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Historical Musings

Here Folds the Map: Finding Where the West Begins

Where does the American West begin? It is a question of geography, of the transition from the fertile hills and fields of the eastern United States to the dry and rugged landscapes of the deep interior. It is a question of cartography, the planting of a flag, and the cleaving of a continent into distinct halves. Moreover, it is a question of identity, of determining who we are in relation to the places we inhabit and the landscapes that surround us.

Ask most Americans this question and one finds that the language used in reply is often that of dichotomy, describing a gap as wide as the perceived chasm between the United States and Europe. To chart a course for the West, we find, is to outfit oneself for a journey that mirrors Columbus's own, to embrace what Jack Kerouac wistfully called "the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming."[1] It is fitting, then, that the renowned western historian Frederick Jackson Turner could think of no better European analogue for the landlocked American frontier than that of the Mediterranean Sea in the age of Greek antiquity.[2] It is as though the poetic symbol of the "prairie schooner" were not whimsy, but literal truth. It is as though the Great Plains have become the mid-American sea, "an ocean in its vast extent . . . in its danger . . . in its opportunities for heroism," and in its power to bisect the nation into hemispheres, two incompatible epistemologies and ways of being.[3]

1. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking, 1997), p. 7.

2. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier in American History and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994), p. 59.

3. Richard I. Dodge, *The Hunting Grounds of the Great West: A Description of the Plains, Game, and Indians of the Great North American Desert* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1877), p. 2.

Yet, the Great Plains are neither an ocean nor a void. They are not a straight black line charging down the middle of the map. They are a place of vibrant experiences, home to a population that both embraces and rejects labels of regional belonging, thus cultivating new areas of uncertainty and pride. This essay considers some of those experiences and combines a brief historiography of the East/West divide in the United States with an exploration of the phenomenon in the Dakotas to understand past and contemporary expressions of regional identity in the Great Plains.

The proper relationship between the East and the West was a key issue for the nine men who assembled in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on the night of 27 November 1911. Each a current or former governor of a western state, together they possessed a century and a half of political experience. The states they represented included Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, and California. "It would impugn the dignity of the governors," wrote an Associated Press reporter, "to refer to them as the 'greatest aggregation of vote getters in the history of the continent.'" Nonetheless, here were some of the most prominent leaders of the western United States on a four-thousand-mile, twenty-day train tour of the East, a journey that would take them all the way from Minnesota to New York and back. The very idea enthralled America's newspaper editors, temporarily generating a cottage industry for historical superlatives. "This special train is the first of its kind ever run and is the first time any advertising event as large as this has even been attempted," the report noted.[4] "It has been said by the leading men of every city visited," proclaimed California's *Mariposa Gazette*, "that the Western Governors' Special is one of the greatest things which has been done by the West. . . . something absolutely unprecedented in the history of the United States or any other country."[5]

The governors, for their part, chose to frame their endeavor in humbler terms. As they saw it, they were engaged in a friendly attempt to promote their region to those Americans who had engaged only with

4. *Gulfport* (Miss.) *Daily Herald*, 16 Nov. 1911.
5. *Mariposa* (Calif.) *Gazette*, 23 Dec. 1911.

the nation's Atlantic seaboard power centers. In addition to space for dining and lodging, their Great Northern Railway train included five exhibition cars, each displaying the manufactures and natural bounties of the western states. The governors themselves were to act as docents, welcoming schoolchildren, adult spectators, and eastern politicians alike into the modernized, post-frontier world of the American West.[6]

The Western Governors' Special proved to be an enormous hit, drawing the gaze of press and public everywhere it went. Portraits of the governors and maps of their route appeared in "over five hundred Eastern newspapers," while the "stories of the West" they carried promised to "fill ten thousand newspaper columns."[7] Vaudeville houses throughout the country showed films of their departure. The delegation delivered speeches and attended banquets at every stop, including a reception with President William Howard Taft in Washington. In the end, turnstile records from the Idaho car showed that over ninety-two thousand people passed through the exhibition, with more than a few walking away convinced of the worthiness of the new West.[8]

If Manifest Destiny had propelled Americans to all corners of the continent, then the hope of the twentieth century was to bring them back together again, East and West united, with the governors acting as the vanguard for a grand national communion. "Patriotically," declared former governor James H. Brady of Idaho, "there is no East and no West, for we are one great country."[9] For many Americans of European descent, this feeling of triumph seemed warranted. In little more than one hundred years, they and their forebears had managed to push the boundaries of the United States from the Mississippi River and the shores of Lake Superior all the way to the Pacific coastline. Whites had, by all appearances, subdued American Indians, whom they had long considered an existential challenge. Reservations, enforced poverty, and an assimilationist school system now circumscribed the bulk of the West's indigenous communities. The impending statehood of New Mexico and Arizona would soon fulfill the old dreams of an unbro-

6. *Portland Morning Oregonian*, 29 Nov. 1911.

7. *Mariposa Gazette*, 23 Dec. 1911.

8. James H. Hawley, *History of Idaho: The Gem of the Mountains*, 4 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1920), 1:292–93.

9. *Portland Morning Oregonian*, 29 Nov. 1911.

ken map. Railroads had reduced transcontinental travel from a matter of months to one of days, while automobiles and aircraft would soon speed travel even further. At the same time, the advent of radio in the form of wireless telegraphy was reinforcing the centralizing power of telecommunications, promising to link even the smallest of settlements to the largest of cities. From Sioux Falls to Seattle, and in every manner under the sun, the East expressed its dominance over the West.

To delighted easterners, the Western Governors' Special was a victory lap. It signified a radical potential for East-West mobility at a time when most vacations were either intraregional or prohibitively expensive to the middle class. While Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows and cowboy novels like Owen Wister's *The Virginian* and Clarence E. Mulford's *Hopalong Cassidy* series offered dramatic visions of the frontier West gone by, the governors' tour brought real, living westerners into direct contact with the people of the East at their local train stations. "There have in the past been many visitors from the east to the west, but never before," claimed one slightly misinformed news article, "has there been an organized method of returning these visits."[10] The West, it appeared, was no longer a foreign land or an intangible dream, but simply another piece of the American whole.

Beneath these celebrations, however, tensions lingered. Although the governors chose to market their work as educational, it was no secret to those behind the scenes that their mission was, in truth, one of economic self-interest. From the very start, the Western Governors' Special (as well as its parent organization, the Northwest Development League) had been the brainchild of men with something to sell, most notably railroad tycoon Louis W. Hill and two professional exhibitors: Lewis Penwell, a Montana livestock executive and president of the traveling Northwest Land Products Show, and Colvin B. Brown, commissioner of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, a world's fair to be held in San Francisco in 1915.[11] The large markets of the East, they and the governors had decided, were losing sight of western commodities in their turn toward globalized trade, or otherwise failing to embrace the mantra of "patronize home industry." It was

10. *Gulfport Daily Herald*, 16 Nov. 1911.
11. Ibid.

a concern they feared the opening of the Panama Canal would only exacerbate.[12]

"The fact remains," said Brady, walking back a bit from his previous avowal of interregional solidarity, "that the commercial interests of the East are too much isolated from the West. . . . There is an unequal distribution of the population of this country. The states represented on this trip, with one-third of the total area, have only 5,000,000 population, while the other two-thirds of the country have 65,000,000."[13] Isolation was the problem that the Western Governors' Special was designed to alleviate. After a century of focused westward expansion, America's imperial ambitions had now shifted overseas, and still the East remained by far the more powerful, populated, and prosperous of its regions. In visiting the East, the western governors sought more than the interest of passersby or even the media. They were searching for new relevance. They were looking for investors. "Such is the outline of work to be done by the [Northwest Development] League," wrote Will A. Campbell, the organization's secretary, some two months before the governors started their journey. "It [the league] will invade New England and the Middle Atlantic states . . . thus reaching directly the man who feels he must move, and putting up the argument to him, 'If you want to leave your old farm, go [to] the Northwest states.'"[14]

As the special pressed its way toward Manhattan, a second point of subtle conflict soon emerged, this time pitting not West against East, but the governors against one another. The question at hand was, where does the East end and the West begin? At first blush, it seemed a simple sort of inquiry, one whose answer depended upon little more than a basic understanding of geography. But somehow these well-educated men could not agree—despite their shared allegiance to the West and public displays of fellowship. Among the theories proposed were North Dakota Governor John Burke's suggestion that "the East stops at the Mississippi River," Wyoming Governor Joseph M. Carey's belief that the East "goes as far west as Kansas City," and the appropriately named

12. *Mariposa Gazette*, 9 Dec. 1911.

13. *Portland Morning Oregonian*, 29 Nov. 1911.

14. Will A. Campbell, "Largest Commercial Club," *Town Development* 5 (Sept. 1911): 67.

Louis W. Hill, son of Great Northern Railway founder James J. Hill, was an important sponsor of the Western Governors' Special.

Oregon Governor Oswald D. West's conviction that "the Eastern spirit is lodged as far towards the Pacific as Denver."[15] Each of the three chief executives saw the East approaching—but not yet reaching—his own home state. This vision of a creeping East is no surprise, however. It was, after all, one of the most precise implications of Turner's famous theory that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and

15. *Portland Morning Oregonian*, 29 Nov. 1911.

the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."[16]

First enunciated in a paper read at the 1893 annual meeting of the American Historical Association and further developed in later writings, Turner's thesis conceived of a regenerative frontier that began with the first English settlements in the present United States and moved west through a series of generational cycles. Each cycle of westward movement exerted a transformational effect on pioneers, turning them from displaced Europeans into genuine, democratic Americans.[17] Seen through a Turnerian lens, eastern drive and western progress would inevitably result in the frontier's assimilation into civilization. "The wilderness disappears, the 'West' proper passes on to a new frontier, and . . . a new society has emerged from its contact with the backwoods. Gradually this society loses its primitive conditions, and assimilates itself to the type of the older social conditions of the East."[18] Turner's work brought him both a chair at Harvard and the presidency of the American Historical Association in 1910. By then, his frontier thesis was "the commanding view of the American past."[19]

But what happens when the Turnerian narrative works against a West that has no further land to yield? In an 1896 essay, the historian expounded on the "problem of the West," an interregional stressor almost as potent as the old tug-of-war between the antebellum North and South. The people of the West, he argued, "having passed from the task of filling up the vacant spaces of the continent," were now "thrown back upon" themselves, with the "forces of reorganization" proving as turbulent as a "witches' kettle."[20] With expansion over, the character and purpose of the West had changed. A region that must once have looked like the promised land now felt cornered and provincial, a dead end more than a dream of tomorrow. It is, by any measure, the very death of the romantic Turnerian West espoused by Grandfather at the conclusion of John Steinbeck's novel *The Red Pony*: "When we saw the

16. Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," p. 31.

17. Ibid., p. 47.

18. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*, pp. 61–62.

19. John Mack Faragher, "Introduction," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*, p. 2.

20. Turner, "Problem of the West," pp. 61, 75.

mountains at last, we cried—all of us. But it wasn't getting here that mattered, it was movement and westering. . . . The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up and piled up until the continent was crossed. Then we came down to the sea, and it was done. . . . There's no place to go."[21]

As much as the western governors sought eastern markets, migrants, and investment capital for their states in 1911, we might also surmise that they feared both outright easternization and being forgotten by the East entirely. If either came to pass, the American West would be a failure—a land devoid of economic opportunity, cultural identity, or both. If the governors feared creeping easternization, this phobia would, ironically, demonstrate their fealty to the East itself. Turner's thesis, as Patricia Nelson Limerick reminds us, "rested on a single point of view; it required that the observer stand in the East and look to the West."[22] While an editorial in the *New York Times* seemed compatible with Governor Brady's outward declaration of unity, encouraging Americans to "obliterat[e] all the imaginary political lines of division" and "acquire a national point of view," the governors, we can imagine, knew that forming such a viewpoint was easier said than done. When that same *Times* editorial posited that the westerner's "commercial and financial interests are identical with those of his fellow-countrymen on the Atlantic seaboard," we can speculate that the governors would find this argument to be factually incorrect and, moreover, a product of regional privilege.[23]

Intriguing as the story of the Western Governors' Special may be, it is likely that the tour would have been all but forgotten had it not grabbed the attention of one particular western newsman, namely, *Denver Republican* literary editor Arthur Chapman. As the usual telling has it, Chapman was short on material for his weekly newspaper column "Center Shots" but found immediate inspiration in the governors' story and this question of an East/West line.[24] What Chapman soon

21. Steinbeck, *The Red Pony* (New York: Viking Press, 1945), p. 129.

22. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), pp. 25–26.

23. *New York Times*, 4 Dec. 1911, p. 12.

24. *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 31 May 1918.

This image, used by the South Dakota Department of Tourism to attract travelers to the state, appeals to the classic western sense of freedom and individualism.

realized was that "the governors were missing the point—the West was surely as much a state of mind as a place on the map."[25]

The resulting column, a poem entitled *Out Where the West Begins,* was a simple, folksy series of repetitious verses about the goodness of life in the West, describing the region as "out where the handclasp's a little stronger/Out where a smile dwells a little longer," and so forth.[26] It was also—owing in equal parts to its easily appropriated structure and Estelle Philleo's popular 1917 musical arrangement—a fantastic sensation, "widely quoted, often imitated, and more often parodied."[27] Chapman's poem appeared throughout the West, with a propensity

25. Laurie J. Sampsel and Donald M. Puscher, "'Out Where the West Begins': The Denver Song That Became a Western Classic," *American Music Research Center Journal* 22 (Jan. 2013): 37.

26. Arthur Chapman, *"Out Where the West Begins" and Other Western Verses* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 1.

27. Dennis Wepman, "Chapman, Arthur," *American National Biography Online,* Feb. 2000, www.anb.org/articles/16/16-03556.html.

for showing up on the most unexpected of tourist knickknacks, "burnished on arrowheads, on leather pillow covers, on almost every possible memento."[28] Although the poem's ubiquity throughout the West was most prevalent during its first decade in circulation, it endures into the twenty-first century as a kind of literary talisman of the cowboy code. As environmental historian Mark Fiege attested in 1999, "I have found it encased in a picture frame hanging in a lonely tavern; printed on a placemat in a restaurant; and embossed in copper plate and nailed to the wall of a shabby motel room. Somewhere, in Twin Falls or Rock Springs, I don't recall where, I purchased a copy of it printed on a postcard."[29]

Close examination of the poem helps to explain its lasting success, for Chapman was a master reductivist, capable of condensing all the complexities of the symbolic regional landscape into a pair of digestible binaries. Though he never explicitly assailed the East as an inferior construct, the poet's assertion that in the West there is "more of singing and less of sighing . . . more of giving and less of buying" sounded an encouraging dog whistle to westerners indicating that theirs was the more pleasant and authentic way of life. Moreover, while his consistent use of the spatial qualifier "out" recognized the primacy of the East, it also positioned the West as something special and distinct. The old eastern idea of the West as a remote and far-flung place became a new wellspring of western cultural sovereignty. From here, Chapman managed to pivot between ideals, focusing alternately in places on the quality of the unspoiled western environment ("Out where the skies are a trifle bluer . . . out where a fresher breeze is blowing"), its ostensibly virginal essence ("Out where the world is in the making"), and the strong masculine bonds of its people (the aforementioned "handclasp" and the sentiment that a western man "makes friends without half trying").[30] Chapman's poem speaks the West back to itself, echoing its citizens' own inward and outward-facing attitudes in a fashion that rejects nuance and confirms pride, thus positioning it as a western com-

28. *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 Dec. 1935, p. 22A.

29. Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 203.

30. Chapman, *Out Where the West Begins*, p. 1.

panion piece to Daniel Decatur Emmett's southern anthem "I Wish I Was in Dixie."[31]

While Chapman was neither willing to smear the East directly nor recognize the West's own flaws, his parodists were more than happy to do that work for him. One anonymously authored spoof, which appeared in print only two months before Chapman's death in 1935, reinterpreted the poem's structure and imagery to take shots at both sides:

Out where the boasting's a little stronger,
Out where the hair grows a little longer,
Where the talk is loud and runs to boast,
And to press your pants is a crime almost,
Where the laugh is loud and the manners rude;
And to shave your neck marks a man a dude—
That's where the West begins.

But—where does the East begin?
Where the streams are shallower and the hills are flat,
And a man is judged by his coat and his hat;
Where the women boss, and the menfolk think,
That toast is food and tea is a drink;
Where the men use powder and the wrist watch ticks,
And everyone else but themselves are hicks;
That's where the East begins.[32]

As far as the popular imagination is concerned, the distinction between East and West becomes obvious—the East is hurried, effeminate, consumerist, and aristocratic, whereas the West is eternal, manly, bountiful, and rugged, perhaps to the point of arrogance. Their sole moment of intersection comes in their exclusionary distrust of one another, for the East views westerners (and, by extension, all outsiders) as "hicks," and the West views easterners as "dudes."

One notes, however, that these pejoratives do not inhabit a sphere of one-to-one equilibrium. Urban easterners can easily survey the nation's hinterlands and regard their inhabitants as "hicks" without visiting the West. Yet, the West's vision of those who so much as "shave their neck"

31. Sampsel and Puscher, "'Out Where the West Begins,'" p. 36.
32. *Iowa Park Herald*, reprinted in *Hearne* (Tex.) *Democrat*, 11 Oct. 1935.

as "dudes" or "city slickers"—uninitiated interlopers—expresses the same anxiety over outsiders as did Campbell's counter-invasion terminology to describe the mission of the Northwest Development League. Indeed, one of the most immediate side effects of the "closing" frontier was, in fact, to *open* the West to the possibilities of eastern tourism. This development is embodied by the word "dude," a reference to the tourist ranches where easterners were "repaired from the injuries of urban, industrial civilization with an interlude of simple, rural western life" and where the serious colonial dramas of the Lakotas, Apaches, cowboys, and ranchers were diminished to mascots for casual entertainment.[33] In many ways, the fear of the "dude" encapsulates the knowledge that each eastern visitor sits "in judgment on the West when he comes," owning all the power to impose upon and define the West as region.[34]

If easterners mocked or belittled westerners as hicks, it is perhaps only because they saw in their fashionable obliviousness a reflection of themselves as they had existed a century before. If westerners lambasted easterners as dandies and snobs, it is perhaps only because they desired to protect their cultural autonomy. The place of most immediate physical contact between the two, the amorphous space where West and East most plainly intermingle, becomes a natural battleground. It is a space contested by two factions aiming to preserve their own sectional customs and evoke judgments against the other, thereby better defining what their region is—in contrast with what their region *is not*. That this tension should bubble into existence at the turn of the twentieth century, at a time when the United States was first beginning to exhibit its strength on a global scale, is no coincidence. How could the country at large hope to explain itself to the world if its citizens had not yet explained themselves to each other?

The West and East are siblings, and everywhere the family resemblance shines through. One sees this truth in the irony of the "wild" West, in which developing land-grant universities and teaching col-

33. Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West," in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, ed. David M. Wrobel and Patrick J. Long (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), p. 46.

34. Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Knopf, 1957), p. xxii.

leges coexisted with vigilantism, as well as in the transmission of Victorian building practices, which so often produced "'second-generation copies' of European forms."[35] That the West is somehow distinct from the East cannot be denied, but it seems neither can it be said that the schism between them is anything like a clean break. Culturally, historically, demographically, in all possible ways, the heritages of East and West bleed into one another, inviting residents of both regions to reconsider just what it means for the East to "end" and the West to "begin."

Such is the anomaly that undercut the unity of the governors, that gave Chapman the confidence to position West above East, and led still others to throw out difference entirely and accept only the prospect of a singular, unified American self. Just what does it mean to be of the West or of the East, and how can the residents of these spaces dictate the terms of their own identities in the face of complex national power dynamics? It is a question as vital now as it was on 2 November 1889, when the "in-between" space of Dakota Territory first found itself segmented in two and dashed into statehood, neither East nor West, neither mountains nor plains, an uncertain bridge between two bodies.

"I came upon it with amazement. Here is where the map should fold. Here is the boundary between east and west." So wrote Steinbeck as he recalled gazing upon the banks of the Missouri River in Bismarck, North Dakota. His 1960 visit to the state—the first, last, and only of his life—was a brief pit stop on the ten-thousand-mile tour of the country that became the basis for his best-selling book *Travels with Charley* (1962). However, unlike the many tourists who simply passed through on their way to Yellowstone or to California, Steinbeck did not approach his time in the unassuming Peace Garden State with dispassion. Rather, he possessed a powerful reverence for America's least-visited state and for the cowtown colossus of Fargo in particular. "Curious," he wrote, "how a place unvisited can take such hold on the mind, so that the very name sets up a ringing. To me such a place was Fargo, North Dakota." That Steinbeck would carve a romantic vision for so unas-

35. Jay Price, "Making the West Look Western: The Rise of the Old West Revival Architectural Style," in *Preserving Western History*, ed. Andrew Gulliford (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), p. 311.

suming a city might strike many as odd, but he was quick to explain. "If you will take a map of the United States and fold it in the middle, eastern edge against western, and crease it sharply, right in the crease will be Fargo. . . . That may not be a very scientific method for finding the east-west middle of the country, but it will do."[36]

North Dakota and South Dakota are a case study in East/West division, for just as they typify the variable, half-flat and half-scarred terrain of the hundredth meridian, they also each enjoy their own small-scale replication of the border debate. They are two states divided by a survey line a few miles south of the forty-sixth parallel, snipped apart at birth like conjoined twins, not in accordance with natural landmarks or cultural points of reference but by the vagaries of late-nineteenth-century politics. They are doppelgängers to each other, near-impeccable in their symmetry.

At the ninety-seventh meridian, where the Red River curls along their eastern border with Minnesota, the Dakotas are of a midwestern flavor. The grass is tall and verdant, and trees are plentiful. Corn is the primary agricultural crop. Sioux Falls and Fargo become far western extensions of the heartland ideal. At the 103rd meridian, the Dakotas are clearly western. The grass is short and rainfall is scarce. Livestock ranching supersedes farming, as the raising of crops without irrigation becomes more and more difficult with each mile further west. The monumental views of the Badlands, Black Hills, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park herald the arrival of a new landscape and identity, as wholly American as that which precedes it, but in an entirely different way. As regional historian James D. McLaird neatly phrases it, in "crossing South Dakota from east to west, Americans leave the region of bib overalls and enter the land of cowboy boots."[37]

Between the two is the place of entanglement Steinbeck imagined, though it falls some two hundred miles west of Fargo. It is at the hundredth meridian, where the Missouri juts its way south through the geographic midsection of both states and flows past their capitals, Bis-

36. John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), pp. 135, 154.

37. McLaird, "From Bib Overalls to Cowboy Boots: East River/West River Differences in South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 19 (Winter 1989): 491.

This North Dakota farm exemplifies the midwestern flavor of the state's eastern section.

marck and Pierre. Both political centers are on the river's east bank, and each has a smaller sister city (Mandan, North Dakota, and Fort Pierre, South Dakota) on the opposite bank. This region, Steinbeck decided, is the map's true center crease. "On the Bismarck side it is eastern landscape, eastern grass, with the look and smell of eastern America. Across the Missouri on the Mandan side, it is pure west, with brown grass and water scorings and small outcrops." The two banks of the river, he wrote, "might as well be a thousand miles apart."[38]

South Dakotans long ago created language to describe this divide, and the names they use to call the two halves of their state are as binding as they are tidy. To the east of the Missouri is East River, with most of the state's larger cities and universities, the famous Corn Palace at Mitchell, and irrigated farms. Opposite is West River, with its large Indian reservations, Wild West tourism, and grand national monuments.

38. Steinbeck, *Travels With Charley*, p. 153.

East River and West River are the primary regions of South Dakota, and their names are ingrained in popular discourse to the point of slurred, comfortable elocution ("Eas-*triver*" and "Wes-*triver*," as some locals pronounce them). The regional contrasts are immediate, like the numerous urban/rural divides that occur elsewhere in the United States, and South Dakotans associate them at times with political disagreements. Indeed, the stereotypes that accumulate around East River and West River lifestyles bear astonishing resemblance to the "Blue America/Red America" binary of contemporary electoral politics and the "dude/hick" binary espoused by Chapman's parodist.

"Residents of East River South Dakota are Scandinavian Americans," noted Democratic consultant Pat Halley, who canvassed the state for Michael Dukakis's failed 1988 presidential campaign. "They drink their coffee black (and plenty of it), root for the Minnesota Twins and Vikings and wear seed caps . . . [they regard] residents of the western

The rugged terrain of the South Dakota Badlands forms an iconic western landscape.

portion of the state as 'less sophisticated.'" West Riverites, for their part, "are western Europeans. They drink their coffee with cream and sugar, root for the Denver Broncos and wear cowboy hats."[39] As Donna Haefs, a Deadwood resident interviewed by the *New York Times* in 1988, commented, "We think the East River people are snobs and they think we're rednecks."[40]

Yet, we must not mistake small distinctions for large disagreements. In terms of national politics, both South Dakota and North Dakota are Republican strongholds. No Democratic presidential candidate has received electoral votes from either state since Lyndon B. Johnson ran in 1964. Even in the larger towns in the eastern part of both states, where the urban/rural voting patterns established elsewhere in the country might predict significant Democratic support, the political climate fosters a reluctant centrism rather than outright liberalism. It should be said, however, that both Dakotas have elected Democrats to Congress from time to time, including notable senators George S. McGovern, Thomas A. Daschle, and G. Kent Conrad.

During the 2008 presidential contest between eventual Democratic victor Barack H. Obama and Republican nominee John S. McCain, Minnehaha County, South Dakota, which includes the city of Sioux Falls, granted only 49.5 percent of its total vote to Obama. He carried the county by a meager 590 votes out of approximately eighty thousand cast. These results seemed to buck national trends that helped push Obama to surprising triumphs in other Republican-leaning states such as Indiana and North Carolina. Minnehaha County swung Republican in 2012, the year of Obama's reelection, as Mitt Romney took 52.7 percent of the vote. This situation repeated itself in Aberdeen, Bismarck, and Grand Forks. Not even the college town of Fargo on the Minnesota border could produce a majority vote for Obama in 2012. In that year, most counties carried by the Democrats in the Dakotas contained major Indian reservations.[41]

Perhaps East Riverites are not necessarily more liberal than West Ri-

39. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 29 Jan. 1989. Also quoted in McLaird, "Bib Overalls to Cowboy Boots," pp. 456–57.

40. *New York Times*, 9 Oct. 1988, p. 28.

41. "Presidential Map—Election Results 2008," *New York Times Online*, elections.ny

verites, but rather, the two camps express differing modes of conservative thought—an eastern populism descended from the "great influx of Scandinavian and German immigrants after the turn of the [twentieth] century," and a western libertarianism associated with ranchers "who balked at government intervention . . . and shared a belief in rugged individualism."[42] West River voters have often opposed what they see as restrictive laws supported by the East—an indication of their desire for government to "leave them alone."[43] James G. Abourezk, a Democrat despite his West River upbringing, served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the 1970s. His memoirs noted that "where there is a greater concentration of cattle and sheep ranches," one invariably finds "all sorts of right-wing political movements, from the Posse Comitatus to the John Birch Society." In an especially colorful example, Abourezk recalled a "town meeting" he once held in "the isolated sheep-ranching country of the West River," during which he "listened in amazement as a rancher rose to his feet to ask when we were going to get enough gumption to overthrow the federal government."[44]

While elections in the Dakotas are often decided with little or no contest to Republican dominance, the East/West fissure can manifest itself in unusually close races. McLaird cites the 1982 contest between Daschle and Republican Clint R. Roberts for the at-large South Dakota seat in the House, which resonated statewide because both were sitting congressmen whose districts had been merged after the state lost a representative as a result of reapportionment after the 1980 census. Because the old congressional district lines corresponded roughly with the James River, Daschle had previously represented much of East River, while Roberts had represented the whole of West River. Daschle won with a geographic distribution of votes that ran like an ascending gradient from west to east, from a low of 44 percent in Harding County in the state's northwest corner to 64 percent in Union County in the

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times.com/2008/results/president/map.html; "Presidential Map—Election Results 2012," ibid., elections.nytimes.com/2012/results/president.

42. *New York Times*, 9 Oct. 1988, p. 28.

43. *Rapid City Journal*, 7 Nov. 2006.

44. James G. Abourezk, *Advise and Dissent: Memoirs of South Dakota and the U.S. Senate* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1989), p. 11.

southeast. The Indian reservations were an exception to the pattern, as Daschle won 87 percent of the vote in Shannon County (renamed Oglala Lakota County in 2015). A more recent example is the 2012 victory of Democrat Mary K. ("Heidi") Heitkamp over Republican Rick A. Berg for a North Dakota seat in the Senate, which was decided by less than 1 percent of the statewide vote. Heitkamp won the Red River Valley and all of the state's nineteen easternmost counties but only five of thirty-four western counties.[45]

Statewide votes in South Dakota on contentious issues often revolve around East River and West River voting blocs, leaving less-populated West River feeling underrepresented and taken for a ride. Several referenda held between the early 1980s and mid-1990s on legalizing gambling resulted in heavy western and tepid eastern support. The first of these ballot questions, a 1982 proposal that would have approved statewide gaming, failed with only 40.2 percent of the vote. Gambling supporters tried again in 1988, advocating a measure that permitted table games with a five-dollar bet limit in the West River tourist town of Deadwood. Though this proposal passed by a comfortable margin, perhaps due to its localized impact, later propositions to allow video poker and to increase bet limits faced far more strenuous electoral hurdles. The 1988 initiative won nearly 70 percent of the vote in Minnehaha County, but a 1993 proposition that would have allowed hundred-dollar bet limits and the construction of two large-scale casinos in Deadwood attracted less than 40 percent support in the same jurisdiction.[46] The 1993 result checked the expansion of "what had become a $1 billion annual industry" and left many West Riverites feeling "stunned and betrayed." Some East River voters, meanwhile, saw the outcome as a win for moral decency.[47]

The 1993 gambling proposition carried every South Dakota county west of the Missouri and failed in almost every county to the east. Such a clean-cut result is not typical of elections in the state, but neither is

45. McLaird, "From Bib Overalls to Cowboy Boots," p. 476; "2012 North Dakota Senate Results," *Politico*, www.politico.com/2012-election/results/senate/north-dakota.

46. Erin Hogan Fouberg, "South Dakota Gaming: A Regional Analysis," *Great Plains Research* 6 (Fall 1996): 182, 202; *Washington Post*, 25 Sept. 1993, p. A9.

47. *Washington Post*, 25 Sept. 1993, p. A9.

The historic town of Deadwood introduced legalized gambling to revitalize its economy after the collapse of the Black Hills gold-mining industry.

it unprecedented. Longtime residents must surely have recalled similar conflicts from the 1980s, when East River voters first took action against prostitution in Deadwood and later against Edgemont's efforts to stimulate its economy through the establishment of a nuclear-waste site.[48] "Obviously, we do dance to the east river tune," stated Deadwood Mayor Bruce Oberlander. "There is a resentment, and it's not just me."[49] Oberlander's sentiments in 1993 were similar to those expressed by mine worker Karl Lalonde five years earlier. "They see the Black Hills as their playground," said Lalonde of outsiders who would impose environmental legislation on West River without investing in its landscape, economy, and way of life. "We see it as a matter of economic survival." Haefs had a similar viewpoint in 1988. "Brothels, waste sites, you name it. Those East River people vote against everything."[50]

48. Ibid.; *New York Times*, 9 Oct. 1988, p. 28.
49. *Washington Post*, 25 Sept. 1993, p. A9.
50. *New York Times*, 9 Oct. 1988, p. 28.

The list of East/West dustups is extensive, long lived, and well known among Dakotans. Jack Schaefer, novelist of the West and a kind of latter-day Zane Grey, used gun culture as his point of entry into this long-simmering feud. "East-river," he wrote in 1960, "is shotgun country; west-river is rifle country. No generalizations are absolute these days, but the cleavage cut by the Big Muddy is still distinct. A few old-timers claim they can tell which side they are on just by sniffing the air."[51]

Fifty years later, self-deprecating West River partisan Todd Williams related "an old joke" about "a sign along Interstate 90 west of Murdo that reads as follows: 'Entering Mountain Standard Time Zone and western South Dakota: Don't forget to set your clock back—20 years.'"[52] Williams then compared East River ways against West River norms, ascribing a humorous "advantage" to one region or the other on each point. That he titled his piece "Go West!" is telling, for, in so doing, Williams not only toyed with Horace Greeley's legendary imperative to "Go West, young man," but also referenced the popular image of frenzied sports fans pulling for their teams:

> People in West Dakota think of Sioux Falls as a big city. So do people in Sioux Falls. ADVANTAGE WEST DAKOTA.
>
> If you were to jump in your car and begin driving west from your home in East Dakota, you'd eventually end up in West Dakota. If you were to jump in your car and begin driving west from your home in West Dakota, you'd end up in Wyoming. ADVANTAGE EAST DAKOTA.
>
> The State Fair is held in East Dakota, not in West Dakota. ADVANTAGE EAST DAKOTA.
>
> It's held in Huron. ADVANTAGE WEST DAKOTA.[53]

At times, there have been movements within the Dakotas to remake the boundaries of the two states. In 1939, some in the Black Hills wished to join a new state to be called "Absaroka" by merging with

51. Jack Schaefer, "Dakota," in *American Panorama: West of the Mississippi* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 309.

52. Todd Williams, "Go West! West River vs. East River," *Rapid City Journal* online, 5 Mar. 2010, rapidcityjournal.com/news/opinion/columnists/local/williams-go-west-west-river-vs-east-river/article_fa9edf0a-2873-11df-bee0-001cc4c03286.html.

53. Ibid.

northern Wyoming and southeastern Montana. The would-be state, joined together by a shared "frontier spirit" and opposition to federal New Deal politics, found its capital in Sheridan, Wyoming, and its governor in A. R. Swickard, the town's eccentric street commissioner. Excitement for Absaroka sufficed for its aspiring citizens to create a flag, issue license plates, and even name a "Miss Absaroka 1939," whose photographs were distributed alongside other "official" materials.[54] In classic western fashion, locals were known to appeal "to the 'governor of Absaroka' for redress when not pleased by the action of the Wyoming government" or, presumably, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[55]

There have been other attempts to separate west from east. In 1876, Black Hills miners petitioned national authorities for a new jurisdiction to be carved out of Dakota Territory. Although the petitioners were able to get a bill to create a separate territory for the Black Hills introduced in Congress, the proposal never gained serious traction. The next year, a convention met at Deadwood to lobby for a territory to be named after the late President Abraham Lincoln, and Nebraska Senator Alvin G. Saunders introduced a bill to divide Dakota Territory at the hundredth meridian.[56] The idea appears to have received significant approval in the Black Hills, with the *Dakota Herald*, a Yankton newspaper, reporting that "the people of the Hills are determined upon a territorial organization, and to that end are making strenuous exertions."[57] Politicians in the East were apparently more skeptical, however, and the Saunders bill died a quiet death. Though not predominantly motivated by regionalism, Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means's 2007 call for an independent Lakota state continues this strain of secessionist populism.[58]

54. *New York Times*, 24 July 2008, p. A1.

55. Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to its History, Highways, and People* (1941; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 212.

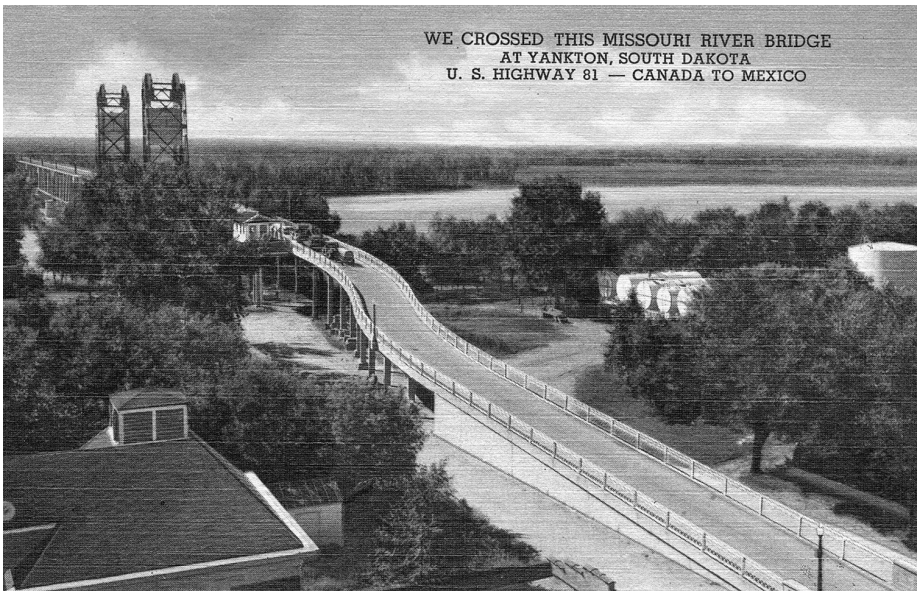
56. Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 4th ed., rev. John E. Miller (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), p. 196; McLaird, "From Bib Overalls to Cowboy Boots," pp. 473–74; Howard R. Lamar, *Dakota Territory, 1861–1889: A Study of Frontier Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 165.

57. *Dakota Herald*, 6 Oct. 1877.

58. McLaird, "From Bib Overalls to Cowboy Boots," p. 473; Lamar, *Dakota Territory*, p. 165; *Rapid City Journal,* 19 Dec. 2007.

It bears stating that this kind of regional dichotomy is not unique to the Dakotas. Several other states recognize significant directional divisions—for example, northern California against southern California, New York City and environs against "upstate," and the Florida Panhandle against Miami. Calls for secession are far from unique, as the Alaskan Independence Party, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and even some Texans' reputed desire for an autonomous Lone Star State prove. Nor are the Dakotas the only place in which the images and environments of the eastern and western United States rub up against one another. The same is true for the other four states along the hundredth meridian from the Canadian border to Mexico. Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas all straddle the same East/West line, but none has political boundaries reflective of this fact, which results in a jumble of conflicting iconographies. Although Texas may mythologize sagebrush and chaparral, its largest city (Houston) is a Gulf Coast seaport.

What makes the Dakotas different is that they are, as *Strange Maps* author Frank Jacobs tells us, "predestined to duality." At a surface level,



U.S. Route 81, which crosses the Missouri at Yankton, runs from North Dakota to Texas. All six states along its path straddle the hundredth meridian.

the points of reference for this phenomenon are obvious, as the states' "almost interchangeable names, shapes, and sizes" foster a binding sense of twoness. The Dakotas are sisters, birthed into statehood as joint heirs to the mineral and agricultural wealth of the former Dakota Territory. They are seldom mentioned by outsiders apart from one another, and it is perhaps impossible to think of South Dakota without thinking also of North Dakota, and vice versa. To tell the story of one Dakota alone is to discount half of the complete narrative. Theirs is a shared history.[59]

Jacobs takes us still further, finding images of duality everywhere in the Dakota landscape. He sees it in the gap between two of the states' most visible motifs, the "emptying . . . prairie" and the recent North Dakota oil rush, "Dakota fading and Dakota booming: two competing images of one and the same place." He sees it, too, in the rival monuments of the Black Hills. Mount Rushmore symbolizes the apotheosis of white American leadership, while nearby Crazy Horse represents a bold, yet incomplete shrine to the unfulfilled promises of that same leadership. "Dakota triumphant and Dakota defiant," he writes. "Two rivaling visions, both hewn out of living rock."[60]

It is appropriate at this point to mention a community that constitutes 8.5 percent of the population in South Dakota and 5.4 percent in North Dakota but stands at the margins of society in both states.[61] "Indian Dakota" consists of groups such as the several divisions of the Great Sioux Nation, the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara), the Ojibwes, Crees, and more. Indian Dakota lives at a sometimes oppositional remove from Anglo Dakota, having been displaced by the European conquest of North America. Its members "tend to believe that they got along just fine without either East River . . . or West River . . . at their borders and could easily do so again."[62] Its re-

59. Frank Jacobs, "Had the Cookie Crumbled Differently: East and West Dakota," *Strange Maps*, 22 May 2013, bigthink.com/strange-maps/609-had-the-cookie-crumbled-differently-east-and-west-dakota.

60. Ibid.

61. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "2010 Census Interactive Population Search," www.census.gov/2010census/.

62. Linda Hasselstrom, *Roadside History of South Dakota* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press, 1994), p. 5.

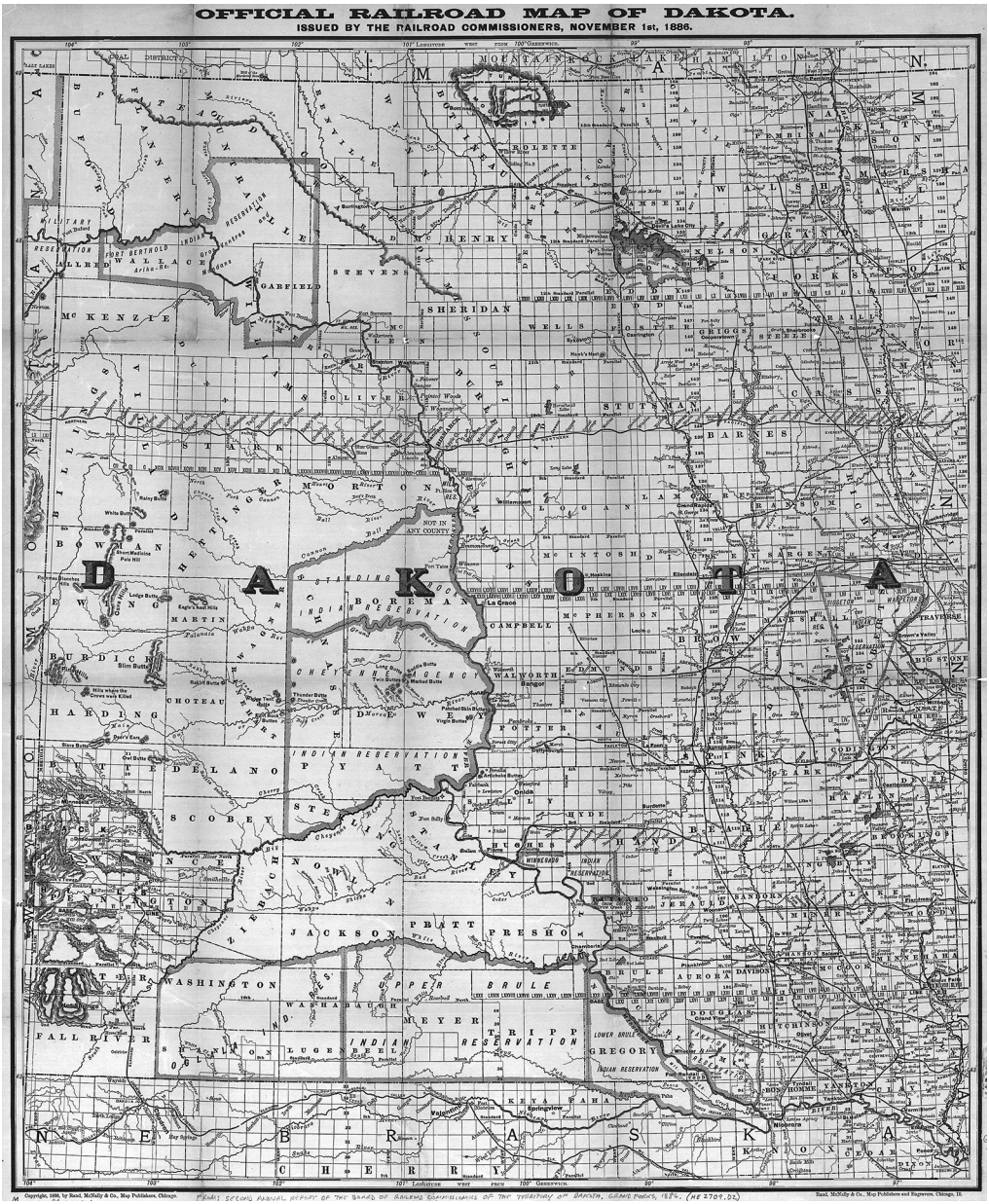
cent history includes strife, conflict, and subjugation, most notably on the massive Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the Wounded Knee Massacre occurred in 1890 and where an American Indian Movement protest erupted into the pivotal Wounded Knee Incident of 1973. Personal, regional, and communal identities in Indian Dakota are more complex than in Anglo Dakota, due in part to tribal differences, historic land use, and specific reservation experiences. While a detailed examination of the perspectives of Indian Dakota is beyond the scope of this essay, the import of those perspectives is readily conceded.

A question remains. Even if we accept Jacobs's idea of Dakota dualism as innate and agree that the East River/West River subcultures that this dualism has fostered necessitated some form of a split, why then a North–South division? If we accept that dyads are written into the DNA of Dakota, the question then becomes—why *this* dyad? Why North Dakota and South Dakota when the alternative of East and West appears so natural?

The answer lies first in the structure of transportation and communications in the late nineteenth century. Because Dakota Territory was the product of westward expansion, it was quite naturally organized in accordance with east-west needs. As a result, the settlers of the Red River Valley in northern Dakota and the James River Valley in southern Dakota found themselves at a surprising remove from one another in commerce and kinship. "The lines of communication," as Howard R. Lamar put it, "then as now, ran east and west in Dakota, and the Missouri River represented the only major north-south line of communication. Throughout the Territory's history, passengers, mail, and telegraph messages from the greater part of northern Dakota had to go east to St. Paul and then southwest to Sioux Falls and Yankton." As a result, Pembina and the Red River Valley developed far stronger economic ties with Winnipeg and Saint Paul than with the southeastern portion of the territory.[63]

Two key events in the parallel developments of north and south came in the 1870s. First, the construction of the transcontinental North-

63. Lamar, *Dakota Territory*, pp. 190–91.



The shortage of railway links between the northern and southern portions of Dakota Territory is apparent on this 1886 railroad map.

ern Pacific Railway between 1870 and 1883 strengthened the link between northern Dakota and the East and furnished the area with a tremendous supply of capital, homesteaders, and European migrants. A series of end-of-track towns soon sprouted up along the path of the railway, including Fargo, Bismarck, and Medora, all of which shipped their wealth of wheat and cattle back to the Twin Cities and Chicago. As New York newsman and lawmaker Lemuel Ely Quigg wrote, "Dakota has been made by the railroads."[64]

Second, the Black Hills gold rush of 1874–1877 catapulted southwestern Dakota into the national limelight and fostered the birth of Rapid City and Deadwood. Black Hills mining towns helped push the population of Dakota Territory past the sixty thousand required to apply for statehood but simultaneously strained relations between old elites at the territorial capital of Yankton and the new bonanza-seekers in the north and southwest. "By 1880," according to historian Norman K. Risjord, "there were three centers of population . . . and each had a profound distrust of the inhabitants of the other two."[65] These tensions, paired with the overlapping distrusts Dakotans had for both the federal government and the territorial system, would underpin the coming decade-long struggle for statehood—a battle so harsh as to guarantee the partition of Dakota Territory into two new states.

President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Nehemiah G. Ordway as governor of Dakota Territory in May 1880. A former New Hampshire state senator, Ordway saw grand opportunities for personal advancement in a still-developing Dakota. From the first day of his tenure in Yankton, the governor seems to have worked only toward corruption and self-interest; he "bribed legislators, threatened vetoes of legislators' bills if they resisted his plans, compelled settlers seeking county seats to give him land, [and] installed his son as territorial auditor in order to control finances."[66] Unsurprisingly, Ordway became an intensely

64. Lemuel Ely Quigg, "New Empires in the Northwest: The Dakotas, Montana and Washington," *Library of Tribune Extras* 1 (Aug. 1889): 11.

65. Norman K. Risjord, *Dakota: The Story of the Northern Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), p. 149.

66. Jon K. Lauck, *Prairie Republic: The Political Culture of Dakota Territory, 1879–1889* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), p. 94.

hated figure in Dakota politics, and history has not improved his reputation. Lamar went so far as to name him "one of the most corrupt officials ever to appear in Dakota" and "an excellent example of the cynical post-Civil War politician who brought the political morality of the country to such a low level."[67]

Ordway's most substantial achievement was to relocate the capital from Yankton to Bismarck. Initially, the governor may have intended to place his new capital either along the Elm River in Brown County—in the recently platted and conveniently named town of Ordway—or at Pierre, where his son George held strong financial interests in land and a position with the Chicago & North Western Railway. Nevertheless, he saw Bismarck as a fine fallback option. Any of the three sites would benefit his wealthy allies in the railroad industry and punish his political enemies in Yankton. Statehood, Ordway and his railroading friends had decided, would be bad for business. They feared the enhanced oversight that a proper state government might represent.[68]

In February 1883, despite significant opposition from southeastern representatives, Ordway and his allies within the territorial assembly were able to establish a commission charged with determining the new capital's location. By law, the commission had to meet in Yankton within thirty days, and so Yanktonians made plans to prevent the meeting from ever happening. The three local men appointed to the commission were "carefully watched; any suspicious gathering was reported," and the men were "openly threatened with violence."[69] The "Yankton Oligarchy," as the political elites of the area were called, began to feel safe. Then "at 6:00 a.m. one morning, an inconspicuous train rolled very slowly into the railroad yards of Yankton and continued through the town westward at a leisurely speed."[70] The capital commission members were aboard, their meeting conducted lawfully within town limits.

The truth is that any of the options the commission considered—

67. Lamar, *Dakota Territory*, p. 241.

68. George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, and George Martin Smith, *South Dakota: Its History and Its People*, 5 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), 2:1174–75; Lamar, *Dakota Territory*, p. 203; Lauck, *Prairie Republic*, p. 96.

69. Lamar, *Dakota Territory*, p. 204.

70. Ibid., p. 205.

Aberdeen, Redfield, Pierre, Steele, and other municipalities of the central plains—would have offended some political interest or another. The selection of Bismarck, so far north and closely tied with the Northern Pacific, did nothing to help the already tenuous relationship between north and south. The battle lines were now clearly drawn as the territory inched ever closer to statehood. Governor Ordway had become a living north/south lightning rod; he was lionized in Bismarck and threatened with death in Yankton. By exacerbating tensions in the already fraught marriage between north and south, Ordway proved himself perhaps the single greatest catalyst in promoting the territory's eventual partition into North Dakota and South Dakota. It was a parting of the ways that Republicans in Washington were happy to indulge, given the additional pair of likely Republican senators a two-state solution would provide. However, Democratic control of the House of Representatives in the mid–1880s delayed its implementation.[71]

Statehood came for the Dakotas on 2 November 1889. The territorial capital struggle ensured that the process would begin amid a climate of "fighting and name-calling."[72] Among the contentious issues was an argument that "northern Dakota was more entitled to" the name "Dakota" at statehood "because of its production of 'Dakota Number One Hard Durum Wheat,' famous the world over."[73] The animosity eventually became so great that popular mythology claims President Benjamin Harrison ordered Secretary of State James G. Blaine to shuffle the proclamations of admission before presenting them for signature to ensure that no one knew which was admitted first.[74] The schism of north and south, the product of the particular conditions of a particular age, had overwhelmed the natural exigencies of east and west. A fence had been erected, though not, it could be said, in the place where it should have been.

"New Tour Corrects History," advertised the web site for Shebby Lee Tours, a professional sightseeing outfit based in Rapid City and

71. Helen Graham Rezatto, *The Making of the Two Dakotas* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Media Publishing, 1989), pp. 167–172; Lauck, *Prairie Republic*, pp. 94–96.

72. Rezatto, *Making of the Two Dakotas*, p. 172.

73. Ibid., p. 178.

74. *Bismarck Tribune*, 27 Mar. 2011.

"specializing in the historic and cultural heritage of the Great American West." The page for the 2010 "West Dakota" tour asserted that the decision to split the old territory by latitude rather than longitude was a "mistake," and that dividing them instead "the way God had made them by the Missouri River (east and west) made more sense." The company's West Dakota package was an eight-day sweep from Rapid City to Fort Mandan, passing through such iconic sites as Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park, the Pitchfork Steak Fondue restaurant in Medora, and the Akta Lakota Museum in Chamberlain. The tour reportedly provided "perspective into the common geographic, economic and psychological characteristics of western North and South Dakota." A separate East Dakota package emphasized Indian and Scandinavian identities, beginning with the replica Viking longship at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead, Minnesota, before visiting the Fargo Sons of Norway lodge, the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, and Scherr-Howe Arena in Mobridge, home of Yanktonai artist Oscar Howe's well-known murals.[75]

However well-intentioned and cleverly marketed these tourism opportunities may have been, it is, of course, too late for these states that never were. For better or worse, the borders of North Dakota and South Dakota have been set for over 125 years. There is neither a state of East Dakota nor a state of West Dakota. So it is that the residents of North Dakota and South Dakota, pulled in equal measure by the forces of cultural unity and statehood, must set aside their east/west divisions to embrace their established north/south identities.

Williams's light-hearted contest between West Dakota and East Dakota attracted a number of comments to the *Rapid City Journal* web site in 2010. Of those that emphasized the ties that bind East River and West River South Dakota, two stand out. One reader using the moniker "dontBfooled" wrote:

> I am slightly biased growing up with the Black Hills, but went to school in Vermillion. It is a good natured kidding, not drama—yet the political fairness does come into question. I do think East and West would have

75. Shebby Lee, "East is East and West is West," *Shebby Lee Tours*, 31 Mar. 2010, www.shebbyleetours.com/news/new-tour/.

> been the logical split. There are those who present themselves as superior in any community, but if they feel so above the rest—move away. Folks with parochial views exist in every culture (yes, I too have traveled and compared European, Asian, and U.S. regional differences), but that makes none of us superior, just different.[76]

Another anonymous commenter, writing under the nickname "Dakotan1" echoed those sentiments, stating:

> I know this is meant to be tongue-in-cheek but I live on the bank of the East River, so pretty much in the middle. And I've never really heard any East River people remark on West Riverians. I'm sure it's happened. But I've had so many West Riverians go on and on about the East River side. And while I'm sure there are East Riverians who do the same, I just haven't heard it. But it bothers me because this is a great state, the people in this state are its greatest resource, on both sides. For every jerk on one side, there is one on the other. And the hard-working, level-headed individuals can be found on both sides too. I wish we could drop this East/West drama and pull together as South Dakotans.[77]

Although they may not have known it, these commenters were voicing the thoughts of a great many Dakotans. The Dakota Centennial Arts Congress, convened in September 1989 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of statehood (and the division of Dakota Territory), drafted a declaration of shared cultural identity later signed by the governors of both states. The document proclaimed of South Dakotans and North Dakotans alike: "We are a people whose loyalty belongs to our neighbors. Climate and geographic distance often hinder our joining together, yet our sparse population intensifies our belief in each other and in the value of the individual. Everyone and everything is closely related."[78] Dakotans know as well as anyone what it means to live in the middle, at the confused nexus of East and West, at the

76. dontBfooled, 6 Mar. 2010 (7:35 a.m.), comment on Williams, "Go West!". Spelling and capitalization have been regularized for clarity.

77. dakotan1, 5 Mar. 2010 (8:52 p.m.), comment on Williams, "Go West!". Spelling and capitalization have been regularized for clarity.

78. Dakota Centennial Arts Congress, "A Declaration of Dakota Cultural Identity," 22–24 Sept. 1989, http://blog.artsusa.org/2014/02/19/if-you-live-in-a-place-you-will-find-art-there.

center of a country, and the center of a continent. "There are people in both states who emphasize differences," novelist Jack Schaefer wrote. "People who become huffy if simply called Dakotans and insist upon the North-South distinction. But differences fade in the face of physical fact. The old maps were right. Dakota is one piece, one place, one area."[79]

Such is the way South Dakotans and North Dakotans have come to think of themselves, finding difference and affinity, conflict and pride in the cultural networks that act to part neighbor from neighbor, as well as in the political connections that grant them fellowship and distinguish them from outside places that are neither East Dakota, nor West Dakota, nor any Dakota at all. There is a popular belief that the very word "Dakota" means "friends" or "allies." This is something of a misconception, for the "allies" the word signifies are in truth the Dakhóta Oyáte, the united people of the Great Sioux Nation. Even so, it has become a fitting name for a region that is constantly reaching out to touch itself, to reaffirm the bonds of its people across rivers, mountains, prairies, and borders. If Steinbeck was right, if this is the place where the map must find its middle, the Dakotan response is clear—let it fold inward.

79. Schaefer, "Dakota," p. 301.

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On the covers: In this issue, Seth Hinshaw reveals how the 1920 South Dakota primary was a turning point in that year's presidential campaign (front). Birgit Hans examines the role of housekeepers such as Della R. Bratley (lower back) in the federal day schools on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian reservations at the turn of the twentieth century.