

FOUNDER'S PARK **Concept for Presentation to Parks & Recreation Department**

THEME: PRIDE IN OUR PAST
(Updated May 6, 2003)

The Founder's Park interpretive site seeks to present a unique aspect of our city's pioneer history to the Rapid City community and our visitors in a beautiful outdoor setting. Knowledge of our roots brings us appreciation and connectedness, and is vital to our children and our future. The Founder's Park project is a grass-roots historical and educational initiative conceived of and spearheaded by members of Leadership Rapid City class of 2001. The concept came about as a result of being alerted by Helen Wrede and her family, descendants of John Brennan, Rapid City's original mayor, that the site was in danger of being lost to historical memory. The Founder's Park project is supported by Rapid City citizenry with interests in history, art, architecture, botany, education, parks, landscaping, and engineering. They have willingly donated their time and expertise for the purpose of preserving Rapid City's unique heritage while beautifying their town.

Founder's Park is conceived as a complementary adjunct to the Journey Museum, mutually beneficial and separate, but not competitive. At its location just west of the Concrete Fish and in full view of Point of Rocks, close by the original campsite of the founding party pioneers of 1876, Founder's Park would provide the visitor an opportunity to realize the historical significance of that place.

The Journey Museum is a regional museum and encompasses a much broader geographic area and much longer time span, encouraging tourism and drawing on a wider visitor base. The Journey Museum has a series of story walls which tell of the

events and places which could be brought to life and imagination by a visit to Founder's Park. The Journey could serve as the ideal location for enhanced displays and educational events stimulated by a visit to Founder's Park. The architectural and landscaping styles of the Journey are free-flowing and natural, and are unique to its specific design. Founder's Park, on the other hand, in keeping with its purpose of portraying a stylized "map" of Rapid City's first 25 years within its specific floodway limitations, is one-dimensional and more geometric. The natural, more subdued earth-tone color scheme of the Journey Museum also is in contrast to the more vibrant brick red and sand yellow colors planned to distinguish design features of Founder's Park. These two points of interest would be closely linked, representing different aspects of local history, one specific and one more broad, along the green corridor, in two separate yet mutually beneficial settings.

OBJECTIVE: A new City Park dedicated to honoring Rapid City's 11 original founders and its pioneers. Founder's Park memorializes the founders by marking the spot where they camped in February of 1876 while they laid out the original townsite. It will show the visitor, by way of creative landscaping and in-ground design, some of the earliest history of our town. It will serve as a new recreational and educational destination. It is intended as an enjoyable, informative, and interactive outdoor destination, an attraction along the historical self-guided tour route, for the purpose of educating citizens and visitors about Rapid City's history.

The Park recognizes limitations created by its being situated in the floodway. It is also respectful of implications of the many lives lost in that area in the 1972 flood by making the site a more beautiful and serene spot for contemplation of our past.

LOCATION: Beside Rapid Creek, just west of the volleyball courts and the Rapid Trout (Concrete Fish) along Omaha Street, between the bike path and the parking lot. This is beneath and across the Creek from Point of Rocks, campsite of Rapid City's founders.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Easy access from Omaha Street to the existing parking lot with lighting, bus stop, telephone, and picnic tables is already in place. Access is flat and within close proximity of the bike path and walking paths, Rapid Trout (the Concrete Fish), and the volleyball court. Projected within the city's 5-year plan are water and restroom facilities for that area.

CONCEPT FOR PLAZA: The Plaza is a flat slab of highly durable concrete, and is an artistic rendering of Rapid City's original townsite, presenting its streets in sand yellow color and blocks in a brick red color. Within its space of approximately 75 square feet it represents a 1-square-mile area of the original town bordered by East Blvd, West Blvd., North Street and Omaha Street. It illustrates the outstanding features of the city's first 25 years. It is a grid of 70 blocks, each block 5 feet square, with streets in between 2-1/2 feet wide, wide enough to be walkways through the "streets". The streets and blocks are all of concrete, with the blocks being of a contrasting brick red color from the streets. The names of the streets and landmarks within the blocks would be imprinted or stamped in the concrete. Within the streets there will be embedded bronze icons representative of early means of transportation including horses, people, bull train, stagecoach, wagon, streetcar, locomotive and horse and buggy. These icons all face in the same direction, leading the visitor serpent-wise through the streets and past the various landmarks. The blocks will illustrate some of the most prominent buildings, businesses and landmarks of the first 25 years of Rapid City's existence.

MATERIALS AND ENGINEERING EXPERTISE: The site has been accepted for consideration by the Rapid City Engineering Department under the supervision and guidance of Rapid City Parks Division Manager, Lon VanDeusen; City Engineer, Keith Johnson; and City Planner, Marcia Elkins. The site will be surveyed and a site plan created by Tech senior civil engineering students, Eric Martens and Andy Baker, as part of their Senior Design Project at the South Dakota School of Mines and Engineering under the guidance of concrete specialist, Prof. M.R. Hansen. In surveying the site the students will ensure that the Plaza provides proper slope to allow for drainage and ease of maintenance.

The concrete itself will be of extremely durable quality and virtually indestructible, also part of the Senior Design Project under Prof. Hansen's direction.

The embedded icons, silhouettes cut out of bronze, representing the transportation modes will be created by the students of the Rapid City schools. The icons will be virtually impossible to pry loose and therefore resistant to vandalism. The construction recognizes the **imperatives of durability, ease of maintenance, resistance to vandalism, public safety, and relationship to the floodway.** The concrete will be engineered and poured under the supervision of MR and the students. The flat, in-ground design with lack of prominences encourages interaction by visitors, and is wheelchair accessible. Landscaping will be accomplished in historic and native Black Hills botanical specimens, reflecting the objectives of the project, under the direction of landscape architects Eric Heikes and Mike Stanley of Wyss Associates. Horticulture students will be involved in the selection and planting under the direction of Darold Hehn of Central High School. The Dept. of Parks and Recreation has agreed to help get the plantings established and follow up with maintenance.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Rapid City Journal article, publicity to inform and involve community (Bev Pechan will write this.)
2. Concrete is being designed as a Senior Design Project of the Civil Engineering Dept. at SDSMT under guidance of Dr. M.R. Hansen.
3. Metalwork is being accomplished by students at Central and Stevens High Schools under the direction of teacher Curtis Bietz.
4. Landscaping is being accomplished with the help of students from Central High School under the direction of teacher Darold Hehn.
5. Informational brochure is being developed by students from Central High School under the guidance of teacher David Laudenschlager.

HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR APPLICATIONS

Include Founder's Park on the self-guided walking tour of Rapid City .

SIGNAGE FOR FOUNDER'S PARK

(PRELIMINARY TEXT FOR FOUNDER'S PARK SIGNS)

Sign No. 1

WELCOME TO FOUNDER'S PARK: A WALK THROUGH 1876-1901, RAPID CITY'S FIRST 25 YEARS

A walk through Founder's Park takes the visitor back to the time to the years 1876 through 1901 when Hay Camp was setting down roots and emerging as a town called

Rapid City. This interpretive site represents an artistic rendering of the original one-square-mile layout of the original townsite as planned by the town's founders. By following along the yellow concrete path in the direction of the bronze icons (oxen, wagons, stagecoaches, people afoot and on horseback, etc., representing the earliest modes of transportation), one begins to appreciate the way the town was laid out and developed during its first 25 years. The stagecoaches are placed at those locations where stage offices were located. Some of the more notable commercial, civic, religious and private structures are represented in the bronze plaques embedded in blocks in which they were built. The plaques are numbered and the visitor may proceed through the sandy-colored streets by following the numbers. The blocks are represented in brick red-colored concrete, within an area bordered on the north by Omaha St., the south by South St., the west by West Blvd., and the east by East Blvd.

Hay Camp to Rapid City

The year 1876 brought events that would forever change the Black Hills, Paha Sapa, of western Dakota Territory. The discovery of gold and the push for westward expansion and development resulted in a stampede for treasure in minerals and land. Miners, entrepreneurs and settlers set up camps, started towns and newspapers, and some made permanent homes. Many of those early hopeful towns have vanished with the subsidence of the Gold Rush, but many remain vital and thriving, abounding in history and mindful of a rich heritage.

Among the most successful towns was Rapid City, also known as Hay Camp in earlier days. Rapid City was founded by a small group of hardy pioneers in that landmark year of 1876. Under the leadership of John R. Brennan, the party left Palmer Gulch, near present-day Hill City, after a fruitless gold-seeking endeavor, and arrived at this

promising scenic location in the foothills on Feb. 24, 1876. The party, comprising John R. Brennan, Martin Pensinger, Thomas Ferguson, W.P. Martin, Albert Brown, William Marston, Samuel Scott the surveyor, J.W. Allen, James Carney, Major Hutchinson, and William Nuttall camped at the "big tree at point of rocks". The next day they explored the area now known as Rapid Valley for about 20 miles down.

The party was soon joined by several others who had followed them, believing they were on a stampede [gold rush]. There was a meeting "held the same evening and it was decided then and there to lay out a town site."

John R. Brennan's diary, February 23, 1876.

"... a section of land was measured off with a tape line, the courses being run by myself with the aid of a pocket compass... six blocks being laid out that same day, and the lots included in them were drawn by those present, each man having the privilege of drawing five lots... The name of Rapid City was proposed by William Martin and agreed to by the remainder of the party."

Samuel Scott's diary, February 25th, 1876

Note that the city was laid out according to the founders' compass, with orientation to magnetic north. It was not until the year _____ when the city extended beyond the original one-mile-square perimeter, that the major thoroughfare, 8th street, now Mt. Rushmore Road, would have its orientation corrected to reflect true north. This slight leftward correction appears as a jog in Mt. Rushmore Road at South St., Rapid City's original southern city limit.

"As makers of the history of the West, their names will be handed down to posterity while summer clouds shall map old Harney's Brow and Black Hills waters run down to the sea." Unknown Pioneer writer (as inscribed on the bronze plaque that previously marked this site, now located at the Children's Science Center.)

Sign No. 2

John R. Brennan was elected Rapid City's first mayor on Nov.17, 1882, the year before incorporation. In 1878 Brennan built the American House Hotel and in 1885 built the Harney Hotel, showplace of the Hills. Both hotels were locations for stagecoach stops. Brennan was a member of the first village board of trustees, president of the first City Council, first postmaster, member and later president of the first School of Mines board, Union Pacific agent in Rapid City, fire chief for several years, Pennington County Superintendent of Schools, vice-president of the First National Bank of Rapid City and railroad commissioner for the State of South Dakota. He introduced and developed the first stage and express line into Rapid City.

SPONSORSHIP:

Sponsorship of the individual blocks and businesses is envisioned. Solicit sponsorship from modern equivalent of pioneer businesses. Solicit sponsorship from local businesses, institutions, corporations, interested individuals and/or service organizations. Sponsorship committee chairperson is Bobbi Jean Jarvinen of Leadership Rapid City. Donation of building materials is anticipated. All members of the committee are volunteering their time and efforts. Engineering, landscaping, and artistic advisers are participating voluntarily and require reimbursement for their expenses only.

FOUNDER'S PARK COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Ann Haber Stanton, historian, Leadership Rapid City 2001

ARTISTIC ADVISERS:

Elizabeth Benusis, artist, Leadership Rapid City 2002

Beverly Pechan, artist

Tommie Leenknecht, artist

CONCRETE ADVISERS:

M.R. Hansen, Civil Engineering Department, S. D. School of Mines and Technology

Andy Baker, Senior Student, Civil Engineering Department, SDSMT

Eric Martens, Senior Student, Civil Engineering Department, SDSMT

Kenny Collins, Student, Civil Engineering Department, SDSMT

ENGINEERING ADVISERS:

Keith Johnson, Rapid City Engineering Department

Prof. M.R. Hansen, Civil Engineering Department, SDSMT

LANDSCAPING ADVISORS

Eirik Heikes, Wyss Associates

Mike Stanley, Wyss Associates

Darold Hehn, Central H.S. Horticulture teacher

METALWORK ADVISER:

Curtis Bietz, Central H.S. Metalwork teacher

HISTORICAL ADVISERS:

Bob Preszler, Minnilusa Pioneer Museum

Watson Parker, historian and author

Beverly Pechan, historian, journalist and author

David Strain, historian and author

David Laudenschlager, historian and teacher

Helen Wrede, granddaughter of founder John R. Brennan

John Wrede, great-grandson of founder John R. Brennan

Paul Swedlund, historian

Eka Parkison, Rapid City historian

Ann Haber Stanton, historian

PLANNING ADVISERS:

Jerry Munson, Rapid City Mayor

Lon Van Deusen, Rapid City Parks Division Manager

Marcia Elkins, Rapid City Planning Department

SIGNAGE ADVISERS:

Kelly Farrar, Rosenbaum's Signs

LEADERSHIP RAPID CITY MEMBERS

Robert Baker, class of 2001

Bobbi Jean Davis, class of 2001

Richard Latuchie, class of 2001

Elizabeth Benusis, class of 2002

Ann Haber Stanton, class of 2001