

# 40 ICONIC MOMENTS

## THAT MOVED RAPID CITY FORWARD

- 1. 1874** Colonel George Custer discovers gold in French Creek near Custer and the Black Hills Gold Rush begins.
- 2. 1876** 10,000 people occupy the Black Hills region and a small settlement called Hay Camp is formed near Rapid Creek in Rapid City.
- 3. 1876** A french goldsmith becomes lost in search of gold in the Black Hills. He stumbles upon a grape patch that saves his life and starts to form gold luck jewelry featuring grapes. Black Hills Gold Jewelry is an iconic souvenir still handmade in Rapid City today.
- 4. 1885** Dakota School of Mines is founded to provide education in mining and metallurgical engineering.
- 5. 1891** South Dakota Stockgrowers Association holds the first convention in Rapid City.
- 6. 1912** Elks Theatre opens as a lavish opera house in the heyday of live theatre.
- 7. 1912** A large "M" on M Hill is created by horse and wagon as a strategy to draw attention to the university.
- 8. 1935** U.S. Army Air Corps launches Explorer II balloon to 72,395 feet out of the Stratobowl off Highway 16. The record launch allows Captain Stevens to snap the first photo showing the curvature of the Earth.
- 9. 1936** Five green dinos are dedicated on Hogback Ridge overlooking Rapid City now known as Dinosaur Park.
- 10. 1938** Bikers gather for the first Sturgis Motorcycle Rally organized by the local motorcycle club "Jackpine Gypsies".
- 11. 1941** Mount Rushmore is declared a completed project and becomes the "Shrine of Democracy" – one of the most iconic images of America.
- 12. 1948** Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski single-jacks four holes for the first blast on Crazy Horse Memorial®, which takes off 10 tons of rock.
- 13. 1959** The first Black Hills Winter Show is held at Central States Fairgrounds and today, Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo is Rapid City's largest winter event.
- 14. 1969** A replica of the famous Borgund Stavkirke of Laerdal in Norway is built in reflection of many Norwegian Lutherans first settling in the Dakotas.
- 15. 1972** Community gathers to rebuild, creating 600+ acres of green spaces and public parks after one of the worst floods in U.S. history.
- 16. 1972** Bear Country U.S.A. opens with 11 black bears, one cougar, one wolf, three buffalo, and one large elk.
- 17. 1973** Storybook Island re-opens after the flood of 1972 and today features over 100 storybook fairytale sets free for exploration.
- 18. 1987** The first Black Hills Powwow is held in Rapid City marking the start of an annual premier culture celebration.
- 19. 1990** Dances with Wolves wins seven academy awards featuring filming locations around the Black Hills and Badlands, including the current location of Fort Hays.
- 20. 1990** South Dakota becomes the first state to celebrate Native Americans Day.

- 21. 1991** A historic firehouse built in 1915 transforms into South Dakota's first brew pub.
- 22. 1996** The Berlin Wall Exhibit is installed in Memorial Park in honor of the citizens of Ratingen, Germany (the sister city of Vermillion, South Dakota).
- 23. 1996** Prairie Edge Trading Co. opens to provide an outlet for Northern Plains Indian artists, as well as educate the public and preserve the culture.
- 24. 1997** The Journey Museum & Learning Center opens with the focus of sharing and preserving the history of the Black Hills and the Native American culture (see a rare American Flag in the pioneer section).
- 25. 1999** Minuteman Missile becomes a national historic site, the seventh national site surrounding Rapid City.
- 26. 2000** The first four presidents in the City of Presidents are unveiled and placed downtown.
- 27. 2003** Art Alley emerges as an organic, community gallery with ever-changing murals for locals and visitors to enjoy.
- 28. 2004** Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park opens 20 miles of recreation trails for hiking, running and cycling and is placed among the "best mountain bike meccas of the west".
- 29. 2008** Downtown Summer Nights kicks off featuring free entertainment and local vendors.
- 30. 2011** Main Street Square opens in the heart of Downtown Rapid City and becomes the host of major events including The Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival and Moonlit Movies.
- 31. 2013** Reptile Gardens claims honor of the World's Largest Reptile Zoo by the Official Guinness World Records.
- 32. 2014** Skyline Wilderness Area is established as part of the "Trails for Everyone" project. Prior to, the trail system was a little known gem.
- 33. 2015** American Bus Association denotes the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup as The Top Event in North America.
- 34. 2017** Sculptor Masayuki Nagase's work on "Passage of Wind and Water" is finished in Main Street Square featuring the unique beauty of the region.
- 35. 2021** Rushmore Plaza Civic Center renames to The Monument and opens the new Summit Arena, changing the entertainment landscape for Rapid City.
- 36. 2021** The Monument hosts Freedom Fest, the largest convention in Rapid City history.
- 37. 2022** Rapid City is named one of the best places to work remotely out of 15 U.S. destinations.
- 38. 2022** Ellsworth Air Force Base is selected as the location of the B-21 Raider, the backbone of future U.S. Air Power.
- 39. 2022** Rapid City is named one of the Best Small Towns in the U.S. to visit in 2023.
- 40. 2023** Rapid City Sports Commission is born with a focus of improving youth sports in Rapid City.



*Bonus Moment* **YOU SHOWED UP!**

Your dedication to the Travel & Tourism Industry helps us to move forward every day. Thank you!