2004 PROJECTS

The following list represents the major projects undertaken by the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission during 2004.

**FOUNTAIN RESTORATION PROJECT**  
**Lee Venteit, Project Coordinator**

During 2004 the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission continued their ongoing efforts to restore the City downtown fountain and return it to Downtown Rapid City. The fountain, a gift to the City in 1911 from the National Humane Alliance of New York, was originally placed at the corner of the intersection of 7th and Main Streets to serve not only to beautify the dusty Downtown area but as a watering station for horses and dogs. With the rise of the automobile in the mid-1920s, however, the placement of the fountain was deemed impractical and it was removed from the Downtown area and relocated to a local city park.

The Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission worked with students and faculty at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology to refurbish the fountain and to restore it near its original location, at the northwest corner of 7th and Main Streets. Engineering plans for final placement were completed and the project was coordinated with the City of Rapid City. The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology secured the assistance of area artist John Lopez for the fabrication of the original cast-iron ornamental water spouts. The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology also secured a replica of the original lamp post.

The dedication ceremony for the 1911 Lion Head Fountain was held on May 23, 2004 and brought to conclusion the decade long project for the Historic Preservation Commission.

As the fountain project did not fall under the project criteria of the Certified Local Grant program, the Historic Preservation Commission secured grant funding from the Modern Woodman of America Foundation. The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology secured additional funding from the Juliana Creaser memorial fund.

**HISTORIC FOUNTAIN DEDICATED IN DOWNTOWN RAPID CITY**

South Dakota Tech students and faculty and local historic preservation officials will dedicate the 1911 Fountain during a ceremony held Sunday, May 23, at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets in Rapid City.

This fountain was donated to Rapid City in 1911 by Hersman Lee Ensign, the founder of the National Humane Alliance. The fountain was designed as a horse watering trough, but the fountain base features two small basins for dogs and cats. The fountain originally sat in the middle of the intersection of Seventh and Main streets, when cars became popular, the fountain was moved to the corner, and then it was placed at the city park's department in old Storybook Island.

In 1998, the Rapid City Historic Preservation Committee and South Dakota Tech decided to undertake a project to restore the fountain and place it downtown area again. At Tech, the project began with students studying the fountain and developing a drawing that was translated to an architectural model. In 2000, students converted the architectural model into a three-dimensional computer model and designed and fabricated a replica of the fountain to be placed in the park.

The most difficult portion of the project was replacing the lion's heads and plaque. After mentioning the project to artist John Lopez, he decided to take on the task of recreating the lion's heads from a photograph of a similar fountain in Illinois.

With continued and dedicated help from the American Society of Civil Engineers, businesses in the community, and the City of Rapid City, the fountain can finally be dedicated near its original location.
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derbyct
Sun, Nov 10, 2019
Fountain: Few like it survived the past century

The Eisele water fountain for horses can be seen in this undated photo of a downtown Rapid City children's parade. The fountain once stood in the middle of the street at Seventh and Main. But the automobiles age turned it into an unnecessary traffic hazard.

The current Eisele fountain is now part of the Historic Preservation Commission. It is located in the Children's Garden at Sioux Park, near the city's former park headquarters on Capitol Lake Drive.

A few years ago, Lee Verberg, a Tech professor and member of the Historic Preservation Commission — and now the chair — stepped up to see the project through to completion.

It was my first assignment on the commission, Paul said. "Lee, you're going to do it." Verberg said. He began working with Kenner and his students. The latest group of students accepted the challenge and completed the project

At various times, Kenner and his students worked with local musicians and other groups to promote the fountain. They had to figure out how to extend water and electricity to the sidewalk, and they had to design the concrete base. Consider their fund raising and historical detective work, and they found a well-rounded student civic and civil-engineering project.

The biggest challenge was replacing the two lion heads. A meeting between downtown Rapid City and Sioux Park, the bronze heads and the commemorative plaque disappeared. The students speculate that the pieces are probably hidden away in someone's basement. The plaque and its inscription were easily replaced, but the lion heads were another matter.

The students found an identical Eisele fountain with its hardware intact in Princeton, Minn. They purchased a $3,000 state who lives in Boston to obtain a Prairie School photo of the fountain. The students then hired a casting expert to make a mold of one of the Princeton lion heads and use it cast new heads for the Rapid City fountain. They could not find anyone to do the work, so they turned to Rapid City sculptor John Lopez. Lopez then sculpted a new pair of lion heads from clay. Shriver said it almost seemed effortless for Lopez, "and it's shocking how beautiful it is." Lopez's two lion heads will be unveiled Sunday, April 15, during a ceremony from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Stahl Arts Center. A rededication ceremony was planned.

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