

General George A. Custer in command. Such an enterprise was, of course, in direct violation of the provisions of the treaty of Laramie, which stipulated that white men should not enter upon the Indian lands without first obtaining the consent of the Dakotas. The faith of the government was pledged to protect the Indians against all intrusions upon this land. Pursuant to the arrangement made by General Sheridan, Colonel Custer left Fort Abraham Lincoln with 1,200 men on the 1st day of July, 1874, and proceeding in a southwesterly direction without interference or interruption reached the Belle Fourche on the 18th of July. On the 20th they crossed the Belle Fourche and began as it were, skirmishing with the Black Hills, General Custer was delighted with the country and in the most glowing terms pictures the wealth of timber and prairie and the beauty of the flora. They passed to the north of the Hills, proper, reaching Injan Kara on the 22d, thence passing down on the western side of the Hills, crossed over into Custer Park.

It would be difficult to frame language better calculated to inflame the public mind and excite men to enter this country or die in the attempt, than is the language of General Custer's official report upon the Black Hills and the section immediately surrounding them. We copy literally from the report from the time the valley of the Belle Fourche was reached: "We continued from the time we ascended from the valley of the Belle Fourche to move through a very superior country, covered with the best of grazing and an abundance of timber, principally pine, poplar and several varieties of oak. This valley in one / ⁴⁰⁹ respect presented the most wonderful as well as beautiful aspect. Its equal I have never seen and such, too, was the testimony of all who beheld it. In no private or public park have I ever seen such a profuse display of flowers. Every step of our march that day was amid flowers of the most exquisite color and perfume. So luxuriant in growth were they that men plucked them without dismounting from the saddle. Some belonged to new or unclassified species. It was a strange sight to glance back at the advancing columns of cavalry and behold the men with beautiful bouquets in their hands, while the headgear of the horses were decorated with wreaths of flowers fit to crown a queen of May. Deeming it a most fitting appellation, I named this Floral Valley. General