



Our History, Our Future: A Historic Context Document for Rapid City, South Dakota



Figure 1: New construction intermingles with the forest on the hillside above Canyon Lake Park.

Prepared for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

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Figure 2: The sign at the Baken Park shopping plaza and Dinosaur Hill reflect the centrality of retail trade and tourism to the economic history of Rapid City.

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Section A. Executive Summary

In 2018, the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC, “the Commission”) engaged Vantage Point Historical Services, Inc. to assist with the updating of its Historic Preservation Plan and Historic Context Document. This project evolved into a three-year strategic planning and updating initiative. It included multiple public outreach and community engagement efforts and the development of a series of research and survey assets that focused on the histories of racial, ethnic, and religious groups that have called Rapid City home before and throughout the city’s history; the environmental history and public memory of the community; and the expansion of the built environment during the postwar boom between 1945 and 1972 when a devastating flood marked a critical turning point in Rapid City’s history. Overall, this work has strengthened the Commission’s understanding of Rapid City’s history and articulated a vision for the role the Commission, history, and historic preservation planning can play in the Rapid City community.

This Historic Context Document reflects the culmination of the research into various themes and developments from Rapid City’s history. It is designed to be used alongside the Preservation Plan (2021) as the RCHPC and the Rapid City community undertake the strategic goals and priorities outlined therein.

This document is not a comprehensive history of Rapid City. Rather, it was designed to serve as a factual and interpretive asset from which the Commission and the community can continue to explore recurring themes in the city’s history and

develop a deeper understanding of specific eras and events. It is a step in the process of building awareness about the importance and utility of history and historic preservation to the Rapid City community as it looks forward to growth and seeks to provide a strong quality of life for residents and a memorable experience for visitors.

The project that produced the Historic Context Document and Historic Preservation Plan was conducted in collaboration with the RCHPC and members of the Rapid City community in order to build upon the work of previous commissions and community advocates to connect the interests of the local community to the RCHPC’s strategic goals and priorities. This Historic Context Document was also developed in accordance with the principles, priorities, and best practices of the South Dakota State Historic Preservation



Figure 3: This screenshot from a community outreach webinar in June 2020 speaks to the RCHPC's efforts to think broadly about places and spaces that are significant to Rapid City's history.

Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS). It has also been shaped by recent developments in historic preservation, including the Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL) framework adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011. HUL promotes the incorporation of built and natural elements of a community into historic preservation planning and encourages communities to understand diverse human experiences as key elements of local history.

Viewing Rapid City's history through myriad lenses, and thinking broadly about the relationship between people, landscape, and structures, this Historic Context Document provides a key asset to support the RCHPC in coming years.

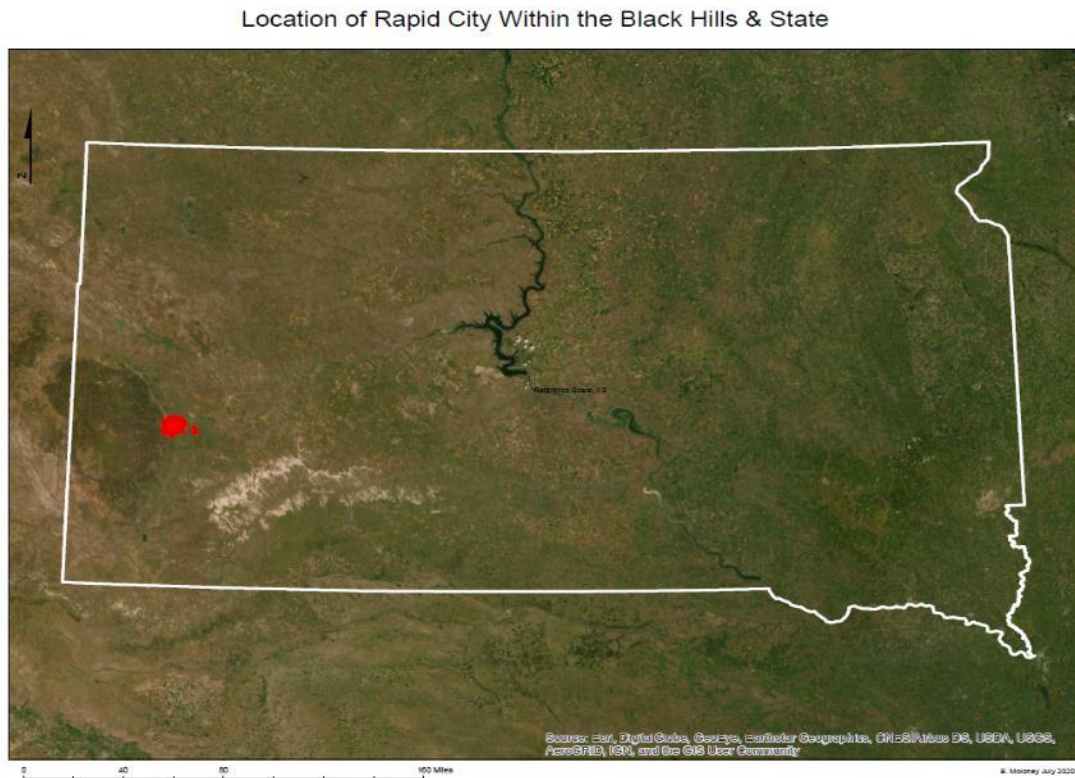


Figure 4: Located on the eastern edge of the Black Hills, Rapid City is the largest urban center in Western South Dakota. Map by Brenna Maloney, 2020.

Section B. Introduction

The Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC, “the Commission”) is comprised of citizen volunteers dedicated to identifying, protecting, and educating the public about cultural resources and historic sites in and around Rapid City, South Dakota. Staffed by and housed within the City of Rapid City’s Community Development Department, the RCHPC is a local manifestation of a national and international historic preservation community that also includes state and federal agencies, municipal and regional planners, cultural resource management professionals, businesspeople, academics and educators, non-profit organizations, property owners, activists, craftspeople, and others. Since the 1970s, the

Commission has undertaken a number of projects to produce planning documents, survey historic properties and districts, nominate properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and engage property owners and community members about the importance of history and historic preservation to the local and regional communities.

In 2019, the Commission undertook an update to its Historic Preservation Plan (previously titled as its Comprehensive Plan), which had last been updated in 2009, and its Historic Context Document (the predecessor to this document), which had been completed in 1989. The updates were completed in 2021, and, working together, build upon previous plans to help the RCHPC identify and preserve historic properties, promote the value of history and historic preservation to the Rapid City community, and integrate its work with

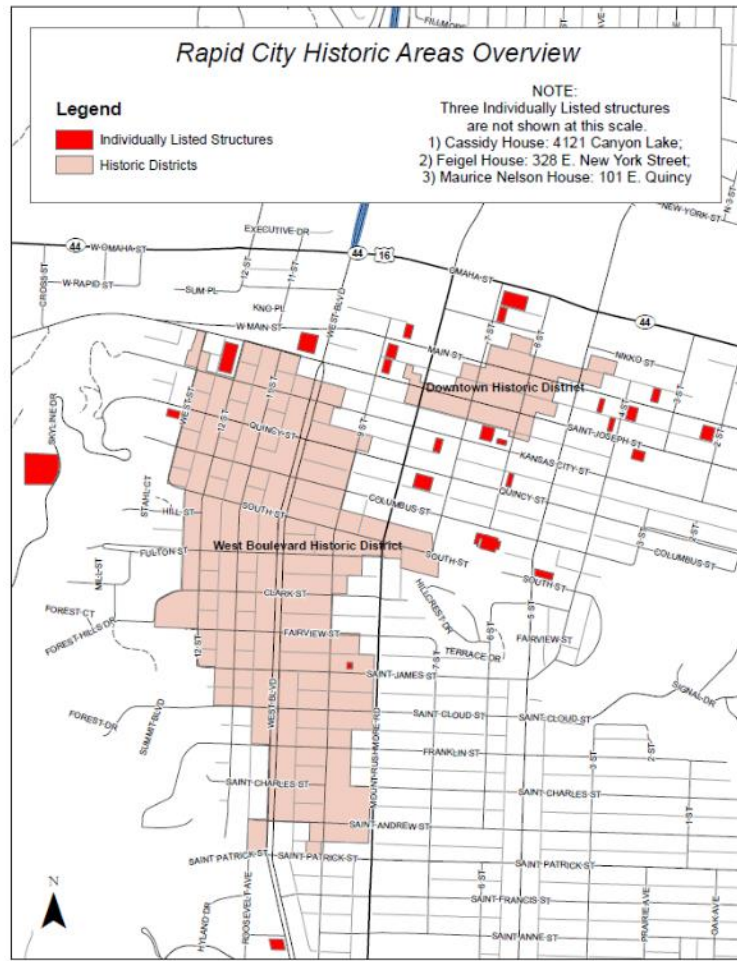


Figure 5: Most of the properties in Rapid City on the National Register of Historic Places are located in or near the West Boulevard Historic District or the Downtown Historic District. Map: Rapid City Community Development Department, 2020.

broader municipal goals outlined in Rapid City’s [Comprehensive Plan \(2014\)](#), [Downtown Area Master Plan \(2016\)](#), and [Cultural Resources Plan \(2016\)](#).

This Historic Context Document is designed to comply with state and federal rules pertaining to historic preservation. It also seeks to supplement existing frameworks and help the RCHPC define a broad and inclusive approach to the preservation and interpretation of historic places and properties in Rapid City. To achieve this goal, this document relies upon the existing formal guidelines for historic properties provided by the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. (For an overview of these guidelines, see the RCHPC’s 2021 Historic Preservation Plan). It also draws on recent developments in the historic preservation, heritage planning, and cultural resources management fields to identify and assess landscapes, waterscapes, and other elements of Rapid City’s environmental and cultural mosaic that—although not necessarily eligible for historic preservation as traditionally practiced—contribute substantially to the community’s history and culture and undergird a sense of place.

Primary among them is the strategy known as Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL). Adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011, HUL moves beyond “conventional” approaches to preservation that emphasize the built environment. Instead, HUL “considers cultural diversity and creativity as key assets for human, social, and economic development.”¹ To achieve its goals, HUL suggests

developing preservation plans and strategies that focus on the tangible and intangible elements of a community’s history, including environmental resources and the landscape itself. HUL’s approach is based on continued engagement with community members. It promotes critical dialogue and learning about the community’s past, present, and future.² It is a useful approach for communities like Rapid City seeking to harness the value of history and historic and cultural assets while preparing to meet the needs of the 21st century.



Figure 6: For much of its history, the RCHPC focused on preserving historic homes and businesses, like this historic bank building on the corner of Main and Seventh Streets. Image: Minnulusa Historical Association.

¹ UNESCO, “[New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained](#)” (2011), 9.

² “Pursuing a Historic Urban Landscape Approach to Heritage in Edmonton: Evolving Report,” City of Edmonton, Alberta, CA, June 14, 2018, 10.

Project Overview and Methodology

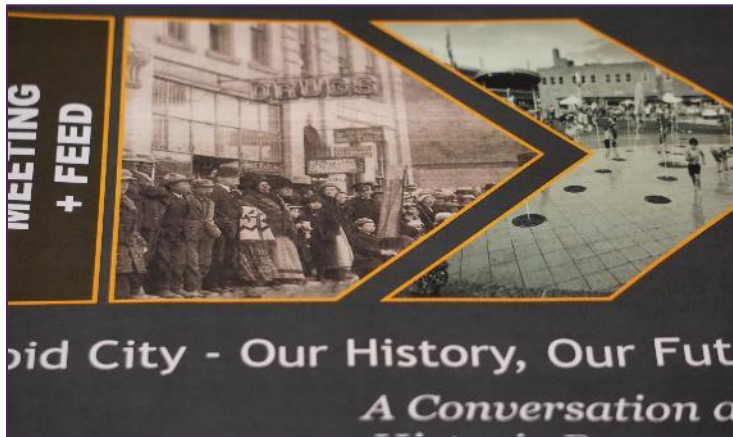


Figure 7: A flyer from a Phase I community meeting emphasized the connections between historic preservation and thoughtful planning.

Phase I of the updating project included a series of working sessions with the RCHPC; several community outreach sessions to describe the project and solicit feedback about the community's historic preservation priorities and ideas about the significance of place in Rapid City; and the production of draft updates to the Historic Context

Document and Historic

Preservation Plan, including the chronological overview of Rapid City's history available in Section D below. This work also led to a strategic planning retreat, during which the Commission updated its mission statement and articulated the strategic goals and priorities stated in its Preservation Plan.

Phase II entailed the drafting of a series of thematic essays (see Section E below) and a windshield survey of properties associated with significant themes or storylines from Rapid City's history. During this research and brainstorming phase, the Commission further articulated opportunities for ongoing work and highlighted the kinds of stories and projects it envisioned undertaking in the 2020s and beyond. This phase of work also included a public webinar to update the community about the project and solicit further feedback.

During **Phase III**, the RCHPC began putting its strategic goals and priorities into practice. It hosted three community workshops on topics that grew from a series of nine focused investigations into specific topics from Rapid City's history. Drawn from key ideas that emerged during the first two phases of work, these investigations position the Commission to pursue additional survey work and other projects in coming years. This phase culminated in a public webinar to engage the community and solicit feedback on the final drafts of this Historic Context Document and Preservation Plan, as well as the delivery of both completed documents to the City and the Commission.

How to Use This Document

Historic context documents play an important role in helping communities understand their history and establish priorities for historic preservation, heritage planning, and cultural resources management. The National Park Service (NPS) defines a historic context as the "trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its

meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history or prehistory is made clear.”³ A historic context document therefore organizes information about cultural and historical resources within a specific geographic area into a narrative that identifies important themes and property types.

These documents work in tandem with preservation plans and other planning documents. As the South Dakota *Local Preservation Handbook* points out, preservation plans should have clear goals rooted in the community’s historic context. Together, these documents allow historic preservation commissions to attract committed members, engage and communicate with the public, and integrate their work with other municipal, county, state, national, and international planning efforts. These documents also help cultural resource management professionals identify and evaluate resources, which can streamline a city’s federal and state regulatory requirements related to development and infrastructure improvement. Plans and historic context documents can also help owners appreciate the historic character of their buildings or sites as they maintain, repair, or adapt their properties for new uses. These plans and historic context documents also allow educators to connect their lessons to local resources. Lastly, sound planning documents can make a city eligible to become a Certified Local Government (CLG), which qualifies it for certain state and federal grant programs that support “surveys, National Register nominations, rehabilitation work, design guidelines, educational programs, training, structural assessments, feasibility studies,” and other initiatives.⁴ Rapid City currently has CLG status and staying engaged in work of this nature helps the commission maintain that status.

To meet each of these objectives, this historic context document includes several sections that ground Rapid City’s history in broad local, regional, and national contexts. The organization of this document intentionally reflects the progression of the updating project itself. The purpose of this approach is threefold: First, it highlights how the Commission and the community’s priorities emerged during the strategic planning and outreach process. Second, it maximizes the ability of this document to act as a useful complement to the Historic Preservation Plan. Finally, it offers multiple perspectives on Rapid City’s history that create a multilayered narrative to draw out key ideas about the rich history and myriad sites and spaces that have defined the character and development of Rapid City.

With all this in mind, this Historic Context Document proceeds as follows:

- **Section C** describes the environmental setting in and around Rapid City and provides a snapshot of contemporary Rapid City, to underscore the principles of the HUL approach and position the RCHPC to utilize the Historic Context Document as it supports broader planning efforts over the coming decade.

³ [“How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,”](#) National Register Bulletin, National Park Service, Department of the Interior (Washington: DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990).

⁴ [“South Dakota Local Preservation Handbook,”](#) South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (2019); [“Certified Local Government Program & Local Preservation Tools,”](#) National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

- **Section D** establishes a baseline understanding of the broad evolution of Rapid City's history through a chronological overview from the deep past to the 2020s. This overview was drafted during Phase I.
- **Section E** articulates three themes that are central to understanding Rapid City's development and character: Community, Government, and Economy. These themes were explored during Phase II.
- **Section F** offers short summaries of nine in-depth investigations into different topics from Rapid City's history completed during Phase III. It also provides a description of historic preservation guidelines articulated by the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service to position the RCHPC to establish the significance of historic and cultural resources in coming years.
- The **Appendices** provide supplemental resources and the full versions of the Phase III essays including documentation of relevant sites throughout the community.



Figure 8: Over time, signs like the Black Hills Bagels cowboy can become landmarks within the built environment of a community.

Section C. Environmental and Contemporary Profile

This section gives an overview of the environmental setting in and around Rapid City. The community is located on the boundary between the forested Black Hills and a vast grassland. The city itself was founded at the vertex of a prominent ridgeline and Rapid Creek, the main artery that brings water to the community. These elements have shaped the ways humans have interacted with this place for millennia. Next, this section provides a brief snapshot of Rapid City in the 2020s to position this Historic Context Document as an asset for future planning.

Environmental Profile

Rapid City sits on the eastern edge of the Black Hills, which are known to area Lakotas as *He Sapa* or *Paha Sapa*. Centrally located in Pennington County, where Interstate 90 encounters the Black Hills from the east and west, Rapid City is a convenient gateway for people seeking access to various resources in the Hills. For this reason, Rapid City was long known as the “Gate City.” With the expansion of tourism in the 20th century, the city has rebranded itself as the “Star of the West” or the “City of Presidents.”



Figure 9: This late 19th-century drawing of the geology of the Black Hills shows the uplift surrounded by miles of flat prairie in every direction. Image: Library of Congress.

The Black Hills consist of a granite core that rose and cracked through the limestone surface during the Precambrian period some 65 million years ago.⁵ This uplift built a small mountain range out of the vast prairies of the Northern Plains. A ring of limestone surrounds this central, granite uplift, and a mix of limestones, sandstones, and shales extend outward until the edge of the Black Hills meets the prairie. Rapid City straddles this boundary where a ring of limestone and reddish clay encircle the Black Hills. According to Lakota oral traditions, this ring served as the track upon which animals participated in the

“Great Race” that gave shape to *He Sapa*. Beyond the racetrack, the Black Hills are surrounded by hundreds of miles of semiarid open prairie.

⁵ See Janet M. Carter, Daniel G. Driscoll, and Joyce E. Williamson, “[The Black Hills Hydrology Study](#),” USGS Fact Sheet FS-046-02 (1990).

Rapid City's landscape includes hilly, rugged terrain as well as rolling hills and flat, open prairies. There are no large, natural lakes in or near the city; all major Black Hills lakes are manmade, while a number of runoff and spring-fed streams flow through or near town. Rapid Creek (*Mniłuxaban* in Lakota) passes through the center of town and feeds water to Rapid City from the Pactola Reservoir, a large, manmade lake located approximately 20 miles west of town. The creek bisects Rapid City along an east-west axis, while a pair of hogback ridges bisect the city along a north-south axis. The area between the vertex of these ridges, where the creek passes through, is known as "the Gap." For generations, residents and visitors have traveled between the east and west sides of town through the Gap. Today, three thoroughfares: West Main Street, St. Joseph Street, and Omaha Street, as well as a bike trail, traverse this historic passageway between the hills.

The physical geography (or physiography) of Rapid City—which includes its geography, geology, and landscape—shaped its defining viewsheds and led to its role as a passing place for many generations. Rapid City and the surrounding Black Hills offer a respite from the extreme weather of other parts of the Northern Plains. The landscape's intrinsic beauty, combined with fresh water, plants, minerals, and game animals, attracted people to the area, and the surrounding bluffs offered shelter to its first inhabitants. Evergreen trees like ponderosa pines and spruces, as well as large deciduous trees like cottonwoods and tall prairie grasses, join sandstone and limestone cliffs and Rapid Creek to create the natural aesthetic of Rapid City.



Figure 10: Across Rapid City, ponderosa pines, tall grasses, and locally quarried stones are featured in private and commercial landscaping and construction, blending the natural landscape into the built environment.

The Black Hills are subject to unique climatological and short-term weather patterns. Rapid City sits at 44.0805 degrees north latitude/103.2310 degrees west longitude. Most of the town is between 3,200 and 3,500 feet above sea level. Rapid City residents experience all four seasons, which are punctuated by sudden and dramatic changes. Cold, windy winters oscillate between deep cold and snow, and warm, sunny days within a short period. Spring often lasts until late April or early June, with heavy

snow possible into late May or beyond. Summers are often hot and dry but punctuated by regular mid-afternoon thunderstorms. Autumn can begin as early as mid-September and remain for months. In some years, snow falls well before the end of October.

Unpredictable weather has brought several major events. A 1907 flood destroyed the first dam at Canyon Lake and slowed plans for residential developments along the creek.

Rebuilt by the federal Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the dam enabled the creation of a large recreation area and made the area a popular site for residences. Some four decades later, the devastating flood of 1972 broke the dam and killed 238 people. Water and debris ripped through the heart of the city, destroying many homes and businesses in its path. Between these floods, a historic blizzard left 14-foot drifts in downtown Rapid City in 1949. The snow buried automobiles and train cars, bringing local commerce to a halt for weeks. Officials blasted away the most stubborn drifts with dynamite.⁶ In 2013, Winter Storm Atlas left residents stuck indoors without power for hours or days, and the storm killed thousands of livestock in the surrounding area.

Together, these environmental attributes set the stage for settlement and development of Rapid City, which coincided—as they did across many parts of the American West—with deep conflicts over control of land, water, and resources. From the late 19th century forward, the city’s centrality within a vast, resource-rich and agricultural region and the availability of timber and minerals provided a means of subsistence for the area’s residents and shaped Rapid City’s economy. The remoteness of Rapid City and the Black Hills from major American cities and global trading centers, along with the area’s natural beauty, have drawn visitors from around the world and shaped the character of the community over many generations.

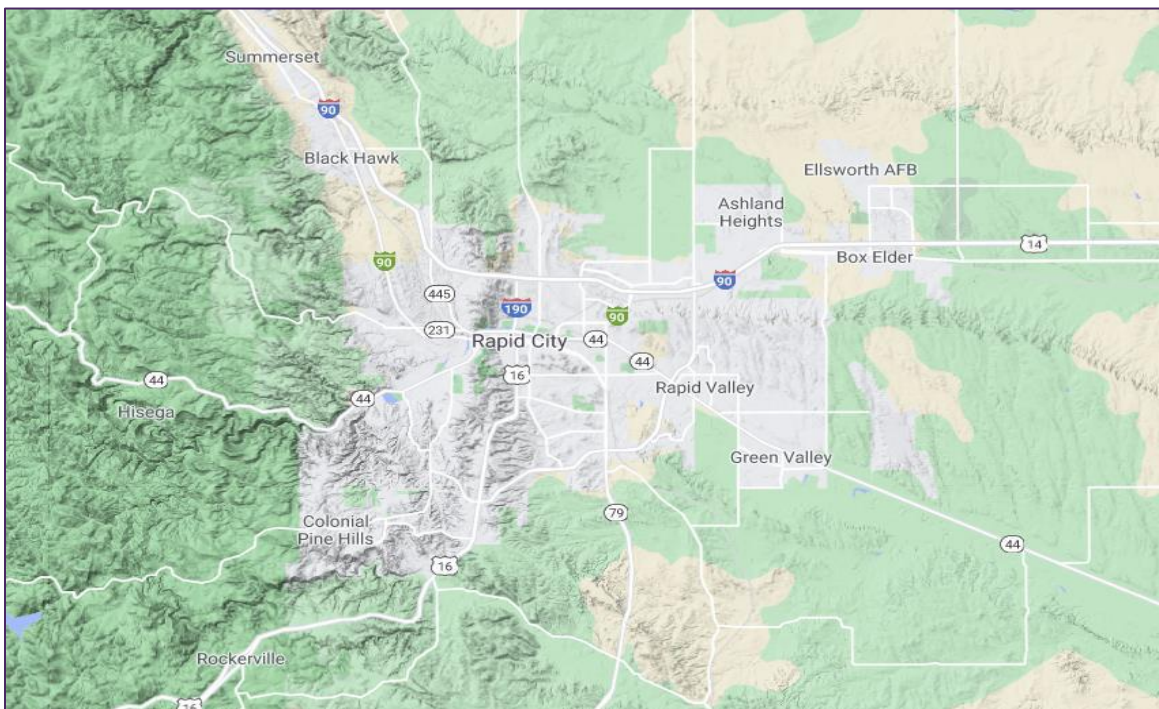


Figure 11: Rapid City spans some 55 square miles. It is surrounded by several suburban neighborhoods like Rapid Valley, Box Elder, and Black Hawk, as well as Ellsworth Air Force Base. Map: Google Maps, 2021.

⁶ John Webb, *RB-36 Days at Rapid City, or Rapid City Freestyle: The People, the Airplanes, and the Times at Rapid City/Ellsworth Air Force Base, 1949 through 1957* (Rapid City, SD: Silver Wings Aviation, n.d.), 12.

Contemporary Community Profile

In 2021, Rapid City is home to over 78,000 residents.⁷ Including Rapid Valley, Box Elder, Black Hawk, Summerset, and Ellsworth Air Force Base, and nearby rural areas, there are around 100,000 people who work in or visit Rapid City on a regular basis, and could therefore be considered members of the community for the

purposes of historical, cultural, and heritage planning purposes.⁸ Rapid City is the second largest city in South Dakota by a considerable margin.⁹ Rapid City is also the largest city in the broader region including western South Dakota, eastern Wyoming, southeast Montana, and northwestern Nebraska.

Rapid City's population is predominantly white. Due to the frequency with which Native Americans travel to and from area reservations, the population of Indigenous people living in and visiting Rapid City ranges between about 12 and 25 percent on a given day. Roughly 7 percent of Rapid Citians identify as Latino, African American, Asian American, or as part of another group.¹⁰ Most of Rapid City's population is concentrated in the city's urban core, with lower density in the rural areas outside town. Meanwhile, in 2016, Rapid City was home to just under 23,000 families who lived in some 36,800 households.¹¹

The Rapid City economy centers around the tourism and service industries, retail and wholesale trade, professional services, healthcare, and Ellsworth Air Force Base. The Rapid City Area School District includes 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. The Catholic Diocese runs an elementary, middle, and high school system and the

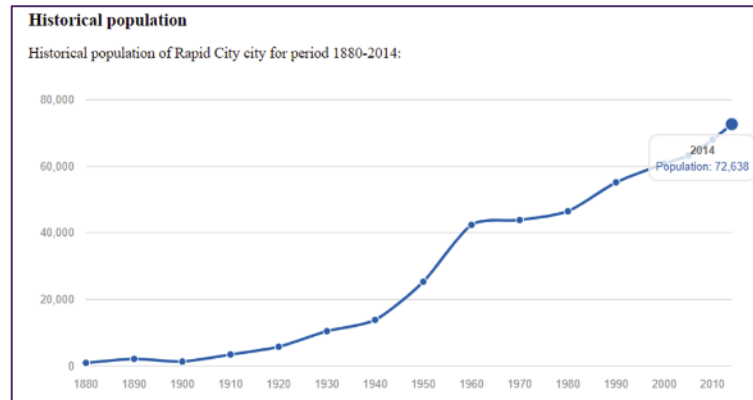


Figure 12: After a period of slow growth from the 1870s to the 1930s, Rapid City became the most populous community in the Black Hills. The population boomed between 1940 and 1960. After leveling off for a time, it has increased steadily since the 1980s. Chart: [Population.us](https://www.population.us).

⁷ Nathan Thompson, "Proposal to Change 'Metro' Area Definition Would Cost Rapid City, City Says," *Rapid City Journal*, March 27, 2021.

⁸ Jared McEntaffer, Callie Tysdal, and Rochelle Zens, "[Rapid City Housing Affordability Study](#)" (June 26, 2018), 10-12. The US Census Bureau considers the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area to include all of Pennington, Meade, and Custer Counties. In 2021, these areas had close to 140,000 residents.

⁹ "[Quick Facts: South Dakota](#)," US Census Bureau. The largest city in the state, Sioux Falls, has around 185,000 residents, while the third largest city, Aberdeen, has around 28,000.

¹⁰ Richard Braunstein and Tobias Schantz, "Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City: Examining Policing Trends, Community Opinions and Best Practices," Rapid City Police Department (2015), 88.

¹¹ McEntaffer, et al, "Rapid City Housing Affordability Study," "[Rapid City Comprehensive Plan](#)" (2014), 15.

city is also home to a few smaller, faith-based schools. Around 700 families homeschool their children. City residents can receive post-secondary education at South Dakota Mines, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, Western Dakota Technical Institute, Oglala Lakota College, and through nursing and extension programs offered by the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University. In addition, some residents pursue degrees and certifications through a host of online programs offered by institutions throughout the world. Rapid City also has a Career Learning Center and the Rapid City Public Library, which offers several opportunities for community learning.¹²



Figure 13: Imbued with art and images of local and national history, Main Street Square hosts summer concerts, winter ice skating, and numerous other community events throughout the year.

The city also offers a variety of parks and amenities. As of 2014, the community had 32 parks; 23 special use areas including golf courses, soccer fields, a polo grounds, three sports and recreation complexes, and a museum; 21 greenways or natural areas that include dozens of miles of hiking and biking trails (another, 150-acre trail system in the Skyline Wilderness Area was developed beginning in 2014). Perhaps most significantly, Rapid City undertook a downtown

revitalization program during the 2000s and 2010s, installing a multi-use entertainment and shopping plaza known as “Main Street Square” and promoting renovations and adaptive reuse of bars, restaurants, and stores throughout the downtown area.¹³

Rapid City has grown steadily over the last 30 years at a rate of about 1 percent per year. To accommodate future growth, the community has laid plans for further investment in infrastructure to enhance the quality of life for all community members through education, opportunity, and inclusivity. A robust and thoughtful plan for identifying and promoting the community’s historic and cultural assets can help Rapid City achieve these goals. To read more about Rapid City, its demographics, other trends, and plans, see [Rapid City’s Comprehensive Plan \(2014\)](#).

¹² “[Rapid City Comprehensive Plan](#),” A-9.

¹³ Ibid., A-17–A-25; Visit Rapid City, “[Skyline Drive & Wilderness Area](#).”

Section D.

Brief Chronological Overview of Rapid City's History

This section offers a brief, narrative summary of Rapid City's history, from the deep past into the 2020s. Its goal is to provide a helpful framework for understanding the early inhabitants, founding, growth, and evolution of the community. It divides Rapid City's story into six major, temporal periods to orient local officials and members of the public to the broad development of the community. This summary provides anchor points to support Section E: Key Themes in Rapid City's history.

Archaeology and Early Indigenous Presence: ~ to 1875

The Black Hills have been home to Native Americans for at least 12,000 years. Archaeological evidence shows that, over that long span, Indigenous peoples built complex and diversified subsistence economies. They hunted bison on the adjacent prairies, harvested plants and game in the Black Hills, and may have come to the area during droughts or other difficult climatic periods for the ample water and resources in the region. Surveys and studies over many decades have revealed a wide array of tools; storage technologies; open-air, rock shelter, pit house, and tipi-ring living spaces; animal kill sites; stone circles; stone quarries; rock art; and other evidence of complex, skilled groups of early Indigenous peoples who lived in and near the Black Hills across a variety of archaeological time periods and culture groups. (For more information about Black Hills archaeology, see the [South Dakota State Plan for Archaeological Resources \[2018\]](#), especially IV-74 to 125.)

Native peoples, meanwhile, camped near what is now Rapid City as far as 2,000 years ago. Lakota oral traditions place the creation of the *Oceti Sakowin* ("People of the Seven Council Fires," often called the "Great Sioux Nation") at Wind Cave (*Wasun Niya* or *Maka Oniye*) in the southern Black Hills somewhere in the deep past. Archaeological evidence, meanwhile, shows that the Black Hills region—including portions of central Rapid City—were commonly-used meeting and passing places for a variety of Native groups over the course of many centuries.¹⁴ By the early 19th century, these groups included members of Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Kiowa, and other tribes, while members of many other Native communities likely visited the area as part of extensive Indigenous trade networks.

Empowered by strong horse cultures characterized by raiding and hunting, Lakotas became the dominant group in and around the Black Hills around 1750. As Euro-Americans began to enter this environment over the course of the next century, trading relationships evolved but eventually deteriorated into conflict over land and other resources. In 1851 and

¹⁴ Linea Sundstrom & Wini Michael, "Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park, Rapid City, South Dakota: A Report Prepared for the City of Rapid City, South Dakota (March 2009), 2.

1868, the US government and Native leaders negotiated treaties preserving tribal rights to land across the Northern Plains. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty deemed all of what is now western South Dakota as the “Great Sioux Reservation.”

Hay Camp to Rapid City: 1876 to 1918

Rumors of rich gold deposits in the Black Hills had circulated among non-Native trappers and traders since at least the 1830s. When a US army expedition discovered gold near French Creek in the southern hills in 1874, the word spread quickly. By late 1875, ambitious gold miners were flocking to the Black Hills where they established boomtowns like Deadwood in direct violation of the 1868 treaty. Unable to find gold, a group of non-Natives established Rapid City in 1876 to meet the retail and service needs of miners and agriculturalists in the region. Originally known as Hay Camp, the town sat at the vertex of Rapid Creek and the two hogback ridges that divide Rapid City, in a spot that had been used by untold generations of Native travelers.

Due to its location and the easy availability of water and grasses, Hay Camp quickly grew into a prominent stopover for travelers taking eastern stagecoaches to the Black Hills. Local entrepreneurs turned it into a supply station for ox teams and weary travelers. Following tension and violence between the US military and area Lakotas who sought to defend their treaty lands from white encroachment, the US government enacted the so-called “Manypenny Agreement” in 1877, which formally removed the Black Hills from the 1868 treaty area. Shortly thereafter, officials in Dakota Territory organized Pennington County and named Rapid City as its seat.



Figure 14. Taken in the late 19th or early 20th century, this photograph shows a small herd of horses grazing before a group of around 300 tents and tipis belonging to Native families. It may have been taken near what is now Robbinsdale Elementary School. Despite federal restrictions on their movement, and ongoing tensions with local non-Native, Indigenous people continued to live in and near Rapid City. Image: Minnilusa Historical Association.

The sister mining towns of Lead/Deadwood remained the most populous and prosperous communities in the area over the next several decades, while Rapid City grew in fits and starts. During the 1890s, for example, the city’s population declined from 2,128 to 1,342. The establishment of the Dakota School of Mines (South Dakota Mines) in 1885 and the arrival of the city’s first

railroad the next year set the stage for future growth. Meanwhile, a series of decisions by the federal government reduced the Great Sioux Reservation, pushed Native peoples onto much

smaller reservations and individual allotments, and opened up the West River territory to white homesteaders.

Over the next several decades, as immigrants flowed into western South Dakota, Rapid City's importance as a retail and wholesale trading center supporting this agricultural and mining hinterland continued to grow. By 1910, the city's population had increased to 3,854. Most of these residents were native-born Americans. Only a small percentage were foreign-born. Protestants of various denominations accounted for the largest block of Christians, but there were more Catholics than any other single denomination. Significantly, there were very few Native residents of Rapid City during these early years, primarily because federal regulations required Native Americans to obtain the express permission of reservation superintendents to leave the reservations. Even with these rules in place, however, some Native families did travel to Rapid City, usually to visit or live near their children, many of whom were taken to the Rapid City Indian School, which opened in 1898.

Perhaps the most significant development in the city's economic history began in the 1890s, when the newly created Black Hills National Forest started to become a tourist destination. In the first years of the 20th century, Rapid City continued to grow due to its geographical position, both in terms of its status as an access point for visitors entering the Black Hills and its ability to ship minerals, lumber, and other raw materials to local, regional, and national markets.



Figure 15: A prominent fixture on the landscape of West Rapid City, the campus of the Rapid City Indian School was developed in 1898. It was later converted into the "Sioux Sanitarium" tuberculosis clinic, then an Indian Health Service hospital. Image: Minnilusa Historical Association.

Depression and War: 1919 to 1945

Rapid City's population increased significantly in the decade of the 1910s, as various agricultural crises led some West River homesteaders to abandon their claims and seek employment in the city. For the first time, the city's population grew while the population of Pennington County declined. This population growth was fueled by the steady expansion of the Black Hills tourism economy, which received significant support from state and federal investments in infrastructure. New state and national parks and monuments like Wind Cave National Park (1903); Jewel Cave National Monument (1908); Custer State Park (1912); Badlands National Park (1939); and Mount Rushmore National Memorial (dedicated 1927, completed 1941) offered a variety of destinations for tourists. Meanwhile, the National Forest Service developed recreation areas, and a host of entrepreneurs opened businesses to provide meals, lodging and entertainment to visitors. President Coolidge's decision to move his summer White House to Custer State Park in 1927 helped publicize the region's attractions.

Rapid City overtook Lead/Deadwood as the largest city in the region by the 1930 census. As the Great Depression ravaged the regional agricultural economy, farmers and ranchers moved to town looking for work, including many Native families who came from reservations. Even in town, however, economic conditions were difficult. Nearly three quarters of the population in the late 1920s did not own their own home. Many subsisted by working in the tourism industry during the summer, which was fueled by Depression-era state and federal investments in parks (like Dinosaur Park), roads (like Iron Mountain Road), utilities and infrastructure (like highways, rural electrification, and a state cement plant opened in Rapid City in 1924). Federal relief programs during the Depression helped provide jobs through the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Projects Administration, which hired artists and writers (who produced promotional materials like the *WPA Guide to South Dakota*).

As the United States geared up for World War II, the Rapid City Army Air Base opened in 1942, bringing a lasting, federal boon to the population and economy of Rapid City. The base also brought the city's first significant population of African Americans as part of the Quartermaster Corps.



Figure 16: Rapid City Mayor Haines shakes hand with Capt. Kelly at the Rapid City Air Base. Then-Colonel Richard E. Ellsworth, after whom the base was named following his death in 1953, is pictured at far left. Photo: Minnilusa Historical Association.

During the war and afterwards, Rapid City's population and economy expanded. As a burgeoning destination and regional hub, the community continued to be a central shipping point for minerals, raw materials, industrial products, and meatpacking industries. It also offered banks, hospitals, department stores, and auto dealerships that defined early-20th century life. The community continued to be home to a predominately white population, the majority of whom had been born in either South Dakota or neighboring states. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (which made all Native Americans US citizens and removed off-reservation travel restrictions) and wartime industry combined to reintroduce Native peoples—primarily Lakotas from nearby reservations—to town. Most Rapid City businesses and non-Native neighborhoods were laid out on a grid-style street system. By comparison, local Native Americans lived in a series of small, makeshift camps along Rapid Creek or in other sectors of town.

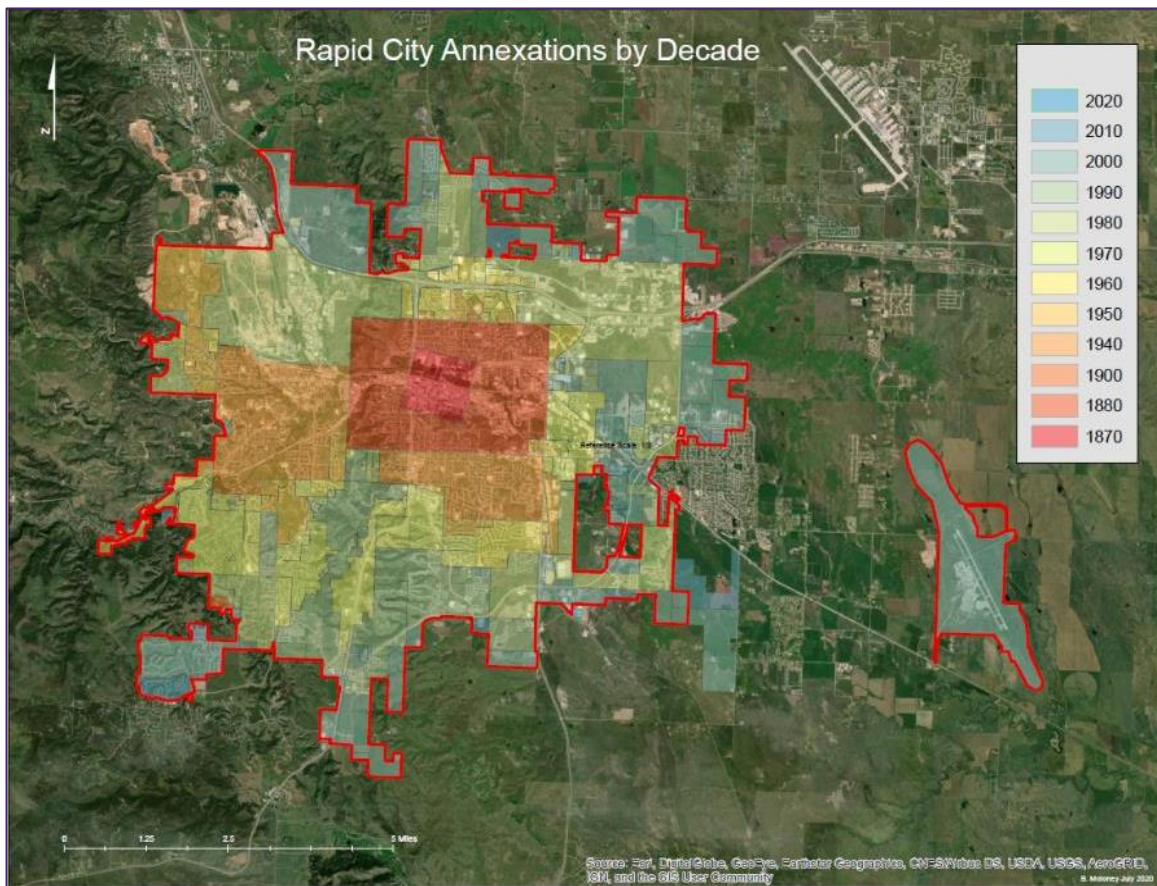


Figure 17: Rapid City has grown steadily from the downtown core since its founding in 1876. The city underwent a major expansion after World War II. Map: Brenna Maloney, 2020.

Expanding Rapid City: 1946 to 1972

Like many communities across the United States, Rapid City enjoyed a post-war economic boom. After closing briefly immediately after World War II, the Rapid City Army Air Base, which was renamed Ellsworth Air Force Base in 1953, became a major training base and bomber wing for the US Air Force. The base was a key headquarters for the Strategic Air Command during the Cold War and contributed to the city's rapidly growing population.

In the postwar years, the city underwent a rapid expansion, packing new neighborhoods in the south, north, and west sides of town with single-family, ranch-style homes. Struggling to keep pace with the need for infrastructure for water, sewage, schools, and streets, the city debated, rejected, and eventually passed a series of bond measures to accommodate growth. In 1949, Rapid City also developed its first citywide zoning plan.



Figure 18: Motel Rapid, located at 3515 Sturgis Road, opened in 1953. It was one among more than 100 roadside motels established in Rapid City as the automobile tourism industry exploded after World War II. Image: CardCow.com (nd).

Through the 1950s, the community continued to focus on growth. By the mid-1960s, population and economic growth began to slow. The city commissioned urban design plans and outlined a strategy for redeveloping the downtown corridor to better accommodate traffic and encourage Black Hills visitors to spend time and money at local businesses. Although the community lacked funds to immediately execute these plans, it took initial steps at downtown redevelopment and planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The development and expansion of the Rapid City economy often did not reach the community's Native American population. The federal government had reserved significant land on the west side of town for the Rapid City Indian Boarding School. When the school closed, some of this property was converted for use by the Indian Health Service, but in 1949, the bulk of it was transferred to public institutions in the community and non-Native owners. Meanwhile, the tourism economy had long marketed and sold Native history, art, and culture, but provided few opportunities or capital for Native entrepreneurs to benefit from tourism or for Native people to receive training and education. Meanwhile, several urban development and beautification initiatives displaced members of the Native community, relocating many of them to substandard housing developments far from the downtown corridor.

Flood and Rebuilding: 1973 to 2000

A devastating flood in June 1972 altered the course of Rapid City's history. Torrential rains flooded Rapid Creek, rupturing the dam at Canyon Lake on the west side of town. The resulting deluge wiped out hundreds of homes and businesses along the banks of the creek, killing 238 people and displacing many more. Although often remembered for the immense tragedy it inflicted upon the community, the flood proved a critical turning point for the city. Flush with federal disaster relief funding, the city was able to invest in urban renewal and the development of a new greenway in the flood plain.

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, Rapid City saw the creation of a new civic center, public library, and a fine arts center. The completion of Interstate 90 and the redesign of the downtown corridor; the consolidation of two hospitals into one major regional healthcare center; the opening of the civic center to host trade shows, concerts, and other events; the opening of a major shopping mall on the north side



Figure 19: After the 1972 flood, Rapid City created a greenway along Rapid Creek. A bike path stretches from Cleghorn Springs in the west to the eastern edge of town.

of Interstate 90, and expansions to Rapid City Regional Airport all contributed to the growth of the service economy. Meanwhile, the construction of a new downtown high school; the implementation of a greenway plan that replaced the buildings along Rapid Creek with miles of bike paths, golf courses, and parks, and the development of new single- and multi-family housing units all enhanced the quality of life.

Race relations continued to present deep challenges to the Rapid City community. In the early 1970s, Rapid City was one of several towns that became the setting for dramatic showdowns between Native American activists and non-Native law enforcement officers. These confrontations culminated in the standoff at Wounded Knee in early 1973. Violence and contention continued throughout the 1970s, straining relations between Native and non-Native people across West River. By the early 1990s, efforts to open a museum that emphasized Native history, investment in downtown installations by Native artists, and the opening of businesses like the Prairie Edge Trading Post, which sold a variety of goods made by Native artists and entrepreneurs, signaled a growing effort by Native people to share their history and play a role in the local economy.

Rapid City's economy and population continued a slow, steady rise throughout this era, anchored in traditional key sectors including retail and wholesale trade and tourism. While manufacturing suffered due to pressures from globalization, professional services and

health care became increasingly important as continued depopulation in the surrounding hinterland made Rapid City a hub for regional banking, accounting, law, medicine, and other businesses. Construction rose and fell with the economy. Spending by the federal government continued to provide vital fuel for the region's economy.

New Millennium to B-21: 2001 to 2021

As it had at the dawn of the preceding century, Rapid City entered the 21st century seeking new opportunities for growth. New companies laid fiberoptic cables and expanded broadband internet to Rapid City and the Black Hills community. Tourism and the accompanying service, retail, and hospitality industries remained the centerpiece of the community's economy. Institutions like South Dakota Mines, Monument Health, and Ellsworth Air Force Base have remained key employers. The regional utility, Black Hills Corporation grew dramatically through a period of great uncertainty in the energy industry, expanding into eight states but choosing to build its new headquarters in Rapid City in 2017.

Rapid City, meanwhile, navigated two major crises in the first decade of the 21st century. First, in early 2005, Ellsworth Air Force Base appeared on a Department of Defense list released by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). Tasked with evaluating Cold War-era military installations and recommending them for closure, the BRAC could have shut down Ellsworth, dealing a significant blow to the economies of Rapid City and the surrounding region. Ellsworth remained open however, following an intense lobbying effort by South Dakota's elected officials and community boosters. A few years later, the Great Recession threw the global economy into chaos. Although the financial crisis brought years of uncertainty, the consistency of Rapid City's core industries meant that, overall, the crisis left a relatively modest impact on the Rapid City economy.

In the years following the Great Recession, a wave of investment fostered increased development of retail, hotels, restaurants, and car dealerships along I-90. With significant philanthropic contributions and municipal investment, the construction of Main Street Square helped to revitalize downtown, and voters supported an expansion and rehabilitation of the civic center, which had been built in the 1970s. Finally, in early 2019, the US Air Force announced that sometime in the mid-2020s, Ellsworth Air Force Base would become a training facility and bomber wing for a fleet of state-of-the-art B-21 Raiders, a nuclear stealth bomber. With that news, Rapid City prepared for growth.



Figure 20: The roar of B-1 bombers has been a common sound over Rapid City since 1987. The B-21 Raider will be phased into Ellsworth Air Force Base in the 2020s. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Section E. Key Themes in Rapid City's History

Three major themes emerge when searching for connections between Rapid City's history and the built environment: community, government, and economy. All are inherently interrelated and manifest in different ways over time. Each provides a lens through which cultural and historic resources can be identified and understood. Building on the chronological overview above, this section illustrates the broad development of the Rapid City community and highlights the complex and diverse experiences of differing groups of people. Using these themes as an interpretive framework can illuminate the ways in which the past contributes to the community's sense of place and identity.

Community

Throughout the city's history, Rapid Citians have expressed an appreciation for their town and fellow residents, which they demonstrated through active participation in civic organizations, faith communities, service clubs, fraternal organizations, sports teams, and arts and cultural groups. Race, ethnicity, and religion have also contributed to a sense of group identity expressed in various traditions and celebrations, but also served as a source of division and conflict. Gathering in meeting halls, churches, inipi circles, cultural facilities and parks, the people of Rapid City have celebrated and mourned, framed strategies for political activism and community service, and competed on the gridiron, baseball diamonds, softball and soccer fields, and other sports facilities across Rapid City. They planted gardens and gathered for picnics. Residents used these places to connect with one another and strengthen social bonds that are critical to democratic government and free enterprise.

Family Bonds and Worship

The earliest groups of people to camp along Rapid Creek may have been on their way to pray at sacred sites like Black Elk Peak or heading into the solitude for ceremonies.¹⁵ Although federal laws confined Native peoples to reservations between the 1870s and 1920s, Native families made their way to Rapid City where they established camps along the creek, sought wage work, and attempted to remain close to children who had been brought to the Rapid City Indian School. Still today, meeting centers, public sweat lodges, and parks host

¹⁵ Eric Steven Zimmer, "Statement on the Renaming of Harney Peak," Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (April 29, 2015), 5–7. See also Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).

sweats, naming ceremonies, graduation celebrations, weddings, and more. Families mourn in homes, churches, and private spaces. For Native peoples whose families integrated Catholic or other Christian religious traditions, many of the religious organizations in the community are important community spaces that solidify familial and cultural ties.

The first generations of Euro-Americans to settle in South Dakota were either foreign-born immigrants who came directly from Western European countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, or Norway or domestic migrants whose families made their way over multiple generations from Europe to Midwestern states like Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, or Minnesota and then moved farther west. Many came in pursuit



Figure 21: Dating back to the 1880s, Emmanuel Episcopal Church has hosted weekly services and faith-based celebrations for generations of Rapid Citians. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1975.

of land made available under the amended Homestead Act and cleared for settlement between the 1870s and the early 1900s. As they moved, families brought traditions and cultural practices from their home countries or other states, which informed everything from culinary styles to religious preferences, patterns of land ownership, architectural designs, and more.¹⁶

The earliest organized Euro-American church services in Rapid

City date back to 1877, when area Methodists held open prayer meetings. In the spring of 1878, a non-denominational group of locals arranged a series of morning “preaching services,” afternoon Sunday school classes, and evening temperance meetings. By 1880, Jewish residents celebrated the High Holidays. Between 1881 and 1887, congregations of Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians all organized in town.¹⁷

Over the next century, many of these groups continued building faith communities large and small across the city. The earliest churches were close to downtown. As the city expanded, particularly after World War II, new congregations were planted in suburban neighborhoods. The proliferation of new churches with streamlined, mid-century designs reflected the surge of religious sentiment generally in the United States in the 1950s.¹⁸ Some

¹⁶ Eric John Abrahamson and Eric Steven Zimmer, “Life in ‘Next Year Country’: History and Identity in Western South Dakota,” Research Report Prepared for Regional Health (May 2017), 11–12; Herbert S. Schell and John E. Miller, ed. *History of South Dakota*, Revised Fourth Edition (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), 168.

¹⁷ “One Hundred Years Trinity Lutheran Church: 1914-2013” (Rapid City, SD: Trinity Lutheran Church, 2013), 4–5.

¹⁸ Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 82–90.

congregations boasted thousands of members and built large, ornate churches throughout the city. These included the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on the south end of 5th Street or the Trinity Lutheran Church and Emmanuel Episcopal Church downtown.

Meanwhile, other, smaller faith communities held meetings in rented commercial space, schools, or store fronts. Rapid City's small Jewish community, for example, met in the attics or basements of other churches or public meeting halls for decades, and Faith Temple Church of God repurposed the historic home of the Congregational Church to house its congregation, which included many African Americans.¹⁹ At the end of the twentieth century, a new group of nondenominational Christian praise churches emerged, several of them housed in large open structures that eschewed traditional religious architecture.

These developments reflected both the growing diversity of religious affiliations in Rapid City and the continuing search for a sense of spiritual comradery and community among local residents. Regardless of denomination, size, or grandeur, all of the religious facilities in the community have been gathering points for coming-of-age celebrations, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and daily or weekly moments of reflection and connection for many of Rapid City's residents.



Figure 22: Built in 1914, the First Congregational Church building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. It has served several congregations over the years, including occasional services of the Synagogue of the Hills. It is presently home to the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ.

Community Organizations

Fraternal organizations, civic associations, and women's clubs thrived in the early- and mid-20th century. The *Rapid City Journal* reported daily on their activities for decades. These organizations flourished with the support of funds contributed by members and by entrepreneurs who had built the city's most successful businesses and helped connect local residents to regional and national institutions.

¹⁹ See "[About Faith Temple Church](#)," Faith Temple Church.

In the first half-century or so of Rapid City's history, many of the most prominent buildings erected downtown reflected the associational quality of life in this era, including the Elks Club and the Masonic Hall. Shortly after Rapid City's founding, its residents organized social groups like the "Rapid City Lyceum," a debate club founded in 1879 for attendees to pass cold winter nights discussing the issues of the day and promoting dialogue between residents.²⁰ As the town grew, locals continued these traditions, developing a wide range of civic, social, and fraternal organizations, many of which were chapters of national service clubs. They built headquarters or used spaces across the community. Groups included the Freemasons, Ladies of the Order of the Eastern Star, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The Retired Enlisted Organization (TREA), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), American Red Cross, Salvation Army, International Cosmopolitan Club, Lion's Club, Elks Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of America, the Boys Club, and more.²¹ Although these organizations had different stories, membership requirements, and areas of focus, all represented a common interest in civic engagement, service, and charity, and a long tradition of personal investment in the health and vitality of the community.



Figure 23: The Loyal Order of the Moose has been active in Rapid City for over 100 years. It moved to this building on St. Patrick Street after the 1972 flood.

Similarly, Rapid City's Native residents organized a number of clubs and organizations throughout Rapid City's history. The women of the Winona Club, along with the Mahpiya Luta (Red Cloud) Lodge, the Indian Men's Club, and other organizations spent decades advocating for the rights and resources Native people were often denied. Founded in 1929, the Winona Club met in the homes of its members and at the St. Matthew's Episcopal Church on north Haines Avenue.²² The Sioux Addition Civic Organization managed homes and advocated on behalf of neighborhood residents in the Sioux Addition and Lakota Homes neighborhoods beginning in the 1950s. Later organizations like the

²⁰ See *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, January 18, 1879.

²¹ Bev Pechan and Bill Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City: A Nostalgic Look at the 1920s Through the 1970s* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2002), 4.

²² See for example "Quarter Century of Good Deeds Rounded Out By Winona Club," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1955; "Mrs. Miller Entertains at First Winona Club Meeting of Year," *Rapid City Journal*, September 9, 1950; "Club Roundup," *Rapid City Journal*, September 11, 1973.



Figure 24: Marie Rogers and Emma Tibbets sold crafts at a Winona Club fundraiser in St. Matthews Episcopal Church. Run out of church basements and members' homes, the Winona Club served the Native community in Rapid City for decades. Image: *Rapid City Journal*, November 29, 1976.

American Indian Movement demanded awareness and resolutions to longstanding issues related to the oppression of and discrimination against Native Americans, staging several tense and historic meetings in the Mother Butler Center and other buildings in Rapid City. In more recent years, a number of Native-led nonprofit organizations and community discussion groups have sought to promote dialogue and healing around deep racial tensions in and around Rapid City.

After World War II, economic and social changes began to transform the quality of civic life in Rapid City.

Increases in mobility, the rise of two-income households, the privatization of entertainment by radio and, later, television, the loss of local ownership in many industries, and other social and economic factors led to the decline of many service clubs, fraternal organizations, and civic groups. In some cases, the increased role of government was reflected in the expansion of existing facilities and the creation of new venues like the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center and various neighborhood community centers as public gathering places. With the coming of the digital age, a growing factor in patterns of civic engagement shifted away from buildings and landscapes to the virtual environments of social media and the internet. Nevertheless, spaces for people to gather, from Main Street Square to the Central States Fairground continue to contribute to a shared identity.

Recreation & Culture

Outdoor recreation has been important to the collective activities of the Rapid City community for generations, and residents' affinity for the natural environment is reflected in local architecture and community activities. Generations of locals have built their homes and gathering places using local materials and frequently emulated the designs they see in nature. Rough-cut sedimentary stones make up the foundations of many houses and retaining walls throughout the city. Granite rocks and thick logs give shape to park shelters and fireplaces and serve as accents on homes and buildings. Quartz, limestone, and slate pave floors, driveways, and walking paths. Tallgrass, sage, cedar, and juniper decorate buildings and yards across town. Many of the city's oldest buildings were built from limestone blocks quarried

outside Rapid City or Custer. These elements evoke a strong sense of history and connection to place that permeates Rapid City.

Residents of all backgrounds have good reason to value the landscape. For many Rapid Citians, spirituality, agricultural traditions, conservation ethics, and enjoyment of outdoor recreation are rooted in the mountain and prairie landscapes. Although building styles throughout the community often reflect national or international design trends, many locals customize their homes by building or decorating with local materials and western motifs. Many midcentury homes, for example, evidence the clean lines and color palettes of 1950s or 1960s architecture but are constructed of local limestone or adorned with rough-cut ranch fences. Restaurants, hotel lobbies, business conference rooms, and public art spaces contain photographs of bison, elk, pheasants, and other wildlife, as well as scenic landscapes from throughout the region. This gives them a distinctively local flavor emblematic of local pride in place.

This sense of outdoor recreation has deep roots in the Rapid City community. To experience an element of urbanity on the frontier, women organized the Current Events, Fortnightly, and Tourist Clubs. The Crouch Line took Sunday afternoon picnickers to Hisega and other towns further in the Black Hills. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Rapid City held pony and wheelbarrow races downtown and had a city hose team and baseball league.²³ Baseball and softball were popular, with games held on the North Park diamond

and on a diamond on the grounds of the National Guard's Camp Rapid by midcentury. The community added youth complexes at Harney Little League, Canyon Lake Little League, two American Legion fields, and the Star of the West complex, which includes baseball, soccer, and football fields, between the 1950s and 1990s.

Other facilities support a variety of activities and interests. The city's first library, which was built with a Carnegie family donation in 1915, expanded into its current facility in 1972. Buildings like the Alfalfa Palace at the fairgrounds were home to 4-H activities popular among agricultural families from across the region. The city added the Dahl Fine Arts Center, the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, and the band shell at Memorial Park in the 1970s,



Figure 25: Youth sports like softball and American Legion baseball are popular family events each summer. The Post 22 Hardhats won the American Legion World Series in 1993 and Floyd Fitzgerald Stadium hosted the tournament four times before it was remodeled in 2021.

²³ See for example David F. Strain, *Black Hills Hay Camp: Images and Perspectives of Early Rapid City* (Rapid City, SD: Dakota West Books, 1989).

which continue to host art shows and exhibits, trade shows, concerts, rodeos, sporting events, theatrical performances, the Lakota Nation Invitational basketball tournament, the annual Black Hills Powwow, and more. In the 1990s, the City of Rapid City consolidated four historic collections at a new facility called the Journey Museum & Learning Center. Meanwhile, privately owned facilities like the historic Elks Theater host annual events like the Black Hills Film Festival.

The history of this wide array of activities and organizations is reflected in buildings, parks, and recreational fields all across the Rapid City landscape. The spaces and structures connected to this element of community memory illustrate the rich diversity of Rapid Citians' interests and willingness to organize events and activities to enhance the quality of life throughout the community.

Race Relations

Although much of Rapid City's history can be described in terms of the coalescing of people around shared values, faiths, and interests, deep divisions and ongoing conflicts have also shaped the community from its very beginning. Tensions between Native and non-Native peoples have remained high since before Rapid City's founding. They are anchored in the violation of the Fort Laramie treaty by non-Native settlers; the often violent and forcible imposition of Western governance, social norms, and religion; and continued efforts to break up tribal land and push Native peoples to assimilate into non-Native society.²⁴

Reminders of these conflicts are evident throughout Rapid City. In 1898, for example, the federal government built the Rapid City Indian School, a boarding school on the western outskirts of town. For years, the facility served as the primary place for providing assimilatory, western-style education in keeping with broader policies that aimed to stamp out Indigenous languages, cultures, and spirituality. Like most federal boarding schools of the era, the facility sat on a large, 1,200-acre parcel of land with gardens and pastures capable of sustaining its staff and students. In 1933, the school was converted into a Civilian Conservation Corps camp and then into a TB sanitarium before it became an Indian Health Service (IHS) hospital in the 1950s. The facility underwent these transitions as Rapid City grew. In 1948, city leaders helped negotiate a special congressional law that transferred most of the boarding school property—which belonged to the Department of the Interior—to several entities.

Under the terms of this 1948 law, the city, school board, the South Dakota National Guard, and many area churches all received land. Despite being eligible for, and specifically named in the 1948 act, “needy Indians”—the term of art used to describe disadvantaged members of the Native American community at the time—received none of this property. Instead, local officials orchestrated the removal of Native residents from small communities

²⁴ See Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010).

in the city to an underdeveloped and under-resourced area north of town called the “Sioux Addition.”²⁵ This story reflects one example of the broader processes that have created enormous challenges for members of the Rapid City Native community. Recent scholarship, for example, has begun to unearth evidence that Native peoples were systematically cut out from the economic benefits of the local tourism economy over the course of the 20th century and that many Native residents received inequitable recovery assistance in the fallout from the 1972 flood.²⁶

Although the difficult relationship between Native and non-Native people has been the primary focus of racial strife in Rapid City, other minority groups have faced discrimination. In the years just prior to World War II, for example, members of Rapid City’s small Jewish population reported a surge in anti-Semitism.²⁷ A few years later, the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base in the 1950s and 1960s brought a wave of African American servicemen and their families to Rapid City. Many of these families experienced discrimination in housing and at local hotels and restaurants, prompting attention from the national media and the state civil rights commission and forcing the community to confront issues of social inclusion and exclusion.²⁸

Since the end of World War II, Native and non-Native residents and political leaders have launched various initiatives designed to promote racial reconciliation and address the needs of the Native community. Various mayors have also created special committees to address discrimination. Meanwhile, Native-led organizations ranging from the United Urban Indian Coalition in the 1970s to Rural America Initiatives today have worked to improve educational and economic opportunities in the community and address issues related to racial justice.

Government

The earliest inhabitants of what is now Rapid City organized themselves within complex networks shaped by bonds of kinship and tribal affiliation. When the first Euro-American settlers established Hay Camp in 1876, what became Rapid City was within tribal treaty land.

²⁵ See Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School: 1898–1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Heather Dawn Thompson, Kibbe Conti, Scott Riney, and Karin Eagle, “An Inconvenient Truth: The History Behind the Sioux San (Rapid City Indian Boarding School) Lands & West Rapid City,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 2017.

²⁶ Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Long History of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019), 187–190; Steven Hausman, “Inventing Indian Country: Race and Environment in the Black Hills, 1851-1981,” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2019); Elaine Marie Nelson, “Dreams and Dust in the Black Hills: Race, Place, and National Identity in America’s ‘Land of Promise,’” (Ph.D. diss, University of New Mexico, 2011).

²⁷ Howard Shaff and Audrey K. Shaff, *Paving the Way: The Life of Morris E. Adelstein* (Keystone, SD: Parmelia Publishing, 2005), 150–55.

²⁸ South Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights “Report on Rapid City” (March 1963): 45–47.

They quickly imposed a legal framework and system of government that relied on notions of citizenship, private property, and administration that were starkly different from the systems of tribal governance they replaced. Within a year, Rapid City became a part of Pennington County in Dakota Territory, which was divided into North Dakota and South Dakota in 1889. Under federal, territorial, and then state laws, the government's role in managing civil society and regulating commerce became an important factor in the day-to-day life of the community. But to build a town in such an isolated place required neighborliness, civic cooperation, democratic decision making, and a sense of shared responsibility as well as the formal rules of law.

Throughout Rapid City's history, residents have capitalized on state and federal funding to support agriculture, forestry, highways, military bases, public parks and memorials and balanced the economic benefits of government support with entrepreneurial instincts and a prominent vein of libertarian conservatism that permeates the local culture. The legacies of the community's political and governmental history are evident in Rapid City's built environment.

City & County

Over the course of history, Rapid Citians have experimented with a series of governmental arrangements, transitioning from an aldermanic form of government, to an elected commissioner system, to a city manager system. Then, in 1957, the City returned to the aldermanic system and has continued to operate in this fashion for more than 60 years, although recent discussions about adopting "home rule" are underway.²⁹

During its nearly 150-year history, the City of Rapid City has developed and managed a variety of public buildings to house important municipal functions ranging from transportation to sanitation to recreation. In 1903, the first city hall, a small, utilitarian office, was completed in the heart of



Figure 26: The Pennington County Courthouse was completed in 1922. Like its predecessor, the building marked a permanent imposition of the American legal system onto the Northern Plains. Image: Minnilusa Historical Association.

²⁹ "Types of City Governments and Home Rule (Rapid City)," Black Hills Knowledge Network, accessed February 7, 2020.

downtown.³⁰ After Rapid City became the seat of Pennington County in 1878, the commissioners met in downtown office buildings. Fire later destroyed a series of early courthouses. Then in 1922, the Pennington County Courthouse became the permanent home of county government.

Early on, law enforcement became an important function of county government, and the sheriff administered the jail. During the city's frontier days, however, the rule of law was often contested. In 1877, for example, two men and a boy were arrested for stealing horses. Before they could be tried, however, vigilantes broke into the jail and hanged the men and the boy from a prominent tree near "Hangman's Rock" in what is today's Dinosaur Park.³¹ Gradually, the threat of incarceration served as an important element for keeping the peace and protecting the local citizenry. It also continued a pattern of social control of Native Americans that began in the 19th century with conflicts between the US Army and tribes and extended into the 20th with the reservation system, boarding schools, and law enforcement. With the backing of sheriff's deputies, Native Americans were barred from various public establishments.³²

For Euro-Americans, the city's governance structures and the growth and centralization of county offices demonstrated the Rapid City community's enduring commitment to finding ways to manage local affairs and promote a high quality of life throughout the city and the region. A conservative ethos anchored in social and religious traditions of the majority population ensured, however, that investments in public infrastructure and the expansion of public services would often be contested, especially when citizens were asked to pay more in taxes to fund these initiatives. This economizing instinct has often been reflected in the character and scope of public buildings past and present including the Rapid City Municipal Auditorium, the Carnegie Library, the courthouse complex, the City School Administration Building (CSAC), the Rapid City Regional Airport, local fire stations, the wastewater treatment plant, and the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center.

These facilities are joined by community institutions born of public/private partnerships like the Rapid City Public Library, the Dahl Fine Arts Center, and the Journey Museum & Learning Center.³³ Taken together, these structures represent the bedrock of local governance and symbolize long-held values of local control and citizen-led decision making and stewardship.

The citizens of Rapid City have debated and forged agreements over how to govern themselves for nearly 150 years. The landscape and built environment of the community reflects many of the unresolved tensions in the community's perspective on the role of

³⁰ Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, "[City Hall](#)," Picture Rapid City's Past, accessed February 8, 2020.

³¹ "Two Legal Hangings in 18 Years," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1894, 11.

³² "[Municipal Parks](#)," City of Rapid City, accessed February 8, 2020; "[Jail History](#)," Pennington County, South Dakota, accessed February 8, 2020.

³³ Kayla Gahagan, "Crowded School District Administration Seeks an Exit from CSAC," *Rapid City Journal*, May 5, 2009, accessed February 8, 2020.

government, but general patterns emerge. Some structures, particularly county buildings, have appropriated elements of classicism that provide subtle references to republican ideals evident in ancient Greece and Rome. A few, like the campus of the Journey Museum & Learning Center or the Mother Butler Center, reference the Native history of the region. But more often, government buildings—from the City and School Administrative Center (CSAC) to the Civic Center—are generally utilitarian in design and function, reflecting the community’s recognition of the need for public services, but its financially conservative desire to restrain both budgets and any ostentatious celebration of the power of public agencies.

Education



Figure 27: Built as part of the consolidated school movement of the early 20th century, the original Rapid City High School was completed in 1923. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

Immigrants from other parts of the United States as well as foreign born residents who came primarily from Northern European countries placed a high value on literacy and formal education. The first schoolhouse opened downtown in 1876, and the first public high school was built seven years later, but these buildings did not last.³⁴ As late as 1915, most residents of Rapid City and Pennington County had

only a common school education. Just over one in ten had completed high school. In the entire county only 158 people had a college degree.³⁵ But as part of a nationwide movement to provide universal public education, the people of Rapid City erected more permanent and imposing schools including James Garfield Elementary (1910), Rapid City High School (1923) and Wilson Elementary (1929).³⁶ North, South, and West middle schools all opened prior to 1960, many elementary schools were built during the housing boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and Stevens High School and Central High School were constructed in 1969 and 1977, respectively.³⁷ Schools are associated with formative moments in the lives of many area

³⁴ “Timeline,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 4, 2020, accessed February 7, 2020.

³⁵ State of South Dakota, *Third Census* (1915), Table XIII “Showing Extent of Education, Eighteen Years and Over, By County, 1915,” 48–49.

³⁶ “Wilson Elementary,” Rapid City Area Schools, accessed February 7, 2020.

³⁷ “Rapid City Area Schools Embarks on Ambitious Plan to Modernize Facilities,” KOTA News, April 4, 2019, accessed February 8, 2020; “Old Rapid City High School Named to National Register of Historic Places,” *Rapid City Journal*, August 27, 2010, accessed February 8, 2020; “Timeline.”

residents. They are anchors of community memory whose walls contain stories about the formative years of many Rapid Citians.

State and Federal Government

As the largest West River community, Rapid City has long served as a central hub for state and federal government offices and resources, and government dollars flowing into the community have been important to the economy, especially after the construction of the Rapid City Air Base during World War II. In Rapid City and the Black Hills region, government's role as a significant landowner has also affected the ways in which people think about the landscape and the concept of public resources. Buildings, including various Forest Service and USDA offices, as well as field offices for the state's Congressional delegation, provide a physical connection to state and federal government.

Government-sponsored conservation management and outdoor recreation facilities are a central element in Rapid City's story. Several US Forest Service offices in Rapid City have been the administrative home of conservation management, wildfire prevention, and timber and water management work related to the vast Black Hills National Forest. The Mystic



Figure 28: The 30-acre Outdoor Campus West is a nature park and interpretive center run by the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department. Nestled between Sturgis Road and the South Canyon neighborhood, it presents ample opportunities for outdoor recreation, naturalist education, and interpretive programming about culturally significant plants and animals in and near the Black Hills. Map: Google Maps, 2021.

Ranger District office opened atop Highway 16 in 2006. The South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department also has offices in Rapid City, and in 2008, acquired more than 30 acres on the west side, which it uses as an educational outdoor recreation campus. For many residents, jobs and resources provided by these offices have helped define the local outdoor culture, shaped environmental ethics, and helped create economic opportunities.

Meanwhile, the various local, state, and federal government offices in Rapid City have also provided steady employment. In 1980, for example, 7,140 Rapid Citians held government jobs—the third largest sector for employment in the local economy.³⁸ In 2016,

³⁸ City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1980," Local History Collection, Rapid City Public Library, 4–5.

government, including federal civilian, military, and state and local agencies, contributed \$1.1 billion, or almost 17 percent, to the total GDP of the metropolitan area.³⁹

Because of the nation-to-nation relationship between tribes and the federal government, Rapid City remains an administrative home to several federal offices that serve Native American residents of Rapid City, surrounding communities, and area reservations. Many Native people, for example, travel to Rapid City for care at the Sioux San IHS Hospital facilities. Others come to Rapid City to study in state colleges and technical schools, or at the extension campus of Oglala Lakota College, a tribal college that is funded in part by federal support. Meanwhile, the primarily Native neighborhood called “Lakota Homes” was created with the support of a federal housing program in the 1960s.

Likewise, the presence of a federal courthouse in Rapid City evidences the city’s role in the complex legal relationship between Native people and tribes and the federal government. Issues related to treaty rights and sovereignty have been debated and adjudicated in the city. Within the walls of the courthouse, the lives of many Native people have been affected by changing interpretations of their individual rights and responsibilities under the law. The original court was in Rapid City’s first Federal Building at the corner of St. Joseph Street and Mount Rushmore road downtown, which first opened in 1911. Federal offices moved to the new Federal Building and US Courthouse on Ninth Street in Rapid City in 1973 (later named for Judge Andrew W. Bogue). The facility serves as an important reminder of these relationships.

Rapid City’s relative geographic isolation, far from the more populous eastern side of the state and the urban centers of the nation has also affected the city’s perspective on state and federal government and politics. The city has welcomed the visits of a number of US presidents over the years and the summer stay of President Calvin Coolidge. Presidential candidates have also traveled to the Black Hills as part of their national campaigns. But at other times, the city’s citizens have been frustrated by their lack of ability to shape state and federal policies in line with the community’s interests.

State and federal investments in higher education have also played an important role in the city. South Dakota Mines has been an anchor institution for more than a century. More recently, extension campuses for medical programs at South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota continue the long legacy of nursing education that traces back to St. John’s McNamara Hospital buildings on 11th Street, which opened in 1928.⁴⁰ For generations of young people—and for decades, primarily women—these places represented critical moments in their personal and professional development. The training and values imbued there have resonated throughout the local and regional healthcare systems.

³⁹ [US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.](#)

⁴⁰ Eric Steven Zimmer, *The Question Is “Why?”: Stanford M. Adelstein, A Jewish Life in South Dakota* (Rapid City, SD: Vantage Point Press, 2019), 139.

Other resources represent changing attitudes toward the role of government in the economy. In the 1920s, the state of South Dakota constructed and operated its own cement plant, which played an important role in the region's economic development. In 2001, the state sold the plant to a private company. Similarly, local residents debated municipal ownership and local regulation of various electric, gas, and telephone utilities at various times in the 20th century. Today, public facilities for water and sewage reflect a continuing role for government in public infrastructure, even as investor-owned utilities provide electricity, gas, telephone, cable and internet services subject to the regulation of state and federal agencies.

Military

Rapid City's economy receives strong direct and indirect support from state and federal military facilities and civilian personnel. As early as 1878, locals asked the US Marshall of Dakota Territory, the leading law enforcement officer, to station soldiers near the nascent town for protection. Indeed, Rapid City competed with towns like Deadwood for military resources, in part out of an awareness that large contingents of military personnel offered a boon to merchants.⁴¹ From the 1870s to the 1940s, the military presence in the Black Hills was largely consolidated at the veteran's hospitals in Hot Springs and Ft. Meade near Sturgis. During this era, Rapid City benefitted primarily from individuals traveling to and from these facilities.

With the creation of Ellsworth Air Force Base (originally the Rapid City Air Base and then Weaver Air Force Base) in 1942, government defense spending became a major factor in Rapid City's economy. These bases brought a permanent military presence—and a concomitant surge of middle and high-wage jobs—to the community. After closing temporarily after World War II, Ellsworth reopened as the Cold War began, eventually becoming a headquarters for several generations of bomber fleets and Minuteman Missile stations. Similarly, the South Dakota National Guard occupies two large acreages in western Rapid City. The Guard began using this property before World War I but took possession as part of the reapportionment of Rapid City Indian School property in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although the number of military and civilian personnel at Ellsworth fluctuated according to budget allocations over the years, the base has remained a substantial contributor to the local economy. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, Ellsworth provided around 700 civilian and 6,600 active duty military jobs.⁴²

These investments have contributed more than jobs and facilities to the Rapid City community. Service assignments brought men and women of diverse background to the region. Ellsworth Air Force Base, for example, became home to a large congregation of Jewish families in the 1950s and 1960s—an era that was, perhaps, the high point of Jewish

⁴¹ See *Black Hills Daily Times*, October 14, 1878; *Black Hills Daily Times*, May 24, 1878; *Black Hills Daily Times*, May 15, 1880.

⁴² City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1980," 5; City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1990," 4–7.

presence in Rapid City. And the military has left a lasting impression on local culture. Many servicemen and women return to the Black Hills in retirement, while others stay to raise their families. Rapid City has a strong culture that supports veterans and honors military service. Military service has defined the lives and careers of many area residents. Perhaps the largest federal investment in the Rapid City area, Ellsworth Air Force Base, lies outside city limits, but its creation led to the development of military housing developments as well as military-related social and service organizations like the VFW and TREA halls. These organizations also reflected the historically important relationship between the Black Hills and the Veterans Administration.

Economy

Thousands of square miles of thick forests, open ranchland, and resource-rich landscapes radiate from Rapid City making it the central trading point for a vast hinterland. For generations, people have been coming to Rapid City to exchange goods, purchase items shipped from faraway cities, and send their own goods to market. The city has also served as a gathering point for the exchange of information and knowledge ranging from the news of the day, to scientific research on mining and agriculture, to expert advice from lawyers, doctors, engineers, and other professionals.

After cycles of boom and bust in its earliest decades, Rapid City's economy settled into a pattern of slow and steady growth beginning in the 1920s. Relatively stable sources of federal funding for major institutions like Ellsworth Air Force Base and the National Parks and National Forests in the Black Hills have provided a solid base for the economy, along with state funding for major institutions like the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. The cash flows from these anchor institutions have helped fuel an economy focused primarily on trade, services, and tourism with a small, but significant, manufacturing sector that shifted over the years from agricultural and mineral processing to building supplies and machine parts. Rapid City thus strikes a balance between being an isolated community far from the growing urban centers of the Midwest and Intermountain Plains and an important economic, cultural, professional, and intellectual hub in the heart of a vast, rural region.

A Historic Passing Place

Transience has long been a part of Rapid City's history. As they traveled through the Black Hills, untold generations of Indigenous peoples camped along the rocky bluffs in "the Gap," where Rapid Creek passes through the Black Hills and meets the grasslands.⁴³ The site

⁴³ Sundstrom and Michael, "Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park, Rapid City," 2, 7.

offered protection from the elements and access to water. For the same reason, Rapid City's first non-Native settlers chose this place to establish Hay Camp and plan what became downtown Rapid City.

Later, wagon trains, railroads, highways, and airports connected the Rapid City

community to the outside world, and the community became known as the "Gate City." For generations, members of the military, students at South Dakota Mines, the National Business College, and area vocational schools temporarily lived in Rapid City while they completed service assignments or pursued an education. Dormitories, apartments, tourist courts, motels, and truck stops have been part of the community's architectural and lived history. Meanwhile, the community's location on I-90, far from any other metropolitan area, has continued its function as a key place for exchanging goods, ideas, and culture.

As a geographically isolated crossroads with a strong tourism economy, Rapid City has long reflected a social combination of deeply rooted families and communities living alongside sojourners here for seasonal employment, military service at the base, or the pursuit of a college degree. At times, multi-generational residents and sojourners have moved in very different social environments.



Figure 29: Completed in South Dakota in 1976, Interstate 90 passes through a second, northern gap in the ridgeline that bisects Rapid City.

Subsistence and Transportation

The earliest residents of what is now Rapid City used the area's access to water and timber to protect themselves from the elements. They also relied on the ample natural resources—game and fish, medicinal plants, edible flora, and stones for tools and trade—to build strong economies that balanced subsistence with participation in vast regional and continent-wide trade networks. First, Native peoples used dogs to move, hunt, and trade; later, horses enabled them to travel faster and further to hunt, procure, and exchange goods and ideas. In this way, they blended subsistence hunting, gathering, and agriculture with travel and transportation, thereby establishing the framework for the transportation industry that would later make significant contributions to the local economy.

Euro-American settlers came hoping to find gold but stayed to meet the demands of miners and other new arrivals who needed smelting services and lumber and desired beef, agricultural products, dry goods, and other trade items. The city's service industries—which included clerks, barbers, bakers, bankers, attorneys, washerwomen, butchers, and more—

developed as the city grew.⁴⁴ Between 1900 and 1905, the leading occupations among men in Rapid City were farmer, railway employee, miner, and stockmen—in that order. A strong sense of entrepreneurialism and a business culture defined by personal relationships and social networks took root during this period.

To allow mineral and agricultural producers to ship their goods to market, people needed access to the Black Hills. Accordingly, transportation emerged as a key pillar of the local economy. In the early days, Rapid City was a watering and supply hub for the many stagecoaches and freighters that connected Northern Hills boomtowns to communities like Pierre or Cheyenne, Wyoming, and residents established stables and corrals near downtown in the late 1870s.⁴⁵ The first rail line, known as the Fremont, Elkhorn, & Missouri Valley Railroad, was completed in Rapid City in June 1886, and the first train rolled in to a major welcome celebration that Independence Day.⁴⁶ Work on the line continued and connected Rapid City to Deadwood in 1890.⁴⁷ In subsequent years, the city would add a number of rail lines, including the Crouch Line that connected Rapid City to the central Black Hills, taking passengers all the way to Mystic by 1906. The next year, the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad reached Rapid City, offering passenger service between Rapid City and Chicago until 1960.⁴⁸

Together, these developments brought commerce to Rapid City. Locals built grand homes and buildings and department stores made of brick and stone. Between the 1870s and the 1910s, however, the city's fortunes and population ebbed and flowed in response to fluctuations in the surrounding agricultural economy. Meanwhile, the cities of Lead and Deadwood experienced growth and prosperity fueled by the success of the Homestake Mine, the local Slime Plant, and all the industry related to extracting, preparing, and shipping gold and other minerals to market. In the 1920s, however, Rapid City's position as a transportation hub led to its expansion. The first airline in South Dakota, Rapid Air Lines, Inc., began operations in the city in 1926.⁴⁹ By 1925, the city ranked sixth among the state's urban communities with 7,465 people, and for the first time, the city accounted for a slim majority of Pennington County's residents. As the tourism industry developed around new parks and monuments like Mount Rushmore, Rapid City solidified its position as the locus of economic activity in the Black Hills. It overtook Lead and Deadwood as the largest community in the region by 1930.

⁴⁴ Brenna Maloney, "Rapid City Downtown Area Survey," April 12, 2017, 16–18; Linde, Martha Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills* (Rapid City, SD: Jesse Y. Sundstrom/Fiske Printing, 1984), 58–59. South Dakota State Census, 1905.

⁴⁵ Maloney, "Rapid City Downtown Area Survey," 18.

⁴⁶ David Seidel, *Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley R.R. Co.* (Columbus, NE: Harbor Mist Publications, 1988), 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁸ Pechan and Groethe, 21; Mark Hufstetler and Michael Bedeau, "South Dakota's Railroads: An Historic Context" (South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, July 1998, Revised December 2007), 18.

⁴⁹ Robert Wright, *Little Business on the Prairie* (Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies, 2015), 65.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, major state and federal investments in road transportation expanded the network of highways that connected Rapid City to surrounding states and cities and the more rugged parts of the Black Hills. Much of this construction depended on limestone quarried within Rapid City by the Black Hills Marble Quarry company, which was sold to Pete Lien in 1944; the state-owned cement plant down the road; and the Hills Materials Company, which provided construction materials for the



Figure 30: Located on either side of the railroad tracks that brought their grain to market, downtown grain siloes like Aby's Feed and Seed and the Hubbard Mill played a key role in Rapid City's early economy. In recent decades, agriculture's influence on the local economy has diminished substantially.

Northwestern Engineering Company that built many of the new routes that snaked their way into the Black Hills.⁵⁰ By the 1960s and 1970s, plans were underway to expand and replace Highway 16, the major artery between Rapid City and Sioux Falls, with I-90, which also connected to surrounding states.⁵¹ As these routes developed, service stations like the Windmill Truck Stop, built around 1970, became landmarks to area residents. Meanwhile, by the 1980s,

Rapid City was home to several major shipping companies, like Salt Creek Freightways, All American Transportation, Inc., and Barber Transportation—the latter of which was one of the city's largest employers at that time.⁵²

The resource and transportation industries complemented one another and led to the creation of rail yards and large storage facilities. Among them were the grain elevator at the Aby's Feed & Seed complex, which was built in 1911; the silo of the Tri-State Milling Company (known to many as the "Hubbard Mill") across Omaha Street from Aby's, which dates to 1938; and the former Milwaukee Freight House between 6th and 7th Streets.⁵³ Commerce demanded the construction of large industrial buildings like metal pull-barns, which served as warehouses for farm equipment and highway freight companies. These

⁵⁰ J.D. Ames, "Lien family has built an empire on \$100 and some rock," *Rapid City Journal*, December 29, 1980, 11; Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"*, 112–16.

⁵¹ Bernie Hunhoff, "[Old Highway 16](#)," *South Dakota Magazine*, accessed February 12, 2020.

⁵² City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1980," 4–6.

⁵³ Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City*, 21; Scott Feldman, "New Store Opens in Aby's Feed & Seed in Rapid City," *Rapid City Journal*, December 4, 2014; [SHPO Case Report: Aby's Feed & Seed](#), accessed February 12, 2020; Mark Hufstetler and Michael Bedeau, "[South Dakota's Railroads, An Historic Context](#)" (December 2007), 42.

structures reflect the relationship between the geographic isolation and resource richness of the Black Hills, as well as the entrepreneurial spirit of some in the Rapid City community.

Over the last several decades, continuing consolidation in agricultural processing has had a major impact on Rapid City as producers increasingly bypassed the community to send their livestock or crops to other parts of the country. By the time fire destroyed the Federal Beef processing plant in 2002, Pennington County ranked as the least agriculturally dependent county in the entire state, and land underneath the plant was rezoned to make way for professional office buildings, apartments, and homes in what became known as Founders' Park.⁵⁴

That same year, 2002, the Homestake Mine in Lead closed after 125 years of operation, significantly reducing mining's stake in the regional economy. A few years later, a private donor, the US Department of Energy, and the state of South Dakota committed funds to open the Sanford Underground Research Facility, a physics laboratory that has brought several major projects to the area with ties to the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. As the economy has evolved, transportation's contribution to the region's gross domestic product has declined compared to other sectors.⁵⁵ Today, resources and transportation—once bedrocks of the local business culture—make limited contributions to a broader, more diverse Rapid City economy.

Retail and Tourism

Trade, services and tourism have long accounted for the vast majority of private sector jobs in Rapid City. As of 2016, all other economic sectors combined (wholesale trade; transportation; mining; manufacturing; finance, insurance and real estate; construction; and agriculture, forestry, and fishing) accounted for about one-fourth of the total sales garnered by the combined retail and services sectors, each of which relies on the local hospitality, dining, entertainment, retail shopping, and professional services industries.⁵⁶ Tourism makes a major contribution to this retail sector.

Although the search for gold sparked the initial, non-Native settlement of Rapid City, trade quickly emerged as the focal point of the city's economy. With Euro-American migration to the West River area in the first decade of the 20th century, the population of the city swelled to 3,854. At the same time, the work life of the people of Pennington County began to change. The number of men self-identifying as miners declined from 216 to 100 between 1905 and 1915. The number of blacksmiths dropped from 32 to 16. Meanwhile, the population of teachers more than doubled (to 130), as did the number of

⁵⁴ Jim Holland, "Federal Beef burning," *Rapid City Journal*, January 31, 2002, 1.

⁵⁵ In 2017, transportation and warehousing accounted for \$160.1 million in a \$6.881 billion metropolitan area economy, or about 2.3 percent. See US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.

⁵⁶ "2016 Rapid City Gross Sales (By Sector)," Black Hills Knowledge Network, accessed February 13, 2020.

barbers (12 to 25). There were 91 merchants in 1915, along with 13 lawyers and 22 physicians.

Although Rapid City continued to grow in the 1920s, its economy faced many of the same challenges as most other Midwestern agricultural communities. Farmers and stockgrowers suffered as commodities prices plummeted. Bank foreclosures rose in the rural Midwest. The pattern of exodus from the countryside and the growth of cities and towns continued. This migration contributed to Rapid City's emergence as the largest community in the Black Hills by 1930.

Between 1915 and 1930, Rapid City shifted definitively towards a service-based, urban employment model. More bookkeepers, barbers, lawyers, physicians, auto livery employees, merchants, salespeople, contractors, carpenters, real estate agents, and insurance agents came to town during this period. Many of these industries were male-dominated, and as professionals and tradesmen moved in, many were accompanied by partners who identified their

occupation as "housewife." More and more women, however, found work as stenographers, teachers, telephone operators, nurses, dressmakers, bookkeepers, bankers and even cigar makers, while fewer women were working as domestic servants.

Overall, employment in the city was growing to meet the needs of an

urban population and to service the agricultural and mineral economies of the hinterland.

With the advent of the automobile and the construction of the first highways across the state and through the Black Hills, tourism added to the trading economy previously focused on agricultural and natural resources exploitation. In the 19th century, tourists had come to the region by rail to visit Hot Springs and Deadwood. In the early 20th century, local boosters marketed the Black Hills as a national tourist destination, pushed for the creation of state and national parks and monuments, and exercised their influence in politics and business to ensure that everything from zoning ordinances to highway plans empowered local entrepreneurs to create the attractions, restaurants, and hotels that would entertain and support visitors. In 1927, these boosters help convince President Calvin Coolidge to escape the heat and humidity of Washington, D.C. and spend the summer in the Black Hills.

Coolidge's presence and his endorsement of the construction of Mount Rushmore

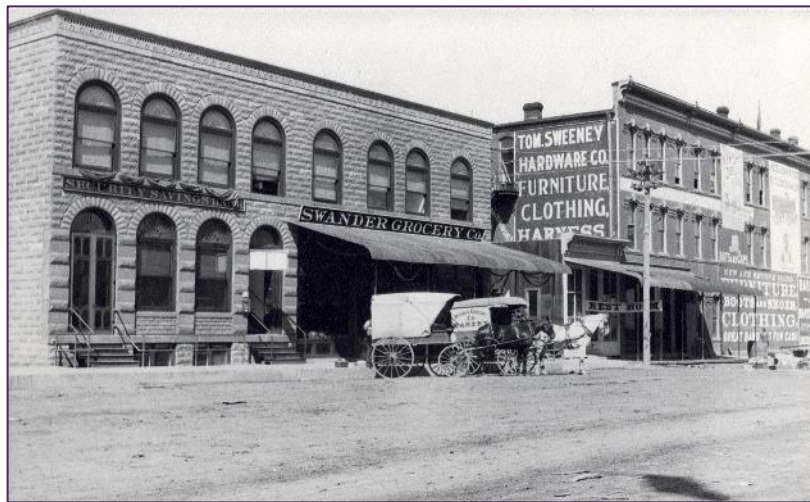


Figure 31: Visitors from across the Northern Plains traveled to the "Gate City" to purchase goods and supplies at stores like Swander Grocery and the Sweeney Hardware Co. Image: Minnulusa Historical Association.

helped accelerate the growth of the tourism economy. The construction of the Hotel Alex Johnson in 1927 reflected the growing importance of this industry and identified downtown as a hub for visitors. Over the next several decades, as highways improved and more Americans purchased automobiles, a host of entrepreneurs launched roadside attractions aimed at the tourists headed to Mount Rushmore. Tourism sites like Sitting Bull Crystal Cave offered the Native community opportunities to earn extra cash while preserving songs and ceremonies through public performances. Nonetheless, Native people were offered few other opportunities to reap the benefits of a tourism economy that used Indigenous arts, culture, and history to attract visitors from faraway locations.⁵⁷

In this era, locals used federal Depression relief funds to restore Canyon Lake Park and build the iconic statues at Dinosaur Park. With the United States' entry into World War II in 1941, gas rationing and war mobilization depressed the tourist economy. In 1946, the community launched the event that came to be known as the Central States Fair on donated ranch land on the east side of town.⁵⁸ After the war, as the national economy boomed, new waves of visitors came to the Black Hills including many middle-class families traveling on limited budgets. Their preference for value over luxury fit well with the generally down-home culture of Rapid City and stimulated the construction of tourist courts and motels along the main highways in and out of town.

Over the decades, a library, arts center, public museums, and a civic center brought events and programming to town, attracting new kinds of visitors and giving traditional tourists more reasons to extend their stay in the city. In 1969, with financial support from banker Art Dahl, the Stavekirke or "Chapel in the Hills" was constructed near Canyon Lake as a tourist destination and prayer space, as well as an ode to the Norwegian Lutheran influence in Rapid City. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Rapid City placed bronze statues on downtown street corners. The first of these represented regional Native American history, and later manifestations included statues of each US president.

Like many cities across the country, Rapid City's physical development was powerfully affected by the arrival of the interstate. In the 1970s, the downtown area added tall office complexes like the Turnac Tower and the Black Hills Corporation headquarters to its skyline and the prominent tower of Monument Health (Rapid City Regional Hospital) stood at the south edge of the city. Meanwhile, the construction of the Rushmore Mall, which opened in 1978, began to siphon retail businesses from the downtown corridor. Over the next 40 years, the I-90 corridor became a major focus for new hospitality, retail, and industrial developments.

The development of the Rushmore Mall and associated retail along the interstate reflected the increasing dominance of national chain stores in the local retail market, a

⁵⁷ Eric Steven Zimmer, "Historical and Cultural Significance Report: Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns," February 2016, 7–13. See also Nelson, "Dreams and Dust in the Black Hills."

⁵⁸ Bart Pfankuch, "Central States Fair Looks Back While Moving Forward This Year," *Rapid City Journal*, August 15, 2015.

pattern that traced its roots back to the late 1920s. Although local franchisees often did very well, profits in many other cases were siphoned out of the community to headquarters cities, limiting the pool of capital available to local entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, numerous efforts to revitalize downtown met with limited success between the 1970s and the 2000s. When business owner and philanthropist Ray Hillenbrand and the City of Rapid City committed millions of dollars to the construction and programming of Main Street Square, foot traffic associated with programs at the Square surged. In combination with decades of historic preservation planning in the downtown area, the venue brought a new vitality to the heart of Rapid City.

Healthcare

Medical care and related services are another key pillar of the Rapid City economy. For much of the city's early history, charitable organizations associated with Christian denominations or, in the case of veterans and Native Americans, the government, operated the community's hospitals. Early physicians worked out of their homes or private offices.

Around 1911, a surgeon and his nurse founded Methodist Deaconess Hospital. Operating out of the nurse's house from about 1911, it relocated to a prominent brick building a few blocks off West Boulevard in 1923.⁵⁹ A group of Benedictine nuns moved to Rapid City from Sturgis in 1928 and opened a 75-bed facility and nursing program at St. John's McNamara Hospital on 11th Street.⁶⁰ Another large facility called Bennett-Clarkson Memorial Hospital opened on the West Side of Rapid City in 1954.⁶¹ Along with the Indian Health Services facility at Sioux San, clinics at Ellsworth Air Force Base, and the VA hospitals in Hot Springs and Sturgis, St. John's and Bennett Clarkson were the primary care centers for most Rapid Citians.

Nationally, the expansion of private insurance programs after World War II transformed the health care system in the United States and contributed to increasing professionalization and secularization. With federal funding, community hospitals grew in size, featuring specialties and sub-specialties supported by private and government insurance



Figure 32. The logo for Rapid City Regional Hospital adorned the tower of the region's largest medical facility for years. Built in the late 1970s, the hospital was rebranded as Monument Health in 2020.

⁵⁹ George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory, Volume 5* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company 1915), 26. Liz Almlie, "[Places of Care and Science: Hospital Buildings in South Dakota](#)," accessed February 6, 2021.

⁶⁰ Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"* 139.

⁶¹ Almlie, "Places of Care and Science."

payments.⁶² In Rapid City, competitive pressures collided with market demand for new facilities and new programs. In 1973, Bennett-Clarkson and St. John's McNamara consolidated into Rapid City Regional Hospital, which operated out of both of the former hospital buildings for several years.

Rapid City Regional planned and built a large new hospital complex on the south side of town. Opened in 1979, the facility became the headquarters for "Regional Health," a hospital network that consolidated various community health clinics between the 1980s and 2010s and became the primary medical network for the West River region.⁶³

As the median age of the population in western South Dakota increased in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Rapid City became a destination for retirees. New senior living facilities, retirement homes, and long-term care facilities were built. West Hills Village, for example, developed in 1980, underwent significant expansion starting in 2000 when the association bought Clarkson Health Care. Other nursing homes and retirement centers provided an expanding market for health care services. In addition, several private specialty-driven therapy and surgery centers emerged around the community to serve the growing market. Meanwhile, IHS continued to provide healthcare to the Native community and began developing plans for new facilities.

In 2020, Regional Health merged into the Minnesota-based Mayo Clinic network of care, rebranding itself as Monument Health. As recently as 2016, the CEO of Regional Health estimated that the hospital network's economic impact in the Black Hills totaled more than \$1 billion each year, including an institutional payroll of \$300 million and a contribution to the employment of 9,000 additional service providers across the region.⁶⁴ Healthcare facilities in Rapid City, moreover, are anchors of memory for area residents, many of whom experienced significant life events—from births to major surgeries, or the loss of loved ones—inside their walls. Others learned their profession in these places and some spent decades in service to local hospital networks and the patients they treat.

⁶² Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

⁶³ Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"* 202–3.

⁶⁴ Jim Holland, "[Regional Health Leader: Some Employees Not Devoted to Being No. 1 Are Gone](#)," *Rapid City Journal* March 26, 2016, accessed February 13, 2020. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, health care and social assistance accounted for \$916 million, or roughly 14 percent, of the metropolitan area's total GDP in 2017. US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.

Section F: Significance and Sense of Place

This section explores ways to connect the interpretive framework outlined above to concrete ideas about Rapid City's history, to surface opportunities for historic preservation, and to position the RCHPC to pursue its strategic goals and priorities. It describes the guidelines set forth by the National Park Service and the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, as well as an additional category called "Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place." This section then summarizes a series of nine focused investigations into discrete topics about Rapid City's history and, in each case, lists associated property types and features significant to Rapid City's history. It provides anchor points from which the RCHPC can pursue surveys and related work in coming years. (The full text of each focused investigation, as well as supporting documentary material, is available as an appendix to this document.)

Eligibility Criteria

National Register of Historic Places and South Dakota State Register of Historic Places

The National Park Service (NPS), Department of the Interior maintains the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP, "the National Register"), the official list of historic places designated for preservation in the United States. The NRHP is authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is governed by NPS guidelines and criteria.

Meanwhile, South Dakota law conveys preservation authority and oversight of municipal preservation activities to state authorities. Under SDCL 1-19A and SDCL 1-19B, the SHPO conducts surveys of historic resources across the state; maintains the State Register of Historic Places; promotes public interest in historic preservation; and supports, funds, and provides assistance to local historic preservation commissions as well as private entities engaged in preservation projects to identify significant properties and articulate the qualities that make them significant to local and national history.

Both the NPS and the SHPO refer to the NPS bulletin "[How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation \(revised 1997\)](#)," in which the NPS provides the following guidelines for evaluating properties for potential listing on the National Register of Historic Places:

Criteria for Evaluation

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Criteria Considerations

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- A building or structure removed from its original location but which is primarily significant for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building associated with his or her productive life; or
- A cemetery that derives its primary importance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or

- A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

Integrity

A property must also retain integrity, or the ability to convey its significance. Places that have changed or been altered dramatically often lose integrity. To retain integrity a property will possess several of the following aspects:

- **Location:** the place where significant activities occurred.
- **Design:** the composition of elements comprising the form, plan, and spatial organization of the property (usually not applied to prehistoric sites but can be for some site/feature-types).
- **Setting:** the physical environment within and surrounding the property.
- **Materials:** The construction materials (usually not applied to prehistoric sites).
- **Workmanship:** The ways materials have been fashioned for functional and decorative purposes, planting and maintenance of vegetation, and construction methods (usually not applied to prehistoric sites but can be for some site/feature-types).
- **Feeling:** evoked by the presence of physical characteristics that convey the sense of past time and place. Integrity of feeling reflects the cumulative effect of setting, design, materials, and workmanship.
- **Association:** the direct link between a property and important events or people that shaped it (usually not applied to prehistoric sites but can be for some site/feature-types).

Other Considerations Contribute to Sense of Place

In addition to the kinds of historic and cultural resources that are customarily surveyed and preserved by historic preservation commissions, other community resources contribute to Rapid City's sense of place. They are identified below, and although there is considerable overlap with some resources or aspects of resources that would be included in a formal survey or nomination process, they are described here not necessarily to assess them under existing state or federal guidelines and procedures. Rather, recognizing their significance positions the RCHPC to meet its strategic goals and priorities.

Understanding the broad and diverse history of Rapid City and identifying new kinds of assets—natural and built, historic and cultural, constructed and collected—shape the local sense of place.

Landscape, Waterscape, and Skyscape Elements

Given Rapid City's deep Indigenous history and strong outdoor culture, the natural environment comprises a key piece of the sense of place that defines the community. For example, the cottonwood trees along Rapid Creek may remind many Rapid Citians of the 1972 flood. Similarly, many community members value the clear night skies and limited light pollution that enhance the Rapid City environment. Although beyond the parameters of traditional preservation, these resources are worth considering as the RCHPC considers community outreach and engagement projects.

Traditional Cultural Properties

Some historical and cultural resources are not associated with a specific place or feature but speak to more generalized patterns or aspects of community history. For example, plants and herbs of significance to Native peoples—like sage or sweetgrass—grow throughout Rapid City. Other spaces or features speak to underrepresented narratives of the community's history, such as the parking lot on the 700 block of Main Street, which used to be the location of a complex that housed one of the few African American-owned bars in Rapid City in the 1970s. Recognizing these spaces can create opportunities for outreach, interpretive, and educational initiatives.

*Any Traditional Cultural Properties related to the Indigenous history of Rapid City and the Black Hills should be evaluated in coordination with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and leaders within the Native community of Rapid City and in accordance with National Register Bulletin 38: "[Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties](#)."

Community Cultural Elements

Finally, some historic resources are not spaces or places at all. Instead, they are organizations, institutions, and archival and artifact collections that capture and tell the story of Rapid City's history. As the RCHPC develops plans for assessing historical assets across the community or building collaborative partnerships with cultural, educational, and historical institutions, it could use surveys of these existing assets to promote their use and understand their applicability to broader commission and city goals. Engaging in this way also creates opportunities for collaboration.

Assessing Significance

Below, brief summaries of nine in-depth investigations establish key areas of historic context for Rapid City. The topics grew out of discussions with the RCHPC and the community and intentionally focused on parts of Rapid City's history that had not been emphasized by the Commission to date, related to developments that occurred between 1946 and 1972 (post-WWII to the Black Hills Flood), or both. As the 50th anniversary of the Flood approaches in 2022, many structures and spaces created or rebuilt immediately after the flood will begin to meet the NRHP and SRHP's 50-year criteria. Their inclusion below reflects the intention of the RCHPC to conduct further research into post-flood spaces as they surpass this threshold.

The lists of "Associated Property Types" and "Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place" below are not exhaustive, nor should the listing of specific spaces or properties as examples be taken to suggest eligibility or non-eligibility for the NRHP or SRHP. Rather, they are listed because each space was identified through research and windshield surveys as significant to key stories in the development of Rapid City's history.

Except where properties already listed on the NRHP are noted, no assessment of individual properties—including research into their integrity or eligibility—was conducted during the creation of this Historic Context Document. The lists exist to offer a starting point from which the RCHPC can undertake further research and surveys in years to come.

Summary Investigations

The Ridgeline and the Creek: Landscape and Memory in Rapid City

For millennia, the natural resources and allure of the Black Hills have drawn people to the region to hunt, explore, pray, recreate, and live in and around what is now Rapid City. The community sits where the open prairie meets rocky hills and thick forests, and where Rapid Creek flows from the Black Hills towards the Cheyenne River.

For generations, area residents have shaped their lives, in terms of both work and play, in response to the opportunities and limitations presented by these surroundings. High ridges on Skyline Drive and Cowboy Hill, flowing waters in Rapid Creek and Canyon Lake, and pine forests and grasslands fill the city limits. Rapid City's scenery attracts visitors and transplants to the area. Although connections to place are articulated through different cultural and spiritual lenses, many residents feel a strong connection to the landscapes, waterscapes, and skylines in and around Rapid City.

The settlement of Rapid City was part of the imposition of Euro-American land ethics onto the Northern Plains. Throughout Rapid City's history, as in much of the American West, competition for land and natural resources has fueled tensions over public and private management, industry and development, and preservation and conservation. These tensions have shaped and reshaped the landscape even as natural forces have altered the environment through slow processes like erosion or climate change, as well as sudden disasters like floods, fires, and blizzards. The landscape that endures, reflected in public parks and open spaces, has played a critical part in building and sustaining community identity and character.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

- Outdoor picnic shelters

Examples:

- Shelters at Canyon Lake Park
- Shelters at Old Storybook Island
- Shelters at Memorial Park

- Tourism shops:

Example:

- Gift shop at Dinosaur Park

Structures

- Commercial signage

Example:

- Signage on rocks along Cowboy Hill
- Stonework and earthworks
 - Examples:
 - Retaining walls along Skyline Drive and at Canyon Lake Park
 - Drainage pools at Canyon Lake
 - Amphitheater on Skyline Drive
 - Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery
 - Dam at Canyon Lake
 - “M” on “M Hill”

Objects

- Communications infrastructure
 - Example:
 - Radio towers on Skyline Drive and Cowboy Hill

Sites

- Designed landscapes
 - Examples:
 - Greenway
 - Sioux Park sundial
 - Storybook Island
- Recreational Complexes
 - Examples:
 - Baseball/Softball fields at Canyon Lake and Harney Little League
 - Floyd Fitzgerald Stadium
- Archeological Sites
 - Example:
 - Indigenous rock art at base of Cowboy Hill
 - Settlers’ inscriptions at base of Cowboy Hill

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Landscape, Waterscape, and Skyscape Elements

- Creeks and Streams
- Canyon Lake and Memorial Pond
- Cottonwood and poplar trees along Rapid Creek
- Viewsheds to night sky
- “Hangman’s Tree”

Traditional Cultural Properties

- Grasses, herbs, and culturally significant flora
- Culturally-significant animals
- Skyscapes (re: Indigenous star knowledge)

Community Cultural Elements

- Landscape art at Dahl Fine Arts Center
- Landscape art in Art Alley
- Museum of Geology and Devereaux Library, South Dakota Mines
- Local history collections at the Rapid City Public Library
- Collections related to environmental history at the Minnilusa Historical Association

Hallowed Ground: Rapid City's Historic Cemeteries

Cemeteries hold more than the remains of our forebearers. They preserve significant elements of community history and memory. Cultural markers on gravestones and tombs bear the racial, ethnic, and artistic heritage of a place. Epitaphs reflect the values and beliefs of the dead and those who buried them. Clusters of graves help document natural disasters and other mass death events. Flags and memorials honor service and sacrifice. Cemetery landscapes speak to patterns of land use, development, and planning. And well-manicured burial grounds demonstrate the intentionality of mourning and remembering. Dilapidated or unmarked graves can show the opposite.

Since its founding in 1876, Rapid City has had at least six organized cemeteries: the Plateau Cemetery off St. Cloud Street, Mountain View Cemetery and Mount Calvary Cemetery off Sheridan Lake Road, Evergreen Cemetery off Highway 44 in Rapid Valley, Pine Lawn Memorial Park and Gardens on Tower Road, and the cemetery at St. Martin's Monastery. Three other significant burial sites are known to have existed in or near the city. One was by the Rapid City Regional Airport and was known as the Mentch Methodist Cemetery. The other, a group of unmarked graves of Native Americans who died at the Rapid City Indian School or the Sioux Sanitarium, has no name. Finally, a few references suggest that another, long-forgotten cemetery may have existed on Rapid City's north side, near what is now St. Therese the Little Flower Church.

Associated Property Types:

Sites

Cemeteries

Examples: According to the NRHP criteria stated above and the NPS bulletin "[Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places](#)," cemeteries are only eligible for the NRHP when they meet specific criteria. The table below lists every known cemetery and burial place in Rapid City. A detailed survey of the history of each would be required for formal evaluation or nomination to the NRHP or SRHP.

Type	Name	Location	First Burial	Status
*Church	Mount Calvary Cemetery	SW ¼ x NE ½ Sec 10 T1N R7E	1888	Active (now city run)
*Church	Mentch Methodist Cemetery	NW ¼ x NW ¼ Sec 32 T1 R9E	1889	Abandoned 1906
*Church	St Martin's Monastery Cemetery	St. Martin's Monastery, 1851 City Springs Road	1961	Active
Church	"Old Catholic Cemetery"	Near St. Therese The Little Flower Church [exact location unknown]	1883	Abandoned, Date Unknown
*Community	Mountain View	NW1/4 x NE ¼ Sec 10 T1N R7E	1888	Active
*Community	Plateau Cemetery	Near Center Sec 1 T1N R7E	1878 or 1879	Abandoned 1888
*Privately Owned	Evergreen Cemetery	NE ¼ x SE1/4 Sec 5 T1N R8E	1888	Last Burial 1922
*Privately Owned	Pine Lawn Memorial Gardens	W ½ x SW ¼ Sec 14 T1N R7E	1936	Active
Federally owned? (Originally DOI land)	Rapid City Indian School/Sioux Sanitarium	Hillside adjacent to West Middle School	Unmarked, likely early 1900s	Unmarked/Date Abandoned Unknown

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Traditional Cultural Properties

- Graves at the Rapid City Indian School/Sioux Sanitarium

Community Cultural Elements

- Records held at Behrens-Wilson Funeral Home
- Records held at Rausch Monuments
- Papers and oral histories by residents of the Sioux Addition or Lakota Homes neighborhoods
- Death records and related documents held by the Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project

Indigenous Presence: Deep History to 2020

The Native American community in Rapid City has a rich, dynamic history. It extends back thousands of years and reaches into the present, where Native peoples are enmeshed in all aspects of community life. Over many generations, Native people lived on and used the land that became Rapid City. After the city's founding, they returned, often under challenging circumstances. Nevertheless, they built communities and advocated for their people.

The Indigenous history of Rapid City is most apparent in the landscape along the creek, where Native families camped long before Euro-Americans came to the area. Well into the 20th century, they lived near the Sioux San area, in the downtown and North Side corridors, and especially in the neighborhoods that grew around the Sioux Addition and Lakota Homes. The Indigenous community's presence is evident in open outdoor spaces, in churches, in community gathering places like the Mother Butler Center, and in public institutions like the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, where community sports, meetings, events, and gatherings occur each year.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

- Federal facilities that served Native Americans and Native American Tribes

Examples:

- Sioux San/Oyate Health Center campus
- Andrew W. Bogue Federal Building

- Churches

Examples:

- Mother Butler Center / St. Isaac Jogues
- St. Therese the Little Flower
- Woyatan Lutheran Church
- St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

- Municipal buildings

Examples:

- Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
- Halley Park / former Sioux Indian Museum building

- Private businesses

Examples:

- Prairie Edge (already on NRHP)

- Octagonal Barn at Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns (already on NRHP)

Structures

- Indigenous ceremonial structures

Example:

- Inipi lodges at Sioux San/Oyate Health Center

Objects

- Stonework

Example:

- Retaining wall, stairs, and logo at Sioux San / Oyate Health Center

Sites

- Historic campsites

Example:

- Osh Kosh Camp/Indian Camp (near present-day Founders Park)
- Founders Park North
- Creek area from Sioux San to Central States Fairgrounds

- Predominantly Native neighborhoods

Example:

- Sioux Addition
- Lakota Homes

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Landscape, Waterscape, and Skyscape Elements

- Rapid Creek
- Prairie/grasslands at Outdoor Campus West

Traditional Cultural Properties

- Culturally relevant flora and fauna

Community Cultural Elements

- Sioux Indian Museum collection, Journey Museum & Learning Center
- Indigenous art collections at the Dahl Fine Arts Center
- Local history collection, Rapid City Public Library
- Papers and oral histories by members of the Sioux Addition, Lakota Homes, and the broader Native community
- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association

Rapid City Indian School / Sioux San Lands

A large section of Rapid City's West Side was once the campus of the Rapid City Indian School. Like federal boarding schools across the country, the school sought to assimilate Native American children into American society. The property of the Rapid City Indian School included more than 1,200 acres. The history of that facility and the surrounding area affected development and race relations across Rapid City for generations.

The Rapid City Indian School operated from 1898 until 1933. During the Great Depression, the federal government converted the boarding school to a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. During that period, the campus underwent landscaping and renovation by the CCC and Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1938, the "Sioux Sanitarium" opened on the grounds and provided medical care to Native American tuberculosis patients for several decades. In the 1950s, the Indian Health Service took over the facilities and has provided healthcare to members of Native Nations ever since. Today, the facility is known as the "Oyate Health Center" and serves tribal members under contracts between the federal government and area tribes. Plans for major changes to the campus and facilities are underway in 2021.

As the campus transitioned at midcentury, Rapid City was growing. In 1948, Congress passed a law allowing the Department of the Interior (DOI) to give land to several entities and groups of community residents. The process through which these lands were divided reshaped the West Side of Rapid City and contributed to broader settlement patterns across the city, especially on the North Side, where many Native residents moved after the creation of the Sioux Addition.

Recently, the history of the boarding school and the associated lands have sparked a great deal of community interest. In November 2020, the city council, with the mayor's support, passed a resolution acknowledging the challenging history of the boarding school lands.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

Structures relevant to the Native history of the Rapid City Indian School Lands

Examples:

- Sioux San / Oyate Health Center campus
- Churches that received boarding school land
- South Dakota National Guard buildings on boarding school land
- Schools on boarding school land
- Residential neighborhoods on boarding school land

Sites

Gravesites of children from the Rapid City Indian School

Examples:

- Graves at Rapid City Indian School
- Mountain View Cemetery
- Churches, Parks, neighborhoods, and South Dakota National Guard facilities on the former property of the Rapid City Indian School

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Landscape, Waterscape, and Skyscape Elements

- Rapid Creek

Traditional Cultural Properties

- Culturally-relevant flora and fauna

Community Cultural Elements

- Papers and oral histories of the Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project
- Papers and oral histories by descendants of Rapid City Indian School students and Sioux Sanitarium patients
- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association

Diverse Rapid City: Catholic, Jewish, and African American History

Rapid City was founded as part of the process of Euro-American conquest of lands long held by the Indigenous people of the Black Hills and the Northern Great Plains. Ideas about race played an important part in this process and shaped the segregated society that evolved in the wake of this conflict. For decades, white Euro-Americans represented the dominant racial group in the city. Myriad ethnic, religious, and cultural differences persisted, which fed other tensions within the community. Meanwhile, Native Americans and other peoples of color shaped their lives, often in the face of discrimination, in their own search for community. Against this backdrop of conflict, however, the city also learned to celebrate the diversity that fed a shared sense of belonging and common identity.

Understanding, documenting, and preserving these diverse histories supports the City of Rapid City's strategic goals. Although related to multiple City priorities, further explorations of the histories of historically marginalized groups will assist in two specific areas. The Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC) can move the City towards its goal of being "recognized as a leader in attracting, expanding and retaining diverse businesses and services." Second, it can help the community strengthen its reputation as "a strong, vibrant and culturally-diverse community."⁶⁵

Documenting the stories of these groups presents steep challenges. Many of the minority communities in Rapid City have been and remain small and diffuse. Often, only a handful of personal accounts or other historical records—both in terms of archival source material and of physical markers and monuments—link their experiences to the natural and built landscapes of Rapid City.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

Churches relevant to minority groups in Rapid City

Examples:

- Catholic churches and facilities across Rapid City
- Faith Temple Church of God in Christ/First Congregational Church (already on NRHP)
- Surbeck Center at South Dakota Mines
- Chapel at Ellsworth Air Force Base
- Eagles Club (1410 Centre Street)

Businesses relevant to minority groups in Rapid City

Examples:

⁶⁵ "[Rapid City Comprehensive Plan](#)" (2014), 4–5.

- Hotel Alex Johnson (part of Downtown Historic District)
- Duhamel Building (part of Downtown Historic District)
- St. John's McNamara and School of Nursing (part of West Boulevard Historic District)
- Prairie Edge Building (part of Downtown Historic District)

Sites

Spaces relevant to the history of minority groups in Rapid City

Examples:

- 700 Block of Main Street (former location of the Ebony Club)
- Canyon Lake Park

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Community Cultural Elements

- Local history collection, Rapid City Public Library
- Local history collection, Deveraux Library, SD Mines
- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association
- Archives and library, Synagogue of the Hills
- Papers and oral histories of local African Americans
- Papers and oral histories of Jewish residents
- Archives, Catholic Diocese

A Home of One's Own: Postwar Residential Development in Rapid City, 1945-1972

The end of World War II ushered in a period of rapid and dramatic change in Rapid City and the nation that lasted until the early 1970s. For millions of Americans, the single-family home was at the heart of a new vision of the nuclear family—mom, dad, and a handful of children—living in a new neighborhood built with new materials and techniques that allowed for mass production homes made affordable by a partnership between the federal government and private industry that sought to make homeownership ubiquitous throughout the United States.

In Rapid City, this revolution in mortgage finance and home construction converged with an expanding economy fueled by the growth of government spending (especially via the Rapid City Air Force Base), tourism, and trade. Economic opportunity during and after the war brought a wave of migrants. Combined with the baby boom that followed the war in western South Dakota and across the nation, the growth in population created a powerful demand for new housing that pushed the boundaries of the community outward in all directions.

Postwar residential construction focused initially on new neighborhoods south and north of downtown and in the West Chicago area, with some development in the Canyon Lake neighborhood as well. In the late 1950s, builders continued to erect new housing tracts in these neighborhoods, as well as along Jackson Boulevard and to the south along what is today Sheridan Lake Road. Through the 1960s, construction slowed as infill development in the postwar neighborhoods continued combined with some greenfield development at the edges of the city.

The Rapid City Flood of 1972 marked a turning point that aligned with other factors signaling the beginning of a new era in residential construction. Changes in federal policy combined with a credit crunch and rising interest rates pushed homeownership beyond the reach of households with more modest incomes. A greater emphasis on community planning, multi-unit master-planned developments, coordinated infrastructure development combined with a shift in consumer tastes and expectations gave the neighborhoods of the late 1970s and 80s a different look and feel.⁶⁶ After the flood, the effects of urban renewal and the development of additional subsidized housing introduced new components to the housing stock. Today, nearly 50 years after the flood, the homes and neighborhoods constructed in the postwar era communicate an abiding sense of an important era in Rapid City's history that should not be forgotten.

⁶⁶ Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950–1975: A Thematic Context Study" prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Society (August 2017), 23–29.

Associated Property Types:

* The Cassidy House (4121 Canyon Lake Road) is a Lustron house already listed on the NRHP.

Buildings

Postwar ranch houses

Examples:

- Houses in Robbinsdale neighborhood
- Houses in South Canyon neighborhood
- Houses near Canyon Lake Drive neighborhood
- Houses in Northern Heights neighborhood

Sites

Postwar Shopping Plazas

Examples:

- Baken Park Plaza
- Robbinsdale Plaza

Postwar Municipal Parks

Examples:

- Sioux Park
- Robbinsdale Park
- Horace Mann Park
- College Park
- Thompson Park
- Memorial Park
- Kiwanis Mary Hall Park

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Community Cultural Elements

- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association
- Local history collection, Rapid City Public Library
- Archives, Rapid City Parks and Recreation Department

Post-War Rapid City

Tourist Cabins, Tourist Courts, and Motels, 1945-1972

As Rapid City grew after World War II, new suburbs began to sprawl in every direction. Merchants and service providers followed residents to these new communities. Before the rise of the regional shopping mall, new businesses developed along the main arteries that brought families in and out of the neighborhoods: East North and LaCrosse streets in the north; St. Patrick and Rushmore Road in the south; Omaha and Campbell to the east; and Jackson, Canyon Lake Drive, and West Main to the west.

Long before a retail revolution brought the rise of big box stores in the 1980s, these neighborhood commercial establishments were relatively small. Locally-owned grocery stores mixed with chain-store markets like Red Owl, Family Thrift, and Piggly-Wiggly. Commercial developers built multi-unit shopping centers to accommodate local hair salons, dry cleaners, insurance brokers, real estate agents, and more. Among the most recognizable of these centers today are the Baken Park Shopping Center (built in 1956) and Robbinsdale Plaza (built in 1953). In an era when most people still prepared and ate meals at home, early fast-food drive-ins provided a local eatery for neighborhood residents or the opportunity to grab a quick meal on the go.

Motels proliferated along all of these new neighborhood commercial arteries. They catered to visitors enjoying the postwar boom in automobile tourism. Service stations pumped their gas and repaired flat tires and flooded engines. The new motels were generally one or two-story constructions, built in an L- or U-shape with a courtyard as the focal point of the property. Porticos stretched out over the space in front of the office to shelter new arrivals from the rain or the sun. These were the days before the arrival of national motel chains, and most of these establishments were owned by local entrepreneurs.

With the completion of the Interstate and the development the Rapid City Regional Mall, retail shopping and newer motels filled the outskirts of town. Postwar neighborhood commercial districts began to deteriorate in the later part of the twentieth century. Some of the older motels provided long-term rentals to transient workers in the construction trades or low-income families who could not afford first and last month deposits on an apartment. As cash flows decreased and maintenance costs rose, many of the structures suffered from neglect. Some were razed, but a few have been renovated and rejuvenated.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

Postwar Roadside Motels

Examples:

- Ranch House Motel (1946) – 202 East North Street

- Corral Motel (1940) – 210 East North Street
- Price Motel (1948) – 401 East North Street
- East Omaha Lodge – 525 East Omaha Street (formerly Evergreen Motel)
- Lazy “U” Motel (1957) – 2215 Mount Rushmore Road
- Rapid Motel – 3515 Sturgis Road

Postwar Neighborhood Businesses

Examples:

- Robbinsdale Lanes bowling alley
- Meadowood Lanes bowling alley

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Community Cultural Elements

- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association

Faith in a New Direction: Suburban Worship in Postwar Rapid City: 1945-1972

Membership in churches, synagogues, and other faith-based institutions grew dramatically across the country in the postwar years. Between 1940 and 1960, the percentage of people in the United States claiming some religious affiliation rose from 49 percent to 65 percent. Rapid City churches experienced this surge. As residential construction boomed and the city expanded, Mainline Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church followed the community into new neighborhoods that sprawled outward from downtown Rapid City in every direction.

Between 1945 and 1972, nearly two dozen new congregations were formed and churches built in Rapid City's new suburban neighborhoods. At the same time, long-established downtown congregations (Trinity Lutheran, First United Methodist, and First Presbyterian) renovated or razed their historic structures to build anew in the heart of the city. Meanwhile, around 1960, the Synagogue of the Hills was established to serve the small but growing Jewish community. Without a facility of their own, Jewish congregants met in borrowed space on Ellsworth Airforce Base and in church attics and basements for decades.

Christian churches in Rapid City's suburbs reflected the postwar concerns of their congregations. The spiritual needs of the postwar nuclear family and the church community were reflected in the architecture of the building and site planning. L-shaped structures included a sanctuary for worship along with above-ground wings to accommodate classrooms for Sunday school children and fellowship halls for multiple generations of parishioners. New materials, many of them developed to support the war effort, were now integrated into building design and deployed to accentuate the streamlined mid-century look in architecture and furniture. Meanwhile, large parking lots accommodated family station wagons and sedans, reflecting the increasing mobility of the community. Long run changes in the character and practices of the Christian community in Rapid City and the United States increasingly threaten the future of these postwar churches.

Associated Property Types:

The following churches are already listed on the NRHP:

- Church of the Immaculate Conception, 918 5th Street, listed 1975
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 717 Quincy Street, listed 1975
- Faith Temple Church of God in Christ (First Congregational Church), 715 Kansas City Street, listed 1984
- Chapel in the Hills, 3788 Chapel Lane, listed 2012

Buildings

Postwar churches

Examples: This table documents many of the churches established in Rapid City after World War II

Name	Year Completed	Location
Freedom Chapel, Ellsworth Air Force Base	Unknown, 1940s?	1554 Ellsworth St, Ellsworth AFB
St. Therese the Little Flower	Unknown, 1940s?	532 Adams Street
Seventh Day Adventist	1950	4703 South Canyon Road
St. Isaac Jogues/Mother Butler Center	1950 MB, SIJ added 1957, both relocated after flood in 1972	221 Knollwood Drive
Canyon Lake Methodist	1950	3500 Canyon Lake Drive
International Church of the Four Square	1951	927 E. Philadelphia
First Church of God	1951	6 th and Denver
Grace City	1951	1302 Ninth Street
St. Matthew's Episcopal	1952	620 Haines Avenue
Blessed Sacrament	1956	4500 Jackson Boulevard
South Park Community Church	1955	2201 Third Street
Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church	1957/1958	17 Indiana Street
St. Andrew's Episcopal	1958	910 Soo San Drive
Westminster Presbyterian	1960	1012 Sioux San Drive
South Canyon Lutheran	1960	700 S. 44 th Street
First Congregational Church	1960	1200 Clark Street
Knollwood Heights United Methodist	1962	320 East College Street
Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help	1962	520 Cathedral Drive
St. Martin's Monastery	1962	1851 City Springs Road
South Maple Methodist Church (Open Heart United Methodist Church)	1963	202 E. Indiana Street
Rapid City Wesleyan Church	1965	202 E. St. Francis Street
Christian Reformed Church	1965	210 E. Philadelphia Street
Sioux Baptist Chapel	1967	1520 Haines Street

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Community Cultural Elements

- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association
- Various congregational archives

The Modern School: Postwar School Architecture in Rapid City

Like swelling municipalities across the United States, Rapid City struggled to scale up its infrastructure after World War II. The rapid arrival of the Baby Boomer generation, compounded by the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base, created intense demand for housing, utilities, healthcare, and more. Schools were a major priority since successive waves of pupils would enter elementary then middle and high schools within a few short years. To meet this need, Rapid City undertook a major school construction program. Between 1949 and 1969, the city added more than a dozen public schools and undertook repeated additions—sometimes to brand-new buildings—while churches and nearby suburbs expanded their own educational facilities.

These new, postwar schools reflected emerging trends in local and regional history. Their architecture combined the iconic red brick of schoolhouses everywhere with the clean, glassy lines of midcentury design. The layout and amenities within the schools represented the evolution of American educational practice. The schools' placement in growing Rapid City neighborhoods, meanwhile, offered anchor points for understanding the patterns of growth that shaped Rapid City during this period.

These postwar neighborhood schools were integral parts of the Rapid City community. Over several generations, many thousands of students studied, played, competed, gathered, and celebrated inside these schools. Families walked to school playgrounds on weekends, and during the summers the city parks department used these campuses for camps and youth activities. School facilities have been home to a variety of community meetings and activities, from voting to soccer tournaments. As neighborhood centers, the schools played a central role in shaping the character of the Rapid City community and fostering a sense of cohesion and civic pride among residents.

To help the RCHPC document and preserve the history of postwar schools in Rapid City, this essay explores the processes and challenges that shaped the school construction boom between the end of War II and 1972, the year of the Black Hills flood. It focuses on the public schools within the city limits of Rapid City but outlines opportunities for further research into private parochial schools as well as public schools in suburbs like Rapid Valley and Black Hawk.

Associated Property Types:

Buildings

Postwar Schools

Examples: The original Rapid City High School, now the Performing Arts Center (615 Columbus) and Wilson Elementary School (827 Franklin Street) are the only Rapid City schools currently on the NRHP. All of the postwar schools in Rapid City

are now more than 50 years old could be evaluated and nominated to the NRHP or SRHP. The table below lists each school.

Name	Founded	Location
E.B. Bergquist Elementary School	1952 *Demolished 2006	725 E. Philadelphia
Canyon Lake Elementary School	1949	1500 Evergreen Drive
General Beadle Elementary School	1949 *Renovated/rebuilt 2007	10 Van Buren Street
Grandview Elementary School	1961	3301 Grandview Drive
Horace Mann Elementary School	1952	902 Anamosa Street
Knollwood Elementary School	1963	1701 Downing Street
Lincoln Elementary School	1951	1325 Quincy Street
Meadowbrook Elementary School	1957	3125 W. Flormann Street
Pinedale Elementary School	1958	4901 W. Chicago Street
Robbinsdale Elementary School	1953	424 E. Indiana Street
South Canyon Elementary School	1952	219 Nordbye Lane
South Park Elementary School *Previously Annie Tallent Elementary	1951	207 Flormann Street
North Middle School	1959	1501 North Maple Street
South Middle School	1959	2 Indiana Street
West Middle School	1955	1003 Sioux San Drive
Stevens High School	1969	4215 Raider Road

Other Considerations that Contribute to Sense of Place:

Community Cultural Elements

- Photograph collections, Minnilusa Historical Association

Appendices

Appendix 1: Existing National and State Registry Properties

The table below provides detailed information about the existing properties listed on the NRHP within the city limits of Rapid City. The “NRHP Registration” links in the “Additional Resources” column are directed to NPS documentation forms for each property.

National Register of Historic Places Listings in Rapid City

Name	Location	Year Registered on NRHP	Additional Resources
Black Hills Model Home / Wilkins House	2101 West Boulevard (44°03'54"N 103°14'07"W)	2004	NRHP Registration Form 93001072
Casper Supply Company of SD	415 Main St. (44°04'50"N 103°13'26"W)	2000	NRHP Registration Form 00000996
Cassidy House	4121 Canyon Lake Rd. (44°03'53"N 103°17'16"W)	1998	NRHP Registration Form 98001407 Lustron built 2,498 steel homes between 1948 and 1950. The Cassidy House is one of just 24 two-bedroom homes made by Lustron.
Chapel in the Hills	3788 Chapel Ln. (44°02'57"N 103°17'59"W)	2012	NRHP Registration Form 12000487 (not yet digitized)
Church of the Immaculate Conception	918 5th St. (44°04'33"N 103°13'31"W)	1975	NRHP Registration Form 75001721

Dean Motor Company/Midwest Tire	329 Main St. (44°04'49"N 103°13'21"W)	1995	NRHP Registration Form 95000768
Dinosaur Park	Skyline Drive southwest of Lincoln Elementary School (44°04'40"N 103°14'42"W)	1990	NRHP Registration Form 90000956
Emmanuel Episcopal Church	717 Quincy Street (44°04'41"N 103°13'50"W)	1975	NRHP Registration Form 75001722
Fairmont Creamery Company Building	201 Main Street (44°04'55"N 103°13'18"W)	2006	NRHP Registration Form 06000048
Feigel House	328 E. New York Street (44°05'05"N 103°12'21"W)	2006	NRHP Registration Form 97000145
First Congregational Church	715 Kansas City Street (44°04'45"N 103°13'47"W)	1984	NRHP Registration Form 84003372
Gambrill Storage Building	822 Main Street (44°04'55"N 103°13'52"W)	1984	NRHP Registration Form 84003379
Zack Holmes House/Barney House	818 St. James Street (44°04'22"N 103°13'57"W)	1982	NRHP Registration Form 82003937
Milwaukee Road Freight House	306 7th Street (44°04'47"N 103°13'38"W)	1989	NRHP Registration Form 88003200
Motor Service Company	402 St. Joseph Street (44°04'47"N 103°13'24"W)	1995	NRHP Registration Form 95000766
Maurice Nelson House	101 E. Quincy Street (44°04'35"N 103°12'51"W)	1998	NRHP Registration Form 98001403
Nichols Funeral Home Building	832 St. Joseph Street (44°04'59"N 103°13'57"W)	2004	NRHP Registration Form 03001532
Pennington County Courthouse	301 St. Joseph Street (44°04'44"N 103°13'21"W)	1976	NRHP Registration Form 76001751
Michael Quinn House	728 6th Street (44°04'40"N 103°13'36"W)	1993	NRHP Registration Form 93000782
Rapid City Carnegie Library	604 Kansas City Street (44°04'46"N 103°13'39"W)	1981	NRHP Registration Form 81000578
Rapid City Fruit Company	320 7th Street (44°05'30"N 103°13'39"W)	1993	NRHP Registration Form 93001340
Rapid City Garage	827-829 Main Street (44°04'54"N 103°13'53"W)	1984	NRHP Registration Form 84003381

Rapid City High School	615 Columbus Street (44°04'37"N 103°13'43"W)	2010	NRHP Form 10000409 (not yet digitized)
Rapid City Historic Commercial District	Downtown Rapid City (44°04'51"N 103°13'39"W)	1974/1998	Main Street to St. Joseph Street, Seventh Street to 60 th Street. Expanded in 1998 to Mt. Rushmore Road and Fifth Street
Rapid City Historical Museum	515 West Boulevard (44°08'09"N 103°14'00"W)	1988	NRHP Registration Form 88002837
Rapid City Laundry	312 Main Street (44°04'50"N 103°13'16"W)	1995	NRHP Registration Form 95000767
Rapid City Masonic Temple	618 Kansas City Street (44°04'45"N 103°13'43"W)	2016	NRHP Registration Form 16000828 (not yet digitized)
West Boulevard Historic District	West Boulevard area (44°04'38"N 103°14'00"W)	1974/1995	NRHP Registration Form 74001898 Kansas City Street to Fairview Street, Seventh Street to Eleventh Street. Expanded 1995 to include Ninth to 11 th Street from Kansas City Street to St. Andrews Street
Glenn W. Shaw House	803 West Street (44°04'47"N 103°14'27"W)	2002	NRHP Registration Form 02000706
Swander Bakery Building	601 12th Street (44°04'53"N 103°14'17"W)	2001	NRHP Registration Form 01000099

South Dakota State Register of Historic Places Listings in Rapid City

Name	Location	Year Registered on SDSRHP	Notes
Pap Madison Cabin	222 New York Street (Journey Museum & Learning Center)	2017	The Pap Madison Cabin was moved from its original location in Halley Park and removed from the National Register in 2012. It remains on the State Register of Historic Places.
McGillycuddy House	727 South Street	2019	

Appendix 2: Full Investigations and Windshield Surveys

During Phase III of the update project, the RCHPC sponsored the creation of nine focused investigations that explored specific aspects of Rapid City's history. Each essay is available in full below. Each includes samples of historical documentation from newspapers and local archives as well as photographs of buildings and spaces relevant to each topic that still exist in Rapid City.

The Ridgeline and the Creek: Landscape and Memory in Rapid City

The Black Hills formed when a large, oblong section of igneous rock lifted through the earth's mantle some 65 million years ago, breaking through the limestone crust to expose the large, stone center of the Hills. In and around this central ring, forests thick with ponderosa pines, blue spruce, and cedar trees cropped up. They intersperse in meadows with prairie grasses and shrubs and are home to an array of animals including deer, elk, beavers, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, rabbits, and more. Bison, grizzly bears, wolves, mountain lions, and coyote once inhabited the vast prairies surrounding the Black Hills. Most of the large predators and most of the bison were killed off or pushed out as Euro-Americans displaced early Indigenous inhabitants.

Rapid City grew up at the vertex of water and stone. A long, narrow ridgeline juts from south to north. Residents can look up at the ridge from any side of town or peer down over the vast distance visible from Skyline Drive or Highway 16. The ridge forms the backbone of the Rapid City landscape and includes two main parts from south the north: Hangman's Hill, which is traversed by Skyline Drive, and Cowboy Hill, which begins immediately north of Rapid Creek. The Black Hills are an island in a vast sea of prairie, and as writer Dan Daly put it, "this ridge runs all the way through the city. It's symbolic. [It's] what makes Rapid City a city in the Black Hills, not a city near the Black Hills."⁶⁷

Rapid Creek, meanwhile, transverses this ridge. It runs from west to east, passing through Rapid City before emptying into the Cheyenne River about 30 miles east of town. For centuries, the creek has made Rapid City a passing place. Untold generations of Indigenous peoples camped on its banks and utilized its resources.⁶⁸ Later, settlers chose a rocky outcropping to found Hay Camp and lay out Rapid City. Over time, wagon trains, railroads, highways, and airports connected the Rapid City community to the outside world, and the town became known as the "Gate City" given its central location and its utility as an access point to the Black Hills. Major commercial arteries have paralleled the creek's path through town. In 1972, in the midst of an enormous downpour, Rapid Creek flooded and devastated much of Rapid City. In the aftermath of the flood, the community devised new uses for the creek, and its banks host many beloved parks and recreational spaces.

⁶⁷ Dan Daly, "Skyline Wilderness Area a 'Hidden Treasure,'" *Rapid City Journal*, July 30, 2005.

⁶⁸ Sundstrom and Michael, "Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park, Rapid City," 2, 7.

Hangman's Hill and Skyline Drive

The neighborhoods on the eastern foothills of the ridgeline are among the oldest in Rapid City. Several cross streets, from Flormann north to Quincy or Kansas City Streets, provide multiple points of access to Skyline Drive. From the top of the ridge, a viewer can look down on the central core of Rapid City or the urban sprawl that has continued north past the interstate, east to Ellsworth Air Force Base, south to the Monument Health building complex, or west towards the American Legion baseball fields. Similarly, the views up and down Mount Rushmore Road from atop Highway 16 or the Omaha Street I-90 exit reveal the many businesses along the central corridor into the heart of the city.

Hangman's Hill illustrates Skyline Drive's prominent role in local history. In June 1877, a local man discovered three outsiders camping at the base of Cowboy Hill, near the creek. It was an era of violence and tension between Native and non-Native people. Mistaking the men for Indigenous people, he reported the trio to the sheriff. The officer quickly formed a posse who arrived at the men's campsite and found six horses tied to a tree. On the thin evidence that three men with six horses meant the men must be horse thieves, the sheriff had them arrested and imprisoned in a small, temporary jailhouse east of town. Before the judge could arrive from Deadwood, a mob broke the men, one of whom was still a teenager, out of jail, hauled them to the top of Skyline Drive and executed them on what came to be known as "Hangman's Tree."⁶⁹

What began as an attempt at swift justice and a warning to would-be thieves ended up having a paradoxical effect on local memory. On one hand, the story of the hanging became part of the frontier lore of early Rapid City. According to the author Robert J. Casey, who tried to reconstruct the story of Hangman's Tree in the 1940s, residents preserved the site for decades after the event. City leaders even replaced the original, withering Hangman's Tree with another one to mark the site. Yet, over time, locals began to regret the incident. Many participants, Casey wrote, came to deny their involvement and other Hills towns viewed the incident as a stain on Rapid City's reputation. Still today, *a* Hangman's Tree (if not *the* Hangman's Tree), stands near the top of Skyline Drive, but is on a portion of private property and inaccessible to members of the public.⁷⁰

Despite this early, violent incident, the Skyline Drive area was a place where early generations of residents and children hiked and played. Building on this legacy in the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration undertook several enhancements to the area. Most notable among them was Skyline Drive itself, which the WPA completed in November 1935. The new road wound from the base of Hangman's Hill to the top of the ridgeline and connected with Highway 16 to the south. Winding up the new road in the 1930s, visitors passed a series of other projects underway, as well as a memorial to longtime Black Hills newspaper publisher Alice Gossage. (The Gossage monument was later moved to Halley Park in the Gap.)⁷¹

Dinosaur Park was another popular WPA project. Conceived to honor the legacy of Dr. C.C. O'Hara, a respected president of South Dakota Mines who passed away in early 1935, the park came to include a visitor's center and parking lot situated across from a large stone staircase that leads up to a series of walking paths. Once atop "Dinosaur Hill," visitors

⁶⁹ Robert J. Casey, *The Black Hills and Their Incredible Characters* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1949), 32.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Sky Line Drive To Be Completed," *Rapid City Journal*, November 19, 1935.

stroll around several large, concrete replicas of dinosaurs that once lived on what became the Northern Plains.⁷²

In addition to honoring O'Hara's legacy, local boosters saw the project as a way to deepen Rapid City's ties to the growing Black Hills tourism economy. By creating "one of the most unique, attractive and educational recreation spots anywhere to be found," wrote George Mansfield in 1936, the Skyline Drive and Dinosaur Park projects could attract visitors and "afford to the people of Rapid City a short pleasure drive for themselves and their friends," all while providing much-needed Depression-era relief.⁷³

Others saw Dinosaur Hill as a poor use of natural space and a waste of government resources. One man steamed in a letter to the *Rapid City Journal*: "we have Skyline Drive, a road which leads nowhere, accomplishes no useful purpose, which marches up a hill and marches down again. And now at a cost of \$24,000," he complained, "we are to have a bevy of pink elephants in commemoration of our illustrious reptile dead."⁷⁴ Despite this protest, the park was completed in 1938 and became part of a broader, national trend that saw the establishment of several dinosaur-themed parks across the United States at midcentury.⁷⁵ Over the years, Dinosaur Park has made occasional appearances in national media and advertising campaigns.⁷⁶ A Rapid City couple managed the visitor's center until the late 1960s, when the city took over. It has since contracted concessions at the site to a series of vendors.⁷⁷

The Skyline Drive area included two other nature-themed attractions. First was the Chamber of Commerce-managed Skyline Fossil Forest, an admissions-only exhibit that displayed samples of petrified wood excavated from the hillside. The attraction was destroyed by a fire in the 1960s.⁷⁸ Another project, a large outdoor amphitheater, was designed by a graduate of the South Dakota Mines civil engineering program. An earthen stadium was to be carved into a natural bend in a hillside overlooking a meadow that could serve as a stage. Some locals hoped that the amphitheater might host the Black Hills Passion Play, a popular reenactment of the Christian crucifixion story, which was held in the Northern Hills town of Spearfish for years. The WPA cut terraced steps into the side of the hogback, which remain visible today. Although the amphitheater did not host the large performances its designers had intended, its construction reflected the marriage of work relief, landscape development, and support for the tourism economy that was prevalent at midcentury.⁷⁹

In the decades after Skyline Drive and its amenities were built, Rapid City continued to grow. The top of the ridge was the logical place for several broadcast companies to situate

⁷² "Dr. C.C. O'Hara Passes Away at Home in Rapid," *Lead Daily Call*, February 21, 2021.

⁷³ George Mansfield, "Letter to the Editor," *Rapid City Journal*, March 10, 1936.

⁷⁴ George S. Reeves, "Letter to the Editor," *Rapid City Journal*, March 6, 1936.

⁷⁵ Ross J. Wilson, "Encountering Dinosaurs: Public History and Environmental Heritage," *The Public Historian* 42, no. 4 (November 2020): 126.

⁷⁶ See for example "Stegosaurus with Sex Appeal," *Dunkirk Evening Observer* (Dunkirk, NY), June 15, 1938; "Dakota Parks Trace History," *San Antonio Express and News*, April 22, 1962; "A Monster Emerges from the Mist," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, September 10, 1986; "OK, Big Smiles!," *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 2002.

⁷⁷ "Dinosaur Park, Rapid City," The Living New Deal, accessed January 23, 2021, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/dinosaur-park-rapid-city-sd/>.

⁷⁸ "Sky Line Drive To Be Completed," *Rapid City Journal*, November 19, 1935.

⁷⁹ "The Amphitheater," interpretive sign at Skyline Wilderness Area, installed by Troop 131 of the Eagle Scouts.

their studio or communications towers, which could take advantage of the altitude to transmit radio and television signals across a vast airspace. Independence Day fireworks blazed over the ridge each summer. Boy Scout Troops and the Jaycees held annual cleanup days. Recreating on and around Skyline Drive became a common part of life in Rapid City.⁸⁰

In the 1960s and 1970s, the community debated carving a tunnel through the base of the ridge to increase traffic flow between the east and west sides of town. Concerns over the impact to private property and area ecology halted these plans.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the quiet forests and stunning vistas made the Skyline area desirable for housing developments.⁸² As large homes filled the hillsides on both slopes of the ridge, a group of conservation advocates and outdoor enthusiasts began searching for ways to protect parts of the hillside from development. By the 1990s, an informal network of game trails had become popular routes for local hikers. As plans for further residential development began to take shape, a nonprofit group called Skyline Preservation, Inc. organized to protect the Skyline Wilderness Area in 1999. By 2005, the group held 105 acres on the eastern slope after the City of Rapid City passed on an opportunity to acquire the property. Working alongside other organizations like the Black Hills Mountain Bike Association, Skyline Preservation, Inc. developed trails and infrastructure while carrying out environmental mitigation techniques to use the land responsibly.⁸³

As the project progressed, some neighborhood residents were skeptical of increased public use near their property. Other community members were confused by signage and rules and regulations about whether, for example, mountain bikes could be used in the Skyline Wilderness Area, since bicycles were prohibited in federally protected preserves like the Black Elk Wilderness in the Black Hills. Advocates worked through these issues and donated a total of about 184 acres to the city around 2008.⁸⁴ Since then, multiple investments from the Rapid City Vision Fund have supported trail maintenance, wayfinding and signage, and the construction of several parking lots and trailheads. In 2015, for example, an expansion added 10 additional miles of trails and a new parking lot, as well as enhancements to existing parking and the lot at Dinosaur Park.⁸⁵ The Skyline Area remains a popular place to live, play, and enjoy the natural beauty of Rapid City.⁸⁶

Cowboy Hill and Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park

Across the Gap, on the north bank of Rapid Creek, the ridgeline continues through Rapid City. Like the hogback straddled by Skyline Drive, this ridge—known as Cowboy Hill—is a rocky outcropping of ponderosa pine, stone, and prairie meadows. For more than a century, it too, has held a prominent place in the history of economy, environment, industry, and civil pride in Rapid City.

Archaeological evidence and oral histories demonstrate the longstanding use of the creek bed and rocks at the base of Cowboy Hill going back thousands of years. In the 1870s,

⁸⁰ “Final Plans Set for Fourth Fireworks Here,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 30, 1948; “Jaycees, Boys Clubbers Clean Up Skyline Drive,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 4, 1965.

⁸¹ “Skyline Drive Ecology Must Be Part of Any Plans for a Road,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 26, 1970.

⁸² Dan Daly, “Skyline Wilderness Area a ‘Hidden Treasure,’” *Rapid City Journal*, July 30, 2005.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ John McLaughlin, “\$1.4m Skyline Wilderness Park Project Open for Bids,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 8, 2015; Drew Matthews, “City Poised to Accept Skyline Land Donation,” *Rapid City Journal*, February 2, 2017.

⁸⁵ McLaughlin, “\$1.4m Skyline Wilderness Park Project Open for Bids.”

⁸⁶ Daly, “Skyline Wilderness Area a ‘Hidden Treasure,’” *Rapid City Journal*, July 30, 2005.

non-Native settlers founded Hay Camp at the bottom of the hill. Although the place likely had an Indigenous name—or perhaps several of them, used by peoples at different moments in history—these monikers may be lost to history. There is no official account of how the hill came to be called “Cowboy Hill.” A 1926 story from the *Rapid City Journal*, however, lends the following explanation: “As everyone knows Rapid City used to be known as ‘Cow Town,’” the author begins. As the “vast open ranges in every direction attracted cattlemen soon after the gold rush,” ranchers began to fill in the hinterland. When they came to Rapid City for supplies or entertainment, “the riders approaching the town from the northwest kept to the north side of the creek.” After setting camp there, many would head downtown to drink and revel. Townspeople could hear them rowdily shouting and firing guns into the air as they came and went downtown, and “in time the eminence became known as Cowboy Hill.”⁸⁷

As Rapid City transitioned from a rough cattle town to a bustling industrial and educational hub in the early 20th century, Cowboy Hill took on new meaning. In 1912, a professor and a group of students at South Dakota Mines came up with the idea of painting a large “M,” for “Mines” on the side of Cowboy Hill as a publicity stunt and a point of school pride. That October, the university president declared the first “M-Day,” which became the school’s homecoming celebration. Every year for many decades, students climbed the hill with hand tools, sand, water, and whitewash to brighten their school’s emblem. Initially made of sandstone, the M was eventually reified by concrete. In the early years, students also doused it in kerosene and lit the “M” ablaze on M-Day, allowing the flames of their school pride to mark the night sky. In 1953, the students added smaller letters, “S” and “D,” for “South Dakota,” on either side of the M.⁸⁸

This annual ritual became an important Mines and city event. So much so, in fact, that when Cowboy Hill changed owners in the 1960s, and the new owner attempted to stop the students from climbing across private property, the State of South Dakota intervened to grant an easement to the crest of M Hill, based on the site’s historical significance and continued use by students.⁸⁹ Later on, the South Dakota Mines Foundation acquired the parcel surrounding the “M.”⁹⁰

The Cowboy Hill area also played a significant role in the early, industrial development of Rapid City. Between 1908 and 1912, a group of entrepreneurs purchased the water rights along Rapid Creek at the base of Cowboy Hill. They constructed a flume along the creek to run enough water to power an early hydroelectric plant that helped power Rapid City.⁹¹

The area was also the location of a series of beef processing and meatpacking plants. The first, called Rapid City Packing Co., opened north of the creek in 1910. It changed hands several times but continued to process, pack, and ship meats from Rapid City

⁸⁷ “How Kola,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 19, 1926.

⁸⁸ “Hardrockers Celebrate Homecoming with More Work on Big Concrete ‘M,’” *Rapid City Journal*, October 4, 1951; “Burn ‘M,’” *Rapid City Journal*, October 25, 1935.

⁸⁹ “School of Mines Retains Rights to Cowboy Hill,” *Rapid City Journal*, October 18, 1967.

⁹⁰ “Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block,” *Rapid City Journal*, August 23, 2006.

⁹¹ Eric John Abrahamson and Eric Steven Zimmer, *Expanding the Energy Horizon: A History of Black Hills Corporation Since 1883* (Rapid City, SD: Black Hills Corporation, 2018), 44–48.

until a fire destroyed the plant in 2002. At the time, the facility was owned by Federal Beef Processing and employed around 400 workers.⁹²

A few years after the meat plant opened, in 1914, another pair of businessmen opened the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company. They ran a large lumberyard at the base of Cowboy Hill. For decades, the operation provided blue-collar jobs to white and Native American workers. Like the power company before it, Warren-Lamb invested heavily in a water flume in an effort to efficiently float logs from the central Black Hills, down Rapid Creek, to its plant. The scheme failed for lack of sufficient water flow, and the company relied on railroad transport. For decades, it harvested timber from in and near Custer State Park, along Slate Creek near Hill City, and other locations. The company appears to have closed in the 1930s but restarted its operations before going out of business in the 1960s.⁹³

Cowboy Hill has also been part of the regional advertising and communications industries. Early retailers took advantage of the tall, sandstone cliffs facing the Gap to advertise their stores and wares. Like Skyline Drive, the top of the hill is home to radio towers, and in the 1960s, the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company installed a large aluminum reflector that helped bounce radio signals to the nearby town of Hermosa from the top of Cowboy Hill.⁹⁴

These industrial pursuits touched on another piece of Rapid City's environmental history: air quality and fire. The caption to a 1937 aerial photograph of Rapid City calls out the Warren-Lamb smokestack for, as the author wrote, "belching a dark cloud of smoke" from its smokestack at the base of Cowboy Hill.⁹⁵ As late as the 1990s, meanwhile, Federal Processing faced complaints for the pungent, unpleasant smells that wafted from its factory, and neighbors cautioned their children from playing near the creek when it ran red with blood from the plant.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, over the last century, numerous fires have broken out on Cowboy Hill and Skyline Drive alike. Sometimes, these fires started after reckless hikers and campers failed to douse their flames. Other fires were started by industrial endeavors. Most recently, in 2012, construction equipment touched off a wildfire fire that burned some 150 acres on Cowboy Hill.⁹⁷ The ponderosa pines on Rapid City's ridgeline, meanwhile, have been threatened by a region-wide mountain pine beetle infestation, which has killed around 430,000 acres of trees since the mid-1990s.⁹⁸ Despite these threats, both hills have retained much of their forest cover.

The Cowboy Hill area has also been a popular place to hike and recreate. In the 1920s, for example, the local YMCA sponsored a "hare and hound chase" that began at Cowboy Hill and made its way over the rural hills and meadows towards the South Canyon neighborhood.⁹⁹ By the end of the 20th century, the hillside had also become a popular

⁹² "Beef Plant, Founders Park Timeline," *Rapid City Journal*, January 29, 2012.

⁹³ Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, 58–59.

⁹⁴ "Cowboy Hill Again Plays Key Communications Roll," *Rapid City Journal*, June 25, 1966.

⁹⁵ "Bird's Eye View," *Rapid City Journal*, July 10, 1937.

⁹⁶ "Beef Plant, Founders Park Timeline," *Rapid City Journal* January 29, 2012; "Rapid City Meatpacking Plant Burns," *Black Hills Pioneer* January 30, 2002. Oral history with Darla Drew Lerdal, August 22, 2020 by Eric John Abrahamson.

⁹⁷ "City Wildfire Offers Glimpse of Regeneration," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 2012.

⁹⁸ USDA Forest Service, "[Mountain Pine Beetle](#)," Black Hills National Forest, accessed January 21, 2020; R. Keith Stewart and Carol A. Thilenius, "Black Hills Lakes and Streams: Stream and Lake Inventory and Classification in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1964," Department of Game, Fish and Parks Lake and Stream Classification Report (1964), 50–52.

⁹⁹ "YMCA Boys Step Out in Hare and Hound Chase," *Rapid City Journal*, October 21, 1920.

location for mountain biking, rock climbing, and bouldering—although at the time, these activities occurred on private property.¹⁰⁰

That changed in the early 2000s, when Cowboy Hill and the surrounding area became known as Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park. Years before her death in 2004, Edna Marie “Eddie Larsen,” a South Dakota Mines graduate and longtime Hermosa resident, had established a trust to create a park to honor her parents’ memory. When Cowboy Hill went up for sale in 2006, the trustees of her estate acquired the 300-acre property. Since 2008, Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park has operated as an independently funded, self-sustaining nonprofit park that is open to the public. It includes over 20 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails and continues to be a popular location for Rapid City residents and visitors who travel to town for events like the Black Hills Fat Tire Festival, a mountain biking race, and other gatherings each year.¹⁰¹

Rapid Creek

Fed by runoff from winter snows, spring rains, and smaller tributaries like Castle Creek, Rapid Creek originates in limestone springs west of Rapid City. It flows east along a narrow bed, then pools against the dam at the man-made Pactola Reservoir. From there, the water snakes towards Rapid City, where it fills Canyon Lake on the west side of town.¹⁰² The creek connects the central hills to the eastern prairie as it passes through “the Gap,” a large dip in the ridgeline between Hangman’s Hill and Cowboy Hill. Over the years, the creek, the Gap, and a second gap in the hills created by the passage of Interstate 90 on the north side of Cowboy Hill, have become a vital entry point for access to the Black Hills, earning the community the nickname “The Gate City.”

The earliest residents of what is now Rapid City used the area’s access to water and timber to protect themselves from the elements. They also relied on the ample natural resources—game and fish, medicinal plants, edible flora, and stones for tools and trade—to build strong economies that balanced subsistence with participation in vast regional and continent-wide trade networks. Native peoples used dogs to move, hunt, and trade. Later, horses enabled them to travel faster and further to hunt, procure, and exchange goods and ideas. In this way, Native peoples blended subsistence hunting, gathering, and agriculture with travel and transportation. Native peoples also lived along its banks into the 20th century, first in winter camps and later in informal communities.

When Euro-Americans began to settle along Rapid Creek, they appropriated the water for domestic use, livestock, and agriculture. Euro-American settlers harnessed the water’s industrial power, using it to mine for gold, create electricity, water livestock, and float logs to factories for processing.¹⁰³ Recognizing the beauty of creekside property, early developers planted towering poplar and cottonwood trees along the banks.¹⁰⁴ These trees offered shade to the neighborhoods that developed alongside the water.

¹⁰⁰ Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block,” *Rapid City Journal*, August 23, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Visit Rapid City, “[Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park](#),” YouTube, accessed January 20, 2021, Cowboy Hill on the Auction Block,” *Rapid City Journal*, August 23, 2006; “Fat Tire Festival Rolls into Hills,” *Rapid City Journal* June 22, 2014.

¹⁰² Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, 210–12.

¹⁰³ See Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*; Abrahamson and Zimmer, *Expanding the Energy Horizon*, 34–35; Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, 57–59.

¹⁰⁴ Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, 210–12.

Over the years, the banks of Rapid Creek have been home to both the most and least wealthy members of town. Before the 1972 flood, which devastated the neighborhoods along the creek and killed at least 238 people, the picturesque area near Canyon Lake was a desirable location for residential homes and vacation cabins. A few miles downstream, however, communities of less affluent and primarily Native American or working-class non-Native people lived in temporary homes along the creek between Sioux San and the base of Cowboy Hill. After the flood, many wealthier households moved up onto ridges overlooking scenic vistas or set back into the forest. The creation of parks and greenways along the creek displaced many of the less affluent families to other parts of town that were, in some cases, far from basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity.

Like the forests and prairies that surround it, the water in Rapid Creek has served a variety of purposes. In addition to providing water to the residents and businesses of Rapid City, for example, the creek contributed to state initiatives aimed at conserving and managing natural resources in the Black Hills. After claiming land and building a home near an “immense and ever-flowing spring” in 1879, a local settler named Daniel Cleghorn began cultivating trout.¹⁰⁵ Fifty years later, his operation inspired the state of South Dakota to establish the Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery on what would become the west side of Rapid City. The state added 22 nursery ponds to the complex in 1949. To this day, the Game, Fish & Parks department grows and harvests fish to be released into lakes and streams throughout the area.¹⁰⁶

Yet the massive, mid-century surge of people and activity also polluted the creek. The population grew so quickly that some neighborhoods, both in and beyond the modern city limits, developed absent city ordinances that regulated their size and layout. This meant that people were building in the floodplain, drilling wells, installing septic tanks, and building access roads—all with minimal consideration for the risks, to residents and the creek, this development posed.¹⁰⁷

By 1949, pollution had gotten so bad that one reporter called Rapid Creek “South Dakota’s Largest Sewer.” Along this “six-mile cesspool,” the story reads, “outdoor privies” and rat-infested trash piles combined with “horses, chickens, and goats” that residents allowed to “roam the local creek area that lies less than four blocks from the fancy store fronts of Main Street.”¹⁰⁸ A 1957 study by the Pennington County Health Department noted that many Creekside homes west of Canyon Lake had inadequate wastewater systems that were leeching into the creek and groundwater. Residents, meanwhile, were digging wells perilously close to this contaminated water. Eventually, the state and county public health departments declared Canyon Lake unsafe for swimming.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Daily Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, April 9, 1879, 4.

¹⁰⁶ South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, “[Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery](#),” accessed February 8, 2020. See also, “Stage Set for Dedication of Cleghorn Springs Fish Hatchery Near Here Tomorrow Afternoon,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 5, 1930, 1; Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ See South Dakota State Department of Health, Division of Sanitary Engineering, “Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek, Dec. 1963, Pactola Reservoir to Cheyenne River” (Pierre SD: 1964), v.

¹⁰⁸ Duane McDowell, “Length of Rapid Creek Through City One of Big Health Hazards,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 4, 1949.

¹⁰⁹ R. Keith Stewart and Carol A. Thilenius, “Black Hills Lakes and Streams: Stream and Lake Inventory and Classification in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1964,” (Pierre: Department of Game, Fish and Parks, 1964), 36.

Concerned citizens and downstream ranchers complained to South Dakota and the US Public Health Service. In 1963, officials set up 17 sampling sites between Pactola and Cheyenne River.¹¹⁰ The samples showed clean water above Rapid City, then low water quality in town and downstream. Industrial wastewater was only partially treated and many municipal wastewater facilities were producing partially treated water or being bypassed altogether. The final report called sections of the creek “unwholesome and unfit for domestic use,” “unsafe as a source of public water supply,” and “harmful to fish and plantlife.” City leaders were called to Pierre to testify in 1964.¹¹¹

Rapid City took steps to rectify these issues in the years that followed. Wastewater treatment and careful monitoring by various local, state, and federal agencies have helped maintain a safe supply of drinking water.¹¹² Yet concerns over water quality in Rapid Creek have not disappeared. As recently as 2018, a South Dakota Mines study found “that genes from potentially deadly forms of E.coli bacteria were present in significant numbers in Rapid Creek throughout and below Rapid City.”¹¹³ In 2020, moreover, a national watershed advocacy group designated Rapid Creek one of the nation’s most endangered rivers due to the efforts of entities pursuing mining permits upstream from Rapid City.¹¹⁴

The 1972 flood destroyed many homes and businesses along the creek bed. In the aftermath, the city restricted construction in the flood zone and built a long, narrow greenway filled with parks, golf courses, bike paths, and outdoor recreational facilities through the heart of Rapid City.¹¹⁵ These developments and activities have both improved the usability and exacted an environmental toll on the creek and its ecosystems. Silt and seepage from roads and residential developments, along with the leaching of mining chemicals and byproducts further upstream, have impacted the water quality, sometimes with effects on area wildlife, over the last 150 years.¹¹⁶

Documentation

Dinosaur Park, 940 Skyline Drive

¹¹⁰ “Water Pollution Sampling Slated on Rapid Creek,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 2, 1963; “Pollution Study Report is Ready; Hearing to Come,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 2, 1964.

¹¹¹ “Rapid Creek pollution Hearing Before State Committee Thursday,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 3, 1964. See South Dakota State Department of Health, “Report on Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek,” v.

¹¹² J.S. Zogorski, E.M. Zogorski, and T.E. McKallip, “Sources and Summaries of Water-Quality Information for the Rapid Creek Basin, Western South Dakota,” US Geological Survey Open-File Report 90-115 (Rapid City, SD: US Geological Survey, 1990).

¹¹³ Bart Pfankuch, “Studies Reveal Health Hazards in Big Sioux River, Rapid Creek,” *Argus Leader*, August 29, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Seth Tupper, “National Group Puts Rapid Creek on Endangered Rivers List,” *South Dakota Public Broadcasting*, April 14, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, 210–12.

¹¹⁶ See SD Department of Health, “Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek, v;” Bart Pfankuch, “Studies Reveal Health Hazards in Big Sioux River, Rapid Creek,” *Argus Leader* August 29, 2018.



Hangman's Tree, Skyline Drive



“M Hill,” Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park



Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park



Skyline Drive





Black Elk Peak, visible to the west from Skyline Drive



Looking east from Skyline drive, eastern Rapid City, Rapid Valley, and Ellsworth Air Force Base.



Radio Towers



Apartment buildings, housing developments, and new businesses are harbingers of expansion and growth on Highway 16 south of Rapid City, on the ridge that becomes Skyline Drive.



In 2008, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks purchased a 33-acre parcel of land which it designated “Outdoor Campus West.” The space is a microcosm of the Rapid City environment, with ponderosa pine forest, a grassland prairie, a small creek, and a pond.





“The Gap” looking east from Omaha Street towards downtown.



The “I-90 Gap” is a primary entry point for interstate travelers coming to Rapid City. View looking west from Rushmore Mall.



Rapid Creek



[illegible]

**Tyrannosaurus Rex At
Last Given Set Of Teeth**



U. S. Sullivan, left, a WPA worker completing insertion of teeth in huge nose of Tyrannosaurus rex, one of first huge exhibits in Board City's Whittier Park. (Special photo and caption.)

Chicago Tribune, March 17, 2002 (Photo 1938)



Concession Building Opened 1969

Rapid City Journal, June 5, 1969



This memorial to newspaperwoman Alice Gossage once sat atop Skyline Drive. It was later moved to Halley Park. Minnilusa Historical Association



A petrified log excavated from the ground at the Skyline Fossil Forest. Minnilusa Historical Association



Rapid City in 1886, note “the Gap” in the background.
Minnilusa Historical Association



South Dakota Mines students maintained the M on “M Hill” in 1940.
Rapid City Journal, October 4, 1951



The Ridge at Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park, no date (ca early 20th century?)
Minnilusa Historical Association



Sub-Station at base of Cowboy Hill
Minnilusa Historical Association



Timber arriving by rail at the Warren Lamb Lumber Company near the base of Cowboy Hill.
Minnilusa Historical Association



A “Bird’s Eye View” of Rapid City from 1937 shows the Warren Lamb Lumber Company “belching a dark cloud of smoke,” as the caption reads, at the base of Cowboy Hill.
Rapid City Journal, July 10, 1937



Construction of the Canyon Lake Dam, 1933
Minnilusa Historical Association



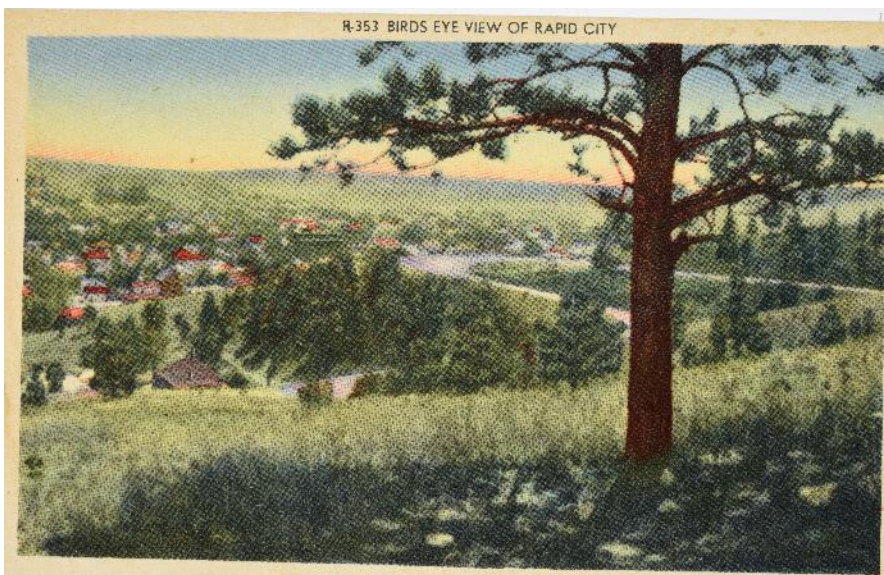
Canyon Lake, no date (early 20th century?)
Minnilusa Historical Association



The Amphitheater at Skyline Wilderness, nd. (1930s?)
Minnilusa Historical Association.



Postcard—View from Skyline Drive, nd.
Minnilusa Historical Association.



Hallowed Ground: Rapid City's Historic Cemeteries

For the first decade of Rapid City's history, residents had a problem. The young community lacked a good place to bury its dead. The *Black Hills Weekly Journal* called it "the cemetery question," and Rapid Citians needed an answer.¹¹⁷

The paper's readers, of course, had pragmatic reasons for desiring a cemetery. Many regional Indigenous peoples honored their dead by placing them on above-ground funerary scaffolds. There, the physical form could rejoin the natural world.¹¹⁸ The Judeo-Christian traditions of non-Native settlers, however, demanded burial, which required designated cemetery space.

Rapid City, meanwhile, was establishing itself as a key cattle camp, a regional supply stop, and a community of permanent residents. Founded in 1876, Rapid City was a roughshod frontier town on Lakota treaty land. Without a formal cemetery for its first two years, residents buried bodies where they were discovered or placed them in an early burial ground just north of Rapid Creek, likely on or near the base of Cowboy Hill. In 1878, the community created the Plateau Cemetery south of town, off what is now St. Cloud Street near the Star Village housing development.¹¹⁹

Plateau became Rapid City's primary cemetery, but problems quickly arose. In poor weather, horse-drawn funeral processions struggled to trudge up the steep hill to the burial grounds. Community members, encouraged by *Black Hills Weekly* editor Alice Gossage, began building support for alternative, and more accessible, locations. Indeed, locals established four cemeteries in the 1880s. Religious groups organized two of them, and neither lasted long. The first, known only as the "Old Catholic Cemetery," is referenced vaguely in the historical record. According to one newspaper article from 1975, the plot was "said to be [located] a mile north of Rapid City on the old school section in 1883 . . . perhaps near the present St. Therese [The] Little Flower [Church]."¹²⁰ No further documentation of the location or number of burials at the site seems to survive.

The second early, church-sponsored burial ground was known as Mentch Methodist Cemetery. It sat roughly six miles east of town along Highway 44 near what became Rapid City Regional Airport. Around 23 bodies were interred at Mentch between 1889 and 1902. According to an entry in *A History of Pennington County*, a Methodist congregation built a church and established a small cemetery on the grounds. Within a few years, the

¹¹⁷ "The Cemetery Question," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, August 3, 1888.

¹¹⁸ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places, 1992), 4.

¹¹⁹ Don Barnes, "Early Rapid City Burials, Burial Grounds and Cemeteries," in Pennington County History Book Committee, *A History of Pennington County, SD* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, nd), 14; "In Memoriam," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, June 4, 1897.

¹²⁰ "Woman Seeks to Solve Mysteries of Unmarked Graves," *Rapid City Journal*, December 16, 1999.

congregation relocated, steeple and all, to rural Caputa several miles further east on Highway 44. They left the burial site behind, where it remained, largely forgotten, for decades.¹²¹

Meanwhile, Rapid Citians organized two major cemetery associations and began laying the groundwork for large burial complexes.¹²² The first was the Mountain View Cemetery Association, which acquired 80 acres of land at the base of the western slope of the Rapid City ridgeline. The group received its charter from the secretary of Dakota Territory on August 21, 1888.¹²³ That same month, the Evergreen Cemetery Association met at the town library and began planning their plot, which was located a quarter mile east of the city limits in Rapid Valley.¹²⁴

The planning and promoting of the Mountain View and Evergreen cemeteries echoed patterns of cemetery design popular earlier in the 19th century. Between the 1830s and 1860s, Americans reimagined the roles cemeteries could play in the death of individual people and the life of burgeoning communities. For the dead and their survivors, the gravestones, epitaphs, mausoleums, and decorations that adorned a resting place were mediums for conveying values and identity. As historian Richard Meyer writes, cemeteries “take on distinctive flavors relating to regionalism, ethnicity, religious influence, and a whole host of other factors. They also allow for considerable personal innovation, as can be attested to by anyone who has spent much time exploring their infinite variety.”¹²⁵

For many 19th century communities, cemeteries were also important assets, understood as opportunities to beautify the community, promote outdoor recreation, and even attract tourists. Elaborate “garden” cemeteries were established across America. As Blanche Linden-Ward writes, they were “more than a plain and simple burial place.” Before public parks filled urban greenspaces, erudite citizens took long nature walks and these “pastoral places also functioned as ‘pleasure grounds’ for the general public, often to the dismay of their founders.” Many cemeteries were popular tourist attractions, with cities’ visitor guides enticing out-of-town guests to stop by and take a stroll through manicured rows of headstones and flora.¹²⁶ In this way, bucolic cemetery grounds became open spaces where visitors could immerse themselves in an exploration of the juxtaposition of life and death.

Although Mountain View and Evergreen were established a few decades after the garden cemetery movement had peaked, rural design clearly influenced both cemeteries’ impressions of how patrons should perceive their plots. On August 3, 1888, both cemetery associations ran dueling descriptions of their burial grounds on the same page of the *Black Hills Weekly*. Mountain View enthusiastically described the beauty of its newly acquired, 80-

¹²¹ “Woman Seeks to Solve Mysteries of Unmarked Graves.”

¹²² Ramona Wickenkamp, “‘Genealogy’ of a Forgotten Cemetery,” *Rapid City Journal*, October 12, 1975.

¹²³ “Mountain View Cemetery,” *Rapid City Journal*, September 14, 1888.

¹²⁴ Wickenkamp, “‘Genealogy’ of a Forgotten Cemetery,” “Evergreen Cemetery,” *Rapid City Journal*, August 3, 1888.

¹²⁵ Meyer, “Origins and Influences,” 105.

¹²⁶ Blanche Linden-Ward, “Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourists and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries,” in *Mere*, 293.

acre plot: “The land could not lay nicer for the purpose intended than it does,” the members wrote. “It is slightly rolling, enough to secure natural drainage, and yet not sufficient to make the land what is called broken. It will permit of most picturesque decoration...and the unanimous opinion of all who have looked over the land is that it is by far the most desirable that can be obtained in this vicinity for that use.”¹²⁷

Not to be outdone, Evergreen promoted its 71-acre cemetery grounds as “picturesque” and “laid out to conform to the topography, which is undulating, with gentle sloping hills” east of Rapid City. The cemetery’s plan included a sprawling, rural landscape with “numerous parks with lakes and broad avenues,” which would be lined by trees.¹²⁸

Few residents got to enjoy Evergreen. Around 50 people were interred there. They included several bodies that had been relocated from other parts of Rapid Valley, including the remains of the three men executed on Hangman’s Hill early in Rapid City’s history. Just a few years after the cemetery opened, however, a flood washed out a main road and bridge. Visitation dropped, and when convenient access was not restored, Evergreen went bankrupt. Pennington County sold part of the cemetery’s land for taxes in 1893. The cemetery struggled along until 1910, when the last burial occurred there.¹²⁹

Mountain View, on the other hand, thrived. It steadily added plots over the years and became the resting place for thousands of area residents including Rapid City’s earliest settlers; prominent civic and business leaders; some children and staff from the Rapid City Indian School; veterans of various conflicts from the Civil War forward, including some African American “Buffalo Soldiers” from the 1880s; and Rapid Citians representing a wide array of faith traditions and backgrounds.¹³⁰

Mountain View’s success derived in part from the fact that the cemetery comprises half of what is now a large, two-cemetery burial complex in west Rapid. Shortly after Mountain View was planned in 1888, a group of Catholics—perhaps seeking a new, permanent home for the cemetery they had previously used on the north side—secured permission to acquire ten acres adjacent to Mountain View Cemetery for a burial ground of their own. Known as Mount Calvary Cemetery, this burial place grew alongside Mountain View and now holds several thousand graves. Today, the two cemeteries are separated by West Flormann Street, and both are managed by the City of Rapid City.¹³¹

Rapid City added two other cemeteries in the 20th century. In the 1920s and 1930s, the south side of Rapid City expanded as Highway 16 extended towards Mount Rushmore and Custer State Park in the southern Black Hills. Meanwhile, Works Progress Administration developments on Skyline Drive made the area more accessible. Pine Lawn Memorial Park and Cremation Gardens opened near the intersection of Tower Road and Skyline Drive in

¹²⁷ “Mountain View Cemetery,” *Rapid City Journal* August 3, 1888.

¹²⁸ “Evergreen Cemetery.”

¹²⁹ Wickenkamp, “‘Genealogy’ of a Forgotten Cemetery.”

¹³⁰ “[Mountain View Cemetery](#),” Findagrave.com, accessed February 19, 2021.

¹³¹ “The Catholic Cemetery,” *Black Hills Weekly*, September 14, 1888.

1936. The complex offers burial plots, mausoleums, and spaces for interring urns for the more than 5,200 souls who rest there.¹³²

Pine Lawn's design—an oblong path with trees, landscaping, and scenic overlooks—reflects earlier traditions of cemetery planning as well as new developments that were underway in the mid-20th century. Although cemetery designers continued to emphasize natural beauty, as Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland write, memorial parks were “comprehensively designed and managed by full-time professionals,” who sought to “extend perpetual care to every lot and grave” by smoothing out rough features with new, industrial landscape tools, and creating a sense of visual uniformity among the graves.¹³³ The design at Pine Lawn intertwines natural beauty with a vision of a restful afterlife to provide a peaceful experience of mourning and remembrance.¹³⁴

The most recent cemetery founded in Rapid City is located on the campus of the St. Martin's Monastery. Nearly 80 nuns who lived and worshipped at the monastery are buried there, with the oldest gravestone dating to 1961.¹³⁵

The expansion of cemeteries and the growth of Rapid City also created market demand for mortuary and funeral services. Several long-running businesses have served Rapid City and its cemeteries for generations. The earliest was operated by Henry Behrens, who established his still-running mortuary service in Rapid City in 1879.¹³⁶ In 1961, while Rapid City was undergoing a major postwar population boom, Herman Rausch founded Rausch Monuments, which has continued to craft many of the gravestones and memorials that honor deceased members of the Rapid City community for sixty years.¹³⁷

As Rapid City grew and evolved, officials relocated bodies from abandoned cemeteries several times. This process was poorly documented and has long vexed local historians and genealogists. As early as 1892 and 1893, for example, some bodies were taken from Plateau and moved to Evergreen, presumably due to accessibility issues.¹³⁸ About a decade later, eight bodies were moved from Mentch to Mountain View.¹³⁹ Then, when Evergreen went out of business, many of the bodies were relocated to either Plateau or Mountain View. Plateau then closed in 1920, and three years later, the city undertook the removal of all the graves to make room for a “water works plant” on the site.¹⁴⁰ According to one local researcher, the city failed to account for all the bodies moved to Mountain View, and some either remain at Plateau or were moved without being indexed or recorded, so

¹³² “[St. Martins Monastery Cemetery Memorials](#),” Findagrave.com, accessed February 19, 2021,

¹³³ Walton Potter and Boland, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, 5.

¹³⁴ “[Pine Lawn Memorial Park and Cremation Gardens](#),” accessed February 19, 2021.

¹³⁵ “[St. Martins Monastery Cemetery Memorials](#),” Findagrave.com, accessed February 19, 2021.

¹³⁶ “[Our Story](#),” Behrens Wilson Funeral Home, accessed February 19, 2021.

¹³⁷ “[Four Generations of Excellence](#),” ModaStone, accessed February 19, 2021.

¹³⁸ “Removing Bodies,” *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, September 14, 1888; “Woman Seeks to Solve Mysteries of Unmarked Graves,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 16, 1999; Wickenkamp, “‘Genealogy’ of a Forgotten Cemetery.”

¹³⁹ Barnes, “The Case of the Missing Cemetery,” 13.

¹⁴⁰ “Notice,” *Rapid City Journal* January 30, 1923.

their descendants are unlikely to find records of their burials.¹⁴¹ Documentation of cemeteries like Mentch, Evergreen, and Plateau—including exact details of who was buried where and when—remain open for further research.

Perhaps the greatest mystery of Rapid City’s cemeteries, however, regards the unmarked graves from the Rapid City Indian School and the Sioux Sanitarium. The Rapid City Indian School operated from 1898 to 1933, and after the Great Depression, was converted to the “Sioux Sanitarium,” a tuberculosis clinic for Native American patients. This facility became an Indian Health Service hospital in the 1950s and today operates as the Oyate Health Center.

During the boarding school era, an unknown number of Native students died either traveling to the school, while enrolled, or in attempts to escape the campus. Around 10 of these children were buried at Mountain View Cemetery. Others were interred on the school’s campus. Their graves were either never marked or the headstones deteriorated and disappeared over time. In either case, knowledge of these graves was preserved only in the local Lakota community. For decades, Lakota families maintained that a significant number of children, and perhaps patients from the early sanitarium days, remained buried somewhere on the former campus of the school. Around 2013, a group of volunteer researchers undertook an effort to document the names of those who had died and find and protect the graves. To date, they have identified about 50 children who died at the boarding school, but the list is incomplete, since a substantial portion of the school’s records were destroyed. After several years of research and consultations with Lakota elders, spiritual leaders, and representatives from state and tribal historic preservation offices, the research team identified the likely location of the graves on a hillside across from West Middle School and the Oyate Health Center. Research into these children’s deaths, their resting place, and efforts to protect and memorialize the site are ongoing.¹⁴²

Rapid City’s cemeteries are vital resources for understanding the history and development of the community. Their history, however, is only sparsely documented. In some cases, research projects by members of the Rapid City community, including entries on websites like Findagrave.com, appear to be the only investigations into locating and preserving graves or memorializing the dead buried there. The RCHPC faces a rich opportunity to further study, explore, understand, and preserve Rapid City’s hallowed ground.

¹⁴¹ “Removal of Bodies from Plateau Cemetery,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 3, 1923; Wickenkamp, “‘Genealogy’ of a Forgotten Cemetery;” “Woman Seeks to Solve Mysteries of Unmarked Graves.”

¹⁴² “[Deaths: Rapid City Indian Boarding School](#),” Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project, accessed February 18, 2021.

Documentation

Table: Rapid City Cemeteries

* Information from Don Barnes, “Pennington County Cemeteries” in *History of Pennington County*, 14

Type	Name	Location	First Burial	Status
*Church	Mount Calvary Cemetery	SW ¼ x NE ½ Sec 10 T1N R7E	1888	Active (now city run)
*Church	Mentch Methodist Cemetery	NW ¼ x NW ¼ Sec 32 T1 R9E	1889	Abandoned 1906
*Church	St Martin’s Monastery Cemetery	St. Martin’s Monastery, 1851 City Springs Road	1961	Active
Church	“Old Catholic Cemetery”	Near St. Therese The Little Flower Church,	1883	Abandoned, Date Unknown
*Community	Mountain View	NW1/4 x NE ¼ Sec 10 T1N R7E	1888	Active
*Community	Plateau Cemetery	Near Center Sec 1 T1N R7E	1878 or 1879	Abandoned 1888
*Privately Owned	Evergreen Cemetery	NE ¼ x SE1/4 Sec 5 T1N R8E	1888	Last Burial 1922
*Privately Owned	Pine Lawn Memorial Gardens	W ½ x SW ¼ Sec 14 T1N R7E	1936	Active
Federal?	Rapid City Indian School/Sioux Sanitarium	Hillside adjacent to West Middle School	Unmarked, likely early 1900s	Unmarked/Date Abandoned Unknown

Mountain View Cemetery





Mount Calvary Cemetery





Pine Lawn Memorial Park and Cremation Gardens



Map of Pine Lawn

<http://pinelawnrapidcity.com/html/garden.html>



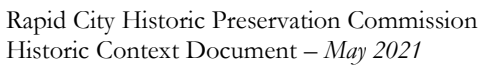
Unmarked Graves from Rapid City Indian School/Sioux San

Top: Looking west from West Middle School

Bottom: Looking northwest from Canyon Lake United Methodist Church



Minnilusa Historical Association



Behrens-Wilson Funeral Home was established as Henry Behrens, Inc. in 1879.

<https://www.behrenswilson.com/our-story/>



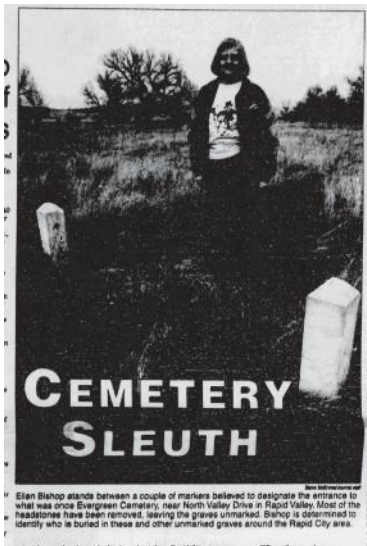
Mountain View/Mt. Calvary Cemetery, 1971-1972
Minnilusa Historical Association



Gravestones at Mentch Methodist Cemetery in 1998
 Photos by Ellen Bishop, Rapid City



Ellen Bishop at Evergreen Cemetery
Rapid City Journal, 1999



Indigenous Presence: Deep History to 2021

Thousands of archeological sites in the Black Hills document the Indigenous presence in the region extending back at least 12,000 years. Indigenous oral traditions reach even deeper into the past. A creation story, for example, places the origins of the Lakota people at *Wasun Niya* (Wind Cave) sometime in the deep past. Over many millennia, members of several Native tribes came into and through the Black Hills. This included the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota tribes of the *Oceti Sakowin* (“People of the Seven Council Fires,” often called the “Great Sioux Nation”), as well as Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, Arikaras, and Mandans.

Some members of these tribes may have passed through, stopping briefly on the way to hunt or trade. Others stayed longer after trekking to the area for extended sessions of individual prayer or healing. Still others stayed for weeks or months, holding elaborate ceremonies, camping seasonally, or assembling for large meetings. These activities lent structure and rhythm to early life on the Northern Plains, and for this reason, the landscape itself is imbued with deep meaning and ancient, dynamic connections to place, people, and community.

Like the rest of the Indigenous world, the early Black Hills and the prairies that surround them were complex and contested places. Life on the High Plains was challenging. Tribes faced a volatile, unforgiving climate. They sought access to natural resources like water, wood, stone, and game. They adapted and responded when violence and new diseases threatened their populations or new goods, tools, and technologies brought innovations to their lives.

The Black Hills also constituted, as the ethno-archeologist Linea Sundstrom writes, “a complex sacred geography” in which various Native groups held deep cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial ties to locations throughout the region.¹⁴³ For all these reasons, Native tribes moved into and out of the Black Hills many times over untold generations, making and remaking the social and cultural landscape.

Over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, other tribes as well as the steady trickle of non-Native fur traders and military personnel recognized Lakotas as the primary occupants of the Black Hills region. The government of the United States recognized the Black Hills as territories of the *Oceti Sakowin* by federal treaties in 1851 and 1868. Well-documented violations of these agreements opened the Black Hills to non-Native settlement in 1877. In 1889, the federal government further divided the remaining portions of West River, creating the rough boundaries of the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Lower Brule, and Cheyenne River Reservations as we know them today. The high number of Lakota people

¹⁴³ Linea Sundstrom, “The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 206.

who live on and around these reservations, combined with the deep cultural and legal connections that tie Lakotas to this area, bolster Lakota rootedness in the Black Hills region.

Native knowledge of the landscape corroborates the archaeological evidence establishing the enduring presence of Native people in what is now Rapid City. A map by Amos Bad Heart Bull, a Lakota man, captured an Indigenous perspective on the Black Hills region around the turn of the 20th century. He noted that Rapid Creek had long been utilized for winter camps. There, the trees and bluffs offered respite from intense prairie winds. In separate accounts, both Bad Heart Bull and the venerated Oglala Holy Man Nicholas Black Elk connected Rapid Creek, or *Mnilusa*, and the valley it created through the eastern Hills to a Lakota spiritual story.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Rapid Creek was a vital artery that brought water from the central hills to the eastern prairies. It was a locus of Indigenous activity, as evidenced by hundreds of tool grooves and other stone markings in the area that demonstrate Indigenous presence along the creek as much as 2,000 years ago. The same stone outcropping, known today as “Founders Rock,” that became the site of Rapid City’s establishment had been a well-known camping space for Indigenous peoples for generations.

Due to government regulations, Native peoples had a limited presence in Rapid City for the first 25 years of the city’s existence. Rapid City had been founded as “Hay Camp” in 1876. Just months before, the US government had ordered all Native peoples in the region to report to their assigned reservation. (Indeed, it was Native leaders’ resistance to this declaration, and the US Army’s efforts to enforce it, that brought about the violence at the Greasy Grass, or the “Battle of the Little Bighorn,” and related skirmishes that summer.) Following that event and other, smaller skirmishes, the specter of Native attack persisted in Rapid City for years. In 1876, for example, most of Rapid City’s residents fled to Pierre on a report of Native presence in the area. Well after any violence had subsided, the federal government enforced strict regulations aimed at confining Native peoples to reservations. Until the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, Native peoples were required to secure a pass from their agency superintendent before leaving their reservation.¹⁴⁵

Around 1900, a handful of Native families were living in Rapid City. Most had relocated from area reservations to live near children forcibly enrolled at the Rapid City Indian School built on the western outskirts of town in 1898. (See the essay on the Rapid City Indian School Lands for further details.) These families assembled semi-permanent camps along Rapid Creek, which extended at different times roughly from the Roosevelt Park area in the east all the way to the boarding school campus at Sioux San in the west.

The most prominent of these Native villages was known as the Osh Kosh Camp, or simply, “Indian camp,” which originated in the 1920s or 1930s. The main camp was located on the banks of Rapid Creek underneath tall cottonwood trees on what is now the greenway just south of Omaha Street and between Osh Kosh Street and Founders Park Drive. Most

¹⁴⁴ Sundstrom, “The Sacred Black Hills,” 187–92.

¹⁴⁵ Ross P. Korsgaard, “A History of Rapid City, South Dakota, During the Territorial Days,” *South Dakota History*, vol. 38 (1976): 523.

families established their homes in tents, boxcars, or other temporary housing, which they set up near the creek because it was near to the Warren Lamb Lumber company, an industrial business that owned the land upon which the camp was located. The company employed Native people and in a few cases provided small homes to its employees. According to Cecelia Montgomery, a Lakota woman who grew up in the Osh Kosh Camp, most Lakota families “camped because they couldn’t afford to rent anywhere; [the company] paid them very little wages. They were living in tents and some people bought shacks and moved them down there; it was a regular little reservation. They had outdoor toilets and everybody had to use the same water hydrant.”¹⁴⁶

Despite these conditions, Native families built a community at Osh Kosh. Over time, working-class non-Native families also built homes along the creek, making these spaces a cultural crossroads where residents of different backgrounds met and intermingled in the decades before the 1972 flood. James Emery, a Lakota, described how the Native community’s emotional attachment to this area persisted after the 1972 flood destroyed most of the camps and homes along Rapid Creek. “As far as the Indian was concerned, most of these places, that was home-sweet-home to him. That was the only place he knew. He loved it there. There was home life there...that was home-sweet home.”¹⁴⁷

Another Native community spent the summers on the property of Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns on Highway 16 just south of Rapid City. In 1927, a prominent businessman named Alex Duhamel partnered with the Oglala Holy Man Nicholas Black Elk. Together, they organized the “Duhamel Sioux Indian Pageant,” a cultural performance for locals and tourists. The first of these performances took place inside a dance hall in the Baken Park plaza before they moved to the Sitting Bull Cave property, where Lakota families lived in small, private camps set in the trees a short distance away from the performance area. For several years in the early 1930s, the pageant also held performances outside the Duhamel Store on Sixth Street downtown.

More Native families came to Rapid City in the 1940s and 1950s, spurred along both by the post-war economic boom and federal relocation programs. Although the Rapid City Native community remained predominantly Lakota and comprised of tribal members from reservations in South Dakota, more and more members of other tribes moved to the area.

During this period, Rapid City faced an economic and housing boom related to the creation and expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base and the growth of the local tourism industry. In 1954, the city of Rapid City empowered and funded a mayoral committee to move the Osh Kosh Camp from the downtown creek bed to a plot of land north of the city limits that came to be known as the Sioux Addition. Some Native families moved elsewhere in Rapid City, to the burgeoning neighborhoods in Robbinsdale and South Canyon, for

¹⁴⁶ Cecelia Montgomery, quoted in *Honor the Grandmothers: Dakota Women Tell Their Stories*, ed. Sarah Penman (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), 77–112.

¹⁴⁷ James Emery, oral history interview, July 11, 1972, South Dakota Oral History Center, accessed November 5, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/channels/sdoralhistory/78842793>.

example, but most remained at the Sioux Addition. For several years after the creation of the Sioux Addition, the structures there were comprised of tents and lean-tos arranged along a worn prairie floor.

Between 1954 and 1969, the Sioux Addition Civic Association lobbied local and federal officials to expand the development to accommodate the growing community. In 1969, a second neighborhood, known as Lakota Homes, was added next to the Sioux Addition. Today, the rows of ranch-style homes that line the streets in these neighborhoods reflect these developments.

As Rapid City expanded and enveloped these areas over the next several decades, the Native community remained consolidated in the North Side neighborhoods. The Black Hills Flood of 1972 contributed to this consolidation. After the flood and ensuing recovery eliminated what remained of Native camps and older homes along the creek, many displaced Native families settled in these North Rapid neighborhoods.

While these changes were underway throughout the middle decades of the 20th century, Native people became intimately entwined in the civic life of their neighborhoods and the city at large. The Winona Club, for example, was a Native women's club that had been founded in 1929. The group met in its members' North Side living rooms and kitchens and held craft sales and fundraisers at the St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and elsewhere over many decades. They used these funds to host lecturers, to help recovering patients at Sioux San, to make school lunches for disadvantaged children, and more. From the 1950s to the 1980s, the Winona Club advocated for resources on behalf of the Rapid City Native community and raised funds and developed a detailed plan for a "Sioux Indian Cultural Center" that would have provided space for exhibits and cultural performances.¹⁴⁸ Some elements of this plan became part of the vision that led to the creation of the Journey Museum and Learning Center in the 1990s.

Other Native organizations reflected the broad history of Native activism in the face of ongoing and unresolved racial conflicts. Throughout Rapid City's history, persistent tensions between the Native and non-Native communities have shaped the social and political ecosystems in the community. The Black Hills Council of American Indians, for example, met often in church basements as it advocated on a variety of Native issues and opposed violations of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty up to and beyond the US Supreme Court Case *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* in 1980. Rapid City, meanwhile, became a hotbed of activism for the American Indian Movement (AIM) and other groups in the years surrounding the 1973 occupation at Wounded Knee. In one telling example, the Mother Butler Center—which has been a community space that hosted everything from wakes and funerals to community action meetings over the last several decades—was the site of a tense, nearly-violent standoff between AIM activists and local law enforcement in early 1973.

Since the 1970s, Rapid City has continued to grow and expand as a hub of urban Indigenous life on the Northern Plains. Census reports place the number of permanent,

¹⁴⁸ Susan Braunstein, "Enriching the Culture: Winona Club," *Indian Country Today*, September 4, 1985.

Native residents at around 12 percent of Rapid City’s population. However, with residents of the surrounding reservations coming to shop, recreate, visit family, conduct business, and engage in a wide array of other personal and community activities, the Native population on any given day accounts for as much as a quarter of the people in the city.¹⁴⁹

Over the last few decades, community spaces like the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center have hosted annual events like the Lakota Nation Invitational and the *He Sapa Wacipi*, or Black Hills Powwow, (founded in 1976 and 1986 respectively).¹⁵⁰ Both of these events contribute significantly to the local economy each year. They also serve as a loci for community gatherings and cultural events and create opportunities for the reservation and urban Native communities to connect with one another and to strengthen the bonds between Native and non-Native people.

Native art and culture is also woven into Rapid City’s economy and institutional landscape. Although managed by non-Natives, downtown businesses like Prairie Edge and the Elks Theater sell Native-made goods and host events like the Native American Film Festival. For Native people whose families integrated Catholic or other Christian religious traditions, many local churches offer important community spaces where familial and cultural ties are solidified. Meanwhile, public cultural institutions like the Journey Museum and Learning Center, the Rapid City Public Library, and the Dahl Fine Arts center host frequent speakers, events, exhibits, and arts and crafts events related to Indigenous history and culture. In the center of the city in Halley Park, the First Nation Sculpture Garden honors the historical contributions of four prominent Native leaders. The Sioux San campus, meanwhile, continues to host *inipi* (sweat/purification) ceremonies.

Documentation

The stone outcroppings near “Founder’s Park,” 2019



¹⁴⁹ See Braunstein and Schantz, “Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City.”

¹⁵⁰ “[Press Release: October 29, 2019, Lakota Nation Invitational \(LNI\), Rapid City, SD,](#)”, accessed November 5, 2020; “Black Hills Powwow Co-Founder Randy Ross Dies at 63,” KEVN-Newscenter1, July 18, 2020.

Sign at Lakota Homes, 2019



Houses at Lakota Homes, 2019



The Mother Butler Center, 2019



Site of the Osh Kosh Camp, 2020



The Osh Kosh Camp in 1953, just prior to its destruction.
Rapid City Journal, March 1953

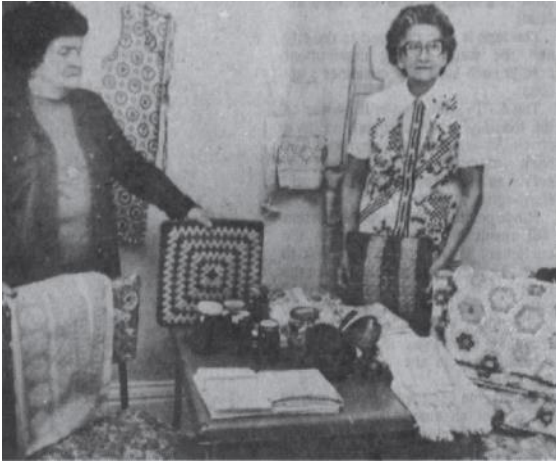


The Sioux Addition as it appeared in 1962.
New York Times, June 16, 1962



Marie Rogers and Emma Tibbets of the Winona Club arrange items for sale at the “Winona Club Bazaar” crafts sale at the St. Matthew’s Church in 1976.

Rapid City Journal, November 29, 1976



Rapid City Indian School / Sioux San Lands

In 1896, the US government began acquiring land for a boarding school in the rural valley west of Rapid City. At the time, the city was growing from a small mining camp to a regional trade center. By 1900, the population was just over 2,000 people. Due to the persistence of federal regulations limiting the movement of Native peoples from their reservations, only a handful of Rapid City's residents were Native American. In 1898, as the federal government was consolidating a group of homestead plots, Congress appropriated funds for the Rapid City Indian School. Over the next several years, it added additional acreages including the Cleghorn Spring, which pumped water to the school's campus and, for a time, served as the main source of drinking water in Rapid City. By 1907, the school's property totaled 1,391.16 acres and extended from what is now Baken Park in the east to Canyon Lake in the west. Overall, the boarding school lands totaled around two square miles of property.¹⁵¹

Like federal boarding schools across the United States the Rapid City Indian School sought to assimilate Native children into mainstream American society. To this end, government officials removed children from their homes, often by force or coercion, and took them to boarding schools. There, children were forbidden from speaking Native languages, practicing Indigenous ceremonies or traditions, wearing customary hairstyles and clothes, and more. Meanwhile, students were made to participate in a combination of academic curriculum, social training, and manual labor. Through this "industrial education," as it was called, Native children would be prepared for integration into non-Native society. This is why the boarding school property was so large. To be self-sustaining, the campus required outbuildings and infrastructure and fields for farms and livestock like dairy cows. As part of their daily tasks, students attended academic courses and then worked to support the facility's operations and maintain the sprawling, rural campus.

The first class of students at the Rapid City Indian School arrived in 1898. Although some students came from the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Reservations accounted for more than 80 percent of the student body.¹⁵² During the 35 years of the school's operation, thousands of Native children from reservations in South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana attended the institution. Enrollment regularly topped 300 students in the 1920s. In 1927, US President Calvin Coolidge and First Lady Grace Coolidge toured the campus during the summer they spent in Rapid City.¹⁵³

Life at the school was difficult. The staff enforced strict codes of conduct, using corporal punishment that ranged from beatings to solitary confinement before federal regulations prohibited these practices. At least 40 children died at the school from diseases

¹⁵¹ "Indian School Not at Fault," *Rapid City Journal*, August 3, 1909.

¹⁵² Riney, "Life at the Rapid City Indian Boarding School," in "An Inconvenient Truth," *Rapid City Journal* May 4, 2017.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

like tuberculosis, malaria or meningitis; work accidents; and other, unknown causes. Several died, and others were maimed while attempting to escape and return to their families. The exact numbers of enrollments and deaths are difficult to determine, in part because many records from the school's early years were destroyed and because existing records are vague. In some cases, staff failed to record the names of deceased children. In other cases, the school never informed families of their child's death, and many of the children were buried in unmarked graves on the school's campus.¹⁵⁴

In 1929 and 1930, the school closed due to a tuberculosis outbreak and served as a temporary sanitarium. The school reopened briefly but was closed for good in 1933. Three factors contributed to the closure. First, the federal government developed a growing awareness of the shortcomings of the boarding school model and the goals of assimilatory education and began to phase out residential boarding schools across the country while revising core tenets of the curriculum. Second, the Great Depression created new demand for federal facilities and resources. Finally, as scientists better understood the transmission of infectious disease, officials raised concerns about community members living near and visiting the sanitarium. This inspired a reevaluation of the ways the federal government should use the boarding school land and facilities.¹⁵⁵

After the school closed, the campus was converted to a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. Between 1933 and 1939, the CCC and the Works Progress Administration conducted extensive renovations that created the buildings, landscape, and general aesthetic that would characterize the main campus into the 2020s.

The federal government started construction on the main building of the Sioux Sanitarium in 1938. The facility opened in 1938 and served as a tuberculosis clinic for Native American patients into the 1960s. (Another sanitarium for non-Native patients operated in Custer.) Many patients died during this period, and again, some may have been buried on the grounds. Sioux San became part of the Indian Health Service in 1955. As treatments for tuberculosis improved, the facility transitioned to a full service medical clinic for Native patients, a role it continued to fill until very recently.¹⁵⁶

Boarding School Lands

Rapid City boomed as Sioux San underwent these changes in the 1940s, solidifying its place as the largest urban center in West River, South Dakota. The population nearly doubled from around 14,000 to 27,000 people, driven by the opening of the Rapid City Air Base during World War II and its postwar expansion. In 1947, a city report noted that it would need to quickly add 1,500 dwellings (800 rentals and 700 owner-occupied homes) to keep up with demand.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Riney, "Life at the Rapid City Indian Boarding School."

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Kibbe Conti, "History of Sioux San as a Segregated Tuberculosis Clinic," in "An Inconvenient Truth."

¹⁵⁷ "City Needs 1,500 New Dwellings According to Housing Survey," *Rapid City Journal*, June 8, 1947.

As the city expanded, the federal government realized that it no longer required the large acreage once used for the school to support the operations of the Sioux Sanitarium. In the late 1940s, the Department of the Interior made plans to reduce the Sanitarium's campus and make the remaining property available to other entities in the Rapid City community. Immediately, stakeholders from the city, the chamber of commerce, the school board, the state of South Dakota, members of the Native American community, and area churches began an intensive lobbying effort to gain access to the former boarding school lands.

Informed by these discussions, in May 1948, Congress passed a law authorizing the Secretary of the Interior "to convey without compensation any lands contained in the Sioux Sanitarium Farm at Rapid City, South Dakota, not necessary for the administration and operation of the Sioux Indians Sanitarium, to the City of Rapid City for municipal purposes, or to any public-school district for educational purposes, or to the State of South Dakota for use of the South Dakota National Guard." The act also made portions of that land available to "church organizations for religious purposes, upon receipt of the reasonable value of such lands," and to "utilize any of the said lands for the rehabilitation of needy Indians." The law also contained a clause stating that "the title to any lands so conveyed shall revert to the United States of America when the land is no longer used for the purposes for which such lands were initially conveyed."¹⁵⁸

Over the next few years, the city, the school district, and the state created Sioux Park, several schools and school facilities (including Canyon Lake Elementary, West Middle School, and Stevens High School), Camp Rapid, and the National Guard training facility west of Stevens. Meanwhile, several diocesan church organizations purchased acreages.¹⁵⁹ Some kept the land and built facilities for new congregations organized as the city grew on the West Side. (See the essay on postwar churches in Rapid City.) Other church organizations sold all or part of the land at substantial profits to real estate developers who created residential neighborhoods on the former boarding school property.

An early, informal agreement provided that the Native community would receive land for a housing development near what is now West Middle School. But a group of neighborhood residents petitioned the City and threatened to seek a legal injunction if plans for Native housing in the area moved forward.¹⁶⁰ As a result, none of the more than 1,200 acres of former boarding school land went to the "needy Indians" included in the 1948 Act.

The dispersal of the boarding school lands intersected with broader processes that shaped the racial landscape of Rapid City at midcentury. In 1952, the DOI conveyed just over 27 acres of land to the City of Rapid City, which then sold that land to the Rapid City

¹⁵⁸ Public Law 543, H.R. 5651, "An Act Authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to Convey Certain Lands in South Dakota for Municipal or Public Purposes," May 20, 1948.

¹⁵⁹ "Sioux Indian School Lands Grants to City Approved," *Rapid City Journal*, May 11, 1948.

¹⁶⁰ "Local Indians Request Some of Their Land," *Rapid City Journal*, June 16, 1948; "Petitions Protest Indian Camping Ground Proposal," *Rapid City Journal*, November 11, 1951; "Oshkosh Camp Should Go to Soo San Land-Decision," *Rapid City Journal*, April 26, 1953; "Commission Leaves Indian Camp Business Up in Air," *Rapid City Journal*, May 5, 1953.

Independent School District for \$15,000. The school district built West Middle School on that property. Meanwhile, the city gave the \$15,000 to a city organization called the “Mayor’s Committee on Human Relations,” which used the funds to buy 20 acres of property north of Rapid City. That plot of land became the Sioux Addition, and many Native families were moved there following the dismantling of the Osh Kosh Camp in 1954. (See the essay on Indigenous Presence: Deep History to 2021.) Over time, continued economic challenges and formal and informal processes of residential discrimination pushed the majority of the Native community to the North Side of Rapid City, where they have continued to face high rates of socioeconomic disadvantage ever since.

In the decades following the dispersal of the boarding school/Sioux San lands, members of the Native community sought recourse. For 60 years, Native community members and groups repeatedly raised this issue with local and federal officials. They requested numerous property allocations; developed plans for housing, economic development initiatives, cultural centers, and more. Many sought investigations into why the Native community, despite these efforts, never received portions of that property.¹⁶¹

Around 2013, a new generation of Native leaders in Rapid City reopened this issue. Their research began during the 75th anniversary celebration of the Sioux San IHS hospital, when a group of elders asked them to locate the graves of the children who died at the boarding school. Conducting land research towards this end, the researchers once again surfaced the challenging history of the boarding school and the inequities related to the dissolution of the associated property. In November 2020, the Rapid City Council adopted a resolution acknowledging this history and committing to a plan to move the community forward on constructive terms.

¹⁶¹ See for example, Bob Imrie, “Investigation Sought on Deeds, Use of Land,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 17, 1981.

Documentation

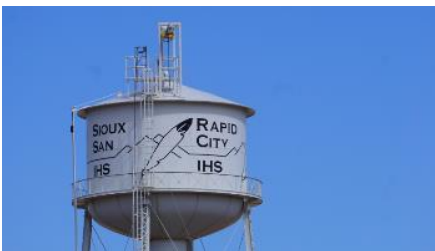
Plaque installed by the Works Progress Administration following improvements to the Sioux San campus in 1939.

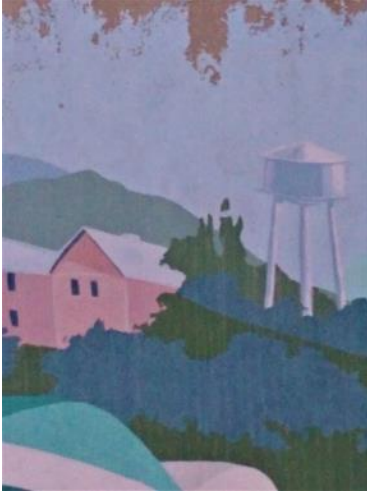


Many of the structures on the Sioux San campus have undergone updates over the years.



The water tower at Sioux San (above) stood from roughly 1932 until it was demolished in September 2020. Today, all that remains of the tower is its appearance on a mural painted on the side of the racquetball courts at Sioux Park (below).





The name “Sioux San” is a shortened version of “Sioux Sanitarium,” a name which hearkens to the facility’s history as a boarding school, primarily Native tuberculosis sanitarium, and Indian Health Service Hospital.



The Sioux Sanitarium came under the jurisdiction of the Indian Health Service in the 1950s.



Stevens High School (right) and much of the open space nearby were part of the boarding school lands.



Soldier Drive marks the gated entrance to the South Dakota National Guard training area across from Stevens High School. The National Guard received that land, along with the property for Camp Rapid, under the 1948 Act.



The Oyate Health Center/Sioux San and West Middle School looking east from the top of the hill where a community group hopes to build a memorial to the children who died at the Rapid City Indian School.



The south parking lot at West Middle School looks over the hillside where the children's memorial will be located.



The Canyon Lake/Jamie Johnson baseball complex from the Oyate Health Center/Sioux San campus.



The Catholic Church was the first religious organization to purchase boarding school/Sioux San property under the 1948 Act. In 1949, it bought just under 35 acres and built Blessed Sacrament Church.



Several churches that acquired land under the 1948 Act sold all or part of that property to real estate developers who created the neighborhoods within the original boundaries of the boarding school/Sioux San lands.



Maps/Historic Photographs

Rapid City Indian School campus, early 20th century.
Rise Photography



Chapel at the Rapid City Indian School, 1908.
McNamara Publications



Students entering a building on the boarding school campus, early 20th century.

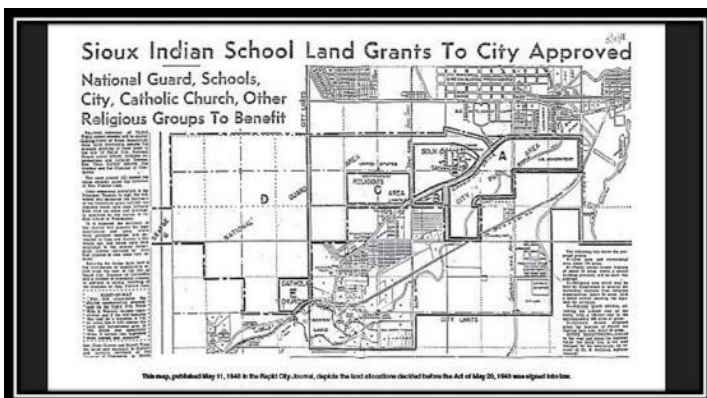


President Calvin Coolidge greets a group of boarding school students in 1927.

<https://blackhillsknowledge.network.omeka.net/items/show/11>



A map of the entities slated to receive boarding school/Sioux San lands published in the *Rapid City Journal* in 1948.



The original boarding school property extended from what is now Mountain View Road in the east to Canyon Lake in the southwest and includes the extent of the National Guard training facility.

Heather Dawn Thompson, 2017



Vintage postcard of the Rapid City Indian School.
Cardcow.com



Diverse Rapid City

Most histories of race and difference in the Rapid City area focus on the experiences of and relationships between Native Americans and Euro-American settlers. Today, around 97 percent of Rapid City's residents are either white or Indigenous, a pattern that has held true over the course of the community's history.¹⁶²

In the early years after Rapid City's founding, many settlers came from other parts of the United States and traced their family histories to Western Europe, especially regions like Germany and Scandinavia. Many had settled in the Midwest before heading West River to pursue mining, work in support industries or retail, or prove up land made available by federal settlement programs. For this reason, early Rapid City was comprised of a largely homogenous, Euro-American community without ethnic enclaves or distinct cultural districts.¹⁶³ Native communities represented the exception to this pattern. After a brief hiatus caused by their confinement to reservations in the last quarter of the 1800s, Native families returned to Rapid City in several waves over the course of the 20th century. In the face of prejudice and discrimination, many lived in predominately Native neighborhoods along Rapid Creek, in the Sioux Addition/Lakota Homes area, and in the postwar housing development known as "Star Village."

While the diversity of the white community was less apparent in the city's pattern of settlement, it was evident in the growth of institutions—churches, fraternal organizations, and cultural societies—associated with the city's ethnic and cultural diversity. This essay focuses on three groups that experienced prejudice and discrimination, even as they sought to celebrate their shared values and identities within the city as a whole.

Roman Catholics

Many Euro-Americans who settled in Rapid City were Protestant Christians. As early as 1877, area Methodists were holding prayer meetings—the first Christian religious services recorded in the town's history. They were soon joined by Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians.¹⁶⁴ Roman Catholics, meanwhile, started construction on the first church in Rapid City in 1881.¹⁶⁵

Throughout the history of the United States, Catholics have faced discrimination. Nativist objections to immigration in the nineteenth century often targeted groups from predominately Catholic countries like Ireland, Italy, and Southern Europe. In the 1920s, a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest targeted Catholics in the Black Hills, as well as other racial and ethnic minorities. The Klan held large rallies and carried out acts of

¹⁶² Braunstein and Schantz, "Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City," 3–4.

¹⁶³ See Jeff Buechler, "[City of Rapid City Historic Context Planning Document](#)," May 1980.

¹⁶⁴ *One Hundred Years, Trinity Lutheran Church: 1914-2013* (Rapid City, SD: Trinity Lutheran Church, 2013), 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

violence across the Black Hills. In Rapid City, the KKK marched through downtown and pressured the school board to fire teachers who were Catholic.¹⁶⁶

To counter prejudice and antipathy and to affirm their own religious values, Catholics throughout the United States established schools, hospitals, fraternal organizations, and other institutions. Concerned about the growing anti-Catholic sentiment in and around Sturgis, for example, a group of Benedictine nuns came to Rapid City in 1928 and opened the town's second major health clinic, St. John's McNamara Hospital. (The city's first hospital was Methodist Deaconess, located on South Street.) Originally operating out of three houses in the West Boulevard area, the nuns eventually raised funds to build a 75-bed facility on 11th Street. The hospital expanded to host a nursing program that has trained thousands of nurses over the course of nearly a century.¹⁶⁷

The Catholic community built several churches in Rapid City over the course of the twentieth century as the city grew. The Catholic fraternal order, the Knights of Columbus, traces its presence in the Black Hills to the Gold Rush. In 1910, the Rapid City council of the Knights of Columbus was formally launched with a high mass at St. Mary's Church.¹⁶⁸

Anti-Catholic sentiment abated over time. Today, Catholics attend a half dozen congregations across town, including in the prominent and ornate Immaculate Conception church on Fifth Street, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on Cathedral Drive, and the Blessed Sacrament Church across from Canyon Lake. The Catholic Church, meanwhile, manages private schools (St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Thomas More), a monastery and large retreat center known as Terra Sancta, and several service organizations committed to education and community well-being continue to influence the life of the larger community. Catholic congregants, meanwhile, are active participants in local business and civic life.¹⁶⁹

The Jewish Community

Rapid City has also been home to a small but active Jewish community. Its members held the first Yom Kippur ceremony in Rapid City in September 1880.¹⁷⁰ Lead/Deadwood had the largest Jewish community in the Black Hills until about the 1930s. When the mining industry declined, many Jewish families left the area. The few that remained in Rapid City became the community's anchor in the region. While Jewish residents of Rapid City and the Black Hills experienced prejudice and discrimination, especially in the leadup to World War II, some became prominent in civic affairs and business.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Charles Rambow, "The Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s: A Concentration on the Black Hills," *South Dakota History* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 63–81.

¹⁶⁷ Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"*, 139. See also Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 26; Almlie, "Places of Care and Science: Hospital Buildings in South Dakota."

¹⁶⁸ "Knights of Columbus Institute a Lodge," *Rapid City Journal*, May 29, 1910, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Rapid City Catholic School System, "[The History of the Diocese and Catholic Education in Western South Dakota](#)," accessed January 19, 2021.

¹⁷⁰ *One Hundred Years, Trinity Lutheran Church*, 5.

¹⁷¹ Shaff and Shaff, *Paving the Way: The Life of Morris E. Adelstein*, 150–55.

Military service brought a substantial number of Jewish families to the area. When Ellsworth Air Force Base expanded to support the Cold War effort in the 1950s and 1960s, the Rapid City area saw its highest number of Jewish residents. Around 1960, they formed the Synagogue of the Hills. For decades, it was a congregation without a facility. Membership ebbed and flowed depending on the number of Jewish families stationed on base. The Synagogue members, nonetheless, met for weddings, funerals, the High Holidays, and other important events. According to longtime Synagogue member Ann Haber Stanton, they held services “at the site of the present Faith Temple on Kansas City Street, occasionally in Canyon Lake Park, and eventually at the Chapel at Ellsworth Air Force Base.” Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the Synagogue met occasionally at the Sheraton-Johnson Hotel (Hotel Alex Johnson) or on the campus of South Dakota Mines for Passover Seder and similar gatherings. In 1995, the congregation moved into town, first meeting in an office building owned by the Hills Materials Company, and then in a house in the South Canyon neighborhood on Rapid City’s West Side.¹⁷²

In addition to these places, a reminder of Jewish history of Rapid City can be found on the corner of Sixth and Main Streets, in the large building that now houses the Prairie Edge Trading Co. The building was built by two Jewish merchants, Louis and Julian Morris. Meanwhile, members of several Jewish families are buried at the Mountain View Cemetery.¹⁷³

Today, the Synagogue has a handful of members, some of whom travel hours for Shabbat services or holiday celebrations. The resilience of their community was captured by longtime Synagogue president and former state legislator, Stan Adelstein. In 1978, he reflected on the fact that people often asked how his family had “managed to stay Jewish for four generations in Rapid City.” Adelstein replied that “statistically we are a true microcosm of the world Jewry. We probably are to Western South Dakota what the world Jewry is to world population. If we cannot survive for four generations in freedom, what hope is there for [the] Jewry to survive in a hostile world?”¹⁷⁴

African Americans

A small number of African Americans have called the Black Hills home since the 1870s. The first arrived in the Black Hills in 1874 on a wagon train from Sioux City, Iowa. Over the next several years, several Black men and women came to the area. Many were former slaves who became miners, traders, and laborers in the local retail and service industries. Thomas Clark and Posey Ogelsby were two of the approximately 100 African Americans living in the Black Hills as of 1880. They were part of a group of Black and Irish prospectors who hit a large gold vein in the Northern Hills in 1876. Another Black man, Anderson Daniels, became

¹⁷² Ann Haber Stanton, “[A Destination in the Wilderness](#),” Synagogue of the Hills, accessed January 11, 2021; “Passover Seder,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 26, 1964.

¹⁷³ Stanton, “A Destination in the Wilderness.”

¹⁷⁴ Stan Adelstein quoted in Zimmer, *Question is “Why?”*, 188.

known as the “quartz king” of Lead and made a good living from the quartz vein that ran underneath his house.¹⁷⁵

Fitting the boom-and-bust pattern of the early mining economy, many Black workers stayed in the region only briefly. A contingent of some 180 “Buffalo Soldiers,” or African-American infantrymen, were stationed at Fort Meade in Sturgis from 1880 to 1888.¹⁷⁶ Due in part to the Black servicemen who stayed in the region following service at Fort Meade, by 1885, there was enough of a Black presence in Rapid City for a group to organize an emancipation celebration. Commemorations took place in August 1885 and August 1886, but local newspapers ran derogatory coverage of both events, and they did not continue.¹⁷⁷

Several African Americans became a longstanding part of the Rapid City community. The Graves Family Band, for example, performed in the area in the 1880s. The patriarch, a former slave from Missouri named Benjamin F. Graves, settled in Rapid City. Graves had eight children with his first wife, Caroline, who passed away in 1884. When Benjamin remarried, he and his second wife, Patsy, and their children stayed in town. One son, Frank Graves, was a track star at Rapid City High School. Three children were members of the hose brigade for the local volunteer fire department. Several members of the family remained in Rapid City for years, although others left after two of the brothers were killed in a violent altercation with another individual. William and Margaret “Auntie” Summers were another notable Black family who lived in early Rapid City. They came to town in 1885 after William completed military service at Fort Meade. The couple lived for years on Rapid Street and had eleven children of their own. Mary was a well-known midwife who delivered many babies in and around Rapid City before her death in 1905.¹⁷⁸

According to the historian Betty VanEpps-Taylor, African Americans “kept a low profile and blended into the general population.” In addition to Black members of the hose running team, there was a mostly African-American basketball team that played in a league at the Community Service Center, and Black residents were enmeshed in various aspects of community life. Yet “it was well known among the town’s minority populations,” Van Epps-Taylor continues, “that many otherwise public facilities in Rapid City were restricted to

¹⁷⁵ Betti VanEpps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives: African Americans in South Dakota* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2008), 71—73.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁷⁷ Lilah Morton Pengra, “Corporals, Cooks, and Cowboys: African Americans in the Black Hills,” bound volume available at Rapid City Public Library, June 2006, 23. Although President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1863, it did not take effect until January 1, 1864. In many African American communities, “Juneteenth” celebrations mark the occasion. That date references June 19, 1865, when news that the Civil War had ended, and that slavery was over, arrived at a Black community in Texas.

¹⁷⁸ VanEpps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives*, 79–81. See also Pengra, “Corporals, Cooks, and Cowboys,” 134–41; Liz Almlie, “[Blackface Minstrel Performance in South Dakota](#),” History in South Dakota, accessed January 18, 2021.

whites only,” and that “jobs for American Indians and African Americans existed mainly at the bottom of the economic ladder.”¹⁷⁹

Instances of discrimination by whites against the African-American community increased dramatically after World War II. The expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base in the 1950s and 1960s brought a wave of African-American servicemen and their families to Rapid City. Many of these families experienced discrimination in housing and at local hotels and restaurants. Discrimination gained the attention of the national media and led to several community surveys around race relations. Prejudice also sparked an equality campaign by the local chapter of the NAACP. In reaction, members of the white community formed a local “Citizens Council for Individual Rights,” which advocated against passing any laws to “impair their rights” by forcing business owners and landlords to serve or rent to Black patrons.¹⁸⁰

Bobby Seale, who would later co-found the Black Panther Party, was stationed at Ellsworth in the 1950s. In an oral history interview, Seale described the experience of African-American service members in Rapid City. “Of course, white GIs went to the white places in town. The black GIs went to the two black places.”¹⁸¹

Ultimately, the South Dakota Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights launched an investigation into race relations in Rapid City in the early 1960s, a period when racial tensions between African Americans and the white majority made headlines across the country. After conducting numerous interviews, holding community forums, and probing allegations of discrimination, the Commission found a high degree of housing discrimination. Often, African-American families tried and failed for months to find a place to live. Hotel and motel owners, meanwhile, denied service to many Black families. This forced Black airmen to leave their families in other cities during assignments at Ellsworth. As many as 86 percent “of bars and nightclubs practiced discrimination,” and Black residents also had a difficult time being served in salons and barber shops.¹⁸²

The Civil Rights Commission noted that although discrimination was a serious problem that needed resolution, racial animosity had been exacerbated by the post-war housing boom in Rapid City. The flood of people had stoked tensions by straining the housing and rental markets and overloaded the demand for utilities and municipal services. The Commission also pointed out that while Rapid City became the locus of the regional

¹⁷⁹ Vanepps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives*, 177. See also Pengra, “Corporals, Cooks, and Cowboys,” 69; “Custer Indeed to Play in Tourney,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 26, 1957. The Rapid City Community Service Center was located at 804 East Chicago Street and was severely damaged by the 1972 flood and demolished a short time later. See Kay Taylor, “Community Service Center Trust Fund Receives Donation from VIC,” *Rapid City Journal*, November 26, 1984.

¹⁸⁰ Vanepps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives*, 186. See also Pat McCarty, “Rapid City Sampling Shows High Degree of Tolerance Found Toward Negroes,” *Rapid City Journal*, February 5, 1961.

¹⁸¹ Stephen Shames and Bobby Seale, *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers* (New York, Abrams Books, 2016).

¹⁸² South Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights “Report on Rapid City” (March 1963): 45–47.

conversation around racial discrimination, the fact that Ellsworth was a prominent federal entity had brought increased scrutiny. Discrimination of this nature could have occurred in any rural Northern Plains community, the Commission said. In the end, it maintained that a relatively small segment of the white population had engaged in any form of discrimination. By the end of its study period, the Commission reported that instances of discrimination in hotels and restaurants had decreased while the community focused on the issue.¹⁸³

Shortly after the Commission completed its work, the state legislature passed a law prohibiting racial discrimination in public accommodations.¹⁸⁴ This law assuaged, but did not eliminate, racial tensions between the African-American and white populations in Rapid City. In 1967, a Black serviceman sent a letter to the editor of the *Rapid City Journal*. He described his experience trying to help another airman find a home. Despite the law, the colleague, who was also Black, “was told by several persons that because he was a Negro they couldn’t rent to him. He finally got a house but was charged an outrageous price by the landlord.”¹⁸⁵ The next year, the Rapid City Municipal Court had to review complaints that a local barkeeper was denying service to African Americans.¹⁸⁶

Black residents responded to these ongoing challenges by attempting to open their own businesses. In the spring of 1972, the Ebony Club opened on the 700 block of Main Street. The city denied its liquor license after several fights broke out and the business closed shortly thereafter. In response, members of the African American community organized a protest. They marched down Main Street carrying picket signs with phrases like “We Want Our Own Bar Now!” The event was staged to coincide with a presidential campaign event for Senator George McGovern at the Hotel Alex Johnson.¹⁸⁷ Two years later, four Black business partners opened Club 1410, which was located at 1410 Centre Street on the East Side of Rapid City. Called by one reporter “the first black-owned club to be granted a liquor license in South Dakota,” the 1410 lasted only about a year before its liquor license was transferred to the Eagles Club, which moved into the building shortly thereafter and still occupies the Centre Street location today.¹⁸⁸

The number of Black Rapid Citians has remained small since the 1970s. As recently as 2015, the Black population was 1.1 percent, or around 700 individuals, of the community’s population.¹⁸⁹ Several African-American residents have become important community leaders. In the 1980s, the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ bought the former Congregational Church at 715 Kansas City Street. The church was led for many years by Lady Evelyn Kelly and Bishop Lorenzo Kelly. Both were immersed in charitable work

¹⁸³ “Report on Rapid City,” 45–47.

¹⁸⁴ Vanepps-Taylor, *Forgotten Lives*, 186–188.

¹⁸⁵ Joseph T. Boone, “For Fair Housing,” *Rapid City Journal*, February 22, 1967.

¹⁸⁶ Ed Martley, “Hearing Continued on Public Accommodations Law Complaint,” *Rapid City Journal*, October 26, 1968.

¹⁸⁷ “Council Asked to Approve a Black Parade on Friday,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 4, 1972; “Bar Closing Protested,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 8, 1972.

¹⁸⁸ “City’s First Black-Owned Nightclub Opens,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 8, 1974.

¹⁸⁹ Braunstein and Schantz, “Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City,” 3–4.

and service until their respective deaths in 2014 and 2017. The Kelly's were succeeded by Bishop Troy Michael Carr and his wife, Twana Carr, who have continued the Kelly's legacy of leadership and service.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, in 2004, Malcom Chapman became the first African-American city alderman in Rapid City's history. He served several terms until 2010 and, after spending a decade in private consulting practice, Chapman became the city's first Human Relations Commission coordinator. This new position was created in 2020 to help improve race relations and cultural dialogue in Rapid City.¹⁹¹

Opportunities for Further Research

In addition to the various racial, ethnic, and religious groups noted above, members of other groups of difference, including Asian Americans (who comprised some 1.2 percent of the population in 2015), Latino/as, people of Middle Eastern descent, and LGBTQ residents have lived and worked in Rapid City.¹⁹² A survey of the available literature on Rapid City history and search of newspaper databases turned up only a handful of references to terms like "Latino," "Latina," "Hispanic," "Arab," "Muslim," "gay," "lesbian," "Asian," "Asian-American," and "LGBTQ." Additional, in-depth research would be required to uncover the stories of these and other groups and to situate them on the built and natural environments of Rapid City.

Documentation

Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at 520 Cathedral Drive.



¹⁹⁰ See Faith Temple Church, "[About Faith Temple Church](#)," accessed January 19, 2021.

¹⁹¹ Siandhara Bonnet, "HRC Coordinator Salary Approved; Soo San Drive Name to Change to Sioux San," *Rapid City Journal*, December 8, 2020.

¹⁹² Braunstein and Schantz, "Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City," 3–4.

Immaculate Conception Church at 922 5th Street.



The office building at 916 5th Street formerly belonged to the Knights of Columbus.



Blessed Sacrament Church at 4500 Jackson Boulevard.



St. Therese the Little Flower Catholic Church at 532 Adams Street.





St. Thomas More High School at 300 Fairmont Boulevard.



St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary School at 2101 City Springs Road.



St. Isaac Jogues and the Mother Butler Centers at 221 Knollwood Drive.





Catholic Social Services is housed in an office building at 529 Kansas City Street.



The St. Martin's Monastery and Terra Sancta retreat center on City Springs Road.



The facilities of St. John's McNamara hospital and nursing school, 1014 11th Street.



The Freedom Chapel at Ellsworth Air Force Base.
Ellsworth.af.mil





The Synagogue of the Hills at 417 N. 40th Street



The Duhamel Building on the 500 block of 6th Street in downtown Rapid City is an example of a business and building once owned by a prominent Catholic family.



Surbeck Center, South Dakota Mines — 501 E. Union Street

The Synagogue of the Hills held High Holidays celebrations and Passover Seder events at the Surbeck Center on the campus of South Dakota Mines at 501 E. Union Street.



The Synagogue of the Hills held many weddings and outdoor celebrations at Canyon Lake Park.



Formerly home to the Congregational Church, the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ at 715 Kansas City Street has welcomed Jewish and African-American worshipers throughout its history.



The Synagogue of the Hills held many events at the Sheraton-Johnson Hotel (Hotel Alex Johnson) at 523 6th Street in Rapid City.



Now owned by Simon Construction, the “Quarry Building” of the Hills Materials Company, located at 3975 Sturgis Road, was a meeting place of the Synagogue of the Hills in the early 1990s.



According to one history, the building that now houses Prairie Edge at 606 Main Street was built by Jewish brothers Louis and Julian Morris.



The graves of several Jewish residents and African American “Buffalo Soldiers” are located at the Mountain View Cemetery at 1901 Mountain View Road.



An early member of Rapid City's African-American community, Hance Graves, helped build the Emmanuel Episcopal Church at 717 Quincy Street.



This mobile home park occupies the 800 block of Chicago Street. The Community Service Center had been located at 804 Chicago before it was damaged by the 1972 flood and demolished a short while later.



Before it became the Eagles Club in the 1970s, 1410 Centre Street was the location of Club 1410, a Black-owned bar.

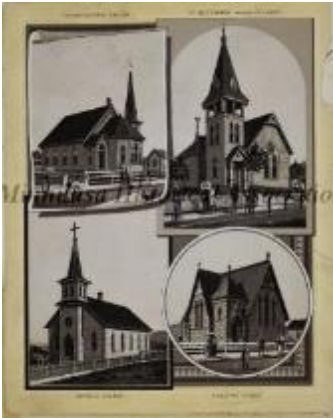


This parking lot on the 700 block of Main Street may have been home to the Ebony Club at 728 Main Street.



Historic Photographs

A pamphlet of churches in early Rapid City.
Minnilusa Historical Association



A view of Rapid City with the Immaculate Conception Church prominent in the foreground.
Minnilusa Historical Association



An early Catholic church in Rapid City.
Minnilusa Historical Association



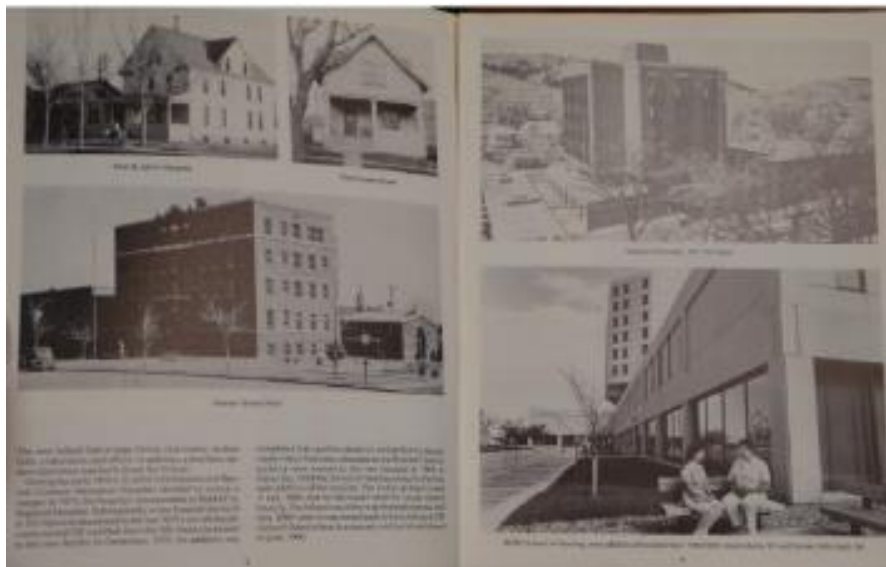
“Catholic Convention” in Rapid City, early 20th century
Minnilusa Historical Association



Members of the Ku Klux Klan march in Rapid City in the 1920s.
South Dakota State Historical Society



Photo Spread of St. John's McNamara Buildings through time. In *St. John's McNamara/Rapid City Regional Hospital School of Nursing: History, 1927-1991*



Chapel and Grotto at St. John's McNamara. In *St. John's McNamara/Rapid City Regional Hospital School of Nursing: History, 1927-1991*



Members of the Synagogue of the Hills light a Hannukah menorah outside Stan Adelstein's home at 1999 West Boulevard in Rapid City.

Rapid City Journal, December 21, 1984



Stan Adelstein speaks to a group of Synagogue members during a Passover Seder in the Surbeck Center at South Dakota Mines in 1986.

Stan Adelstein personal collection



Menorah lighting ceremony at Stan Adelstein's home in Rapid City.

Rapid City Journal, December 18, 1985



Wedding chuppah, likely in Canyon Lake Park, 1990s

Synagogue of the Hills Library



The Synagogue of the Hills around the time of its move to a permanent home at 417 N. 40th Street in 1995.

Synagogue of the Hills Library



A Jewish mission group sponsored a series of day camps and events at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in 1989.

Stan Adelstein personal collection





Members of the African-American basketball team at the Community Service Center.

Rapid City Journal, 1952, reprinted in Pengra, “Corporals, Cooks, & Cowboys,” 69



A Black resident leading a parade float in Rapid City.

Minnilusa Historical Association, reprinted in Pengra, “Corporals, Cooks, & Cowboys,” 133



Hance Graves delivers material to the site of the new Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Rapid City.

Minnilusa Historical Association. Reprinted in Pengra, "Corporals, Cooks, & Cowboys," 140.



The Ebony Club operated briefly at 728 Main Street in Rapid City.
Rapid City Journal, April 1972.



Black residents protest the closure of the Ebony Club in 1972.
Rapid City Journal, April 1972.



Club 1410 may have been the first Black-owned club to receive a liquor license in South Dakota.

Rapid City Journal, April 26, 1974



A Home of One's Own:

Postwar Residential Development in Rapid City, 1945-1972

Across the nation and in Rapid City, the shortage of housing made headlines after World War II. Through the Great Depression and the war, many Americans had postponed building new homes. First, the sagging economy made it impossible for many families to afford homes. Then, during the war, shortages of supplies and building materials made construction difficult. Immediately after the war, many Americans got their finances in order and waited for supplies, labor, and services to catch up with demand. During this nearly 20-year lag in homebuilding, new federal programs and policies, launched first under President Herbert Hoover and then expanded during the tenure of President Franklin Roosevelt, revolutionized the process of mortgage finance. At the end of the war, loans written by savings and loan companies and banks, backed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran's Administration (VA), made homeownership accessible to millions of American households.

These programs and the prosperity they delivered were not distributed equally throughout the American populace. Race and economic status often determined who benefited from these federal programs and who did not. In Rapid City, for example, housing discrimination against Native Americans and African Americans was documented in the press and by the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁹³ These conditions did not improve until the 1970s when new fair housing initiatives pushed back against discrimination. (See essays on Indigenous Presence and Diverse Rapid City.)

A Revolution in Home Construction

Prior to World War II, most single-family residences in Rapid City and the US were constructed for individual customers by builders who erected homes one at a time. On the eve of the war, however, many people predicted a revolution in home construction. A banner front-page headline in the *Rapid City Journal* on March 15, 1941, for example, suggested "Low-Priced Home Now An Established Building Fact." The paper featured an image of the Hillcrest Terrace development behind the high school and claimed it was "the largest private housing job in the country." The article also pointed to new developments in the area between Baken Park and Canyon Lake. Lumber dealers in the city, however,

¹⁹³ See, for example, "Discrimination Noted in R.C.," *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, February 17, 1959 and "Discrimination Against Indians Aired in State," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, May 8, 1959. Also, South Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Negro Airmen in a Northern Community: Discrimination in Rapid City, South Dakota* (Pierre: South Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1963), cited in Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975: A Thematic Context Study," August 2017, prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Society, 86–87.

dismissed the idea of a radical change in the homebuilding industry. They soon changed their minds.¹⁹⁴

After the war, a new generation of builders, appropriating techniques for factory-style production, dominated homebuilding in America's largest metropolitan regions, including Rapid City.¹⁹⁵ In Rapid City local builders leveraged these techniques to create new neighborhoods as early as 1946 when the Robbins and Stearns Lumber Company began construction on 28 new homes on Franklin Street, just east of Fifth Street. The following year, the company's former manager, Cecil Urban, founded Private Homes Inc. and began building 50 new houses along St. Andrews and St. Patrick Streets between Fifth and Third streets.¹⁹⁶ Using "mass production methods," the company offered four basic designs with ten exterior variations. Most of the homes had two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bath and were offered via a rent-to-buy program with priority given to veterans.¹⁹⁷

While Private Homes and Robbins and Stearns led the first building boom, smaller developers also jumped into the market. The L&L company, launched by C.W. Laws and J.A. Lamper, built five homes on Fifth Street and St. Andrew. Using steel frames and walls and partitions made of fabricated panels, the Knecht Lumber company also built a series of houses on St. Patrick Street. As the market exploded, even Al Costello's Highland Beverage company erected a series of homes along Rapid Creek near the fairgrounds, and Rushmore Life Underwriters broke ground on a 12-unit project in the Canyon Lake district.¹⁹⁸ In the immediate postwar years, new residential construction focused south and north of downtown and in the West Chicago area, with some development in the Canyon Lake neighborhood as well in the first decade after the war. In 1952, the Signal Heights Corporation began construction of 200 rental units on the top of Reservoir Hill.¹⁹⁹

High volume builders played a major role in residential construction over the next 10 to 15 years. Of the 5,672 single-family residences erected between 1950 and 1964, for example, nearly a quarter were built by one company—Private Homes, Inc.²⁰⁰ Other major builders included Robbins & Stearns; Marcoe Construction; Gale Goodwin; Walter Quinn Construction; Lee Arnold Construction; Martin Hoefer Construction (700 units; 12.1

¹⁹⁴ "New Air View of City's Largest Housing Project," *Rapid City Journal*, March 15, 1941, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 101-102.

¹⁹⁶ "Cecil Urban," *Rapid City Journal*, November 9, 1995, 14. See also, "Hundreds of New Homes Easing Housing Problem in Rapid City," *Rapid City Journal*, September 11, 1947, 11. On Private Homes founding in January 1947 by Charles N. Keown and Cecil Urban, see picture and caption, *Rapid City Journal*, September 16, 1956, 38.

¹⁹⁷ "50 New Houses Planned By Company Here," *Rapid City Journal*, March 15, 1947, 4. See also, "Hundreds of New Homes Easing Housing Problem in Rapid City," *Rapid City Journal*, September 11, 1947, 11.

¹⁹⁸ "Hundreds of New Homes Easing Housing Problem in Rapid City."

¹⁹⁹ "Temporary School Buildings Studied for Southeast Area," *Rapid City Journal*, April 4, 1952, 12. The builder Sheldon Reese, president of Acme Construction Company, was sued by the project's architect, Ursa L. Freed (147 East Franklin Street) who asserted that he was never paid for his work. "Architect Sues Acme for \$12,804," *Rapid City Journal*, April 13, 1953, 3.

²⁰⁰ Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 101.

percent of total construction in the period; Midwestern Homes; Myhren's Cashway; and RECO Master Craft (450 units; 8 percent).²⁰¹

Tract home developers took advantage of new materials and new standardized, pre-fabricated building materials. They also relied on methods of construction that had been invented or refined during the war to bring mass-production techniques to homebuilding. Extruded aluminum, pre-formed concrete blocks, pre-cut plywood sheets, fiberboard, and tempered glass products all lowered costs, accelerated the speed of construction, and created opportunities for new home designs. Utilizing these products and systems, builders could reduce construction time and the cost per square foot for construction to meet the demand for homes.²⁰²

Matters of Design

When they were involved in the development of these new communities, architects created a limited set of plans that the builder would mix in a particular development. Most of these new homes were very modest. In 1954, the average new home was 1,080 square feet.²⁰³ They included few design amenities. For families with more resources, however, the influence of national design ideas was substantial. In 1954, for example, *Better Homes & Gardens* launched its "Home for All America" campaign, promoting ranch house architecture as a concept that could be adapted for various climates and reflected the character of "modern" life with large windows and easy access to the outdoors. The following year, the magazine introduced its "Idea Home" as a template for builders, who constructed models based on the plan all across the country, including South Dakota. In Rapid City, builder Dallas Smith constructed an Idea Home in the Strathavon Addition. More than 10,000 people toured the home in the late summer of 1956, including home economics classes from Rapid City High School who traversed its linoleum floors and marveled at the wonderful, modern kitchen.²⁰⁴

In the immediate postwar years, affordable homes came with few amenities. By the mid-1950s, however, carports and even garages were added by builders to meet the demand of middle class families and their automobiles. The idealization of the rustic or western way of life was reflected in antique brick fireplaces and stained pine walls or beams. Larger homes featured split-level floor plans to separate entertaining from the privacy of the

²⁰¹ This study refers to these builders as merchant builders, borrowing terminology from Marc Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). It should be noted, however, that these projects were much smaller than the typical merchant builder in major metropolitan areas, diminishing opportunities for economies of scale in construction and finance. As the authors point out, in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, "the homebuilding industry was more complicated in its reliance on a variety of players," and South Dakota had the "fourth lowest number of merchant builders in the country." See Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 101-102.

²⁰² Eric John Abrahamson, "One After Another: Building Homes and Making Loans," in Jocelyn Gibbs and Nicholas Olsberg, *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2012), 193-203.

²⁰³ Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 22.

²⁰⁴ *Rapid City Journal*, September 16, 1956, 29.

bedrooms. But in 1959, in the middle of the Cold War, amenities could also include fallout shelters as well.²⁰⁵ As the children of the baby boom aged, families looked for finished basements or recreation rooms as well.²⁰⁶

Planning Challenges

While many of these new developments were within the city's limits, others were built beyond the city's incorporated borders. A great deal of this new construction was unplanned and uncontrolled. "Hundreds of homes were constructed in the Canyon Lake area, for example, "without benefit of adequate street design, proper grading, sewers, or virtually any controls," according to one newspaper publisher in July 1947. As a result, he said, water contamination in Canyon Lake had become so bad that airmen stationed at the Rapid City Army Air Base were told not to swim there.²⁰⁷

To tackle these planning issues, the city annexed the Canyon Lake area that fall, as well as the Greenacres subdivision to meet the demand for city services and provide for the health and safety of these rapidly expanding new suburbs.²⁰⁸ It also established a new planning and zoning committee to coordinate development in a way that would protect residential areas and provide for industrial and commercial development.²⁰⁹ In 1948, the city contracted with the A.C. Godward Company of Minneapolis to develop the city's first comprehensive plan.²¹⁰ When it was delivered, *Rapid City Journal* editorial writers exclaimed that "Rapid Citians of 1999 Should Appreciate Today's Planners" and predicted the document would lead to the development of a "beautiful, well-planned metropolis" by the end of the century.²¹¹ Indeed, with Godward's plan, the city improved streets, revised its zoning ordinances, and began developing Sioux Park.²¹² An effort to win voter approval for the creation of a statutory planning commission in 1952, however, failed with 81.5 percent voting against the measure.²¹³

Water, sewer, and roads, meanwhile, remained a basic necessity. As the city expanded, new infrastructure for water (particularly after the Pactola Reservoir was

²⁰⁵ "Development Home with Fallout Shelters to Open," *Rapid City Journal*, August 23, 1959, 17. This article profiles a new tract development in Denver where fallout shelters were included. At least one house in Rapid City built on Clark Street during this time period was equipped with a fallout shelter. See also, "First Two of 100 Family Fallout Shelters Opened," *Rapid City Journal*, February 9, 1960, 9.

²⁰⁶ "Homes for Americans," *Rapid City Journal*, May 19, 1963, 16.

²⁰⁷ "Thru the Hills," Warren Morrell, *Rapid City Journal*, July 22, 1947, 6.

²⁰⁸ "Assessor Explains Taxes for New Residents Again," *Rapid City Journal*, November 4, 1947, 4. A number of residents of the Canyon Lake area were not happy about the city's annexation. They sued the city, but the court upheld the city's action. "Taxation and Services Included in Study of Annexation Possibilities," *Rapid City Journal*, February 12, 1963, 3.

²⁰⁹ Brad Slack, "Planning Committee Must Study Sites for Erection of Multiple-Dwelling Units," *Rapid City Journal*, November 23, 1949, 4.

²¹⁰ "City Solons Study Zoning Proposals," *Rapid City Journal*, February 19, 1950, 18. See also, "Planning Engineer Finishes City Study," *Rapid City Journal*, November 27, 1948, 4.

²¹¹ "Rapid Citians of 1999 Should Appreciate Today's Planners," *Rapid City Journal*, December 9, 1949, 9.

²¹² "City Planner Applauds Civic Cooperation Here," *Rapid City Journal*, March 28, 1950, 3.

²¹³ Bob Fell, "Plan Commission To Be Voted On Again," *Rapid City Journal*, March 9, 1969, 1.

completed in 1956) and sewers allowed postwar neighborhoods to continue to grow.²¹⁴ The completion of Interstate 90 to the north also spurred residential and commercial construction between downtown and the interstate.²¹⁵

Developers frequently preferred what would later be called “greenfield” development in areas outside the incorporated limits of the city. There, they were not subject to the city’s zoning ordinances and building codes. Once homeowners moved in, many pressed for annexation to receive city services. In the spring of 1958, a frustrated city planning engineer named Douglas VanEykeboach told members of Rotary Club that there were more than 2,200 acres of vacant land in the city limits that should be developed first before the city agreed to extend water and sewer services to areas proposed for annexation.²¹⁶

Battles over infrastructure and development standards also reflected the tension between builders’ efforts to keep costs low and the city’s desire to avoid future remediation costs for substandard infrastructure. In 1962, for example, Mayor Bill Raff vetoed the Rapid City Common Council’s decision to allow the developer of a 200-unit low-cost housing development northeast of the city to finish his development with gravel, rather than hard surface, streets. “If street standards are good for wage earners,” the mayor said, “they are also good for large building development corporations.”²¹⁷

Further Expansion

In the early 1950s, private builders expanded the city in every direction. Private Homes continued to build affordable single-family homes south of St. Patrick, erecting 184 units for sale or to rent in 1952 alone. The company boasted that it built more than 100 homes a year between 1945 and 1954.²¹⁸ The biggest building boom, however, came in the middle of the decade. In 1954, 175 acres were platted for new housing developments.²¹⁹ Marcoe Brothers developed a series of affordable homes in the Meadowood addition in the South Canyon area in 1954, while Quinn Construction began work on the Canyon View Subdivision near Horace Mann School, which was destined to include 169 new homes. Meanwhile, builder Gale Goodwin launched two developments—Palo Verde Heights above West Boulevard, and a development in the Brookside Addition on the west side of town.²²⁰

²¹⁴ Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota,” 34.

²¹⁵ See the map “Rapid City, SD, 1950-1975, Residential Development,” in Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota,” 65.

²¹⁶ “Planning Commission Goals Told To Rotary,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 24, 1958, 3.

²¹⁷ “Raff Vetoes Council Action on Housing, Cites Reasons,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 11, 1962, 3. Eventually, this project was approved. Jack Simpson, “Confidence in City’s Future Exemplified By Continued High Construction Progress,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 31, 1962, 3.

²¹⁸ “Temporary School Buildings Studied for Southeast Area,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 4, 1952, 12. See also, “No Lag in Rapid City’s Homebuilding Industry,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 11, 1954, 16.

²¹⁹ “We Have Made Great Strides But Still Have Far To Go,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 3, 1955, 9.

²²⁰ “No Lag in Rapid City’s Homebuilding Industry,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 11, 1954, 16.

Altogether, these efforts set a record for single-family home construction in the city and served the city's growing population, which was estimated at 35,000 by January 1955.²²¹ After builders added an estimated 650 new homes the following year, developer Martin Hoefer observed that on a per capita basis, the pace of Rapid City's construction of new houses was among the fastest in the nation.²²²

The rate of population growth in Rapid City, however, began to fall in the late 1950s. It declined from 67.5 percent in the 1950s to 3.4 percent in the 1960s. Despite this decline, some new development continued south of Canyon Lake Dam and up onto the ridges. New homes were also built on the north side with the creation of the Sioux Addition in 1954. As this predominately Native neighborhood grew, residents lobbied local and federal officials to support an expansion that came to be known as Lakota Homes, which opened with FHA assistance in 1969.²²³

More Planning Challenges

By the early 1960s, the city's population growth continued to be focused on the eastern side of the city. The 1960 Census showed that 32,401 people lived east of the hogback that divided the city; 9,246 lived to the west.²²⁴ In 1961, Martin Hoefer filed a master plan for the 40-acre Parkhill subdivision on the south side of town.²²⁵ The following year, developer Glenn Marcoe began a 400-home development in the Northern Heights subdivision just south of Interstate 90 along West Boulevard North.²²⁶

This growth prompted concerns. In 1959, a national leader in the field of urban planning visited Rapid City and told nearly 600 members of the Chamber of Commerce that the city desperately needed an updated master plan to eliminate blight, promote the development of infrastructure and community facilities, and improve transportation.²²⁷ Following up on this admonition, in 1961 the city applied for and was chosen as one of five cities in the country by the US Chamber of Commerce for its Community Development Action study.²²⁸ The project entailed a citywide self-study. It quickly ran into problems because of its complexity. The study did, however, revive efforts to create a statutory planning commission with legal powers to implement a master plan for the city and a three-

²²¹ "Fatalities, Fires, Movies And Building Feature 1954," *Rapid City Journal*, January 2, 1955, 4. See also, "We Have Made Great Strides But Still Have Far To Go," *Rapid City Journal*, January 3, 1955, 9.

²²² With sites platted for 300 new 1,000-square foot homes in his Knollwood Heights development, Hoefer was among the leaders in the industry. "Hoefer Ranks City High in Home Building," *Rapid City Journal*, September 16, 1956, 33.

²²³ Population data from Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 36.

²²⁴ "High School Location Is Questioned," *Rapid City Journal*, December 19, 1961, 13.

²²⁵ Harry Marshall Elected By City Planning Commission," *Rapid City Journal*, August 2, 1961, 4.

²²⁶ Jack Simpson, "Confidence in City's Future Exemplified By Continued High Construction Progress," *Rapid City Journal*, December 31, 1962, 3.

²²⁷ "Chamber Hears Problems of Growth," *Rapid City Journal*, October 23, 1959, 1.

²²⁸ "City is One of Five in Nation Chosen for Development Study," *Rapid City Journal*, April 25, 1961, 3.

mile contiguous area.²²⁹ In April 1962, voters in the city were once again asked to approve this move, but once again the measure failed. This time, however, supporters were able to garner 47.4 percent of the vote.²³⁰

In 1964, the city hired Wilbur Smith & Associates to create a planning study. The consultants' report noted that a third of the developed land in Rapid City was devoted to residential use. Eight out of ten housing units were single-family homes. Streets accounted for 36.4 percent of the developed land. Meanwhile, 47.3 percent of the city's total area, or 5,352 acres, remained undeveloped. A large percentage of this undeveloped area was on the hogback ridge where steep slopes posed challenges to construction. Some of this land, along with parks accounted for the roughly 11 percent of the developed area of the city that was devoted to recreational use and open space.

The Smith report and a study of the downtown area conducted in 1968 by Hodne Associates, Inc. in Minneapolis set the stage for urban renewal. Some of the consultants' recommendations, including the zoning ordinance, were adopted by the Rapid City Common Council. But the need for comprehensive planning was clear to many people in city government. In 1969, the council brought the issue back to the voters, and this time they approved it, setting the stage for a series of urban renewal efforts that led up to the eve of the flood.

Trailer Parks and Affordability

As the city wrestled with long-range planning issues, the development of new housing slowed considerably in the late 1960s along with the pace of population growth. In 1970, the *Rapid City Journal* featured the 15-unit Paradise Valley development off Nemo Road in the South Canyon area calling it "one of the larger housing developments built in several years." This was a far cry from the hundreds of new homes built annually in the heyday of the building boom in the 1950s.²³¹

In the late 1960s, as affordability became a larger issue for many working families and prefabricated or mobile homes became increasingly popular in Rapid City. Local manufacturers like New Moon Homes and Rushmore Homes (established in 1956), as well as Champion Home Builder Company and Rapid Travelers (established in 1958) fabricated for the local market as well as for distribution to other parts of the US.²³² In some cases, trailer parks were also developed to meet an immediate demand for housing. The Boeing Company, for example, funded the Northern Heights Mobile Park in the early 1960s to

²²⁹ "Action Study Here To Get Shot in Arm," *Rapid City Journal*, September 19, 1961, 4. See also, "CDA Committee Says Statutory Planning Commission Necessary," *Rapid City Journal*, December 15, 1961, 3.

²³⁰ Bob Fell, "Plan Commission To Be Voted On Again," *Rapid City Journal*, March 9, 1969, 1.

²³¹ "One of the City's Larger Housing Developments," *Rapid City Journal*, February 27, 1970, 27.

²³² Cultural Resource Analysts, "Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota," 117.

house workers associated with the Minutemen II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Launch Facility.²³³

The real growth of the prefabricated home market, however, depended on access to credit and insurance. As new modular concepts were introduced, manufactured homes took on qualities that made them seem more like conventional real estate. Units produced by Rushmore Homes and Kenwood Homes, for example, provided up to 1,450-square feet of living space and often came with a one-car garage. Installed over a full basement and attached to a foundation, these units were treated as “real estate” by lenders and insurance companies, particularly after changes in federal regulations allowed thrifts to make federally-insured loans on these units.²³⁴

The growth of trailer parks and the decline in demand for stick-built new construction in the late 1960s raised concerns among the city’s business leaders. As demand for new housing faltered, so did investments in maintenance, especially in properties serving low-income families who were increasingly priced out of homeownership by increases in land and construction costs.

In 1969, civic leaders pushed plans forward for a major new urban renewal project, which they hoped would qualify for federal funding. Studies had shown that there were 2,300 sub-standard housing units in Rapid City. In July, the Rapid City Housing and Development Commission was established to focus on “the removal of blighted areas, and the development or replacement of sub-standard housing.” The common council hoped that the commission would develop a plan that would be funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop low-cost housing and parks, especially along Rapid Creek²³⁵ Over the next two and a half years, these plans would slowly take shape.

The Flood and the Future

The Rapid City community explored new opportunities to revitalize its core and improve the quality of housing in the early 1970s. But it was a natural disaster that would spark a new wave of construction and land use in Rapid City. In June 1972, an historic flood ripped through the downtown core, killing hundreds of residents and tearing up homes and businesses along its path. Over the course of several years, with a massive infusion of federal, state, and charitable dollars, Rapid City would undergo a slow recovery effort that reformulated the downtown core, removed homes, and created additional pressure on a community that would continue to grow into the 1980s and beyond. As Rapid City approaches the 50th anniversary of the flood, the RCHPC is well-positioned to explore ways

²³³ Christina Slattery, Mary Ebling, Erin Pogany, and Amy R. Squitieri, *Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, South Dakota* (Omaha: Mead & Hunt, Inc., 2003). See also, Rapid City Journal, Rapid City Market Guide and Business Survey, 1963, 7. Both cited in Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota,” 118.

²³⁴ Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975,” 64.

²³⁵ Paul Cross, “Housing Board Set to Study Blighted Areas,” *Rapid City Journal*, October 16, 1969, 1.

to document and commemorate the largest boom in residential construction in the community's history.

Note on Sources:

In recent years, the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office has begun to focus on documenting the postwar era. In 2007, SHPO commissioned a study of “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota” by Michelle L. Dennis.²³⁶ This report provided a much-needed overview of the history of the era, its dominant architectural trends, and a preliminary guide to assessing the condition and importance of historical resources from the era. Dennis’ report was followed ten years later by a study of “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975” completed by Cultural Resource Analysts. This report provides an outstanding overview and should be used for deeper background on architectural styles, structural significance, and aggregated development data.

For this report, we searched and reviewed articles associated with “housing development” in the Rapid City Journal from 1945-1972. Prior to the mid-1960s, this search term yielded large numbers of articles. After 1965, there were far fewer related to Rapid City.

Documentation

South Rapid City

Rapid City Journal, September 17, 1947



²³⁶ Michelle L. Dennis, “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota,” (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society/South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2007).

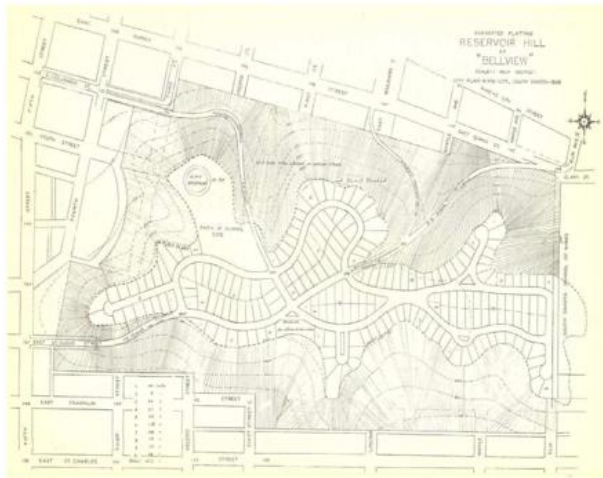


Knecht Homes on St. Patrick between 7th and 8th Streets
Rapid City Journal, September 17, 1947





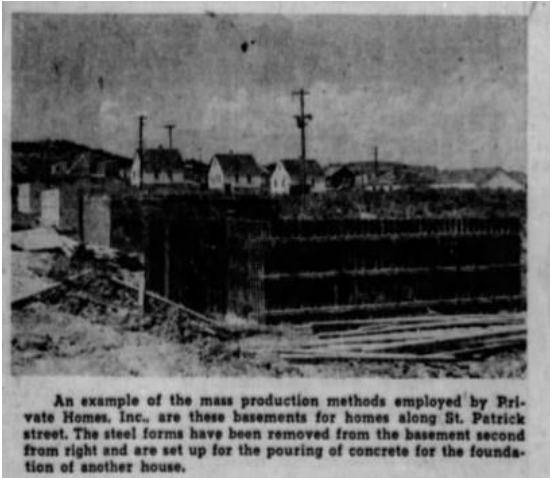
“Bellview” Subdivision Plan, 1949. From City Plan, Rapid City, South Dakota (Minneapolis: A.C. Godward, 1949). Cited in Cultural Resource Analysts, “Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1950-1975: A Thematic Context Study,” August 2017, prepared for the South Dakota State Historical Society, 79.



Hillcrest Apartments on Reservoir Hill, 2021.



Rapid City Journal, September 17, 1947



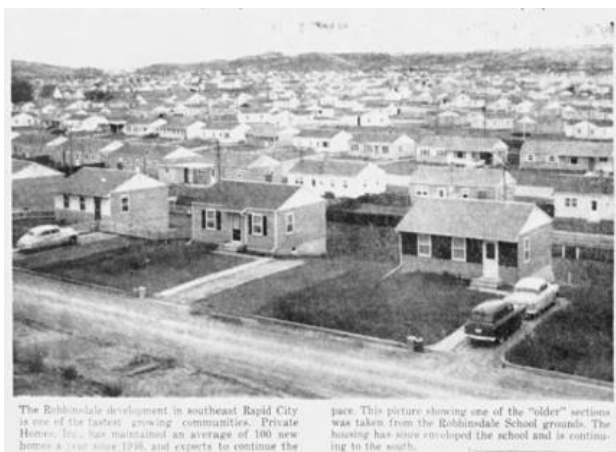
Homes in the Flormann Addition, 2021.



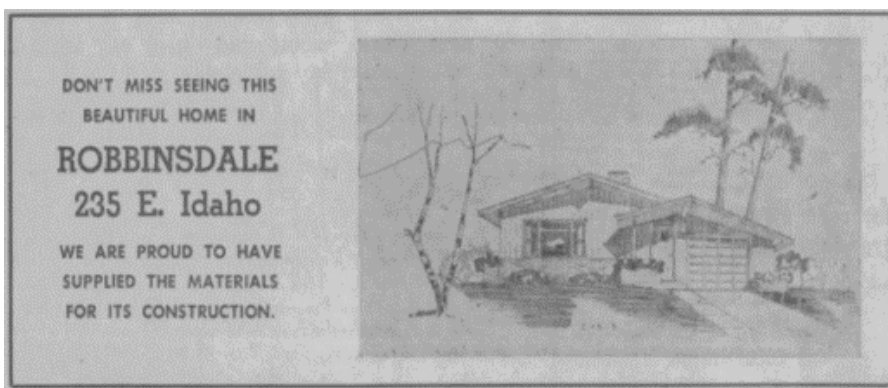
Rapid City Journal, September 17, 1947

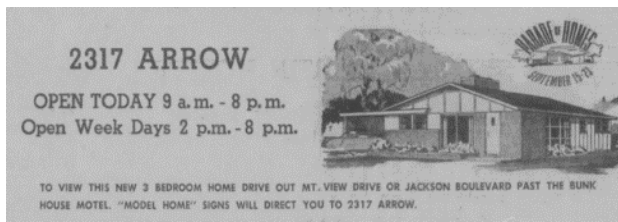


Rapid City Journal, July 11, 1954



Rapid City Journal





Better Homes & Gardens – IDEA Home
Rapid City Journal, September 16, 1956



IDEA Home 2017 Selkirk Place.



Strathavon homes, 2021. Note original front door.



Updated Strathavon home preserves much of the original presentation to the street, 2021.



Rear view of same house shows presentation to the park, 2021.



South Canyon, Paradise Valley Development

Rapid City Journal, February 27, 1970



Pleasant Valley home on Philip Drive. Rear additions tripled the square footage of the home while leaving the original profile of the house facing the street, 2021.



Meadowwood Addition
Rapid City Journal, July 11, 1954



Knollwood Heights
Rapid City Journal, August 4, 1956

 <p>HOEFER BILT-RITE HOMES</p>		 <p>THE WHOLE FAMILY will enjoy living . . . in a well-built MIDWESTERN HOME</p>
<p>OPEN HOUSE DAILY 8 A. M. - 9 P. M.</p>		<p>The family will have churches, schools and shopping facilities at their convenience. Let the family really LIVE . . . in pleasant Canyon View Addition. Remember . . . door-to-door . . . roof-to-roof . . . Midwestern Homes offer you more!</p>
<p>HAINES SUB-DIVISION Office 409 S. Steele Phone FI 2-2857</p>	<p>KNOLLWOOD HEIGHTS Office 444 E. Waterloo Phone FI 2-4108</p>	 <p>On the West, Westwood North to South, South to the Sun Avenue Rapid City, South Dakota</p>
<p>NOTE Due to the high quality of workmanship and building materials used in these homes, it is imperative to offer a home with out complying with the restrictive down payment set for FHA for these homes.</p>		<p>Call 409 S. Steele FI 2-2857</p>

Lakota Homes / Sioux Addition
Rapid City Journal, September 5, 1969

NOW
Cooperative Home Ownership
for modest income families!!
2-3-4 Bedroom Models



OPEN
For Your
Inspection

Location:
Saturday, Sept. 6 - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sundays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Weddays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Lakota Community Home Development
is a community OWNED & OPERATED by the people who live there
A RENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM



**A home of your own costs less at
LAKOTA COMMUNITY HOMES**
100 low cost cooperative homes
for modest income families . . . a
rent supplement program with low
monthly occupancy charges, in-
cluding interest, principal, taxes,
heat, water, electricity and maintenance.

The model home and sales office is located at Northwest cor-
ner of Minnie Wan Drive and Engineer Street, located in Min-
neapolis Heights Subdivision, Fort Snelling, off Annapolis, on
North 7th Street to Minnie Wan Drive.

AN 8000 OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM - built by Minneapolis Homes,
Division of Rockingham West Products

Rapid City Journal, June 25, 1970



Lakota Community Homes Inc., provides modern homes

Rapid City Journal, November 2, 1971



Annexation unresolved

Lakota Community Homes Inc., a portion at left in photo, request for annexation failed to get council approval Monday night because of failure of other groups to reach agreement. Sioux Addition is in the right in photo and Lakota history District includes both Sioux Addition and Lakota Homes. Homes Avenue can be seen running lower foreground from left to right. Aerial photo by Sam Fournick is looking to the west northwest. See story page 1.

Rapid City Journal, August 6, 1968



BIG CROWD JAMMED COUNCIL CHAMBERS MONDAY NIGHT AND GAVE ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE WHEN LAKOTA WATER REQUEST WON APPROVAL

Post-War Rapid City Tourist Cabins, Tourist Courts, and Motels, 1945-1972

Between World War II and the 1972 flood, tourist cabins, tourist courts, and motels represented the most visible sign of the city's postwar economic boom. They were also the most distinctive commercial structures in Rapid City. In their design, signage, and advertising, these businesses reflected the mid-century imagination and pragmatism of a generation of local entrepreneurs as well as various romantic visions of the American West that appealed to the families and individuals who came to spend a few nights and tour the Black Hills region.

Usually owned and operated by husbands and wives, many of whom had grown up on farms and moved to the city during the Great Depression, these businesses flourished in an era before the emergence of national brands in the lodging industry. They provided entrepreneurial opportunities for local residents, jobs for maintenance workers and maids, and buyers for a host of contractors.

Today, some of these structures have been adaptively repurposed by a new generation of entrepreneurs to provide affordable housing for some of Rapid City's most economically challenged residents. This essay explores the history of the postwar lodging industry and the subsequent use of these structures for short- and long-term housing in the community.

Lodging for a Night

The advent of the automobile, especially relatively inexpensive models like Ford's Model T, combined with the construction of highways, inspired the Good Roads movement in the early 20th century. The affordability of assembly-line vehicles allowed middle class families to travel on vacation in unprecedented numbers starting in the late 1920s. With the construction of Mount Rushmore and the establishment of several state and national parks, the Black Hills became a major destination for these travelers as well as a stopping point on the way to Yellowstone National Park, Denver, or Minneapolis.

Catering to the needs of these travelers, cities opened campgrounds with amenities like bathrooms, camp stores, and recreational amenities to attract automobile tourists. To earn extra income, some homeowners offered rooms to travelers. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs improved on the tourist camp model by building rough individual cabins for individuals, couples, and families. Some of these cabins were stand-alone units on the homeowner's property. Others might have more than a dozen structures.

The new tourist camps proliferated along the main entrances to town, especially on East North Street. They also radiated from downtown along St. Joseph, Omaha, and West

Main. In addition to lodging, some owners added roadside diners or operated gas stations on site. Meanwhile, other entrepreneurs created roadside attractions like Reptile Gardens.²³⁷

Highway improvements were critical to the growth of the tourism industry. By 1937, tourist camp operators, for example, were optimistic that the state highway department would complete work on a “dustless” highway across the state that would encourage more visitors to come to the Black Hills.²³⁸

A *Rapid City Journal* survey in the spring of 1937 documented 24 “active camps” in and around the city with 342 cabins and cottages in total.²³⁹ The largest camp in the city, Baken Park, had 65 cabins with room trailers as well.²⁴⁰ The *Journal* touted the improvements that owners were making: painting and redecorating interiors, laying sidewalks, and upgrading landscaping and signage. Much of this work was done by the owners themselves.

In the prewar years, many of these entrepreneurs had grown up in farm country and were comfortable with basic construction and manual labor. Some had moved to Rapid City when the farm crisis of the 1920s was followed by the Great Depression. Fred and Florence Freeman, for example, homesteaded near Hermosa in 1907, but in 1929 they moved to Rapid City and later opened the Freeman Tourist Court at 125 East Boulevard North.²⁴¹ Their development was one of more than a dozen tourist camps and courts along East North that catered to tourists entering the city from the east. At 702 East North, Howard Irwin erected eight log cabins and a café in 1937.²⁴²

Notably, women played an important role as entrepreneurs in this era in combination with husbands or as solo operators. Mrs. E.C. Baken operated the Green Acres Tourist Camp on the west side of town in 1931 with 15 cabins.²⁴³ Anna Devine opened the DeVine Modern Log Cabin Camp at 1325 St. Joseph that year. Bess Dawkins and her husband Lewis, a Rapid City pioneer, owned the Dawkins Tourist Camp near the fairgrounds in the 1930s. When her husband died in 1936, Bess carried on the enterprise through the end of the war.²⁴⁴

In the years just prior to the war, the visitor industry in Rapid City began to organize. In 1939, the Black Hills and Badlands Association was established to promote the region. Hoping to encourage tourists to stay longer, the association also encouraged property owners to improve accommodations.²⁴⁵ Tourist camps evolved to become tourist courts. “Modern” cabins included private bathrooms and other amenities.

²³⁷ See Suzanne Barta Julin, *A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880–1941* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2009).

²³⁸ “Tourist Camp Owners Improve Properties: Expect Good Year,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 24, 1937, 3.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ “Mrs. Fred Freeman Dies Thursday; Rites Set Monday,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 25, 1952, 4.

²⁴² “Tourist Camp Owners Improve Properties.”

²⁴³ “Tourist Totals of Last Two Years About Same,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 1, 1931, 3.

²⁴⁴ “Lewis Dawkins, Pioneer, Dies,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 26, 1936, 2. Dawkins moved to Odessa, Kansas in 1955. She died in 1982. “Odessa,” *Kansas City Times*, February 26, 1982, 42.

²⁴⁵ See Barta Julin, *Marvelous Hundred Square Miles*.

Although some new construction took place during the war, limited supplies of building materials and the decline in tourism due to gas rationing restricted the expansion of the industry. Some existing owners filled their units by housing individuals or families associated with the new Rapid City Base, which became Ellsworth Air Force Base in 1953.²⁴⁶

After the war, existing business owners and would-be entrepreneurs were optimistic that greater prosperity throughout the region and the country would reinvigorate tourism. Tourist courts continued to improve with shared amenities and updated interiors.²⁴⁷ The Arneson Cottages on St. Joe, for example, featured knotty pine walls, western-themed bedding, and rustic furnishings.²⁴⁸ World War II veterans like Gerald Gill and Marvin Beach opened the Gill Motel and the Motel Beach in 1954.

As family incomes rose in the 1950s and tourism boomed, owners continued to upgrade their accommodations. Tourist courts became motels. Dozens of new structures were built along the main arteries in and out of town. Some were developed by existing owners who modernized their accommodations to keep up with market demand. Freeman's Tourist Court, for example, became Freeman's Western Motel, featuring 22 modern air-conditioned units with cooking facilities, refrigerators, and a playground.²⁴⁹

As the local industry grew, lodging owners organized the Rapid City Tourist Court Association to present a unified voice on issues affecting the business. Formed in 1936, the association grew significantly after the war.²⁵⁰ By January 1948, the association had 42 members out of a total of 65 tourist courts in the city.²⁵¹ A critical housing shortage in Rapid City after the war and across the nation put tourist operators at the heart of controversies over rent controls, especially for the long-term, off-season shelter they provided.²⁵² In 1950, the association also pushed for the construction of a swimming pool in Roosevelt Park that would serve visitors to Rapid City.²⁵³ The association was so successful it hosted the national tourist court convention in Rapid City in 1950.²⁵⁴ But in keeping with changing industry of automobile tourism, the organization changed its name the following year to become the Rapid City Motor Motel Association.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁶ The Gate City Camp became home to the newly married Pfc. Edward Allen and his wife Bernice Haynes in 1943. Kitty Arnold, "Society," *Rapid City Journal*, June 30, 1943, 6.

²⁴⁷ E.H. Lighter, "City Building Program Three and a Half Million for 1946," *Rapid City Journal*, March 15, 1946, 5.

²⁴⁸ Arneson Cottages postcard, Patrick Roseland Collection, nd. The earliest citation for the Arneson Cottages in the *Rapid City Journal* is from June 1, 1946.

²⁴⁹ Freeman's Western Motel postcard, Patrick Roseland Collection, nd.

²⁵⁰ "Motels Play Big Role in Hills Economy," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1955, 11. The association may have been formed in March 1935 as the Black Hills Tourist Camp association. See *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, March 16, 1935, 2.

²⁵¹ "Tourist Court Club Convenes," *Rapid City Journal*, January 12, 1946, 4. See also, "Tourist Court Group Favors Winter Decontrol," *Rapid City Journal*, January 9, 1948, 2.

²⁵² "Controls Go Off Tourist Courts and Hotels—No Drastic Boosts Foreseen," *Rapid City Journal*, February 14, 1947, 1.

²⁵³ "City Motor Court Operators Ask Pool Construction Now," *Rapid City Journal*, January 31, 1950, 4.

²⁵⁴ "Rapid City Eyed For 1950 Sessions," *Rapid City Journal*, May 12, 1949, 2.

²⁵⁵ "Local Motel Association Boosts Good Roads Program," *Rapid City Journal*, January 16, 1951, 3.

Meanwhile, the business continued to grow. Between 1947 and 1948, for example, existing operators added 75 new cabins and five new owners built 45 cabins.²⁵⁶ By 1955, when lodging institutions joined in the first nationwide Motel Week, there were 95 licensed motels and motor courts in Rapid City, representing one-seventh of all of the motels in the state. With 1,959 rooms, they offered shelter to an estimated 5,500 tourists and their families on any given night. Over the course of a year, according to the *Rapid City Journal*, they accommodated 2.3 million visitors.²⁵⁷

In an era before the consolidation of the lodging industry into nationwide chains, motels were small and locally owned. In 1955, the average Rapid City motor court had 12 to 15 units. The largest was the Baken Park Motel. First opened in 1920 by William Baken, the business had 86 units in 1955 and was known for its huge [cottonwood] trees. That year, however, plans were in the making to transform Baken Park into a 60,000 square foot shopping center to serve the growing population on the west side of town.²⁵⁸

Motels were an important part of Rapid City's economy. Rates were based on the number of people in a party. For a family of four, they ranged from \$8 to \$15 a night (\$76.33 to \$143.12 in 2019 dollars), and business was booming. In 1954, for example, local entrepreneurs added 200 new rooms. With construction costs running from \$4,000 up to \$8,000 a unit, the industry accounted for between \$800,000 and \$1.6 million (\$76.3 million to \$152.7 million in 2019 dollars) of total commercial construction.

Most motels were owner-operated and provided employment and a livelihood to not only the husband and wife who ran the establishment, but also to service staff and maintenance workers. In 1955, the industry employed approximately 300 people on an annual basis; during the summer months, employment doubled.²⁵⁹ That year, annual payrolls were estimated to be \$1.25 million (\$119.3 million in 2019 dollars). Owner-operated establishments could return 15 to 20 percent in profits to the proprietors.²⁶⁰

Many motels contracted out for laundry services like Rapid City Laundry and Dry Cleaners. They purchased supplies, including soap, toilet paper, and linens from local dealers and wholesalers. To advertise their businesses, they ordered post cards, match books, and neon signs, most of which were supplied locally. As the *Rapid City Journal* noted, most hotels carried insurance policies for public liability, fire, and workers' compensation, most of which were provided by local insurance agencies.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ "Tourist Court Industry In Boom Here," *Rapid City Journal*, February 17, 1948, 2.

²⁵⁷ Jack Cannon, "Constant Improvement To Serve Traveling Public Keynotes Week," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1955, 11.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. In 1955, the Baken Park Motel was operated by former mayor Neil Briggs, who bought the business in 1946. "Million Dollar Shopping Center May Be Erected," *Rapid City Journal*, March 25, 1955, 1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Motel Construction and Design

As entrepreneurs responded to the increase in tourism after the war in the tradition of the pre-war years, they built rustic, stand-alone or attached tourist cabins or “cottage courts” that were inexpensive to build. Many Rapid City establishments catered to the romantic view of the West that many travelers expected and desired. Prior to the war and in the immediate postwar years, exteriors featured logs, rough-wood siding, or stucco “adobe-like” finishes. Interior walls were covered with knotty pine. Many, like Price’s Motel on East North, were associated with service stations.

As the lodging industry grew in the immediate postwar years, many owners shifted from individual cabins to building one long structure to save as much as 50 percent on the costs of construction.²⁶² Owners focused on the economy traveler offered few amenities in either the design of the motel or the facilities.

The revolution in building materials after the war, however, soon led to improvements and changes to the look and feel of lodging establishments. Tourist cabins and tourist courts gave way to modern motels in the 1950s that featured stainless steel, aluminum, and larger windows (especially in the main office), as well as two-story construction with amenities like swimming pools, television sets, air-conditioning, full-service restaurants and bars.²⁶³ With these changes, *Architectural Forum* proclaimed in 1953 that the industry was showing “signs of maturity.”²⁶⁴

The Interstate and the National Chain

The development of the Interstate Highway system in the late 1950s and the rise of national hotel and motel chains posed an existential threat to the small owner-operated local motel. For years, travelers had relied on travel guidebooks, like those published by Duncan Hines and the American Automobile Association in the late 1940s, to increase their confidence that a motel room would be clean and safe. With the advent of national brands in the industry, early pioneers like Howard Johnsons and Holiday Inn used print and broadcast advertising to communicate service standards that gave them a competitive advantage in local markets.²⁶⁵ National chains became so ubiquitous by the late 1970s, that local owner-operated motels either went out of business or affiliated with the chains and increasingly lost their sense of local character and identity in the process.

By the 1980s, many of the smaller, independent motels constructed during the postwar boom were struggling in Rapid City and across the country. In 1981, the president of the Rapid City Motel Association was the manager of the Howard Johnson’s Motor

²⁶² See Troy Paiva, *Lost America: The Abandoned Roadside West* (St. Paul: Motorbooks International, 2003).

²⁶³ Michelle L. Dennis, “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota,” Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society / South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2007, 31–32.

²⁶⁴ “420 Million Spent in ’53 On Motels,” *Washington Post*, March 21, 1954, R7.

²⁶⁵ “Big and Better Motel Trend Lures Chains,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1956, A6.

Lodge. That year, the group became part of the Rapid City Area Hospitality Association and the small independents were less able to be heard in economic planning circles.²⁶⁶

Increasingly the owners reoriented their businesses to meet the housing needs of low-income residents of the community. Over the next three decades, many only drew attention from the community when they were the site of a violent crime. In the 1990s, the city, the health department, and the police department looked for ways to collaborate with the owners to ensure that these residences offered safer shelter. During this time, many of these businesses were razed and replaced by more modern motels or by other businesses. Still, many of these structures have survived.

Preservation

In Rapid City today a number of remaining structures reflect the postwar boom in owner-operated tourist courts and motels in Rapid City. East North Street, which used to be the primary highway into town for generations, is still home to the Corral and the Ranch House Motels, as well as the historic structures from the Cozy Cottages. Nearby, on North Maple, the building that was once the Model Motel provides affordable housing to residents while down the street the Avanti Motel has been upgraded to serve visitors and local residents. On East Omaha, the Evergreen Motel is now the East Omaha Lodge. On Jackson Boulevard, the Garden Cottages is probably one of the most intact examples from the postwar era. Meanwhile, on Sturgis Road, the Marco Motel has evolved to become the Family Inn, and on Canyon Lake Drive the structures that were once part of L'il Audrey's Motel provide long-term housing for individuals and families. Over the last several decades, these businesses have shifted away from tourism and more frequently offer short and long-term inexpensive lodging to blue collar workers and low-income families.

²⁶⁶ "Davis Re-Elected Head of Motel Group," *Rapid City Journal*, October 22, 1981, 5.

Documentation

As a part of this project, VPHS developed a spreadsheet that includes references to more than 120 historic tourist camps, tourist courts, and motels. Due to the high number of these businesses in Rapid City and the incomplete nature of records documenting their history, this document does not include a full table. A draft research document was provided to the RCHPC to assist with a more detailed future survey.

Contemporary Photos

Corral Motel (c. 1940) – 210 East North Street.



Ranch House Motel (c. 1946) – 202 East North Street.²⁶⁷



²⁶⁷ Construction date drawn from: Rapid City Planning Department, Commercial Properties database.

Avanti Motel (c. 1965) – 102 North Maple Street.



Former Model Motel – North Maple Street.



Former Cozy Court buildings – East North



Historical Photos

Horseshoe Motel

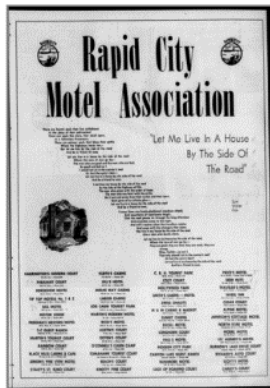
308 E. North Street. In 1945, John and Almeda Moses quit farming after 29 years and moved to Rapid City to operate the Horseshoe Motel.²⁶⁸ This location is now Auto World Auto Sales. [No remaining structures from the motel.]

Entrance to Rapid City along East North Street in 1931. Tourist cabins at Cozy Camp on the right. (*Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1955)



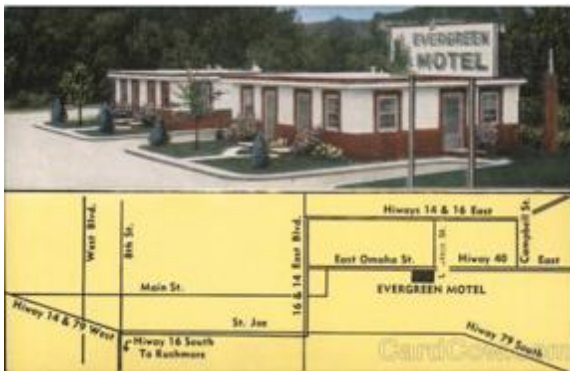
²⁶⁸ "John H. Moses," *Rapid City Journal*, October 9, 1978, 5.

Rapid City Journal, May 1955



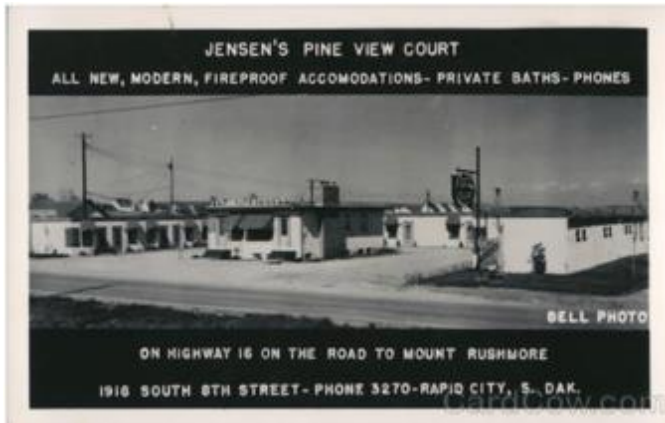
Evergreen Motel

525 East Omaha Street (Highway 40). (c. 1953). In 1955, the business was operated by Victor and Gladys Pengra.²⁶⁹ Today, this is the East Omaha Lodge.

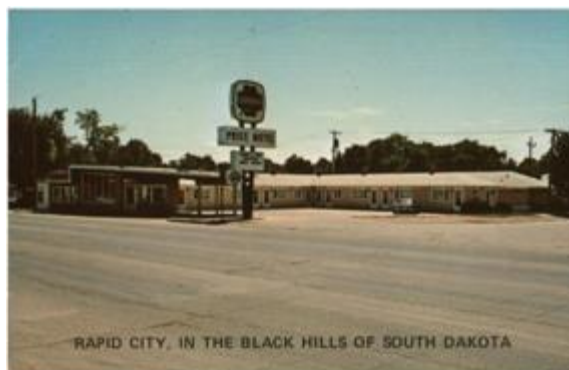


²⁶⁹ Display advertisement, *Rapid City Journal*, May 6, 1955, 4.

Jensen's Pine View Court (later Jensen's Motel)
1916 Mt. Rushmore Road.



Price's Motel and Standard Service
Established in 1938.



Open House for National Motel Week, May 1955. (*Rapid City Journal*, May 6, 1955, 10.)



De Vines Court

Patrick Roseland Collection



Cozy Court Motel

Patrick Roseland Collection



Corral Motel

Patrick Roseland Collection



Historic postcard (eBay) (1957)



Historic postcard (eBay)



Garden Cottages Motel

Historic postcard, Garden Cottages Motel (1968)

Patrick Roseland Collection



Garden Cottages Motel

Google Maps (2021)



Rushmore Motel

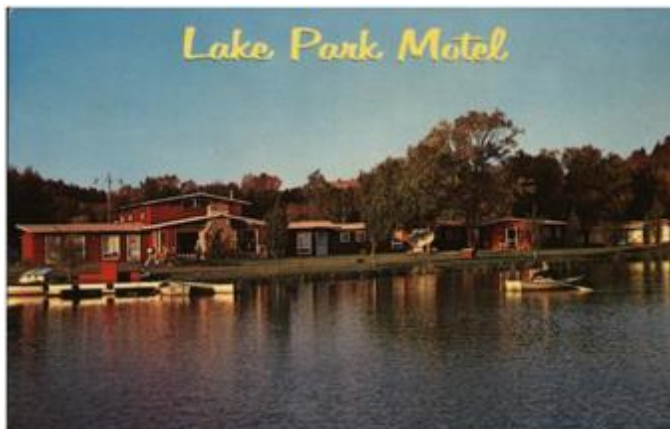
207 St. Joe. (c. 1941). Operated by Mr. and Mrs. Earl Updike in 1941.²⁷⁰

Patrick Roseland Collection



Lake Park Motel

Patrick Roseland Collection



²⁷⁰ Beverly Pechan and Bill Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City: A Nostalgic Look at the 1920s Through the 1970s* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 26. See also, *South Dakota History* 35 (2005), 326.

South Town Motel

2018 Mt. Rushmore Road

Patrick Roseland Collection

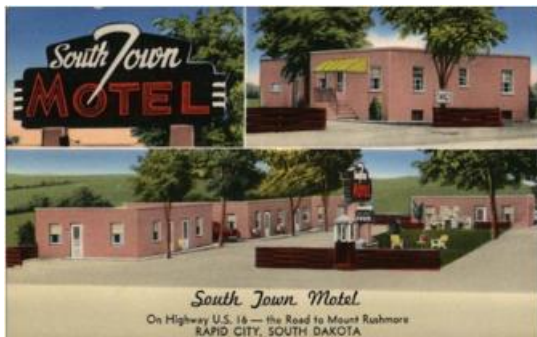
Motel ownership continued to be attractive to servicemen in the 1950s. When he got out of the Army in 1955, Eddie Mayo purchased the Southtown Motel from Charlie and Marge Schmitt.²⁷¹ Site is now the Pioneer Bank and Trust.



Rapid City Journal, May 8, 1955.



Patrick Roseland Collection



²⁷¹ "Eddie Learns About the Motel Business," [advertisement], *Rapid City Journal*, May 8, 1955, 14.

Town 'N Country Motel
Patrick Roseland Collection



Freeman's Western Motel
103 East North Street, current location of Parkway Laundry.
Patrick Roseland Collection



Traveler's Motel

407 East North Street. (c. 1952)

Patrick Roseland Collection



Lazy "U" Motor Lodge

2215 Mt. Rushmore Road. Opened in 1957.

Patrick Roseland Collection



Google Maps (2021)



Rapid City Journal, December 17, 1957



LAZY U MOTOR LODGE
"Your Home Away From Home"

**Rapid City's Newest, Most Modern Motel, Is
 OPEN FOR BUSINESS**
 at 2215 South Eighth St.

**15
 SPACIOUS
 UNITS**
 7 Doubles
 8 Singles

Radio-Phon Recording — Individual Refrigerators
 — Hairdresser — Private Bath Rooms —
 only equipped for and service customers — Closest
 Highway to Park View

Over 1000 Large Cars Will Stop In Front
 of the International Union Building Here

"BRIDAL UNIT" FEATURED

Ceremonial Studio and Gift Shop
 Reception Room Made for Mrs. Schlegel

Mr. and Mrs. Lester Seibenberger
 Own and Operate
 21-2-2000

Horseshoe Motel

308 East North Street. (Prior to 1951)

Patrick Roseland Collection



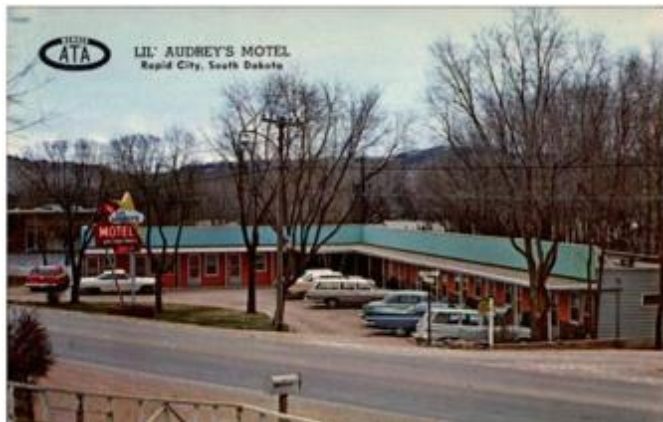
Google Maps, 2021



Lil' Audrey Motel

4007 Canyon Lake Drive. (Prior to 1951). Owned and operated by "Maurice, Audrey and Roger."²⁷²

Patrick Roseland Collection



Google Maps, 2021.



²⁷² Display advertisement, *Rapid City Journal*, May 6, 1955, 4.

Cozy Court

402 East North Street. (Before 1951)

Patrick Roseland Collection



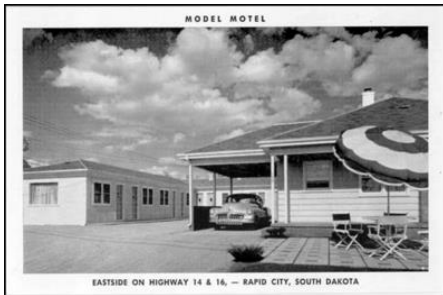
Google Maps, 2021



Model Motel

508 North Maple. Circa 1951 or earlier.

Patrick Roseland Collection



Model Motel building, 2021



Motel Rapid

3515 Sturgis Road (1953)

Patrick Roseland Collection



Google Maps, 2021



Faith in a New Direction: Suburban Worship in Postwar Rapid City: 1945-1972

In the mid-1950s, the members of the First Congregational Church—the oldest church in Rapid City—were in crisis. Over the previous two decades, membership had grown from 500 in 1940 to over 660 in 1950 and approached 800 by the early 1960s. With the baby boom, Sunday school classes were packed. The basement was no longer big enough or conducive to fellowship. Moreover, the existing stone structure downtown on Kansas City Street, built in 1914, projected an image of the church that was stuck in the past, and many in the congregation felt it was time to make a change.²⁷³

The first step was awkward. Given the opportunity to sell before they had a building site or a design, the congregation made the decision to sell. For the next two and a half years, from 1956 to 1959, they met in the chapel of the Campbell Funeral Home while the Building Committee did its work.²⁷⁴

After acquiring a piece of property in a newly developed residential area off of West Boulevard, the committee traveled to Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Spencer, Iowa; and Boulder, Colorado to look at churches and interview architects. They also attended the International Conference of Church Architects to further their research. In the end, they chose the well-known Sioux Falls architect Harold Spitznagel to design a modern structure emblematic of the congregation's increasingly suburban lifestyle.²⁷⁵

The Building Committee's "Preliminary Statement of Requirements" for the architect spoke volumes about the ways in which they hoped the architecture would reflect the congregation. They wanted a building "that speaks to us, and to all who view it, in the language of our own time, a building that uses the materials of our day to express our own particular Congregational Protestantism with spiritual dignity and strength and beauty...." They wanted a design that was honest, simple, functional, beautiful and built "around our worship patterns and the life we live within our church body as a whole." Sensitive to the site nestled just below Skyline Drive, the committee stressed: "The importance of view, of skyline and cloud patterns, and of surrounding terrain will help to make a distinctive setting for the church buildings." Cherished symbols of their faith, from the crucifix to the organ to the belltower were important, but the committee hoped the architect would find new ways of expressing these elements in the design. "We do not wish a copy of some trite other denominational style," the committee wrote. "We do desire a church of our day, deeply and

²⁷³ Henry Bradshaw, ed., *Glimpses of Our History: Celebrating 125 Years of the Ministries of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Rapid City, South Dakota*, (Rapid City: Clark & Greilind Printing, 2011), 65.

²⁷⁴ Slide show script, 1961, First Congregational Church Archives.

²⁷⁵ Unsigned handwritten notes (Paul Fenske Printing Co. notepaper), no date. See also, Hazel Schwentker, [Memories, no date], First Congregational Church Archives.

simply expressive of our religious way of life, honestly functional, deeply inspirational, simply and beautifully designed to meet the needs of our day.”²⁷⁶

In choosing Spitznagel, the congregation was getting “one of our nation’s finest architects,” Rev. George Fisk later wrote. Spitznagel had attended the Art Institute of Chicago and earned his degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania.²⁷⁷ His work was widely recognized throughout the Upper Midwest. His design for the church reflected many of the characteristics of suburban church construction in the Upper Midwest in the postwar years. As historian Gretchen Buggein has noted, many members of the “Greatest Generation” had a sense that humanity’s destructive technology had outpaced spiritual development. To assert the constancy of their faith in the face of a modern world, suburban congregations embraced church designs that were streamlined and horizontal, and integrated the new materials of the age with the ancient feel of stone, wood, and stained glass.²⁷⁸

When the new First Congregational Church building was dedicated in January 1960, it represented one of the most iconic religious structures of the postwar era in Rapid City. Largely unchanged over the last six decades, it perpetuates the esthetics and the aspirations of the era.

The Pattern of Postwar Church Development

First Congregational Church was not alone in the postwar years. Across the United States, church membership swelled in the postwar era. In 1940, 49 percent of the population claimed some religious affiliation; by 1960, that number had risen to 65 percent. As residential construction boomed and Rapid City grew to the north, south and west, Mainline Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church followed the community into these new neighborhoods.

Between 1945 and 1972, nearly two dozen new churches were built in Rapid City’s new suburbs. At the same time, long-established downtown congregations (Trinity Lutheran, First United Methodist, and First Presbyterian) renovated or razed their historic structures to build anew in the heart of the city. The boom began right after the war and built momentum throughout the 1950s. In March 1957, the *Rapid City Journal* noted, “More than half of Rapid City’s 45 church congregations are in various stages of developing building programs to accommodate growing membership rolls and increasing attendance at worship services, church school classes, youth programs, and weekday events.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Building Committee, First Congregational Church, “Preliminary Statement of Requirements,” no date. First Congregational Church Archives.

²⁷⁷ Dennis, “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota” (2007), 16.

²⁷⁸ See Gretchen Buggein, *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

²⁷⁹ Paige Carlin, “Churches Show Vigorous Growth,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 11, 1958, 20.

The churches in the suburbs reflected the postwar concerns of their congregations. At the heart of the design was a concern for the postwar nuclear families who were the bedrock of the church community. L-shaped structures included the church sanctuary for worship along with above-ground wings to accommodate classrooms for Sunday school children and fellowship halls for multiple generations of parishioners. Unlike the basements of an earlier era, these spaces were illuminated with large windows that shed daylight on the faces of friends and family, and for the faithful, imbued the space with the warmth of the Holy Spirit. New materials, many of them developed to support the war effort, were now integrated into building design, including plywood, aluminum, precast concrete, gypsum board, wallboard, factory-built cabinets, tempered plate glass, laminates, and plastics. Deployed to accentuate the streamlined mid-century look in architecture and furniture, these materials accentuated the modern look, but often helped congregations keep construction budgets under control.

Just as the new suburban neighborhoods facilitated community interaction, with room for cars and children on bicycles, neighborhood shopping, and neighborhood schools, the new churches were designed to encourage fellowship and community. As West River Methodist District Superintendent Harvey Sander noted in 1959, many people preferred a neighborhood church.²⁸⁰ Large parking lots accommodated family station wagons and sedans in neighborhoods filled with blue collar laborers or service workers living in modest single-family homes.²⁸¹

The Need for Documentation and Preservation

Today, some of these Mainline and Catholic churches are still home to families who have been part of the congregation for several generations and who remain tied to the surrounding neighborhood. Other churches struggle to survive amid the general membership decline in Mainline denominations across the United States. Indeed, Christian Americans have gravitated to newer, larger, non-denominational churches with more contemporary praise worship formats and an expanded range of services for their congregants. In some cases, neighborhood Mainline churches have also been repurposed to serve as incubators for new charismatic and evangelical congregations.

Documenting the Neighborhoods

West Rapid City

Canyon Lake Methodist Church

²⁸⁰ Dick Rebbeck, "Rural Religion Has Rebuilding Pains," *Rapid City Journal*, November 8, 1959, 1-2.

²⁸¹ In her survey of postwar architecture in South Dakota, Dennis only highlights these downtown churches: Trinity Lutheran (Spitznagel, 1951), First Presbyterian (1952), Faith Lutheran (1957), and First United Methodist (1958), overlooking the migration of churches to the city's suburban neighborhoods.

When Methodists from across the state gathered for their annual conference in 1949, they met in Rapid City. Recognizing that the city was growing rapidly on the west side of town, they voted to establish a new Methodist church in the Canyon Lake area. To accelerate the launch of the new congregation, the Methodists purchased two and a half acres of land on Hillview Drive from the Department of the Interior—land that was made available in 1948 after the agency released surplus land after converting the Rapid City Indian School to the Sioux Sanitarium. (See essay on the Rapid City Indian School and Associated Property.) The Methodists then moved a small wood frame church building from Nowlin, South Dakota to the Canyon Lake area, renovated it, and began to worship.²⁸² On January 1, 1950, the parishioners, many of whom had been members of the First Methodist Church downtown, gathered for the first time in this building. The congregation began with 42 charter members, and their new church was formally dedicated in a ceremony in April 1951, more than a year after that first service.²⁸³

For the next seven years the congregation utilized this two-room structure while raising money to build a new church. In the spring of 1957, the architectural firm of Lucas, Craig, and Whitwam presented drawings for a new church campus. Construction on the first stage of this complex, which would include the sanctuary, a limited classroom, office space, and a full basement with kitchen and fellowship hall began in the fall of 1957 and was completed in 1958.²⁸⁴ Four years later, the church added a 12,000 square foot educational wing to accommodate the more than 500 Sunday School students. The project was designed by Kirkham, Michael & Associates, an engineering and architectural firm, and completed and dedicated in January 1963.²⁸⁵

Westminster Presbyterian

The Presbyterians began planning a new, West Side church at the same time as the Methodists. In September 1956, the National Missions Committee of the Black Hills Presbytery, working with the Board of National Missions, invited the Rev. Paul Fowler to survey the South Canyon-Canyon Lake area and to organize a new congregation.²⁸⁶ The group then purchased 13 acres across the street from the new West Junior High School (now known as West Middle School).²⁸⁷

Fowler set to work organizing the new congregation. In September 1956, he asked the school district for permission to rent a portion of the junior high school on Sundays for church services while the new church was under construction. The school district demurred;

²⁸² “Methodist Church Opens Here Sunday,” *Rapid City Journal*, December,

²⁸³ “Canyon Lake Methodist Church To Be Formally Dedicated Sunday, April 13, 1951, 3. See also, “Canyon Lake Methodists To Start Building,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 9, 1957, 3.

²⁸⁴ “Canyon Lake Methodists To Start Building.”

²⁸⁵ “Canyon Lake Methodist Okays Expansion Plan,” *Rapid City Journal*, February 8, 1962, 3. See also, “Bishop To Consecrate Canyon Lake Church,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 25, 1963, 9.

²⁸⁶ “Dedication Ceremonies Scheduled For Westminster Church Sunday,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 29, 1960, 4.

²⁸⁷ “School Rentals and Bond Sale Talked by Board of Education,” *Rapid City Journal*, September 12, 1956, 3.

it had adopted a policy that prohibited loaning or renting school facilities to partisan political or denominational groups.²⁸⁸

Undeterred, Fowler continued organizing and hosted the first meeting of this new congregation on February 17, 1957.²⁸⁹ Construction of the new church was already underway at that point and for the next three years as the 75-member congregation held fundraising meetings in the basement sanctuary beneath the manse. Finally, on March 27, 1960, members worshipped in the new church for the first time.²⁹⁰

The new church, designed by Aukerman and Mazourek, was completed in April 1960. It was one of Rapid City's most innovative new houses of worship. Its interior featured parabolic arch construction, with slopes and textures reminiscent of a gothic cathedral. Nevertheless, as the *Rapid City Journal* reported, "the lines of the building were conceived in such a manner as to present only clean definition without useless extras." Reflecting the modernist sentiments of the church's pragmatic congregants, the design was "keyed to efficiency, functionality and economy." "The buff face exterior of the building is combined with the open welcome of glass."²⁹¹

South Canyon Lutheran

Like other denominations, the American Lutheran Church monitored the growth of Rapid City on the West Side after the war. In 1954, the district mission committee authorized a survey of the South Canyon neighborhood to determine the potential for a new church. Five years later, Pastor Howard Bomhoff arrived to establish the new congregation. He held the first worship service on October 4, 1959. Seven months later, in May 1960, the City issued construction permits for the new church to be located at 4333 Brookside Drive. The church was completed and dedicated the following September. The L-shaped structure offered space for 300 worshippers on Sunday along with an office, a nursery, a "cry room," a kitchen, restrooms, and 14 classrooms. When the church was dedicated, it had 237 baptized members, 120 confirmed, and nearly 90 students attended Sunday school.²⁹²

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Families living on the west side who were members of the congregation of Emmanuel Episcopal Church formed their own Sunday school in the fall of 1957. The group met initially at the Red Barn Restaurant in the early hours before the restaurant opened for lunch.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ "Dedication Ceremonies Scheduled For Westminster Church Sunday."

²⁹⁰ "Dedication Ceremonies Scheduled For Westminster Church Sunday."

²⁹¹ Ibid. Aukerman and Mazourek was a Rapid City firm that also designed the new YMCA in 1961. Jim Kuehn, "New 'Y' Center Nearer Reality," *Rapid City Journal*, April 23, 1961, 7. The company also designed the new wing of the State Game Lodge in 1964, Stevens High School, and the expansion and remodel of Bennett-Clarkson Hospital in 1971. See "Historic Game Lodge Grows," *Rapid City Journal*, June 7, 1964, 33; "Bennett-Clarkson \$900,000 project plan on schedule," *Rapid City Journal*, August 19, 1971; and "Many Involved in Construction," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1970, 27.

²⁹² "South Canyon Church To Be Dedicated," *Rapid City Journal*, September 30, 1960, 22.

This group soon evolved into the congregation for a new church to be named St. Andrew's. The Episcopal Diocese had obtained land that once belonged to the Rapid City Indian Boarding School (see related essay), and in September 1958, the construction of the new church began. Much of the design and work was completed by volunteers, many of whom were professionals in engineering and construction. On November 23, 1958, the first worship service was held inside the still-unfinished building.²⁹³

Other Churches

Seventh Day Adventist (1950) – 4703 South Canyon Road
Canyon Lake Methodist (1950) – 3500 Canyon Lake Drive
Blessed Sacrament (1956) – 4500 Jackson Blvd

South Rapid City

On the south side of Rapid City, new homes went up quickly in the Robbinsdale district. As the new neighborhoods expanded, churches followed. Congregations were often incubated in people's homes or other facilities. When they were ready for a church building, thrifty congregations sometimes purchased and moved existing structures. Others erected new buildings that they hoped would reflect the neighborhood.

Southern Baptist Church

Rev. L.H. Roseman arrived from Batesville, Arkansas to organize the first branch of the Southern Baptist Church in Rapid City. He spent a year meeting with potential members in a home on East St. Francis Street. With a strong prospective membership, the church purchased 15 lots on the corner of Indiana and Oak Streets to build a three-unit church complex.²⁹⁴ The new structure was a hadite block and brick construction that included an auditorium and classrooms. Completed in the summer of 1954, the facility was envisioned as the first phase in a multi-unit complex that would eventually accommodate 700 children.²⁹⁵

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

In 1957, the Evangelical Lutheran Church founded a new congregation in Robbinsdale and began construction on Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, which sat across the street from South Junior High School (now South Middle School) at 17 Indiana Street. The first pastor, Rev. Harold J. Larsen, came to Rapid City from Tucson, Arizona. It was the third church he had started.²⁹⁶ Larsen conducted the congregation's first service on June 30, 1957 in the

²⁹³ Jo Parker, "A History of St. Andrew's Church," 1984. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church archives.

²⁹⁴ "Southern Baptist Church To Erect Building in City," *Rapid City Journal*, February 26, 1954, 3.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ "Faith Lutheran Church Started," *Rapid City Journal*, June 2, 1957, 3.

unfinished building. After the exterior was completed, members of the new congregation spent the fall “work[ing] together painting walls, tiling the floors, [and] building study bookcases and kitchen cabinets. They also completed the altar, pulpit, communion railing, bulletin board, and coat rack.”²⁹⁷ The church was formally organized and a constitution adopted in November 1957.²⁹⁸ Children accounted for a significant percentage of the new congregation, which included 165 baptized members, 82 confirmed, and 150 Sunday school students.²⁹⁹ The new building was dedicated in May 1958.³⁰⁰

South Maple Methodist Church

When a group of Methodists in the Robbinsdale area built a new church at Maple and Indiana, for example, they transferred their old church to a new congregation in Rapid Valley alongside Highway 40.³⁰¹ South Maple Methodist Church was designed by James C. Ewing, Jr. It opened for Mother’s Day services in May 1963. Built against a gentle rise near South Junior High School (now South Middle School), the church’s main floor included the work sacristies, offices, and parlor-nursery areas adjacent to the narthex. Underneath, at the ground level to the parking lot, the church proudly featured a “modern serving kitchen and a fellowship hall” that could accommodate 255 people at a banquet. The relatively simple rectangular structure was ornamented with hand chipped rock and faced brick on the exterior walls with a large stained-glass window facing Indiana Street.³⁰²

Rapid City Wesleyan Church

Three blocks away, the Rapid City Wesleyan Church was completed in June 1965 to house the combined congregations of Robbinsdale Wesleyan Methodist Church and First Wesleyan Methodist Church, which had been founded in 1942.³⁰³

South Park Congregational Church

In 1951, the new congregation of South Park Congregational Church was raising money to build its sanctuary. The building campaign brochure noted that the church “was planted in the heart of the new and growing suburb of southeast Rapid City, by means of a cooperative agreement with the major Christian communions of the city and state.” It thus reflected the ecumenical impulse that was an important element of the postwar era. The congregation described itself as “in the tradition of the Pilgrims and the Prairie Pioneers who valued freedom of worship and freedom of opportunity as their greatest treasure....” The design of the new church, according to the brochure, “speaks the language of worship in a

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ “New Church To Be Formally Organized,” *Rapid City Journal*, November 21, 1957, 3.

²⁹⁹ “Faith Lutheran To Dedicate Church Sunday,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 8, 1958, 20.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ “Church Moves to Rapid Valley,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 15, 1963, 10.

³⁰² “South Maple Methodist Consecration Sunday,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 6, 1964, 5.

³⁰³ See First Wesleyan Church, “[Our Story](#),” accessed March 15, 2021.

contemporary mood.”³⁰⁴ Vertical lines, a high roof, and a tall campanile appealed to tradition. Horizontal elements, however, and a cloistered entryway resonated with Prairie architecture and communicated a domestic feel that appealed to postwar families. Construction emphasized the need for education and services for children and youth. Groundbreaking took place in April 1954. By the time the church was open and fully operating in January 1956, the congregation had 197 members and offered Sunday school classes for more than 100 children.³⁰⁵

Other Churches

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church (1950) – Ninth & Fairview

First Baptist (1958) – Seventh & St. Patrick

Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1962) – Fifth Street (see essay on Diverse Rapid City)

North Rapid City

In the postwar years, residential development north of downtown also expanded dramatically. Commercial development followed, and so did churches. In line with various formal and informal systems of discrimination, the Native community was concentrated in this part of town and various denominations opened churches that sought to serve Rapid City’s Native residents.

First Church of God

In 1951, the parishioners of the First Church of God erected a small frame, stucco, and stone building at Sixth and Denver in a working class neighborhood near Rapid Creek. In 21 years, it would be destroyed by 1972 flood. With capacity to house 200 congregants for worship, the church basement included a kitchen and was used for Sunday school classes, recreation, and meetings.³⁰⁶

St. Matthew’s Episcopal

St. Matthew’s Episcopal on Haines Avenue opened its doors for the first time to worshippers in 1952. The congregation, most of whom were Native American residents, had worked on the church’s construction.³⁰⁷ In addition to regular services at the church, the

³⁰⁴ “The South Park Congregational Church of Rapid City,” [Building brochure], 1951. South Park Community Church archives.

³⁰⁵ “History of South Park Community Church, 1951-1976,” nd. South Park Community Church archives.

³⁰⁶ “First Church of God Dedicates Building,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 31, 1951, 6.

³⁰⁷ “New Church Sets Consecration Rites,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 27, 1952, 3.

vicar, Reverend Levi M. Rouillard also conducted Holy Communion regularly at the Sioux Sanitorium.³⁰⁸

Sioux Baptist Chapel

In 1966, A.L. Davis, a Baptist missionary who had been working on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana, moved to Rapid City with his family and opened the Sioux Baptist Chapel, which began worship services in the old Community Hall in the Sioux Addition. In the spring of 1967, the congregation began construction of a small church at 1520 Haines Avenue, which was opened in October of that year. With its motto proclaiming, “The Savior for the Sioux,” the church was affiliated with other Baptist chapels on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and in Black Hawk, and Davis, a pilot, used a light airplane to travel between the church’s different locations.³⁰⁹ In the 1980s, the church changed its name to Haines Avenue Baptist (c.1981) and then to InterTribal Baptist (c. 1986), and the Northridge Baptist Church (1989). In 2007, the church building was lifted and moved to the Buffalo Chip Campground to make way for commercial development.³¹⁰

Knollwood Heights United Methodist

As new residential communities developed in North Rapid City, the Dakota Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, through its Conference Board of Missions, purchased seven lots on the corner of Milwaukee and East College Streets to establish a new church. Following the construction of a parsonage in 1960, Otto H. Lehner came to Rapid City that May to build the congregation and the new church. The main sanctuary was nearly complete when the congregation used the church for worship for the first time on December 17, 1961. A dedication took place the following March.³¹¹ Designed by William A. Schaefer & Associates of Minneapolis, who designed other churches around the northern Great Plains, the yellow brick walls of the structure give it an airy, modern look.

Other Churches

International Church of the Four Square (1951) – 927 E. Philadelphia
St. Isaac Jogues/Mother Butler – 221 Knollwood Drive
St. Therese of the Little Flower – 532 Adams Street

³⁰⁸ “St. Matthews Episcopal,” *Rapid City Journal*, October 3, 1952, 2.

³⁰⁹ Display advertisement, *Rapid City Journal*, September 13, 1969, 12. See also, “Sioux Baptist Chapel to mark 10th anniversary on Sunday,” *Rapid City Journal*, June 26, 1976, 9, “Baptists Will Build Indian Mission Chapel,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 18, 1967, and “Sioux Baptist Chapel as Church,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 4, 1969, 12.

³¹⁰ Dan Daly, “Cuatro Vistas under way on Haines Avenue,” *Rapid City Journal*, September 13, 2007, 15.

³¹¹ “Knollwood Heights Evangelical United Brethren Church Dedication Program,” March 25, 1962. Knollwood Heights United Methodist Church archives.

Documentation

Westminster Presbyterian



South Canyon Lutheran Church



South Park United Church of Christ



Faith Lutheran Church



South Maple Methodist Church



First Congregational Church



Emmanuel Episcopal Church



Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help



The Modern School

Postwar School Architecture in Rapid City

In March 1958, the *Rapid City Journal* proclaimed that “Schools Are Rapid City’s Biggest Business.” This was not hyperbole. The schools “have the biggest payroll, the largest capital outlay, purchase thousands of dollars worth of supplies annually and take the biggest share of Rapid City’s tax dollars.” To educate the over 8,000 students in the community, the schools had an operating budget of \$2.5 million, and taxpayers had committed \$7.6 million for new school construction over the previous decade. “The end isn’t in sight” when it came to construction, the paper declared, “so long as the ‘baby boom’ continues.”³¹²

The postwar population boom affected the United States in myriad ways. Since the late 19th century, the birthrate in the United States had been on a slow decline.³¹³ It spiked unexpectedly after World War II, and some 72 million American “Baby Boomers” were born between 1946 and 1964.³¹⁴ Many Americans, no doubt, viewed the boom as a positive development. Weary from nearly two long decades of depression and war, millions of Americans experienced the joys of parenthood in a rapidly expanding, consumer-driven economy. Many viewed the nuclear family as a valuable social and cultural asset in the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.³¹⁵

But the boom was also a “birth quake,” as the economist Diane Macunovich has written.³¹⁶ It was a sudden, transformative event that rattled American life that continues to shape our politics, society, and economy today. Among the many immediate aftershocks was a sudden, surging demand for new infrastructure in communities where the most intense growth was concentrated.

Rapid City felt the quake. Fueled by the baby boom, the establishment and expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base, and migration from the rural hinterland to the urban center, the city’s population nearly doubled between 1940 (13,844) and 1950 (25,179). It continued a steep rise to about 42,000 by 1960. The boom subsided in the mid-1960s, and Rapid City’s population would continue a slow increase for about 20 years.³¹⁷

³¹² “Schools Are Rapid City’s Biggest Business,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 11, 1958.

³¹³ Jan Van Bevel and David S. Reher, “The Baby Boom and Its Causes: What We Know and What We Need to Know,” *Population and Development Review* 39, no. 2 (June 2013): 257.

³¹⁴ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, “The Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060,” US Census Bureau, May 2014, 2.

³¹⁵ See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

³¹⁶ See Diane J. Macunovich, *Birth Quake: The Baby Boom and Its Aftershocks* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

³¹⁷ Bureau of the Census, “[1950 Census of Population: Preliminary Counts: Population of South Dakota, By Counties](#),” Series PC-2, no. 18, August 21, 1950. Ellsworth Air for Base was originally named the Rapid City Air Base.

Across the United States, civic leaders and education advocates were clear-eyed about the challenges that lay ahead. In the spring of 1950, the *Washington Post* reported on the growing need for a nationwide school construction program. Quoting the US Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, the story noted that as many as a quarter of American schoolchildren were attending classes in “obsolete, unsafe, or inadequate buildings,” and that the nation would need to build around 450,000 new classrooms to accommodate its projected growth by 1960.³¹⁸ The next year, the *New York Times* described a report by a citizen advisory organization that urged the Eisenhower administration to push a 10-year, \$14 billion plan to build a half million schools.³¹⁹ Yet another piece exclaimed that about half of all college graduates would need to go directly into teaching to meet the pressing demand for teachers.³²⁰ And, in 1955, a report in the *Architectural Forum* complained that “every 15 minutes enough babies are born to fill another classroom and we are already 250,000 classrooms behind.”³²¹

Despite these calls, politicians and policymakers remained apprehensive about the federal government’s role in education, which had, to that point, generally been considered a state and local issue. It was not until 1958—a year after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellites, sparking fears that the Americans were losing the technology and innovation race—that Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Although much smaller than the \$14 billion called for in the *Times* several years earlier, the NDEA was a historic federal education bill that framed the need for quality schools and education as a Cold War imperative. It appropriated \$1 billion over several years to education in the United States, with an emphasis on science and mathematics at colleges and universities. Meanwhile, the number of enrolled students in US public schools continued to balloon from about 25 million in 1949 to 46 million in 1971. The NDEA helped, but local school taxpayers would ultimately cover the bulk of the costs for new or expanded schools.³²²

In Rapid City, the squeeze on educational facilities was already underway. In March 1949, Superintendent E.B. Bergquist informed the school board that the community could expect an increase of 224 students by the fall. A new elementary school called Canyon Lake Elementary, one of the first schools built in Rapid City since the 1930s, would absorb 175 of them.³²³ Overcrowding at the Rapid City High School was also beginning to cause problems by 1950, and the school was working on a plan to update the cafeteria to accommodate

³¹⁸ Mary Spargo, “School Construction Bill Raises Varied Problems,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 1950.

³¹⁹ “Eisenhower’s Aid on Schools Urged,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1954.

³²⁰ “Thinking Ahead on Schools,” *The New Republic*, July 9, 1956, 5.

³²¹ *Architectural Forum*, quoted in Amy F. Ogata, “Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, no. 4 (Dec. 2008): 582.

³²² Ogata, “Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools,” 580.

³²³ “School Survey Indicates Local Elementary Enrollment will increase by 224 pupils,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 15, 1949.

almost twice as many students by the next academic year.³²⁴ For the moment, growth in the district seemed significant but manageable.

Excepting Canyon Lake Elementary and General Beadle Elementary, which were established in 1949, the educational facilities in Rapid City at that time included several small elementary schools spread across town. The earliest schools in the area were single-room, and often rural, structures reminiscent of the “Little Red Schoolhouse” of popular memory. In the early 20th century, South Dakota followed national trends in curriculum development and school design. Known as the “Standardized School”—or simply, “standardization”—movement, legislatures across the United States passed laws that prescribed detailed plans that aimed to enhance learning. In this era, schools remained relatively small and dispersed. Many rural schools were converted via state financial incentive plans, while new construction followed updated rules that standardized the number of windows and doors; detailed the placement of recently-developed electric lighting; prescribed the dimensions of egresses; and established the number and positions of fire escapes, chimneys, and more. Rapid City had at least seven elementary schools in this early era: Four were named after US Presidents Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Jefferson; James A. Garfield Elementary School; and two small A-frame-house schools named South Park (or “Old Mattoon”) and Upper Rapid School.³²⁵

Completed in 1929 and 1936, respectively, the Rapid City High School complex and Wilson Elementary School were the capstones of the local school district. Each epitomized the “consolidated school” movement of the early 20th century, which built upon the new approach created during the standardization era and popularized large, centralized facilities that “tended to feature stately neoclassical facades and standardized, utilitarian classrooms with multiple rows of desks.” At schools like Rapid City High School, many students could socialize, learn from different teachers, and utilize amenities like auditoriums and gymnasiums inside massive buildings.³²⁶ The imposing, four-story structure included a manicured campus on Columbus Street that had famously hosted President Calvin Coolidge during the summer of 1927. On the south side, up a short incline on the hillside, sat Washington Elementary School. Another building that had been used by the 30th president during his visit housed Coolidge Junior High.³²⁷

Within a few short years, the trickle of students Superintendent Bergquist had described in 1949 soon became a flood. In late 1951, Rapid City’s public schools enrolled a total of 4,955 students. A report anticipated that some 2,000 more students would arrive

³²⁴ “School Board Awards Cafeteria Contracts,” *Rapid City Journal*, April 15, 1950.

³²⁵ Mark Elliott and Melissa Dirr, “Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development” (Pierre: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1998), 12–14; “School Survey Indicates Local Elementary Enrollment will Increase by 224 Pupils,” *Rapid City Journal*, March 15, 1949; Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City*, 63

³²⁶ Bryn Nelson, “[School Design Through the Decades](#),” *Mosaic Science*, November 14, 2014, accessed February 24, 2021; Elliott and Dirr, “Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development,” 17–22.

³²⁷ “Timeline: How Rapid City High School became Dakota Middle School,” *Rapid City Journal*, July 3, 2010.

within five years.³²⁸ That estimate, it turned out, was woefully conservative. By 1952, the school board had updated its projections, noting that at least 3,000 students would arrive by 1954—and that number merely accounted for the “normal growth” of families already living in Rapid City. The school district had no way of knowing how many families would move to Rapid City, much less where they would settle.³²⁹ By 1960, total enrollment in Rapid City’s public schools reached 10,585 students.³³⁰

Communities across South Dakota were also facing increased enrollments. As Michelle Dennis writes, across the state, “dozens of new education-related buildings were constructed between 1945 and 1960.” These included expansions to public school facilities as well as additions to the campuses of colleges and universities. Many added student housing, libraries, laboratories, and other research facilities. Federal laws like the NDEA and the GI Bill, which made affordable college education available to veterans, inspired the spike in college enrollments. Many of these veteran students lived in on-campus family housing units that had been built to accommodate them.³³¹

To keep up with this growth, Rapid City undertook an aggressive construction and school expansion program, building over a dozen new schools between 1949 and 1969. First were Canyon Lake and General Beadle in 1949. Next, in 1950, came Annie Tallent Elementary (renamed South Park Elementary in the 1990s) and Lincoln Elementary. In 1952, E.B. Bergquist Elementary—named for the longtime superintendent—Horace Mann Elementary, and South Canyon Elementary were all founded, followed by Robbinsdale Elementary in 1953 and West Middle School in 1955. Later that year, voters passed a \$3.1 million bond issue. It included funds to make additions to many of the schools built just a few years earlier, which were already nearing capacity. The bond also helped spur new school construction over the next several years: Meadowbrook Elementary opened in 1957, followed by Pinedale Elementary in 1958, and South Middle School and North Middle School in 1959. In 1961 and 1963 came Grandview Elementary and Knollwood Heights Elementary, respectively. The last of Rapid City’s postwar schools, Stevens High School, was built in 1969.

Meanwhile, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, new or expanded schools sponsored by faith communities popped up in Rapid City, as did public school facilities in suburbs like Rapid Valley. The Catholic Diocese, for example, planned a 1,000-student school to be built adjacent to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which was completed in 1962. Congregations of Seventh Day Adventists and a Lutheran denomination also had small

³²⁸ Bob Lee, “School Building Programs Pushed,” *Rapid City Journal*, November 18, 1951.

³²⁹ “School Board Confronted with Expansion Problems,” *Rapid City Journal*, November 12, 1952.

³³⁰ “First Week Enrollment is 10,585,” *Rapid City Journal*, September 10, 1960. According to the US Census, the city’s population in 1960 was 42,399. Nearly three quarters of these residents lived east of the hogback that divided the city, including 12,043 under the age of 18. On the west side of town, there were 9,246 residents, including 4,554 under the age of 18. “High School Location is Questioned,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 19, 1961, 13.

³³¹ Dennis, “Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota”(2007), 34–35.

elementary schools in Rapid City.³³² Meanwhile, an addition to the Rapid Valley School was completed in 1960, and Valley schools would become part of the Rapid City school district in 1969.³³³

Many of Rapid City's postwar schools became the centerpieces of new, postwar neighborhoods that were sprawling outward from the downtown core. As crews broke ground on Robbinsdale Elementary in 1952, for example, real estate developer Private Homes, Inc. was finishing work on 170 mostly ranch-style homes on the new streets that surrounded the school. The company was also planning a shopping center and drugstore just blocks from the school to serve the hundreds of new families moving into the area.³³⁴ (See essay on Postwar Residential Growth.)

The schools were anchors for daily life and commerce. They also shaped the development of the character of Rapid City's new neighborhoods. Families played on the school swing sets on the weekends and in the summer. Little league, softball, and junior football teams practiced on the athletic fields. Boys Scout and Girl Scout troops held meetings and events in school buildings. Grandparents and parents attended holiday programs and band and orchestra concerts in school gyms and auditoriums. Adults voted and attended PTA meetings in school facilities. In these ways, neighborhood schools were a cornerstone for civic and social life.

The schools had been designed with these multiple, flexible uses in mind. According to author Bryn Nelson, postwar schools marked a departure from their large, costly predecessors. They "featured more standardized and cost-conscious designs" due to budget constraints and surging enrollment.³³⁵ Architects also accounted for pedagogical innovations. As another pair of scholars observed in 1962, "Americans are aware that the curriculum content and the process of teaching and learning are in the throes of vigorous investigation and exploration." Early schoolhouses, they wrote, had "followed a prosaic pattern" with a "single-minded purpose... to shelter the students from the elements." A school could live in basically any "good sturdy structure that provided space for a few desks and some blackboard area." But changing modes of thinking required a new spatial approach, and "the box-like school structure, comprised of a series of rectangles, row on row and layer on layer" they wrote, "is becoming a thing of the past."³³⁶

Cutting edge research at Stanford University's School Construction Systems Development Project had outlined four key principles to guide school designers in the postwar era. First, schools should be flexible, with interior spaces utilizing movable walls and multiple configurations. Second, different-sized spaces should be included and adaptable for

³³² "Schools Are Rapid City's Biggest Business;" McCarty, "Schools Planning to Meet Challenge in New Year," *Rapid City Journal*, December 27, 1959.

³³³ Andrea J. Cook, "School to Celebrate Move," *Rapid City Journal*, May 27, 2015.

³³⁴ School Board Confronted with Expansion Problems," *Rapid City Journal*, November 12, 1952.

³³⁵ Nelson, "School Design Through the Decades."

³³⁶ James D. MacConnell and Harold Faulk, "Architecture for Education," *American Behavioral Scientist* 6, no. 3 (Nov. 1962): 70.

different sizes of student groups. Third, schools should be able to accommodate emerging technologies like televisions and overhead projectors. Finally, permanent spaces like auditoriums should be able to be reconfigured to meet a variety of uses.³³⁷

An American Institute of Architects demonstration in 1958 showcased some of these plans. The cutting-edge schools in the exhibit, wrote the *Washington Post*, were “characterized by an open planning of component units, central courts and student assembly places surrounded by classrooms, overhead lighting and an improved use of landscaping to make the adjoining paces esthetically pleasing.” Tile and playground sculptures of animals, meanwhile “add[ed] a new dimension to formerly severe surroundings” while “imaginative use of new building materials has also added a sense of lightness and warmth to the architecture itself.”³³⁸

These elements were practical as well as cultural. Concerns about the state of the world shaped the vision for what schools could be. In a study of postwar school design in England, which mirrored many of the new trends in the United States, one architectural historian argued that “the postwar school stands out as a monument for a time when the prospects of imagining a more humane future were channeled into children and their education.”³³⁹ Another scholar points out that the “modern American elementary school, as a cultural and architectural form, emerged from a complex interaction of technical concerns, educational theory, and the larger historical forces of postwar expansion and Cold War anxiety.”³⁴⁰

New schools being implemented in California provided a popular model for postwar schools all over the country. There, many architects adhered to the “modern, one-story, flat-roof design aesthetic” of the era.³⁴¹ Large windows helped illuminate classrooms with natural light. Many California schools were designed to take advantage of the state’s sunny days and temperate climate, and classrooms were often connected by covered walkways to provide easy access to the outdoors. This integration of interior and exterior spaces became a signature element of postwar residential architecture, exemplified by the popularity of ranch house designs. But it was also an important cultural component of the postwar era as Americans adjusted to more urban or suburban patterns of life after generations of living in more rural communities.

An indoor, adapted version of the California plan was utilized in northern states like South Dakota.³⁴² A *Christian Science Monitor* article from the period described a model school in Barrington, Illinois, which had been developed as part of the Stanford project. “The building,” it reads, “consists of four wings of classroom space which shoot off from a

³³⁷ MacConnell and Faulk, “Architecture for Education,” 70.

³³⁸ “AIA Displaying School Architecture,” *Washington Post*, July 6, 1958.

³³⁹ Roy Kozlovsky, “The Architecture of *Educare*: Motion and Emotion in Postwar Educational Spaces,” *History of Education* 39, no. 6 (November 2010): 712.

³⁴⁰ Ogata, “Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools,” 552.

³⁴¹ Nelson, “School Design Through the Decades.”

³⁴² Nelson, “School Design Through the Decades.”

central core. In the middle is a 7,000-square foot informal ‘learning center,’ complete with film strips, tape recordings, and newspapers, as well as books, and another huge room which doubles as a study hall and cafeteria.”³⁴³

Rapid City’s postwar schools incorporated many of these trends. Michelle Dennis notes that a Belle Fourche school designed by the architect Harold Spitznagel in 1949 was a model utilized by school districts across the state.³⁴⁴ Spitznagel’s work was influenced by the broader evolution underway in the design and architecture world and informed the design of Rapid City’s schools.

During the postwar era, Rapid City engaged a variety of design and construction firms to complete new construction and additions to existing facilities. But its initial building program was overseen by Ewing & Forette, a local business affiliated with the Chicago-based firm Perkins & Will.³⁴⁵ Their work helps explain the general uniformity of schools like Lincoln, South Park, Robbinsdale, and Canyon Lake, all of which conformed to a modern vernacular that featured low, horizontal lines and brick facades with an occasional slight peak like the one at Pinedale. Built two years apart, Grandview and Knollwood Heights deviated slightly from this look. Each, for example, features a taller, glassy peak above its main entrance. The schools resemble one another because the school board had utilized another Rapid City firm, Auckerman & Mazourek, to draw Grandview. Their design was well-liked and the school board asked the firm to adapt that plan for the new, north side school at Knollwood Heights.³⁴⁶

Descriptions of Rapid City’s postwar schools illuminated a sense of civic pride in the new facilities. Each of the new schools, read one account, was “an attractive brick building” situated on five acres of land so children would have plenty of room to play and exercise during recess.³⁴⁷ Lincoln Elementary was “ultra-modernistic in design,” while Pinedale was divided into “seven levels and units, consisting of two classrooms each,” which were “‘staggered’ up and down a gentle slope” in the hill. A news reporter marveled at how “an auditorium-office at [the] apex of the angle” joined the “the two classroom wings” at Pinedale. Like the other new Rapid City schools, “it feature[d] ample expanses of glass.”³⁴⁸

When North Middle School and South Middle School opened in 1959, these larger schools incorporated even more of the open-air concepts of the time. North could hold 700 students, while South had capacity for 1,000. Each was comprised of “four connecting wings enclosing an open court.” Long hallways separated these main wings from the gymnasium and arts and vocational wings in order to enhance the classroom learning environment by isolating noise and bustle.³⁴⁹

³⁴³ Lucla Mount, “New Twist in School Architecture,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 23, 1966.

³⁴⁴ Dennis, “Post-War Architecture in South Dakota,” 35.

³⁴⁵ “Plans for Two Elementary School Additions Approved,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 19, 1956.

³⁴⁶ “School Board Hears Proposals on Salaries, Hires Architects,” *Rapid City Journal*, January 23, 1962.

³⁴⁷ “Schools Are Rapid City’s Biggest Business.”

³⁴⁸ Bob Lee, “School Building Programs Pushed,” “Schools Are Rapid City’s Biggest Business.”

³⁴⁹ “Open House at Junior Highs First Event in Education Week Here,” *Rapid City Journal*, November 8, 1959.

Rapid City's schools followed national trends and also helped set them. In 1963, Perkins & Will teamed up with Auckerman & Mazourek to integrate a new, state-of-the-art learning center at Grandview Elementary. Roughly the size of two classrooms, it was a 1,600 square-foot space that could accommodate 120 students in a classroom configuration or 200 when set up like an auditorium. The space could be used for "lecture-demonstration, film projection, panel and discussion groups, radio tape recording, educational television, live music and drama." The design was so innovative that it earned a two-page spread in the February 1963 issue of the *American School Board Journal*.³⁵⁰

As Rapid City sought to integrate these amenities into its postwar schools, it also faced financial and infrastructural challenges characteristic of the era. In the mid-1950s, the Museum of Modern Art in New York published a pictorial review of midcentury architectural trends. Describing the nationwide boom in school construction, the work's editor reminded readers that "booms are not always conducive to good building." Recalling a smaller, troublesome wave of construction from the 1920s, he pushed readers to cast a "wary eye [on] such construction as it was prepared and executed under conditions of manic haste and rising costs."³⁵¹

His warnings were prescient. In 1954, for example, the *Rapid City Journal* reported on the deteriorating educational facilities across town. Although many of the worst maintenance issues were occurring at the old, pre-war schools, several of the brand-new facilities like Horace Mann, Canyon Lake, and South Canyon were already cracking and chipping due to the expansion of steel framing beams.³⁵² Just months after Pinedale Elementary opened, parents complained about heating issues and poor acoustics that were making it difficult for their children to learn.³⁵³

Problems like these, along with cost overruns and change orders, pushed the *Journal* to criticize the school board in 1958. After doing some math, the *Journal* calculated that Rapid City should have been able to afford an entire, additional elementary school from the 1955 bond initiative. The paper argued that "it could have been done, too, if the [school] board had done one thing: stayed within the financial bounds approved by Rapid City voters three years ago."³⁵⁴

By the time the baby boom subsided, taxpayers had grown tired of bonds, rising construction costs, and other issues. In 1971, Educational Facilities Laboratories reported that "half of all school bond issues" in the country were "going down to thumping defeat." In this climate, many school districts across the United States would look for cost savings in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. Rather than building new schools, many would opt for lower-cost annexes built from prefabricated materials over full renovations or additions to

³⁵⁰ Grandview School Layout Written Up in Magazine," *Rapid City Journal*, February 6, 1963.

³⁵¹ Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler, *Built in the US: Post-War Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 10.

³⁵² Schools Still Inadequate, Need Repair, Board Finds," *Rapid City Journal*, April 14, 1954.

³⁵³ Ed Niciejewski, "Savings Could Mean and Additional School," *Rapid City Journal*, December 28, 1958.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

compensate for growing enrollment.³⁵⁵ This trend is evident across Rapid City, where many of the public schools have two-classroom annexes situated near the main school buildings.³⁵⁶

Rapid City's population had leveled off by the mid-1960s. In 1970, projections suggested that the city's population would begin to decline by the end of the decade. A pair of evaluators from the University of Minnesota recommended phasing out several of Rapid City's schools, planning to build a new, 1,700-student high school on the east side of town, and preparing for new construction in the southwest and north sides of town, where the neighborhoods continued to grow.³⁵⁷ Although the city's population did not decline, growth slowed from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s.^{358 359}

More than 70 years have passed since Canyon Lake and General Beadle Elementary—the community's first postwar schools—opened. Many of the postwar schools are aging and face high costs for maintenance and expansion. Those factors, combined with low enrollments, have already led to the closure of the prewar Cleghorn Elementary School in 1993, as well as the closure of Lincoln Elementary and the demolition of E.B. Bergquist Elementary in the early 2000s. General Beadle Elementary, meanwhile, was rebuilt with new amenities and higher student capacity in 2007. Since the early 2000s, the school district has discussed plans to decommission or rebuild several other postwar neighborhood schools. As these decisions are made, the school board, the city, and the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission will need to think about how these structures contribute to neighborhood identity and how and whether they can or should be adapted for reuse in ways that will support a sense of continuity and history in the community.

³⁵⁵ "Cheaper Ways to Build Schools," Educational Facilities Laboratories, Inc., 1971, 1; Nelson, "School Design Through the Decades."

³⁵⁶ "Cheaper Ways to Build Schools," 2.

³⁵⁷ Bob Fell, "Extensive School Improvements Suggested in Special Survey," *Rapid City Journal*, August 11, 1970.

³⁵⁸ "Officials Scrambling to Find Room for More Students," *Rapid City Journal*, August 3, 1986.

³⁵⁹ The only new Rapid City schools built after 1972 were Central High School, which was built just off Rapid Creek in the years after the 1972 flood, and Kibben Kuster Elementary, which was located on the Canyon Lake campus and served elementary and special needs students at different times over several decades. New schools in Black Hawk and Rapid Valley—which although outside city limits are part of the Rapid City school district—were built in 1984 and 1987. Rapid City, meanwhile, added Southwest Middle School and Corral Drive Elementary in 1994. Andrea J. Cook, "School to Celebrate Move," *Rapid City Journal*, May 27, 2015.

Documentation

Table: Rapid City's Postwar Schools (1945 to 1972)

Name	Founded	Location
E.B. Bergquist Elementary School	1952 *Demolished 2006	725 E. Philadelphia
Canyon Lake Elementary School	1949	1500 Evergreen Drive
General Beadle Elementary School	1949 *Renovated/rebuilt 2007	10 Van Buren Street
Grandview Elementary School	1961	3301 Grandview Drive
Horace Mann Elementary School	1952	902 Anamosa Street
Knollwood Elementary School	1963	1701 Downing Street
Lincoln Elementary School	1951	1325 Quincy Street
Meadowbrook Elementary School	1957	3125 W. Flormann
Pinedale Elementary School	1958	4901 W. Chicago Street
Robbinsdale Elementary School	1953	424 E. Indiana Street
South Canyon Elementary School	1952	219 Nordbye Lane
South Park Elementary School *Previously Annie Tallent Elementary	1951	207 Flormann Street
North Middle School	1959	1501 North Maple Street
South Middle School	1959	2 Indiana Street
West Middle School	1955	1003 Sioux San Drive
Stevens High School	1969	4215 Raider Road

Community Health Center now at former site of E.B. Bergquist Elementary
25 E. Philadelphia



Canyon Lake Elementary





General Beadle Elementary
 *Remodeled 2008



Grandview Elementary



Horace Mann Elementary





Kibben Kuster Elementary School



Knollwood Heights Elementary School



Lincoln Elementary School





Meadowbrook Elementary School



North Middle School



Pinedale Elementary School





Robbinsdale Elementary School





South Middle School





South Canyon Elementary School



South Park Elementary School



Stevens High School





West Middle School





“Looking east on St. Joe at 9th, Old Lincoln School on Right”
Minnilusa Historical Association



“First Rapid City High School, cost \$12,000, south side of Columbus between 6th and 7th”
Minnilusa Historical Association



“Rapid City High School where President Coolidge had Offices,”
Minnilusa Historical Association



Students in front of Coolidge High School
Minnilusa Historical Association



Washington Grade School in foreground
Minnilusa Historical Association



“Halley Airport, present site of North Middle School”
Minnilusa Historical Association



Expansion of Rapid City schools
Rapid City Journal, November 18, 1951



Rapid City Journal, November 1952



Rapid City Journal, April 14, 1954



Dedication of West Middle School
Rapid City Journal, November 7, 1955



A LARGE CROWD was in attendance Sunday at the formal dedication of West Junior High School. Principal Norman Nordby said 600 persons attended the ceremonies in the gymnasium while about 1,800 toured the building in the open house period between 3 and 5 p.m. Attorney Joe Bottom gave the dedicatory address and short talks were given by Mrs. Virginia Simpson, president of the school board; M. A. Garland, contractor for

the building; E. B. Bergquist, former Rapid City superintendent of schools; James Ewing, architect, and Nordby, Assistant Superintendent of Schools. C. E. Hawkins introduced the guests and the West Junior High School band played two numbers. Nordby called separate junior high schools a boon to education in Rapid City and noted truancy has become a thing of the past at West Junior High. (Journal Photo)

Rapid City Journal, December 27, 1956



THE NEW MEADOWBROOK SCHOOL, located north of the municipal golf course, will be ready for occupancy by grade school students at the beginning of the second semester Jan. 28 if plans go according

to schedule. Between 275 and 300 children now in classes at Canyon Lake and Wilson Schools are to attend. The 12-classroom building is shown above as seen from the northeast.

Meadowbrook School Construction Rushed



GARLAND CONSTRUCTION—

Western South Dakota's Oldest General Contractor . . .

"ON THE MARCH" WITH RAPID CITY!

Some of the Major Projects "BUILT BY GARLAND"

West Side Junior High School

East Side Junior High School

Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

North Central Junior High School

South Central Junior High School

St. Mary's Cathedral

St. Mary's Cathedral

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NEW FIVE-STOREY CONSTRUCTION

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NEW FIVE-STOREY CONSTRUCTION

Lead Students Prepare For Busy Week

Students of the Junior High School are preparing for a busy week ahead. The school is holding an open house for parents and the community. The school is located at 1234 Main Street, and the open house will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 10th. The school is a modern building with a flat roof and a series of windows. The school is identified by a sign as 'JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL'.

Open House At Junior Highs First Event In Education Week Here

Students here are busy preparing their papers and other assignments of study, and are also preparing for the first event in Education Week here, the open house at the Junior High School. The school is holding an open house for parents and the community. The school is located at 1234 Main Street, and the open house will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 10th. The school is a modern building with a flat roof and a series of windows. The school is identified by a sign as 'JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL'.

First Week Enrollment Is 10,585

Enrollment figures for the 1980-81 school year were announced Friday by Paul E. Hansen, associate superintendent.

"There are no exact predictions for enrollment," Hansen said, "but we expect that the 1980-81 enrollment will be about 10,585."

Enrollment for the 1979-80 school year was 10,400. The 1978-79 enrollment was 10,200.

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by district is as follows:

Alameda	271
Butte	471
Calaveras	271
Colusa	271
Contra Costa	271
El Dorado	271
Fresno	271
Glenn	271
Humboldt	271
Imperial	271
Kern	271
Los Angeles	271
Maricopa	271
Mariposa	271
Monterey	271
Nevada	271
Orange	271
Placer	271
San Bernardino	271
San Diego	271
San Francisco	271
San Jose	271
Shasta	271
Siskiyou	271
Sonoma	271
Stanislaus	271
Tulare	271
Yuba	271

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by grade is as follows:

Kindergarten	271
First	271
Second	271
Third	271
Fourth	271
Fifth	271
Sixth	271
Seventh	271
Eighth	271
Ninth	271
Tenth	271
Eleventh	271
Twelfth	271

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by sex is as follows:

Male	271
Female	271

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by race is as follows:

White	271
Black	271
Hispanic	271
Other	271

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by district and grade is as follows:

Alameda	271
Butte	471
Calaveras	271
Colusa	271
Contra Costa	271
El Dorado	271
Fresno	271
Glenn	271
Humboldt	271
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San Jose	271
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Siskiyou	271
Sonoma	271
Stanislaus	271
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Yuba	271

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Yuba	271

Enrollment for the 1980-81 school year by district and grade and race is as follows:

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Stanislaus	271
Tulare	271
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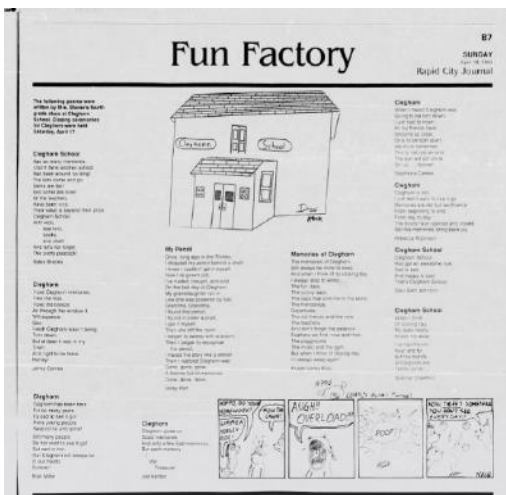
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San Diego	271
San Francisco	271

“Cleghorn School in 1996, before it was town down”
Minnilusa Historical Association



Drawings and poems about Cleghorn School closure
Rapid City Journal, April 18, 1993

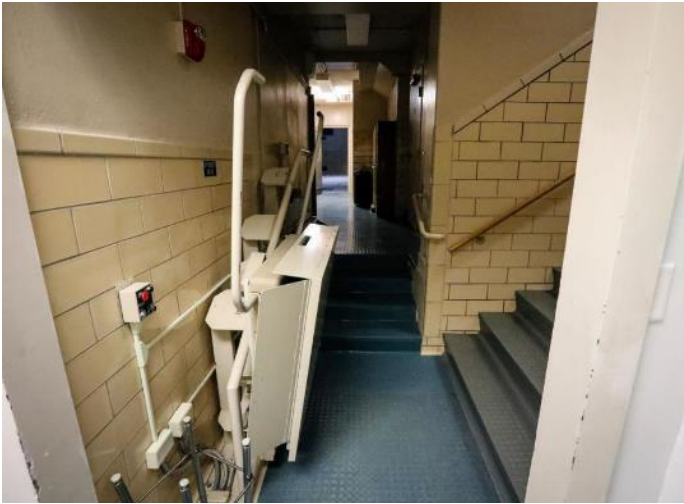


Bergquist Demolition
Rapid City Journal, June 14, 2006



West Middle School Aging
Rapid City Journal, May 30, 2019







Canyon Lake
Rapid City Journal, September 4, 2019

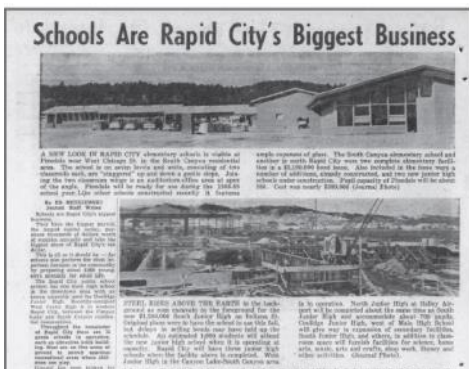




Expansion of postwar neighborhoods
Rapid City Journal, November 9, 1960



School construction business booming
Rapid City Journal, March 11, 1958



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