

July 25, 1937.

Handwritten:
Sioux Religion
Wind Cave

Director,
National Park Service,
Department of the Interior,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I shall preface this letter by telling you who I am, in order that you may have confidence in the information offered. I am a professor in this University, a former Rhodes Scholar, and a Fellow of the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and served for two years as a Captain of Field Artillery, A.E.F. Under my pen-name, Stanley Vestal, I have published a dozen books about the West and the Plains Indians, including a biography of Sitting Bull, and that of his living nephew, Chief Joseph White Bull, under the title WAPATH.

I have just returned from a trip into the northern plains, where I was doing research among the old Indians. On my way through the Black Hills I stopped at the Wind Cave National Park, and was very favorably impressed by the courtesy and efficiency of the staff. While there I was given a booklet on the Wind Cave National Park. It is attractive and well turned out.

In this booklet I find a statement that the Wind Cave was discovered by a white man in 1881. Of course it was known to the Sioux Indians long before that. As I recall, their calendars show that they discovered the Hills about the time the Declaration of Independence was signed.

As you may know, the four winds were major dieties of the Plains tribes, and wind was associated in their belief with the breath of life and the vital principle. Hence the Cave of the Winds was a sacred spot to them. Many of the Plains tribes had myths in which the story was told of how the buffalo first came out of a cave (I suppose this was an objectification of the fact that all flesh is made of earth), and Chief White Bull (Pte San Hunka), Sitting Bull's living nephew, informed me that the Sioux believed that the Wind Cave in the Black Hills was the cave from which Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery, sent them out into the Sioux hunting grounds. This was one reason why the Sioux fought so hard for the Black Hills when they were invaded by the whites. The Chief also told me that some of his people still hoped that when they had regained the favor of their gods, the buffalo would once more issue from that cave, and fill the Plains.

These facts, with their rather touching implications and historical importance, seem to me to merit mention in the next edition of your booklet on the Wind Cave National Park. At any rate, I am sending them your way, hoping they may interest you and others connected with the Park Service.

Yours sincerely,

W.S. CAMPBELL