

NPS FORM 10-900 (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018 [SD-SHPO # ECA-OH-597-1/89]  
(use paper with at least 25% cotton rag content, use NLQ or LQ printer)

United States Department of the Interior -- National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES -- REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering "NA" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property  
historic name: Dinosaur Park  
other name/ site number: NA

2. Location  
street & number: Skyline Drive /NA/ not for publication  
city, town: Rapid City /NA/ vicinity  
state: SOUTH DAKOTA code: SD county: Pennington code: SD 103 zip code: 57701

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property:		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
/ / private	/ / building(s)	_____	_____	buildings
/XX/ pubic-local	/ / district	_____	_____	sites
/ / public-state	/ / site	_____	_____	structures
/ / public-federal	/ / structure	5	_____	objects
	/XX/ object	5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

11. Form Prepared by  
name/title: Carolyn Torma, Historical Survey Coordinator  
organization: State Historical Preservation Center date: February 28, 1990  
street & number: 3 East Main, P. O. Box 417 Telephone: 605-677-5314  
city or town: Vermillion state: SOUTH DAKOTA zip code: 57069

page 2: Dinosaur Park  
property name

, Pennington  
county

, SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

#### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this / / nomination / / request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property / / meets / / does not meet the National Register criteria. / / See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property / / meets / / does not meet the National Register Criteria.  
/ / See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

#### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register

\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for  
the National Register

\_\_\_\_ removed from the National  
Register

\_\_\_\_ other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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property name

. Pennington  
county

. SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

6. Function or Use (enter categories from instructions)

Historic functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Work of Art  
LANDSCAPE/Park

Current Functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Work of Art  
LANDSCAPE/Park

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7. Description

Architectural Classification:

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Dinosaur Sculptures

Materials:

(enter categories from instructions)

foundation NA

walls NA

roof NA

other Concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance: /XX/ see continuation sheet

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8. Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in  
relation to other properties: / / /XX/ / /  
nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria /XX/ A / /B /XX/C / /D

Criteria Considerations / /A / /B / /C / /D / /E / /F / /G

Areas of Significance (enter from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Art

Period of Significance  
1936-1940

Significant Dates  
NA

Significant Person  
NA

Cultural Affiliation  
NA

Architect/Builder  
Sullivan, Emmitt A.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations,  
and periods of significance noted above /XX/ see continuation sheet

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Dinosaur Park is situated just west of Skyline Drive on the crest of "Hangman's Hill" overlooking downtown Rapid City, South Dakota. Conceived in 1935, the original park consisted of five historic dinosaur sculptures a rustic pagoda of stone and log (no longer extant), and two long stone stairways (recently reconstructed). Two more-recent dinosaur sculptures, a concession building, and a parking lot all located east of Skyline Drive were added much later. This document nominates only the five original sculptures.

The park is one of twenty properties surveyed in 1989 under the subcontext "Roadside Sculpture" of the larger statewide context "Recreation and Tourism" (V. F.). Of these twenty properties, only Dinosaur Park and Mount Rushmore National Memorial (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966) are more than fifty years old. The other sculptures are made of concrete or fiber glass; many of the fiber glass sculptures were produced by the Creative Display factory in Sparta, Wisconsin. These figures include buffaloes (8), human figures (4), other dinosaurs (4), mice (3), bulls (2), prairie dogs (1), pheasants (1), donkeys (1), seals (1), cows (1), moose (1), horses (1), and "Flintstone" creatures (1). Most are located on major arteries of tourist traffic. The survey team included State Historical Preservation Center staff and contractors Diane Cole, Carolyn Torma, Rolene Jungemann and Ted Daughters. All survey data is housed at the State Historical Preservation Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

All five of the original dinosaurs are built in an identical fashion. The frames of the figures are composed of two-inch-diameter black iron pipe, which is set into concrete. Around the central frame, body forms consist of a steel framework reinforced "at close intervals." Over this is a wire mesh to which the concrete skin is applied. The thickness of the concrete averages four to five inches. Each figure was originally painted with oil paint and "given a chemical glaze to protect from weathering." Subsequent paintings of the animals were not recorded in terms of the material used. Oral tradition purports that the dinosaurs were originally grey, but today they are painted bright flesh green and white, with touches of pinkish red.

Built to authentic size, the five original dinosaurs have the following dimensions:

1. Triceratops, which is 27 feet long, 11 feet high and has 40 inch horns;
2. Tyrannosaurus Rex, which is 35 feet long, 16 feet high, the head is 4 feet long and the teeth are 6 inches long;
3. Brontosaurus, which is 80 feet long and 28 feet high;
4. Stegosaurus, which is 11 feet long and 7 feet high;
5. Trachodon, which is 17-feet-6-inches high and 33 feet long.

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E. A. Sullivan was the designer and chief sculptor. Dr. Barnum Brown, curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, was the scientific consultant. Dr. C. C. O'Hara, retired President of the South Dakota School of Mines and acclaimed paleontologist, was one of the originators of the idea. The Rapid City Chamber of Commerce took responsibility for the project, and the Works Progress Administration [WPA] provided engineering assistance, materials, and salaries for the workers. Work on the dinosaurs began in February of 1936. At first, cost of the project was estimated at \$24,000. But, by November of 1936, the cost estimate had risen to \$25,000. The Chamber of Commerce contributed welding equipment worth \$500 to the project.

Work was halted for a short time in late-1937 and early-1938, when a dispute erupted between Sullivan and the WPA. Nevertheless, the project was substantially complete by mid-year 1938.

Skyline Drive was started by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and completed by the WPA as a necessary adjunct to the park. Work on the road consisted of installation of retaining walls, log supports, and gravel for the road bed.

At some later date, two dinosaurs were added to the park and are now located in front of the concession building. These figures are much smaller in scale and less finely detailed than the original sculptures. Since their date of construction is unknown, they are not considered contributing features. They are located outside of the of the boundaries of the nominated property.

After several years of poor maintenance, the park was refurbished in the late 1960s. In 1968, the U. S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation provided a grant of \$18,203, which the City matched, for upgrading the park. (In 1967, a grant proposal for \$96,373, was apparently not awarded.) The work included a new parking lot (to hold seventy-five cars), retaining walls, reconstructed steps and walkways, and a new concessions building with public restrooms.

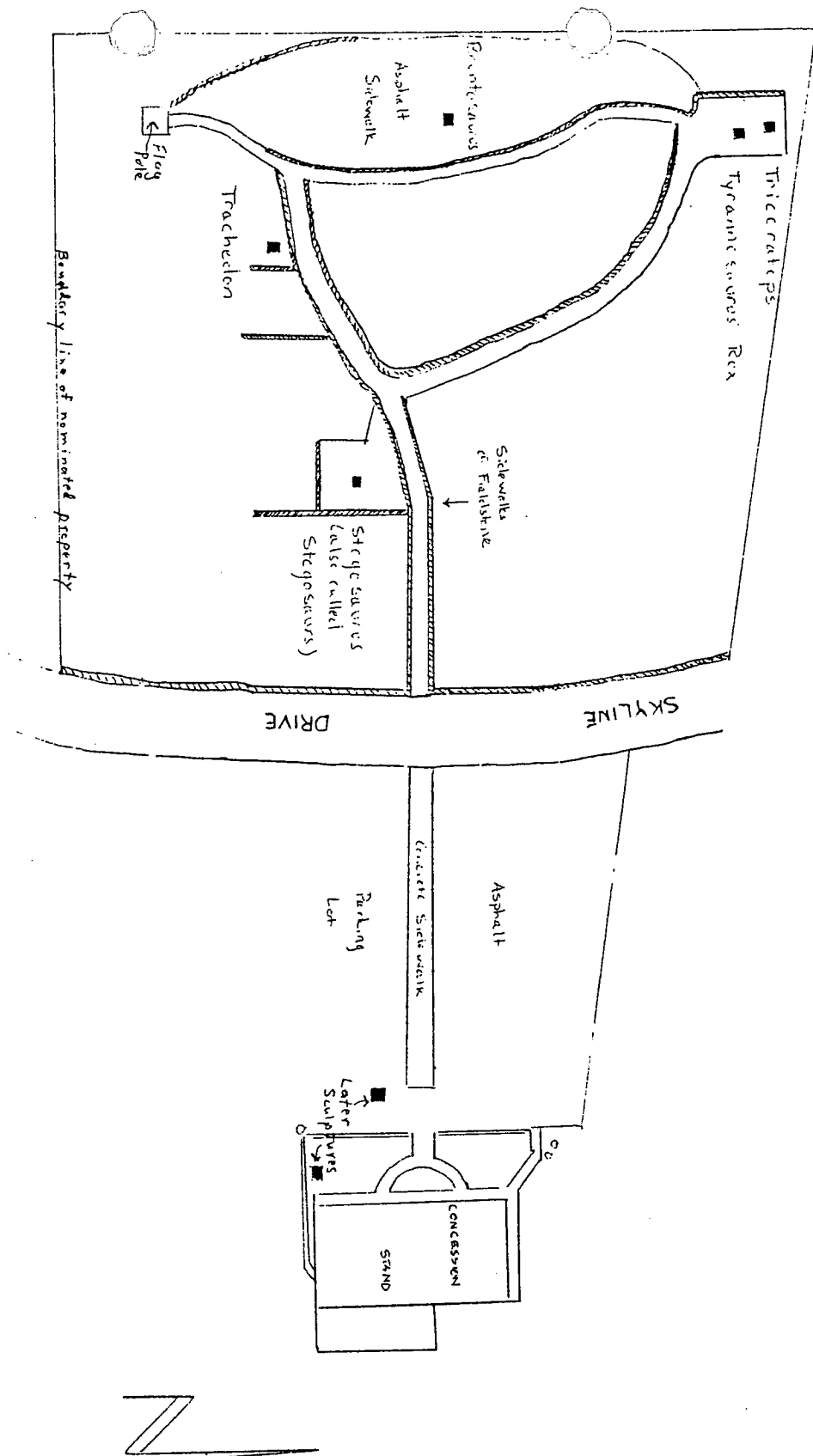
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SKETCH MAP OF DINOSAUR PARK ON REVERSE SIDE



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Under Criteria A and C of the National Register Criteria, Dinosaur Park is significant in the areas of entertainment/recreation and art. The park represents the local residents' growing awareness during the 1930s that the Black Hills had the potential for being a major tourist attraction. Constructed by the Works Progress Administration (Project No. 960), it is one of the most elaborate examples of roadside tourist sculpture in the state and an excellent example of vernacular public art. Under the South Dakota Historical Preservation Plan, the property relates to the following historic contexts: V. F. Depression and Rebuilding/Recreation and Tourism-- Roadside Sculpture; and VI. The Great Depression.

Settlement in the Black Hills began in the mid-1870s when confirmed rumors of the presence of paying quantities of gold incited a great gold rush. Much of the economic development of the region during the nineteenth century relied upon mining, ranching, or related activities. Rapid City, located at the eastern edge of the Black Hills, was founded in 1876 to serve as a commercial and transportation center. The city grew to be second largest city in the state largely due to the installation of nearby Ellsworth Air Force Base. In addition, from the 1930s on, many of the city's entrepreneurs nurtured a blossoming regional and statewide tourism industry.

In 1923, State Historian Doane Robinson conceived the idea of a roadside sculpture in the likenesses of western heroes somewhere in the Black Hills to attract tourists to the state. His intent was to symbolize the westward expansion of America and the growth of democratic ideals. Sculptor Gutzon Borglum expanded the idea to national figures. He chose four presidents, who played a major role in westward expansion. Both Robinson and Borglum were impressed with the bigness of the west and insisted that the sculpture be colossal in scale. Thus emerged the carving of Mount Rushmore in the east-central part of the Black Hills about twenty miles southwest of Rapid City.

The first dedication at Mount Rushmore took place on July 4, 1930 and by 1935, 200,000 people had visited the unfinished monument. These statistics were not lost on the promoters of Rapid City. Tourism had gone largely unnoticed prior to 1920, despite the few private lodges that had been built in the scenic Black Hills. By 1920 and the advent of the widespread use of the automobile, tourism quietly reached the position of the second largest industry in the state. Tourist attractions grew rapidly during the 1920s from tourist camps to motels to state parks. However, the importance of tourism to the state was not truly recognized widely until the proven success of Mount Rushmore and other ventures in the 1930s. Finally in 1937, the promotion of tourism and highway development were combined with the establishment of a state tourism publicity agency within the Department of Highways. One year later, U. S. Highway 16 between Sioux Falls and Rapid



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City, linking the two ends of the state, was completely oiled and improved.

The Rapid City Chamber of Commerce began to feel the effects of tourist traffic by the late 1920s and early 1930s. However, it was the Great Depression that inspired the Chamber to conceive of a project which would attract federal funding and create jobs for unemployed men in the area. The Chamber was eager to make the connection between one successful sculpture (Mount Rushmore) and their hopes for another. On February 27, 1936, the Rapid City Journal published an article entitled "Dinosaur Park Work Started," in which the reporter wrote, Dinosaur Park will be "a companion Black Hills attraction to the huge carvings of three great presidents on the granite slope of Mt. Rushmore."

Art historian Karal Ann Marling in her work The Colossus of Roads points out that America is covered with fanciful, giant roadside sculptures. Yet, like the monument to the presidents of the westward expansion, the dinosaur motif for the Rapid City project had some link to the region's history. Dr. C. C. O'Hara, retired president of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, is credited with the original idea of the dinosaurs as the subject of the sculptures. O'Hara, a paleontologist, was fascinated with the prehistoric dinosaur remains he found in the Badlands of South Dakota.

Another contemporary newspaper article shares the credit for the idea with R. L. Bronson, secretary of the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce. According to the Rapid City Journal on February 27, 1937, Bronson claimed to have conceived the idea "... when he visited the Chicago Century of Progress exposition and saw the mechanically operated reproduction of a Brontosaurus." Marling also expounds upon the connection between world fairs and colossal roadside sculpture. She writes that the heroically proportioned sculptures at the fairs "reflects the magnitude of the loss felt by Americans ... with the disappearance of a West whose distant horizon in the recesses of history, ... only the sculpted eyes of art can still perceive."

Marling also explains the choice of awesomely large prehistoric animals. "Humor and fakery create situations that appear 'dangerous, horrible, or uncanny' and then disperse the sensation of terror with the sudden realization that the whole thing was a hoax." In the case of the ferocious-looking dinosaurs, the sculptures were not so much a hoax as merely harmless, immobile concrete. Further, she states, American tourists love over-sized sculpted attractions. "America responds to the environmental aesthetic of surfeit, giantism, the colossal ...." Therefore, the dinosaur sculptures hit three nerves in the American aesthetic -- a sense of the history of the West, an enjoyment of things scaled larger than present-day life, and a sneaky enjoyment of being frightened. A local reporter described the appeal in

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other terms in a January 27, 1937, article entitled "Dinosaur Park Will Open in Hills Area on June 1." Dinosaur Park, he wrote "promises to become one of the most unusual and interesting projects of its kind in the world."

Emmit A. Sullivan, a lawyer and sculptor, became the designer and superintendent of construction in 1936. Under his direction, between fourteen and twenty-five men, worked on the project. A newspaper article dated March 3, 1936, indicated that Walter Walking, a WPA engineer provided engineering assistance. The actual building of the sculptures was executed by Frank Lockhart and George McGraw. Sullivan's design work was aided by Dr. Barnum Brown, curator at the American Museum of Natural History, who served as a consultant. Barnum furnished precise measurements for the animals. Because no paleontological evidence existed in South Dakota for the Brontosaurus, he provided the specifications from the museum's fossil collection.

Originally, a set of dinosaur footprints were to accompany the animals, however, no evidence of them remains today. A February 27, 1936 article describes the footprints. "Adding to the naturalness of the final grouping will be actual footprints of dinosaurs which roamed the swamps ... Found some time ago east of Rapid City, the prints will be removed to the park and set in concrete slabs, Sullivan said."

Although all work was scheduled to be completed in April 1937, the project ran into difficulties. An article entitled "Tyrannosaurus Rex at Last Given Set of Teeth" pointing to these problems appeared in the Rapid City Journal on April 23, 1938. The article stated:

Work ... halted for several months by the Sullivan-WPA controversy. Sullivan resigned as project foreman last fall, which was all right with the WPA except for the fact he kept Rex's teeth -- made on his own time -- in his possession. Under persuasion of the Chamber of Commerce he released 24 tusks to the WPA, promising to complete and hand over the others later; but the foreman who replaced him refused to follow his directions for their insertion and Sullivan made no more teeth. The project was suspended. This spring he agreed to take charge of the work again as an employee of the Chamber of Commerce. A WPA crew was assigned to the project, working under his direction, and Sullivan brought his teeth out of hiding.

The park was dedicated on May 22, 1936 and a time capsule with the names of the all the contributing people was placed inside one of the dinosaurs. Finally, in early 1938 the chairman of the project reported that work was 95

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percent complete. Presumably the park opened to the public that summer.

Once the park was completed, Sullivan and his wife opened a concession stand at the park. The building was moved from the stratosphere bowl outside Rapid City. In 1967 the Rapid City Journal reported that the concessions lease, held by Mrs. Lorraine Sullivan, was renegotiated. In 1968 the city received a federal grant through the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for \$18,203 for improvements to the park. These improvements included new retaining walls, terraces, handrails, and a concession building. The following year parking facilities and restrooms were added. Mrs. Sullivan retired from the concession business that same year. Dinosaur Park became an official city park in 1968.

Overlooking the city, Dinosaur Park remains a popular tourist attraction. The profile of the giant Brontosaurus is visible from many vantage points in central Rapid City capturing, at least for a moment, the attention of most visitors and local passers-by. The creatures set in concrete are extraordinary reminders of early tourism promotion and of early roadside art in South Dakota.

The period of significance of the nominated property extends from the beginning of construction in 1936 to 1940, the established 50-year cut-off date for the National Register.

page 4: Dinosaur Park  
property name

, Pennington  
county

, SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

9. Major Bibliographical References

/XX/ see continuation sheet

Previous documentation by NPS:

/ / preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
/ / previously listed in the National Register  
/ / previously determined eligible by the National Register  
/ / designated a National Historic Landmark  
/ / recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
/ / recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

/XX/ State historic preservation office  
/ / Other State agency  
/ / Federal agency  
/XX/ Local government  
/ / University  
/ / Other

Specify repository:

Rapid City Planning Office

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: 1.5 acres

UTM References:

A = /13/ /640-530/ /4881-800/  
C = / / / / /  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B = / / / / /  
D = / / / / /  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

Quad: Rapid City East

Scale: 1:24000

/ / see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:

/XX/ see continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

/XX/ see continuation sheet

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City of Rapid City. "Dinosaur Park." brochure. Copy housed at the State Historical Preservation Center, Vermillion, SD.

Dedication Booklet. "Dinosaur Park 1-9-3-6." Copy housed in the Minnulusa Historical Society Collections, Rapid City, SD.

Lee, Shebby. "Traveling the Sunshine State: The Growth of Tourism in South Dakota, 1914-1939." South Dakota History 19, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 194-223.

Marling, Karal Ann. The Colossus of Roads. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Rapid City (South Dakota) Journal. February 27, 1936; March 5, 1936; March 9, 1936; November 10, 1936; April 23, 1938; October 17, 1967; November 8, 1967; December 5, 1967; February 20, 1968; June 5, 1969. All articles housed in a Rapid City scrapbook in the Minnulusa Historical Society Collections, Rapid City, SD.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The nominated property is bounded by a set of imaginary lines that intersect to form a polygon around the original dinosaur sculptures. The eastern boundary line lies along the west edge of Skyline Drive. The southern boundary line extends 270 feet due west from the southernmost point of the retaining wall along Skyline Drive (as shown on the accompanying scaled map of the park). The western boundary line extends 315 feet due north from the western terminus of the southern boundary line. The northern boundary line extends from the northern terminus of the western boundary line to the northernmost point of the retaining wall along Skyline Drive (as shown on the accompanying scaled map of the park). The property is located in the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 2, Township 1 North, Range 8 East (Black Hills Meridian), in Pennington County, South Dakota.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The boundaries of the nominated property have been set to include the original Dinosaur Park sculptures and to specifically exclude the noncontributing concession building, parking lot, and later sculptures, and any public or private roads. Two different, conflicting plats of the park boundaries are recorded at the Pennington County Register of Deeds Office; therefore, it was not possible to use legal descriptions to form the boundaries of the nominated property. Rather, the lines were set using the west edge of Skyline Drive and the retaining wall along Skyline Drive (as shown on the accompanying scaled map of the park) for reference points.

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1.  
Dinosaur Park  
Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota  
by John Rau  
May 1987  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Camera facing west  
Photo No. 1

2.  
Dinosaur Park  
Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota  
by John Rau  
May 1987  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Brontosaurus, camera facing south  
Photo No. 2

3.  
Dinosaur Park  
Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota  
by John Rau  
May 1987  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Triceratops, camera facing west-northwest  
Photo No. 3

4.  
Dinosaur Park  
Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota  
by John Rau  
May 1987  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Tyrannosaurus Rex, camera facing east  
Photo No. 4

5.  
Dinosaur Park  
Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota  
by John Rau  
May 1987  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Trachodon, camera facing south  
Photo No. 5

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6.

Dinosaur Park

Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota

by John Rau

May 1987

Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

Stegosaurus, camera facing southeast

Photo No. 6

7.

Dinosaur Park

Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota

by John Rau

May 1987

Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

Newer dinosaur sculpture in front of concession building (not nominated),  
camera facing east

Photo No. 7

8.

Dinosaur Park

Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota

by John Rau

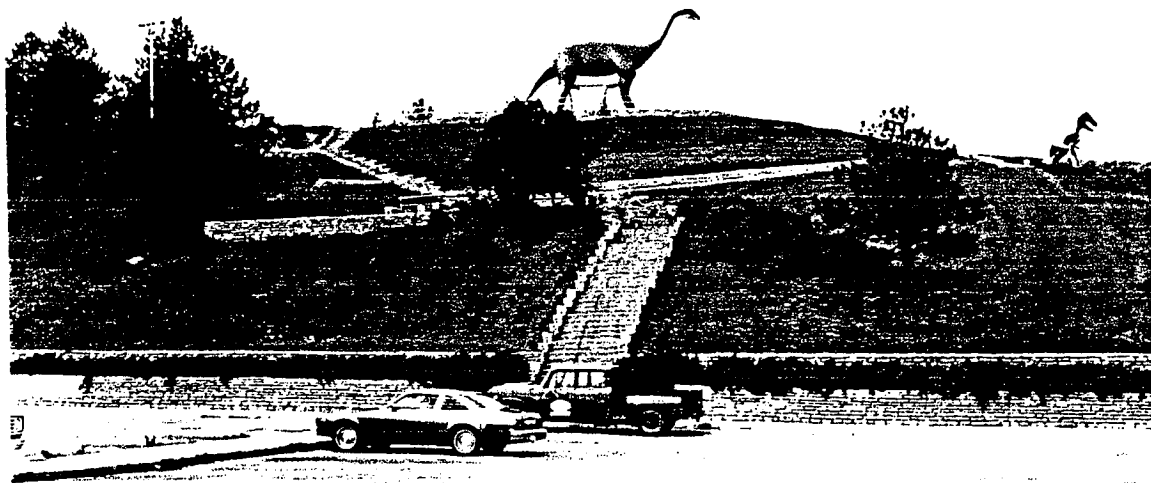
May 1987

Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

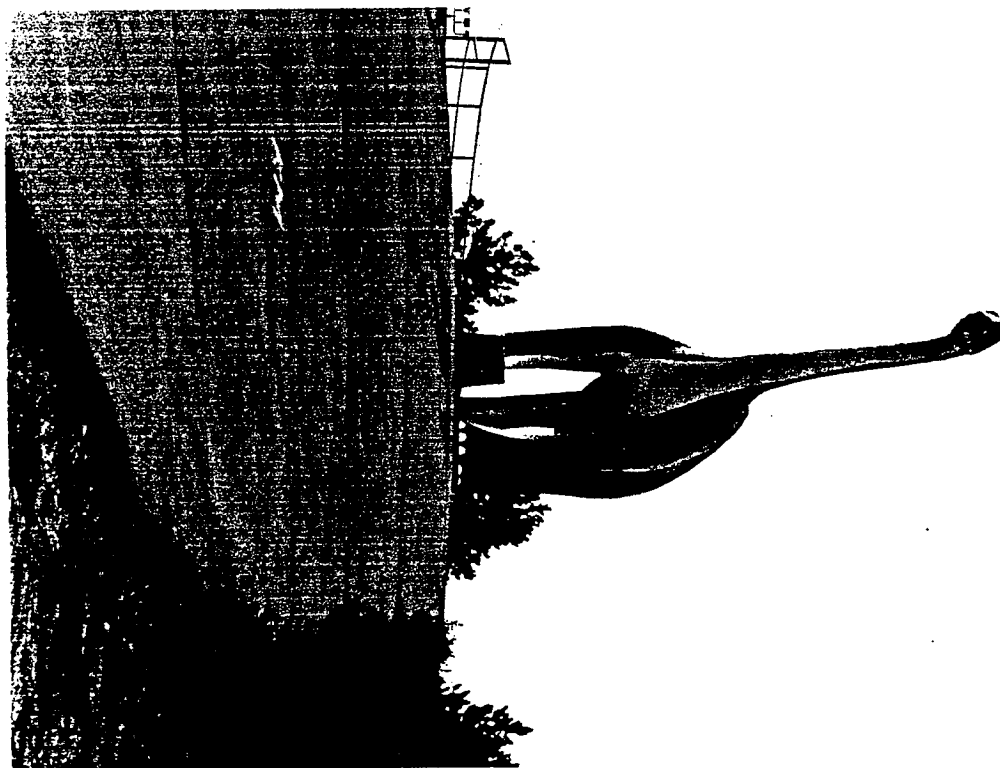
Newer dinosaur sculpture near concession building (not nominated),  
camera facing north

Photo No. 8

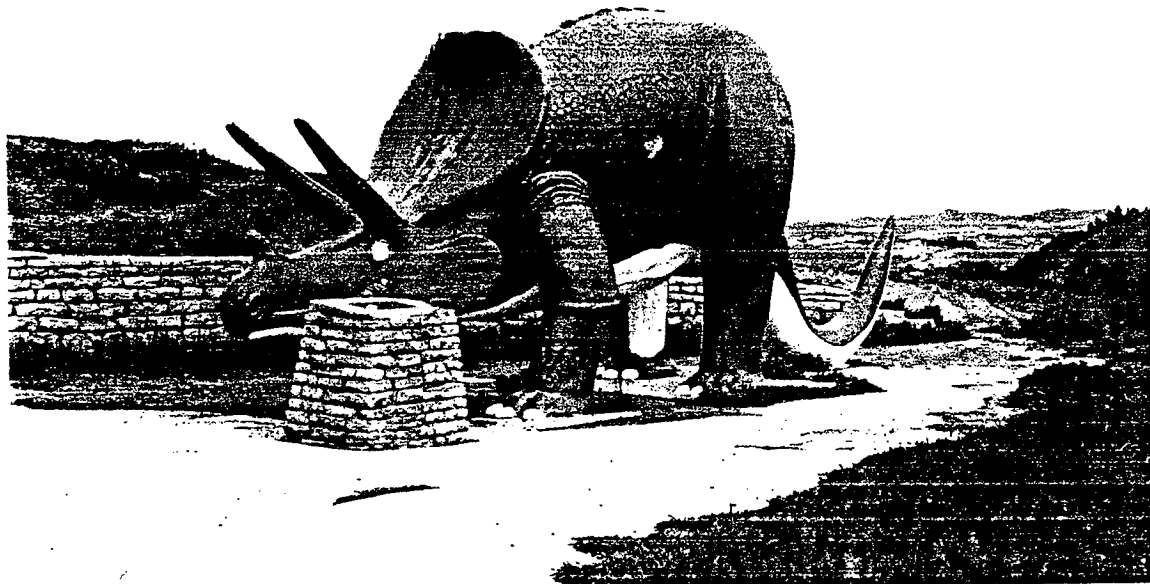




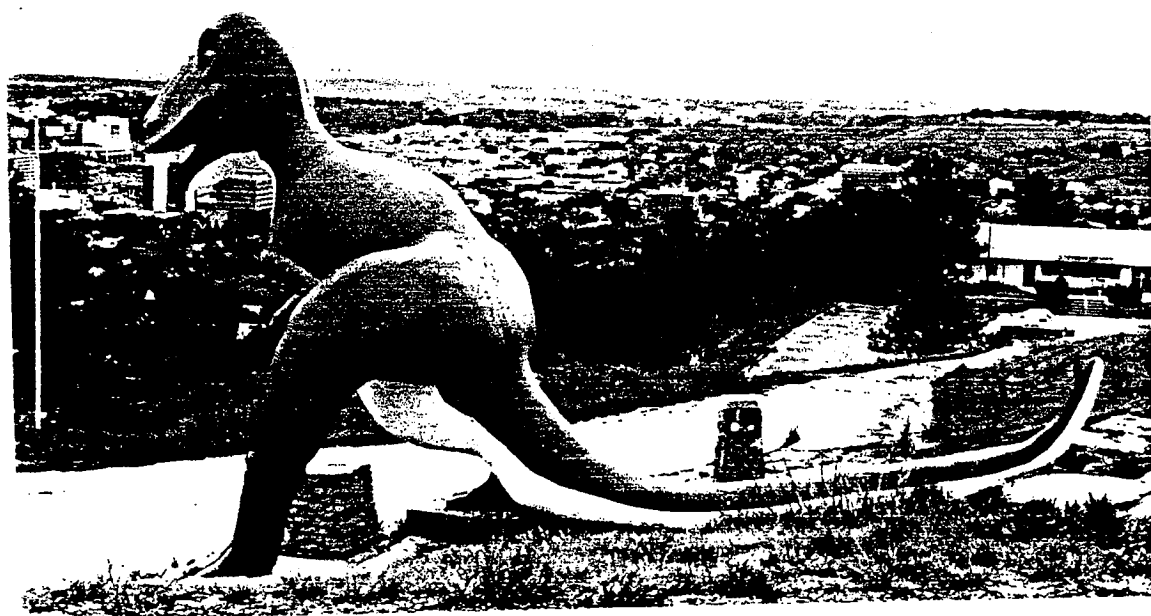
Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak, No. 1



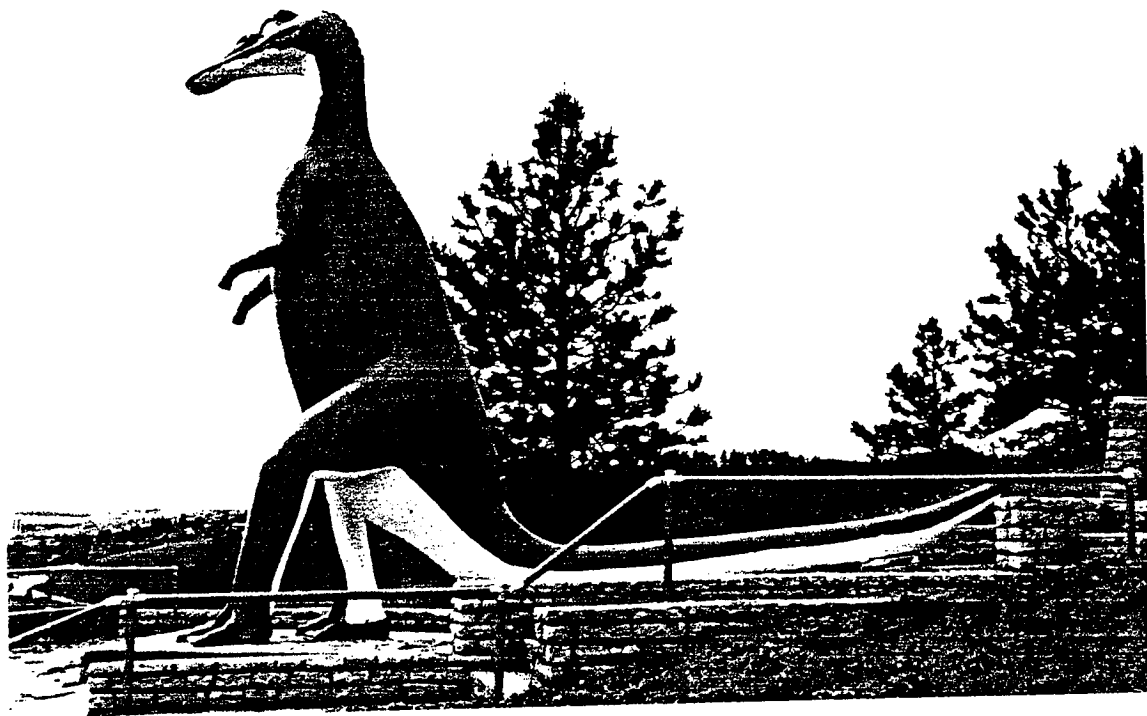
Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 2



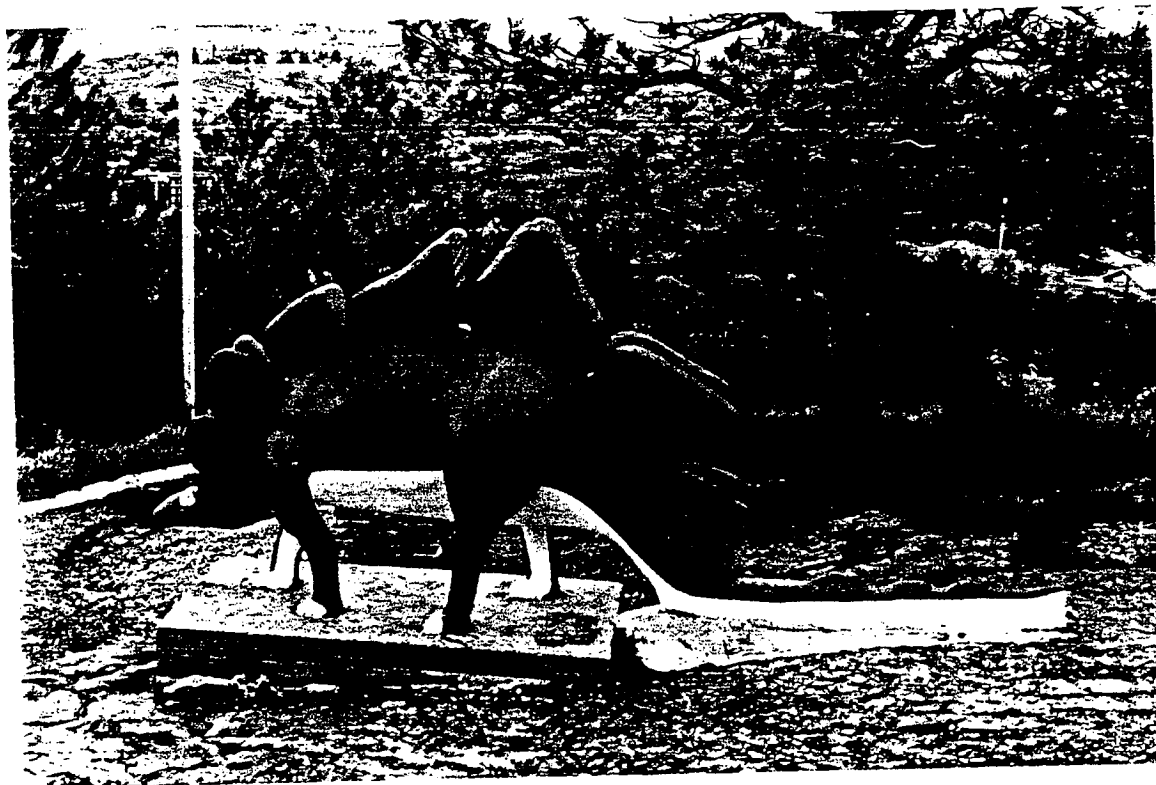
Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 3



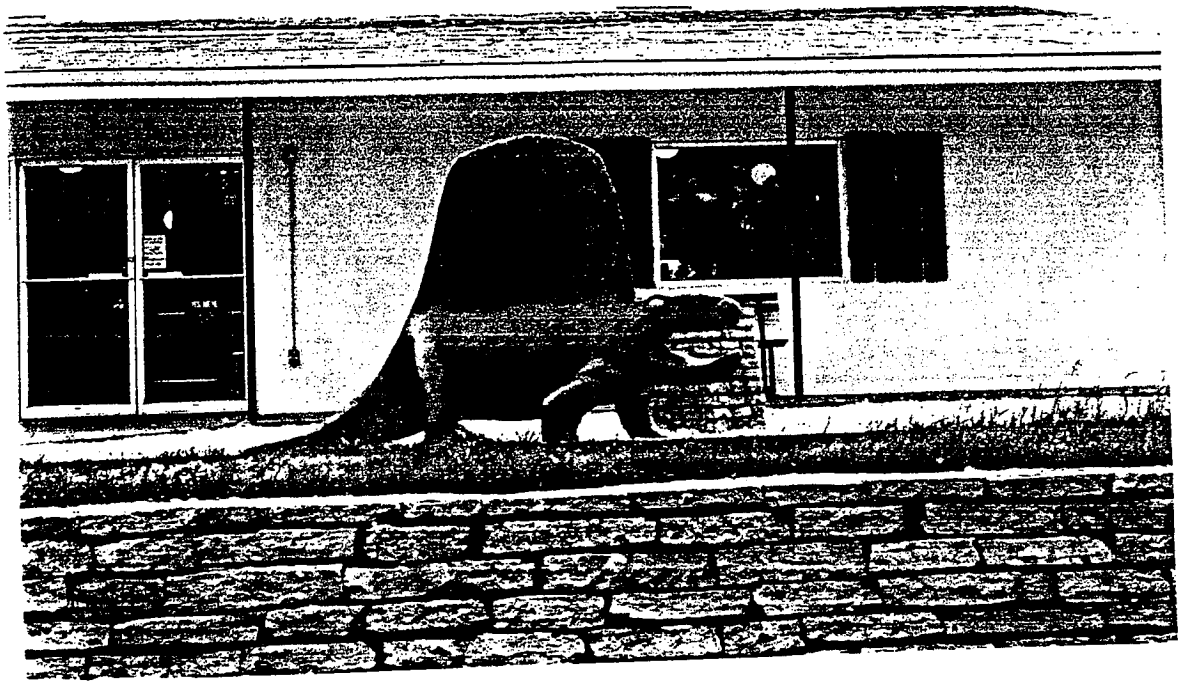
Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 4



Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 5



Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 6



Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 7

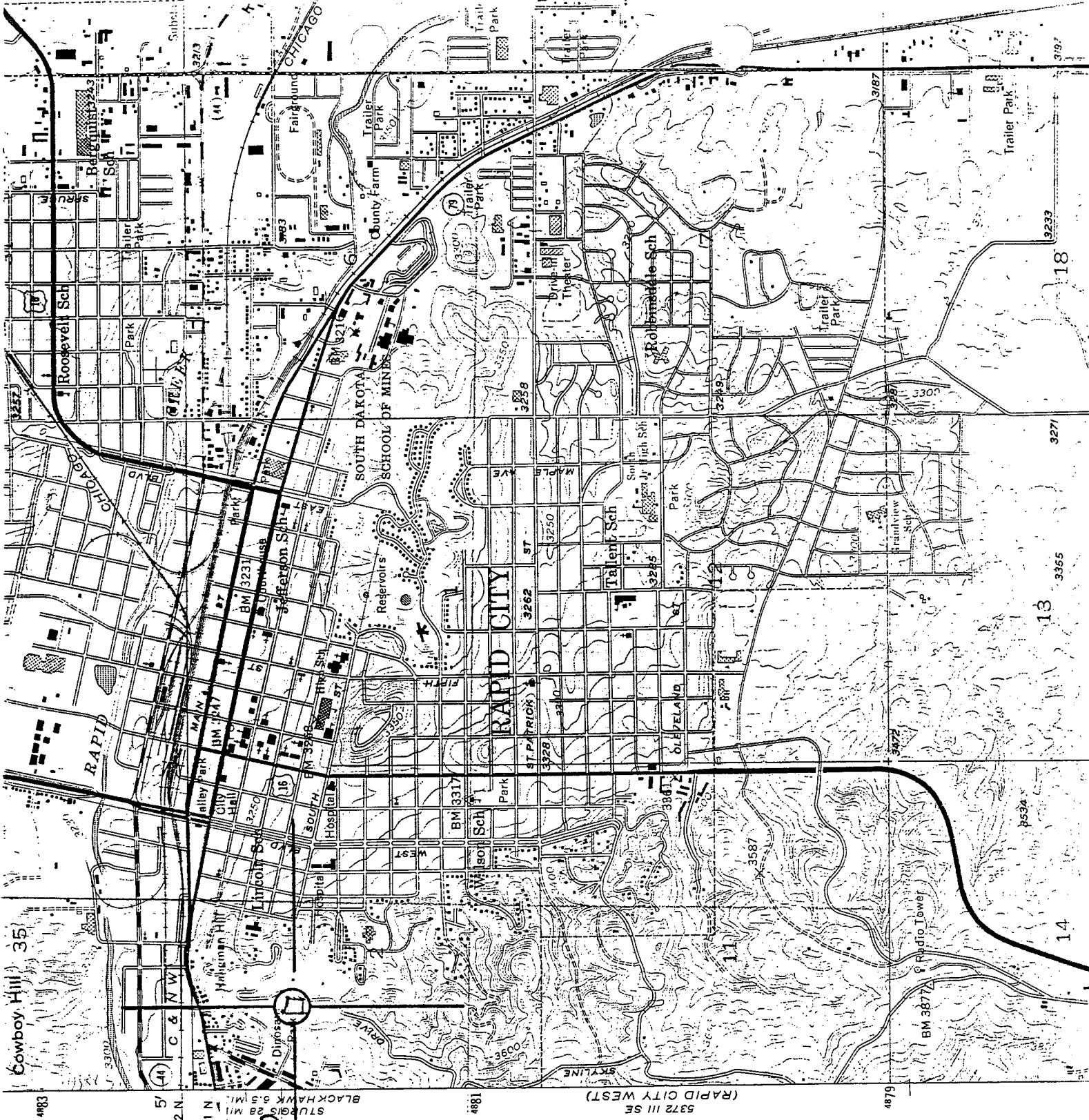


Dinosaur Park, Pennington County, So. Dak., No. 8

Dinosaur Park

UTM:

3/640530/4881800



SOUTH DAKOTA  
HISTORIC INVENTORY

Site Name Dinosaur Park  
Location off <sup>skyline</sup> Starlite Drive  
Owner City of Rapid City  
Address City Hall, Rapid City

History with Dates of Settlement and Construction  
WPA Project # 460

Description of Site

Floor and Roof Plan of Main Building

☐ County  
☐ Township  
☐ City (Urban)  
☐ Neighborhood (Urban)  
☐ Site Number

USGS Quad or City Base Map:

UTM

☐ Q1 ☐ Q2 ☐ Sec. ☐ T ☐ R

Surveyors: John Rau  
Diane Cole

Date 5 ☐ 87  
7 89  
National Register Eligible ☒

(Urban only) A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐

Neg. Roll # Frames

slides