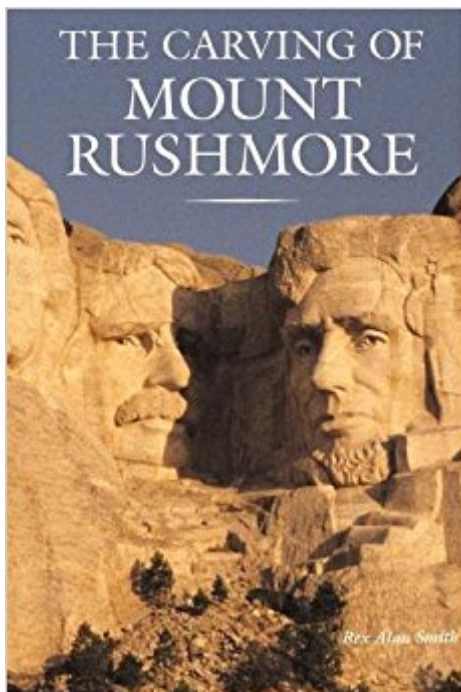


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The Carving Of Mount Rushmore



Synopsis

The first book to tell the complete story of Rushmore. "I had seen the photographs and the drawings of this great work. And yet, until about ten minutes ago I had no conception of its magnitude, its permanent beauty and its importance." —Franklin Delano Roosevelt, upon first viewing Mount Rushmore, August 30, 1936 Now in paperback, *The Carving of Mount Rushmore* tells the complete story of the largest and certainly the most spectacular sculpture in existence. More than 60 black-and-white photographs offer unique views of this gargantuan effort, and author Rex Alan Smith—a man born and raised within sight of Rushmore—recounts with the sensitivity of a native son the ongoing struggles of sculptor Gutzon Borglum and his workers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rex Alan Smith is also the author of *Moon of Popping Trees*, the story of the Wounded Knee Massacre, and the co-author of Abbeville's *One Last Look*.

Foreword High on a pine-clad mountain in South Dakota's Black Hills are the carved faces of four presidents of the United States—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt—each chosen for such commemoration because of his unique contribution to the building and shaping of his country. Created as a monument not only to those men but also to the aspirations and ideals of the nation they did so much to mold, the four faces together constitute the world's most gigantic piece of sculpture. Eight hundred million pounds of stone were removed in its carving, and so huge are the faces that from brow to chin each is as tall

as the entire Great Sphinx in Egypt. Ordinary men of the same proportions would stand shoulder-even with a forty-story building and could wade the Mississippi River without dampening their knees. Yet, so skillfully are the faces carved that to an observer viewing them from across the canyon they do not appear massive or coarse or even heavy. On the contrary, they look as graceful and lifelike as the finest busts sculpted in a studio. Carved upon a cliff that has changed but little since mankind first appeared on earth and has worn down less than the thickness of a child's finger since Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the faces will still be there, looking much as they do now, long after man has gone. All things considered, Mount Rushmore National Memorial is not only America's greatest and most enduring monument, it is all of mankind's as well. Today the memorial is visited by well over two million people a year. When these visitors ask, as most do, "Who created it?" they are answered almost invariably with, "The sculptor, Gutzon Borglum." In a limited sense that answer is true, but only in a limited sense. Certainly it is true that without Borglum's genius and stubborn dedication the monument might never have been carved, and the Rushmore cliff might look little different now than it did a million years ago. But that is only part of the story. The Rushmore monument also came from the dreams of a gentle, aging scholar named Doane Robinson, and from the levelheaded judgment and legislative skill of United States Senator Peter Norbeck. Equally important was the down-to-earth business sense of Jon Boland, a dealer in farm implements, and the integrity and legislative ability of William Williamson, a United States congressman and attorney. Just as Borglum brought to the work talents these men did not possess, they brought to it talents Borglum did not possess. All together these men are to the Rushmore work as legs are to a table. It rests upon them all. Lacking any one of them it would have fallen, yet no single one of them could claim credit for the fact that it did not fall. And there is more to the story, for the Rushmore memorial to a substantial extent is also the product of a United States president who learned how to fish, and to a very great extent that of a bunch of hard-working, hard-playing, drill-dusty miners who did the actual work of the carving. They came not even qualified to learn the art of mountain-carving, but learn they did, and the monument stands as everlasting evidence that they learned it well. Beyond what it owes to these men, the memorial is a creation of two brief consecutive moments in our national history—the booming 1920s and the depressed 1930s. Only because these were the kind of times they were and occurred in the sequence they did was it possible for the Rushmore project to have been conceived, approved, executed, and paid for. Even so, the challenges were so enormous and the difficulties so nearly insurmountable that it almost failed. Most people who view the monument today do realize there were great challenges to be met in its construction. They know also, since the monument does exist, that those challenges were not impossible to overcome. The

creators, however, were denied the comfort of such knowledge. Attempting to do that which never had been done before, they were never sure it could be done. When obstacles arose or money ran out, as both were always doing, time and again the machinery was covered, the work was abandoned, and the mountain was returned to silence. And each time this happened there was ample reason to believe the project could not be revived again...ever. Eventually, the time did come when the work had to be permanently shut down and the carving left uncompleted according to its original design, and it happened for a reason that the builders could neither have avoided nor foreseen. Although the first World War was supposed to have made the world "safe for democracy" it had not done so. By the end of the 1930s, the free nations of Europe again were fighting for their very survival, and the United States was attempting both to supply them with the arms they needed and to rearm itself as well. Continued building of the monument that had come to be called "The Shrine of Democracy" was forced to give way to the building of what President Franklin Roosevelt called "The Arsenal of Democracy"

Mr. Smith has written a lengthy, yet very readable story about Borglum the man and the colossal monument that overshadows all his earlier works. It is laced with plenty of insights, anecdotes and details that make the creation of Mount Rushmore fascinating. The book also gives a wonderful overview of South Dakota during that era, helping the reader to understand the mindset of people and their initial reaction from bemusement to disdain. Mr. Smith paints a story about life in the Black Hills, of the men who came to work at Mount Rushmore. The print version of the book has wonderful photographs sprinkled heavily throughout. All the photos are black and white with great tones. I've also purchased the digital edition, but can't really recommend it if the photos are important to the reader. The photos in it are not reproduced well like their printed counterparts. The digital book is just as readable but has the appearance and feel of a "hurry up and scan it so we can sell it digitally" copy. What a pity the publishers didn't lavish the same kind of attention to the digital book as they did for the original print copy.

Very interesting book about the creation of the monument. My only disappointment is that it was heavy on the politics of the creation, and I would have liked more info about the challenge of the actual carving.

A lot of details, perhaps too many, fill the 28 chapters that cover the time from the 1924 initial trip of the sculptor to the Black Hills to the 1941 completion of the Mount Rushmore carving of the faces of

four presidents. The story is told in chronological order and it is easy to skip where there is unwanted detail. For example, I was less interested in the politics and funding, and focussed on the actual carving of the gigantic faces on the rocky face of Mount Rushmore. It is very interesting to read about the completion of this amazing sculpture.

I found this book very engaging throughout. Conceived in the roaring twenties and paid for by the New Deal, Mt Rushmore was an amazingly difficult work executed by a sculptor with a monumental personality. The author gives you glimpses into life in those times, the politics involved and the engineering feat this was. I thoroughly enjoyed it and recommend it.

I read the book before a trip to Mount Rushmore and was glad I did. The book tells why this site was selected, how it was named and hundreds of other interesting facts. Most important it tells the story of the sculptor, Gustav Borglum and what he went through to accomplish this amazing piece of sculpture. The book is non-fiction but reads like a novel. Read it before you go to South Dakota or once you read it you will want to go to South Dakota.

This is a must read for anyone venturing to Mount Rushmore or anyone who has an interest in the quirky side of American history. It is very well researched and contains pictures that really help you understand the long, arduous business of carving one of our country's most memorable landmarks,

If you are looking for the best book on the construction of Mt. Rushmore, you need not look any further. This is an excellent resource that details how construction was performed with excellent illustrations. The book tells the entire story of the artist Gutzon Borglum and his life. The book also details the political turmoil involved in financing the project. It is fascinating to think this was constructed and financed as the country was deep in the depression. The entire story is told in this book, and I am convinced, you, as the reader, will love this book as much as I did. This book is one to keep on your book shelf for generations.

I really enjoyed learning about the real people involved in making this amazing historical landmark happen!

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