during this period was part of a larger campaign by elites to make climbing an acceptable activity at national parks and monuments that mostly lay in the trans-Mississippi West. It was part of a larger activist campaign by the AAC and other climbing groups like the Sierra Club to make climbing a legitimate activity on federally managed lands. As evidenced by the number of letters written to Superintendent Joyner, these elites sought to consolidate their claim to the Tower by appealing directly to Joyner as well as to the national leaders of the Park Service. The next section that covers the expansion—and increasing regulation—of climbing at the Tower includes details on a tripartite relationship between individual climbers, climbing clubs, and the National Park Service.

## The Parachutist

After the initial technical ascents in the late 1930s, the next person to stand on top of the Tower arrived from a surprising direction. While war consumed the world in 1941, a parachutist named George Hopkins planned a jump and landing atop the Tower. This was to be his spectacular start to a world-record attempt to perform the most parachute jumps in a single day. Already an accomplished parachutist, Hopkins anticipated that the press generated from his monumental jump would catapult his subsequent record-making attempt into the spotlight. The fates had other plans. On October 1, 1941, Hopkins jumped from an airplane and attempted to prove that parachutists could indeed land on small targets such as the approximately one-acre top of the Tower. He successfully landed on his mark, but his 1000-foot rope (an essential element of his plan) had landed out of his reach. Hopkins was stuck. The NPS and park managers were in a pickle. How could they get this man down from the Tower safely and keep him fed and warm until they perfected their plan?

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<sup>51</sup> "Devils Tower," *The American Alpine Journal* 3, no. 1, (1937): 107.

<sup>52</sup> Harrison Butterworth, "A New Route on Devils Tower," *The American Alpine Journal* 3, no. 3, (1939): 360-61.

<sup>53</sup> See Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*, 31-60.

As they worked through the possibilities, a skilled pilot in a small aircraft dropped Hopkins food, water, and warm clothing. The military offered assistance and plans for retrieving Hopkins, but ultimately the honor fell to the technical climber Jack Durrance who had ascended the Tower in 1938. As Durrance made his way to the Tower by train and then car (bad weather made this the only option), more offers to assist came in, following national press coverage. The Goodyear Company offered the use of its famous blimp and the Navy its helicopter. By the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, Durrance had made it to the Tower and worked with NPS staff and other climbers to plan their next moves. The rescue team included the young Paul Petzoldt who went on to establish the world-renowned National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Durrance and a cohort of seven skilled climbers divided among three ropes ascended the Tower to find Hopkins atop the monolith in excellent spirits and good health. The park superintendent was impressed that Hopkins quickly learned rappelling technique and that a bottle of whiskey dropped to him early on had remained untouched. The ordeal brought national attention to the Tower as 7,000 visitors watched excitedly as events unfolded in front of their eyes.<sup>54</sup> Hopkins had made no official request from the Park Service before the stunt, and though the ensuing chaos and media swarm caused anxiety among the Park Service, it also helped shape the Tower into a space for thrill seekers, elite athletes, and gawking spectators.<sup>55</sup> Hopkins went on to join the airborne infantry as a trainer for soldier-parachutists.<sup>56</sup>

## **Decades of Expansion and Regulation, 1940s-1950s**

### **Qualified Climbers**

During the 1940s and 1950s, growing enthusiasm for climbing forced the National Park Service to consider monitoring and regulating this increasing recreational use of the Tower. Coming on the heels of the first successful technical ascents, the astounding event of the stranded parachutist and the competent rescue carried the Tower further into the national and international spotlights. Yet, most of the factors bringing more climbers to the Tower happened outside of the Monument's borders. A growing American climbing and mountaineering scene came of age in the second quarter of the century. Climbers were opening up the West's vertical geographies including the Tetons in Wyoming and Yosemite in California, and in the process, they helped develop what would become a distinctly American style of climbing.<sup>57</sup> In general, the routes Americans sought were more difficult and dangerous, which differed from traditional European mountaineering where summiting by the easiest way possible was the norm. For these new American mountaineers, the difficulty and aesthetic of the climb mattered more than the height of the peak. Wiessner and Durrance were part of a growing group of climbers including Robert Underhill and Albert Ellingwood who helped introduce this vision to other American climbers.

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<sup>54</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Parachutist George Hopkins," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/first-fifty-years-george-hopkins.htm>, accessed August, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "First Technical Climb," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/deto/learn/historyculture/firsttechnicalclimb.htm>, accessed April, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> See also Superintendent's Monthly Reports, September 1942, file 1630, DETO Records, MORU MPR.

<sup>57</sup> Isserman, *Continental Divide*, 161.

This transition from mountaineering to technical climbing required a change in the type of technology used. Many of these early climbers like Wiessner had immigrated to the United States after learning to climb in Europe, and they brought new technologies with them. Though Europeans introduced pitons in the 1890s, it took until the 1930s for them to make their way deep into the American West.<sup>58</sup> With the steady advance in technology came the need to establish informal rules surrounding their use, what climbers call an “ethic.” As exemplified by the Wiessner and Durrance climbs in the late 1930s, the emerging American ethic was to show restraint by placing as few pitons as possible. The goal was to keep the climbing “pure.”<sup>59</sup> But this changed in the following decades, as American climbers attempted bigger and bigger walls that demanded more security and thus more pitons.

Mountaineering clubs supported most climbers during this period including Wiessner and Durrance. These clubs were powerful players in the formation of local, regional, and national climbing ethics. In the 1930s, for instance, the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club had become the de facto climbing overlords of Yosemite where Americans established much of the nation’s rock climbing ethic.

Within these broader changes—in technique, technology, and ethics, climbing at national parks and monuments grew in popularity. And with it came the need for more formal regulations. A combination of National Park Service employees, climbing clubs, and individual climbers coalesced to help create the regulations surrounding climbing on U.S. federal lands. These groups established rules primarily in other parks, especially Yosemite, and then applied them to the Tower, though this was not always the case. At certain times, the superintendents at the Tower played a critical role in creating and enforcing regulations surrounding climbing within the park system more generally. Local climbers and specific climbing clubs had undue influence on the local ethic that developed at the Tower.

The 1940s was a period of increasing popularity in climbing and increasing regulations of climbers at the Tower. At the beginning of the decade, though only two groups of climbers had ascended the Tower, the National Park Service began the process of regulation and control. It recognized the need for system-wide rules and acknowledged that climbing was a recreation that would happen on federal lands. Already by 1940, the Park Service had made informal recommendations on the use of pitons; climbers should remove them if possible, though climbing guides were exempt and could leave them on a route for the season.<sup>60</sup> In 1941, the agency required the superintendent of each national park or monument where climbing took place to report to the Washington Office on the administration of climbing. They had to spell out specifically “what has been done to satisfy the desires of qualified climbers and mountaineering

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<sup>58</sup> Isserman, *Continental Divide*, 177 and 189. A comparison with Shiprock is telling. Like Devils Tower, it too was first explored for its technical climbing in the 1930s and finally summited in 1939, where pitons were used for safety and the first expansion bolt was drilled into the face of a rock.

<sup>59</sup> Isserman, *Continental Divide*, 214.

<sup>60</sup> “Policy on mountain climbing approved by the Secretary, April 2, 1940” and Section 1.14, Mountain Summit Climbing of the NPS General Rules and Regulations.



organizations, to provide for the public safety, to discourage foolhardly [sic], and to solve the administrative difficulties of rescue.”<sup>61</sup>

The references to “qualified climbers” and “mountaineering organizations” epitomized the approach the Park Service was already taking at the Tower. To become a “qualified climber,” a person had to apply, give qualifications, and furnish references, usually from either a notable mountaineering club or from individuals who had previously climbed the Tower. Officials never granted final permission prior to the climber actually showing up at the ranger station. They then inspected all the equipment and tested the climber’s ability on one of the easier routes at the base of the Tower.<sup>62</sup> References could come from any of the major mountaineering clubs, including the American Alpine Club, the Canadian Alpine Club, and the Sierra Club. As the decade progressed, however, the Tower superintendent relied on more regional clubs, such as the Seattle Mountaineers, Appalachian Mountain Club, Potomac Trails Club, and the Colorado Mountain Club, to furnish references and make recommendations. Special relationships also existed with specific university clubs. As requests to climb the Tower began to rise in the middle of the decade, the whole application process at the Tower became standardized with a printed application form.<sup>63</sup>

Though the popularity of climbing was evident throughout the national parks, by the late 1940s, it had yet to take off at the Tower. In 1949, for instance, Rocky Mountain National Park had 1,416 climbers summit Long’s Peak, including seventy-four who reached the East Face, a relatively serious mountaineering route. The Grand Teton had 846 climbers register and summit. In contrast, only three groups totaling twenty climbers summited the Tower’s top during this time. All of these climbers were associated with mountaineering clubs.<sup>64</sup> Even though the numbers did not compare with what was happening in surrounding areas, it seemed like the Tower was becoming a popular climbing destination. In attempting to get a reference from Art Gilkey in 1949, McIntyre noted the uptick in climbers: “Looks like we may have to set up traffic signs on the side of the Tower.”<sup>65</sup>

### **University Climbing Clubs and the Mountaineer’s Week**

In this period, two university clubs established especially close relationships to the Tower: the Iowa Mountaineers (University of Iowa) and the Wyoming Mountaineers (Casper College). John Ebert and his wife Ede founded the Iowa Mountaineers at the University of Iowa in 1940 where it became one of the most active university climbing clubs in the United States. By 1995, they had put over four hundred members on the top of the Tower via ten different routes.<sup>66</sup> Ebert first requested permission to climb the Tower in 1948, and the correspondence

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<sup>61</sup> A. E. Demaray, “Memorandum for the Superintendent, Devils Tower National Monument, May 26, 1941, Climbing History Through 1950, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>62</sup> Numerous letters in DETO 1687, including memorandum on climbing dated January 5, 1949.

<sup>63</sup> “Application for Permit to Climb on Devils Tower,” DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>64</sup> Paul R. Franke, Summary of Annual Mountain Climbing Reports from Areas of the National Park System (1949), March 14, 1950, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>65</sup> Raymond McIntyre to Art Gilkey, April 18, 1949, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>66</sup> Jim Ebert, “Iowa Mountaineers,” *The American Alpine Journal* 37 (1995): 383-384.

between him and Superintendent McIntyre revealed the ad hoc and ongoing process of regulating climbing. McIntyre responded to Ebert's request with suggestions that were actually rules. "It was preferred," McIntyre responded, "that at least one of the men making the attempt be one who has made the climb previously, or be of the same ability and experience as Mr. Petzoldt."<sup>67</sup> Ebert's reply showed that he indeed altered the members of the climbing party, which now included Petzoldt as "Chief guide."<sup>68</sup> As evidenced by this exchange, much of the momentum at the Tower was toward guided climbing.

The Iowa Mountaineers put sixteen climbers on the Tower's summit in 1948. They hauled up food and bedding and spent the night on the summit. This was the first of many group climbs organized by the club to climb the Tower, and except for the parachutist Hopkins, they were first group to overnight on the top.<sup>69</sup> The following year, they again requested permission with as many as twenty people taking part. They requested that officials allow a plane to drop all the needed material on the summit, as hauling all the food and bedding had been a hassle the previous year.<sup>70</sup> McIntyre replied that he could find no regulations against such a thing, but thinking back to the parachutist debacle, he simply did not want to turn it into a stunt. He did not acknowledge that such publicity had been good for the Monument. The Regional Director Merriam also chimed in, suggesting that "such a procedure seems hardly in keeping with the general policies of the Service."<sup>71</sup> Low flying planes and parachutes were a distraction taking away from the scenic nature of the Tower and aesthetic experience of its visitors.

The initial connection between the Iowa Mountaineers and the Tower might have been made through Art Gilkey, one of the founding members of the club. Gilkey climbed the Tower in 1947 and continued to climb in the region until his death on a 1953 American expedition to K2, the second tallest mountain in the world in the Karakoram Range in Kashmir between China and Pakistan.<sup>72</sup> The Devils Tower superintendent requested recommendations from climbers like Gilkey about who it should allow to climb. One such request to Gilkey came in 1948 concerning Herb and Jan Conn who were another important couple in the history of the Tower. After serving in World War II, Herb traveled around the United States with his wife, Jan, looking for a place to settle. One of their requirements was that they locate near climbing. They ended up spending years in the Black Hills and are primarily known today for pioneering many climbing routes in the Needles area of Custer State Park on the southeast side of the Black Hills. A decade earlier, Art Gilkey assured the park superintendent that Herb and Jan could safely climb the

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<sup>67</sup> Raymond W. McIntyre to Iowa Mountaineers, June 7, 1948, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>68</sup> Iowa Mountaineers to Robert W. McIntyre, June 13, 1948, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>69</sup> John Ebert to Raymond W. McIntyre, July 15, 1949, DETO 1687, MORU MPR; See memorandum on climbing, January 5, 1949, DETO 1687.

<sup>70</sup> John Ebert to Raymond McIntyre, July 29, 1949, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence C. Merriam, to Superintendent, Wind Cave National Park, "Supplying climbers at Devils Tower from the air," December 19, 1949, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>72</sup> This link to K2 also connects him to Wiessner, who had attained the highest point on K2 prior to the first successful ascent. On K2, after suffering from pulmonary edema, Gilkey's partners attempted to take him down the mountain. On the descent he disappeared, perhaps untying himself from the rope to save their lives on the tricky descent. His body later appeared from the glaciers at the base of K2 in 1993.

Tower. When Jan summited in 1948 with Herb, she was the first woman to achieve the distinction since Linnie Rogers. Four years later in 1952, Jan came back to the Tower with her climbing partner, Jane Showacre, to make the first all-female ascent. Both Jan and Herb became unofficial advisors and safety instructors for the Tower in the mid-1950s, holding climbing safety schools for the Rangers during the summer months.<sup>73</sup>

The second connection between the Tower and a university club was through Walt Bailey who began the Casper College Climbing Club, known colloquially as the Wyoming Mountaineers. In the 1950s, Bailey established many of the new routes at the Tower, including routes using what he referred to as “tension and the direct aid of acrobatic rope-engineering.”<sup>74</sup> Climbers colloquially used the term “putting up routes” when discussing the establishment of new routes or “lines” in a climbing area. Like Gilkey, Bailey also died while climbing outside of the United States as part of an American climbing expedition in Peru. Prior to his death, he held the record for the most climbs up the Tower: twenty-three times, according to a 1958 Alpine Club Report, and twenty-seven times by the following year.<sup>75</sup> He also incorporated a climb of the Tower into his final examination for the Casper College Mountaineering course he taught. But most significantly, Bailey created, planned, and then oversaw “Mountaineer’s Week” at the Tower, a grand celebration of climbing, sponsored by his Casper College Club, to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the founding of the Monument in 1906. The week-long celebration took place between July 14-22, 1956. According to Bailey, enthusiasts created more new routes during the week-long celebration than in any previous year; there were more new routes in one week than all the years since Wiessner’s first technical ascent.<sup>76</sup>

Along with Bailey’s Casper College crew, the Army Mountain and Cold Weather Training Command from Fort Carson, Colorado, attended Mountaineer’s Week. The troops climbed the Tower in the morning and then performed demonstrations for the tourists every afternoon at 3 pm. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, they spent the night on top of the Tower where they lit a bonfire visitors could see from the campground. All of the local newspapers and ones as far away as Denver, Colorado, publicized Mountaineer’s Week before national publications picked up the story. *Life Magazine* sent two photographers to cover the event. The magazine published a three-page spread including photographs of the climbers and dramatic shots of the Army personnel dressed in all-white jumpsuits hanging precariously to the vertical sides of the Tower.<sup>77</sup>

If the media coverage of the parachutist in 1941 put the Monument on the map for Americans across the nation, the widespread coverage of Mountaineer’s Week popularized the Tower specifically for climbers. Although the Tower lagged behind other national parks and

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<sup>73</sup> They were also part-time scientists, helping with petrological studies when needed. See “Proposed Petrological Report” 2964, ETIC DETO 109 D77 [2296660].

<sup>74</sup> Albert W. Bailey, “Devils Tower,” *American Alpine Journal* 10, no.2 (1957): 149-150.

<sup>75</sup> DETO Superintendent’s Report, June 1958; *American Alpine Journal* 11, no. 2 (1959). A group of his former students climbed a new route on the Tower in 1959 and named the climb the Walt Bailey Memorial Route. He had previously aid climbed a route with his students in 1956, which is called the Casper College route.

<sup>76</sup> Albert W. Bailey, “Devils Tower,” *American Alpine Journal* 10, no. 2 (1957): 149-150.

<sup>77</sup> DETO Superintendent’s Report, Supplement, April 1955.

monuments like Yosemite and Rocky Mountain National Park, the Mountaineer's Week brought the Tower to the attention of climbers who came of age in the next generation. Climbing was about to explode at the Tower. With this came additional expectations and regulations.

The history of climbing at the Tower in the mid-twentieth century illuminated the emerging relationship between climbers and the federal government. Administrators from the Department of the Interior down to the superintendents of specific parks and monuments did not sit idly by as climbers created an American climbing ethic. Rather, these bureaucrats took part in actively constructing this ethic through the establishment of regulations. In essence, they served as the gate-keepers who directed the ethics surrounding climbing.<sup>78</sup> The superintendents and rangers at the Tower were part of this larger, national process. For instance, the staff at Yosemite requested the current regulations from the Tower when they were considering their own regulations at Yosemite.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, Raymond W. McIntyre, the Superintendent of the Tower in the 1940s, attended the first agency-wide mountain climbing and rescue school at Mt. Rainier in September 1948. He brought with him hundreds of feet of 35mm film of climbing and rescue operations from the Tower.<sup>80</sup>

This attention to climbing throughout the Park Service worked the other way as well. By the end of the 1950s, climbing had become an established activity at the Tower and one of the many resources used to attract visitors. In July 1959, park staff set up a case displaying climbing equipment and placed it in the Visitor Center. Most days throughout the summer, climbers attracted the attention of tourists.<sup>81</sup> By the end of the 1950s, the narrative interpretations park staff offered to visitors had fully integrated climbing. In addition to its manifestations as a place of Native spiritual practices and geological wonder, the Tower became a place for adventure recreation, especially rock climbing. The transformations in representation and interpretation that occurred at the Tower in the postwar years had considerable effect on how people interacted—and interact today—with the physical nature of the Tower. By the beginning of the 1960s, it had become a popular place for rock climbers and those who wanted to witness this thrilling activity.<sup>82</sup>

### **Emerging Ethics: From Aid to Clean to Sport Climbing, 1950-1990**

In the post-1970s era, a dramatic rise in climbing at the Tower occurred within broader sociotechnical developments, both within the climbing community and within Americans' attitudes toward the national parks and monuments. In 1977, in movie theaters throughout the world, Steven Spielberg released his cult classic *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, which featured the monolith as the central meeting place between humans and aliens, drawing attention to the Monument. Following 1978, the Tower became a site of conflict in the culture wars

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<sup>78</sup> J. Taylor, "Mapping Adventure: A Historical Geography of Yosemite Valley Climbing Landscape," *Journal of Historical Geography* 32, no. 1 (January 2006): 190-219.

<sup>79</sup> Frank A. Kittredge, Memorandum to Superintendents, August 13, 1947, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>80</sup> McIntyre to Superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park, September 3, 1948, DETO 1687, MORU MPR.

<sup>81</sup> DETO Superintendent's Report, 1959.

<sup>82</sup> See also Wendy Rex-Atzet, "Narratives of Place and Power," passim.

surrounding Native American rights and activism with the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. In 1979, Steve Roper's and Allen Steck's *50 Classic Climbs of North America*, a classic text for American climbers, was published. At the center of this book, literally climb number twenty-five out of fifty, was the Durrance Route.

Statistics revealed the significance of these developments. In the 1940s, visitation at the Tower had climbed to over 279,000 for the decade, but only forty-six of these visitors were climbers. By 1977, annual visitation had increased to 156,000, but after *Close Encounters* hit theaters, visitor numbers quickly grew beyond 200,000. Climbers remained a relatively small, albeit growing population of the total number of visitors to the Tower. Climber visits totaled 939 during the decade of the 1950s, 1,203 in the 1960s, and 12,133 in the 1970s, while the total number of visitor numbers remained relatively steady, exceeding one million per decade. Everything, however, seemed to speed up in the 1980s. Total visitation from 1981 to 1990 tripled to almost three million people, and the total number of climbers during the decade skyrocketed to 44,525.<sup>83</sup> Prior to Spielberg's film and *Fifty Classic Climbs*, about fifty-five routes marked the Tower. In the decade that followed, no less than eighty new routes appeared. During this period, climbers and Park officials alike acknowledged that climbing was taking its toll on vertical environments.

### **The 1950s: Aid Climbing**

During the second half of the twentieth century, climbing techniques at the Tower transformed from aid climbing in the 1950s, the resulting backlash and subsequent move to "clean climbing" in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally to the radical consequences of sport climbing in the 1980s. Climbing became more than just a physical activity; it involved interactions between humans and the natural world. Over the course of the twentieth century, climbers and the NPS altered the physical environments of the Tower, both the area surrounding its base and the Tower itself, to further accommodate climbing. These alterations took many forms including cleaning plants and lichens from climbing routes, the establishment or construction of trails and paths to better facilitate access to climbs, and the unavoidable impacts of equipment, trash, and bodily excretions on the vertical environment of the Tower. Thus, this section traces the ways climbing placed increasing stress on the Tower, forever altering its physical environments.

In America in the first half of the twentieth century, climbing emerged as a recreation activity for upper middle-classes who sought out vertical landscapes as sites for leisure recreation. For these people, climbing was a powerful recreation in large part because it brought them into direct contact with nature. This sort of relationship explained the rise of climbing at the Tower. Yet, as evidenced by the first ascent of the Tower in 1893 and in the first technical climbs in the late 1930s, climbers were also capable of altering the places in which they

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<sup>83</sup> Decadal numbers are from Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 144, 153, 163, 194. See also Superintendent's Annual Reports from the 1970s, DETO Records, MORU MPR.

recreated. Cleaning routes of unwanted organic material has long been an aspect of technical rock climbing. At the Tower, the Park Service did not view these early alterations as overly problematic. Though they insisted that Wiessner and Durrance not leave climbing gear on the Tower, which they did anyway, Park officials were more interested in overall aesthetics than in cliff ecology. Yet, as climbing at the Tower became more popular, land managers confronted an increasingly challenging dynamic. The NPS dual mandate charged the agency with maintaining the Monument's natural environment for all present visitors and future generations, while at the same time allowing access to the Tower for those interested in climbing—and those spectators who came to watch them.

The steady rise in the number of climbers at the Tower was not the only transformation taking place. Climbing technologies and techniques continued to change as well. The days of placing minimal pitons in cracks were long gone. Rather than emphasizing free climbing, climbers in the 1950s increasingly used pitons for help (or “aid”) as they made upward progress on increasingly steep and complicated routes. Originating around the same time in Yosemite Valley, this style of climbing became known as aid climbing. A second technology in aid climbing was the expansion bolt. Climbers used a drill (early ones were hammer driven) to create a hole for an expanding bolt that provided a point of secure attachment to the rock. At Yosemite in 1957, Warren Harding laboriously placed 28 bolts to overcome an overhanging face during the last day of a long climb on El Capitan. Thus, one could ascend virtually anywhere. However progress was slow, and bolting marred the rock. Placing bolts generally fell from favor among most climbers as an inelegant approach except where necessary for safety.

Established in 1951 by Anton Soler, Art Lambeck, Herb Conn and Ray Moore, the first aid route climbed at Devils Tower was “Soler,” which began on the left of the Tower's East side.<sup>84</sup> Other aid climbs followed in quick succession as some local climbers as well as well-known figures in the history of American climbing such as Fred Beckey and Royal Robbins scouted out new paths.

Aid routes utilized an unprecedented use of pitons to surmount difficult sections. Wiessner had used two pitons on his initial ascent and left several more for the descent. When Durrance climbed the Tower in 1938, he added a few more. Aid climbers, however, placed pitons in cracks with a loop of rope (or, later, webbing) from which they could then stand and place another piton. From the 1950s through the 1970s, climbers ascended many previously unclimbable routes by laboriously placing pitons from bottom to top. John Rupley, for instance, used seventy-five pitons while attempting to open a climb on the West Face of Devils Tower in 1956.<sup>85</sup> Fred Beckey used “80 pitons and 8 nuts, largely for aid” when he established “El Matador” in 1969.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, Royal Robbins established several aid routes at the Tower in the

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<sup>84</sup> The route was climbed free by Layton Kor and Raymond Jacquot in 1959, and is “considered by many local cragrats to be the finest free climb on the Tower.” Rypkema and Haire, *A Climbers Guide*; See also Rachael Lynn and Zach Orenczak, *The Tower* (Laramie, WY: Extreme Angles Publishing, 2006), 122. Soler is located on the left side of the Ramp area's East Face, also known as the East Bench of the Tower.

<sup>85</sup> John Rupley, “West Face of the Devil's Tower, Wyoming,” *The American Alpine Journal* 10, no. 1 (1956): 119.

<sup>86</sup> Fred Beckey and Roy Kligfield, “Devils Tower,” *The American Alpine Journal* 16, no. 2 (1969).

1960s including “The Window” that took sixty pitons (and ten hours) to climb.<sup>87</sup> Using pitons for aid was also how three Park Rangers – Terry Rypkema, Roger Holtorf, and Bruce Bright – restored the top 160 feet of the original “Stake Ladder” in 1972. In the process, they established a new aid route, “Carpenter’s Caper,” today the only named climb on the Tower prohibited to climb as it lies too close to the original ladder, a historic site.

One of the regulations the Park Service developed at the Tower required aid climbers to remove the pitons they placed so as to leave the vertical environment relatively free of extraneous climbing equipment. To achieve this, the follower (or the last member of the team) would hammer out the pitons placed by the leader. When a subsequent party climbed the route, it would pound the pitons back in, often in the same place as before. In heavily traveled places like Yosemite and the Tower, piton placements obviously altered the nature of the rock by creating wider and wider pockets that grew in size with every climb. Park managers, both at the Tower and elsewhere, quickly became aware of the deleterious impacts of aid climbing on the physical nature of cliffs.<sup>88</sup> So, too, did the American climbing community.

### **The 1960s-Early 1980s: An Environmental Ethic and Clean Climbing**

The clean climbing revolution that emerged in the 1970s was a response to the damage pitons were doing to cliffs. It was part of a growing environmental awareness by climbers that cliffs were not an inexhaustible resource. As a result, prominent American climbers and gear manufacturers like Yvon Chouinard began to promote “clean” climbing to preserve the rocks for future generations. They invented new types of gear for cracks and chimneys that they could more easily remove. Hexes, stoppers, and nuts (wedge-shaped metal blocks with a wire or sling) replaced bugaboos, angles, bongs, and blades (variations on pitons, hammered into a crack). All of these came in different sizes and fit different sized cracks. Nuts, for instance, could be an inch wide (walnuts), the size of one’s finger (peanuts), or even much smaller (RP nuts). Importantly, they enabled climbers to establish routes where only a thin crack existed. Eventually made with softer metal (copper, for instance), these smaller nuts molded more easily to the shape of the crack to protect a fall. The last person climbing could remove all this gear with little damage to the rock if placed correctly.

Alongside nuts and other passive protection (devices with a fixed shape to place and pull on, anchoring the piece into a crack that narrows), other advancements in technology further revolutionized the sport. In the late 1970s, about the time moviegoers were watching aliens land on the Tower, “active” gear exploded onto the scene. Called “friends,” or cams, these devices were spring-loaded, which made it much easier to both place and remove them from vertical cracks. Active protection implied that a trigger or spring mechanism allowed the piece to contract and expand. They were particularly good for placement in cracks that had vertical sides without narrowing. In addition, the development of sticky rubber shoes enabled climbers to

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<sup>87</sup> Gardiner and Guilmette, *A Climber’s Guide*.

<sup>88</sup> See also Alexander and Moore, “People and Nature on the Mountaintop,” 52-71.

smear their feet on slick rock.<sup>89</sup> These technological developments helped turn the Tower, known for its steep, vertical cracks, into a free climbing mecca. These two developments also made climbing safer. With the ability to securely ascend a route without pounding and removing pitons, this new gear certainly helped preserve the rock faces. But they also enabled climbs to exist in areas previously overlooked.

Ironically, the rise of free climbing and clean climbing (both terms imply avoiding the use of pitons) precipitated the most dramatic alterations to the monolith's physical environment. This revolution helped popularize the sport and brought more and more people to the Tower from throughout the United States and abroad.<sup>90</sup> More people, of course, meant more stress on the physical environment. Wire brushes scraped lichen to make new routes, climbers trampled sensitive vegetation, and gymnast chalk (which climbers used to dry out their sweaty hands) besmirched the cracks. Litter appeared at the base of routes and on the summit. Unfortunately, an ethic of clean climbing was no match for the sheer number of people who discovered the thrill of climbing at the Tower in the 1980s. Alongside these technological developments, the film *Close Encounters* and Roper's guidebook *Fifty Classic Climbs* reimagined the Tower into a destination spot on the emerging North American climbing circuit. Well-known and accomplished mountaineers had continued to visit the Tower, including Fred Beckey, Royal Robbins, and Layton Kor, leaving stories and a climbing identity in the routes they put up. Many enthusiastic climbers in the American West made their climbing sojourns to the Tower.

### **The Late 1980s-1990s: Sport Climbing**

In the 1980s, climbers introduced a new style of rock climbing that transformed American climbing and the Tower itself. Whereas previous generations of climbers had valued risk and boldness, a new generation began to experiment with tactics that dialed down the emphasis on risk and dialed up an emphasis on athleticism and technical difficulty. Key to this movement was a renewed use of expansion bolts.<sup>91</sup> Prior to bolts, good form had always dictated that one climb a route from the bottom to top placing gear as one climbed. The new style, however, allowed climbers to install hardware – bolts – from the top down and inspect a climb on rappel before tying in for a lead attempt. For some, this was heresy, but for others it was the way to continue to advance American climbing standards. The advocates who supported bolts became known as sport climbers, and the group that despised bolts traditional, or trad, climbers.

Although the debate over style fractured the climbing community in the late 1980s, all agreed that bolts were changing the physical nature of cliffs. To place a bolt, climbers needed to drill a hole into which they inserted the bolt. Once placed, a bolt was a permanent alteration to a cliff. For trad climbers, this sort of permanent alteration was unacceptable. They saw bolts as a destruction of the natural environment, and an anti-bolt stance became an extension of the clean climbing ethic of the previous decades. As with cams and sticky rubber shoes, bolts enabled

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<sup>89</sup> Taylor, *Pilgrims*, 225-227.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *Pilgrims*, 203-209.

<sup>91</sup> On historical use of expansion bolts, see Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 136.



climbers to venture into otherwise inaccessible places. For example, where trad climbers relied on natural cracks and grooves in which to place their protection, bolts allowed climbers to safely climb where there was no opportunity for other protection. The rise in sport climbing meant that climbers began to explore new areas of vertical terrain. At the Tower, climbers explored the faces between the cracks.<sup>92</sup> Because sport climbers aspired to pure difficulty and not summits, it also meant that they constructed routes that did not reach the top of the Tower. Climbers placed more bolts on the Tower, whether as protection on a climb or as part of an anchor system from which to rappel. By 1990, an estimated 600 bolts marked the Tower.<sup>93</sup>

By the late 1980s, the Tower was showing signs of overuse. As local climber Andy Petefish noted in 1989, “the West Face looked like a giant anthill.”<sup>94</sup> *Climbing* magazine identified a “very serious environmental problem on the summit,” which was “beginning to show wear and tear.” In addition, “Erosion had become a major concern.”<sup>95</sup> Climbers pleaded with each other to bring their trash down with them and walk on the rocks rather than the vegetation.<sup>96</sup> Whatever the solution, it was apparent that climbing had damaged the Tower and its surroundings.

In response to these developments, the Park Service devised new ways to protect the giant rock’s physical environments from further degradation. They began to build trail systems specifically to alleviate the degradation to the vegetation at the base of climbs. A new trail below the South Face funneled the approach to some of the most popular climbs on that side of the Tower, including the Durrance route. In popular magazines like *Climbing*, Andy Petefish urged climbers to “please help by using the new trail.”<sup>97</sup> Although these policies and infrastructure developments mitigated some of the environmental damage, they did not stop the destruction to the rock faces. More climbers simply meant more stress on the plants and animals that lived in the Tower’s vertical environments.

Ironically, however, bolts had the potential to fix these emerging environmental problems. At the Tower, the NPS actually welcomed the bolts because they could hold chain anchors, ending the brightly colored anchor slings and webbing that were eyesores for visitors. More importantly, bolted anchors established standard rappel lines that reduced climber erosion on the summit area. Yet, bolts were a double-edged sword. Even though they helped with erosion and the destruction of sensitive flora, they were harmful in other ways. As Martin Ziebell pointed out in a 1991 *Climbing* article, “Although bolts can hardly be considered a visual blight due to the distance between the climbs and the trail around the base, the issues of noise pollution

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<sup>92</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, “Final Climbing Management Plan/Finding of No Significant Impact, Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming,” February 1995, 5, [www.nps.gov/deto/planyourvisit/upload/DETO-FCMP-1995-accessible.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/deto/planyourvisit/upload/DETO-FCMP-1995-accessible.pdf).

<sup>93</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Final Climbing Management Plan,” iii.

<sup>94</sup> Andy Petefish, “Plenty of Cracks Left for the Cleaning,” *Climbing* (June/July 1989): 31-33.

<sup>95</sup> Petefish, “Plenty of Cracks Left for the Cleaning,” 31-33.

<sup>96</sup> “Devils Tower,” “1987 in review,” *Climbing* (June 1988): 40.

<sup>97</sup> “Devils Tower,” “1987 in review,” *Climbing* (June 1988): 40.

generated by drills (both hand and electric) and ‘littering’ the Tower with bolts and slings are of concern.”<sup>98</sup>

The question of permanent bolts reached a fever pitch at the Tower – and the rest of the country – in the early 1990s. In nearby Custer State Park, administrators banned all battery-operated drills. Climbers could replace bolts and establish anchors, but they could not place actual new bolts on the climbs (though rumor had it a few climbers still did so).<sup>99</sup> Members of the Black Hills Climbing Coalition took offense, not with the ban, but rather with the lack of transparency in making the decision. These climbers thought they knew more than the park staff about what was needed. Complicating matters, local members of the Northern Plains tribes became more vocal about the ways in which bolting and climbing at the Tower interfered with traditional tribal practices and ceremonies. Clearly, the park needed a solution to protect its most central resource.

Part of the problem was that the climbing guidelines and regulations at the Tower originated in the 1940s and 1950s. Until the late 1970s, climbers still needed a recommendation from an outdoor club or from someone who had previously climbed the Tower and a gear check with the Park Service. But with the rise of climbers in the 1970s and 1980s, the agency relaxed and eventually ignored these regulations. Although “friends” or nuts had replaced much of the protective equipment, officials still allowed pitons when nothing else would suffice, though not on aid routes if the route had also been climbed free.<sup>100</sup> Bolting, however, had become a common practice. By the early 1990s, it was clear that an update to the regulations was long overdue.

### **Managing the Vertical: Climbing Management Plan, 1995-2006**

When Monument officials began to draft a Climbing Management Plan (CMP) in the early 1990s, the climbing community had little doubt that the Tower was a place where they belonged. The federal managers did not question climbing’s place there or on federal lands. Instead they responded to a larger call by the federal government to reevaluate the administration and regulation of climbing on federal lands. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Park Service realized it was ill equipped to deal with the influx of climbers to national parks and monuments. In 1991, the agency requested that all national parks where climbing was a significant activity begin work on CMPs.<sup>101</sup> Historian Anna Kramer has argued that this request was not simply a response to sport climbing and bolting but also to address environmental effects of climbing, including human waste on long routes and the clearing of moss and lichen to improve gripping

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<sup>98</sup> On visual impacts of slings, see “Final Climbing Management Plan,” 13. See also Martin Ziebell, “The Devil will find work,” *Climbing* (December 1990/January 1991): 31.

<sup>99</sup> *Black Hills Climbing News* II, no. 1, (May 1991).

<sup>100</sup> Rypkema and Haire, *A Climbers Guide*. Climbers still had to register with a park ranger before climbing, needed to sign out after their climb, and couldn’t stay out overnight (either on the sides or on the top of the Tower).

<sup>101</sup> Anna Marie Kramer, “Power of the Tower: Contesting History at Bear Lodge/Devils Tower National Monument” (undergraduate paper, Claremont College, 2016) [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cclura\\_2016/4/](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cclura_2016/4/), accessed October 2022, 57, 63-77.

surfaces.<sup>102</sup> Sport climbing – and bolting – were paradigm shifting activities in the American climbing world. Since bolts were affixed to rock (relatively) permanently, all climbers who followed found a secure anchor. As a result of sport climbing and bolting, the numbers of climbers in America grew to unprecedented heights. These combined developments were responsible for the emergence of Climbing Management Plans.

But the CMPs dealt with more than just the controversy surrounding bolts and bolting. Administrators intended these documents to be comprehensive management plans that addressed the most pressing social and environmental issues surrounding climbing at each location. Pressured by the tribes and supported by ethnographic research by Jeffrey Hanson and Sally Chirinos in the 1990s, the Park Service acknowledged the Tower as a site of significant value for Northern Plains Indians. To ensure that they correctly identified—and addressed—the complex social and environmental issues at the Tower, the park managers convened a group of representatives from interested stakeholder groups to discuss the scope and shape of the CMP. The working group began meeting in 1993 with representatives from both local and national climbing groups and numerous Northern Plains tribes.<sup>103</sup>

One of the most significant issues addressed by discussions leading to the Climbing Management Plan was conflict between Native American religious use of the tower and climbing activity that interfered with their religious practices. The suppression of Native American religious practices went back to at least 1892 when Congressional actions punished Native Americans with imprisonment for participating in religious ceremonies; they were not considered citizens with constitutionally protected rights. By 1978, much had changed in American culture when Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. It protected Native American rights to use and possess sacred objects, access sacred sites, and worship in traditional ceremonies. This legislation contributed toward a freer expression of tribal religions.

One such spiritual activity tribal people engaged in was tying a simple strip of cloth in a tree as part of a private observance. It might be part of an offering, a request or prayer, or serve to memorialize a loved one. Others created and placed “prayer bundles,” a special offering, at a personally selected place. In the early 1980s, such expressions or offerings started to appear or reappear at the base of the Tower. Some might ask, why in this place? The idea of a spatial “hierophany,” a place with unusual significance, applies at the Tower for this sort of place-based religious expression. For Indigenous people, the Tower stood out as especially significant, even among all the places considered sacred.

A second religious practice some tribes brought back to the Tower was the Sun Dance. The proper month to hold this ceremony was in June. Intermittently before 1985 and then

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<sup>102</sup> Kramer, “The Power of the Tower,” 58.

<sup>103</sup> On history of CMPs, the ethnographic studies that revealed Northern Plains tribes’ connections to the Tower, and the stakeholders present at the work group meeting, see Kramer, “Power of the Tower,” 57-64. On the ethnographic work itself, see Jeffrey R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9 (1997).

regularly thereafter, tribal members traveled to the Monument to hold a Sun Dance in the spacious meadows on the Tower's south side. Russell Means, a participant in the American Indian Movement, showed up to dance several times. This ceremony occurred over multiple days and held special importance in the annual spiritual calendar for several tribes.

Another central issue for the CMP working group was growing Indigenous opposition to bolts on the monolith. Tribal members felt the heavy-handed method of hammering in bolts for points of climbing protection was offensive. Additionally, the webbing slings left behind at rappel anchors or on bolted routes (used to extend an anchoring point, and back in the day quite colorful) appeared disrespectful to Native sensibilities.<sup>104</sup>

After a series of contentious meetings in which stakeholders argued over the future of climbing at the Tower, the Park Service released a Draft Climbing Management Plan (DCMP) to the public for review and comment in July 1994.<sup>105</sup> The objectives of the DCMP were as follows:

1. "To preserve and protect the monument's natural and cultural resource for present and future generations."
2. "To manage recreational climbing on the tower."
3. "To increase visitor awareness of American Indian beliefs and traditional cultural practices at Devils Tower."
4. "To provide the monument with a guide for managing climbing use that is consistent with NPS management policies and other monument management plans."<sup>106</sup>

To achieve these goals drafted in consultation with the working group, the DCMP sought to address Indian complaints about climbing and acknowledge the tribes' historic claims and to protect and preserve the Tower's geologic and ecologic integrity from further degradation associated with climbing.<sup>107</sup> The DCMP offered six different options to address the issues identified in the drafting process. Of these six, the preferred alternative was "Alternative D," which included a voluntary closure to climbing during the month of June, no new bolted routes, and restrictions on climbing in areas where raptors nested.<sup>108</sup> June was significant to tribal peoples because of the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. Yet individuals might have occasion to visit the tower any time of the year for spiritual purposes. In 1994, the park introduced the plan to the public through a series of meetings in the local and regional area. Over the course of the year, the NPS received comments and feedback from a variety of audiences.

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<sup>104</sup> On issues brought forth during work group meetings, see Kramer, "The Power of the Tower," 64-73.

<sup>105</sup> For discussion of the work group meeting, see Kramer, "Power of the Tower," 63-77; National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Devils Tower National Monument, "Draft Climbing Management Plan and Environmental Assessment," 1994, digital access at Utah State University's Digital Commons: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/govdocs/363>.

<sup>106</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Draft Climbing Management Plan," 7.

<sup>107</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Draft Climbing Management Plan," 8-9.

<sup>108</sup> For all six proposals including the preferred alternative, see Devils Tower National Monument, "Draft Climbing Management Plan," 18-25.

In February 1995, the Park Service released the Final Climbing Management Plan (FCMP). The FCMP was very similar to the DCMP with a few enumerations or additions. One of the major changes from the DCMP to the FCMP was the inclusion of a mandatory ban on commercial guiding at the Monument during the month of June beginning that year.<sup>109</sup> This was a controversial change. While some local climbers – and those from further afield – voiced their dislike of a voluntary June closure during the drafting process, the mandatory ban on guided climbing during June caused an uproar among the local guides.<sup>110</sup>

Andy Petefish led the campaign against the mandatory closure. As the main plaintiff in a lawsuit against the National Park Service, in 1998, U.S. District Court Judge William F. Downes heard the case *Bear Lodge Multiple Use Ass'n v. Babbitt*. Petefish argued that the FCMP violated his First Amendment Right. Despite his stated opposition to the FCMP and the ban on commercial guiding at the Tower during the month of June, Judge Downes decided against Petefish and the other plaintiffs.<sup>111</sup> His ruling of April 26, 1999, upheld the actions of the NPS in accommodating Native American religious activities as part of the Climbing Plan.

Nevertheless, the threat of further lawsuits prompted the Park Service to revise the mandatory June ban on commercial guiding. In the final CMP, the curtailment of commercial guiding was voluntary; it was simply a recommendation. Interestingly, Native Americans on the collaborative panel came back in support of a voluntary curb on climbing in June because those choosing not to climb would do so from a heartfelt understanding. This held more meaning than climbers simply following a prohibition.

Petefish may have lost in court, but he succeeded in securing access for himself and other guides to the Tower during the month of June. Yet, he was also an outlier in his desire to continue to climb on the Tower that month. Al Read said that his company, Exum Mountain Guides, would not climb at the Tower in June. In fact, Petefish was the only guide service out of eight licensed services to climb on the Tower in June 1995.<sup>112</sup>

In 2006, planners updated the CMP, but made no real changes to the 1995 version.<sup>113</sup> Since 2006, however, interest in climbing has exploded in North America. Climbing gyms have become common in America's urban centers, and more mainstream media coverage of climbing

<sup>109</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Final Climbing Management Plan," 22.

<sup>110</sup> For responses from climbers, see Kramer, "Power of the Tower," 86.

<sup>111</sup> Heath A. Fire, "Cultural Encounters of the Controversial Kind," *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* 19, No. 1 (2019): 41. See also Kramer, "Power of the Tower," 96; *Bear Lodge et al. v. Bruce Babbitt*, No. 98-8021, U.S. 10<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals, April 26, 1999. For a summary of the case, see "Bear Lodge Multiple Use Ass'n v. Babbitt," *Environmental Law Reporter* (1999). <https://elr.info/sites/default/files/litigation/29.21083.htm>, accessed November 2022. See also Indian Law Resource Center, "Indian Religious Freedom at Devils Tower National Monument," [https://indianlaw.org/projects/past\\_projects/cheyenne\\_river](https://indianlaw.org/projects/past_projects/cheyenne_river), accessed November 2022. In 2007, similar arguments against a climbing ban were used in a case against the U.S. Forest Service regarding Cave Rock on Lake Tahoe, California. The court ruled that the significance of Cave Rock rested not on Washoe religion, but rather the historical and ethnographic record. It was protected not for religious values, but as a "cultural, historical, and archaeological monument." Matthew S. Makley and Michael J. Makley, *Cave Rock: Climbers, Courts, and a Washoe Indian Sacred Place* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010), 90, see also 84.

<sup>112</sup> Kramer, "Power of the Tower," 97.

<sup>113</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Climbing Management Plan Update," April 2006, <https://www.nps.gov/deto/planyourvisit/climbing.htm>, accessed November 2022.

moved it beyond a fringe activity or sport. Sport climbing became an Olympic sport, having made its debut in Tokyo in 2021. While most of these new climbers spent their time climbing in indoor gyms, outdoor climbing continued to grow. As a result, major climbing destinations, including places like the Tower, face increased human pressure.<sup>114</sup>

Public engagement with the CMP, including the voluntary June closure, has oscillated since its initial release in 1995. Indeed, the CMP did not solve the social and political issues surrounding climbing at the Tower. Although strong initial engagement with the June closure emerged, data suggests that in recent years more climbers have begun to ascend the Tower in June. In a 2018 article for *Outside Magazine*, Chris Kalman explained how the June voluntary closure, which was an integral part of the 1995 CMP, has been largely unsuccessful. “In the first year of the plan’s implementation,” he explained, “it looked like that goal might be attainable. In 1995, only 167 registered climbers were tallied—an 86.4 percent reduction from the year before.” However, “Over the next decade, the number of June climbers on the monument oscillated between the high-200s and mid-300s. By 2013, that number ballooned to 434. This year [2018], there were 279. It’s clear that 23 years after the FCMP’s implementation, the monument is still far from achieving the voluntary ban’s initial goal.” By 2022, this matter was still controversial. Some guide services continued to ignore the voluntary June closure despite increased social awareness of minority communities. Others including Exum Guides provided notice of their support for the closure, and community leaders such as The Access Fund urged climbers to respect the June closure.<sup>115</sup>

Although the Park Service could reevaluate the voluntary June closure at some point, the CMP in general has been effective in dealing with environmental issues at the Tower. The ban on new bolts at the Tower and the efforts to manage climber foot traffic with a robust trail network seem to be helping preserve the geologic and natural integrity of the Tower from further degradation. Given that climbers are only one percent of visitors to the Tower and that the majority of climbs occur on the same twenty-five or so routes, the bolting ban has saved the Tower from becoming littered with new face routes and bolts.<sup>116</sup> Although no data shows that the bolting ban has had a positive impact on cliffside biodiversity, logically the more climbers are concentrated in certain areas of the Tower, the less damage they will have on the species which live on and around it. Seasonal falcon closures seem to have alleviated previous human-raptor conflicts at the Tower.

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<sup>114</sup> “How COVID-19 Is Crushing Climbing Areas,” *Access Fund* (blog), September 25, 2021. <https://www.accessfund.org/open-gate-blog/how-covid-19-is-crushing-our-climbing-areas>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>115</sup> Chris Kalman, “It’s Time to Rethink Climbing on Devils Tower,” *Outside*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.outsideonline.com/2329411/why-its-time-rethink-climbing-ban-devils-tower>, accessed November 2022; Access Fund, “Climbers: Honor the June Closure at Devils Tower,” May 11, 2021, <https://www.accessfund.org/news-and-events/news/climbers-honor-the-june-closure-at-devils-tower>, accessed November 2022; See also Colorado College’s Sacred Lands Project, <https://sites.coloradocollege.edu/indigenoustraditions/sacred-lands/>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Final Climbing Management Plan,” 5-6.

The CMP for the Tower is an evolving management document. Fifteen years have passed since the 2006 update, and thus the Park Service might revisit the CMP and consider updates to address shifting dynamics at the Tower. For example, outdoor recreation has mushroomed in the United States since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Concurrently, a growing national and regional movement in the Black Hills is forcing the federal government to address past wrongs perpetrated against Native American peoples. Moreover, the Northern Great Plains, like the rest of the nation and world, is staring down the existential threats associated with human-caused climate change.

### **Conclusion: The Sounds of Fracture**

Variouly described as an “ideal climbers’ playground” and “absolutely created for climbers,” the seemingly perfect columns of the Tower with crack systems every ten feet have made climbing there seem predestined.<sup>117</sup> Yet, both the Park Service and the climbing community constructed this sense of inevitability. Once the National Park Service announced in 1950 that “mountain climbing is a legitimate activity in the national parks and one which need not be discouraged,” it gave support to a narrative making the Tower synonymous with climbing.<sup>118</sup> As this chapter argues, the Park Service played a significant role in the rise of climbing in America, evolving to accommodate requests to make the activity an acceptable tradition. Climbers and administrators at the National Parks have constructed powerful narratives of use that have shaped the history of climbing at the Tower for over one hundred years. Recreators now view climbing as an historic use and one of the major resources of the Tower with the National Park staff often serving as the crucial mediators.

In 2006, a confluence of events illustrated cultural forces swirling around the Tower. During the centennial of the Monument’s founding, the same year that the park updated the CMP, Tower visitors participated in a reenactment of the Old Settlers’ Picnic. Just as climbers had done on numerous previous occasions including during the first successful attempt in 1893, the first female ascent in 1895, and during the nation’s bicentennial in 1976, park staff summited the Tower on July 4<sup>th</sup> and once again placed an American flag on top.<sup>119</sup> Vertical geographies have long been sites where Americans celebrated state formation, and the Tower was no different. That mountains have historically served as borders and their summits as imperial trophies, reveals a long history of conflict in high places. Claiming those national or colonial points of pride appears in the history of climbing at the Tower.

Yet, these were not the only celebrations held that year. The American Indian Heritage Weekend in August brought the traditional connection between Northern Plain Indians and the Tower into sharp relief; tribes erected teepees literally in the center of the picnic area. That same year, Dorothy FireCloud, a member of the Rosebud Sioux, took over the reins as the first Native

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<sup>117</sup> Randal Blake, “Free Climbs at Devil’s Tower,” *Climbing* (July/Aug 1982); Beth Wald, “Tower of Power: Recent Free climbs at Devil’s Tower,” *Climbing* (August 1985), 91.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Taylor, *Pilgrims*, 120.

<sup>119</sup> Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 220.



American Superintendent of the Monument. Indigenous assertions of the Tower as a sacred religious site overlaid new meanings on the massive rock structure.<sup>120</sup>

The cultural values of climbers and Native Americans led to physical changes at the nation's first national monument. Native American tribes often circumambulated the Tower in preparation for the Sundance, leaving behind prayer bundles filled with herbs and other sacred objects. The Lakota routinely built sweat lodges with rocks carried from other sacred sites in the Black Hills, which may have included Bear Butte (Mato Paha). Over years and years of use, these acts created social trails in the landscape, leaving both physical and metaphysical footprints on the landscape.<sup>121</sup> With the end of the Sioux Wars and the subsequent influx of Euro-Americans to the Black Hills, these footpaths gave way to wagon roads and picnic areas. The ladder hammered into the crack in preparation for the first ascent in 1893 marked the beginning of an era that brought fundamental change to the physical nature of the Tower. After wooden pegs came metal pitons, with Wiessner and Durrance each leaving their own marks in the stone. By 1990, the Tower was an established and domesticated climbing area. Bolts for both belaying and repelling adorned the top of most pitches. Climbers "cleaned" all the classic routes. Dennis Horning even claimed they were so "immaculate" that they had "lost their mountain status."<sup>122</sup>

Because of all this conflict and contention – political, cultural, and environmental – some climbers argue that no one should climb the Tower at all. Nick Mott is one such climber. In an essay for *Alpinist* in 2017, Mott contrasted climbing's relative short history at the Tower with Native people's spiritual practices and histories that span thousands of years.<sup>123</sup> As others have noted, Mount Rushmore National Memorial does not allow climbing on or near the sculpted faces of the presidents there. Why is this landscape respected, yet Devils Tower--a sacred place to Native Americans--does not receive the same consideration?

How we name and interact with landscape affects how we "see" it. Climbing has added to these cultural optics. The names of the climbs at the Tower often match the Devil moniker – Beelzabub, Route of All Evil, El Cracko Diablo, Satan's Stairway – which further naturalizes the Western narrative, and, as Jay Taylor has argued, "the social relations embedded within those ways of seeing."<sup>124</sup> A climber arriving at the Tower may look at the elongated cracks that line the walls of the Tower and begin eyeing potential routes. A Lakota child making her first pilgrimage to Bear Lodge may envision the great bear tearing chunks out of the rock. These interpretations and experiences are, of course, not mutually exclusive. Many layers of meaning overlay the geologic phenomenon of the Tower.

Beyond this, climbing is an act that shapes Americans' relationship to the National Monument. More than revealing any inevitability, understanding why climbing at the Tower

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<sup>120</sup> Dorothy FireCloud, "Sacred Lands," *Earth Island Journal* 31, no. 2 (2016): 58-60.

<sup>121</sup> Robert MacFarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (Penguin, 2013), 26-30; Amy Corbin, "Black Hills," Sacred Land Film Project, September 1, 2001, <https://sacredland.org>, accessed October 2022.

<sup>122</sup> Dennis Horning, "Devils Tower: Close Encounters of the Sustained Kind," *Climbing Magazine* (October/November 1990): 122.

<sup>123</sup> Nick Mott, "In the Bear's Lodge," *Alpinist* 57 (Spring 2017), <http://www.alpinist.com/doc/web17c/wfeature-in-the-bears-lodge-tcl-alpinist-57>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor, "Mapping," 212.



became popular and natural requires understanding the context in which it occurred. Like William Cronon famously wrote about American wilderness, when we gaze into the history of rock climbing at the Tower, “we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires.”<sup>125</sup> There is nothing innate about Rogers and Ripley climbing the Tower in 1893, nor is there anything natural about it being a climbing mecca today. Vertical sites such as the Tower and the Yosemite Valley are “a geographical category of collective action and public policies” that constantly shift and change.<sup>126</sup> That the once solid foundation of climbing at the Tower is beginning to show cracks should not be surprising. It would be wise to listen to these sounds of fracture.

## Known Resource Types

**The Tower Formation:** The Tower itself constitutes a natural and a cultural resource. The sport of mountaineering and climbing reflects these connections. If not for the geological resource, the sport and culture of climbing would not exist.

**Tower Ladder:** Created in 1893 as an artificial aid for ascending the monolith, the Tower Ladder has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS removed the lower 100-foot section in 1932 for safety reasons. Only the top 170-foot section remains, which NPS personnel stabilized in 1972.

**Climbing Routes:** The Durrance Route is one of the early routes put up on the Tower, is listed as one of fifty “classic climbs” in North America, and remains a popular route for climbers at Devils Tower National Monument. Of all the climbing routes on the Tower, this route has particular significance in terms of historical trends in climbing toward more technical and advanced forms of mountaineering.

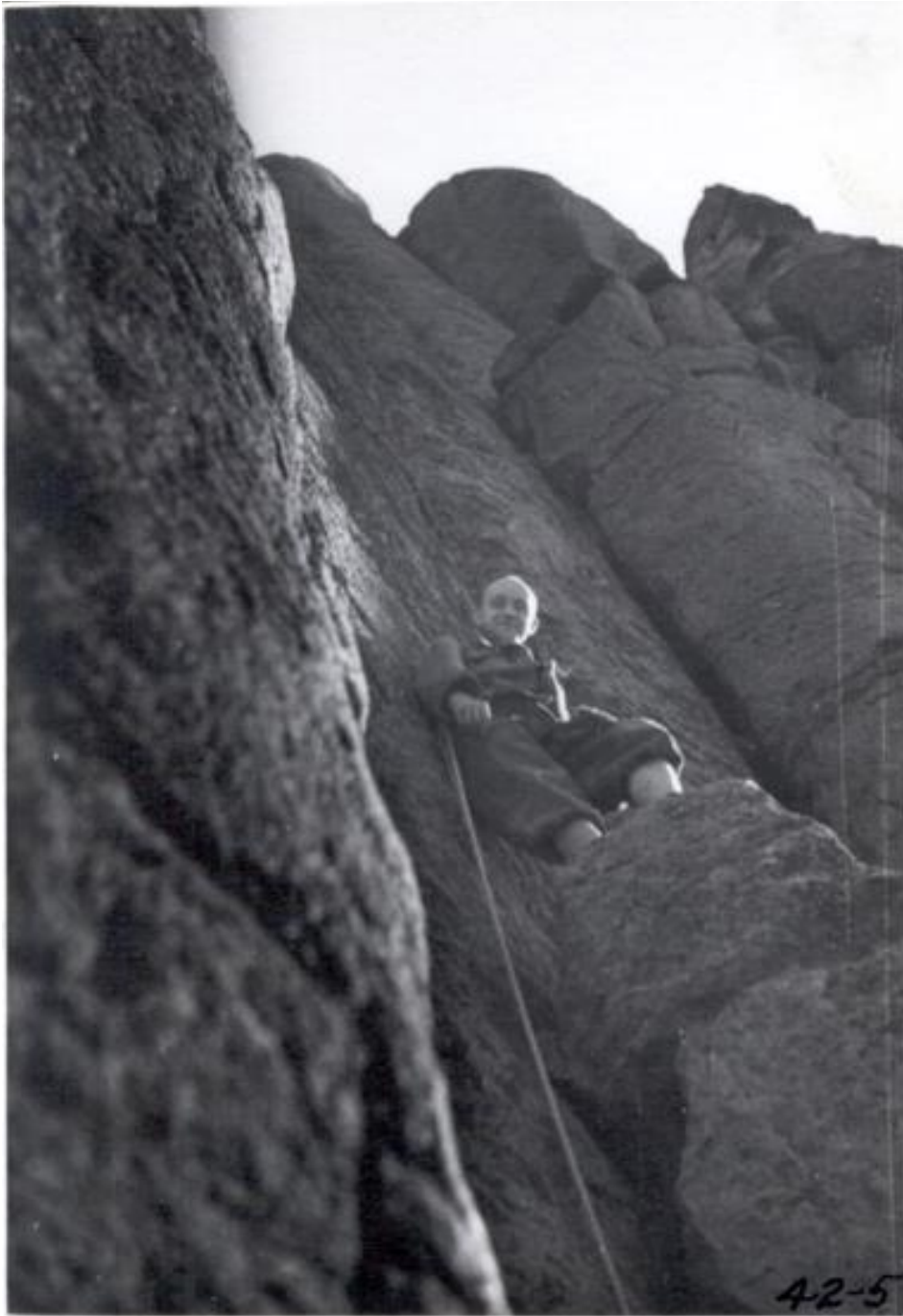
**Pitons and Bolts:** All the known pitons and bolts on the Tower appear in a separate appendix. Climbers have moved away from bolts for aesthetic and practical reasons, while many Native Americans consider pitons and bolts as disrespectful in the context of a sacred or revered site.

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<sup>125</sup> William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (January 1996): 7.

<sup>126</sup> Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 69.

## Graphics



*Figure 34. Fritz Wiessner belays his partner on Devils Tower. He uses a hip belay, a technique creating sufficient friction to catch a following climber, by passing the rope around one's hips. June 28, 1937. (Courtesy NPS).*



*Figure 35. Hopkins Rescue Party, 1941. Jack Durrance (far right) and companions plan an attempt to bring down stranded parachutist George Hopkins. They are gathered in the Visitor Center at the base of the Tower formation. (Courtesy NPS).*



Figure 36. "No Climbing Above This Point." Demonstrates a bit of the insouciance in climbing culture. (Courtesy NPS).

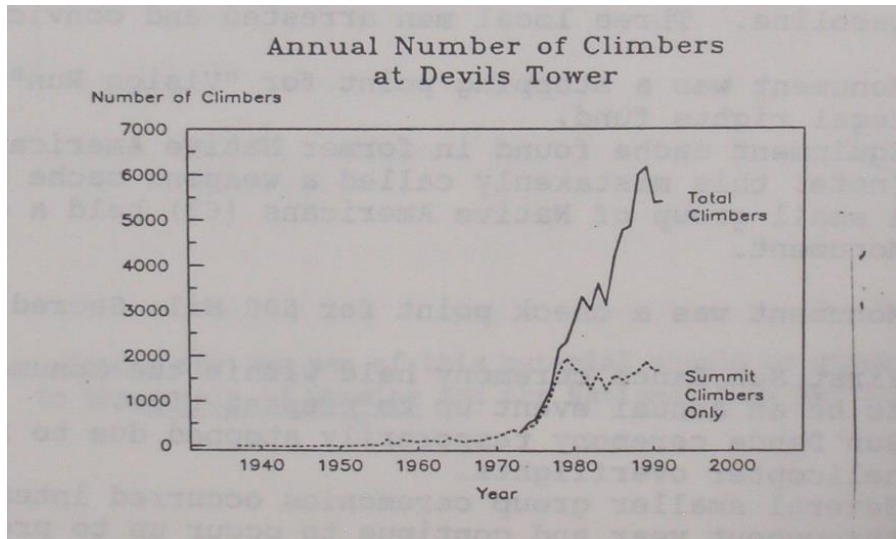
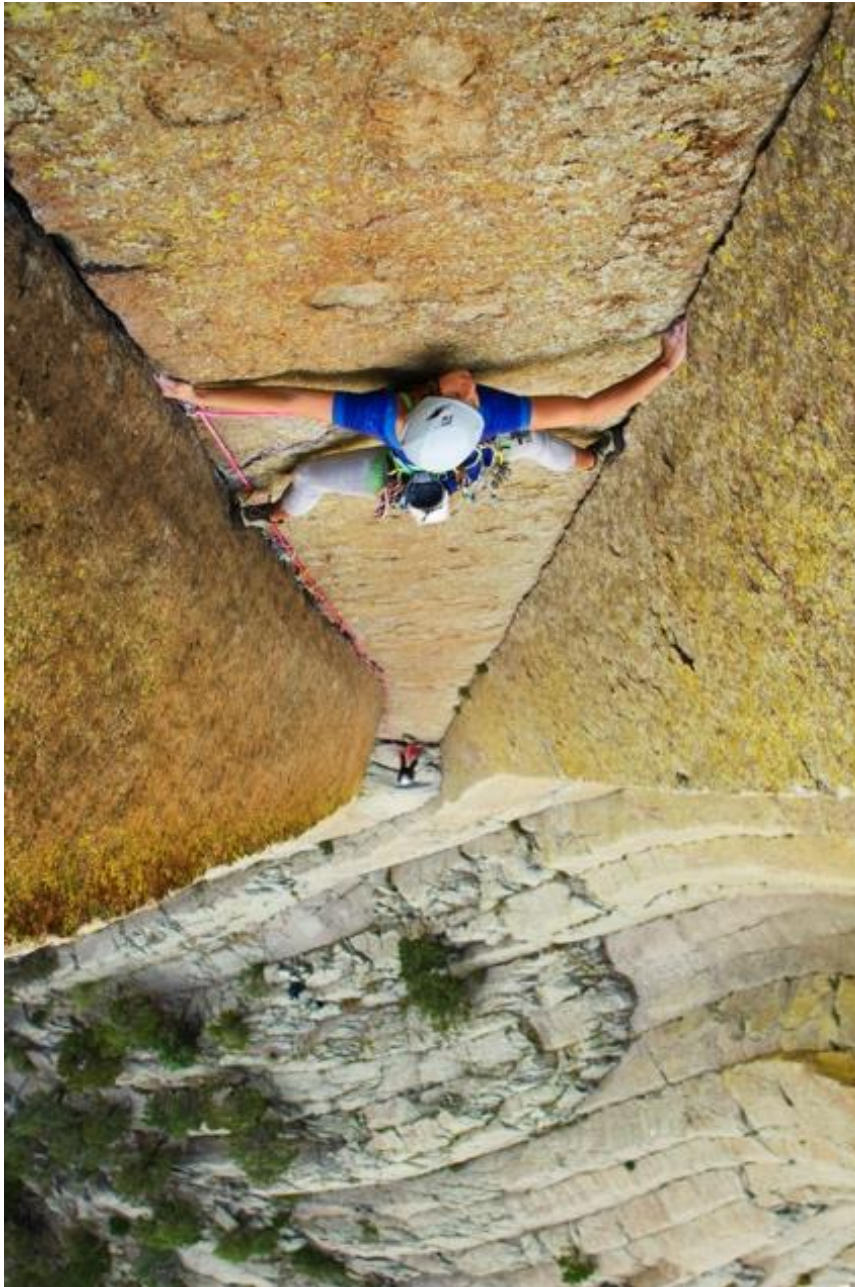


Figure 37. Numbers of Climbers at DETO, 1940 to 1990. Devils Tower became a climbing destination in the late 1970s. (Courtesy NPS).





*Figure 38. Vertical.” Climbing Steward Andrea Carlomagno climbs El Matador route in 2016. Note wide stemming technique, & belay rope running through protection. Part of the Tower’s attraction are the sustained cracks and clean surfaces with few ledges to get in the way of a leader’s fall. (Courtesy NPS, Lucas Barth photo)*

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: Nature and Culture at Devils Tower National Monument, 1970-2022**

In the post-1970s period, the values of many Americans began to change under the pressures of economic, social, and political upheavals. New movements challenged the assumptions and institutions that had accompanied nation state expansion, unlimited natural resource extraction, and settler colonialism. In the national parks, these developments imposed new imperatives on park administrators. The meanings of resources shifted, forcing park administrators to manage new types of resources. As in all national parks, Devils Tower employees grappled with how to administer a raft of post-1970s legislation that resulted from an empowered environmental movement and the policies that followed from it. But unlike many other parks, the monument held special importance to Great Plains tribes. When invigorated Indigenous rights and religious movements demanded access to this sacred site, they forced the NPS to manage the massive rock formation not just as a geologic wonder but also as a site of outstanding cultural significance. Once interpreted as largely a natural site, the Tower moved to the center of cultural revival and conflict.

After 1970, NPS management directives addressing ecological concerns, exponential increases in visitor number (including rock climbers), and use of Devils Tower as a Native and non-Native spiritual site pushed managers to appreciate the alignments of the observable natural resources and the less visible cultural responses within the monument's boundaries. On the ground, the monument's physical boundaries remained the same, but at the same time, other unseen boundaries expanded into three dimensions as sound, habitat, community, and view became management prerogatives. The NPS faced a three-fold challenge: how to interpret, honor, and preserve the site's physical and spiritual integrity through ecological management in the face of cultural contention, including, in the mid-1990s, a lawsuit brought by local climbing guides regarding First Amendment prohibitions against governmental "establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>1</sup> Religious values were a new consideration for administrators. Although set out in post-1970s environmental legislation, other intangible resources emerged from Americans' need to counteract modern life by interacting with nature: viewing stars in the night sky, taking in the quality of air, and experiencing the ambiance of a sacred place and the peace and quiet of a natural site like the awe-inspiring Tower. All these intangible assets comprised critical aspects of a visitor's experience at the Monument: their ability and inclination to pause and reflect and their sense of wonder for this outstanding geological and cultural phenomenon.

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<sup>1</sup> First Amendment, U.S. Constitution.

## NPS in the Environmental Era

Historian Samuel P. Hays pointed to the 1960s as the decade when the environmental movement went mainstream, in part as a reaction to the unfettered growth and despoilation of land and water that resulted from the economic and building booms following World War II. Preserving roadless areas within the country's public lands, the Wilderness Act of 1964 underscored the growing congressional recognition of the importance of land preservation. But it was the passage of a host of environmental legislation over the next decade—the 1970s-- that signaled an overarching commitment to resource conservation and regulation of government and private business. Signed into law in 1970, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) for example, required federal agencies to consider and mitigate environmental harms stemming from their actions. Under the aegis of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the 1970 Clean Air Act provided the framework for protecting air quality and setting ambient air quality standards. The Clean Water Act of 1972 showed the nation's intent to protect and preserve this most basic natural resource. Signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1973, the Endangered Species Act established mechanisms to protect threatened or endangered species and provided for the designation of critical habitat.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout its history, the Park Service had wrestled with the tensions within its mission laid out in the 1916 Organic Act: to encourage visitation through interpretive programs and Park Service amenities such as roads, trails, and campgrounds and to conserve the park's natural values and resources for future generations. By the 1960s, the NPS faced even greater challenges of encouraging use while preserving its sites. Key to the discussion was the 1963 Park Service-commissioned Leopold Report that criticized the agency for insufficiently utilizing scientific knowledge of park landscapes in its decision making. Convinced by a growing body of scientific literature, many in the agency advocated for ecological land management. But those who believed money should go to visitation and park facilities fiercely resisted, setting up conditions for heated infighting as biologists and other scientists gained primacy over park rangers and other administrators regarding park natural resources.<sup>3</sup>

As Mission 66 wound down in the late 1960s and the subsequent five-year Parkscape USA initiative ended in 1972, the NPS bowed to pressure from outside and inside the agency to focus management strategies on ecology and science. Ecologists viewed the physical world as complex networks resulting from interactions between all living things and their environments. The complicated interrelationships within these environments meant that parks and the life they supported did not exist in isolation from surrounding parcels and populations.<sup>4</sup> Ecology required an imagination of a whole—the unseen biological connections were as important or more important than those that could be observed. As Devils Tower's current website states, the

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in The National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Colorado State University Public Lands History Center, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota, Historical Resource Study," (2017), 155.

monument “represents an *ecotone*: a place where different habitats meet. The forests of the Black Hills, prairies of the Great Plains, and riparian areas of the Belle Fourche River create a myriad of different habitats. . . . Within these habitats there are more than 500 native and non-native plant species.”<sup>5</sup>

NPS administrators in far-flung places did not embrace scientific management at the same pace even as Yellowstone and other showplaces became the proving grounds for new management strategies. Indeed, transformation came slowly to Devils Tower. In the 1970s, Devils Tower was perpetually short staffed, underfunded, and technologically handicapped. Each year through 1980 when he retired, Superintendent Homer Anderson’s spare two-page annual reports chronicled the unique challenges managers faced in the rural, sparsely populated area. During this time, Devils Tower seems to be managed rather like a local ranch; Anderson’s reports focused on stock intrusions, fires, bad weather, and unusual weather. Hunters also occasionally encroached on the monument’s grounds; in 1972, law enforcement cited two people for illegal hunting, one of whom paid a seventy-five-dollar fine.<sup>6</sup>

### **Changing Management Concerns at Devils Tower National Monument**

Gradually, after 1970, Devils Tower National Monument began incorporating changing NPS management policies. Modernity brought new technologies, for example. Superintendents’ reports celebrated the installation of a radio network connecting both the park internally and the sheriff’s office, the monument’s first computer and printer, and fiberoptic telecommunication lines. Significantly, with the new environmental concerns and laws, managers’ concerns broadened and became more complex. The 1986 General Management Plan with a Development Management Plan totaled 34 pages. By 2004, Devils Tower National Monument produced a General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement that encompassed 240 pages. The list of environmental issues monument staff had to consider expanded, although cultural resources maintained a steady presence in management considerations.

The NPS ecosystems management approach at the Tower highlighted fire management and invasive species. The National Park Service trained staff in prescribed fire techniques, and the Monument started to employ this method of fire and vegetation management. Invasive species became a concern throughout the West, and people involved in agriculture took particular note of economic costs to productivity. At Devils Tower in the 1990s, the staff utilized angora goats to control leafy spurge. The staff also collected spurge-eating beetles and distributed them to other places in the Monument and to neighbors who wanted them. Prairie dogs remained a management concern and a popular tourist attraction, a signature feature of the landscape. The park installed improved signage to interpret and explain the prairie dog habitat. Ecologists visited to study these interesting species of cynomys. The creatures represented both a natural and cultural resource.

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<sup>5</sup> Devils Tower National Monument (DETO) website, [nps.gov/deto/index.htm](https://nps.gov/deto/index.htm), accessed August 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, 1972 Annual Report, DETO Records, MORU Multi-Park Repository (hereafter cited as MORU MPR).



## Intangible Assets

From the 1970s into the 1990s, managers' environmental awareness and adherence to environmental mandates created new types of resources. Intangible assets rose in importance: "viewscales, soundscapes, nightscapes, and air quality acquired preeminent consideration. The distinct categories of natural resource and cultural resource blurred, prefiguring the current forientation of the historic preservation field on cultural landscapes"<sup>7</sup> Once they recognized these as the park's characteristic resources, staff needed to ensure their survival and protect them in the same way it did the Tower itself. Personnel had to consider developments outside park boundaries to do this. For instance, during the 1990s, a controversy erupted over the construction of an airport at nearby Hulett. Air traffic from it would impinge on the airspace around the Tower and threaten the peace and quiet normally found there. In the 1970s and 1980s, the park had dealt with a similar development. Then, Ellsworth Air Force Base modified flight paths to avoid the Tower reducing the number and volume of sonic booms from the high-performance aircraft. Similarly, administrators carefully watched the night sky, a positive quality it promoted as an asset. Though no nearby industry reduced the air quality at Devils Tower, as mandated by law, the State of Wyoming began to monitor air quality in the region.

Interpretation at Devils Tower National Monument reflected evolving understandings of both nature and culture, of tangible assets such as the Tower formation, and intangible assets like nature's quiet spaces as one ponders a geological wonder. In 1972, the Devils Tower Natural History Association supported the monument's work through the purchase of a movie projector and four interpretive signs for the Tower Trail. In 1972, public programs organized by the interpretive staff included four nature walks daily and campfire talks at night, "our popular climbing demonstration," and other interpretive talks at the visitors' center. Throughout the 1970s, Superintendent Homer Anderson included statistics on how many times docents utilized the A/V machine in the interpretation program. In short, many visitors over time received similar information about the physical and cultural resources of the Monument. In 1978, park staff installed exhibits in the Visitor Center after a 16-month spell of modification at Harpers Ferry. NPS naturalist Myron Sutton summed up the new exhibits with his comment, "I suppose 90% of your visitors are climbers!" Daily climbing demonstrations proved popular throughout the period. To this day, tourists remain very curious about adventurous people climbing the Tower. By the 1990s, staff recognized the importance of interpreting the Native American history of the site and added demonstrations of Native music and handiwork. They featured one of the origin stories of Bear Lodge in interpretive signs and included it in the visitor information newsletter distributed to visitors at the front gate. In 1995, management went a step further; it refreshed its

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<sup>7</sup> Public Lands History Center, Colorado State University, "Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota, Historical Resource Study," 155. An excellent source for NPS natural resource reports and documents showing an evolution of concerns can be found at "Natural Resources Management History," [http://npshistory.com/natural\\_resources.htm](http://npshistory.com/natural_resources.htm), accessed August 2023.

interpretive program to tell a multi-cultural story about the monolith in such a way as to respect the different ways that various groups felt about and respected the Tower.

## **Burgeoning Visitation and Devils Tower National Monument**

While Devils Tower made the transition into ecological management, travelers to the park burgeoned. Comfortable cars, better roads, and booming outdoor recreation encouraged Americans to take vacations and explore the West. Superintendent Homer Anderson reported that entrance receipts totaled \$29,753.75 for 1972, a figure that remained steady over the next few years. The monument set a new record in 1976: 169,754 visitors, a 12 percent increase over the previous year. By 1992, the annual count had increased to 461,000.<sup>8</sup> The National Park Service continued to develop facilities at Devils Tower National Monument to address the growing number of tourists and their environmental effects on the landscape. Physical improvements in 1973, for example, included burying the power line serving the entrance station and the telephone cables connecting the new radio and pouring 15 concrete pads for picnic tables in the campground's A loop. Renovating the sewage system over several years was a large project. Increasing automobile traffic meant repaving the roads. To focus foot traffic at the base of the tower, crews refreshed the paving on the Tower Trail. During the 1970s, the superintendent's reports note consistent expenditures on law enforcement and technology to protect the environment at Devils Tower.

Undoubtedly, many of these tourists typified the suburban, middle-class, white families that composed the parks' usual clientele. However, in the post-1970s period, Devils Tower began to host visitors who had traveled there for the Tower's specific attractions. As the outdoor sport grabbed the imagination of adventurers, rock climbing at the Tower increasingly became a central activity after the Mission 66 era. In 1973, 312 climbers registered, but by the 1990s 5,000 climbers annually exercised their skills on the Tower. By the 1980s, many climbers successfully summited. Contrasted with earlier eras when reaching the top resulted in national newspaper stories, this feat became almost commonplace. Even with mushrooming climbing, the low rate of accidents reassured climbers and seemed an acceptable risk to the National Park Service. Superintendent's reports noted injuries, rescues, and the few unusual deaths. Yet the joy and personal fulfillment found in climbing on the unique columnar basalt lured many more climbers to the Tower. Publicity about the high-quality climbing gradually created an international audience of climbers.

## **Special Visitors**

Devils Tower's iconic role in popular culture caught the eyes of the nation and impelled new travelers to the Monument. In 1977, Steven Spielberg released the science-fiction blockbuster film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Central to the plot was the unique rock

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<sup>8</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1972, 1976, 1992, MORU MPR; "New Visitor's Center Eyed for Devils Tower National Monument: Record Tourist Season Taxes Existing Facilities at Site in Wyoming," *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, CO, September 5, 1992.

formation of Devils Tower where an alien spaceship made friendly contact with a welcoming committee comprised of United Nations and U.S. military representatives. The 1977 superintendent's report noted that "Columbia Pictures was here for almost 2 weeks in May filming 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' to be released on Easter, 1977. It was a major film with about 110 people from Burbank plus up to 300 extras hired locally."<sup>9</sup> Suddenly aware of the massive geologic form jutting from the Black Hills, the nation became fixated on northeastern Wyoming's distinctive and imposing monolith.

The film dramatically increased visitation to DETO. Park attendance was 156,293 in 1977, and the superintendent's report noted that "Close Encounters of the Third kind was released in [mid-November]. Devils Tower has received considerable publicity as a result."<sup>10</sup> Demonstrating the film's popularity, in 1978 following the film's release, visitation to DETO exploded 74% to 272,617 people.<sup>11</sup> *Close Encounters*, with its dramatic landscape shots earning it the 1978 Academy Award for Best Cinematography, created a feedback loop in which the site's significance as a geologic phenomenon and the nation's popular imagination reinforced each other. Although the attendance boom did not last, with 1980 visitation decreasing 28% to 188,244, *Close Encounters* permanently elevated DETO's popular recognizability.<sup>12</sup>

Thanks to an elevated profile after *Close Encounters*, Devils Tower appeared in other films, television programs, and books of the era. A Japanese film crew came to the Tower, and a five-minute CCN clip broadcast worldwide. In April 1979, ABC Sports filmed a television special featuring a famous climber. Superintendent Homer Robinson noted that it was a lot more bother and trouble in comparison to the filming of *Close Encounters*. The Tower had acquired a popular culture significance.<sup>13</sup>

## Popular Culture on Two Wheels

Like in other national parks, motorcyclists had made Devils Tower a ride destination, but annual motorcycle club visits were limited in size. The 1973 superintendent's report noted that in the previous year, "The motorcycle gang "El Banditos" had their national meeting near Devils Tower over Labor Day weekend. Six rangers were brought from other areas but no incidents arose." In 1974, "The Sturgis motorcycle club came on their annual visit in August with 119 motorcycles." The following year, park staff counted 96 motorcycles." In the 1980s, the American Lung Association rode through the park. Later, the Christian Motorcycle Association helped clean campgrounds and empty trash.

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<sup>9</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1977, MORU MPR.

<sup>10</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1977.

<sup>11</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1978, MORU MPR.

<sup>12</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1980, MORU MPR.

<sup>13</sup> *Paul*, a 2011 sci-fi spoof, features a Devils Tower scene in homage to *Close Encounters*. Mentions of Devils Tower are fairly sparse in recent pop culture, but it does appear at least twice in the irreverent cartoon series *King of the Hill*, for example, when the series' two main characters go to Sturgis for marriage counseling. In *An Obvious Fact* (2016), by well-known mystery writer Craig Johnson, Sheriff Walt Longmire and his sidekick travel to Hulett to investigate an accident involving a young motorcyclist.

However, this all changed by the mid-1990s when the Sturgis (South Dakota) rally began to bring tens of thousands of riders to the Black Hills and potentially to Devils Tower National Monument. The “spirit of the highway” and the iconography of the West pervaded the event, whose participants toured the national monument as free-wheeling motorcyclists and on organized rides. The event began in 1940 as a group of local men began riding together recreationally. In the 1990s, it experienced phenomenal growth and by mid-decade became one of the two major summer events at the national monument. In 2019, an estimated 490,000 motorcyclists made the pilgrimage to nearby Sturgis, South Dakota. They came from across the United States, contributing to economies in the Black Hills region and along the routes. Although the official event lasted for nine days, some visitors remained for a month or more.

The Sturgis Rally hosted events in Sturgis, Hulett, and Sundance, publicizing five major circuits to ride: Mount Rushmore Loop, Devils Tower Loop, Needles and Crazy Horse Loop, Spearfish Canyon Loop, and Bear Butte and Badlands Loop. Thousands of bikers passed through Devils Tower National Monument on Ham and Jam Day, the Wednesday of the week’s event, named for a Sturgis pig roast. Organizers designated this day “No Panties Wednesday,” showing a bit of the raucous side of this motorcycle festival. The high volume of traffic slammed the small park and its staff; bottlenecks occurred on the one-lane road entering Devils Tower National Monument through the historic entrance station; custodial staff became overwhelmed; NPS employees from sister parks, including law enforcement, arrived to help manage the crowds. The ramifications of the Sturgis Rally on the Monument highlighted Devils Tower’s dilemma: how to accommodate these numbers on loud vehicles and maintain an intangible resource, the peace and quiet most visitors expected to find in Devils Tower National Monument.

## **Meet the Neighbors**

After 1970, these new groups of visitors, the agency’s Mission 66 modernizations, and mounting environmental legislation more firmly placed the Tower within a national framework. Once dominated by local interests, Tower administrators now responded to national pressures. Yet, national parks still operated in local and regional contexts, and managers worked hard to maintain good community relations. This became more difficult as they faced another post-1970s challenge: the backlash to federal regulation of Western public lands and the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion. Angry about increasing federal and environmental regulation, struggling in a transforming economy, and perceiving threats to traditional land use, ranchers, miners, and elected officials demanded the transfer of federal lands to state or private ownership and the unrestricted use of natural resources. Especially strong in Wyoming, the resurgence of anti-federal activism forced NPS employees to consider carefully their neighbors.

At Devils Tower National Monument, superintendents’ reports often carried news of the local community. Staff made every effort to maintain good relations even during adverse events such as when an adjoining rancher raised a game fence along the property line that impeded the movements of deer and other large animals. Park employees understood the importance of

situating Devils Tower within the broader local landscapes. For example, during the early 1990s as managers learned the merits of using spurge beetles as invasive species control, they gave insects to nearby ranchers to help with weed control.

Despite the post-1970s anti-federalism, Devils Tower was still a source of pride and economic sustenance for local residents and communities. Some looked to the Monument as a way to make money and engage in free enterprise. A tourist campground, café, and gift shop located just outside the Monument's gate comprised one example. Thirty miles to the south, Sundance traded on the geology and images of tower, while Hulett, a ranching community with fewer than 3,000 people ten miles to the east, sought to capture tourist dollars in hotels and restaurants.

An interest in serving the region manifested itself in special events organized to bring Wyoming residents and local people to the Monument throughout the post-war era, including "Keep America Beautiful Day" and the 1976 Bicentennial. National monument staff worked to maintain good relations with local communities. Hired in a part-time capacity in 1972, the Devils Tower's naturalist taught environmental education lessons to nearby school students starting in 1973. Families from the surrounding area continued to consider the Tower a community institution; visits to Devils Tower were an annual event for many with Mother's Day and Fourth of July festivities particularly popular. Finding ways to accommodate the community, many of whom found the entrance fee too steep for casual visits, concerned park management since at least the 1970s. Not selling an annual permit for locals "early in the season" for example, "caused much public complaint" in 1973.

### **Native Americans and the Tower Landscape**

The bigger post-1970 challenge to national parks, however, was a different set of neighbors. Euro-Americans who encountered the Tower had recognized the importance it held for Native Americans in the West. But after it became a national monument, the official justification for its preservation was its awe-inspiring natural formation, and the Indigenous meanings of the site faded into legends of a past peoples. In the post-1970s era, however, American Indians directly challenged that interpretation. Controversies about climbing on the Tower and its name arose from national movements for tribal sovereignty, an evolving legal landscape for Native Americans, and increasing popularity of recreation on federal lands that held cultural significance for tribal communities. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as environmentalism emerged, rock climbing grew in popularity just as First Nations people renewed spiritual practices at sacred sites on public lands, thanks in part to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (AIRFA).

### **Red Power, Tribal Sovereignty, and Self-Determination**

In the post-1970s era, Native Americans began to revive their traditional cultural and religious practices that white colonialism had attempted to erase. As Euro-American settlers colonized North America, the burgeoning United States pushed Native Americans onto

reservations. Citizens and the federal government sought to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream culture using institutions like the now infamous boarding schools for Native children. Yet Native culture and religion never disappeared, despite the active repression of cultural and religious expressions such as dance ceremonies. By the 1960s and 1970s, Native American culture showed signs of a vigorous reemergence. At venues including the Flagstaff All-Indian Powwow from 1929 to 1979, tribes of the Southwest grew their cultural identity within an event originally organized by white community boosters. During this period, the establishment of tribal community colleges partly redressed a loss of culture at the Indian boarding schools. By encouraging a growth of collective memory, “Red Power activists transformed the legacy of assimilation, termination and urbanization into reclamation of culture, identity, and hope for the future.”<sup>14</sup>

Some elements of revived Native American culture focused on engagement with the land and a revitalization of traditional religious practices. Policies enacted during the Self-Determination Era, “designed to strengthen tribal sovereignty, transfer control of Indian programs from federal to tribal governments, and protect tribal lands...has spurred Indian tribes to seek preservation and protection of critical valuable natural and cultural resources on and off-reservation lands, including many lands that are federal lands such as national parks.”<sup>15</sup> Indigenous leaders asserted that unsevered linkages between their peoples and federally held lands, especially in the American West, demanded that Indigenous peoples be allowed to reconnect with their homelands and sacred sites not as remembrances of bygone eras, but for their “continuing political and social wellbeing.”<sup>16</sup> Around the nation, Native Americans organized under the banner of tribal sovereignty.

The American Indian Movement (AIM) represented a sharpened edge of Indigenous sovereignty movements. Founded in July 1968 in Minneapolis, MN, AIM’s goals eventually involved a continuum of Native issues: protection of legal rights, revitalization of traditional religious practices, and economic and political self-determination. As a radical group modeled on the Black Panthers, AIM landed on the national scene with an occupation of Alcatraz Island (building on an earlier, less-reported 1963 protest) and proclaiming the former prison “Indian Land.”<sup>17</sup> In 1973, AIM gained notoriety when it engaged in a standoff with the FBI at the Wounded Knee massacre site.<sup>18</sup> A participant at Wounded Knee, AIM leader Russell Means played a central role in the revitalization of the Sun Dance at Devils Tower in the 1980s.

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<sup>14</sup> Lara Leigh Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers: Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018), 156; National Park Service, “The Trail of Broken Treaties, 1972,” [www.nps.gov/articles/000/trail-of-broken-treaties.htm](http://www.nps.gov/articles/000/trail-of-broken-treaties.htm), accessed August 2023; Public Broadcasting Service, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: Carry It On*, documentary, November 22, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Jeanette Wolfley, “Reclaiming a Presence in Ancestral Lands: The Return of Native Peoples to the National Parks,” *Natural Resources Journal* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 62.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfley, “Reclaiming a Presence,” 56.

<sup>17</sup> Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers*, 150–52; Larry Hatfield, “Indians Talk of Retaking Alcatraz,” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 12, 1971; “Isle of Pelicans -- Indian Power Symbol,” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 12, 1971.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Marie Kramer, “The Power of the Tower: Contesting History at Bear Lodge/Devils Tower National Monument” (Undergraduate Research Paper, Claremont College, CA, 2016), 93; “Wounded Knee Takeover Accomplished by Total Surprise Strategy,” *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, March 16, 1974.

Although perhaps the most criticized Indigenous sovereignty group, AIM represented the more radical ways in which tribal communities sought to reassert their sovereignty and presence on ancestral lands.

Federal attention eventually followed Native American activism. President Nixon stood before Congress on July 8, 1970 and acknowledged how “the American Indians [had] been oppressed and brutalized, deprived of their ancestral lands and denied the opportunity to control their own destiny.”<sup>19</sup> Building on the recently passed Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, Nixon declared “the time [had] come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.” His words signaled the end of termination and the beginning of the Self-Determination Era.<sup>20</sup> Programs aimed at severing federal obligations to Indigenous peoples transitioned into federal policy that promoted or at least allowed a reinvigoration of traditional tribal control, culture, and rituals.<sup>21</sup> Self-determination and demands for increased tribal authority lay at the center of tribal sovereignty movements.<sup>22</sup>

Policy changes during the Self-Determination Era tilted the legal landscape in favor of Indigenous sovereignty. Congress passed a series of laws meant to “atone for what... appear to be nineteenth century acts of attempted cultural extermination.”<sup>23</sup> In 1978, the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) demanded accommodation for traditional Indigenous religious practices on federal lands.<sup>24</sup> Reflecting national trends toward tribal sovereignty and with input from the Native American Rights Fund and the American Association of Museums, in 1990, Congress approved the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). It specified “the process for determining the appropriate disposition and treatment of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony should be governed by respect for Native human rights... [and] that human remains must at all times be accorded dignity and respect.”<sup>25</sup> Tribes received the authority to manage their own historic and archeological resources in a 1992 amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. They could create tribal historic preservation offices that assumed the responsibilities of the state historic preservation offices, giving them control in cultural resource decision making. In 1996, President Clinton substantially advanced the goals

<sup>19</sup> Richard Nixon, “Special Message on Indian Affairs,” July 8, 1970, [www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2013-08/documents/president-nixon70.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2013-08/documents/president-nixon70.pdf), accessed August 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Nixon, “Special Message”; Jeanette Wolfley, “Reclaiming a Presence,” 62.

<sup>21</sup> Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers*, 130–32.

<sup>22</sup> “Sovereignty ‘is a means by which indigenous peoples can assert some degree of control over the form, content, and direction of their individual and collective identities,’” in Lloyd Burton and David Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower: Intercultural Relations, Legal Pluralism, and the Management of Sacred Sites on Public Lands,” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 44; for more on Red Power and its placement within the context of social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, see Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers*, 128–156.

<sup>23</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 221.

<sup>24</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 221; Kramer, “The Power of the Tower,” 93–94.

<sup>25</sup> Select Committee on Indian Affairs, “Providing for the Protection of Native American Graves and the Repatriation of Native American Remains and Cultural Patrimony” (Washington, DC: GPO, September 26, 1990), 2, [www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/upload/SR101-473.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/upload/SR101-473.pdf), accessed August 2023; “Returning Native America Remains,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1990.

of the Self-Determination Era by issuing Executive Order 13007 mandating federal agencies interact with tribes on a government-to-government basis and outlining procedures and goals for accommodating use of sacred sites by Indigenous peoples.<sup>26</sup>

These legislative actions reshaped NPS-tribal relationships. For Native Americans, the interconnectedness between their cosmologies and the physical world complicated relationships with federal land managers. Although the federal government had removed Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands, tribal oral histories retained the significance of location-specific ritual and origin stories, including at Devils Tower National Monument. The evolving legal landscape empowered a revitalization of traditional ceremonies and rituals by a variety of Indigenous groups and brought the Native meanings of landscape to prominence in national parks.

### **The Revitalization of the Sun Dance at the Tower**

A deeply sacred site to many Indigenous communities, Bear Lodge has played a significant role in the revival of Native American religious and ceremonial rituals. Commissioned in 1990 and completed in 1997, a park ethnographic survey revealed to white park managers the Tower's prehistorical and historical ritualistic purposes and its continuing associations with tribal peoples.<sup>27</sup> Archeological and oral history resources demonstrated that the Eastern Shoshone, Crow, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Lakota had traditional associations with the Tower with the Northern Cheyenne and Lakota holding the tightest cultural affinities.<sup>28</sup> Although closely-held secrecy shrouded some groups' religious associations with the rock formation, the Lakota openly equated it with renewal and their June solstice-oriented Sun Dance.

Empowered by an evolving legal landscape that prioritized Indigenous access to sacred sites on public lands, in June 1985, Russell Means and twenty to forty Native Americans relit the flame of the Sun Dance 112 years after its last performance. According to park superintendent reports, in the mid-1980s, Sun Dancers arrived each June with only limited tension. In 1985, the superintendent stated that "the only problems [were] caused by [AIM leader] Russell Means and his followers."<sup>29</sup> Means and others returned in 1986 with less tension, and Lakota have performed the Sun Dance every year since then.<sup>30</sup> Following the reinvigoration of the Sun Dance, NPS employees noted an increased visibility of traditional prayer bundles. Often

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<sup>26</sup> William Clinton, "Executive Order 13007," Pub. L. No. E.O. 13007 (1996), [www.doi.gov/pmb/cadr/programs/native/Executive-Order-13007](http://www.doi.gov/pmb/cadr/programs/native/Executive-Order-13007). accessed August 2023; See also Raymond Cross and Elizabeth Brenneman, "Devils Tower at the Crossroads: The National Park Service and the Preservation of Native American Cultural Resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Public Land & Resources Law Review* 18 (1997): 5-45.

<sup>27</sup>Jeffery R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9 (1997), 19-28.

<sup>28</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 7-17; Lloyd Burton and David Ruppert, "Rising to Heaven or Risen from Hell?: Culture, Consensus, and Conflict at Devils Tower National Monument," in Lloyd Burton, *Worship and Wilderness: Culture, Religion, and Law in the Management of Public Lands and Resources* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 127.

<sup>29</sup> Devils Tower National Monument,, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1985, MORU MPR .

<sup>30</sup> Devils Tower National Monument,, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, MORU MPR.



affiliated with the Lakota *Yuwipi* healing ceremony, these bundles frequently consist of tobacco, sage, cloth, or other offerings.<sup>31</sup> By 1990, the resurgence of prayer bundles and the Sun Dance led to requests for the NPS to accommodate a growing cohort of dancers.<sup>32</sup>

An important renewal ceremony to reconnect the Lakota (and other Indigenous peoples) with spiritual beliefs, the Sun Dance is a distinguishing ceremony performed at the tower. Staged around the summer solstice, the Sun Dance centers on prayer and worship through fasting and self-sacrifice. “It is thought that not only the individual, but also the group as a whole, is renewed and at the same time symbolically joined with the universe.”<sup>33</sup> Since at least 1985, tribes erected a sweat lodge and organized a Sun Dance site in a general area northwest of the Tower. Lakota Sun Dance participants camped east of the Tower but within the monument’s boundaries. The Sun Dance required local materials, including willows, sage, pine boughs, chokecherry branches, sweetgrass, and cottonwoods, often collected from along the eastern bank of the Belle Fourche.<sup>34</sup>

Although building on old traditions, Indigenous peoples used religious ceremony to reimagine their communities. The revitalized Sun Dance arose within a reappraisal of Indigenous ceremony as the political consciousness of activists within AIM and other tribal sovereignty movements “built, in part, on the changing definition of community nurtured by powwow [and Pan-Indian] culture.”<sup>35</sup> Requests for NPS accommodations for the yearly gathering reflected the evolving nature of ostensibly static rituals and ceremonies on publicly held lands. As the Sun Dance grew in popularity, Lakota participants requested, among other things, permission to dig latrines and cooking pits, to construct a sweat lodge, and to install a locker for storage near the Lakota campground.<sup>36</sup> The Lakota and other tribes considered the tower a unique and significant cultural resource crucial to the continuing revitalization of their traditional religions and spiritual well-being.

### **Indigenous Perspectives on the Climbing Management Plan**

The intensely place-based Native spirituality driving the resurgence of rituals at the Tower forced park officials to re-examine their park policies. To Native peoples, cosmological events, such as a people’s origin, occurred in specific places in the past. Spiritual renewal and

<sup>31</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 25.

<sup>32</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Rising to Heaven,” 130; Jeffrey R. Hanson and David Moore, “Applied Anthropology at Devils Tower National Monument,” *Plains Anthropologist* 44, no. 170 (November 1999): 56–58.

<sup>33</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 27. For more on the particularities of the Sun Dance, its history, and its survival of the removal era, see Gloria A. Young, “Sun Dance,” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=SU008> accessed August 2023; Darcy Paige, “George W. Hill’s Account of the Sioux Sun Dance of 1866,” *Plains Anthropologist* 24, no. 84 (May 1979): 99–112; Ella Deloria, “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 42, no. 166 (1929): 353–413; D.B. Shimkin, “The Wind River Shoshone Sun Dance,” *Anthropological Papers* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1953); Jeffrey Zelitch, “The Lakota Sun Dance,” *Expedition Magazine* 13, no. 1 (1970): 17–23; Wendy Rex-Atzet, “Narratives of Place and Power: Laying Claim to Devils Tower,” 45–70 in *Imagining the Big Open: Nature, Identity, and Play in the New West*, ed. Liza Nicholas, Elaine Bapis, and Thomas Harvey (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 53.

<sup>34</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 27, includes map.

<sup>35</sup> Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers*, 140.

<sup>36</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 32–33.

continuity required individuals and groups to commune with land and its animals and plants. Traditionally, American Indian people considered animals family members, links to the divine, and messengers from this realm. Ceremony, ritual, and health required plants associated with a particular place.<sup>37</sup>

Informed by their cultural traditions at the Tower, the tribes expressed disagreements with its NPS management. In the 1990s, discussions between NPS-affiliated ethnographers and tribes revealed Indigenous concerns about “the display of possible sacred materials at the Devils Tower Visitor Center; climbing on the tower; the violation of privacy and the intrusion into ritual space; the removal of offerings by visitors to the monument; the Sun Dance; and the name ‘Devils Tower.’”<sup>38</sup> Occurring within a national boom in recreative rock climbing and subsequent Park Service attempts to create climbing management plans, the controversy over rock climbing at Devils Tower showed the Park Service’s challenge in balancing Indigenous religiosity and public access at NPS sites.

Because of their deeply-held beliefs about the monolith’s cultural and spiritual power, Native Americans argued that the NPS should curtail the proliferation of climbing at the Monument. In 1995, a Cheyenne tribal member told archeologist Pat Barker “You are always talking about preserving the environment—places and things that we can see. I’m worried about protecting the things that exist that we can’t see.” In particular, the Shoshone believed that climbing the giant rock was “not only sacrilegious, but also dangerous to those who do not ‘respect’ it.”<sup>39</sup> Indigenous informants in the early 1990s agreed that the NPS needed to curtail climbing there or risk “angering spirits.” Some were more forgiving of climbing that did not mar the tower such as bolt-less “free” climbers.<sup>40</sup>

Post-1970s federal policies gave Native Americans more authority in these decisions. Executive Order 13007 that mandated federal agencies engage in government-to-government relationships with tribal governments elevated Indigenous voices in the planning for climbing management at Devils Tower.<sup>41</sup> When the NPS included Native leaders in discussions on a climbing management plan, “tribal elders spent many hours during the early meetings trying to explain to the non-Indian climbers how culturally important and sacred a place like Devils Tower is to Indian peoples.”<sup>42</sup> Elders also shared privileged knowledge in hopes that a fuller awareness of the tower’s significance would convince climbers to limit their activities. In persuading climbers of the rock monument’s sacredness, tribal representatives “repeatedly equated climbing

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<sup>37</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 201-247, 9; Rex-Atzet, “Narratives of Place and Power.”

<sup>38</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 31.

<sup>39</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 31.

<sup>40</sup> On Barker, see Devils Tower National Monument, Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1995, MORU MPR; Hanson and Moore, “Applied Anthropology at Devils Tower National Monument,” 58.

<sup>41</sup> Clinton, Executive Order 13007.

<sup>42</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 214. According to Burton and Rupert, “the following groups were identified as the four major stakeholders: 1) climbing community, represented by both local and national climbing organizations; 2) local and national environmental organizations; 3) the local government, represented by the county commissioner’s office; and 4) those American Indian communities that had been identified through recent in-house studies [see Hanson and Chirinos, 1997] as having a strong affiliation with the Tower,” and communities represented by the Medicine Wheel Coalition, 212.

the Tower to climbing St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome” to demonstrate the sacrilege they perceived.<sup>43</sup> Although all parties agreed to make some effort to limit climbing at the tower, disagreement centered on whether a June climbing restriction should be mandatory or voluntary.<sup>44</sup>

After substantial discussion, Indigenous representatives promoted a voluntary closure as the preferred solution as they “felt respect for Indian traditions and religious beliefs was a more important issue” than the enforcement of non-climbing during the solstice month.<sup>45</sup> By endorsing a voluntary closure, Indigenous leaders deftly placed the onus of demonstrating respect for Indigenous peoples and cultures onto the climbers, as voluntary non-climbing more fully demonstrated a respect for Indian people and their traditions. As one tribal member offered, “if someone chooses not to climb, the respect comes from their heart.” The resulting 1995 Final Climbing Management Plan (FCMP) “called for a prohibition on the use of climbing hardware that would damage or deface rockfaces on the Tower, and it implemented the voluntary June closure to climbing.”<sup>46</sup> Although local commercial climbing guides quickly challenged the voluntary closure as an impermissible favoring of Indian religion by the NPS, tribal representatives had successfully centered Indigenous ceremonial practices within the climbing plan and, more importantly, within park management decisions.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Tower as a Cultural Site**

Resurgence of Native self-determination and demand for inclusion in park management forced administrators to reinterpret the significance of Devils Tower. Preserved explicitly for its geologic monumentality, the NPS had managed it as a natural site. Although officials acknowledged Native American stories and tribes’ past associations, they ignored tribal cosmologies and the tribes’ continued presence when planning to meet the dual mandate. Asserting Native religious and legal claims to the park and empowered by legislation supporting Native sovereignty, American Indians shifted the meaning of the Tower. Cultural values and meanings overlaid its impressive biophysical reality; for managers, the Tower took on aspects of a cultural landscape. Federal officials recognized this new layer of meaning when the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places determined Devils Tower a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in 1997. Established as a category for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in

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<sup>43</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 214.

<sup>44</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 216; Daniel L. Dustin, Ingrid E. Schneider, Leo H. McAvoy and Arthur N. Frakt, “Cross-Cultural Claims on Devils Tower National Monument: A Case Study,” *Leisure Sciences* 24, no. 1 (January 2002): 80–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400252772845>, accessed August, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 216.

<sup>46</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 217.

<sup>47</sup> For more on *Bear Lodge Multiple Use Assoc. v. Babbitt* and litigation around the FCMP, see Burton and Ruppert, “Bear’s Lodge or Devils Tower,” 218; Kramer, “The Power of the Tower,” 13; Wendy A. Felese, “No Common Ground: Competing Worldviews at Mato Tipila” (Ph.D. diss., Denver, CO, University of Denver, 2018); Dustin et al., “Cross-Cultural Claims on Devils Tower National Monument,” 83–85; Eric Freedman, “Protecting Sacred Sites on Public Land: Religion and Alliances in the Mato Tipila-Devils Tower Litigation,” *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 11–16; Rex-Atzet, “Narratives,” 58–59.

1992, TCPs documented sites that represented a living community's generationally-held values and practices necessary for identity and vitality. Clearly, with their origin beliefs and continuing rituals, many tribes considered the monument of preeminent spiritual importance. Determining the Tower eligible for listing on the National Register as a TCP required staff to consider and protect its cultural significance. Devils Tower had become a cultural park.<sup>48</sup>

### The Naming Controversy

As tribal peoples more authoritatively asserted their presence on public lands and at the Tower, they pushed (particularly in 1929 and 1995) to change its name, which they found offensive. Scholars, administrators, and tribal peoples have questioned the validity of the monument's name, "Devils Tower." Incorporating tribal concerns and the continuing ritual use of areas around the Tower, ethnographers in 1997 recommended "that the National Park Service change the name of the Monument to 'Bears Lodge,'" a loose translation of the various Indigenous names of the feature.<sup>49</sup> In 1998, David R.M. White completed an illuminating study titled "Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming." He described its cultural affiliations with 15 tribes, subtribes, and bands, while analyzing white man's mythology, the history of the Bear Lodge place name, and the process of NPS consultation with tribes and consideration of cultural issues at the Tower.<sup>50</sup>

By returning to an earlier name that cartographers had removed from their maps with Roosevelt's declaration of the national monument in 1906, the park would more appropriately reflect the site's traditional uses and significance. Although map makers and geologists recognized and accepted *Mato Tipi* or Bear Lodge as the monolith's name prior to 1906, Col. Irving Dodge's dubious 1875 renaming of the rock as "Devils Tower" eventually stuck.<sup>51</sup> Foreshadowing this discussion, in 1920 Major General Hugh L. Scott (who had served on the Northern Plains) wrote to the Wyoming Historical Society, urging them to support an aboriginal name for the Monument's grand rock formation. Scott discussed the beauty of the Kiowa legend of the seven star girls, his experience hunting at the Tower, and his "outrage" that Dodge had

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<sup>48</sup> Determination of Eligibility Notification, NPS, Devils Tower, Feb. 6, 1997. Signed by the Keeper of the National Register on Feb., 6, 1997. DETO Superintendent Deborah O. Liggett signed this document on Dec. 2, 1996. See also NPS, National Register of Historic Places, Bulletin 38.

<sup>49</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview" xiii; Freedman, "Protecting Sacred Sites on Public Land," 1. The Crow refer to Devils Tower as *Dabiche Asow*, or "bears house"; the Cheyenne refer to DETO *Na Kovea* or "Bear's Lodge"; although its indigenous-language name is obscured, Arapaho people refer to DETO as "Bear's Tipi"; the Lakota refer to DETO as *Mato Tipi*[or *Tipila*] or "Bear's Lodge" or *He Hota Paha* (Grey Horn Butte); differing from other groups holding traditional associations with DETO, the Kiowa refer to DETO as *T'soua'e* or "aloft on a rock," gesturing toward the Kiowa sacred narrative of the Tower.

<sup>50</sup> David R.M. White, "Naming Bear Lodge: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument Wyoming" (Santa Fe, NM: Applied Cultural Dynamics, 1998), located in IRMA system, Code #2286734. Similar names for "Bear Lodge" include "Bear's Lodge," which can be found in an 1857 map, and in Mary Alice Gunderson, *Devils Tower: Stories in Stone* (Glendo, WY: High Plains Press, 1988), with terms derived in part from Dick Stone's "History of Devils Tower" (1935). Stone's informants (as transcribed) used the terms Bears Tipi and Bear Lodge. "Bear's Lodge" also can be found in law and climbing articles beginning in the 1990s.

<sup>51</sup> White, "Naming Bear Lodge," 3.

changed the place name to one “without taste, meaning or historical precedent” [sic]. The retired general wrote “in the hope that good taste and historical precedent will appeal to the people of Wyoming to give its most remarkable rock its own aboriginal name.” In 1997, ethnographers Jeffery Hanson and Sally Chirinos recommended a more ethnographically appropriate name as “Native Americans coming to the tower do not worship anything remotely resembling the Devil. The name Devils Tower is an ethnographic misnomer and a negative epithet to many American Indian people.”<sup>52</sup>

The naming controversy at DETO continues to unfold. In June 2015, Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Great Sioux Nation formally submitted a request to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to change the name of Devils Tower to “Bear Lodge.”<sup>53</sup> In 2015, the National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution in support of a name change to Bear Lodge National Monument.<sup>54</sup> Local ranchers, including the sitting state senator for the district containing the tower, have opposed a renaming since as early as the 1990s. They believe the name Devils Tower represents their own culture and is crucial to maintaining the local tourism-based economy.<sup>55</sup> As recently as 2019, Senator Mike Enzi and Representative Liz Cheney proposed a pair of bills opposing any name changes.<sup>56</sup> Widening the significance of the naming controversy, historian Wendy Rex-Atzet contends that “Devils Tower offers a prime opportunity to consider the ways that meaning, identity, and power can be deeply implicated in western landscapes.”<sup>57</sup> As legal scholars of public land management Lloyd Burton and David Ruppert write, “Names matter.” The controversy at Devils Tower reflects a larger dialogue around place-naming in the American West and the post-1970s challenges to the nineteenth and twentieth-century established order.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See also National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail, Devils Tower National Monument,” Final Draft (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, November 2020), 30-36; H.L. Scott to President of the Wyoming Historical Society, May 10, 1920, in Dick Stone, “History of Devils Tower,” 1935, p. 74-75; For full descriptions of various sacred narratives, see Hanson and Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview,” 19–21, 34;

<sup>53</sup> Laura Hancock, “Proposal Could Rename Devils Tower to Bear Lodge,” *Star-Tribune*, Casper, WY, June 20, 2015; Steve Russell, “No Sympathy for the Devil: Change the Name to Bear Lodge,” *Indian Country Today*, September 17, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> National Congress of American Indians, “In Support of the Name Bear Lodge National Monument (Currently “Devils Tower),” Resolution SD-15-001, San Diego, California, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Jared Farmer, “Devils Tower May Get a Second Name,” *High Country News*, September 2, 1996; Steven J. Gunn, “Indians Have a Right to Their Sacred Sites,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1997.

<sup>56</sup> Lorea Zabaleta, “Devils Tower Vs. Bear Lodge: How a Name Shapes the Way Westerners Approach Holy Ground,” *Mountain Journal*, June 16, 2020; Laura Zuckerman, “Native Americans Want Name Change for Wyoming Devils Tower,” *Reuters*, September 22, 2015; H.R. 564, “To designate the mountain at the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, as Devils Tower, and for other purposes,” 116<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress, Jan. 15, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/564?s=1&r=1>, accessed August 2023; See also Committee on Natural Resources, “To Designate the Mountain at the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, as Devils Tower, and for Other Purposes: Report Together with Dissenting Views (to Accompany H.R. 401) (Including Cost Estimate of the Congressional Budget Office),” House Report 115-630, U.S. Congress, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/house-report/630/1>, accessed August 2023.

<sup>57</sup> Rex-Atzet, “Narratives of Place and Power,” 46.

<sup>58</sup> Burton and Ruppert, “Rising to Heaven,” 124.

### Recent Movements

In 2016, a new wave of American Indian activism emerged after the North Dakota Access Pipeline (#NoDAPL) protests.<sup>59</sup> Although many Indigenous leaders in the Black Hills opposed climbing at the Tower, recent activist groups and scholars are challenging Park Service management of western public lands more broadly. At the same time, certain vocal groups in the Land Back movement now call for the return of Indigenous lands in the American West. “All 85 million acres of national-park sites,” argued David Treuer in a 2021 *Atlantic* article, “should be turned over to a consortium of federally recognized tribes in the United States.” This, he says, “would be a deeply meaningful form of restitution.”<sup>60</sup> More likely is an evolving relationship and co-management between the National Park Service and tribes affiliated with specific parks and monuments. Precedents include co-management of the Medicine Wheel site (now a National Historic Landmark) in Wyoming’s Bighorn National Forest. Interested parties are seeking new forms of cooperative management at Yellowstone National Park as well.<sup>61</sup> Contemporary Indigenous activism continues to flow from the revival of Native American communities throughout the nation.

### Conclusion: Nature and Culture

Devils Tower National Monument’s “Foundation Document” (2014) lists the Tower itself, a magnificent geological formation, as one of two Fundamental Resources and Values (FRV). The second fundamental resource is American Indian Spiritual Values and Opportunity for Personal Reflection.<sup>62</sup> This lays out starkly the importance of both nature and culture at Devils Tower. It presents a physical environment that draws people from different walks of life, and their experience of this American landscape icon varies significantly. Some historians see newer narratives and meanings laid atop older stories, and this fits in some ways. Yet human responses to the Tower are quite varied, and visitors bring their own perceptions to their experience of the formation. People see the Tower as a geological wonder, a mountaineering challenge, a sacred space deserving respect, an attraction to see on an American road trip, or a striking natural phenomenon inspiring a deep appreciation for our natural world. For all these visitors, the Tower formation takes the role of a shrine, a special place that stands out in the human memory and imagination.

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<sup>59</sup> See Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019) and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight For Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> David Treuer, “Return the National Parks to the Tribes,” *The Atlantic*, April 12, 2021, [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/05/return-the-national-parks-to-the-tribes/618395/](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/05/return-the-national-parks-to-the-tribes/618395/), accessed August 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Kekek J. Stark, Autumn L. Bernhardt, Monte Mills, and Jason A. Robinson, “Reindigenizing Yellowstone,” *Wyoming Law Review* 22 No. 2, Article 7 (2022): 398-488.

<sup>62</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Foundation Document,” National Park Service, September 2014.

Management of Devils Tower National Monument's cultural landscape is a good example of integrated resource stewardship.<sup>63</sup> It reminds us of the fundamental dilemma of the National Park Service in managing the various kinds of parks, monuments, battlefields, lakeshores, and other sites of national significance. How do we preserve the resource yet allow for visitors, including many different audiences, to experience the place or landscape in meaningful ways?

The Tower is ultimately significant because all the people who come to visit ascribe meaning to the landscape. Everyone draws some sort of energy from the Tower. Tourists, climbers, Native Americans, geology enthusiasts, and nature lovers all find inspiration from the Tower, despite some deep differences in perception and interpretation. The Tower remains a nexus where different cultures come together in one place to experience wonder, awe, or inspiration from the Bear Lodge and the Devils Tower.

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<sup>63</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, "Resource Stewardship Strategy Summary," National Park Service, September 2020, 53, <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/rsss-2020.pdf>.



## **Known Resource Types**

**The Tower Formation:** The Tower remains a central natural and cultural resource for Devils Tower National Monument. This geological marvel awakens visitors' curiosity as they view the wonder. For Native Americans and many others, the Tower formation speaks to spiritual experience and values. For climbers, the Tower is a place of personal challenge and a highly significant recreational destination. For all visitors, the Tower represents a shrine, open to various interpretations. In 1997, park managers and the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places recognized the Tower's spiritual significance to living tribal communities with a Determination of Eligibility as a Traditional Cultural Property.

**Infrastructure:** The vast majority of park infrastructure originated earlier in the monument's history; the time following the Antiquities Act, the CCC era, and the Mission 66 period encompassed the major efforts to provide visitor amenities and necessary improvements to trails, buildings, roads, water systems, and other utilities. Maintenance of structures, both modern and historic, continued from the 1970s to the present day.

## **Sites Associated with Native American Era of Self-Determination**

### **Sun Dance sites and campgrounds**

Located in various places within the park boundaries, Sun Dance sites are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places beginning in 2035.

**Environmental Age Resources:** With the passage of environmental laws and spread of environmental/wilderness values, resources once considered "natural" have taken on cultural meanings. The park manages these under the dual mandate of resource protection and public enjoyment.

**Prairie Dog Town:** Acquiring great popularity as an iconic creature with the viewing public, prairie dogs and this site can be considered both natural and cultural resources.

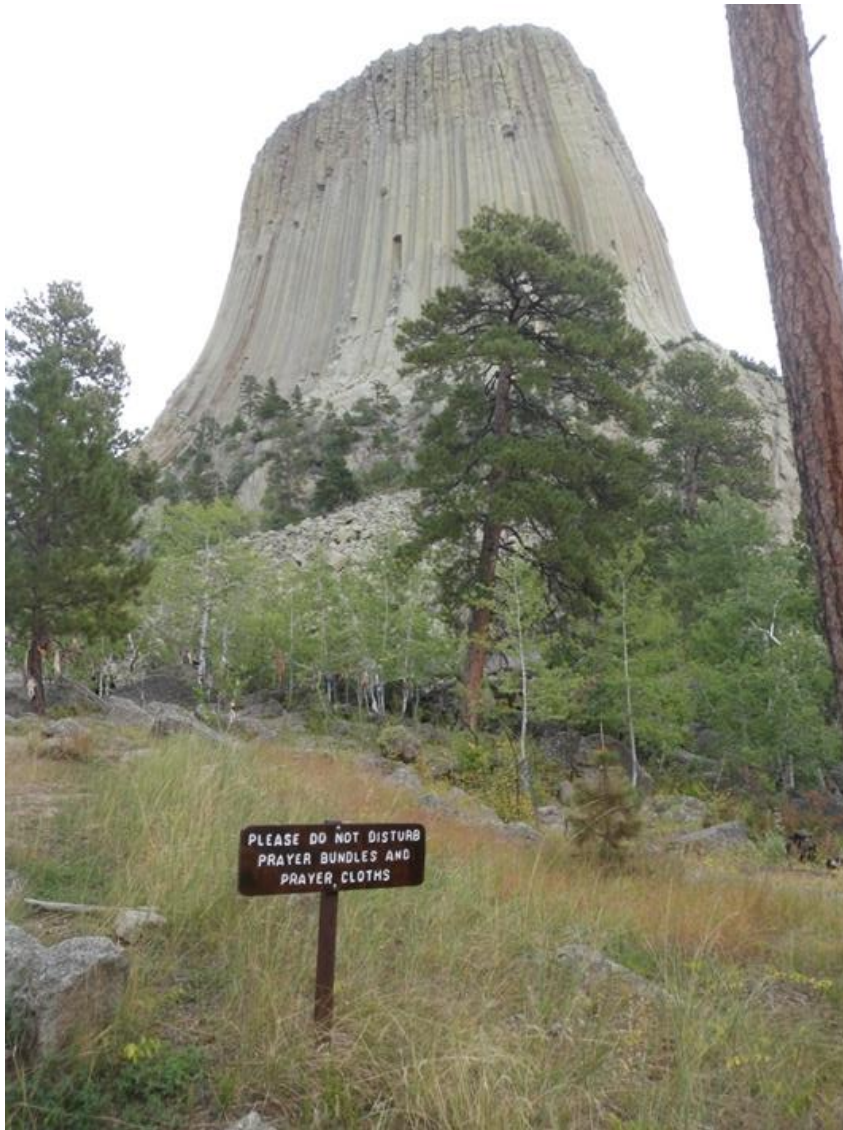
**Night skies:** A significant movement has developed celebrating the beauty of the stars and planets. Clear night skies, unaffected by the bright lights of cities, have become valuable assets for national parks including Devils Tower National Monument.

**Clean Air:** Americans value unpolluted air, especially in remote park spaces such as Devils Tower National Monument. Many rural places have undergone oil and gas development, which in some locations involves a considerable amount of air pollution. DETO still enjoys high air quality.

**Quiet Ambiance:** Peace and quiet are cultural resource Americans expect find at national parks and monuments. In Grand Teton National Park, for example, jet skis comprised noisome disturbances until regulations prohibited them. Devils Tower National Monument does have a quiet ambiance and has taken steps to preserve it despite military aircraft operating in the region.



## Graphics



*Figure 39. Tower Formation with signage on respecting ceremonial objects. (Photo by James Pritchard, September 2022)*



Figure 40. Sacred Circle of Smoke. Japanese artist Junkyu Muto created this sculpture in 2008 as the third of seven “peace sculptures” to be placed at significant places around the world. (Photo by Janet Ore, June 2020)

## CHAPTER NINE: Previous National Register Listings, Determinations, and Recommendations

### Introduction

Utilizing previous studies, this chapter lists and describes historic structures and resources found in Devils Tower National Monument. An Historical Resource Study (HRS) is distinct from an administrative history, which focuses more on administrative actions and staffing. Such a comprehensive history of the park can be found in Jeanne Rogers' *Standing Witness: Devils Tower National Monument A History* (2009). Earlier works pertaining to administrative history include John Daugherty's *Devils Tower National Monument* (1984) and Ray Mattison's *Devils Tower National Monument: A History* (1955).

Three NPS documents provide significant overviews regarding planning for natural and cultural resources at Devils Tower National Monument. The "Resource Stewardship Strategy Summary" (2020), the "Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment" (2019), and the "Foundation Document" (2014) are excellent resources.<sup>1</sup>

### Resources Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

#### Individual Aboveground Properties

##### Tower Ladder (48CK1641)

This is an intriguing listing as the National Register lists few climbing related sites. Camp 4 in Yosemite National Park is the most notable of these. Rogers and Ripley built the Tower Ladder in 1893. It consists of large and long wooden pegs or stakes hammered into one of the Tower's cracks. Thus, it is also known as the "Stake Ladder" or the "Rogers and Ripley Ladder." The climbers nailed boards spanning several of the pegs to the protruding ends, and so it took the form (more or less) of a ladder. The Park Service removed the ladder's lower portion, but in 1972, the agency rehabilitated its upper reaches visible from an informational sign below. The National Register listed the Tower Ladder on July 24, 2000, in conjunction with the Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Documentation Form.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, "Resource Stewardship Strategy Summary: Devils Tower National Monument," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (September, 2020), <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/rsss-2020.pdf>; National Park Service, "Foundation Document: Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (September 2014), <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/foundation-documents/deto-fd-2014.pdf>; National Park Service, "Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment," Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, (May 2019), <http://npshistory.com/publications/deto/crsa-2019.pdf> accessed August 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Kathy McKoy, "Tower Ladder," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, NRIS 00000855, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, June 26, 2000).

**Entrance Road** (48CK1645).

Included with the Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Documentation Form, in July 2000, the National Register of Historic Places listed the Entrance Road for its significant under Criterion A, an association with events making a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and under Criterion C, a property that has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Its period of significance is 1934-1950. This narrow and winding road retains a high degree of integrity.<sup>3</sup> The documentation form describes historic corrugated iron culverts (some with masonry headwalls at inlets) and several masonry retaining walls related to the culverts.

**Entrance Station** (48CK1642).

The National Register recognized this small but fine example of the National Park Rustic Style on July 24, 2000. It is significant under Criterion A, an association with events making a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and under Criterion C, a property that has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission (2000) established this designation.<sup>4</sup>

**Inyan Kara Mountain.** Although located to the southeast of the Monument closer to the Black Hills, Inyan Kara Mountain appears on the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office website and catalog as associated with Devils Tower National Monument. In April 1973, the National Register added Inyan Kara Mountain as a district significant for its prehistoric and historic Aboriginal, agriculture, communications, military, and religious associations. The Lakota nation considered it sacred, and it served as a landmark for people traveling in the Black Hills region.

**Historic Districts**

Titled “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission,” the **Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF)** (2000) prepared by NPS historian Kathy McKoy determined several resources as eligible for the National Register. The form was signed by a Federal Historic Preservation Office on June 26, 2000, by the State Historic Preservation Officer on June 12, 2000, and by the Keeper on July 24, 2000.

This documentation form discussed four contexts for Devils Tower: 1) Recreation and Tourism, 1880s-1950; 2) Administration and Development, 1906-1950; 3) National Park Service Rustic Architecture and Public Works Construction, 1933-1940; and 4) the Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service 1916-1942. This last context referenced Linda

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<sup>3</sup> Kathy McKoy, “Entrance Road,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, NRIS 00000854, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, April 15, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Kathy McKoy, “Entrance Station,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, NRIS 00000853, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, April 15, 2000).

McClelland's MPDF "Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks" (Oct. 4, 1995), which in turn referenced the context titled "The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service 1916-1942." Other nominations for the National Register used the contexts outlined in the 2000 Multiple Property designation.

Resources described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form as associated with NPS Administrative Development include buildings within the Old Headquarters Area Historic District and the Entrance Station. Structures listed included water and sewer systems and Springs No. 1, 2, and 3. Monument road systems are listed as a second type of feature, including the unpaved "truck trails" used for administrative access and firefighting. These resources are significant under Criterion A (NPS activities in the historical period) and Criterion C (NPS Rustic style and planned landscapes). Resources listed as associated with Early Recreation include the tower ladder and historic trails, which could be listed under Criterion A and/or C.

This documentation also described the tower formation as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) (see below).

**Old Headquarters Area Historical District** (48CK1499). The National Register listed this district on July 24, 2000, as part of the Multiple Property Documentation Form (2000). The contributing structures include the Old Administration Building (HS-3, Visitor Center, 1935, 48CK1499, NR00000852), the Custodian's Residence (HS-1, 1931, 48CK1499, NR00000852), and the Fire Hose Shed (HS-13, 1937, 48CK1499, NR00000852). The district is significant under Criterion A, resources associated with broad trends in U.S. history, and Criterion C, properties that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. In this case, we see fine examples of the NPS Rustic style of architecture. Two related Multiple Property Submissions were cited: the Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission (July 24, 2000), and the Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks Multiple Property listing (October 4, 1995).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kathy McKoy, "Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, June 26, 2000); Kathy McKoy, "Old Headquarters Area Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, (April 20, 2000); See also: Architecture 2000 P.C., "Historic Structure Report and Historic Structure Assessment, Devils Tower National Monument, Devils Tower Wyoming" (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Intermountain Support Office, 2004), Link at <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2267032>, accessed August, 2023. See also: David J. Richardson (RMC Consultants), "Intermountain Region New Deal Resources/ Research Findings for Devils Tower National Monument," May 5, 2008.



## Resources Previously Evaluated as Eligible for Listing in the National Register

### Traditional Cultural Property (TCP)

In their 1997 *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment*, Hanson and Chirinos recommended nominating the tower landform to the National Register of Historic Places “as a sacred site and ethnographic resource for Native Americans.”

The Keeper of the National Register signed a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) Notification on February 6, 1997. The Secretary of the Interior determined “the prominent butte” Devils Tower (“also called ‘Bear’s Tipi’ and ‘Bear’s Lodge’”) eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places “as a traditional cultural property for its association with the traditional beliefs of several Native American groups about their origins, cultural history, and understanding of the world.” The DOE indicates (with a check box) that the State Historic Preservation Officer considered the Tower eligible. The SHPO determined Devils Tower significant under Criterion A for its association with “the ideology, encoded beliefs, rituals, and/or sacred narratives of several Native American tribes, including the Lakota, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Eastern Shoshone.” The tower was also significant under Criterion B for its association with “gods and demigods who figure importantly in tribal traditions and are central to tribal creation narratives.” While the Loop Trail encircling the Tower’s base “marks the extent of the current determination of eligibility, additional sites . . . likely exist outside this boundary and should be the subject of further ethnographic study and evaluation . . . .”<sup>6</sup>

The 2019 Cultural Resources Stewardship Assessment (CRSA) for Devils Tower NM states that an updated Determination of Eligibility is not needed and that the Tower is actively managed as a TCP. Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton’s Archaeological Survey in 2000 listed a cave and an eagle trap with a “TCP” designation. Significantly, in the 2000 Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), NPS historian Kathy McKoy identified the Tower as a Traditional Cultural Property, delineating the area included as bounded by the Tower Tail. The Keeper of the National Register approved the Multiple Property Documentation Form (Name of listing: “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission”) on July 24, 2000.<sup>7</sup>

The 2000 MPDF states (repeating language from the 1997 DOE), “As a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), the tower is significant under criterion A for its association with the ideology, encoded beliefs, rituals, and/or sacred narratives of “several Native American tribes.”

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<sup>6</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower, Determination of Eligibility Notification, Feb. 6, 1997. Signed by the Keeper of the National Register on Feb. 6, 1997. DETO Superintendent Deborah O. Liggett signed this document on Dec. 2, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Devils Tower National Monument, “Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment,” 20-21; Jeffery R. Hanson and Sally Chirinos, “Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming,” Cultural Resources Selections, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, NPS D-36, No. 9 (1997), xiii, 33; Kathy McKoy, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Listing,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, June, 2000).

The tower is also significant under criterion B for “its association with gods and demigods who figure importantly in tribal traditions and are central to tribal creation narratives.”<sup>8</sup>

**Recommendation:** We suggest the National Park Service continue to manage Devils Tower with cultural aspects in mind.

### Individual Aboveground Properties

**Tower Trail.** Circumnavigating the Tower, this trail is a 1.3-mile paved pathway that begins and ends near the Visitor Center. A Draft Cultural Landscape Inventory (2020) for the Tower Trail determined that the Tower Trail is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The trail is considered significant under Criterion A (an association with broad movements in history) given its association with the CCC and the Mission 66 periods in the areas of community planning and development and entertainment/recreation. Its significance is associated with the CCC era of development at Devils Tower when New Deal labor built a trail around the Tower to provide visitor access. The period of significance is 1933-1966. The Tower Trail retains integrity of location, setting, and association for its design and construction during the CCC period (1933-1941). The Tower Trail also is significant for the Mission 66 era (1956-1966), and it retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the trail improvements and small realignments planned, designed, and built during Mission 66. The Tower Trail has also been identified as NPS foot trail #1 and Smithsonian #48CK1643. The signage on the Tower Trail (as of 2022) was not part of Mission 66 improvements and resurfacing of the trail.<sup>9</sup>

**Recommendation:** Devils Tower National Monument should pursue securing a letter of concurrence from the Wyoming SHPO and thus finalize the Cultural Landscape Inventory.

### Historic Districts

Written by architectural historian Jayne Aaron, a recent (January 2021) “Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument” recommended two Mission 66 historical districts. The first would encompass the **Administration & Residential Area**, and the second would be a **Campground & Day-Use Areas Historic District**. This study utilizes a context written in 2015 by Ethan Carr et al., in a

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<sup>8</sup> McKoy, “Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: National Park Service, July 24, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail, Devils Tower National Monument,” Final Draft (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, November 2020). Kathy McKoy, “Tower Trail, South Side Trail,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, January 18, 1996); See also Jayne Aaron, “Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings and Structures at Devils Tower National Monument,” Draft (January 2021), U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming.

Multiple Property Listing titled “National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources.”<sup>10</sup> A letter (June 2022) from the State Historic Preservation Office concurred that the two Mission 66 districts were eligible for listing on the National <sup>11</sup>

The Mission 66 buildings do not qualify for listing on the National Register as individual structures. However, when considered together as a cohesive body of work (as a district), they possess emergent properties augmenting their historical significance. The comprehensive planning that went into Mission 66 development at Devils Tower National Monument replicated agency policy across NPS units nationwide.

The Determination of Eligibility finds both the Devils Tower Campground and Day-Use Area and the Mission 66 Administration and Residential Area eligible for listing as a Cultural Landscape according to Criteria A and C in areas of conservation, planning and development, and entertainment and recreation. Criterion A specifies significant contributions to broad patterns of history. The district was associated with Mission 66 and its development of the National Park System, which contributed to the historical development of these protected landscapes. This district is considered eligible under Criterion C as the structures embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The period of significance for Mission 66 buildings and structures at Devils Tower National Monument began in 1955 when the NPS added acreage by the Belle Fourche River to the Monument and extends to 1966, the end of the Mission 66 program. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office concurred that these properties are eligible for the National Register on June 21, 2022.

**Recommendation:** Devils Tower National Monument should advance a nomination to the National Register for the Mission 66 properties.

### Archeological Districts

In the late 1990s, the Devils Tower Archeological Survey completed intensive surveys of resources and issued a report in 2000.<sup>12</sup> In 2001, project archeologist Nancy Hodgson wrote two NRHP registration forms, both of which remained in draft form and unsigned. These two forms documented the qualifications for two recommended archeological districts.

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<sup>10</sup> Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retondo, Len Warner, Rodd L. Wheaton, John D. Feinberg, and Carly M. Piccarello, “National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Santa Fe, NM: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Intermountain Regional Office, August 2015), online at <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/662580>, accessed Nov. 16, 2022; Aaron, “Determination of Eligibility of Mission 66 Buildings at DETO.”

<sup>11</sup> Bethany Kelly (SHPO) to Russ Cash (Acting Superintendent, DETO), June 21, 2022, “RE: National Register Nomination for Two Historic Districts at Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County (DBPR WY 2022 495).”

<sup>12</sup> Brian L. Molyneaux, Nancy J. Hodgson, and Rachel M. Hinton, “The Archeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming 1997-1998” (Archaeology Laboratory, University of South Dakota, 2000).



**Homestead and Early Tourism Historical Archaeological District.** The Archaeological Survey provided details on eight contributing sites along the old road up the east side of a ravine to the base of the Tower (four of them judged eligible for the National Register). Project archeologist Nancy Hodgson found a historic road section (48CK1716) a homestead (the Graham cabin site, 48CK84), historic graffiti (48CK 1773), and the site of the former Thorne's Cabins/Thurman Café and Motel (48CK1714) to be likely eligible for listing on the National Historic Register. The historic road section was thought eligible under Criterion A at the local level of significance, associated with the context of Entertainment/Recreation, especially in terms of transportation development, Monument history, and tourism. The Graham cabin site was thought to be potentially eligible under Criteria A (associated with events contributing to broad patterns of our history), and D (property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history), at the local level of significance, in the context of early homesteading and the efforts to keep the area public.. At the time of the survey, part of the original structure still existed, comprising the only visible remains of the homesteading period before the monument was established. Minimal archival records were enhanced by the artifacts found on the site. The historic graffiti site (48CK 1773) was thought to be eligible under Criterion A and B at the local level of significance in the context of Entertainment/Recreation, as it featured dated inscriptions pertaining to the early history of the monument and the first recorded climb of the tower. The Survey recommended the site of Thorne's Cabins and later Thurman Café and Motel as eligible under Criterion A at the local level of significance under the context of Entertainment/Recreation.

The period of significance for the district was the 1890s-1960s with significant dates of 1890-93 and 1930-1965. Non-contributing sites for this district included one historic road section, a degraded section of trail with stairs, and six prehistoric lithic scatters predating the historic period.

**Devils Tower High Meadows Prehistoric Archaeological District.** In January 2001, archeologist Nancy Hodgson (for the University of South Dakota Archaeology Laboratory) drafted a 49-page National Register Registration Form proposing a Devils Tower High Meadows Prehistoric Archaeological District. Hodgson identified fourteen contributing sites where Criterion D applies-- properties that have yielded, or are likely to yield, important prehistorical information. Areas of significance include Archeology/Prehistoric, Industry, Economics, and Religion. A span of considerable years forms the period of significance for these sites-- 9500-3000 B.C. and 1000 BC to AD 1500. Archeologists found forty-six projectile points, obsidian blades, knives, drills, biface tools, scrapers and thousands of flakes. The registration form lists fourteen Smithsonian site numbers of interest.

## Previous National Register Listings

Currently, the Wyoming State Historical Preservation Office has not concurred with either of these proposed districts, and NPS officials have not signed the registration forms, and so these remain in draft form .<sup>13</sup>

**Recommendation:** Devils Tower National Monument might revisit these suggested archeological districts.

## Resources Previously Determined or Evaluated as Ineligible for Listing in the National Register

### Individual Aboveground Properties

#### Tower Trail

In 1996, Kathy McKoy judged the **Tower Trail** and the **South Side Trail** ineligible for listing, due to a perceived loss of integrity (Kathy McKoy, NR Registration Form, 1996). The historical South Side Trail extended from the Visitors Center southward and down to the Valley View Trail (running on the southeast side of the prairie dog town, north eastward towards the Red Beds Trail near the bridge). Today, the South Side Trail refers to a spur trail traveling from the Campground area north to intersect with the Red Beds Trail.

In 2020, an NPS Cultural Landscape Inventory revisited the Tower Trail and determined it to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (see above).<sup>14</sup>

#### Red Beds Trail.

The Red Beds Trail is a 2.8-mile route that circumnavigates the Tower formation, ambling along outside of the Tower Trail. It departs from the Visitors Center on the west side of the Tower, winds northeast before dropping down and southward passing the beautiful red sedimentary rocks of the Spearfish Formation, then proceeds along cliffs on the south side of the Tower as it returns towards the Visitor Center. The idea of a nature trail arose in the 1930s, and planners approved it for the CCC program. But the camp closed before construction could begin. Intended to open visitors' eyes to interesting natural features other than the Tower, the trail received new attention, and crews completed the project by June.<sup>15</sup>

In 1996, administrators evaluated the Red Beds Trail and determined it ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The 2020 final version of a Cultural Landscape Inventory

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<sup>13</sup> Nancy Hodgson, University of South Dakota Archaeology Laboratory, "Devils Tower High Meadows Prehistoric Archaeological District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Draft, January 18, 2001; Nancy Hodgson, University of South Dakota Archaeology Laboratory, "Devils Tower Homestead & Early Tourism Historical Archaeological District," National Register of Historic Places/ Registration Form, Draft, March 30, 2001. Located at Devils Tower National Monument Headquarters office.

<sup>14</sup> National Park Service, "Cultural Landscape Inventory, Tower Trail."

<sup>15</sup> Jeanne Rogers, *Standing Witness*, 110-11.

for the Tower Trail reassessed the Red Beds Trail with the same conclusion (see above). The Red Beds Trail was not the result of concerted planning, construction, and design during either the early days of the NPS or the CCC era, nor was it a product of Mission 66 redevelopment.

### **Tetrahedrons.**

In June 1993 and March 1995, historian Kathy McKoy studied historic resources in the Monument for a Multiple Property Documentation Form. As part of that process, a 1995 Historic Resource Survey found the tetrahedrons in the Belle Fourche River area (constructed in the 1930s) ineligible for the National Historic Register. Wegman-French and Brower evaluated the tetrahedrons, concluding that although in good condition, the tetrahedrons were not eligible for listing under Criteria A, B, C, or D. They based their conclusion on two contexts-- the NPS resource management vs. tourism context and the engineering context. Significant dates are the first tetrahedrons' construction date of 1930, to 1933 when the NPS placed additional tetrahedrons.<sup>16</sup>

**Recommendation:** We suggest that the tetrahedrons be reconsidered for eligibility for nomination to the National Register as part of planning, design program and construction during the early days of the National Monument. The tetrahedrons might have only local significance.

### **Archeological Sites**

Archeologists have judged many lithic scatters at Devils Tower National Monument ineligible for listing on the National Register. They used the intensity of work thought to be evidenced at the site as a determining factor. Archeologists are less likely to see smaller and less intensive sites as suitable for the National Register.

### **Old Headquarters Area**

The Multiple Property Determination Form (2000) found several features in the Old Headquarters Area ineligible: the Old Campground, the Old Picnic Area, the Visitor Center parking lot, and all the sewer and water systems.

Due to extensive changes to the landscaping around the Visitor Center parking lot, including the old flagstones and the size of the parking lot's center island, the area's designed landscape had lost much integrity (of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association) and retained insufficient historic character to qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. The area was affected when the park moved the headquarters area during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Mission 66).

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<sup>16</sup> Lysa Wegman-French and Ben Brower, "Historic Resource Survey: Belle Fourche River Tetrahedrons," Denver, CO: National Park Service, Rocky Mountain System Support Office, September 29, 1995. Archaeological site numbers 48CK1638 and 48CK1639.

**Recommendation:** Our opinion is that these elements do not need to be reevaluated because of a significant loss of integrity due to modern construction (which was completed with thoughtful attention to detail).

## Resources for Additional Evaluation or Consideration

**Cultural Landscapes.** The Cultural Resources Stewardship Assessment of 2019 tentatively identified four cultural landscapes at Devils Tower. These include the ethnographic landscape, the Tower and Red Beds Trails, the CCC Era, and Mission 66 Administrative Area and Campground.<sup>17</sup> A (Draft) Cultural Landscape Inventory has recently been completed for the Tower and Red Bed Trails.

**Recommendation:** The Ethnographic Landscape shows good potential for further evaluation.

**Sun Dance Grounds.** Hanson & Chirinos (1997) suggested nominating the Sun Dance grounds to the National Register of Historic Places. Such action would be consistent with policies on access and protection of ethnographic resources (NPS-28, 1985: 2,4). These sites will gain increased significance as Devils Tower represents the Park Service's struggle to reconcile Native American sovereignty with recreational realities.

**Recommendation:** The NPS might undertake writing a specialized historic context for the post-1970s era of cultural conflict in Devils Tower to provide the basis for identifying and listing sites associated with the Sun Dance. If interpretation focused more closely on the spiritual and community values associated with the sites, perhaps an amendment to the TCP DOE could include them.

**Naming the Tower Formation.** Hanson and Chirinos (1997) advocated renaming Devils Tower as Native Americans visiting the Tower "do not worship anything remotely resembling the Devil." The name is an "ethnographic misnomer and a negative epithet" to many.<sup>18</sup> In 2015, Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Great Sioux Nation made a formal request to the U.S. Board of Geographic Names to change the Tower's name to Bear Lodge. Some locals and Wyoming legislators remain resistant to changing the Tower's name.

**Recommendation:** Devils Tower National Monument can continue to interpret the long history of Native American cultural affiliation with the Tower and the traditional name Bear Lodge.

**Climbing Routes.** A climbing site of international reputation, Devils Tower features over 200 climbing routes. Though the majority originated in the post 1970s era, numerous historic

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<sup>17</sup> National Park Service, Devils Tower National Monument, "Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment," 22.

<sup>18</sup> Hanson and Chirinos, "Ethnographic Overview," 34.

routes exist on the Tower. Some have national fame such as the Durrance Route featured in the book *Fifty Classic Climbs*. As climbing gains greatly expanded popularity, it has become an important recreation in the national parks.

**Recommendation:** In light of the monolith’s status in climbing culture and its centrality in the disputes between climbers and American Indian tribes, this report recommends a study to determine the eligibility of climbing routes. As of this writing, the National Register lists no climbing routes, so such a study would break new ground for the National Register. Researchers could use the nominations of historic trails in national parks as guides for evaluating climbing routes on Devils Tower.

**Trails.** The 2019 Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment (CRSA) noted that the Red Beds Trail (built in the 1930s), the Tower Trail (48CK1643), and the South Side Trail (48CK1499) lacked current DOEs and had no evaluation under the Mission 66 context. Presented in 2020, a (Draft) Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) reaffirms that the Red Beds Trail is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Recommendation:** DETO should pursue securing a letter of concurrence from the Wyoming SHPO for the Tower Trail and finalize the Tower Trail’s Cultural Landscape Inventory. (See above).

**Mission 66 structures.** The recent Determination of Eligibility proposes two historic districts of Mission 66 era structures for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. As Mission 66 structures are now over 50 years old, they take their own place in the history of Devils Tower NM. The 2019 Cultural Resource Stewardship Assessment recommends that the Mission 66 Administrative Area and Campground have a high priority for cultural landscape management.<sup>19</sup>

**Recommendation:** Monument staff should pursue nomination of Mission 66 resources for the National Register of Historic Places.

### Archeological Sites

The Park Service has carried out several surveys which have helped illuminate the human history of the region. Found in several dispersed areas, lithic artifacts lay along meadow areas to the south and to the northeast of the Tower, and many lithic sites exist close to the Tower itself. With erosion bringing some of the artifacts to the surface, additional artifacts may come to light over time, and thus another survey at some point may be productive.

In 1997 and 1998, Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton (with the University of South Dakota’s Archaeology Laboratory) carried out field work and in 2000 reported with “The

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<sup>19</sup> As of 2019, Mission 66 buildings and structures had not been evaluated for possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (see CRSA, 2019, p. 22, 57). This was addressed in 2021, with the “Determination of Eligibility for Mission 66 Buildings and Structures in Devils Tower National Monument”

## Previous National Register Listings

Archaeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming, 1997-1998.” Particularly interesting finds included projectile points or tools associated with many lithic flakes (debitage), making up a prehistoric workshop of sorts. This type of assemblage is more likely eligible for listing on the National Register than a site with only a few lithic flakes.

The ARCHLAB’s work (Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, 2000) evaluated sixty sites, finding nineteen sites to be NRHP eligible and forty-two sites not eligible. The work revealed a number of small occupations across slopes and many convenient locations for hunting the nearby Belle Fourche River valley. In spring 1998, a controlled burn and heavy rains and further reconnaissance revealed additional sites to the archeologists, including a major Paleoindian find on the Tower flank and two rock painting sites. Maps of these lithic sites for managers’ use can be found in Molyneaux, Hodgson and Hinton (2000).

Scholars compiled this research (a Class III heritage resource inventory) “to locate, record, and evaluate, for NRHP consideration of Historic Places (NRHP), all heritage resources within the inventory areas in compliance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and to provide data for National Park Service (NPS management planning purposes” in a 355-page report. It was not a formal nomination to the National Historic Register.<sup>20</sup>

**Recommendation:** The nineteen sites judged to be eligible for the NRHP should be revisited for potential listing in the NRHP. They include remarkable sites such as where archeologists collected a 10,000 year old lithic point, a prehistoric rock painting, and a sandstone monolith bearing historical graffiti from July 4, 1893, the date of the Tower’s first recorded ascent. The forty-two sites determined ineligible do not need to be revisited at the current time.

## Other Considerations

### Historical Documentation.

**Recommendation:** Devils Tower personnel should consider uploading all appropriate Monument cultural and historical reports to the IRMA or ETIC systems.

### Paleontological Resources

In a 2019 inventory of paleontological resources, Tweet and Santucci mention that Devils Tower National Monument used to have site monitoring programs and suggest that these surveys resume. Fossils near the road are subject to loss through unauthorized “souvenir” fossil collection or unintentional damage. These fossil resources have significance beyond

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<sup>20</sup> Molyneaux, Hodgson, and Hinton, “Archaeological Survey and National Register Evaluation of Devils Tower.”

paleontology as they also are a part of the cultural landscape for Native Americans. Archeological excavations may not be supported in consultations with Native Americans, and so fossils may need to be managed in situ or as float. Interestingly, after fossils started to disappear from a ridge after a 1994-96 survey, park staff stopped sharing the location of the fossiliferous ridge.<sup>21</sup>

### **Intangibles**

**The ambiance of Devils Tower** is affected and shaped by natural features but may be considered an important cultural resource.

**Prairie Dog Colony.** The physical area is well delineated and has remained a vibrant home of prairie dogs throughout the years that Devils Tower has existed as a National Monument. It is an iconic bit of nature amid the surrounding miles of agricultural development and emphasis on ranching. Though categorically a natural site, the Prairie Dog Colony is a major interpretive feature of the Monument and thus has taken on cultural significance.

**Night Skies.** Americans and the NPS now consider access to dark and starry skies a prized cultural value. Additionally, the stars tell Native American origin stories for the Tower, including the account of girls escaping a bear and being lifted up to form a well-known constellation. Thus, the night skies seem to comprise a particularly significant asset for Devils Tower. The Park Service recognizes and promotes the Monument as a place to witness the starry heavens without major light pollution that obscures urban views. Monument policies should protect this cultural asset by addressing lighting in and near the Tower.

**Soundscapes:** In the noisy industrial world, places of peace and quiet have become special cultural assets. Since the 1970s, the National Park Service has become aware of national park and monument soundscapes, conducting studies in multiple locations. For visitors and especially during Native American ceremonial times, the Monument should protect the quiet of the Tower.

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<sup>21</sup> Justin S. Tweet and Vincent L. Santucci, *Devils Tower National Monument Paleontological Resources Inventory (Non-Sensitive Version)*, Natural Resource Report NPS/DETO/NRR—2019/1969, National Park Service, Fort Collins Colorado, xi, 43, 58, 63.

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