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Review of *A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880-1941* by Suzanne Barta Julin

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A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880–1941. By Suzanne Barta Julin. Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2009. xi + 221 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.95.

“Tourists,” said Doane Robinson, the father of Mount Rushmore, “soon get fed up on scenery.”

As car-based tourism exploded after World War I, South Dakotans believed the Black Hills needed not just pretty pines and streams, but a new layer of roadside attractions to bring in more tourists and keep them spending longer. This book is about the making of that tourist landscape—not so much the landscape itself, or the tourists looking at it, but the makers and movers behind the scenes who drove the transformation.

This is, in other words, a book about economic planning. It is a left-wing book in the sense that its heroes are Progressives holding office in the era from Theodore to Franklin Roosevelt, particularly South Dakota's own Peter Norbeck. The real push, Suzanne Barta Julin argues, came at the state level, not the local or federal, and it came from the government: "The success of tourism as a public enterprise allowed private tourism to flourish."

It is a right-wing book in the sense that the author is generally accepting of the resulting commercialization of the Black Hills' natural and cultural heritage. To Julin these tradeoffs are definitely not the "Devil's Bargains" described by Hal Rothman in the 2000 book by that name. She often frames tourist development as a need, not just a desire, and characterizes the billboards, motels, shipped-in wildlife and pseudorustic shops as "symbols . . . as valid as those of any other industry." I was surprised to read that "Deadwood citizens had no need to develop a mythic past," especially when reading about the man Deadwood selected to impersonate the fictional Deadwood Dick. In the concluding chapter, in a shifted tone, Julin allows that Black Hills tourism appealed to "people who passed through," with tourists sometimes "gullible" and billboards sometimes "garish." But her bottom line is agnostic: "This region, one might speculate, has become a large theme park, with tourism as the theme."

There is much to learn, admire, and even envy here: clear summaries, apt quotations, amusing anecdotes, and a depth of research that extends beyond Rushmore's well-worn ground to lesser-known attractions such as Hisega and the Hidden City. And hats off to the SDSHS Press for a great-looking design with photos large enough to read, rather than the usual shrunken heads within broad margins. Its books will be enjoyed and well thumbed for many years.

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