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Mt. rushmore facts and history

Article courtesy of Matador Network. Western South Dakota is home to incredible spots like the Badlands and Black Hills Needles, but nothing sticks out just like the Mount Rushmore National Memorial. This gigantic monument celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2016. In honor of this milestone, here are 75 facts about the sculpture that captured the imagination of so many.¹ The idea of creating a sculpture in the Black Hills was conceived in 1923 by South Dakota historian Doane Robinson. He wanted to find a way to attract tourists to the state.² It worked. Mount Rushmore is now visited by nearly 3 million people a year.³ Robinson initially wanted to sculpt with the sensations of Western heroes such as Oglala leader Lakota Red Cloud, explorers Lewis and Clark, and Buffalo Bill Cody in nearby stone pinnacles known as Needles.⁴ Danish-American sculptor Gutzon Borglum was enlisted to help with the project. At the time, he was working on the massive sculpture in Stone Mountain, Georgia, but on his behalf said the model was defective and that the monument would not stand the test of time. He was looking for a way out when South Dakota called.⁵ Borglum, a good friend of French sculptor Auguste Rodin, dreamed of something greater than needles. He wanted something that attracted people from all over the world. He wanted to carve a mountain.⁶ In addition, the Needles site was considered too narrow to sculpt, and the mountain had better sun exposure.⁷ Borglum and his son Lincoln thought the monument should have a national focus and decided that four presidents should be carved.⁸ Presidents were chosen for their significant contribution to the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the country.⁹ George Washington (1789–1797) was chosen because he was the founding father of our nation.¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was chosen to represent the expansion, because he was the president who signed the Louisiana purchase and was the author of the Declaration of Independence.¹¹ Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) was chosen because it represented the conservation and industrial flowering of the nation.¹² Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) was chosen because he led the country through the Civil War and believed in the preservation of the nation at all costs.¹³ The mountain Borglum chose to carve was known to the Lakota as the Six Grandparents.¹⁴ It had also been known as Cougar Mountain, Sugarloaf Mountain, Slaughterhouse Mountain, and Keystone Cliffs, depending on who you asked for.¹⁵ The mountain's official name comes from a New York lawyer who was taking over gold claims in the area in 1885.¹⁶ Charles E. Rushmore asked his guide, William Challis, What's that mountain called? Challis is said to have replied: He's never had one... until now... we're going to call the damn thing Rushmore. In 1930, the United States Board on Geographic Names officially recognized him as Mount Rushmore.¹⁸ The carving of Mount Rushmore began in 1927 and ended in 1941. The actual carving was made by a team of over 400 men.²⁰ Surprisingly, no one died during construction.²¹ The men who worked on the mountain were miners who had come to the Black Hills in search of gold.²² Even if they weren't artists, they know how to use dynamite and jackhammers.²³ The Borglum hired an artist, Korczak Ziolkowski, to work as an assistant on the mountain. But after 19 days and a heated argument with Lincoln Borglum, Ziolkowski left the project. He would later begin another nearby mountain sculpture, Crazy Horse Memorial, which today is the largest mountain sculpture in the world in progress.²⁴ Mount Rushmore once had an amateur baseball team.²⁵ Because Gutzon and Lincoln Borglum were so competitive, they often hired young people for their baseball skills rather than their carving and drilling skills.²⁶ In 1939, the Rushmore Memorial team took second place at the South Dakota Amateur Baseball Tournament.²⁷ The image of the sculpture was mapped up the mountain using an intricate pointing machine designed by Borglum.²⁸ It was based on a 1:12 scale model of the final sculpture.²⁹ 90% of the mountain was carved with dynamite and more than 450,000 tons of rock were removed.³⁰ Next, a fine carving was made to create a surface as smooth as a concrete sidewalk.³¹ Drillers and finishers were lowered along the mountain's 500-foot face in bosun chairs held by 3/8-inch-thick steel cables.³² Workers at the top of the mountain would crank a winch to lift and lower the drills.³³ If they went too fast, the person in the bosun chair would be dragged up the mountain on their face.³⁴ The kids (known as call boys) were hired to sit on the side of the mountain to shout messages back and forth to operators to speed up or slow down.³⁵ Every president's face is 60 feet tall.³⁶ Faces appear in order: Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Lincoln.³⁷ Jefferson was originally supposed to be to the right of Washington.³⁸ After nearly two years of work on Jefferson, the rock was found unsuitable and the partially completed face was erased from the side of the mountain using dynamite.³⁹ Washington's face was completed in 1934.⁴⁰ Jefferson is in 1936.⁴¹ Lincoln finished in 1937.⁴² In 1937, a bill was introduced to Congress to add the image of women's rights leader Susan B. Anthony to the mountain.⁴³ Congress then passed a bill that required only the completion of leaders that had already begun.⁴⁴ In 1938, Gutzon Borglum secretly began blowing up a Hall of Records in the mountain behind his head.⁴⁵ The Hall of Records was to be a vault containing the history of the and vital documents such as the Constitution.⁴⁶ Congress discovered the project and asked Borglum to use federal funding for faces, not the Hall of Records.⁴⁷ Gutzon reluctantly stopped working on the hall in 1939, but vowed to complete it.⁴⁸ In the same year, the last face — of Theodore Roosevelt — was Sculptor Gutzon Borglum died in March 1941, leaving the monument to his son Lincoln to be completed.⁵⁰ The carving was originally intended to include the bodies of presidents until life.⁵¹ Originally, a huge panel with 8-foot-tall golden letters commemorating famous U.S. territorial acquisitions was also planned.⁵² Funding ran out and the monument was declared complete on October 31, 1941.⁵³ Overall, the project cost \$989,992.³² and took 14 years to finish.⁵⁴ It is estimated that only 6 years included actual carving, while 8 years were consumed with delays due to time and lack of funds.⁵⁵ Charles E. Rushmore donated \$5,000 to the mountain sculpture that bore his name.⁵⁶ In 1998, Borglum's vision for the Hall of Records was realized when porcelain tablets containing images and text of the Charter of Rights, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and biographies of the presidents and Borglum himself were sealed at once inside the Unfinished Hall.⁵⁷ Hall of Records had a role in the plot of the 2007 film National Treasure: Book of Secrets, starring Nicolas Cage.⁵⁸ Over the years, visitor facilities have been added, including a visitor center, the Lincoln Borglum Museum, and the Presidential Trail.⁵⁹ The Lincoln Borglum Museum hosts multimedia exhibits that allow you to use an old-fashioned explosive plunger to recreate the dynamite that blows up the face of the mountain.⁶⁰ You can also visit sculptor's studio, where Gutzon Borglum worked on scale models of Mount Rushmore.⁶¹ Grand View Terrace, one of the best places to see Mount Rushmore, is just above the museum.⁶² Grand View Terrace is located at the end of Flag Avenue; it has flags from all 50 states, one district, three territories, and two Commonwealths of the United States.⁶³ The Presidential Trail is a 1km trail that offers close-up and different views of every face.⁶⁴ If you start the trail from Sculptor's Studio, you'll need to climb 422 stairs. Enter the trail from Grand View Terrace and you'll have an easier time.⁶³ Rushmore's resident mountain goats are descendants of a herd that was donated to Custer State Park from Canada in 1924.⁶⁴ Evidently they escaped (naughty goats!).⁶⁷ From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Ben Black Elk, a famous Lakota saint, personally greeted visitors to Mount Rushmore.⁶⁸ Every night, Mount Rushmore is illuminated for two hours.⁶⁹ Since lighting can have an impact on the natural environment (think of lost moths, among other things), a new high-tech LED lighting system was installed in 2015 to minimize the negative effects of Mount Rushmore.⁷⁰ Lighting. Some believe that you can see an elephant, or at least the face stone of an elephant, if you look right at Lincoln. Others believe that if you look at an image of the mountain rotated 90 degrees, you can see another face.⁷¹ Mount Rushmore is granite, eroding about 1 inch each year.⁷² Since each of the noses is about 240 inches long, it could last up to 2.4 million years before fully wear out.⁷³ After about 500,000 years, faces will probably lose some of their definition. But at this rate the basic form of presidents' heads could last up to 7 million years.⁷⁴ Many things are being done to preserve Mount Rushmore. This included installing 8,000 feet of camouflaged copper wire in 1998 to help monitor 144 hairline cracks. Copper wire was replaced with fiber optic cable in 2009.⁷⁵ So far conservation efforts have been successful, with Mount Rushmore celebrating its 75th anniversary this year - all four noses, interns, and forehead (as well as all 8 eyes, nostrils, lips and ears) intact! Keep things wild in South Dakota! Copyright 2021 South Dakota Department of Tourism

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