The Pull of the Historic Place

There is in most of us an inherent combination of curiosity and reverence that makes us regard the scenes of historic achievement, even if the event was of no supreme consequence, with something of awe and satisfaction. It is a wise Providence that has thus equipped us, for out of it comes that love of the soil which is the foundation of good citizenship. Indeed the man who does not have some of this reverence for the past and the spots in our land where notable events have transpired, is easily diverted from patriotic endeavor into paths not usually trod by those whose names are written upon the tablets of the hearts of the people.

Almost every letter coming to our department making inquiry about tourist routes asks where our great historic events occurred. Mr. Keyes tells me that a very large percentage of the letters received at headquarters of the Black and Yellow trail make similar inquiries. Most of the great national trails have capitalized this human urge and make the utmost of their stocks of historic materials.

Scarcely a community but has something of unusual note, that will loom large in the imagination of a prospective tourist, and it is pleasing to note how generally tourists sieze upon these things and even go out of their way to see them. They go on the principle that while they are upon the road they may as well see all the country has to offer. Almost every party has its diarist and full notes are made upon everything of interest. It has been one of my pastimes, during the past two seasons to visit the tourist camp each evening, and it is rare to find a party without a journalist and a photographer.

Therefore from the sheer viewpoint of desirable and permanent publicity it is worth while for each town to make much of its historic and scenic points. Tourists have neither time nor inclination to make extensive investigation. They want the table spread before them and the exhibits labeled. It is good business to properly mark places in which the community take pride.

In any event it is not very expensive to erect good markers and it is also good business to make the marker substantial and dignified. The marker near Pierre at the center of the State and approximate

center of the continent, is of first class concrete, upon a plinth nine feet square and eighteen inches thick, a base member six feet square and three feet high and upon these a shaft nineteen feet high, making the height over all twenty-three and one-half feet. Upon the side of the shaft is an inscribed bronze tablet two feet square. A steel fence surrounds the monument. This marker cost $392.00 and was chiefly a private enterprise. The markers erected by the D. A. R. at Snake Butte and by the Pierre Kiwanis Club at Medicine Knoll, are standard bronze tablets nine by twelve inches attached to massive boulders and cost in place about fifty dollars each. If a community has a place worth marking, and, as stated, most communities have something of the sort, it is an easy matter for some local organization to produce the money for a suitable marker.

Pursuant to the legislative resolution it is planned to dedicate the Pierre and Fort Pierre bridge, soon to be built across the Missouri, to the memory of Dr. Stephen Return Riggs who preached the first Christian sermon in South Dakota, at Fort Pierre in September 1840.

Very many events of great note occurred at Fort Pierre and the citizens are moving for a monument with an entablature inscribed with a number of these incidents. A bill is pending in congress for the erection of a national memorial upon Verendrye Hill at Fort Pierre to memorialize the French occupation of the northwest made at that point in 1743. Secretary Henry of the State Highway Commission is moving for a tablet to be placed upon the Black and Yellow trail, upon the bridge crossing Willow Creek, which is at the birthplace of Sitting Bull. Altogether we shall soon have many of the historic points in the central part of the state suitably and permanently marked. The most of these lie directly upon the trail.

Every mile of the Black Hills trail from the Missouri River had its tragedy. A lot of important events occurred at Rapid City and many highly dramatic ones in the camps of the Northern Hills which should be marked. The Black and Yellow does not run through the state park but I have in mind a rather unique monument for that section. Some of the needles, or pinnacles near Harney Peak could readily be cut into massive statues. It would add a lot to the pull of that famous section if one or more of these great monoliths should be converted into a memorial to some notable character of the State.