

# MOUNT RUSHMORE

1 x 60



International

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## CONTACT

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It took fourteen years and almost one million dollars to create. Men removed half-a-million tons of granite from the rock face of a mountain deep in the Black Hills of South Dakota, creating one of the biggest and oddest monuments in the world. Mount Rushmore represents the toil and the money of many. Yet it is the result of the tireless enthusiasm, egomaniacal drive, and artistic vision of one man: a sculptor named Gutzon Borglum.

Born in Idaho to Danish immigrants, Gutzon Borglum was thirty years old, a failing artist living in Paris, when he found inspiration in the works of sculptor Auguste Rodin. Borglum returned to New York in 1901 determined to become a successful sculptor. He became famous and influential, but Borglum was also rough around the edges, known for his crude racist and anti-semitic remarks.

Convinced that beauty alone would not move Americans, Borglum turned to scale. In 1925, he eagerly accepted an enormous new project, carving the faces of four presidents onto a mountainside in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Borglum started the project without any money and with little support.

Securing the federal government's support of the project was a feat unto itself. But finances were just one of Borglum's worries. Although the supply of workers in 1929 was plentiful, their skills were not. Borglum persisted, training the "untutored miners," as he called them, to carve the mountain.

On July 4, 1930, just one year after the real work began, Borglum revealed the Washington head. Tourists trekked to the site in droves, and the sculptor confidently predicted that the entire carving would be completed inside four years.

Plans quickly came to a halt, however, when the stone for Jefferson's face was found to be too crumbly. Eighteen months of work had to be blasted away to find more suitable stone. Money woes mounted as the Great Depression gripped the country.

When work resumed in 1933, many of the original workers returned despite Borglum's harsh treatment of them. "He's a heckuva stone carver," said a man who once worked for him, "but he ain't no sweet-talker." Borglum's twenty-one-year-old son Lincoln was now on the job, and his easygoing manner smoothed over the ill will left by his father's combative style.

"One of the great miracles of Rushmore is the miracle of the men, those dedicated guys who came back and came back and came back and came back," says author Rex Smith. "They came together fused in a sense that they were creating a great thing."

As Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt took form, Borglum clung to his vision that Mount Rushmore was a work of art, not merely a feat of engineering. To the end of his life, Borglum insisted that time was on his side. He told interviewers that he was allowing an extra three inches on the features of the sculptures to account for the elements, which would wear the granite down at a rate of one inch every 100,000 years. "The work will not be done for another 300,000 years," he declared, "as it should be."

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### CREDITS

*Executive Producer:* Margaret Drain  
*Senior Producer:* Mark Samels  
*Producer, Director, and Writer:* Mark Zwonitzer  
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