

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

October 1995

Review of *Roadside History of South Dakota* by Linda Hasselstrom

Darrell Napton
South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Napton, Darrell, "Review of *Roadside History of South Dakota* by Linda Hasselstrom" (1995). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 231.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/231>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Roadside History of South Dakota. Linda Hasselstrom. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1994. xxii+467 pp. Photographs, bibliography, and index. \$16.00 paper (ISBN 0-87842-262-5).

The best parts of this book are the introductions to South Dakota and to each of the four regions into which Hasselstrom divides the state. In these sixty pages, she distills the state's history and cultural geography. Linda Hasselstrom is one of South Dakota's most accomplished native writers. Her writing is clean and easy to read. She explains what it is to be South Dakotan as only a native could, but retains the ability to step back and see the state objectively.

Intended for an audience of armchair travelers, vacationers, and casual history buffs, the book is organized around four geographic regions: the farmlands east of the Missouri River, the Missouri River trench and adjacent counties, the thinly settled ranch land of West River, and the tourist oriented Black Hills and Badlands. Within this framework, Hasselstrom discusses the history loosely associated with particular highways, which are often modern expressions of old transportation corridors. Typically, she discusses local places using a three point pattern: origin of the town name, interesting local event, and summary of a historically important local person. Most towns receive three paragraphs; larger and more historically significant towns are

given up to a few pages of discussion. Hasselstrom does not consider every currently occupied town, but she does include several ghost towns.

At first glance, the book's highway organization seems clear, but it is actually its greatest weakness. Although the volume's title and structure are highway oriented, Hasselstrom rarely focuses on things that can be seen. Historical buildings and other historical landscape features are often omitted. The highway organization is an interesting idea, but it needs better execution. The book's five general highway maps omit the location of many of the places discussed, and when a place could be in more than one region, neither marginal notes nor signs on the maps indicate where to look. Brookings, for instance, located on both Highway 14 and Interstate 29, is discussed in the Interstate 29 section with no cross listing in the section devoted to Highway 14.

Many unmapped places are also dealt with in the book. Within one stretch of Interstate 29, Fort Sisseton, Oakwood Lakes State Park, Hole in the Mountain Pass, the EROS Data Center, and Dell Rapids are each considered, though none appears on its regional map. These places range from two to thirty miles from the highway. Hole in the Mountain Pass would be particularly difficult for a traveler to find, since it is located 25 miles east of Interstate 29 in Minnesota. Occasionally a place discussed in one section of the book appears on the map for a different section (Elkpoint: pp. 50 and 122). Readers should supplement the book with a copy of the South Dakota Official Highway Map.

Unfortunately, the book contains numerous small errors. Bowdle, for instance (p. 76) was hurt by a blizzard in 1880-81, several years before its founding in 1886. A glaring omission is any reference to John Miller's definitive *Looking for History on Highway 14*.

Although it could have benefited from more careful organization, tighter editing to catch the errors, better maps, a map of old trails and forts, and marginal index notes to help cross-reference places, I would recommend *Roadside History of South Dakota* to anyone who wants a brief summary of South Dakota history, to South Dakotans who wish to learn more about neighboring communities, and to individuals planning to vacation in the state. **Darrell Napton**, *Department of Geography, South Dakota State University*.