Making the Black Hills Bloom: Fayette L. Cook and the Spearfish Normal School, 1885-1909
by John R. Henris

Cook and Spearfish Normal School:

In 1885 Professor Fayette L. Cook arrived in the northern Black Hills to take the position of president and instructor at the Spearfish Normal School, the forerunner of Black Hills State University, in the Dakota Territory.¹ Cook quickly endeavored to make Spearfish Normal School a successful teaching institution, however, he also took an interest in the emerging horticultural landscapes of the Black Hills and northern Great Plains. Observing the lack of domesticated fruits throughout the district, Professor Cook toured the Black Hills by bicycle gleaning information about pioneering horticultural endeavors from local residents of the mining and ranching communities of the region. After five years of such observation, Cook concluded that the only way to improve the horticultural prospects of the Black Hills region was to develop an experiment station on normal school grounds so as to identify the handful of cultivars that might thrive under the environmental constraints of the Black Hills region.

Normal School Experiment Farm – 1893-1896:

Located on 40 acres in Spearfish, Lawrence County, South Dakota, on the west side of Spearfish Creek, the grounds of the Spearfish Normal School were bifurcated by two valley irrigation ditches—the Mann and Walton—and contained some of the best agricultural lands in the Spearfish valley.² Cook probably signed a lease for six acres of normal school land in the autumn of 1893 for a term of six years at $10.00 dollars per acre for $60.00 dollars annually.³ Cook’s first experimentations were with strawberries, planting at least seventy-five different cultivars on normal school grounds. In 1894, his first year of small fruit production, Cook harvested 3,000 quarts from two of the original six acres.⁴ A year later, in the summer of 1895,
Black Hills Bloom cont.

Cook harvested 4,575 quarts of strawberries. As Cook’s yields increased he expanded his experimentations in small fruits to include cultivars of raspberries, currents, blackberries, and gooseberries while setting out an orchard consisting of at least 100 fruit trees producing plums, pears, and apples.

During these early experimental years, Cook employed Spearfish Normal School students and paid them 15-20 cents an hour to work the “orchard and garden” in the “aim to teach them something of practical gardening and horticulture.” One year alone, for example, Professor Cook’s students harvested 198,000 pounds of strawberries on the Spearfish Normal School grounds. By 1896 Cook’s early experimentations on normal school grounds proved invaluable enough that Cook had taken to calling his leased normal school lands the “Queen City Experiment Station and Small Fruit Farm” and, more often, the “Cook and Rush Small Fruit Farm.” By 1896 these six acres of normal school land produced strawberries and raspberries for sale in Deadwood or other northern Black Hills mining towns, and the Spearfish Queen City Mail estimated that the small fruit farm had a capacity—in an optimum growing season—to produce 8,000 quarts of berries.

Cook Jones Ranch Lands – 1897-1902:

In April of 1897, Fayette Cook purchased two lots, totaling 16 acres, of the old Jones Ranch just east of the Spearfish Normal School on the opposite side of Spearfish Creek and north of the city limits to continue his experimentation with small fruits and apple cultivars. These lots were well watered with an irrigating ditch running through their eastern boundaries, however, it is unclear why Cook purchased them when he still had three years remaining on the Spearfish Normal School lease. One possibility was that Cook recognized that the Spearfish Normal School horticultural lands were quickly developing to the point where they were supplying, at cost, much of the jams, jellies, and canned fruit for students living in the college dormitory and he could no longer afford to experiment with cultivars which might not succeed. Another issue was the political optics of Cook marketing surplus fruits from state lands. In 1901, for example, the editor of a Redfield, South Dakota, newspaper accused Cook of personally profiting off normal school student labor and from the cultivation of state normal school lands. The Spearfish Queen City Mail defended Cook, reminding readers that the professor had turned over $2,000 dollars’ worth of improvements upon the termination of his normal school lease in 1899 and that the experiments conducted on normal school grounds could not have been concluded without an additional $3,000 dollar investment.

Normal School Horticulture 1900-1909:

After Cook’s lease ended with the Spearfish Normal School in 1899, the former grounds of the Cook and Rush Small Fruit Farm continued to expand and provide for the annual supply of jellies, jams, and canned fruit for the normal school kitchens under the direction of Professor Cook and other faculty. By 1906, for example, the original six acres had expanded to 16 productive acres of small fruits while the normal school orchard—or orchards—consisted of 100 plum and 150 apple trees. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century Cook boasted, not without cause, that the small fruit grounds and orchard land of the Spearfish Normal School annually produced 2,500 quarts of jams, jellies, and canned fruits for the consumption of normal school students. Most years the

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Case Library is located on the 2nd floor of the E.Y. Berry Library-Learning Center on the campus of Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota.

Hours are Monday-Friday:
8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Closed holidays and weekends.
Appointments aren’t necessary, but we encourage you to contact us in advance of your visit to make sure we are available.

Contact Us!
• (605)642-6361
• Lori.Terrill@BHSU.edu
normal school orchard land and small fruit acreage also produced enough surplus above and beyond what was required for the normal school kitchen that off campus sales to Spearfish residents paid the cost of sugar and labor for picking and canning the produce.³

When Professor Cook “passed quietly into the sleep which knows no awakening . . . . after an illness of ten days duration” in the autumn of 1922, the Spearfish Queen City Mail lamented that Cook “leased a portion of the Normal School property, and cultivated it with berries, apples, and fruits” while his experiments were “observed with intense interest throughout the region.” A teacher and agricultural scientist, Fayette Cook’s horticultural endeavors should be placed among his educational accomplishments in the early development of the Black Hills and northern Great Plains.

John R. Henris is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. He received a bachelor’s degree in history from Black Hills State University and went on to earn a PhD from the University of Akron.

Notes:
2. For Normal School acreage see, Baldwin, Black Hills Illustrated, 77; Simons & Dunham, South Dakota Legislative Manual, 1905, 125-126. For Ditches see, Joseph E. Cook et al. v. Robert H. Evans et al., Map 1920.4.1, Deadwood City Archives, Department of Planning and Preservation, Deadwood, South Dakota.
4. “Viewed by a Visitor,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), July 17, 1895.
5. “Queen City Small Fruit Farm,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), April 22, 1896.
7. Baldwin, Black Hills Illustrated, 75.
8. “Culture of Small Fruit,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), April 8, 1896; “Queen City Small Fruit Farm,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), April 22, 1896; “Untitled,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), 24 June, 1896; “Untitled,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), July 22, 1896; N.E. Hansen, Ed., Fifth Annual Report of the South Dakota State Horticultural Society, 1908 (Pierre, SD: Hipple Printing Company, 1908), 201.
9. “Untitled,” Queen City Mail (Spearfish), June 24, 1896.
10. “Untitled,” Queen City Mail, (Spearfish), April 28, 1897; “Small Fruit Culture,” Queen City Mail, (Spearfish), June 23, 1897.
11. “Untitled,” Queen City Mail, (Spearfish), April 28, 1897; “Small Fruit Culture,” Queen City Mail, (Spearfish), June 23, 1897; Lawrence County Assessor, Lawrence County Tax Assessment Book, 1915, 52-55, Box 150, South Dakota State Archives, Pierre, South Dakota; Cook-Evans et al., Spearfish Valley Irrigation Map, 1920.
Case Library hosted an educational talk about Black Hills railroads on May 16, 2019, where Don McRitchie addressed an audience of approximately 50 people. McRitchie is a practicing civil engineer in Winnipeg, Manitoba, who has been developing a web-based interactive map of virtually every railroad ever in existence in the Black Hills. The audience was given an overview of railroad history in the area, which dates back to the 1880s and the Homestake Mine. Ultimately there were two major players in the region’s railroad industry: the Burlington and the North Western. Both narrow gauge and standard gauge tracks were built, as well as three-railed tracks that could accommodate trains designed for either narrow or standard gauges. Many rail lines in the Hills were intended to move both freight and passengers, but some were dedicated railways used by companies to support either mining or logging operations. Those built for logging were generally intended to be temporary, constructed cheaply with narrow gauge tracks, then removed once the area had been harvested. Warren Lamb Company built a number of these lines in the area between Rapid City and Hill City. Mining companies built tramways for moving materials to and from the mines. The Ruby Basin, with its numerous mines, was home to the most concentrated area of railroad activity.

McRitchie’s map (see link below) not only shows the locations of the lines, but also of most of the stations and station stops. Locating the mines and mills served by the rail lines is a work in progress. Both historic and modern-day photos can be referenced on the map. Much of the map is accurate to within +/- 25 feet. It was put together using freely available tools: Google Earth was used to build the map, Google My Maps was used to publish it, and Google Maps is the viewer. Because not all of the abandoned railroad beds are visible in the present-day images seen on Google Maps, McRitchie overlaid older topographic maps produced by the U.S. Geological Survey and other historic maps as a way of pinpointing locations. Aerial photographs taken in the 1950s were also helpful, especially once corrected for distortions that come from the differing angles and elevations captured. Most of these resources are freely available, with the exception of the corrected aerial photographs, and some of the maps he utilized are housed in Case Library.

Historic photographs bring another dimension to the mapping project, capturing what contemporary people would have seen in the heyday of Black Hills railroading, both in terms of railroad-related structures and natural features. Case Library at Black Hills State University and Devereaux Library at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology provided photographs, as well as the City of Deadwood, the Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, the South Dakota State Historical Society, the Library of Congress Digital Collections, and the Denver Public Library. Case Library’s Watson Parker Ghost Town Notebooks were highlighted as an important source. McRitchie made use of a drone for reviewing rough terrain, such as Elk Creek Canyon, through which the Black Hills and Fort Pierre Railroad ran for about 20 years. This helped him determine where some of the historic photographs were taken.

**Interactive Map:**
[https://tinyurl.com/bharmap](https://tinyurl.com/bharmap)

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Close-Up from McRitchie’s Black Hills Railroads Interactive Map
Records of the 93rd Army Air Forces College Training Detachment Returning to BHSU

by Paul Higbee

At a public event on October 24, 2019, written records and photos documenting BHSU’s partnership with the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II will be donated to the Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies.

Terry Neil King will deliver the materials from his home in Illinois. King’s father, the late Neil L. King, was adjutant for the Army Air Forces 93rd College Training Detachment (CTD), and briefly its commanding officer.

In early 1943 it was apparent the Army Air Forces (AAF) needed more pilots, navigators, and bombardiers for a war where military air power was essential as never before. The AAF contracted with 150 colleges and universities nationwide so that aviation cadets could earn the college credits required to become officers and simultaneously receive basic flight training. BHSU, then called Black Hills Teachers College, was one of the schools selected. The first 93rd CTD cadets arrived in Spearfish in early 1943. They lived in Wenona Cook Hall, received academic instruction from the college’s regular faculty, and learned all aspects of flight at Spearfish’s airport east of town. In early summer 1944, all CTDs were disbanded because the AAF determined the program had been a success and it had a sufficient number of flyers.

Materials to be donated by King include detailed descriptions of training, issues of a detachment newspaper the cadets produced, and high-quality photos taken by noted Spearfish photographer Josef Fassbender. BHSU president Tom Jackson, Jr., accepted the 93rd CTD flag from King in 2018. It is displayed on second floor of the E.Y. Berry Library-Learning Center.

The materials should prove valuable for researchers studying World War II flight and preparation of aviators. The collection will also open doors to learning more about the 1,000 individual aviation cadets who passed through campus on their way to wartime service.

Become a Member of the Friends of Case Library

The Friends of Case Library provide support in many ways. Your financial contribution helps support scholarships, purchase books, and sponsor public talks. We also hope the Friends will help get the word out when their friends and acquaintances are looking for a place to preserve their individual or organizational papers and photographs or donate books or other materials related to the Black Hills region or western South Dakota.

The Friends played an important role in the successful 2017 symposium, “Forts, Wars, and Treaties of the Northern Plains.” We hope to sponsor another event in 2020, and we want to know what topics interest you most. If you have ideas for topics, speakers, tours, etc., please let us know by contacting the Special Collections Librarian/Archivist, Lori Terrill. You can reach her via phone, e-mail, or U.S. mail:

• 605-642-6361
• Lori.Terrill@BHSU.edu

To become a Friend, visit: https://library.bhsu.edu/case/documents/CaseLibraryMembership.pdf
Case Library Debuts New Website

Black Hills State University’s E. Y. Berry Library-Learning Center has recently redesigned their website to improve usability. The Library website serves as an important portal for students and faculty undertaking research. The new design is easier to navigate and more adaptable to displaying on different devices, from smartphones to computer monitors.

Part of the redesign included a significant revamping of the Case Library web pages. The two main methods of finding special collections materials—the library catalog and archival finding aids—are now front and center on the screen. You’ll also see our hours prominently posted.

All archival finding aids may now be keyword searched as a group, rather than one at a time as was previously the case. Researchers will find this to be a more efficient way of searching our various collections.

One new feature on the website is the exhibits page. Seven of our major exhibits are highlighted: the A. D. Humbert Clay Tablets, the First Ladies Doll Collection, the Flag of the 93rd Army Air Forces College Training Detachment (Air Crew), the Lyndle Dunn Collection, the Mar Gretta Cocking Collection, the William J. Collins Collection, and the Dick Fort Collection. You can learn more about these exhibits and see photographs related to them.

Our new address: https://library.bhsu.edu/case/

The Mar Gretta Cocking Collection (above) and the First Ladies Doll Collection (at right) are two of the exhibits featured on the new Case Library website.
The Digital Library of South Dakota, also referred to as DLSD, is an initiative by the South Dakota Board of Regents libraries. The online library got its start a decade ago and its content has been steadily growing since then. Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, South Dakota State University, and the University of South Dakota were later joined by Dakota Wesleyan University to create collections containing over 167,000 digital items in total. They include digitized photographs, negatives, slides, maps, manuscripts, and publications, as well as video files.

Black Hills State University’s DLSD collections include over 18,000 items and are primarily photographs and other images.

Our largest collection is the Black Hills National Forest Historical Collection, with over 10,000 items. Images document the natural beauty of the region; forest management practices; man-made features, such as dams, reservoirs, campgrounds, buildings, and roads; the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps; firefighting activities; and special events. Also included are images of the Black Hills region beyond the national forest boundaries, as well as some from other national forests and parks. The earliest photographs date from the 1880s.

Another key collection comes from the images found in the University Archives. Black Hills State University was founded as a normal school in 1883 and over the years was known by five different names. Our digitization efforts began with the earliest photographs and dates available currently span from the 1860s through the mid-1980s.

Watson Parker donated his collection of 133 research notebooks to Case Library in 2013. The notebooks contain his research notes and photographs, as well as ephemeral materials such as postcards and brochures, related to towns and other locations in the Black Hills region. We are in the process of digitizing the photographs and adding them to DLSD.

Other online collections include late-19th and early-20 century stereoscope cards by W. R. Cross of Hot Springs, selected items from Joseph R. Douda’s Black Hills Railroading Collection, and selected items from the Lyndle Dunn Collection of wildlife and other prints. BHSU and partner universities are actively adding content to DLSD!
Paul Hedren will discuss his latest book, *Rosebud, June 17, 1876: Prelude to the Little Big Horn*. Many, including Hedren, consider the near day-long Battle of the Rosebud, fought between troops led by Brigadier General George Crook, and Sioux and Northern Cheyenne warriors ably led by Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Two Moon, and others and to be the largest, perhaps even greatest Indian battle in the American West. It preceded the Battle of the Little Big Horn by eight days and occurred just twenty-five miles away.

Hedren retired from the National Park Service in 2007 after serving nearly four decades as a park historian and superintendent in Wyoming, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, and Nebraska. He devotes his energy now to researching and writing Indian wars history, with a special interest is the Sioux War of 1876-77.