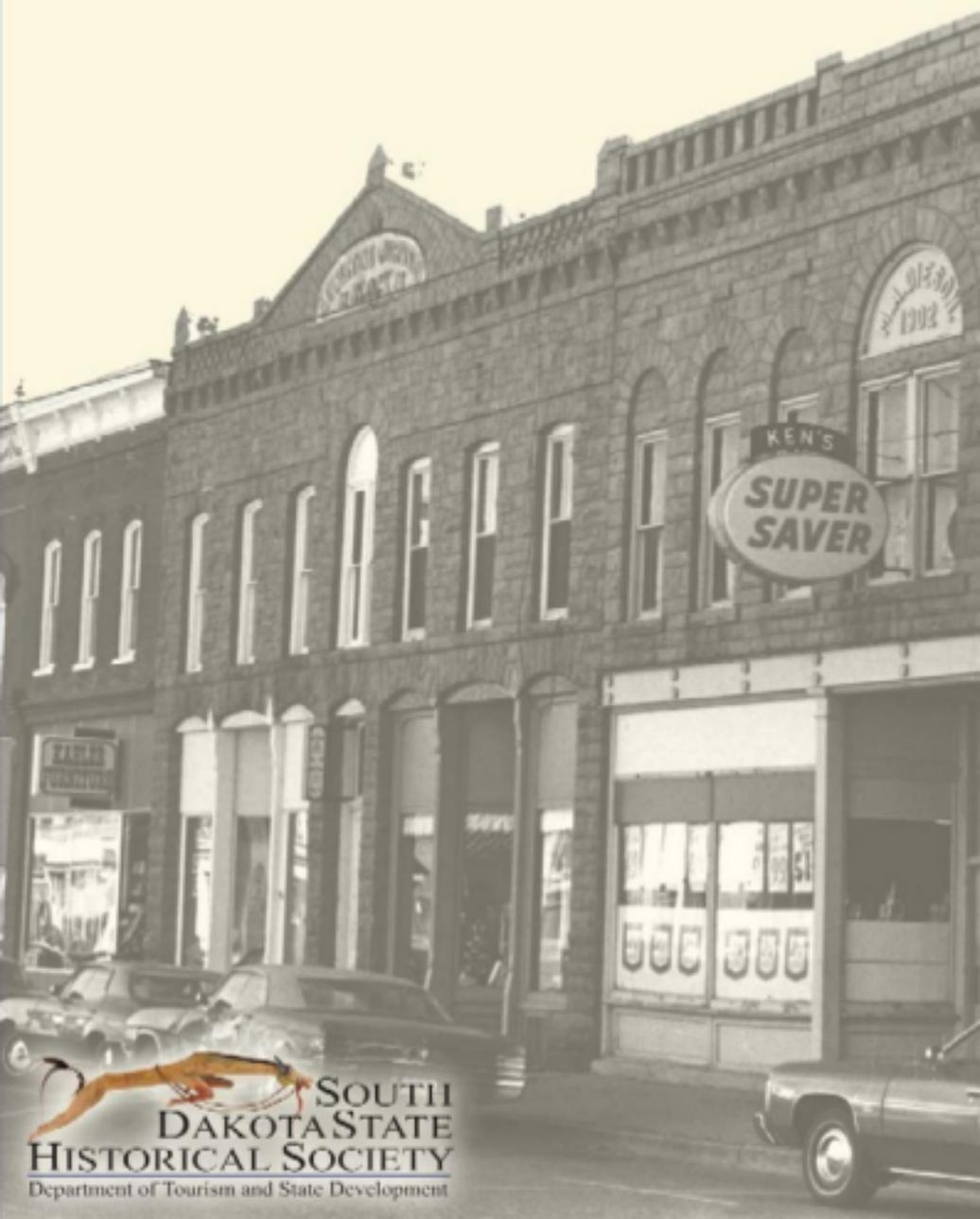


# *Properties of History*

*-Exploring South Dakota's Historic Places*



# What is Historic Preservation?

**H**istoric sites and structures provide important information about people and events. Physical places provide a link to the past that can never be replaced. Historic preservation works to save buildings, sites, structures, and objects so these vital links will not be lost. South Dakota's prehistoric and historic places are saved for different reasons. These include:



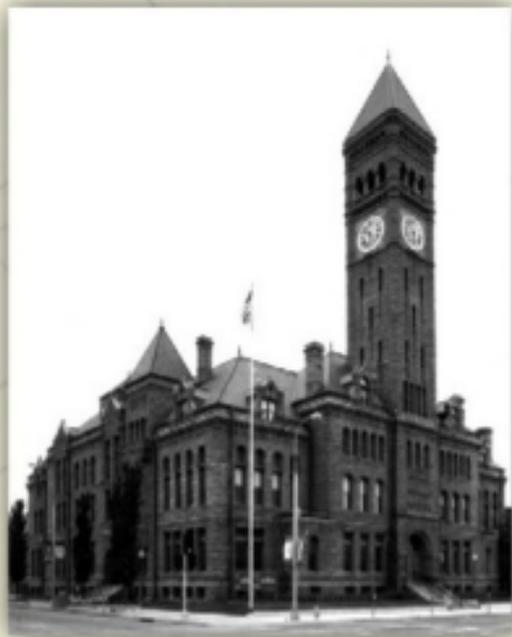
The Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village was a very early community in South Dakota. It was built 1,000 years ago out of wood and earth. Today the village is a rich archaeological site (upper right). Protected from the elements by a dome (Thomsen Center Archeodome shown above), archaeologists piece together a history of these early people. The site's museum features a model of what the village might have looked like in its prime.

## Identity and Education:

*Historic places tell us where, how, and why people lived. They help define who we are as a community. Knowledge of these places provides insight for the future.*

## Civic pride and quality of life:

*Prehistoric and historic places serve as community landmarks and sources of pride. Modern buildings often lack the variety of materials and the details that went into older structures. Many people enjoy learning, working, and living in historic buildings.*



Built in 1860, the Old County Courthouse is the largest standing quartzite building in Sioux Falls. Quarried locally, Sioux quartzite was used to build many public buildings in the city. Today, the courthouse serves as the Old Courthouse Museum.

# What is Historic Preservation?

## Recycling:

*Historic preservation recycles old places. Tearing down an old building wastes the materials and energy that went into constructing the building in the first place. Those resources are saved through preservation.*



*Yankton had South Dakota's first high school. Built in 1916, the building reflected the nationwide effort to standardize school design. The building's U-shape, basement cafeteria, and third-floor library are typical design elements of the time. Today, the building retains its original school character while serving as a senior housing project.*

## Aesthetics and Economics:

*Well-preserved historic places enhance a community's appearance. In turn, attractive communities draw and sustain new businesses and residents. Tourism increases in such places as well. Saving old places helps South Dakota towns survive and prosper.*



*Constructed in 1886, the Prairie Edge building anchors the Rapid City Commercial Historic District. Modified extensively in the 1930's to a commercial store front, the building was returned to its original look in the 1990's. The project served as a catalyst for other restoration work in the District, which today is a thriving commercial center.*

*This exhibition invites you to explore and understand historic preservation in South Dakota. We hope this exhibit inspires you to visit historic properties in your neighborhood, community, and state.*

# Bear Butte, Sturgis

**L**ocated in the northern Black Hills, Bear Butte is significant as a religious and ceremonial site. To the Dakota, it is known as Mata Paha, to the Cheyenne as Nowawaste. Visits by notable Native American leaders such as Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, and Sitting Bull are recorded as part of Bear Butte's history.



*“The Lakota originated in the Black Hills and the sacred instructions given to us by the Creator were given to us on Bear Butte. This makes Bear Butte the central and most sacred mountain to the Lakota people.”*

*-Larry Red Shirt*

Bear Butte is one of 15 National Historic Landmarks in South Dakota. In support of monument status, Thomas E. Odell stated,

*“Let Congress declare Bear Butte a national monument... By doing so he will preserve for future generations a mountain of much historic, geologic, ethnologic, and archaeological interest to mankind.”*



U.S. Army soldiers occupied Fort Meade, five miles south of Bear Butte, in the 1890's.



Bear Butte became a popular vacation spot in the early 1900's.

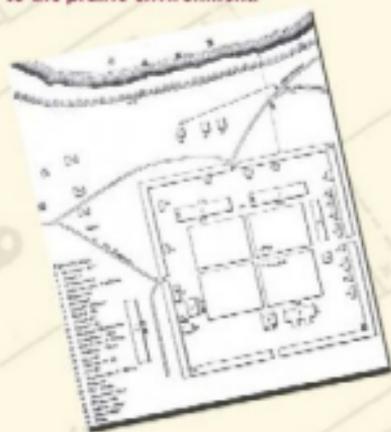


# Fort Sisseton, Britton

Following the 1862 Santee Sioux uprising in Minnesota, frontier settlers wanted military protection. Built in 1864, Fort Sisseton (originally called Fort Wadsworth) protected surveyors, rail crews, homesteaders, and friendly Indians from hostile tribes. Today, the restored site hosts a large historic festival every June.



Map of Fort Sisseton. The military post reflects the hard work and upsets that came with adapting to the prairie environment.



Commanding Officer's Quarters, 1936. The post's first commander, Major John Clowney, boasted that the forces stationed there could "resist all the redskins in the northwest." His statement held true, the fort saw no conflict.

# Dinosaur Park, Rapid City

By 1920, tourism had become the second-largest industry in South Dakota. Roadside attractions began to spring up along the state's main highways. Built in 1935, Dinosaur Park's concrete reptiles lured tourists to the area. The park's dinosaur theme linked neatly with prehistoric remains found in the nearby Badlands.



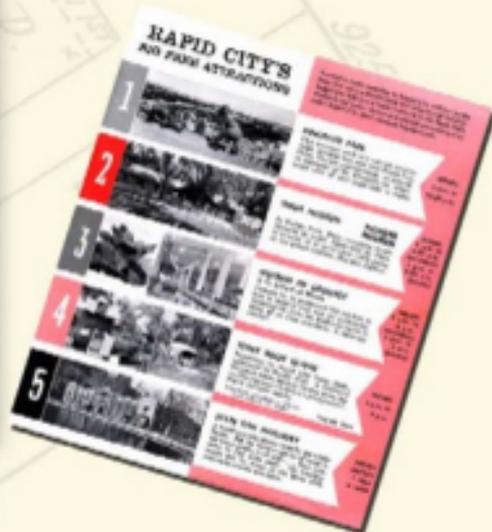
Skyline Drive, ca. 1930's. The city's Chamber of Commerce took on the Dinosaur Park project, and the Works Progress Administration provided engineering assistance, materials and workers.



Dinosaur Park is an elaborate example of roadside tourist sculpture. It features a life-size Triceratops, Tyrannosaurus Rex, and Brontosaurus.



The profile of the Brontosaurus at Dinosaur Park is visible for many miles. It instantly captures the attention of visitors and has become a local landmark.



# Mellette House, Watertown

**A**rthur C. Mellette built this house in 1883. Deeply involved in territorial politics, Mellette lobbied hard for statehood for the southern half of the Dakota Territory. He was appointed territorial governor in 1889. When South Dakota entered the union that same year, Mellette was elected the first state governor.



Mellette House, 1906.



The Mellette House is a premier example of Italianate architecture. The style can be identified by its tall, narrow door and window openings.



Arthur C. Mellette was the only territorial governor who moved to Dakota Territory voluntarily rather than as a result of a government appointment.



The Mellette House had statehood banners from both North and South Dakota. The banners are now on exhibit at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.



# Mobridge Auditorium, Mobridge

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) built the Mobridge Auditorium in 1936. The building owes its unique interior decor to the South Dakota Artists Project of the WPA. Under the program, renowned Sioux artist Oscar Howe was commissioned to paint the auditorium's murals.



Two other Indian artists, John and Tim Saul, painted the murals' decorative borders. The Sauls later became well-known for their small carved wood figurines (shown above).

*“Howe chose for the Mobridge Auditorium a combination of Indian and South Dakota pioneer motifs... Unlike almost all other murals in the state, Howe’s are rooted in the very history and cultural legacy of the area.”*

—Scott Gerloff and Carolyn Toma,  
National Register of Historic  
Places Registration Form



A Yanktonai Sioux, Howe was commissioned to paint the Mobridge murals in 1941. He worked on the murals 20 hours a day and completed them the next year. From 1948 to 1971, he designed the exterior panels at the Mitchell Corn Palace. Howe was named South Dakota's artist laureate in 1960.



# Badger Hole, Custer State Park

**B**adger Clark, South Dakota's first poet laureate, began his writing career in 1910. Clark's 200 poems and 30 short stories epitomized the traditions and values of the ideal westerner. A reclusive man, Clark built his three-room cabin, the Badger Hole, in 1925. Clark's cabin and work represent a special place and time in history.

*"For twelve years, nearly a quarter of my life, I have lived alone, and it suits me so well that when I go off on a trip, though people are more than kind to me and do everything to make me comfortable, I soon get fidgety and wistful and homesick for this little shack."*

-Badger Clark, letter to Ralph Shearer, June 13, 1934



Badger Clark seated on Badger Hole's front porch. Author Shabby Lee described Clark as a "many-faceted artist who often disguised the depth of his vision in folksy verses about the comfortable old west."



Badger Clark reads from his poems, 1952. Clark's best known poem, "A Cowboy Prayer," was often reprinted as an anonymous composition.

## A Cowboy Prayer

Oh Lord, I've never lived where churches grow.  
I love creation better as it stood  
That day You finished it so long ago  
And looked upon Your work and called it good.  
I know that others find You in the light  
That's sifted down through tinted window panes,  
And yet I seem to feel You near tonight  
In this dim, quiet starlight on the plains.  
I thank You, Lord, that I am placed so well,  
That You have made my freedom so complete;  
That I'm no slave of whistle, clock or bell,  
Nor weak-eyed prisoner of wall and street.  
Just let me live my life as I've begun  
And give me work that's open to the sky;  
Make me a partner of the wind and sun,  
And I won't ask a life that's soft or high.  
Let me be easy on the man that's down;  
Let me be square and generous with all.  
I'm careless sometimes, Lord, when I'm in town,  
But never let 'em say I'm mean or small!  
Make me as big and open as the plains,  
As honest as the hawse between my knees,  
Clean as the wind that blows behind the rains,  
Free as the hawk that circles down the breeze!  
Forgive me, Lord, if sometimes I forget.  
You know about the reasons that are hid.  
You understand the things that gall and fret;  
You know me better than my mother did.  
Just keep an eye on all that's done and said  
And right me, sometimes, when I turn aside,  
And guide me on the long, dim, trail ahead  
That stretches upward toward the Great Divide.

-Badger Clark

# Churches, Steeple on the Prairie



Located on the Standing Rock Reservation, Holy Spirit Chapel is a tribute to the traditional cultural values and early missionaries of the Dakota Territory. Native American parishioners quarried and carried the stone used in its construction.

Churches are among the most prominent early buildings in South Dakota. Building a church was often a priority for ethnic communities. The church provided a place for native language services, celebrating holidays, and preserving traditional music and religious customs.



The Episcopal Church began its work in South Dakota in 1873 when it named William Hobart Hare territorial bishop.

*"In recent years, as people have left the countryside in increasing numbers and communities have been forced to merge, the abandonment of country churches is a stark reminder of the different social order that once existed."*

-Robert C. Ostergren, *European Settlement and Ethnicity Patterns on the Agricultural Frontiers of South Dakota*



St. Anthony's Catholic Church, known as the Cathedral of the Prairies, reflects the strong German roots of Hoven. St. Anthony's is a blend of Neo-Romanesque Gothic architecture and German craftsmanship.



# Schools

**The single-room schoolhouse goes back to a time when the local schoolhouse served many functions. A host of scholastic and community activities took place in such schools. Everything from Junior Red Cross meetings to holiday programs and spelling bees were held in the school.**



**1884 Fischer Grove School House, Redfield.**



**Interior of Harding School House.**



**The Harding School is one of the last remainders of rural education in Corson County. Built in 1931 and named for President Warren G. Harding, the school was one of four in the area. The four schools were no more than five miles apart, so no student had more than two-and-a-half miles to walk each day. Harding School is the only one-story rectangular-plan school still in its original location in either Corson or Dewey counties.**



**Interior of Harding School House.**

**"With the closing of rural schools we lost our community connection."**

**-Bertha Bieber,  
on the closing of  
Harding School, 1952**



**School kids posing in a one room school house.**

# Historic Districts

**A** historic district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.



*The Lustron District, in Mitchell, is unique in that a number of Lustron homes are concentrated in a small area. Approximately thirty-eight Lustron homes were built in South Dakota, four remain in this district.*



*Businessman, Carl Strandlund, modeled the Lustron Corporation after the mass-production assembly lines of General Motors and Ford.*



**T**he return of World War II veterans ready to start families and live the American dream created a housing crunch across the country. To meet the need, the Lustron Corporation of Columbus, Ohio, mass produced, prefabricated, porcelain-enameled, steel houses from 1946 to 1950.

# Chicago & North Western Railroad Bridge, Hughes County

**R**ail expansion played a crucial role in the initial settlement of much of South Dakota. The Chicago and North Western Railroad Bridge, built in 1906, was the first permanent Missouri River crossing in central South Dakota. The bridge provided a vital link between the western half of the state and points east.



Missouri River Bridges, Pierre, S. Dak.  
Miller studio pr.

The Chicago and North Western Railroad Bridge was the only Pierre Missouri River crossing for 20 years, until the Highway 14 bridge was built in 1926.



Four Diner across the Missouri to Fort Pierre.



Chicago and North Western workers build across the Missouri River at Pierre, 1906.



The bridge remains an example of 20th-century bridge engineering and is the only bridge of its type to survive statewide, and among the largest such structures remaining in the nation.

-Mark Huffstetter, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



# Needles Highway, Black Hills

**F**ormer Governor and U.S. Senator Peter Norbeck thought that people should be able to come to Custer State Park and get close to the amazing sites there.

One site was the Needles, large rocks that crop out of the ground. Norbeck and Scovel Johnson planned a road to take people through the Needles without hurting the land and animals nearby. Today Needles Highway is one of the most scenic most scenic drives in the Black Hills, however, it is not listed on the National Registry.



**The Horseshoe Curve on Needles Highway.**



**Needles Eye, Custer State Park.**



**I**t is now Highway 87 through Custer State Park. Scovel Johnson used 150,000 pounds of dynamite to make two tunnels along the way.



**Winding through granite spires along the Needles Highway.**