

3 July 2023

Dear MS Jenna Carlson Dietmeier,

By way of introduction my name is Kenneth Hargens. I grew up out in Custer State Park (CSP). In 1951 my father built a modern addition onto an ancient log cabin and the cabin was utilized as our living room. This log cabin was historically recognized by my family as a log schoolhouse known as, 'The Galena Creek School-1877'. This property was used by my grandfather (See, BLACK HILLS DOC) since his arrival in the Black Hills in 1892. He became a well-known and respected surgeon in Hot Springs.

It was great growing up in this secluded area of Custer County. Our only neighbor was Badger Clark who we considered a 'relative newcomer' as he did not arrive on scene until 1937. He had some medical problems and my grandfather attended to him when Badger lived in Hot Springs. I have written about Badger Clark and SD PBS will broadcast my recollections of Badger in September 2023. My father, Holland Hargens, was a jack-of-all-trades and he was instrumental in building Badger Clark's cabin.

But, I am digressing from the subject of this letter. After a 5-year process of interviews, photos, measurements and discussions with the South Dakota State Historical Society, our historic Galena Creek School was placed on the National Historic Register earlier in this year.

Now, imagine the great disappointment and consternation of myself, my family, friends and history-minded folks when I received notice, last week, that our place was to be considered for removal from the National Historic Register. This procedure has been initiated by one Matt Snyder, who is the administrator of CSP.

It is believed that Mr. Snyder is not from west river South Dakota and is not, therefore, knowledgeable and has no interest in the extensive history of the lands enclosed by the boundaries of CSP. As an acknowledged historian, I often give talks related to the pioneers of CSP and of the Fleur de Lys horse ranch which occupied the SW corner of what is now CSP. I have provided tours to interested individuals of many of the sites listed on the enclosed sheet.

I would be a cultural tragedy for our place to be removed from the National Historic Register. The CSP people have disregarded any and all of my oral history of the place. They base their discounting on a lack of any map evidence of the Galena Creek School. The school enterprise was developed by private individuals living in the Galena Creek Valley and it was never supported by any county or state funds.

It may be that the old log school ceased to be a school prior to 1892 and it became just 'another old log building'. Well, the old brass school bell which my family has coveted since 1892 is an indicator that the place was an educational institution for many now long-gone folks. I feel that I must mention also, that I have been in contact with principal members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in Pine Ridge. There is a certain secluded area of CSP that should be recognized and preserved as a historic cultural Native American location.

If you should contact me in regards to this message, please do not expect a quick reply. I spend much of my time at my other place NW of Hill City on the Mystic Road where I am expending efforts to build a cabin. I have neither phone nor computer out there. I thank you for your time.

Kenneth Hargens-605-348-0496 (landline only in RC)-khargens1024@msn.com

7 July 2023

Matt Snyder

Custer State Park

Hello,

With your lack of knowledge and/or interest in any historical aspects of the history of the land within the Custer State Park (CSP) boundaries, I am sure that you are unable to understand the feelings and emotions of the Hargens family, our friends, and many other history-minded folks when I received the letter with the information that you had spent our State's money, time and resources to seek the removal of our historical cabin from the National Historic Register.

Your actions should not have really surprised us in view of the bewildering statement made by yourself and Lydia Austin when I arrived to attend a meeting in the past to discuss our historical sign erected on our property. The statement directed to me: "We know that building was moved in there", was an insult to my knowledge, integrity and honesty.

My family's oral history, the building's artifacts, and photographic evidence stands as a testimony to our cabin's rightful recognition as: 'The Galena Creek Schoolhouse'. This school and sometimes meeting-house was not recognized by the very early Custer County as it was a structure built and supported by the many settlers in the Galena Creek Valley and no monies were provided by the county for its construction, wellbeing, and employment of teachers who educated their pupils there. Don't you think it curious and interesting that a historical document sent to me refers to a Henry Braun and lists the Galena Creek School as: "Site No 1.....known as old log school building"?

Your statement that our property (the old log school house) does not appear on any maps is incredulous, laughable, and lacks any meaning. To wit, I ask you if any of these structures appear on any maps: Any or all of the Ivanhoe Gold Mine buildings? Chauncey Parker's cabin? The miner's cabins on Galena Creek east of the old Juvenile Center? The farmstead between the Downen and Valenthime ranches? The farmstead in the draw leading up to Mt. Coolidge? The log and frame building across the creek from the Galena Creek School? (Said building used to house the relay team for the stage coach on the Custer Cutoff.) The farmstead in 'Heddy Draw'? The farmstead on the roadway between the Custer Cutoff and the Ivanhoe Mine? The buildings used by Westover when he was attempting to mine copper? The little community on upper Grace Coolidge Creek near the Needles Highway?

These are just a few of the many old cabins and structures located within CSP that, I am sure, have not appeared on any maps. I am aware of the books you have mentioned related to Custer County history. And I remind you that the information in these books was voluntarily submitted and very likely no research was done by the assemblers of the books. My family was never consulted about our historic school house. We wonder how much of the information in 'Our Yesteryears' is accurate.

Mr. Snyder, as a person who has recently been made a deacon of his church, and as a person of administrative responsibility, who must have the best interests of our State to heart, we believe you should exercise more understanding and acceptance of the knowledge and expertise of others. Other

folks whose families have lived in these Hills since 1892 or before. As I tell my listeners: "Embrace history".

It has been long understood that distrust and animosity has existed between CSP and Black Hills residents. Any publicity arising from the removal of our historic property known as The Galena Creek School can only reflect negatively on CSP. I am known as a strict proponent of historical accuracy. I regularly give talks related to the history of the pioneers who came to the park area in the late 1870s. Some who stayed until the State Park forced them to leave the area. I speak also of other aspects of the Southern Hills and mining, and ranching efforts. My gatherings are generally well-attended but I have never seen any representatives of CSP who have come to listen to me.

On July 8, I am speaking to an assembly of CSP cabin owners about our historic property. In August I am leading a group of members of the Jedediah Smith Chapter of the Westerners to visit the site of the murder/lynching of Lame Johnny. We will go into CSP where I will point out the location of his hideout and we will visit the location of the Fleur de Lys Ranch and the Rogers Ranch. In September I am speaking to the Custer Seniors about my uncle, the artist Charles Hargens and my family. You are encouraged to visit the Sandstone School Museum in Hot Springs. On the top floor you will find the Hargens Family Annex.

It may behoove you and your staff to pick up a copy of the CSP commemorative issue of the Down Country Roads magazine where I wrote two articles related to CSP. I often receive phone calls from an elder of a Hutterite colony in Montana. The said colony sent members to CSP to fulfill community service as they were conscientious objectors. They have been long unrecognized for their work in the Park from WW2 until the draft ended in the early 1970s.

I will be sending a copy of this letter to our state representatives as well as to other involved persons. As long as I can remember I can recall making the annual visit to the CSP offices with my Dad who was paying the annual 'lease fee' of \$25.00. He would always grumble to us that: "We shouldn't have to pay because your grandfather bought the place years ago". I am sure that if he had the financial resources that the family has today all circumstances would be different.

Kenneth Hargens

Date: 7 July 2023

From: Kenneth Hargens

To: Jenna Carlson Dietmeier

Subject: The Galena Creek School-1877

MS Carlson Dietmeier,

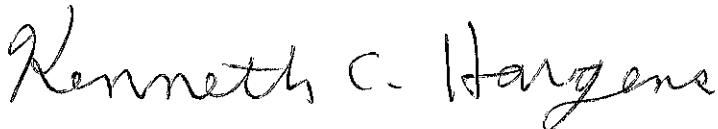
The attached letter was actually developed and sent to my state representatives, MS Ladner and Mr. Krull. As you can see, the rightful designation of our place known as: The Galena Creek School-1877 is a matter close to the ideals of the Hargens Family and that of many history-minded members of the Black Hills.

For your perusal I have enclosed copies of my letter to Matt Snyder and a list of historical sites in Custer State Park that have either been purposefully destroyed or should be given historical recognition. I realize now that I should have been more forceful and accurate in my description of our property and of the displaying of certain 'artifacts' related to the old log school house.

The Park has placed emphases on conversation I had with an elderly lady, Mrs. Spargur, (born about 1900) who related that her father or maternal grandfather had attended school in the Galena Creek School. I do not believe the Park pursued this information in depth.

Please keep me updated on any developments related to this unfortunate situation. I do not have a cell phone and my only number is a landline at my place in Rapid City. I have neither a phone or computer at my place in the Hills where I spend much time.

Thank you.



Kenneth Hargens 605-348-0496 khargens1024@msn.com

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Error: The message must have at least one recipient.

To

Fw: Custer State Park History (Mostly Destroyed)

Historical Sites Within Custer

State Park.

1. Town sites of Ivanhoe, Galena, Otis, and Bakerville.
2. Site of the huge Fleur de Lis horse ranch.
3. Copper Queen Mine.
4. Dr. Herbert's ranch and grave site.
5. Route of the Custer Cutoff of the Sydney-Deadwood Trail (Gold Rush).
6. Galena Creek School.
7. Boy Scouts Balanced Rock.
8. Site and vast contributions of the Hutterite Colony in the Park.
9. Site of the original Legion Lake Inn. Built by the American Legion for WW1 veterans. Destroyed by CSP in 1980's
10. Ivanhoe Gold Mine.
11. Warren-Lamb Lumber Company narrow gauge railroad.
12. The Rogers Ranch.
13. Destruction of teepee rings below Legion Lake.
14. Indian Springs.
15. Warren-Lamb compensating railway site.
16. The 'Narrows' CCC Camp.
17. Chauncy Parker's homesite. (Nephew of outlaw Butch Cassidy).
18. The outlaw 'Lame Johnny's' original hideout.
19. Legion Lake ice house.
20. Site of the huge barn at the Dowen Ranch.
21. Town sites of: Ivanhoe, Galena, Otis, and Bakerville.
22. Bakerville Schoolhouse.
23. The Swint Trail (Between their respective homesteads.)
24. The 'Bear Cave'. Excavated by Holland Hargens with Badger Clark assisting.

Upgrade to Premium

Kenneth Hargens
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