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Article Summary: When a broadcasting company sought to build a television tower on top of the Scotts Bluff National Monument in 1954, the National Park Service refused the request. Television did come to the area the following year, when the company accepted a site without historical significance or striking scenery.

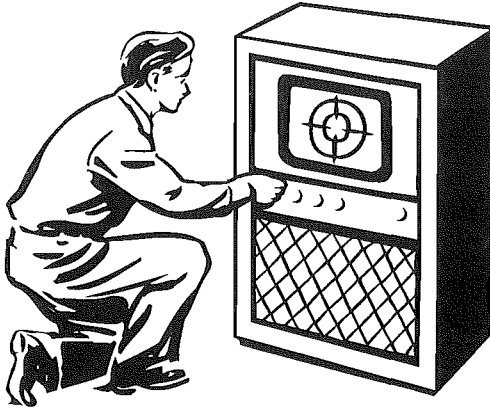
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Photographs / Images: Scotts Bluff National Monument; Tracy McCracken, President Truman, and US Senator Joseph O'Mahoney; inset advertisement by KSTF-Channel 10: "Coming Soon . . . TV," *Gering Courier*, December 3, 1954; US Senator Frank Barrett with President Eisenhower; Tracy McCracken with some of his newspaper and television station employees; National Park Service Director Conrad L Wirth; inset advertisement by Frontier Broadcasting Co announcing that television transmissions were about to be tested in the Platte Valley, *Gering Courier*, March 4, 1955



Scotts Bluff National Monument and the Coming of Television to the Nebraska Panhandle

By Phil Roberts

Until 1955 few Nebraska Panhandle homes had television sets. The nearest station, KFBC-TV, was located nearly one hundred miles to the southwest in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and provided only poor reception to the handful of North Platte Valley television owners.¹ With more than 50,000 people in the valley, however, it seemed inevitable that television broadcasting would come eventually. But potential viewers could hardly have predicted how its arrival would pit local officials, the congressional delegations of two states, and a politically powerful Wyoming media company against the National Park Service.

A decade earlier, Wyoming's congressional delegation had been bogged down in a fight with the National Park Service over creation of Jackson Hole National Monument. In that case, local residents in Teton County convinced the delegation that the monument interfered with local economic activity. In this new controversy, whose locale was just outside Wyoming's borders at the opposite end of the state, historic preservation was pitted against good television reception.²

In 1955 the Federal Communications Commission approved an application from Frontier Broadcasting Company of Cheyenne, Wyoming, to build a television tower in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. The company owned KFBC-TV, the weak signals from which furnished the only television reception in the North Platte Valley. A technical report,

commissioned by the company, concluded,

it is our belief that the proposed [transmitter] installation on Scotts Bluff National Monument is the only feasible and practical location for the dissemination of television to the Scotts Bluff area, which does not now enjoy television programming.

The report added that the site "would not be obtrusive or in any way detract from the Scotts Bluff National Monument as a recreation area or viewing point." Following extensive engineering studies, the company decided that placement of the tower on top of Scotts Bluff would provide extensive coverage of the North Platte Valley and even allow the signal to reach to communities beyond.³

Frontier Broadcasting was controlled by Cheyenne publisher Tracy McCracken. From the 1920s until his death in 1960, McCracken was a power in Wyoming publishing and politics. A native of Illinois, McCracken graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1917 and became editor of the *Laramie Boomerang*. Later he was private secretary to Governor William Ross, leaving that position to serve in a similar capacity for Democratic U.S. Senator John B. Kendrick.⁴

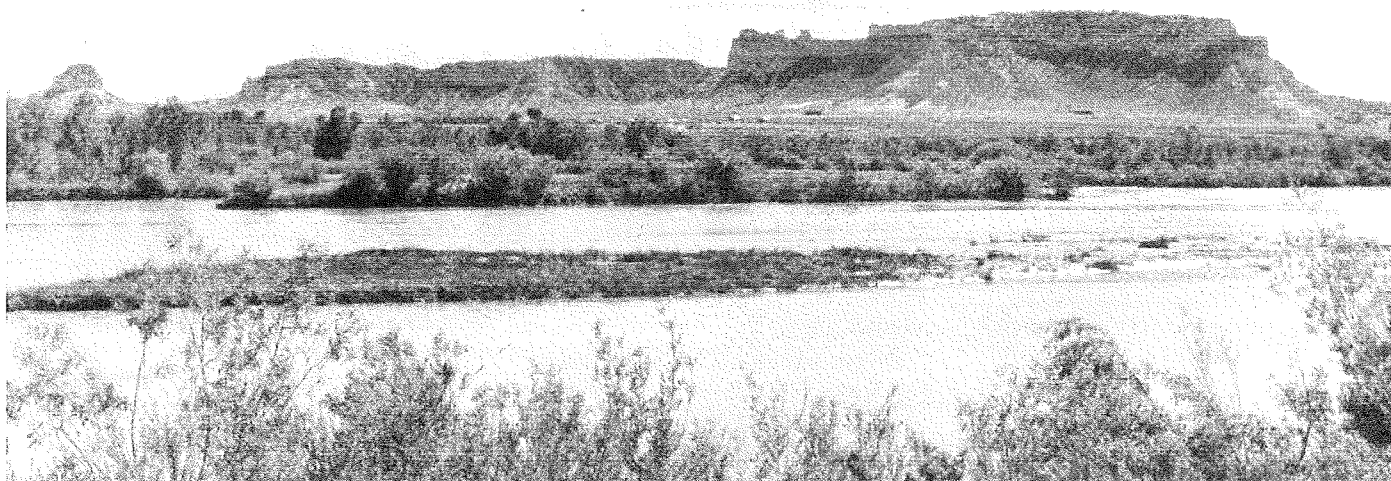
Wyoming's capital city had no newspaper loyal to the Democrats when Kendrick faced reelection in 1922. After a successful campaign despite having no press support in the capital city, the wealthy Sheridan County cattleman, who owned other newspapers in the state, decided to establish such an organ in Cheyenne. The result was the *Wyoming Eagle*, first published May 28, 1925. It was a weekly designed to boost

the election of Democrats. P. J. Kinney, a Newcastle car dealer, furnished the plant and Theodore Wanerus, a former Kendrick aide, was named editor. Wanerus, who edited the paper for almost a year, made the *Eagle* editorially respectable, but it remained a weak competitor to the statewide, Republican-oriented daily, the *Wyoming State Tribune*.⁵ McCracken left Washington in October 1926 to take over the editorship of the *Eagle*, where he continued strong editorial support for Kendrick's fellow Democrat, Governor Nellie Tayloe Ross. Even with the *Eagle*'s support, however, the first woman elected governor in any state lost her bid for reelection that November.

The elections over, McCracken concentrated on building up the business side of the operation, gradually gaining control of the *Eagle* from Kendrick and from Kinney's heirs. Within a decade, McCracken had built the *Eagle* into a competitive daily, mostly through advertising promotions and innovative subscription campaigns.⁶ It didn't hurt the paper's standing when Democrats were swept into office with the New Deal, including McCracken's former colleague on Kendrick's staff, Joseph C. O'Mahoney, who became U.S. senator on Kendrick's death. The two men were to remain lifelong political allies.

While the *Eagle* remained rooted in Cheyenne, the larger *Tribune* lost money in the Depression years of the 1930s by continuing as "Wyoming's statewide newspaper." In 1939, following an ownership change which plunged the *Wyoming State Tribune* into deeper financial difficulties, McCracken rescued the older

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Scotts Bluff National Monument, looking across the North Platte River to the southwest.
Scotts Bluff National Monument



Tracy McCracken (left), President Harry S. Truman, and U.S. Senator Joseph O'Mahoney.
Wyoming State Museum

daily and merged it into his growing media empire. Unlike the usual publisher, however, McCracken opted not to change the editorial direction of the *Tribune*. It would remain Republican and would consequently sew up a newspaper monopoly for McCracken in Chey-

enne. At the same time, Republican politicians knew who owned the Republican paper in the state capital, providing McCracken with a unique political situation. Partisans of both parties depended on his editorial voice.⁷ The political connections set the stage for

McCracken's moves into the broadcast media which, unlike newspapers, were regulated by the Federal Communications Commission.

Although the first radio broadcasting station opened in Wyoming in 1926 as a nonprofit operation in Laramie, commercial radio began four years later in Casper. Oddly, it was another ten years before a radio station was started in the state capital. McCracken apparently failed to see the financial potential of radio broadcasting, and in October 1940 a young couple opened KYAN, a small radio station in Cheyenne. Almost immediately, the McCracken newspapers felt the advertising heat generated by businesses captivated by the new media. Within three months, McCracken, through the help of his friends in the Wyoming congressional delegation, gained FCC approval for a competing station. KYAN didn't stand a chance. Six months after the McCracken-owned station went on the air, the older station went off the air. McCracken's station dominated the market for the next two decades.⁸

When television broadcasting began gaining national attention in the early 1950s, McCracken had learned his lesson about new technologies. In 1954 he ob-

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tained a television broadcast license for Cheyenne even though the town had a population of less than 30,000 people. It was, by far, the smallest market in the United States to be granted its own station.⁹

The station made little economic sense in such a small community. Consequently, McCracken's company, Frontier Broadcasting, the owner of KFBC-TV, opted to develop new markets through the use of "translator stations" to rebroadcast the flagship station's programming into homes far from the signal's origin. Denver television stations had already tied up the markets just south of Cheyenne in northern Colorado, so Frontier decided to place its first translator in the Nebraska Panhandle, where no television existed except for KFBC's own weak signal. The additional viewers would enable the station to "secure a good schedule of network programs."¹⁰

FCC approval came quickly in the summer of 1954 when the commission approved the proposed station as KSTF-TV to broadcast on Channel 10. The initial license request indicated that the transmitter would be located about ten miles south of the town of Scottsbluff. Sometime during the late summer of 1954, engineers working for Frontier Broadcasting reported that the proposed location had not taken into account that the huge bluff from which the town and county had gained their names would block television reception to a significant number of potential viewers. The engineers suggested locating the tower on top of the bluff itself.¹¹ There was a minor problem with that location, however. The top of the bluff was part of Scotts Bluff National Monument, administered by the National Park Service. Park Service approval would be essential in order to proceed with the location change.

On July 29, 1954, KFBC general manager William C. Grove wrote to Senator Frank Barrett's administrative assistant, Lewis E. Bates, asking for the senator's help in gaining the necessary clearance.

Gering Courier, December 3, 1954

Coming Soon - - TV

Because of the great interest in the valley regarding TELEVISION, we thought you might like a report regarding the progress being made toward its installation.

Much of the equipment has already been purchased. Within sixty to ninety days after the start of its erection, weather permitting, we hope to be televising. Because a much greater area and population could be served if the tower is erected on the Monument it is hoped the National Park Service will soon approve construction on that site. Realizing this, many governmental bodies and civic organizations throughout this region have urged the Park Service to grant the permit. As soon as it is approved construction will start.

-- PROGRAMS --

Channel 10 has been designated by the Federal Communications Commission for the Valley area. The call letters granted are KSTF. On KSTF Channel 10 you will receive such outstanding television programs and stars as Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in the nation's top rated TV show, "I Love Lucy," Ronald Colman in "Halls of Ivy," Jack Webb in "Badge 714," "Ford Theatre," "Schlitz Playhouse of Stars," "Disneyland," William Bendix, Edward R. Murrow, Red Skelton, Robert Cummings, Brian Donlevy and Spring Byington. Professional baseball including the World Series, Pro and College football will be telecast during their seasons. KSTF Channel 10 will also carry the Rose Bowl and other bowl games from year to year. Local programs from the Valley will also be carried from time to time.

-- Thank You --

We are making every effort to hurry construction. We are as anxious to begin televising, as we know you are anticipating viewing it. THANK YOU for bearing with us.

KSTF-Channel 10

"SERVING AMERICA'S VALLEY OF THE NILE"

Is it possible to build on a national monument? The company needed to know soon because it did not “wish to build in winter.” An unsigned note, apparently to support a telephone conversation, indicated it was “not against the law but up to the NPS.”¹²

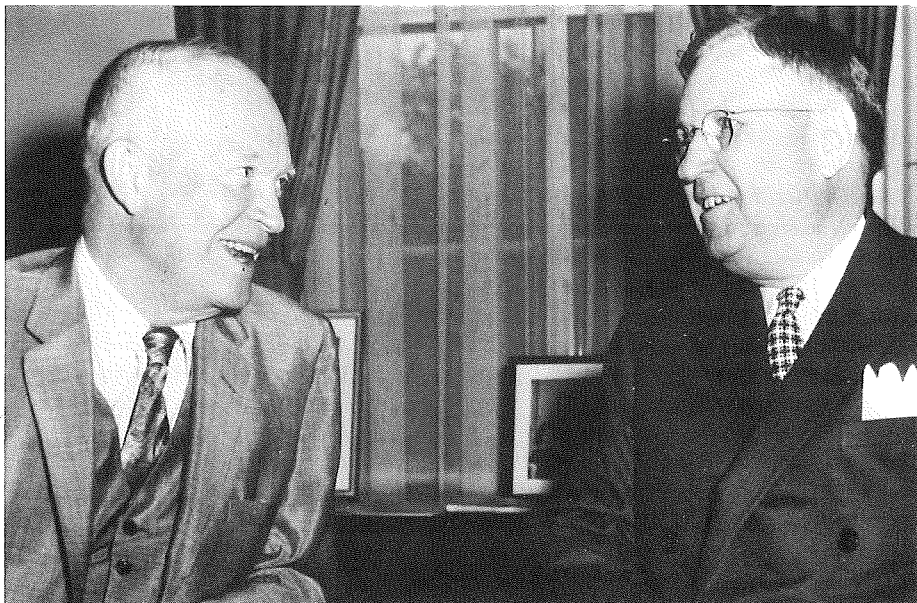
After contacting officials in the Park Service, Bates discovered that what had seemed at first a simple matter might be more complicated. “I learned this morning that there is some resistance to the use of the Monument areas for such purposes,” Bates wrote Grove, “so you may be confronting a wrestling match on this.” He added that it was “worth trying because the area is teleblind.”¹³

The same day Bates was writing Grove about the possible “resistance,” Grove again wrote to Barrett’s office, stressing that the best location for the tower would be “on top of the monument.” He also asked if it would be possible to add a small building at the site, its “architecture to conform to the entrance gate station” of the national monument and to be mostly hidden from view. Grove reiterated that the monument was the “one and only suitable location” for the tower.¹⁴

Bates forwarded the request to Conrad L. Wirth, director of the National Park Service, on September 22, 1954. Wirth responded nine days later that the service had turned down similar requests and was doing so in this case as well.¹⁵

Neither Frontier Broadcasting nor Senator Barrett’s office was willing to accept Wirth’s decision. Even though Bates remained the main contact in Barrett’s office, another Barrett aide, Mary Bruner, called director Wirth in mid-October, asking for Park Service approval. This time, Wirth wrote directly to Barrett:

I believe you will agree with me, Frank, that if we should allow the company to install a television antenna within the boundaries of an area of the National Park System, we would be immediately flooded with similar requests; the granting of any one of which would be contrary to the basic principles and concept of the laws creating the National Park Service.¹⁶



U.S. Senator Frank Barrett (right) with President Dwight D. Eisenhower.
Wyoming State Museum

Barrett forwarded the response to Grove and added a brief note indicating that it appeared another site would have to be found. Grove responded: “It would serve no purpose to have a station constructed there on an uneconomical basis and then be forced to discontinue after a few months’ operation.” Frontier Broadcasting had hoped to invest less than \$100,000 to put the Scottsbluff station on the air. Grove added that if the company could not broadcast from atop Scotts Bluff, a “900-foot tower would be necessary, costing \$200,000.”¹⁷

Meanwhile, Frontier Broadcasting was busy marshaling local support in the Nebraska Panhandle for the station and the proposed tower site. O. B. Koerfer, KFBC co-manager, who also served on the staff of McCracken’s newspapers as general manager, sent a telegram to the mayor of Scottsbluff, specifying the language for a resolution to be sent to the Park Service and to Congress. The Frontier-written resolution endorsed the monument as the transmitter site “to the end that our people [will] have the advantages of this great electronic miracle.”¹⁸

In October 1954 a flurry of letters and resolutions from civic organizations in Nebraska and in Goshen County, Wyoming, began arriving in the offices of Senators Barrett and O’Mahoney, urging that they force the Park Service to reconsider. The issue was framed by questioning whether “preservation” of Scotts Bluff would be adversely affected by construction of the tower and, even if it were, did “preservation” somehow merit greater consideration than “quality television reception for 100,000 people.”¹⁹

Letters also went to Park Service Director Wirth. A typical one was from Percy F. Renner, mayor of Bridgeport, who told Wirth that as a boy, “I climbed the butte on foot. More recently we climb the butte by automobile. I do not think that the paved roadway has spoiled the butte one bit,” the mayor asserted, “nor, do I think, will a TV antenna spoil the scenery.” He offered an unusual perspective on public response to a television tower on Scotts Bluff: “It might cause some people to take an interest in the Monument who are not otherwise interested in history or scenery.”²⁰

Other letters from proponents of the tower location seemed inadvertently to

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Attending a Christmas party: Lew Bates (left), editor *Wyoming State Tribune* and later U.S. Senator Frank Barrett's assistant; William Grove, manager KFBC-TV; Oz Koerfer, vice president of McCracken's newspapers; Loretta Cobry, ad department; and Tracy McCracken. Wyoming State Museum

undermine Frontier's position. "Many 'TV' sets are already in operation in the Minatare area; however reception is not very good," wrote E. M. Parker, Jr., president of the Minatare Lions Club. Willis A. Faith, mayor of Lyman, noted that the nearest station to his town was ninety miles away in Cheyenne. "It is hard for us to get good reception at times from there," he wrote.²¹ Such comments suggest television reception may have been better in some areas of the North Platte Valley than McCracken's company wished to admit to government officials.

Barrett recommended that petitions might have an effect. Consequently, Frontier management circulated petitions throughout the proposed viewing area. In Torrington, one petition with forty-five names had been "left in the newspaper office." Petitions also contained names of various civic clubs in Goshen County. One petition with 110 names was circulated by Torrington insurance man Fred C. Pearson.²²

In late December, Senator O'Mahoney announced plans for congressional hearings to be held concerning the

tower matter. The senator wrote Grove explaining how the hearings would be structured, noting "I have assured, of course, that it would be impossible or at least too difficult to get a satisfactory signal into this area from any long-distant [sic] station." He told Grove that a television lawyer wasn't necessary because "this issue has nothing to do with television law." According to O'Mahoney, "the issue is whether or not the proposed tower would be such a blemish on the monument that it should be prohibited even at the cost of depriving a large number of people residing in western Nebraska of access to television."²³

The hearing in Washington was set for January 10, 1955, in the Interior Department hearing room. Local officials from the Panhandle were scheduled to appear along with KFBC-TV station manager William Grove, who invited Senator Barrett to join the party for dinner at the Statler Hotel on the night before the hearing. Grove warned Barrett that "Mr. Hacker [sic] of the Park Service, an attendant at Scotts Bluff Monument," would suggest an alternative site. But he

emphasized to Barrett, whose home was in Lusk, Wyoming, some eighty miles northwest of Scottsbluff, that "we cannot guarantee coverage of Lusk from the Monument, but there is infinitely better chance than from the [other] site."²⁴

Park Service Director Conrad Wirth presided at the hearing. Wyoming Senators Barrett and O'Mahoney, Representative Keith Thomson, and Nebraska Fourth District Representative A. L. Miller all attended, in support of the company's application. Nebraska Senators Roman Hruska and Carl Curtis were invited but did not come to the hearing. The entire Wyoming delegation, along with Curtis, Hruska, and Miller from Nebraska, later signed a letter to Wirth urging a favorable ruling. Otherwise, "35,000 people will be deprived of the opportunity to enjoy television."²⁵

No one appeared in opposition, but the Park Service submitted a six-page report from Coyt H. Hackett, acting superintendent of Scotts Bluff National Monument. In firm language, Hackett proposed an alternate site, noting that the Park Service had conducted "a survey of one such alternate site as the resources at our command would allow." He claimed that Frontier Broadcasting had failed to consider any site north of the North Platte River and the Park Service's proposed location was "as good as, if not better than, the site desired on the summit" of the monument.²⁶

The Park Service's site, a 38.8-acre tract of "unimproved grassland," 10.3 miles north-northeast from downtown Scottsbluff, was owned by Mrs. Dorothy E. Morrison, who consented to locating the tower on the site. Hackett pointed out the numerous benefits of the Morrison site including proximity to a paved road (the monument road was "not plowed the 1.6 miles from monument headquarters to the summit" during winter), availability of water (none available at the monument site), and land enough for additional towers, including microwave facilities.²⁷

Hackett also speculated about why McCracken's company desired the monu-

ment site. "If the use of public property and public facilities, maintained at federal expense, in order to reduce the capital outlay of the promoters of a commercial venture and consequently a greater realization of profit are to be a consideration, then there is no comparable alternate site [to the monument location]." He reminded Wirth of another problem with locating the tower on the monument:

Man-made structures such as a television antenna are required by the Civil Aeronautics Administration [sic] to be painted with alternate bands of orange and white in addition to a blinking red light. It is inconceivable that such a structure could be made to blend with the surrounding terrain under these conditions.²⁸

In Hackett's view, the scenery would be irreparably damaged. "The general view of the bluff as seen from the north side of the North Platte River has often been used by national publications on stories on the monument or the State of Nebraska," Hackett wrote. "In the future, should Frontier erect their antenna and transmitter . . . , their installation would be featured in similar photos." He added dryly, "While this would generate a quantity of national publicity for Frontier Broadcasting and KSTF-TV, it is questionable if either the national publications or the general traveling public will feel that a television antenna has national significance."²⁹

Despite Hackett's compelling report, Barrett felt the hearing had gone well for Frontier Broadcasting. He wrote Torrington businessman Pearson, who had been gathering signatures on petitions, that the Park Service director might change his mind. "Wirth . . . told Reuel Armstrong that we made out a very good case and that he is trying his level best to work out something which will be satisfactory to us."³⁰

But Barrett's optimism was ill-founded. Unknown to the senator, Director Wirth had received a memo from Verne E. Rowley, Park Service supervisory electronics engineer. The report was devastating to the Frontier position. Rowley revealed that Frontier had con-

ducted no transmission tests at any of the sites and that Grove apparently had relied on a report suggesting that the "vertical surface" of Scotts Bluff would create "undesirable ghosts" in television transmissions. The Park Service's test, however, contradicted that position.³¹

On February 8, 1955, Wirth again wrote Grove that he was denying the



National Park Service Director Conrad L. Wirth. Scotts Bluff National Monument

company's request. In a prepared statement, Barrett said he was "distressed to learn of the decision." In one version of the statement, the Wyoming senator added:

The historical significance of the monument is in the fact that it was a landmark in the early days of the West. It would take several atomic bombs to destroy that landmark, and it is hard to see how a tower less than 75 feet high could get that job done.³²

Without identifying that Frontier Broadcasting was McCracken's company, his *Wyoming State Tribune* blasted the Park Service's decision editorially. Titled "Bureaucracy at Its Worst," the editorial repeated Barrett's contention that the tower would not "destroy the value, beauty or significance of that

landmark," and argued that the Park Service was attempting to deprive Panhandle residents of quality television viewing. "The *Tribune*, as readers will well recall, excoriated bureaucracy's great and mounting power, and warned of the danger of that growth, through all of the 20 years it was permitted under the Democrat administrations," the editorial thundered. "Over and over again, the *Tribune* urged support of the Republican party for that and various other reasons. Must we confess that the Republican party can do no more about this than the Democrat party?" The editorial concluded, "Is there not a power in the Republican administration, which can bring bureaus and bureaucrats to book?" Listed on the masthead, printed above the editorial, was the name of the *Tribune's* new editor, Lewis E. Bates, who had been the administrative assistant for Barrett during the beginning of the controversy.³³

There was the expected outpouring of support for Frontier from Panhandle residents, coupled with corresponding denunciations of the Park Service's decision. Well-known University of Wyoming historian T. A. Larson wrote Barrett as a proponent of Frontier's proposal. "I want to compliment you on your stand with respect to Echo Park and the TV tower on Scotts Bluff National Monument," Larson wrote, adding, "I try to study each conservation question on its merits and I am sure that you do the same."³⁴

The *Scottsbluff Star-Herald* applauded the Park Service's decision. The paper was skeptical of claims that the monument was the only feasible location for the tower. "A little distasteful, too, has been the open organization and application of political pressure to force a reversal of the historic principle of maintaining national monuments in their natural state."³⁵

McCracken thanked Barrett for supporting the company's position. "While you, Joe [O'Mahoney], Keith [Thomson, Wyoming congressman], were unable to prevail upon the Park Service people

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to deviate from their usual bureaucratic thinking, I want all of you to know I am greatly appreciative of your efforts." However, he was not ready to concede defeat. "I knew that we could make of our case an air-tight and clinching one. But I was not convinced that this bureau would judge the case on its merits. And it certainly hasn't," McCracken grumbled. "As [a] result of this narrow and selfish decision which is so contrary to the best interests of the greatest number of people, [the Panhandle] will perhaps indefinitely or even forever, be denied the advantages of television service." He then asked Barrett if he could arrange "an appointment with the President, at which time an appeal to him would be made."³⁶

Barrett replied that he had contacted J. Reuel Armstrong, the Wyomingite serving as solicitor of the Department of the Interior, about the matter. Armstrong suggested not appealing the decision to the Secretary of the Interior until the Echo Park Dam issue was settled.³⁷ O'Mahoney wrote a similar letter.

McCracken responded that "it would just be plain unsafe" to delay the matter. "I am afraid some people in the Scottsbluff region would have a difficult time convincing themselves that any further postponement of action is something other than a stall on our part." He wrote to O'Mahoney, bluntly stating that "the community antenna people are again getting busy in Scottsbluff."³⁸

McCracken was not giving up. He sent Koerfer and Grove to Scottsbluff on February 18 to attend a junior chamber of commerce meeting. Barrett sent an air-mail letter the next week, urging Frontier Broadcasting to seek a reversal of the decision at a higher level in Interior. He noted that Armstrong and two other officials of the department "are in our corner." He added that "the Secretary himself is inclined to go along also, but for some reason or other they [Interior] seem to be terribly afraid of the opposition from some of the so-called conservation organizations."³⁹

Gering Courier, March 4, 1955

KFBC-TV

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH PLATTE VALLEY:

Television station KSTF, Channel 10, Scottsbluff, will be on the air soon with test transmission. Probably in 75 to 90 days.

Our application for permission to construct a tower on the Monument, the most feasible site, having been denied, we shall proceed, as previously announced, to determine the next most advantageous available site for our tower and transmitter.

All equipment for the complete station and its construction has been ordered and the orders have been confirmed. In approximately two weeks the first of the shipments will be arriving in Scottsbluff.

KSTF, through its sister station, KFBC-TV, Cheyenne, will be affiliated with all four major networks, CBS, NBC, ABC, and DuMont, thus assuring viewers in this vicinity of the finest in entertainment, news, informative and educational programs. We are proud of the opportunity to become what we hope will be an integral part of the social and economic life of this region.

THE FRONTER BROADCASTING CO.

WILLIAM C. GROVE, MANAGER

In February, former U.S. Senator Clarence C. Dill of Washington wrote to Barrett, pointing out, "I wrote the present law . . . and after quitting the Senate, I practiced radio law in Washington for several years." The former senator then told Barrett of a recent case in which he represented a television owner in Spokane, Washington, who had a site on top of Mount Spokane in a state park. "Another station sued to remove it," Dill wrote, but the court upheld the placement of the tower. He suggested that the case might serve as precedent in the Frontier case.⁴⁰

But Barrett already had checked for precedents. There were several places where state park commissions had allowed such towers, he wrote Dill. "The Forest Service and BLM have done so, but nowhere has the National Park Service" permitted such towers.⁴¹ The only hope was an appeal to higher authorities in the Interior Department or the Federal Communications Commission.

In early March Barrett wrote to the FCC, asking "whether or not the FCC had any authority to intervene or help in getting the National Park Service to agree to the location of the television tower." Mary Jane Morris, FCC secretary, responded,

The commission is fully appreciative of the problems confronting the above permittee in its efforts. . . . However, the issuance of authority to locate a transmitter on Scotts Bluff National Monument appears to lie exclusively within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service and the Commission can only approve the location from an engineering standpoint.

She reminded Barrett that the company's application "did not specify the Scotts Bluff National Monument as the location of the proposed transmitter site, but rather a site some ten miles south of the city of Scottsbluff."⁴²

Barrett turned to Interior Undersecretary Orme Lewis to review the Park Service's decision. While Frontier and Barrett waited for Lewis's reply, Reuel Armstrong wrote to Barrett, including a copy of his lawyer's report, the Park Service engineer's report, and Frontier's

statement. "Connie [Wirth] says he rested his decision on the statute and not on the reports, however."⁴³

The lawyer's report was not particularly favorable to Frontier's position. Written by Julian H. Golden, acting assistant solicitor for National Parks, the report described the testimony at the hearings and later exhibits, indicating that "many letters in the file [are] from persons who favor the granting of the application and many from persons who oppose it."⁴⁴

Lewis finally made his decision and replied to Barrett on April 18, noting that the record had been "quite voluminous and I found it necessary to devote the past weekend to it so that I might give it undivided attention; hence the delay in responding." He then reiterated Wirth's decision. "My conclusion is that the very nature of the installation contemplated and its particular location within the boundaries of the national monument is so much at variance with the fundamental purposes of establishing and preserving national monuments that it precludes a decision contrary to that of Mr. Wirth." He concluded, "Therefore, the denial of the application must stand."⁴⁵

Barrett sent a copy of Lewis's decision to Tracy McCracken. "I know that it is a blow to KFBC-TV, but I don't know what we can do about it." He also sent a copy to his former aide, Lew Bates, now the *Tribune* editor. "I was dubious of the matter from the first," Barrett confessed.⁴⁶

The matter was closed. The Park Service, historic preservation, and scenery had prevailed over television in yet another minor skirmish between conservation and profit. Nonetheless, television did come to Scottsbluff and the Nebraska Panhandle. Ironically, Frontier Broadcasting located the tower for KSTF-TV ten miles north-northeast of Scottsbluff, near the site suggested by the Park Service, where the tower still stands. KSTF-TV went on the air June 1, 1955, serving television viewers throughout the North Platte Valley without compromising the historical significance or

the scenery of Scotts Bluff National Monument.⁴⁷

Notes

¹ KFBC-TV went on the air July 18, 1952. Phil Roberts et al., *Wyoming Almanac* (Laramie: Skyline West, 1994), 330.

² For a detailed study of the Grand Teton controversy, see Robert Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Creation of Grand Teton National Park* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University, 1982).

Scotts Bluff National Monument was created by presidential proclamation 1547 on Dec. 12, 1919, reserving 2,053.83 acres for the site. *U.S. Statutes At Large* 41 (1919): 1779-80. The area was reduced to 1,893.83 acres by survey on May 9, 1924, but again enlarged by Proclamation 1999, June 1, 1932, and by Proclamation 2391 on March 29, 1940. *U.S. Statutes at Large* 47 (1932): 2512-13; 54 (1940): 2690-91.

³ Robert C. Pfannenschmid, "A Study of Site Availability for Construction of Television Transmitting Facilities in the Vicinity of Scottsbluff, Nebraska," 7. Unpublished technical report in Frank A. Barrett Papers, Coll. 631, Box 24, File Folder 898, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, hereafter cited as Barrett Papers.

Application, William Grove to National Park Service, Sept. 18, 1954, in which Grove indicated the station would serve "54,000 people presently without television service" throughout the North Platte Valley. Barrett Papers.

⁴ "Wyoming Eagle Now Directed by T. S. McCracken," *Wyoming Eagle*, Oct. 15, 1926. "Final Tribute Paid to Tracy McCracken," *Wyoming State Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1960.

⁵ "Owner of Eagle is Cheyenne Visitor," *Wyoming Eagle*, June 7, 1925. No masthead appears in early issues, and Wanerus is not identified as the editor until Aug. 9, 1925, in the eleventh issue of the paper. Wanerus's name did not appear on the masthead after Dec. 5, 1925. Kinney, his wife, and Wanerus are listed as the directors of the "Wyoming Eagle Publishing Company." Certificate of Incorporation, Folder 31553, Wyoming State Archives.

Confusion surrounds McCracken's involvement in the *Eagle*. Years later, the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News* perpetuated the myth that McCracken had purchased the *Eagle* as a small, struggling, free-distribution weekly. Actually, the issues edited by Wanerus indicate the paper had substantial local advertising and editorial content from throughout Wyoming.

⁶ As an example of McCracken's skills at promotion of the *Eagle*, see "The Largest Circulation of Any Newspaper in the State of Wyoming," *Wyoming Eagle*, Dec. 5, 1925.

⁷ In August 1937 McCracken entered a partnership with *Tribune* owner Alfred G. Hill, but within two

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years, McCracken had taken control of both dailies. "Under One Roof," *Wyoming State Tribune*, Aug. 2, 1937.

McCracken remained active in the Democratic Party, becoming state chairman and, later, Democratic National Committeeman from 1942 to 1960. In 1960, shortly before his death, he chaired Wyoming's delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles where Wyoming's votes barely gave John F. Kennedy a first-ballot victory over rival Lyndon Johnson.

⁸ Burton Thompson, former *Tribune* reporter and AP correspondent, interview with author, Laramie, Wyo., Sept. 1993.

⁹ Peggy Bieber-Roberts, "Media Hegemony in Cheyenne: A Discriminant Analysis Approach to Media Advertising Opinions of Merchants," (master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1985).

¹⁰ A Torrington, Wyo., newspaper incorrectly asserted that the station would provide Scottsbluff with "its first television reception." *Torrington Telegram*, Jan. 13, 1955. Weak reception was received from Cheyenne. The article also noted that the Scotts Bluff site would allow for the signal to reach throughout Goshen County and as far north as Lusk, Senator Barrett's hometown. William C. Grove to Lewis E. Bates, July 29, 1954. (Unless otherwise noted, all further references to letters are from the Barrett Papers.) Grove noted that there had been "at least two unsuccessful efforts to finance the installation of a television station to serve the valley." Grove to Barrett, Oct. 26, 1954.

¹¹ Actually, six sites were surveyed, all south of the North Platte River and ranging from one mile to eleven miles from Scottsbluff, mostly to the south and west of the town. See map in Pfannenschmid, "A Study," Barrett Papers.

¹² Grove to Bates, July 29, 1954; note, Aug. 6, 1954.

¹³ Bates to Grove, Sept. 7, 1954.

¹⁴ Grove to Bates, Sept. 7, 1954.

¹⁵ Bates to Conrad L. Wirth, Sept. 22, 1954. Sent along with the letter was Grove's application dated Sept. 18. Wirth to Bates, Oct. 1, 1954.

¹⁶ Wirth to Barrett, Oct. 19, 1954.

¹⁷ Grove to Barrett, Oct. 26, 1954.

¹⁸ Telegram, O. B. Koerfer to Clark Williams, Nov. 26, 1954.

¹⁹ See, for example, the resolution from the Torrington Chamber of Commerce, Dec. 31, 1954.

²⁰ Percy F. Renner to Wirth, Oct. 15, 1954.

²¹ E. M. Parker to Wirth, Oct. 9, 1954; Willis A. Faith to Wirth, Oct. 13, 1954. J. C. Kuxhausen, Mitchell Community Club president, wrote that "there are about 60 sets in our small town," indicating that television signals were being received from somewhere. Kuxhausen to Wirth, Oct. 18, 1954.

²² Torrington petition dated Dec. 30, 1954; Pearson-circulated petition, undated, Barrett Papers.

²³ O'Mahoney to Grove, Dec. 22, 1954. O'Mahoney indicated that he had received materials about the issue, probably from McCracken, at a meeting in Cheyenne's Plains Hotel earlier that fall. In the 1930s, observers often referred to McCracken, O'Mahoney, and Gov. Leslie Miller as "MOM" and told of seeing them meeting at the Plains. Thompson interview.

²⁴ Grove to Barrett, Jan. 5, 1955.

²⁵ Memorandum, Julian H. Golden, acting assistant solicitor for National Parks, Mar. 17, 1955, NPS file L3030-SCBL, 1, Barrett Papers. Letter, Barrett, O'Mahoney, Thomson, Hruska, Curtis, and Miller to Wirth, Jan. 25, 1955. Miller had expressed reservations about the site in an Oct. 18, 1954 letter to Koerfer and Grove: "It's my understanding, as a general practice, the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service frown on this kind of addition to these nature's beauty spots."

²⁶ Coyt H. Hackett, "Comparison Study of Television Transmitter Sites," unpublished report, Jan. 1, 1955, Barrett Papers.

²⁷ Ibid., 2-4.

²⁸ Ibid., 1.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Barrett to Pearson, Jan. 26, 1955. J. Reuel Armstrong, a Wyoming native, was then serving as solicitor for the Department of the Interior. Later, he became a Wyoming district judge.

³¹ Memorandum to the director from Verne E. Rowley, Jan. 21, 1955, citing letter to Grove from K. O. Hornberg, who suggested the "vertical surface" theory. Armstrong sent Barrett a copy of the report with a handwritten note dated Mar. 18, 1954.

³² Wirth to Grove, Feb. 8, 1955; Wirth to Barrett, same date. Construction of the tower would "impair the historic significance of Scotts Bluff National Monument and would also impair the enjoyment of the area by those who visit it." Barrett prepared statement (multiple copies), Feb. 9, 1955, Barrett Papers.

³³ "Bureaucracy at Its Worst," *Wyoming State Tribune*, Feb. 10, 1955. In other area newspapers, the decision was summarized in unbiased news articles. See, for example, "TV Permit Denied for Park Tower," *Denver Post*, Feb. 10, 1955.

³⁴ T. A. Larson to Barrett, Feb. 10, 1955.

³⁵ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, Feb. 11, 1954.

³⁶ McCracken to Barrett, Feb. 11, 1955.

³⁷ Barrett to McCracken, Feb. 16, 1955. In 1950 the Bureau of Reclamation announced plans to build two dams along the Colorado River. Reservoirs behind both would have been within Dinosaur National Monument. After a long fight by environ-

mentalists, the proposed Echo Park Dam was stopped in 1956. The dispute is described in Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

³⁸ McCracken to Barrett, Feb. 19, 1955; McCracken to O'Mahoney, Feb. 18, 1955.

³⁹ Barrett to McCracken, Feb. 23, 1955.

⁴⁰ Clarence C. Dill to Barrett, Feb. 16, 1955.

⁴¹ Barrett to Dill, Feb. 21, 1955.

⁴² Barrett to Mary Jane Morris, Mar. 7, 1955; Morris to Barrett, Mar. 10, 1955.

⁴³ Handwritten note, Armstrong to Barrett, Mar. 18, 1955.

⁴⁴ Memorandum Report, Julian H. Golden to Armstrong, Mar. 17, 1955. NPS File L3030-SCBL, Barrett Papers.

⁴⁵ Barrett to Lewis, Mar. 10, 1955; Lewis to Barrett, April 18, 1955.

⁴⁶ Barrett to McCracken, Apr. 20, 1955; Barrett to Bates, Apr. 20, 1955.

⁴⁷ Conversation with Dean Knudsen, historian/librarian, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Jan. 4, 1995. According to Knudsen, the "Administrative History of Scotts Bluff National Monument" indicates that the field tests conducted in Jan. 1955 "dampened the flames of the controversy." Unpublished manuscript, collections of Scotts Bluff National Monument. *Spot TV Rates and Data*, 75 (Aug. 1993), 209.