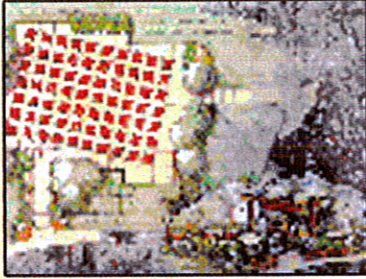


Welcome To FOUNDERS PARK PLAZA



Drawing by Wyss Associates

Mission

1. To mark the location where the founding party camped in 1876 while they laid out Rapid City.
2. To honor Rapid City's founders and pioneers.
3. To educate visitors about the first 50 years of Rapid City's existence and to inspire further interest in this subject.
4. To provide an attractive and interactive outdoor destination that enhances our city's historical preservation focus.

Knowledge of our roots brings us appreciation and connectedness with those whose aspirations we are fulfilling. Founders Park Plaza is a community project, initiated through Leadership Rapid City (LRC), intended to benefit the Rapid City and Black Hills community and all who wish to learn about its unique history.

Rapid City's Founders

This group arrived with Brennan on Feb. 23rd, 1876

John Brennan
William P. Martin
Albert P. Brown
Martin Pensinger
William Marston
Thomas Ferguson

This second group arrived with Scott on Feb. 25th, 1876

Sam Scott
Dick King
William Nuttall
James Carney
Major John Hutchinson
John W. Allen

Notes from John Brennan's diary

"February 23, 1876. A party consisting of W. J. Martin, J. W. Allen, Mart Pensinger, William Marston, John R. Brennan, Tom Ferguson, and Dick King left Palmer Gulch with a view to laying out a town someplace in the foothills. The party arrived at Rapid Creek that same date and camped near Big Springs at mouth of Canyon. Next day, the 24th, the party explored the valley for about 20 miles down.

Returning next day, the 24th (here Brennan meant to write the 25th) the party camped at big tree at point of rocks. Here the party was joined by several others (Dick King, William Nuttall, James Carney, Major John Hutchinson, John W. Allen, Sam Scott) who had followed the party thinking 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."



Notes from Sam Scott's diary

"... 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 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."

Why the sudden bend in Mount Rushmore Road at South Street?

Rapid City was surveyed in 1876 using John Brennan's compass, which pointed toward magnetic north. Because the Earth wobbles on its axis in an easterly direction, there is a variance between magnetic north and geographic (true) north of 12 degrees 30 minutes at Rapid City. Modern surveying instruments are oriented toward true north. As the city expanded, additions to the city were oriented to true north. This explains the jog in the plat adjacent to the east side of Mount Rushmore Road. It also accounts for the sudden westward jog in Mount Rushmore Road at South Street, the original southernmost border of the city.

Founders Park Plaza recognizes the profound implications of its location in a place where so many lives were lost in the disastrous flood in June of 1972. It is respectful of this tragic event in Rapid City's past, and hopes to make this site a more meaningful and serene spot for contemplation of our history.