

‘Accurate History and Facts’ or Memoir?:

Unravelling the Weave of History and Life Narrative in the Black Hills

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**Abstract:** This essay explores how John S. McClintock’s *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills: Accurate History and Facts Related by One of the Early Day Pioneers*, originally published in 1939 and republished by the University of Oklahoma Press in 2000, is employed as a historical source by historians and in popular cultural contexts (including by scriptwriters for the HBO series “Deadwood”). The essay underscores palpable tensions in a text in which McClintock presents himself as an eyewitness to key moments in Black Hills history, yet claims not to want to speak of himself. Tracing these tensions in the text reveals interesting insights into how we read and classify forms of life narratives and how those life narratives may serve historical understanding and writing. In writing of a life narrative written by an ancestor, I discuss my own relation to the man and the memoir as well the challenges that arise in working on life narratives by kin.

**Biographical note:** Laura J. Beard is Professor and Associate Vice President of Research at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Her research interests include life narratives, women writers of the Americas, Indigenous literatures, stories and storyworlds. A two-time Fulbright Scholar, she is a founding member of, and serves on the Steering Committee for, the International Autobiography Association Chapter of the Americas. She is currently working on a book project on the memoir of her ancestor John S. McClintock, *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills: Accurate History and Facts Related by One of the Early Day Pioneers*, which involves fun research in Deadwood, South Dakota.

Within traditional Westerns, the West often functions as ‘a symbol of freedom’ as well as an ‘opportunity for conquest,’ offering an ‘escape from the conditions of life in modern industrial society’ and promising ‘a translation of the self into something purer and more authentic, more intense, more real’ (Tompkins 1993, 4). While that promise of purity and authenticity is most often connected to the deserts and mountains of the western landscapes, the towns of the Wild West also feature prominently, with many such towns continuing to play off their histories as Western towns today. Deadwood, South Dakota is one example. The city itself is designated as a National Historic Landmark, visitors are encouraged to come to Deadwood in order to see the ‘authentic’ Wild West, and various cultural heritage tourism events play powerfully on the narrative of authenticity and nostalgia for the West that was.

In contrast to any mythic space of purity, the first episode of HBO’s popular series *Deadwood* (aired 2004-2006) opens with an indoor scene in which a prostitute named Trixie shoots a customer who beat her. The bullet passes straight through his head, while the man lies slumped against the wall, still alive. The scriptwriters took the scene directly from the memoir of my paternal ancestor, John S. McClintock, who tells the tale thus:

On one occasion as I was passing up the street, I heard a great clash of voices and a shot fired. I waited until others had rushed in and following them, I beheld a man lying on the floor with a bullet hole clear through his head back of his eyes. The woman “Tricksie” had grabbed a pistol while he was beating her and turned the tables on him. A doctor came and ran a probe through his head. However, there were no brains, at least in that section of his skull. A few weeks afterward I met the same man on the street.

(McClintock 2000, 70)

The dramatic anecdote, told in his usual no-nonsense fashion, comes from McClintock's *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills: Accurate History and Facts Related by One of the Early Day Pioneers*, originally published in 1939 and republished by the University of Oklahoma Press in 2000. The scene from the 'Deadwood' tv show is just one example of how pieces of McClintock's memoir have become part of the public knowledge of history—used as an authoritative source by academic historians, popular historians, scriptwriters for HBO, the City of Deadwood on their website<sup>1</sup> and in public displays throughout town.

In this essay I examine how McClintock's work is employed as a historical source by others and underscore palpable tensions in a text in which the author presents himself as an eyewitness to key moments in Black Hills history, yet claims not to want to speak of himself. Tracing these tensions in the text reveals interesting insights into how we read and classify forms of life narratives and how those life narratives may serve historical understanding and writing.

### **Determining the genre of the text**

McClintock's text fits Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's basic definition of life narrative as 'a historically situated practice of self-representation' (2001, 14). Certainly the text is historically situated in the Black Hills, in the city of Deadwood, in Dakota Territory, before the establishment of what is now the state of South Dakota. In coming to McClintock's text from a different time and place, part of the critical knowledge I bring is that of a life narrative scholar, trying to pin down the genre of this historically situated text. I write this essay at the beginning of a larger research project on this text; my research in the Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center in Deadwood, where I have had a chance to review McClintock's original manuscripts and papers as well as files on Deadwood businesses and life in the town in the early

days; the hours spent scanning old Black Hills newspapers available in the Deadwood Public Library; and the generous help from the archivist at the Deadwood City Archives with maps and other documents there all help me perform the acts of interpretation and translation I make in discussing this memoir—intergenerational acts of transfer, crossing time periods, geographical boundaries, even political ideologies, to flesh out what was going on in Deadwood in 1876-1939 (Arthur & Kurvet-Käosaar 2015, 119).<sup>2</sup>

The subtitle of McClintock's work, '*Accurate History and Facts Related by One of the Early Day Pioneers*,' would seem to claim it as history. The book is presented as a 'record of early-day conditions and events in the Black Hills' and readers are assured that McClintock's 'reputation for veracity is unimpeachable' (2000, x). Indeed, his text is widely cited by academic historians, popular historians, or popular culture presentations of the history of Deadwood, the Black Hills, Wild Bill Hickok, and Calamity Jane.<sup>3</sup>

The Editor's preface, first published in the original 1939 edition, reveals how Edward L Senn met McClintock when the former arrived in Deadwood in 1909 to take on the Deadwood newspaper, then called the *Deadwood Daily Telegram*. Senn, impressed with McClintock's 'wonderful memory and vivid recollection of early-day occurrences,' convinced him first, to write historical pieces for the newspaper and later, 'to leave to posterity in permanent form his knowledge of early-day history of the Black Hills' (McClintock 1939, ix, x).

Senn's 1939 preface writes McClintock's text onto a generic boundary between history and life writing. Senn refers to the text as a 'record of early-day conditions and events in the Black Hills' (McClintock 1939, x), which appears to present the work as history. Yet in the same sentence he affirms that in writing that record, 'Mr. McClintock has confined his stories to

matters of which he has personal knowledge, or information direct from reliable persons who had such knowledge' (McClintock 1939, x). Now we have *stories*, McClintock's stories, stories of which he has personal knowledge or lived experience, back on the life narrative side of our spectrum, corresponding, indeed, to statements from Smith and Watson (2001) that, for life narrators, 'personal memories are the primary archival source' (6). Life narrators make use of other sources, including conversations with other persons, but usually only 'to support, supplement, or offer commentary on their own idiosyncratic acts of remembering' (Smith and Watson 2001, 6). Senn further asserts that other momentous or tragic events in Black Hills history do not enter this text or only receive 'casual mention' because McClintock has no personal knowledge of those events. *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills* is not a professional historian's account. Indeed, while John S. McClintock was not a professional historian, through the widespread use of his memoir as an authoritative source by other historians, it can be said that he 'made history.'

Yet an examination of the paratextual materials reveals other claims for the text. Inside the book, the Library of Congress classification system uses the term biography. The back cover of the 2000 paperback reprint from the University of Oklahoma Press carries the information that '**John S. McClintock** (1847-1937) was an early pioneer of the Black Hills. **Edward L. Senn** edited and published McClintock's memoirs in 1939, two years after McClintock's death.' That information is incorrect, as McClintock died in 1942, three years after the publication of his book, as evidenced by, among other things, the photos of him doing book signings in Deadwood! The University of Oklahoma Press reissued the book with a new cover (and corrected information) in 2017, but the point of genre I want to underscore is that clearly the book is read as *memoir*. Indeed, that corrected 2017 book cover quotes from a favorable review in the

*Amarillo Globe-News* that repeatedly refers to it as memoir: ‘Anyone who can resist this memoir. . . has no sense of humor, no history, and no soul. John S. McClintock had all three in abundance. . . . A wonderful memoir of the early West.’

So rather than a history or a biography, memoir seems to be the most commonly used term for the text. Certainly Smith and Watson’s definition of memoir as ‘a mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant; the memoir directs attention more to the lives and actions of others than to the narrator’ (2001, 198) fits well with McClintock’s work.

For McClintock’s text is clearly not confessional. McClintock does not share details of a personal or emotional life, but maintains a distinction between the private and public that Jaume Aurell (2016) calls ‘a very archetypal conflict for biographical historians’ (65). To what degree, then, is this text a life narrative and how has the text been used by historians of all stamps to create their own narratives of Deadwood and its colorful characters? To explore those questions, we turn again to those who set up the text for publication and to those who have drawn from it over the years.

In his foreword to the 2000 University of Oklahoma republication, Wayne Kimm refers to the text not as ‘a comprehensive account but rather a gathering of glimpses that together comprise a varied sketch of the place and time its author had come to know so well’ (ix). That ‘gathering of glimpses’ seems an apt description of a text that was compiled, late in his life, in part from shorter pieces McClintock had written for and published in the local newspapers. In the newspaper sketches, as in the larger book, McClintock clearly wanted to set the record straight on the city he helped found and on the people he knew there. Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane

and others had already become legends. He wanted to provide the ‘accurate history and facts’ to offset all the crazy ‘bunk’ that had been circulated by others.

In his introduction, McClintock is deliberate in his authorial aims, assuring his readers that

In presenting personal recollections as well as general knowledge of early days in this narrative, I shall, so far as is practicable, refrain from drifting into my own life history, and from injecting my own personality too freely into the story, though I have, during more than threescore years in the western mountains, shared in many of the dangers, hardships, troubles and disappointments incident to life in the western wilds. While my life has not been wholly devoid of dangers and thrills, I shall endeavor to find other and more appropriate material than personal exploits and self-laudatory “bunk” such as too frequently finds its way into print. (McClintock, 2000, 1)

These double-barrelled sentences both work in the same way: they stake his claim as a participant in and eyewitness to important moments in Black Hills history, while making it clear he is not writing a text about himself. These somewhat convoluted claims are intriguing to me as a scholar of life narratives. He wants to make clear that he writes of ‘more appropriate material than personal exploits and self-laudatory “bunk”’ he has seen in other printed histories of his locale, putting himself above those texts and authors. But even as he does so, he wants the reader to know that he has had considerable experience in the Black Hills and shared in ‘the dangers, hardships, troubles and disappointments’ that others write about in more colorful or exaggerated fashion. McClintock’s claim to the authority of lived experience in the Black Hills is important in the text, inviting the reader’s belief in the narrative and in his veracity as a narrator,

persuading the reader of the narrative's authenticity, even justifying the writing and publicizing of the life narrative (Smith & Watson 2001, 27).

As an intradiegetic narrator, McClintock is present in the text as both observer and participant (more often the former) and his text directs almost all attention to the lives and actions of others. Of the 71 chapter titles, only one has a first person reference from the author, 'XXII. My Arrival in the Black Hills' (McClintock, 2000, 45). Eighteen titles have names of specific persons who are not McClintock, while others refer to places, groups, events, aspects of the mining business, etc. Some of the final chapters include: 'Summary of Early Day Fatalities' (a listing by year of who was killed by whom and how); a chapter on 'The Society of Black Hills Pioneers' (which describes how the Society was established and includes lists of who served as president, secretary or treasurer, with dates, as well as the 1908 list of members in good standing); a list of surviving pioneers (19 as the book was going to press in 1939); and a final chapter which includes biographical sketches of prominent citizens compiled by Edward Senn. An earlier chapter includes the listing from the 1878 Business Directory of Deadwood and adjacent mining camps, with the most extensive listing of businesses being the saloons. While these lists might at first seem out of place in a life narrative, Philippe Lejeune (2009) reminds us that 'the form of the account book probably acted as an inspiration or a model for the less financial and more personal journals that people began keeping of their other "properties" in the modern era' (51). Anne Rügemeier further affirms that the inclusion of lists in a life narrative 'highlights the tension between the things mentioned and the things not mentioned, the absent and the present, things revealed and things hidden' (forthcoming, n.p). McClintock and Senn create lists of persons and events they consider important but there are many other persons and groups in the Black Hills whose stories are not included. I would argue also that the inclusion of

the lists and the chapters on such topics as sawmills and placer mining—all chapters that provide information rather than tell a story, contribute to his power as a narrator. By establishing his expert knowledge on Deadwood and these various topics, these chapters not only serve as a source for historians but also set him up as an expert so that we, as readers, are more likely to consider him a reliable narrator in the more narrative chapters. We are more likely to take his opinion on the facts because we see him as a factual person.

Clearly, McClintock does not use his memoir to direct attention to own life, but rather uses his life experience as the authoritative material from which he writes a history of Deadwood, the Black Hills, and the early day pioneers. He believes that readers will be interested in learning about the early days of [non-Indigenous, almost exclusively male] settlers in the Black Hills and he has the lived experience to share about those days. *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills* is an example of a life narrative written and published within the ‘larger historical and cultural conjunctions and shifts [that] bear upon the composing and publication of a particular narrative’ (Smith and Watson 2001, 166).

In *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market*, Julie Rak writes about memoirs written for readers who ‘want to read about places and people that are not accessible to them in their immediate lives’ (2013, 3). McClintock’s memoirs (and the histories and historical biographies informed by them) serve that need, allowing ordinary readers to read about places, people, and past times not accessible to them today. Just as memoirs in recent decades have held broad appeal for readers who want to be transported to other lives and other places, so too were Westerns (the novels, the films, and the tv shows) wildly popular through much of the twentieth century in transporting people from all levels of society to another world (Tompkins 1993, 5). Deadwood and the Black Hills seem always peopled with characters from a (somewhat) mythic

past. The books, films, and tv shows about Deadwood continue to fascinate folks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century intrigued by those legends.

While not a professional writer, McClintock skillfully sets up his memoir in relation to already legendary figures<sup>4</sup> and tumultuous events. The introduction (or ‘Introductory’ as it is called in the text) reviews how he came to know of the Black Hills, General Custer’s expedition through Dakota in 1874 and the reported discoveries of gold by members of that expedition, the restraining order from Washington forbidding whites from entering the Black Hills, land reserved for the Dakota under treaty, and the general disregard of the treaty rights by those hungry for gold. He ends the introductory chapter with a dramatic one sentence paragraph: ‘Such was the tumultuous condition of affairs at the time I arrived here in the spring of 1876’ (McClintock 2000, 5).

While the final sentence sets up expectations in the reader of a narrative that will continue to tell the story of McClintock’s arrival in the Black Hills, and thus provide a narrative arc of his life story, those expectations are not met. The next chapter does not plunge the reader into tumultuous events nor provide details of McClintock’s time in the Black Hills, but rather provides a sketch of ‘The Black Hills.’ Much of this sketch is laudatory, describing ‘the scenic splendors’ (McClintock 2000, 6) of the Black Hills, which are described as ‘[f]riendly, inviting and of rare charm,’ an area ‘becoming known each year in wider circles for their unique beauty’ (McClintock 2000, 6), a ‘land of pure delight to the pleasure seekers, the health seekers, the home-seekers—for all humanity’ (McClintock 2000, 7). Yet the first few paragraphs underscore the different reality that runs throughout the text and throughout this history. The ‘Blue spruce and Ponderosa pine in eternal struggle to conquer the rugged, rock-topped peaks [that] give the mountains the color of midnight blue’ in the second paragraph set up the ‘eternal struggle’

described in the third paragraph and throughout the text: ‘Then came the gold rush of ’76, the final and greatest battle of the red men against further encroachment of the white men, and the Black Hills passed from the dominion of the Indians’ (McClintock 2000, 6). No matter how lovely the Black Hills are in McClintock’s description, no matter how greedy the miners were for the gold, no matter how nostalgic folks may be about the Pioneers of 1876, the reality is that everyone who entered the Black Hills in 1876 did so in violation of treaty rights of the Dakota and in violation of US law. The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie recognized the Black Hills as ‘set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians herein named’ (Treaty). Every non-Indigenous person who entered, including John S. McClintock, was violating the treaty.

McClintock recognizes the violation of treaty rights in the introductory section: ‘The situation in 1875 became so tense that, notwithstanding the treaty rights of the Indians, the governmental restraining order, and the strict surveillance kept up by military guards, many tried to reach the Hills’ (McClintock 2000, 4). In 1875, some were apprehended and turned back, some wagon trains were captured and destroyed, but by 1876, when he arrived, McClintock notes that the ‘almost unparalleled gold mining excitement . . . increased in intensity’ (McClintock 2000, 4) with the restraining order ‘not being effectively enforced’ (McClintock 2000, 4-5). While celebrating in some ways the excitement of the gold rush days, McClintock’s narrative on numerous occasions reiterates that none of the settlers/pioneers/miners had the right to be there. This tension between a recognition of the illegality of their presence and a celebration of their status as ‘Pioneers’ is one of the palpable tensions I trace in another part of this project on *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills*.

## **A Brief History of the Man Behind the Memoir**

John S. McClintock was born in Missouri in 1847. His father had come to Missouri from Tennessee five years earlier and received land from the government. While they had been somewhat prosperous, the Civil War swept away all they had. In 1869 John S. McClintock went to Montana as prospector and miner, so that, in 1876, when he set off to the Black Hills in search of gold, he already had some experience in prospecting and mining.

While he did get involved in mining and prospecting, McClintock, unlike many who arrived in Deadwood caught up in gold fever, was practical enough to get involved in other things as well, owning several businesses over the many years he lived in Deadwood. He operated the stagecoach line between Deadwood & Spearfish and had a livery stable in town. He was a prominent citizen in the new town, starting and managing the Opera House for many years. He was one of the original members of the Society of Black Hills Pioneers, a group of citizens who arrived in the Black Hills before January 1, 1877 and, in 1889, formed ‘a moral, benevolent and literary association.’<sup>5</sup>

He wrote small pieces for the local papers and, at the age of 92, published his memoirs. When he died in 1942, he was the oldest living Lawrence County resident and the oldest living member of the Society of Black Hills Pioneers (Rezatto 1980,120). He is buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery, the same cemetery where the more famous Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane lie interred.

## **My Relation to the Man and the Memoir**

John S. McClintock is a relation on my father’s side. Although a few generations apart, he and my father both grew up in Missouri and I remember childhood trips to visit all my Beard and

McClintock relatives there. I also remember childhood family trips out west, stopping in Deadwood, visiting McClintock's grave in Mt. Moriah, as well as the graves of the more famous Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane. On a return trip, the summer after my graduation from university, I walked through the cemetery, looking for McClintock's grave as I couldn't remember where it was in relation to those famous, well-marked graves.

My mother, however, was the genealogist in our family. She traced my father's tree, kept track of old family photographs, and had a file on the McClintock relatives, all of which has become part of my archive for this larger project. That my mother was the one tracing my father's family tree is not unusual, as it is often women who are the family genealogists or, as Alonda Nelson calls them, the 'kin keepers':

Kin keeping refers to the maintenance of familial links, the circulation of information and traditions through the familial network, and the provision of financial and emotional support to kin that is predominantly performed by women and often passed intergenerationally between grandmothers, mothers and daughters. (Nelson 2011, 29)

I first learned of John S. McClintock's book from my mother too. She had located an antiquarian bookseller who had a copy (her genealogy research was before the days of computers and e-mails, so she wrote letters, visited libraries, and did much painstaking work), but felt the price was beyond our budget.

In the summer of 2002, I was participating in a summer seminar on American Indian Autobiography at the Newberry Library in Chicago and consulted with a research librarian there about McClintock's text. We discovered that it had recently been reprinted as a paperback by the University of Oklahoma Press. I skimmed my new copy, but it sat on my shelves for a long time

until a research leave in 2017-2018 offered me the chance to take up the book again as an academic topic. As a life narrative scholar, I am interested in memory, the politics of identity, the construction of family, the relationships between family narratives and national narratives, and the politics of historical sites. In my work to date, I have studied, written about, and taught these issues in the life narratives of others. However, I have also been intrigued by important life narrative scholarship by researchers who have turned to stories in their own families. That work emboldened me to turn to a published life narrative in my own family and start a larger project around that narrative.

Nevertheless, back when I first was able to purchase John S. McClintock's book in 2002, I was disappointed that it was not more autobiographical. Reading a memoir by my relative, I wanted more about the man, his life experiences, and his family of origin. Driven by the affective will to know, I wanted to learn more about our shared family, but McClintock does not write about his life before Deadwood (nothing about his parents who are my great-great-grandparents). Perhaps that is why I put it aside for so long. I was expecting an autobiography and I got a history of the town and its inhabitants. Not only did I not get the life narrative of John S. McClintock I had expected, I did not get the narrative I expected. The text is not a neatly constructed linear narrative with beginning, middle, and end, tracing a life from a (more or less) beginning point to the point of writing. It is more a series of sketches and some lists.

It is only when I picked up the text fifteen years later and read it from the perspective of a life narrative scholar that I started to find traces of his voice, topics to research, ideas to explore. The chapter titles confirm that he is writing mainly of others, but the text as a whole also confirms Jaume Aurell's claim that 'When historians write history, they aspire to comprehend the experience of the self, not merely that of the other; conversely, when they write

autobiography, they aspire to comprehend the experience of the other, not merely that of the self' (2016, 2). If this text can be said to be a life narrative, it is certainly one by a historian more interested in helping his readers comprehend the experiences of others.

### **The Memoir as Source of History**

In *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Smith and Watson affirm that 'when life narrators write to chronicle an event, to explore a certain time period, or to enshrine a community, they are making "history" in a sense' (2001, 11). Historians also make narratives, that is, historical writing is the construction of narratives. As Robert Rosenstone reminds us, 'Neither people nor nations live historical "stories"; narratives, that is, coherent stories with beginnings, middles and endings, are constructed by historians as part of their attempts to make sense of the past . . . written history is a representation of the past, not the past itself' (1995, 35). Written history, just like life narrative, is shaped by conventions of the genre.

Certainly, McClintock sets out to chronicle the early days of Deadwood and states quite clearly his intentions in writing his history of the pioneer days:

While it is regrettable that varying versions of many events which transpired in the Black Hills during its pioneer days have already passed into history, it should not be expected that, after the lapse of so many years, all accounts written from memory should harmonize in all particulars. Each writer should transmit his version of these events as they were impressed upon his individual memory. This rule I will adhere to in whatever I have to say or write, regardless of what others may have said or written, although they may have been equally honest in their statements as I have been in mine. (2000,1)

He performs several rhetorical acts here. He disputes the accounts of others. He upholds his own reputation. He regrets the printed versions he finds inaccurate, lamenting throughout his own text the wild versions of tales told of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane that do not correspond to his lived experiences with the two flesh-and-blood persons who lived in Deadwood for parts of their lives. Mostly he confirms that he will be ‘honest’ in his ‘statements’ all the while acknowledging that ‘accounts written from memory’ cannot be expected to be perfect ‘in all particulars.’ From page one, he names and acknowledges the thorny issues we face as historians and life narrative scholars. His text is intriguing then, not only for those interested in the early days of the Black Hills, but also for those interested in the imbrication of memory, authority, history, and life narratives.

Interspersed throughout his text are statements about authority, reliability, integrity and veracity. In the chapter ‘Trail Blazers of 1875,’ he writes of a conversation with his old partner, William Smith of Cave Gulch, Montana, who had come to the Black Hills in the summer of 1875. McClintock sets up his report by proclaiming:

Here was a man who had passed middle age, well educated, well informed, a practical miner, of strict integrity and unquestionable veracity. From this man I received more authentic information regarding the discoveries made in Whitewood and Deadwood gulches and the locating of placer claims and the townsites of Deadwood and Central, than I have since learned from all other sources. (2000, 31)

While McClintock describes Smith, he could also be describing himself at the time of writing, another man past middle age, well informed, someone with at least some practical mining experience, someone whose integrity and veracity he would like the readers not to question,

someone who (we are to believe) is offering more authentic information about Deadwood than all other sources.

Historians continue to take McClintock as a definite source, or as definite a source as one can find on the pioneers days of Deadwood. Robert K. DeArment, author and editor of numerous books on gunmen, gamblers and lawmen of the West, cites from McClintock in his *Assault On the Deadwood Stage: Road Agents and Shotgun Messengers* (2011). His chapter on ‘The Battle at Canyon Springs’ relies on information from McClintock’s *Pioneer Days* chapter on ‘Overland Stage Business and Holdups.’ In McClintock’s account, ‘The most heartless, as well as the bloodiest, stage robbery ever perpetrated in the Black Hills, occurred on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1878, at Canyon Springs station on the Cheyenne Road, 40 miles south of Deadwood’ (2000, 212). Listing the persons involved, he notes: ‘In this bloody affair at least six men were implicated. For these men were well known to this writer, three of them favorably’ (McClintock 2000, 212). McClintock considers the blame to lie with the outsider, a hardened criminal, who concocted the heinous crime and tempted ‘the three supposedly honest, hardworking boys into what appeared to be a promising proposition’ (McClintock 2000, 212-13). When DeArment cites from McClintock, he refers to him as ‘Deadwood pioneer and historian John S. McClintock’ (2011, 152) or ‘Black Hills historian John S. McClintock’ (2011, 197). In a long footnote discussing the different dates of birth given for Scott Davis, one of the shotgun messengers who battled against the road agents attacking the stage coaches, DeArment notes that ‘John S. McClintock was one of the few writers correctly citing the year of Scott’s birth’ (2011, 220n3). For DeArment, McClintock is a historian and a reliable one.

Helen Rezatto, author of *Mount Moriah: ‘Kill A Man—Start a Cemetery,’* similarly, if more colorfully, places McClintock’s name ‘high on the honor roll of Black Hills historians’

noting that he ‘was usually where the action was,’ witnessing so many of the key events in the Black Hills ‘from a ringside seat’ (1980, 17). In her caption to the McClintock photo she includes in her book, Rezatto again affirms that he ‘usually had a front row seat when history exploded in Deadwood Gulch. His first break as a future historian was that he saw Wild Bill’s assassin run down the street with a smoking gun’ (1980,17).

Rezatto is correct in her claim that McClintock was often a witness to key events, yet her own reporting from his text is not always accurate. In returning to his text, we find that he does not report Jack McCall running down the street. In his chapter on ‘Wild Bill,’ McClintock writes that ‘Many contradictory statements have been made by different persons who claim to have witnessed the murder of Wild Bill and the arrest of McCall. This writer, though near by on the street at the time, did not witness the killing’ (2000, 108). He proceeds to share an account that was related to him by the late Anse Tippie, the bartender in the saloon who was a witness, proceeding to the part when McCall, having been arrested and in the custody of three or four men, ‘passed me on the street’ (McClintock 2000, 109), whereby McClintock gives his own description of McCall at the time, concluding that ‘At best, he was a repulsive-looking individual. He showed no sign of being drunk at the time, as he walked quietly up the street’ (McClintock 2000, 109). That Rezatto refers to McClintock’s having seen the murderer run by, when McClintock does not report him running, seems only to uphold McClintock’s own claim of the ‘many contradictory statements [that] have been made by different persons.’

James D. McLaird, professor emeritus of history from Dakota Wesleyan University, has written books on Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hickok. McLaird cites from McClintock to dispel rumors that Hickok had been asked to serve as marshall of Deadwood (McLaird 2008, 56). In his chapter entitled ‘Wild Bill,’ McClintock writes of the conditions in the town of Deadwood at the

time that Hickok arrived. He proceeds to state ‘I have described these conditions to show that, from my point of view as an everyday observer in those memorable days of ’76, while there was no question but what the city of Deadwood was at that time in need of better local government, it was not in the need of a notorious man-killer as peace officer’ (McClintock 2000, 106). As is often the case, McClintock, as an intradiegetic narrator, uses his extensive local knowledge to support his opinions, setting himself up as a reliable narrator. The level of specific detail given as he responds to the stories of others supports his knowledge of the events and of the individuals involved:

There may have been some talk by his friends [referring here to Wild Bill] that he was to receive the appointment as marshal, but if there was such talk, it was not generally known, as I never heard of it. As regards the stories about Johnny Varnes, a professional gambler whom I knew very well, and Tim Brady, a man I never heard of, conspiring to have Wild Bill killed, it is my opinion it is without foundation, and has been related by hero worshippers for the purpose of leading readers into belief that their hero was greatly feared by the tough element in Deadwood. . . . I don’t believe that Varnes or any other gambler in the town had any fear of Wild Bill, as he himself was a gambler. Though not a very successful one, it was his only occupation in Deadwood. (2000, 106)

In this sample passage, McClintock 1) distinguishes himself as not a friend of Hickok (his friends might have spoken of him as a possible marshall, but *I* never heard of it, the general population of the townspeople were not speaking of that possibility); 2) dismissing the stories about Varnes and Brady as he knew Varnes well (insider knowledge) and never heard of Brady (which presents the possibility that there was no such person in Deadwood at that time); 3) reminds us that much of what is written about Hickok is created to build the myth but does not

correspond to the lived reality of his relatively short time in Deadwood; and 4) undercuts any lawman status for Hickok by reiterating that he was an unsuccessful gambler and a notorious killer. These moves all depend on McClintock's authority as narrator. If we believe McClintock is a reliable narrator, we accept his version of events as likely factual.

The myths and the legends of the Western get reworked at different points in our national histories to respond to contemporary moments yet always remain central to our national narratives. David Milch, creator of the HBO series 'Deadwood,' has asserted that 'Deadwood, like other gold rush towns, was a kind of reenactment of the founding of our country' (Milch 2006, 41). The fictional and filmic versions of Deadwood all seem to carry a heavy representational weight. To be sure, Westerns are seen as mythic and legendary at the same time as they function as 'a complex retelling of American history, bound just as much to [their own] . . . contemporary moment as [their] . . . historical setting' (Worden 2009, 222). McClintock's 1939 text interests me, in part, as a seemingly intermediate point between the lived reality of the 1800s Deadwood and Deadwood as I have experienced it in my lifetime, an increasingly touristy Deadwood that, like the individual legendary characters of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane, exists in multiple iterations: on television and in films, novels, short stories, advertisements, museum exhibits, portraits, postcards, lunchboxes, t-shirts, tea towels, and refrigerator magnets. How we separate all these images, how we consume the past and make meaning from the past and all the images of it, is forever complicated. As Jerome De Groot (2016) notes, "'History' is no longer (if it ever was) a phenomenon that can be contained, and therefore the study of this thing we call 'history' in popular culture must similarly recognize its unending multiplicity' (xvi). As I study the context around John S. McClintock's memoir, De Groot's assertion rings true for the 'history' interwoven in popular (re)presentations of Deadwood.

I am still figuring out what to make of this memoir and the web of connections in which it is enmeshed. I continue to trace how history and life writing come together in this text and how this text has informed and inspired historical and creative stories. But I do know that, by writing his memoirs, John S. McClintock has made his mark on the history of Deadwood and the Black Hills. While the stagecoach from Deadwood to Spearfish no longer runs and his livery stables are long gone, he quite literally put himself on the map with his memoirs. For today in Deadwood, visitors to the Mt. Moriah cemetery receive a map marking the graves of the famous inhabitants therein. John S. McClintock is on that map. I expect he would be pleased.

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<sup>1</sup> See example at <https://www.cityofdeadwood.com/index.asp?SEC=269A8C80-9F36-4D72-A17D-DF18E23E10FF&Type=B> BASIC

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<sup>3</sup> See JD McLaird, L Jucovy, P Stasi, J Greiman, MJ Dworkin, RW Etulain, DA Wolff, JL Buttke and P Zinder for examples.

<sup>4</sup> The Black Hills and the characters were the stuff of legends long before McClintock published his memoir. To cite just a few examples, see S. Goodale Price's *Black Hills: The Land of Legend* (1935), Edward L. Wheeler's *Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road: Or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills* (1899) or Wheeler's *The Black Hills Jezebel: Or, Deadwood Dick's Ward* (1881).

<sup>5</sup> The Society continues today, but membership now extends to living descendants of the original members.