

**CEDAR PASS VISITOR CENTER**  
(Ben Reifel Visitor Center)  
Badlands National Park  
Highway 240  
Interior  
Jackson County  
South Dakota

**HABS NO. SD-23**

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SD-23

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
1709 Jackson Street  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HABS NO. SD-23

Location: Badlands National Park  
Highway 240  
Interior  
Jackson County  
South Dakota

Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates:  
263400E  
4847820N

Present Owner/Occupant: U.S. National Park Service (Badlands National Park)

Present use: Operating as a visitor center and park administrative office facility.

Significance: As a product of the National Park Service's Mission 66 program and its chief designer, Cecil Doty, the Cedar Pass Visitor Center possesses significance as an excellent example of its building type and style. The low, horizontal massing, covered porch, exterior restrooms, and simplified palate of building materials and finishes are all characteristics of Doty-designed Mission 66 visitor centers. A deliberate distinction between public and private uses is evident in the building's spatial organization. Although the visitor center has experienced some loss of historic fabric over time, it is believed that these changes are reversible, allowing it to retain a substantial degree of its historic integrity.

#### **PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

##### **A. Physical History:**

1. Date of erection: July 15, 1958 (groundbreaking), through September 16, 1959 (dedication ceremony).
2. Architect: Cecil John Doty with the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) generated the preliminary designs and layouts of the Cedar Pass Visitor Center. The firm of Lucas, Craig & Whitwam from Rapid City, South Dakota, was hired as the project architects to generate working drawings and supervise construction of the building.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States government (National Park Service), 1958 to present.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Corner, How & Lee of Rapid City, South Dakota, were the contractors for construction of the building.

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5. Original plans and construction: The original drawings for the visitor center can be divided into two groups: those produced by Cecil Doty with the WODC of the National Park Service, and a set of "As Constructed" drawings prepared by Lucas, Craig & Whitwam of Rapid City, South Dakota.

The five surviving drawings prepared by Doty show preliminary schemes, each with a slightly different layout. The earliest drawing, dated February 14, 1957, shows the building with an appearance and configuration very similar to that which was ultimately constructed. The building is organized around a long corridor running east and west. North of the corridor are the public spaces: the open-air porch, the restrooms located at its eastern edge, the lobby, and the exhibit area. Doty shows the porch with planters at five different locations. He also indicates a strip at the south end of the porch along the building wall with an opening in the roof to allow natural light to penetrate the furthest recess of the porch. Internally, the space south of the corridor is primarily reserved for clerical and service functions with office space for park rangers, administrators, support staff, and a naturalist. Separate staff restrooms for both sexes are also indicated on the plans immediately north of mechanical room at the southeast corner of the building. Immediately south of the lobby, and partitioned from it by a folding door, is an audio-visual room intended for media presentations to the visiting public. In the southwest corner of the building is a staff work room.

Doty's second scheme, dated June 25, 1957, is very similar to the previous one, but with notable exceptions on the interior. The exhibit area has been moved from the northwest corner of the building over to the area immediately south of the lobby. The audio-visual room now takes the place formerly occupied by the exhibits. A dark room has been added off of the work room, and the mechanical room has been expanded by eliminating one of the staff restrooms.

In a third preliminary iteration, dated July 25, 1957, Doty reverts back to a rectilinear layout similar to his first scheme, returning the exhibit and audio-visual areas to their original locations. The mechanical room remains in its expanded configuration, leaving only one staff restroom which is now labeled "Women."

Departing radically from previous designs is Doty's alternate preliminary layout of November 4, 1957. While keeping the same vocabulary of forms and materials in elevation, the floor plan has now been twisted into an elongated "Z" shape. The spaces that had formerly been located at the east and west ends of the plan have been rotated at forty-five degree angles relative to the main corridor. Interestingly, it is the public spaces that are now set apart from the staff and service area by their new orientation. This new configuration creates some oddly shaped rooms at the juncture of the three parts, and apparently this scheme was abandoned in favor of the previous one.

On January 14, 1958, an overlay was generated to further refine the spatial layout of western half of Doty's July 25, 1957, preliminary plan. By moving the space for the park naturalist further west (adjacent to the work area) the audio-visual room can assume the same width already established by the lobby.

Using this refined layout, a seventeen page set of construction drawings were prepared by the architecture firm of Lucas, Craig & Whitwam on May 15, 1958. These deviate very little from what Doty had prepared, with the exceptions being the elimination of the porch planters, the insertion of translucent corrugated material into the open-air porch skylight, and moving the west wall of the work room four feet further west.

6. Alterations and additions: In the years since it was constructed, the Cedar Pass Visitor Center has undergone several alterations as follows:

Headquarters (Visitor Center) identification sign: To assist visitors in finding the visitor center, a two-sided building identification sign was installed in the grassy area between the visitor parking lot and the highway. Construction of the sign began on August 18, 1959, and was completed on September 12, 1959. The cost for this project was \$1,425.91.

Emergency roof repair: On May 1, 1972, the Cedar Pass area sustained a damaging wind storm with wind speeds estimated at seventy-five to eighty miles per hour. Portions of the visitor center roof, primarily along the perimeter of the porch area, were lifted up and peeled back. Closer investigation revealed that in the affected areas, the contractor had used two six penny nails to fasten the roof beam clips to the wood roof decking. The original drawings called for this attachment to be made with a single spike. The wind also damaged areas of the guttering, portions of the exterior split-face concrete veneer, and two roof vents. Repairs to the roof began on May 19, 1972, and consisted of replacing the damaged areas of roofing, guttering, and the two vents. The damage to the exterior cladding was also repaired. This work was completed June 1, 1972, by Brablec Construction Company of Rapid City, South Dakota, at a cost of \$14,370.00.

Steel and glass entrance vestibule: The vestibule entrance to the Cedar Pass Visitor Center was installed in the spring on 1978. Black Hills Glass and Mirror Company of Rapid City, South Dakota, furnished the materials and installed the vestibule for \$1,904.00.

Audio-visual enclosure on front porch: In March 1981, a large area of the front porch was partitioned off for use as an expanded audio-visual space. Hollow steel columns were installed from the porch floor to ceiling and plywood panels were hung between the columns to create an outdoor auditorium where audio-visual presentations could be shown to a larger audience.

Porch wall realignment and associated improvements: By 1984 repairs to the wall along the north edge of the porch were needed. This wall had been slowly rotating outward, apparently due to soil settlement. Investigative excavations revealed that the grade beam supporting the wall was out of plumb and needed to be realigned. As part of the work, it was decided to install a trench drain along the north edge of the porch and reconstruct 630 square feet of the surrounding porch floor slab. New front steps and a handicapped-access ramp were also installed at this time. The work commenced on November 2, 1984, by Peter and Rangel Construction Services of Rapid City, South Dakota, and was completed by April 1985 at a cost of \$16,300.00.

Fire alarm and intrusion detection alarm system: In June 1985 fire alarm and security alarm systems were installed at the visitor center for \$10,447.50. The work was done by Industrial Electric & Supply, Inc. of Rapid City, South Dakota.

Re-carpeting of visitor center: In 1986 the worn carpeting in the visitor center was replaced. The services of Kelly's Flooring of Rapid City, South Dakota, were engaged to install 4,275 square feet of 18" x 18" carpet tiles. In addition to this work, 1,520 linear feet of vinyl molded baseboard was replaced with 4" pine base board. During removal of the carpet, a settlement crack in the building floor slab was uncovered and repaired. The work was begun in January 1986 and completed in September 1986. The total cost was \$5,449.18.

HVAC Upgrade: Upgrading of the visitor center heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system took place from May 1987 through October 1987. The old pre-heating and air conditioning unit with its refrigerant compressors and air-cooled condenser was replaced with a new built-up air conditioning unit and air-cooled condensing unit. New HVAC controls were also installed at this time. The work was done by Aldrich Air Conditioning of Rapid City, South Dakota, for the sum of \$24,995.00.

Roof Replacement: By 1988, the existing roof of the visitor center had reached the end of its useful life and was beginning to leak, resulting in damage to the interior ceilings. It was decided to replace the entire roof with a new sixty mil ethylene propylene diene membrane (EPDM) roof manufactured by Manville Roofing Systems. Lowe Roofing of Spearfish, South Dakota was hired to install the new roof, gutters, flashing, and downspouts. The final cost for this work was \$38,681.26, and it was completed November 4, 1988.

## **B. Historical Context:**

### **Mission 66 Program**

The economic prosperity brought on by World War II help catapult the United States out of the Great Depression and into a new era characterized by wealth, mobility, and the luxury of recreation. Use of the national park system soared to new levels, putting a tremendous strain on the limited number of existing facilities to accommodate this influx. Between the years of 1931 and 1948, the total number of visitors to the national parks expanded from an estimated 3,500,000 to nearly 30,000,000.<sup>1</sup> During the depression and the ensuing war, funding for public construction in the parks had not been high on the list of federal priorities. The result had been almost two decades of deferred maintenance and facilities that were now strained to the breaking point. Something had to change.

In the midst of this crisis, Conrad Wirth was named as director of the National Park Service and charged with the task of finding a solution. What he came up with was a radical departure from the status quo. In place of making an annual budget request, Wirth proposed asking for an entire decade of funding.<sup>2</sup> This would serve to guarantee funds for multi-year construction projects on a system-wide scale. He also proposed a system of standards to ensure every park would have the basic facilities necessary to accommodate visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Allaback, Sarah. *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type*. (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2000) 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

A privately funded study was conducted in 1955 to gather public opinion on the problems facing the parks and generate suggestions for improvement. Overcrowding and the limited amount of overnight accommodations were the two most frequently mentioned problems. Among the primary suggestions that emerged (besides the obvious call for more sleeping facilities) were requests for “more information about the sights to be seen, plaques, printed material, guide maps, lectures, etc.”<sup>3</sup> It was this cry for interpretive services that would spark the creation of a new building type in the parks: the visitor center.

During the 1950s there was a growing interest among Park Service planners and architects to develop a facility that could accommodate basic visitor services for information and educational interpretation in addition to administrative functions.<sup>4</sup> Such a building would be, as the Mission 66 program’s promotional booklet *Our Heritage* touted, “a center of the entire information and public service program for a park.”<sup>5</sup> After mounting a significant public relations and promotional campaign, and receiving the necessary congressional and presidential support, Director Wirth launched the Mission 66 program in 1956. Among the many projects planned for construction in the decade were 109 visitor centers.<sup>6</sup>

### **Embracing Modernism**

At the time when the Mission 66 program emerged, the existing buildings and facilities in National Park system were the products of a whole host of architectural styles. Beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 1930s era when the New Deal’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided the parks with inexpensive labor, the Park Service Rustic style emerged as the preferred aesthetic for new facilities. The Rustic style was characterized by the use of natural materials that had strong associations with the surrounding landscape.<sup>7</sup> The public had come to expect buildings and infrastructure that blended in with the environment rather than standing in stark contrast to it.

Mission 66 was a program whose primary objective was to bring about change. It was charged with the task of taking an over-taxed, inadequate system and making it function again through the expansion of visitor-oriented facilities. The program also had to accomplish this objective on a conservative budget in an economy marked by rising labor costs. With its labor-intensive construction techniques and expensive traditional materials, the Rustic style did not seem to fit with what Mission 66 was trying to accomplish.

Although far from new to the United States, the Modern Movement in architecture was gaining wider acceptance in America during the 1950s. It offered the potential to construct large numbers of buildings at a minimum of expense with a limited palate of materials like glass, concrete, and steel.<sup>8</sup> While Americans had accepted such buildings in their cities, it was unclear if they would be willing to do so in their national parks. So while the Park Service embarked on a massive public relations campaign for acceptance of the Mission 66 program, the designers set their hands

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior. *Our Heritage, A Plan for Its Protection and Use: “Mission 66”* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1956) n.p.

<sup>6</sup> Allaback, Sarah. *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type*. (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2000) 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 13.

to the task of creating a new style that would blend the architectural vocabulary of Modernism with the natural settings of the parks. The result became known as Park Service Modern.

The new style reinterpreted the Park Service's position of creating harmony between architecture and landscape.<sup>9</sup> While the Rustic style buildings had achieved this through the consistency of their materials with the surroundings, Park Service Modern designs sought to make the new buildings less obtrusive through low, horizontal massing, and the choice of material colors and textures appropriate for each unique site. Among the characteristic elements of the style that emerged were flat roofs, stone and concrete veneers, and painted steel columns.<sup>10</sup> Efforts were made to select concrete and paint colors that would complement the natural earth tones of each specific site.

### **The Visitor Center as a Building Type**

The term "visitor center" was coined by Mission 66 planners and officially codified by Conrad Wirth in a February 1956 memorandum that urged park staff to use the term when referring to the new facilities. As the name implied, the building type was to be the point of concentration for park interpretive and educational displays, information, restrooms, and other visitor-oriented services. It was also to serve as the nucleus of administrative offices and support. Wirth likened the new facility to a shopping center, a concept that the general public would be familiar with, where they could park their car and from there have access to a variety of highly concentrated services.<sup>11</sup>

This was a novel idea considering that many of the previously-designed facilities had employed the decentralized "park village" model with information and services spread out in individual buildings. The visitor center gathered these amenities together in a central point to help increase efficiency in serving an ever-growing number users. It also ensured that all visitors would have access to the same basic spectrum of orientation, information, and park services.

### **Cecil Doty and the Western Office of Design and Construction**

As part of the Park Service's internal reorganization in 1953, the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) had been created in San Francisco along with its eastern counterpart, the Eastern Office of Design and Construction (EODC), located in Philadelphia. Neither office was completely prepared for the increased work load ushered in by Mission 66, and they recognized that additional design help would be needed. Instead of hiring additional Park Service staff to address these concerns, the agency turned its attention to private architecture firms, and issued contracts on a case by case basis. Typically these firms received preliminary designs that had been developed by Park Service staff, and their job was to take these and produce the necessary construction documents.<sup>12</sup>

Among the designers assigned to the WODC was Cecil John Doty. Born in 1907 and trained as an architect in Oklahoma, Doty spent several years in private practice before joining the CCC. Moving through the ranks from drafting to design, he was given the opportunity to work on a number of projects in state parks across the country. In 1936 Doty became part of the National Park Region Three headquarters in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a staff architect. He was given the

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 18, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 25.

task of designing the new Headquarters building there, and the resulting traditional adobe building was praised as “a fine adaptation of regional architecture.”<sup>13</sup> In 1940, Doty transferred to the Region Four Office in San Francisco, where, among other things, he worked on a lodge for ~~Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park and an administration/lodge/restaurant at Flamingo~~ Marian in Everglades National Park.

Shortly after the organization of the WODC in 1953, Doty was called upon to design a public use building at the Grand Canyon. The result was a building that incorporated modern style elements juxtaposed with traditional rustic materials like stone walls and flagstone paving.<sup>14</sup> Although somewhat awkward, the building was an important transitional prototype in the movement towards the Park Service Modern style Mission 66 visitor center.

With the advent of 1956, Mission 66 began in earnest and Cecil Doty’s hands were full with new visitor center projects. As the schematic designs came off his desk, distinctive elements of circulation, organization, style, and materials emerged as characteristics of Doty’s visitor centers.

In Doty’s way of thinking, the lobby was the hub of activity. Visitors went here first to get information and orientation materials. Exhibits and audio-visual services took on secondary roles and were often located in separate rooms adjacent to the lobby. There was also a distinct separation between public and private spaces. The administrative portion of the building was often kept to the rear of where visitors entered, and frequently had its own private entrance for park staff. Doty used materials as a means to connect the Park Service Modern style in which he designed with the landscape, and where present, other existing buildings.<sup>15</sup> Doty also sought to “bring the outdoors in”<sup>16</sup> and wherever possible, his visitor centers were oriented to take advantage of dramatic natural views from the lobby.

During his career with the WODC under the Mission 66 program, Doty personally worked on plans for more than fifty-four visitor centers at national parks and national monuments in Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.<sup>17</sup> When the program ended in 1966, he was transferred to the EODC in Philadelphia where he worked another two years before retiring. Cecil Doty moved back to California where he died in 1990 at the age of eighty-one.

It was in the midst of this long and colorful career that Cecil Doty took on the challenge of designing a suitable visitor center for the harsh landscape of the South Dakota Badlands.

### **Badlands National Monument**

The Badlands region of southwestern South Dakota is an area that exhibits spectacular erosion. Silty marine and terrestrial sediments, laid down over millions of years, have gradually eroded into an almost unearthly landscape, much of which is nearly devoid of vegetation. One feature that is particularly interesting to tourists is the Badlands Wall - an irregular formation of cliffs, ridges, and spires running for nearly sixty miles along the north bank of the White River.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 217-218.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 225.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 263-265.

<sup>18</sup> Schuler, Jay. *A Revelation Called The Badlands: Building a National Park, 1909-1939*. (Interior, South Dakota: Badlands Natural History Association, 1989) 16.

Long known for its abundant fossil record, the area first came to the attention of the Department of the Interior as a possible park site through the efforts of South Dakota congressman Peter Norbeck. Beginning in 1909, Norbeck launched a crusade aimed to get a portion of the Badlands named as a national park. The effort took years and a great deal of effort. When Norbeck was elected to Congress in 1921, he introduced legislation to create a park, but it got bogged down over land ownership issues and never made it out of committee. Undaunted, Norbeck continue to collect information, outline boundaries, and educate the National Park Service on the importance of the Badlands.<sup>19</sup>

In May of 1928 the bill finally passed the Senate but failed to get consideration in the House before adjournment. That summer the Park Service visited the area and produced a report. It concluded that the Badlands "would make an excellent state park, that it would qualify as a national monument,"<sup>20</sup> but the scenery was not outstanding enough to meet the standards for a national park. After more delays this report eventually found its way into the hands of the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary's Budget Officer, concerned that creating the park would require the government to purchase a great deal of private land, recommended against the proposal.

At this point an exasperated Peter Norbeck gave up the pursuit of national park status for the Badlands and resolved to focus his efforts on getting the area into the National Park System as a national monument. There was always the possibility that Congress would one day upgrade the Badlands to a national park as had been done at the Grand Canyon and Bryce Canyon.<sup>21</sup> Congress agreed to authorize monument status by presidential proclamation on the condition that the State of South Dakota first purchase the privately owned lands within the proposed boundaries and build a road through the area. The bill passed both houses on May 2, 1929, and was signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge.<sup>22</sup>

There was much debate over the route for the new road, but by 1936 work on it was underway. The acquisition of private lands continued throughout the 1930s. Although Peter Norbeck died on December 20, 1936, South Dakota Representative Francis Case carried on his efforts. Two years later all of the pieces of the puzzle where in order, and on January 25, 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation establishing Badlands National Monument.

### **Cedar Pass and the Visitor Center**

Located at the eastern edge of the park boundary, Cedar Pass was named for a stand of evergreen trees in the area. In 1927 a former banker named Ben Millard chose the area as the site to build a campground and hotel that he hoped would be profitable if the Badlands were to become a national park. After his application to build within the publicly-owned portion of the park was rejected by officials in Washington, Millard purchased an adjacent tract of private land at the foot of the pass and started construction of a hotel and tourist cabins.<sup>23</sup>

Not sure that there would be enough visitors to make the hotel viable by itself, Millard constructed a large dance pavilion as an added attraction. He advertised the venue profusely, and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 26.

brought in bands from around the country. People came and Millard's business boomed. He ran the Cedar Pass development with the assistance of his sister for many years, and when the Park Service needed a site for a headquarters/visitor center facility, Millard donated twenty-eight acres for this purpose.<sup>24</sup>

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Ben Millard passed away in 1956, just as the Mission 66 program was getting underway. In June of that year, Badlands National Monument Superintendent George H. Sholly put together a prospectus documenting the significance of the park, the condition of its existing facilities, and what he perceived as the great need to further develop the Cedar Pass area to accommodate a growing number of visitors.<sup>25</sup>

Sholly was convinced that both the park and the public would benefit from a visitor center and administrative headquarters. This would require supporting facilities like employee housing, utility upgrades, and additional roads. Sholly's prospectus received approval in May 1957 with a budget of \$4,050,100 for roads and trails and \$1,373,700 for buildings, utilities, and site improvements.<sup>26</sup> Of this, \$152,900 was earmarked for the new visitor center.

With the assistance of National Park Service naturalists, Superintendent Sholly also submitted a "museum prospectus" specifically addressing the needs and requirements for visitor services. The Cedar Pass location, he felt, was ideal because it allowed visitors coming from either the east or west ends of the park to experience some of the Badlands formations before arriving at the visitor center. Then, after viewing the exhibits and information, they would be able to enjoy the rest of the park with new appreciation and understanding.<sup>27</sup> The document went on to outline the different public spaces in the visitor center that would be required and suggested some rough dimensions for each.

This information was passed along to Cecil Doty at the WODC, and was incorporated to a large degree in his preliminary drawings. Building on Sholly's suggestions, Doty oriented the visitor center to face the Badlands Wall and provided the lobby with a "picture window" view of the formations. To shield it from climatic extremes, the public entrance was located on the building's north side at the rear of a large, covered porch. The interior layout of space in the visitor center accommodates the programmatic requirements of the building while maintaining a separation of visitor services and administrative functions. Although he did not lay out a formal landscape plan for the visitor center, Doty situated the building and its public parking lot just south of Highway 240, where park visitors could conveniently pull off to orientate and educate themselves before continuing on with their visit.

After several refinements to the preliminary design, Doty's plans were handed off to the Rapid City architecture firm of Lucas, Craig & Whitwam. By May 1958 they had prepared and issued a complete set of construction drawings. Two months later, on July 7, 1958, Superintendent Sholly was authorized to proceed with construction. Corner, How & Lee from Rapid City began excavating, and by August the foundations were nearing completion. Portions of the roof and walls were in place by November. At the end of 1958 the visitor center was more than forty percent complete and it was estimated that it would be finished by June of the following year.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Dreller, Sarah M. *Cedar Pass Visitor Center*. National Register of Historic Places Determination of Eligibility. (29 March 2002) section 9, page 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, section 9, page 21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, section 9, page 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, section 9, page 23.

Even though none of the exhibits and very little of the furniture were in place, the park staff moved into the building in May 1959. Work continued throughout the summer, and by ~~September everything was in order. A dedication ceremony was held September 16, 1959, with~~ the Secretary of the Interior, Fred Seaton, presenting the keynote address. He praised the building as yet another fine example of how the Mission 66 program was successfully improving the park system for the benefit of the American people.<sup>29</sup>

The new visitor center at Cedar Pass was not without its share of problems. Settling foundations required the frequent adjustment of interior doors. The number of visitors to the park increased so dramatically that within a few years the seating capacity of the audio-visual room could no longer keep up with demand. Storage space quickly became inadequate, so much so that the westernmost window bay of the lobby was converted into a closet and the storage closets along the hallway were expanded to infill the rows of windows above. An addition to the building was proposed in 1967 to alleviate these concerns, but no action was ultimately taken.

In 1968 Congress added a 133,000 acre portion of land within the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to the monument boundaries. This brought the total land area to approximately 244,000 acres. A decade later, and nearly 70 years after the effort was first begun by Peter Norbeck, Congress officially re-designated Badlands National Monument as Badlands National Park in 1978.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement**

1. **Architectural Character:** This building is a classic example of the Park Service Modern style visitor center which was an outgrowth of the Mission 66 program in the National Parks from 1956 until 1966. It was designed by Cecil Doty, the primary architect of the Mission 66 program, and incorporates the design principles, characteristics, and ideals that epitomize Mission 66 and the Park Service Modern style.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Fair. Evidence of foundation settlement is represented by several cracks in the exterior cladding, interior walls, and an interior door frame that is out of plumb. It is not known if this settlement is still active. Old water damage still stains some of the interior ceiling tiles.

### **B. Description of Exterior:**

1. **Overall dimensions:** Largely rectangular in plan, the building (including the porch) measures approximately 149' - 8" x 55' - 0".
2. **Foundations:** The reinforced concrete foundation wall thickness varies between 6" and 9", depending on location. Above grade these walls are painted beige in color.
3. **Walls:** The reinforced concrete foundation walls of the visitor center extends approximately 1' - 6" above grade. Above this level, the core of the walls is composed of 6" lightweight concrete block clad with split-face concrete block veneer laid in a complex, seemingly random ashlar pattern. The veneer blocks have variegated tan and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, section 9, page 23.

gray hues and come in five modular sizes. A few of the narrower blocks are pulled forward 7/8" to create a random shadow pattern. The masonry joints of gray mortar are raked back 1/4".

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4. Structural system, framing: The foundation system consists of a reinforced concrete foundation walls resting on 2' - 6" x 2' - 0" wide reinforced concrete grade beams. The depth at which top of the grade beams are located varies, but typically is between 3' - 6" and 4' - 0" below grade. The structural floor of the building is a 4" thick reinforced concrete slab resting on a 4" thick layer of granular fill.
  
  5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The deeply recessed porch located at the center of the north side is one of the building's primary components. Originally an open expanse between the entrance to the visitor center and the restrooms, a large area of the porch is now partitioned off with plywood dividers for use as an outdoor auditorium. While they are an alteration to the original design, these partitions could be easily removed in the future if desired. The porch floor is made of poured concrete with a pattern of 24" squares scored into the surface. 4" square hollow metal columns support a series of 10" x 5" steel roof beams. The porch roof consists of 6" wide tongue and groove wood decking that has been painted dark reddish brown. From the sidewalk along the parking lot, the porch is accessed at its northwest corner by two 8" high concrete steps and the adjacent concrete handicapped-access ramp. Originally the steps were flanked by a pair of low cheek walls clad in the same split face concrete block as the rest of the building. The east cheek wall was removed as part of the 1984 porch rehabilitation work to make way for the handicapped access ramp.

The south side of the visitor center contains a long recess with a 4' -6" deep roof overhang. At either end of this recess are a pair of low stoops that provide access to rear entrances. The east stoop also has a wood ramp to facilitate deliveries.

6. Chimneys: There is one chimney located above the mechanical room at the southeast corner of the visitor center. It projects about 2' above the roof level and is clad with split face concrete block.
  
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Pairs of aluminum-framed glass doors provide access to the lobby. Similar doors with vinyl panel inserts are located on the men's and women's restrooms. Hollow metal doors with single, wire-glass view panels open out onto the two stoops at the south side of the building, and the door to the mechanical door is a windowless hollow metal door.
  
  - b. Windows and shutters: Surrounding the lobby on the north side of the building are large, steel-framed windows, divided by a muntin into two lights each. Along the south wall of the porch is a continuous row of high windows that were covered over with plywood as part of the porch audio-visual enclosure project. A similar row of high windows on the east side of the building allow natural light into the restrooms. In the recessed area on the south side of the building, the upper half of the wall is composed of twenty-eight windows. Horizontal muntins

divide each window into four lights. Above the doors at either end of recess are single-light fixed windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof of the visitor center is flat with a raised portion over the exhibit area. In 1988 a new EPDM roof membrane was installed over tapered sheet insulation and ballasted with pea gravel.
- b. Cornice, eaves: At the top of the exterior walls is an 8" tall pre-finished aluminum fascia with a raised upper lip. The roof is tapered to direct water to a handful of downspout locations around the building where it enters a scupper and flows into the 4" x 4" pre-finished aluminum downspouts. At the north porch overhang, the aluminum fascia overlaps the 3" x 12" wood fascia. On the south side of the building, the soffit beneath the overhang has a painted stucco finish on metal lath.

**C. Description of Interior:**

1. Floor plans: The main entrance of the visitor center opens into the lobby which is now used primarily as a gift shop. West from the lobby is a wide opening that leads into the exhibit area where educational exhibits are located around the perimeter of the room. There is every indication that the exhibits on the walls and in the display cases appear to date to the time when the visitor center first opened. This space also serves as an impromptu auditorium when cold weather conditions outside make using the A/V enclosure on the porch impossible. Directly south of the lobby is a second exhibit space. This room was originally constructed for audio-visual presentations. The windows along the south wall of this room have been paneled over, but part of the wood sills remains exposed. Around the corner to the west is an office space for park rangers, and beyond this is the workroom and a storage closet. Running east from the lobby is a long hallway. Park offices and a reference library are located along the south side of the hallway while the north side is lined with storage closets. A small restroom is located at the eastern end of the hallway where it turns south for a short distance to one of the rear exit doors. Out through this exit door and immediately to the east is the only entrance to the mechanical room.

Comparing the current floor plan with the original construction drawings, several alterations become apparent. Most noticeable is the audio-visual enclosure on the porch which is used during the warmer months for presentations. The westernmost window bay in the lobby has been converted into a storage closet. The workroom in the southwest corner of the building has been partitioned to include a storage closet. The room directly west of this, originally labeled for the park naturalist, has had the audio-visual projection and storage closets removed from it. And further east down the hallway, the space labeled "Clerical & Files" has now been divided into two offices by the installation of a wall.

2. Flooring: With the exception of the restrooms and the mechanical room, the flooring throughout the visitor center is 18" x 18" brown carpet tiles. Most of these were installed in 1986. The floors of the building's restrooms are tan colored ceramic tile and the mechanical room has a bare concrete floor.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: Throughout the visitor center, most of the walls in the public spaces (lobby, exhibit room, and former audio-visual room) and the work room are covered with 1/2" wood-grained plywood paneling. In the exhibit room this paneling extends up to a height of 8' - 0". Then from this level up to the ceiling the wall surface is painted gypsum board. In the private spaces (the hallway and staff offices), some of the walls have light-colored wood wainscoting that extends from the floor to a height of 32". Above this the wall surface is painted gypsum board. Other walls in these areas have full-height 1/2" wood-grained plywood paneling. The north wall of the former rangers' office (presently the library) is surfaced with vinyl wall covering. The walls in the restroom have ceramic tile up to a height of 6' - 0" and above this the walls become painted gypsum board. Concrete block is used for the north and west walls of the mechanical room, and on the sides of these walls there they are shared with the restroom and hallway, the concrete block has been painted white. 4" tall, light-colored, pine baseboard can be found through the building.

There are four different ceiling types represented in the visitor center. By far the most prevalent is 10" x 10" acoustical ceiling tiles glued to gypsum board. In the lobby and former audio-visual room, the ceilings are gypsum board with a texturized surface finish. This ceiling was installed in November 1988 by adding furring, gypsum board, and a texturized finish over the existing acoustical ceiling tiles. The exhibit area was designed with a suspended metal grid ceiling with 2' x 4' acoustical panels. Painted gypsum board ceilings can be found in the restrooms and mechanical room.

4. Openings:
- a. Doorways and doors: The majority of the doors in the building are light-colored oak doors. Each door has a tall, narrow pane of obscure glass located close to the door handle. The light-colored oak door trim is 1 3/4" wide with a simplified profile.
  - b. Windows: The interior window trim consists of a light-colored oak sill and molding that is 3 1/2" deep.
5. Decorative interior features and trim: The only semi-decorative features on the interior of the visitor center are a pair of louvered wood transoms above the doors leading from the lobby into the hallway and the workroom. These have the same materials and finish as the doors and door trim.
6. Hardware: Brushed brass hardware with a clear lacquer finish is installed on most of the visitor center doors. The lobby and restroom doors are fitted with steel hardware and hinges. On the windows the steel hardware has been painted to match the color of the window frame.
7. Mechanical equipment:
- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: When originally constructed, the visitor center was heated by a fuel oil-fired boiler and cooled by an evaporative condenser. A new built-up air conditioning unit and air-cooled condensing unit

were installed in 1987. The existing HVAC controls were also upgraded at this time

- b. ~~Lighting: Two and four-lamp ballasted fluorescent lights can be found in the~~ majority of the visitor center rooms. Square, recessed can lights with frosted glass drop lenses are installed in the exhibit room and the restrooms. The exhibit room also has a number of recessed, elongated, directional can lights that illuminate the wall displays.
- c. **Plumbing:** Most of the plumbing fixtures in the building are located at its eastern end in the restrooms. The women's restroom has four toilets and three lavatories. Three toilets, two urinals, and three lavatories can be found in the men's restroom. The staff restroom contains a single toilet and lavatory. The only other interior plumbing fixture is a small efficiency kitchenette lavatory located in the north wall at the west end of the hallway. Hot water for the building is provided by a 19.9 gallon water heater located in the mechanical room. There are exterior water faucets at several points around the exterior of the building.
- d. **Fire/intrusion alarm system:** The fire and intrusion alarm system was installed in 1984. Smoke detectors were installed in all of the visitor center rooms and heat detectors were placed in the three restrooms. Magnetic contact switches to detect unlawful entry were placed on all of the exterior doors except the restrooms, and an infrared motion detector was located to span the opening into the exhibit room. Both the fire and intrusion alarms can be controlled from panels located inside the northeast entrance door to the building and in the mechanical room.

**D. Site:**

1. **Present and Historic landscape design:** The site of the Cedar Pass Visitor Center remains largely the same as when the building was constructed. Highway 240, which is the main path for vehicular traffic passing through the park, runs along the north edge of the visitor center grounds. There is a long, curving parking lot for public use between the building and the highway, along with a smaller parking lot for employees on the south side of the building. A building identification sign was constructed in 1959 in the grassy area between the visitor parking lot and the highway. A prominent flagpole is located in the front lawn of the visitor center, directly north of the front porch and slightly east of where the handicapped access ramp and entry walk connect to the building. At some point in time a 4' - 0" wide sidewalk was added parallel to the west wall of the building to connect the north and south parking areas. A small number of medium-sized cedar trees are scattered throughout the lawn surrounding the visitor center, along with several young cottonwood trees. The area directly beneath the overhang on the south side of the building is covered with landscape gravel, but lacks any plantings.

No historic landscape plans for the building by Cecil Doty or others were found during the data gathering for this documentation project, nor were any landscape materials shown on the plot plan that was included in the "As Constructed" drawing set. The only information available about Doty's landscape intentions for the visitor center can be found on two of his preliminary drawings, dated February 14, 1957, and November 4, 1957, respectively. Each of these show the north elevation on the visitor center with low shrubs and bushes spaced randomly up against the building walls.

The visitor center is situated at the foot of Cedar Pass, adjacent to the lodge, cabins, and campground area that were originally laid out and constructed by Ben Millard in the late 1920s. ~~The closest buildings to the visitor center are housing units for National Park Service staff which are located several hundred yards south of the building.~~

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

#### **A. Architectural drawings:**

Preliminary; Sheet 1: Site plan, Sections, Elevation and Floor Plan; February 14, 1957, Cecil Doty, National Park Service, WODC; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

Preliminary; Sheet 1: Site Plan, Sections, Elevation and Floor Plan; June 25, 1957, Cecil Doty, National Park Service, WODC; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

Preliminary; Sheet 1: Site Plan, Sections, Elevation and Floor Plan; July 25, 1957, Cecil Doty, National Park Service, WODC; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

Preliminary; Sheet 1: Floor Plan, Alternative Preliminary Elevation/Perspective; November 4, 1957; Cecil Doty, National Park Service, WODC; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

Preliminary; Sheet 1: Floor Plan (overlay for floor plan on sheet dated July 25, 1957); January 14, 1958; Cecil Doty, National Park Service, WODC; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

"As Constructed" drawing set; Sheet 1: Plot Plan, Roof Plan, Details; Sheet 2: Foundation Plans and Details; Sheet 3: Floor Plan and Room Finish Schedule; Sheet 4: Exterior Elevations; Sheet 5: Building Sections; Sheet 6: Section and Structural Details; Sheet 7: Structural Plans and Details; Sheet 8: Window Elevations and Details; Sheet 9: Door Elevations and Details; Sheet 10: Room Elevations and Details; Sheet 11: Cabinet Work and Details; Sheet 12: Exhibit Room Casework and Details; Sheet 13: Plumbing Plan; Sheet 14: Heating Plan; Sheet 15: Heating Data; Sheet 16: Electrical Plan; Sheet 17: Projector Room Details; May 15, 1958; Lucas, Craig & Whitwam, Rapid City, South Dakota; repository: National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

Sound System for Visitor Center; Sheet 1: Electrical Plan; May 15, 1958; Engineering Branch, WODC, National Park Service; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

Audiovisual Facilities Improvements; Sheet 1: Plan, Elevations; Sheet 2: Details; March 18, 1981; National Park Service; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

Rehab Floor & Retaining Wall; Sheet 1: Maps, Photographs, Plot Plan; Sheet 2: Plans and Details; April 1984; National Park Service; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

Fire and Intrusion Alarm drawing set; Sheet 1: Cover Sheet; Sheet 2: Visitor Center; Sheet 3: Building 12; November 1984; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

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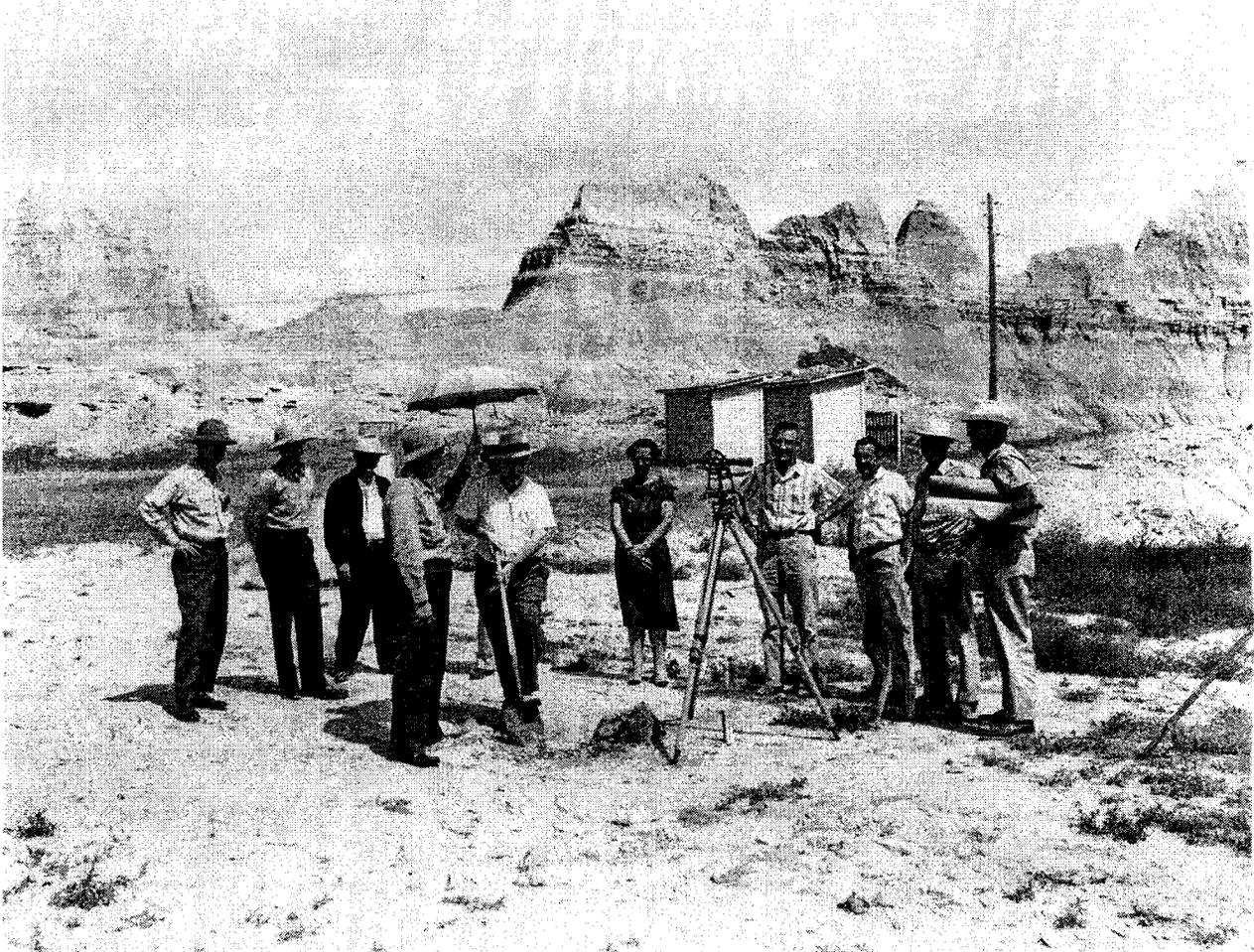
Fire and Intrusion Alarm drawing; Sheet 1: Main Floor, Intrusion Panel, Fire Alarm Panel; November 1984; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

Reroof Visitor Center; Sheet 1: Cover sheet, Sheet 2: Roof Plan, Sheet 3: Roofing Details; May 1988; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

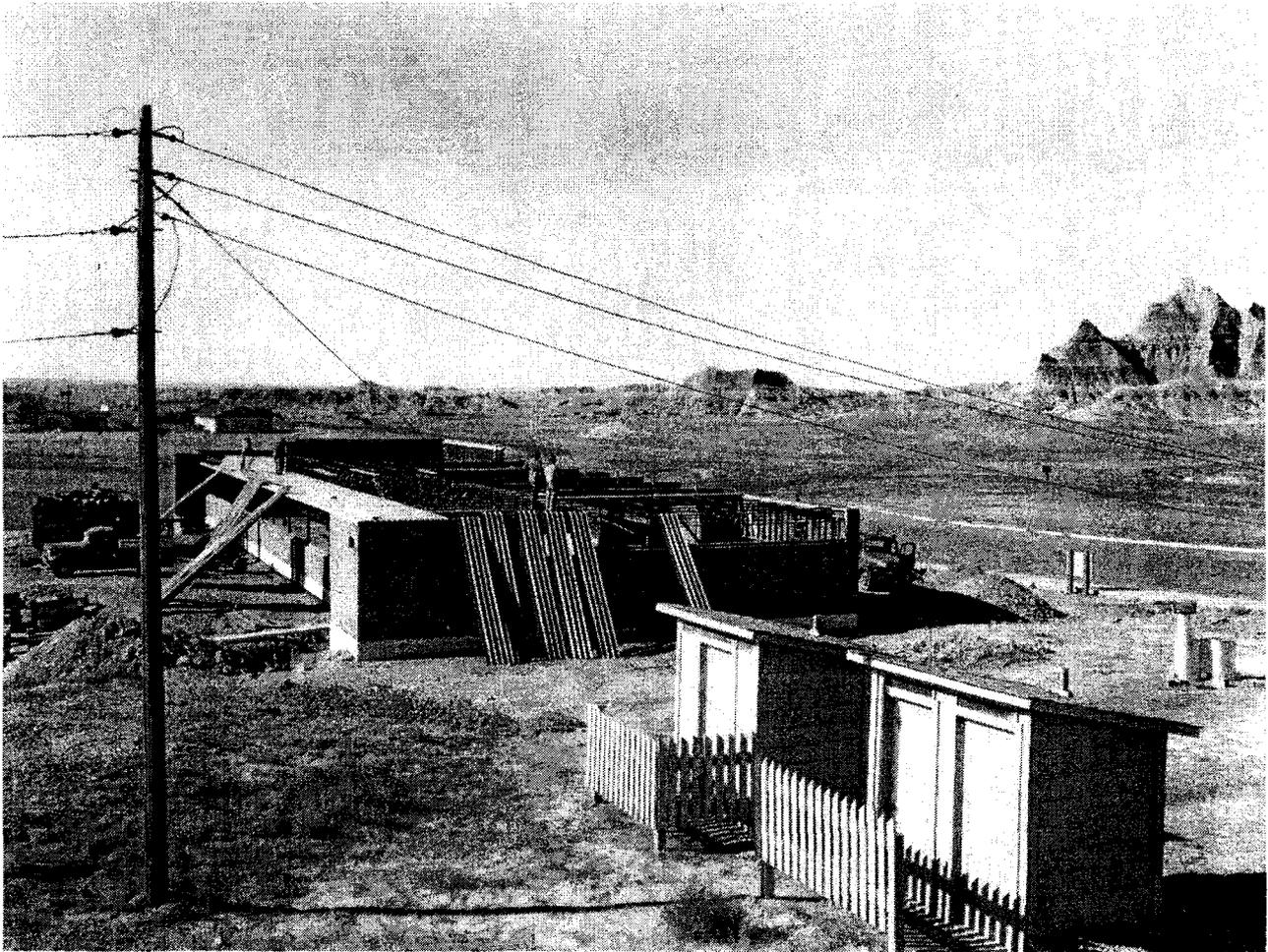
Visitor Center Reroof; Sheet 1: Roof Plan (showing tapered insulation layout); Big Sky Insulations, Unlimited, Belgrade, Montana; August 9, 1988; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

Downspouts and guttering drawing set; Sheet 1: Roof Plan; sheet 2: Fascia Detail; sheet 3: Downspout/Gutter Detail; Sheet 3: Downspout Detail, Downspout Section; Hickman Aluminum Construction Products; August 19, 1988; repository: Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

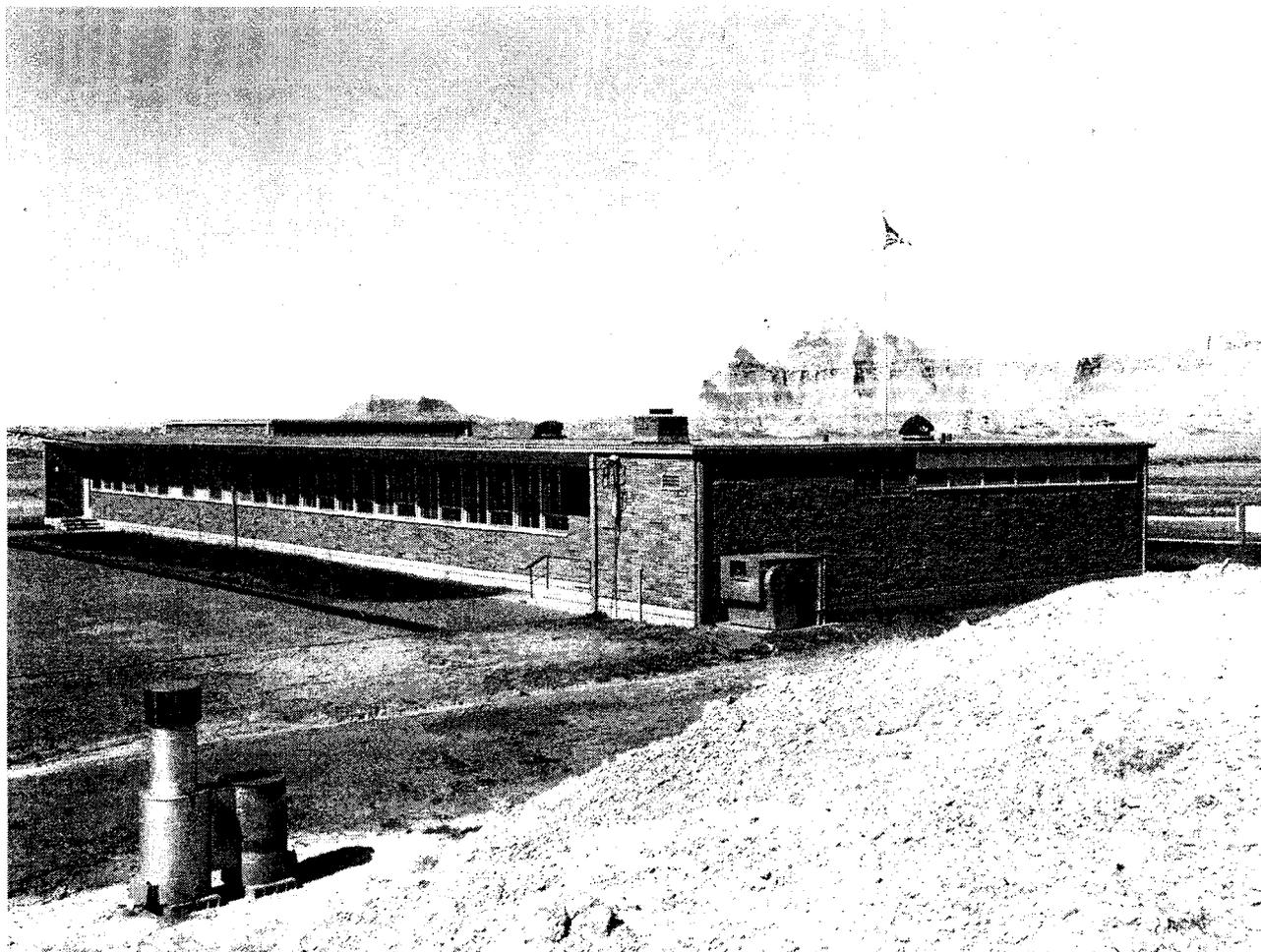
B. Historic Photographs:



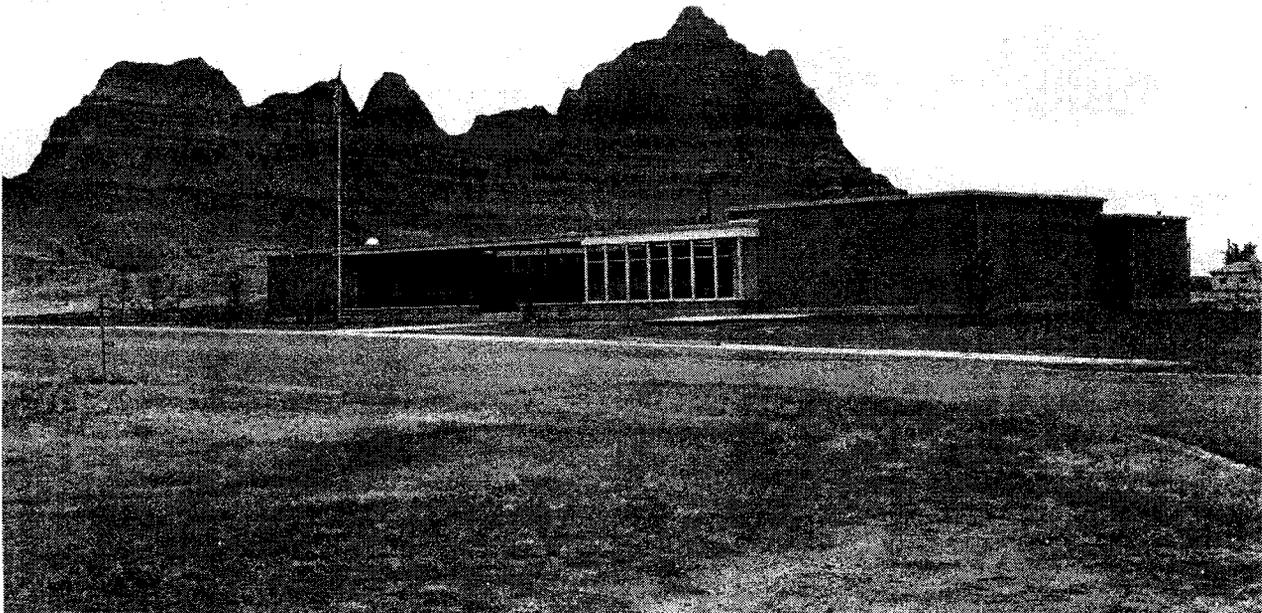
**Figure 1:** Badlands National Monument Visitor Center ground breaking ceremony, photographer not known, July 15, 1958, Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 2:** Badlands National Monument Visitor Center construction, photographer not known, not dated (circa 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 3:** North side of Badlands National Monument Visitor Center shortly after completion, photographer not known, not dated (circa 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 4:** South side of Badlands National Monument Visitor Center shortly after completion, photographer not known, not dated (circa 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



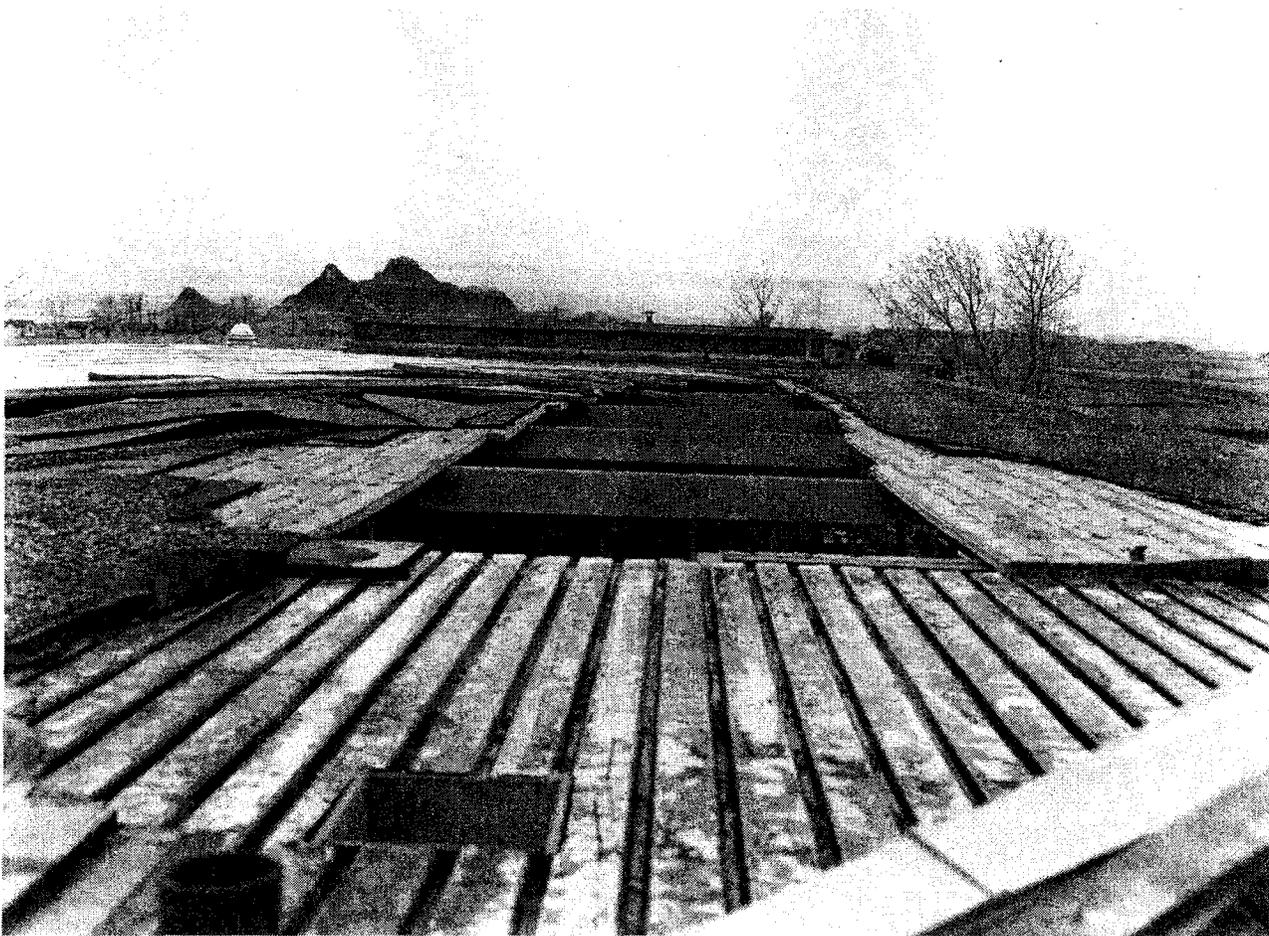
**Figure 5:** North side of Badlands National Monument Visitor Center shortly after completion, photographer not known, not dated (circa 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



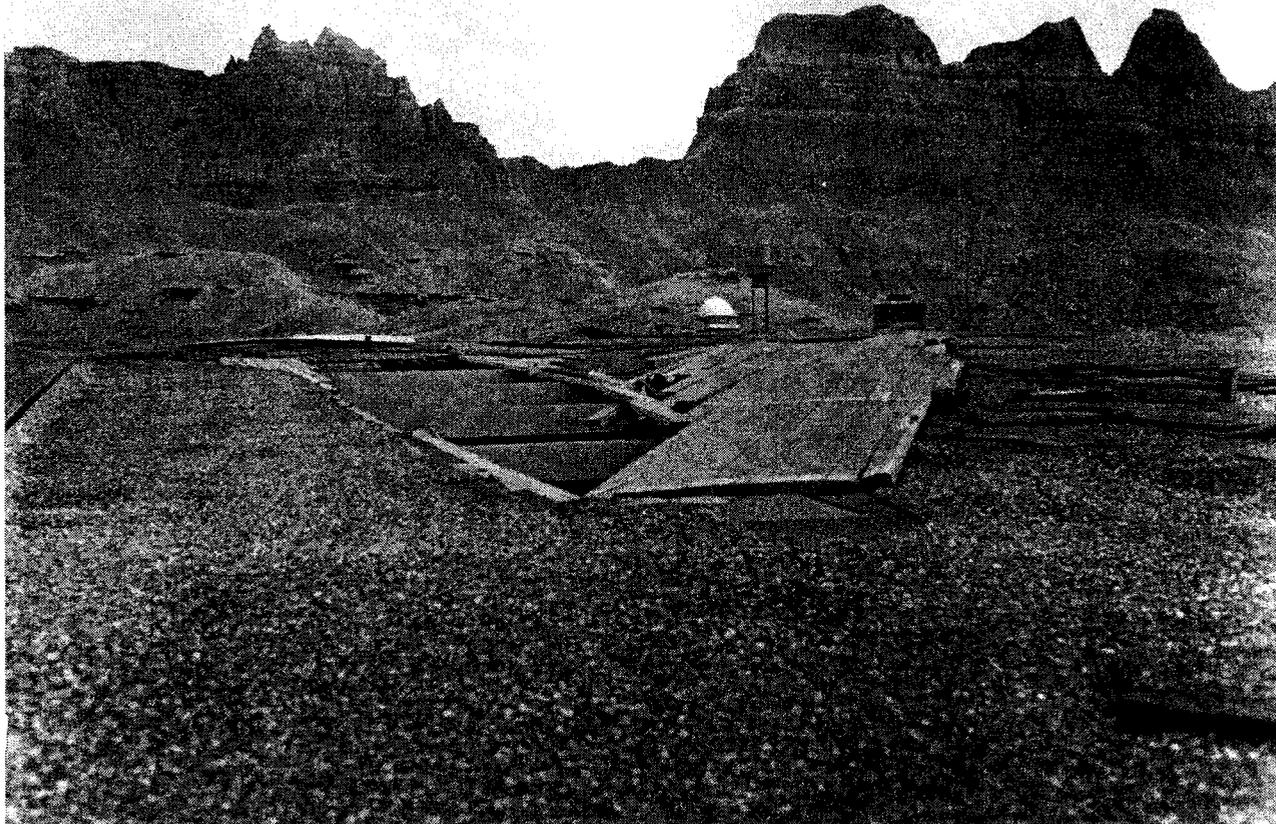
**Figure 6:** West side of Badlands National Monument Headquarters sign (located between the visitor center and the highway), photographer not known, not dated (circa September 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 7:** East side of Badlands National Monument Headquarters sign (located between the visitor center and the highway), photographer not known, not dated (circa September 1959), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 8:** “View of damaged roofing, taken from portion over restrooms toward the lobby area. Note vent frame in foreground, steel decking, and damaged roof laid back over office area to left.”  
photographer not known, not dated (but taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



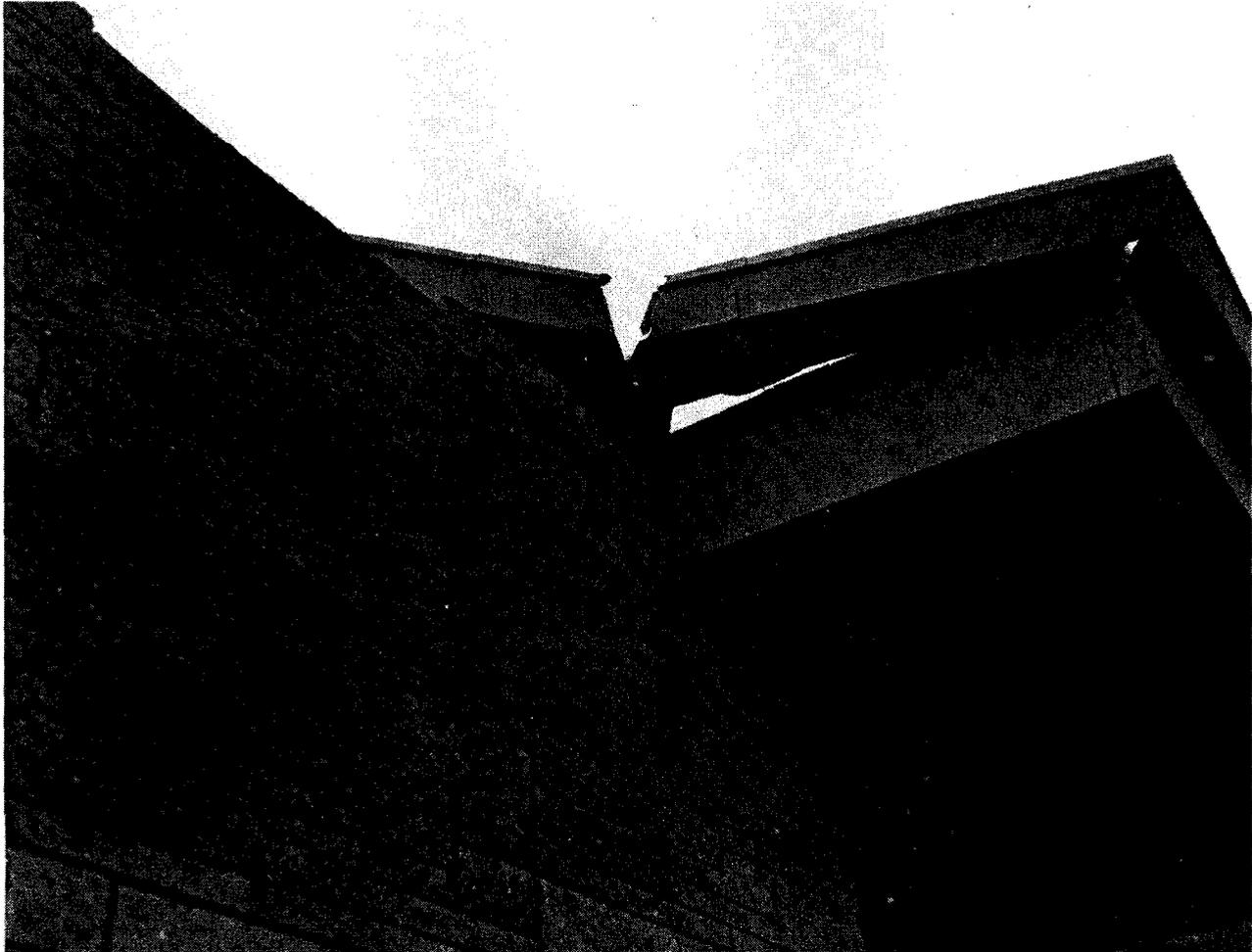
**Figure 9:** “View from over lobby area showing damaged section, ventilator which came from near vent pipe over women’s restroom.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 10:** “View from porch note taped windows and the area where the roof had laid over.”  
photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and  
copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 11:** “View from porch center showing damaged section, splintered decking and connecting spikes.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



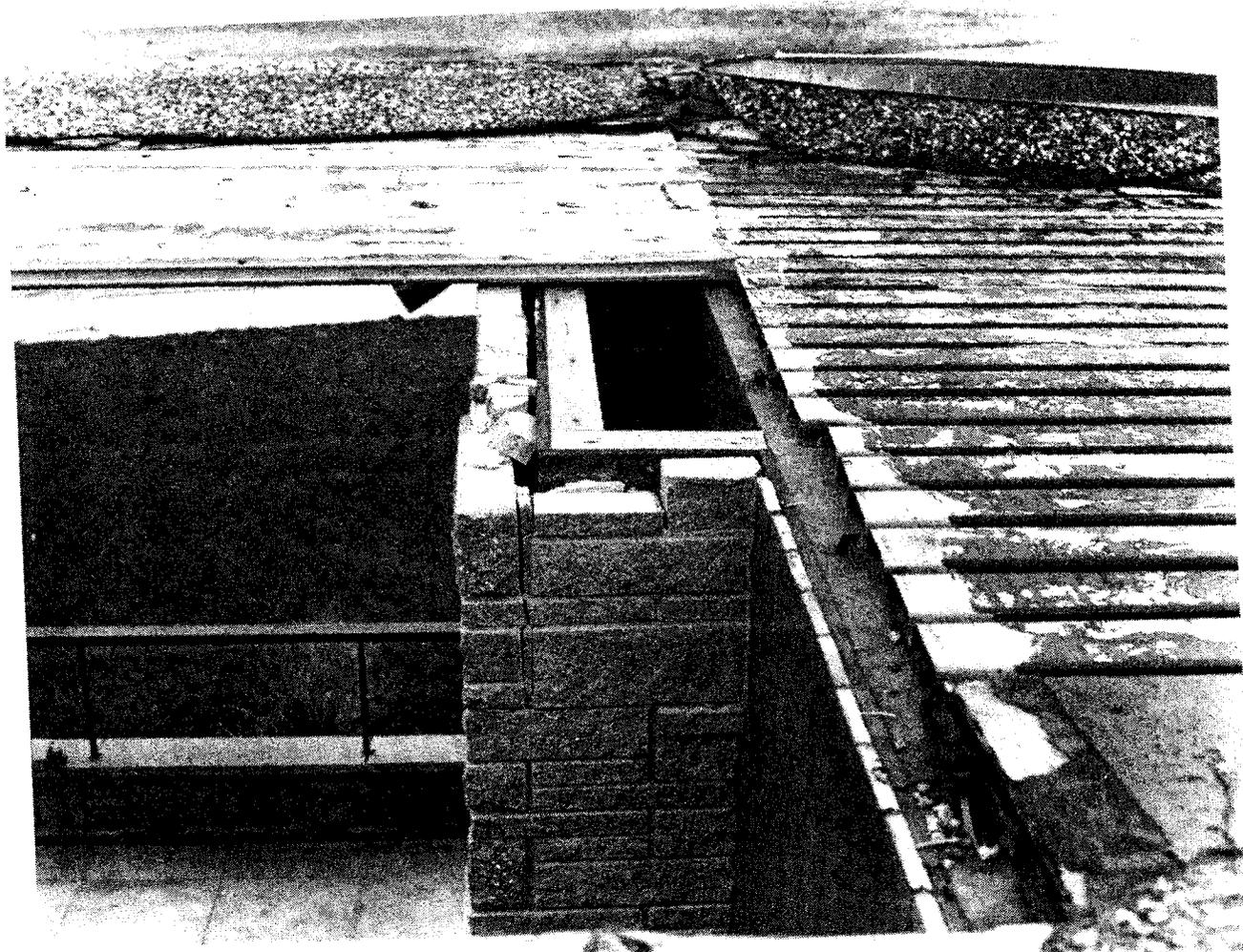
**Figure 12:** “Corner of roof near women’s restroom. Note damaged gutter corners and separated brick siding. Also note separation of wood plank facing from metal support beam.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 13:** “Clip with two, six-penny nails in lieu of spike. Note spike driven through planking to left. The culprit of the damage.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



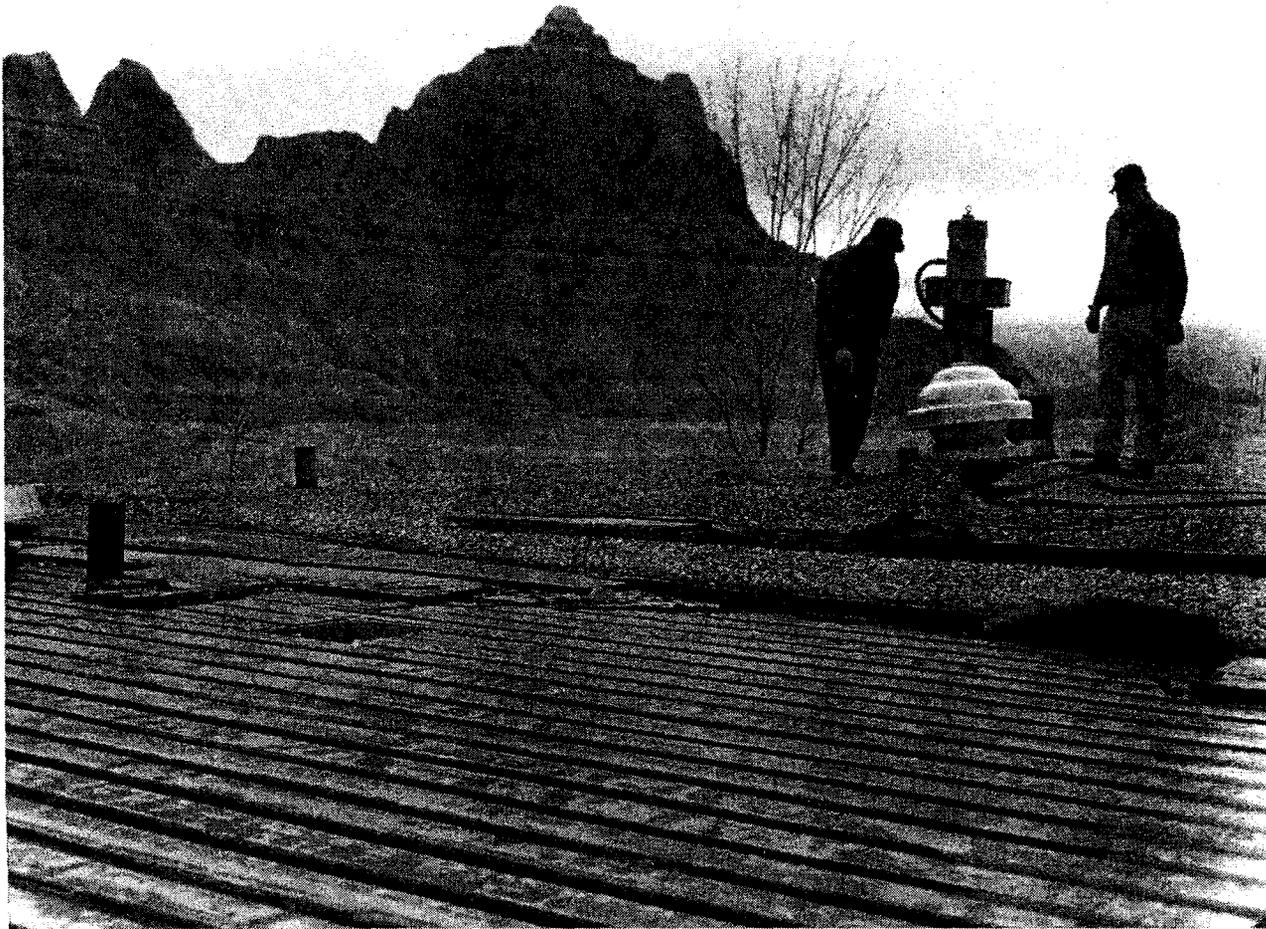
**Figure 14:** “Portion of planking roofing showing tar paper, under 1 inch insulation mat, and four ply asphalt and gravel roof.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



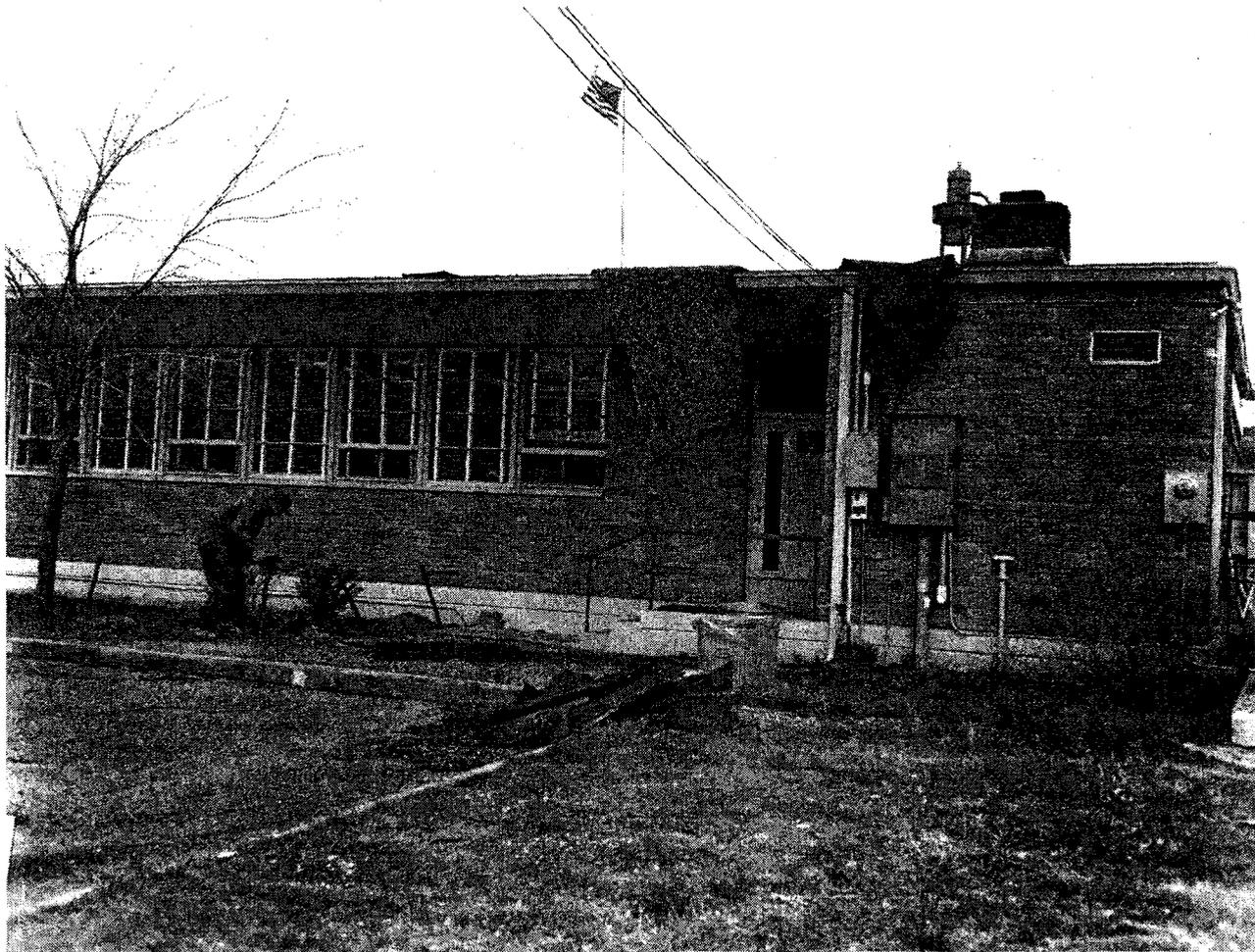
**Figure 15:** "Section showing plank deck and metal decking over restrooms. Note separation of brick facing. This portion, and that over the lobby required emergency repair to prevent rain damage." photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 16:** “General view of porch roof. Note the ventilator near fire siren which came from the frame below Mr. Harrington’s left foot.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 17:** “View over restrooms showing vent frame and approximately 25 feet away the ventilator with motor.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.



**Figure 18:** “Rear of visitor center showing debris which blew over and off the roof. One car parked in the first space had several large cracks and pit marks in the windshield, plus chipped paint.” photographer not known, not dated (taken immediately following windstorm of May 1, 1972), Image and copyright held by Badlands National Park, Interior, South Dakota.

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#### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

This report was prepared by Matthew G. Hansen as part of the larger Cultural Landscape Report on the Cedar Pass Developed Area of Badlands National Park. The project was completed at the request of the National Park Service Midwest Regional Office (MWRO). Dr. Edward F. Zimmer, historian, was the report editor. Large format record photographs were contributed by photographer Paul J. Brokering.