

Curator's Choice

Driving Through History in Deadwood, South Dakota

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At the turn of the twentieth century, the beginning of America's automotive industry was underway as designers and entrepreneurs were busily manufacturing and marketing their horseless carriages to consumers.



Figure 1: Haynes automobile axle, from Deadwood, SD, before treatment.

A vestige of one of these early automobiles is currently at the MAC Laboratory undergoing conservation so that it can be displayed in an upcoming exhibit by the city of Deadwood in South Dakota. The artifact is an iron wheel axle, with a white metal alloy cap, from a Haynes automobile (Figure 1). The white metal alloy cap is clearly marked with the name HAYNES and their slogan "AMERICA'S FIRST CAR" (Figure 2). Elwood Haynes was one of the early automobile inventors, building his first car in 1893 (Clymer 1950). He went on to form his own company, joined into partnership with Edgar Apperson in 1895, but then the company was split and reorganized in 1901 to become the Haynes Automobile Company (Byrne 2004). The company stopped manufacturing cars and went out of business in 1924 (Byrne 2004).

The axle was excavated from a site along Main Street in the historic district of Deadwood. During the early twentieth century, that area of the archaeological site was host to a variety of auto-oriented shops (Byrne 2004). In addition to the axle, engines and other automotive parts were recovered during the excavation. This deposit demonstrates there was a thriving trade in the maintenance of cars at the time and reflects the growth of automobile use. The rise of the automobile also led to the Good Roads Movement, a nation-wide effort to build and improve the condition of roads throughout the United States. One of these projects was the establishment of the "Black and Yellow Trail" in 1912, a highway that connected Chicago, the Black Hills, and Yellowstone Park (Deadwood Historic Preservation Committee). The



Figure 2: White metal alloy cap on the axle, with the Haynes Automobile Company logo, during treatment.

"Black and Yellow Trail" was designated an automobile tourist route and passed through the City of Deadwood (Figure 3).

Recognizing the potential for tourism, Lawrence County (which includes the northern Black Hills and cities of Deadwood, Lead, and Spearfish) Commissioners developed a road system with Deadwood at its center (Barta Julin 2009). By 1919, they had spent over \$600,000 on roads and bridges throughout the county (Barta Julin 2009) (Figure 4). The scenery and history of the county proved a tremendous draw; by the 1930s, tourists numbered in the tens of thousands. A combination of good roads, special events held by the cities, the creation of national parks, and an increase in tourist accommodations led to more motorists driving to the region over the following years (Barta Julin 2009). The city of Deadwood and the Black Hills continue to be significant tourist destinations to this day and the car is still a popular mode of transportation to explore the area.

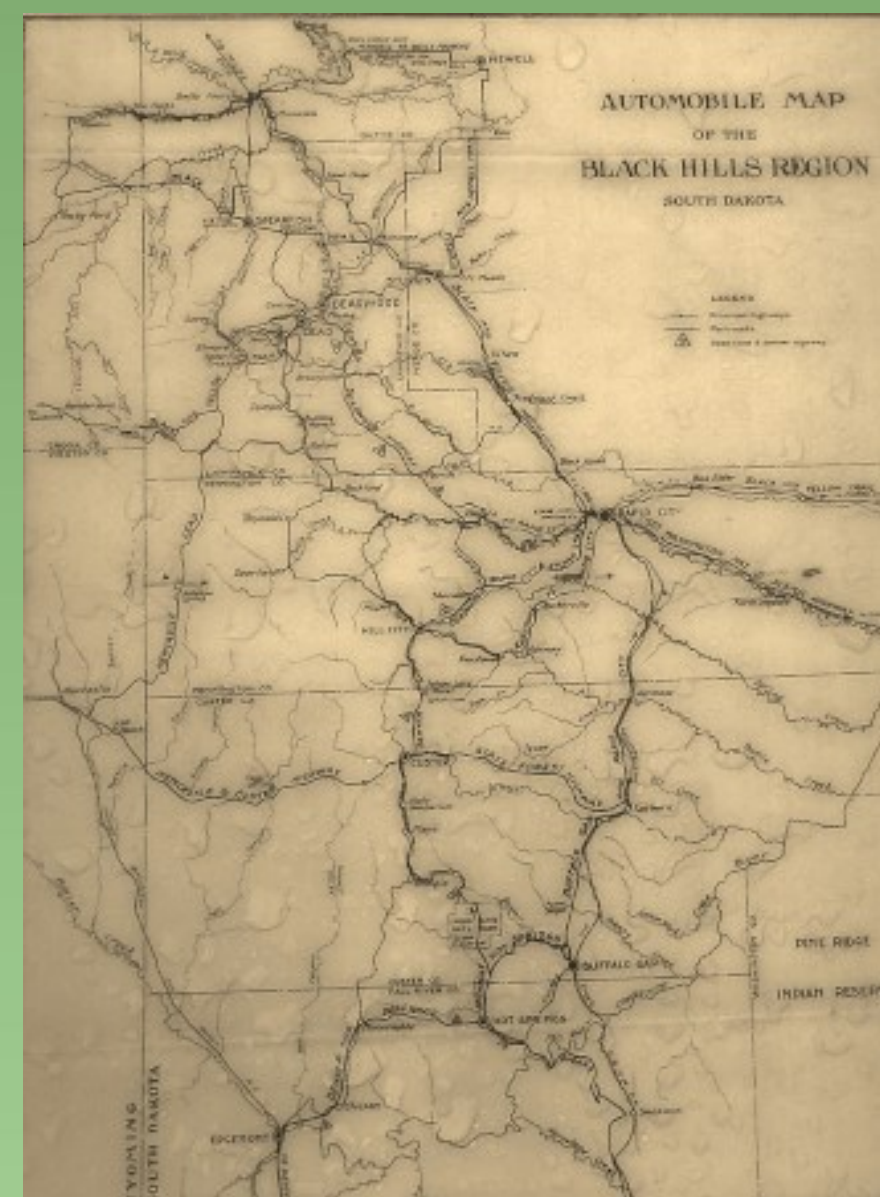


Figure 3: Automobile tourist map of the Black Hills from 1920. Courtesy of the City of Deadwood Archives.



Figure 4: A road in Lawrence County, SD, 1915. Courtesy of the City of Deadwood Archives.

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Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum is part of the Maryland Historical Trust, an agency of the Maryland Department of Planning, Baltimore.

