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The Black Hills Journals of Colonel Richard Irving Dodge (American Exploration and Travel Series)

Richard Irving Dodge

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In the spring and summer of 1875, Lt. Col. Richard Irving Dodge escorted the scientific expedition of geologist Walter P. Jenney into the Black Hills of the Dakotas to determine the truth of rumors of gold started by Gen. George Armstrong Custer the previous summer. The five-month trek north from Cheyenne, "Wyoming, challenged Dodge's 452 men with their wagons and animals, but in many respects it was "a delightful picnic (without the ladies)," as Dodge described it.

Colonel Dodge wrote his journals daily in the field, and in their variety, discursiveness, and detail they convey clearly the pleasure he took in what he said was "the most delightful summer of my life." Yet he used only a small fraction of what he recorded in his subsequent official communications and published works. If it were not for this well-annotated and illustrated edition by Wayne R. Kime, readers would not have access to Dodge's experiences with such characters as the stowaway Calamity Jane or the eccentric mountain man and backwoods philosopher California Joe, who was hired to guide the expedition. Dodge's particular interests in hunting, fishing, and fine scenery also enliven his narrative, as do the politics dividing the miners from the Indians, and the soldiers from the scientists on the expedition.

Black Hills Journals of Colonel Richard Irving Dodge is by far the most detailed account yet available of the conflicting claims, interests, and populations that converged on the Black Hills during the key transitional period before the Great Sioux War of 1876.

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