

South Dakota: Visits by the Presidents



Still from Film: Calvin Coolidge at Mt. Rushmore – 1927

Visits by the Presidents

Many presidents have visited South Dakota, including Mount Rushmore. The article below from the South Dakota State Historical Society Press website documents the Presidential visits from 1899 – 1999. ("[Patriotic Pageantry: Presidential Visits to South Dakota](#)" by Harold H. Schuler)

Video footage was used to document the Presidential visits. The film shows President Calvin Coolidge riding a horse to the dedication of the Mount Rushmore site. There are also views of Mount Rushmore as it looked before carving began. In another clip, the narrator provides some details about the events of the dedication. Coolidge addressed the assembly and presented sculptor Gutzon Borglum with steel drill bits, symbolically providing the tools to get the carving underway. ([Watch/ Photos & Article](#))



Still from Film: FDR at Mount Rushmore – 1936

On August 30, 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited the Black Hills to dedicate the Jefferson sculpture. Roosevelt was already in the region on a tour of Great Plains states, which were hard hit by the drought of the 1930s.

In the photo above, a flag is removed from Jefferson's face during the dedication.

The following clip ([Watch](#)) contains two newsreel films. In the second, Roosevelt is shown speaking extemporaneously about the significance of Mount Rushmore and its place in history.

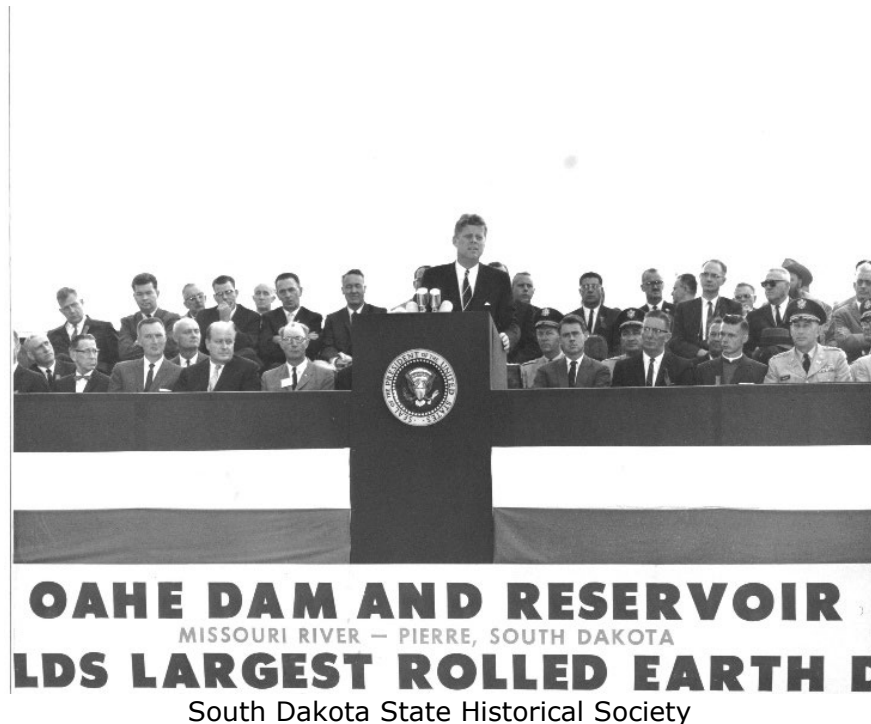


Still from Film: Dwight Eisenhower at Mt. Rushmore

On June 11, 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower became the first U.S. President to arrive in South Dakota by air. Eisenhower came to the

state to address delegates attending a Young Republicans League convention in Rapid City.

President Eisenhower addressed the Delegates at a gathering at Mount Rushmore. In the following clip ([Watch](#)), Eisenhower is seen speaking and mixing with a crowd. There are also shots of Eisenhower fishing, most likely in a stream in Custer State Park. The film is silent. A transcript of the speech is [available online here](#).



President John F. Kennedy visited South Dakota on August 17, 1962. While Kennedy was here, he dedicated the recently completed Oahe Dam and the start of its full operation as an electric power plant.

The following film clip ([Watch](#)) shows the arrival of Air Force One at the Pierre airport. Assembled dignitaries greet Kennedy, including Governor Archie Gubbrud and then-U.S. Senate candidate George McGovern.

****Presidential Visits to South Dakota, from William McKinley, 1899 – Donald Trump, 2020**** South Dakota has always been considered a flyover country, but a few American Presidents have made their way to the Mount Rushmore State.

Related Video:

Cleaning Mount Rushmore: The following program features a spectacular video showing National Parks Service workers cleaning Mount Rushmore ([Watch](#)).

[Mount Rushmore Models](#): Danish-born sculptor Gutzon Borglum's original vision of the monumental Mount Rushmore figures was very different from the carving as it stands today. ([More](#))

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