On the granite face of 6,000-foot Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills of South Dakota, carved in dimensions symbolic of greatness, are memorialized four American Presidents who upheld the rights and dignities of the common man. Boldly American in size and scope, Mount Rushmore portrays through these likenesses the beginnings and trials of the Nation during its first century and a quarter. Washington represents the fight for liberty and the birth of the Republic. Jefferson is the expression of this country's political philosophy. Lincoln embodies the preservation of the Union, and Theodore Roosevelt depicts the expansion and conservation of the Nation as it is today.

MOUNT RUSHMORE
National Memorial • South Dakota
THE CARVING OF A MOUNTAIN

The idea of a gigantic sculpture in the Black Hills had its origin in 1923 in the fertile mind of Doane Robinson, State historian of South Dakota. Two years later he had found a sculptor competent enough to carve a mountain. This was Gutzon Borglum, an artist then at work sculpturing a Confederate memorial on Stone Mountain in Georgia. Borglum was later to use at Mount Rushmore engineering methods that he had developed at Stone Mountain.

Robinson's original concept for the memorial was to carve the figures of local heroes like Jim Bridger, John Colter, and Kit Carson into the unusual granite formations known as the Needles. But Borglum thought that the project should be of national significance rather than regional and that a site other than the Needles should be found. He preferred a mountain large enough to encompass a sculptural unity. After much searching, Borglum selected the mountain named after Charles E. Rushmore, a New York lawyer. He chose this mountain because it was of smooth-grained granite, it dominated the surrounding terrain, and it faced the sun most of the day.

Work began on August 10, 1927, the day that President Calvin Coolidge dedicated the memorial. But 2 months elapsed before large-scale drilling and blasting began. Lack of funds and contrary weather spread the carving over 14 years, and death stilled Borglum's hand before the memorial was completed.

Essentially, the project was one of removing unwanted rock. The first step was to blast away surface rock until deep fissures and cracks were bypassed and solid granite reached. Ex-miners, trained by Borglum, did the work with drills, jackhammers, and dynamite. The drilling and blasting was based on measurements taken from a scale model. Gilbert C. Fite, in his book Mount Rushmore, has vividly described the work:

The model was first measured by fastening a horizontal bar on the top and center of the head. As this extended out over the face a plumb bob was dropped to the point of the nose, or other projections of the face. Since the model of Washington's face was five feet tall, these measurements were then multiplied by twelve and transferred to the mountain to form a scale model large enough for the desired effect. Instead of a small house, a thirty-foot scaling house was built on the mountain in the stone which would ultimately be the top of Washington's head and extending over the granite cliff. A plumb bob was lowered from the boom. The problem was to adjust the measurements from the scale of the model to the mountain. The first step was to locate the point of the nose since that was the extreme projection of the face. If it was found that several feet of rock had to be removed to reach the nose point, this would be indicated by paint marks. Then other projected points of the face, such as the frontal bones, were located and measured.

After the rough points were established, men suspended in swing seats began the drilling and blasting.... The blasting was done in such a way as to leave a great rough, eggshaped mass.... It was possible to dynamite within an inch or two of the intended surface, and occasionally this was done at Rushmore. But generally, blasting was not carried on closer than six inches to the surface. It was not practicable to dynamite too near, because the charges had to be so small and the holes so near together that labor was saved. Measuring, drilling, blasting, shaping, wedging, and humping was only a small part of work. The "true carving" was only a figure of speech in this gigantic project.

The vast enterprise came to an end in October 1941, after 6 1/2 years of actual work since the project's inception. Seven months earlier Borglum had died at the age of 74, leaving the final work to his son Lincoln who spent the last funds on Roosevelt's face (which was never completed), finishing the lapels and collar of Washington's coat, and putting some final touches on Lincoln's head.

The memorial cost $989,992.32. Initial funds were raised by school children who sent in pennies, nickles, and dimes. Individuals and businesses gave larger amounts, but Federal appropriations accounted for 83% of the total.

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Although he carved the figures to the scale of men 465 feet tall, Gutzon Borglum (right) did not intend that the memorial should be merely the expression of one man's talent or a monument known only for its gigantic proportions. To Borglum, and those who worked with him, "a monument's dimensions should be determined by the importance of the events commemorated."
Author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson would have been great by that act alone. But that noble document was only one of the many accomplishments he bequeathed upon the new Nation. Throughout his life he was a foe of all forms of social and political inequality: for a more broadly based democracy in the interests of the common man. More, indeed, than the work of his contemporaries he believed that through the combination of education and religion the common man could rise to the challenge of republic government.

Jefferson's long career in many branches of science, and his habits and temperament were those of a man who observed and comprehended the social and economic forces which at the same time were the most volatile of Americans. He was the first President to possess a broad and comprehensive scientific and historical training in the academic and classical revival of architecture in the United States. A builder whose creative genius comprehended both, he was the first to be depicted by sculptor in a grand national memorial for liberty centered in him during the American Revolution. The qualities of personal leadership, devotion to the American cause gave strength and his accomplishments as Commander of the American forces for the successful conclusion of the war, he continued to maintain.

As the first President, he launched the new Nation on a new and sturdy course. Washington's stature, probity, and practicality gave the office a dignity and respect that later Presidents have sought to maintain.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Just as George Washington was the first American President, so was he the fourth President, a time when the Nation found its true place in the family of nations. His qualities of statesmanship and personal leadership, devotion to the American cause gave strength and his accomplishments as Commander of the American forces for the successful conclusion of the war, he continued to maintain.

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AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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