a warm, clear summer day, we met President John F. Kennedy and his young son at Mount Rushmore Road and Main Street near The Rushmore Hotel and Suites in downtown Rapid City, S.D. The bronze sculpture, by John Lopez, depicts President Kennedy handing John Jr. one of his favorite toys—a replica fighter plane. The linked, life-sized figures re-create a popular photographic image of father and son, taken outside the White House.

One of many exquisitely crafted bronzes that are part of the Rapid City Historic District Tour, the sculpture project began in 2000. Private sources fund each sculpture, which is carefully placed without favoritism.

Political Best and Worst  If Kennedy was among the nation's best-loved presidents, Richard M. Nixon was among those least liked by the public, largely because of Watergate.

But sculptor Edward E. Hlavka depicted this controversial figure at his political best, during negotiations with Mao-Tse-Tung. Nixon sits in a Chinese-designed chair with a pensive pose and fingertips touching, at Fifth and St. Joseph, kitty-corner from the South Dakota Stock Growers Association.

Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan has historically been considered by many as one our best presidents. Sculptor James Michael Maher depicts him wearing a cowboy hat and boots while enjoying his ranch on a vacation from stressful presidential responsibilities. The sculpture stands at 6th and St. Joseph, near Tally's Silver Spoon.

Outside the Federal Building at 9th and Main is the figure of the revered Abraham Lincoln, whose hand rests on the shoulder of a young man in military dress. Elsewhere, Hlavka's sculpture of Federalist and gifted writer Thomas Jefferson stands with the Declaration of Independence at 7th and St. Joseph, near the Canvas to Paint shop.

Among the presidents considered among the worst executives was Whig Millard Fillmore, who served for three years after President Zachary Taylor died. Better known for political failures than for any significant accomplishments while occupying the Oval Office, Fillmore is depicted by sculptor James Van Nuys reading with a look of annoyance on his face that seems to indicate his distaste for visitor interruptions. This one is at 9th and St. Joseph, near Wells Fargo.

Also considered among the country's worst is Republican Warren G. Harding, who stands behind an ornate chair at 9th and St. Joseph, south of the Federal Building. Sculpted by John Lopez, the work is of a leader whose presidency was rocked by scandals and a year in jail.

Camera-worthy  These sculptures only scratch the surface of Rapid City's bronze presidential collection. Hlavka's sculpture of Franklin D. Roosevelt at 5th and Main, beside Furniture Mart, depicts him at a lectern as he deals with the debilitating effects of polio. The longest-serving American chief executive, FDR guided the country through
World War II and the Great Depression, as well as creation of the Social Security Act and repeal of Prohibition.

Elsewhere, Lee Leuning and Sherri Treeby crafted the likeness of James Monroe. Known to be cordial and charming, Monroe tips his top hat while wearing tails and leaning on a cane at 7th and Main, near the City of Presidents Information Center.

A neighbor makes the roster, too, near the U.S. Bank branch at 7th and St. Joseph. Here, the James Michael Maher sculpture of Republican Gerald Ford, born in adjacent Nebraska, stands with his golden retriever, Liberty, beside him. Not far away—at 6th and Main—is George H.W. Bush with his hand on a globe. Right across is John Adams, the only other president to have a son serve as president. H&A

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**Other highlights:**
- Holding an open book, Democrat Grover Cleveland was the only U.S. president who served two non-consecutive terms in office. James Michael Maher crafted this bronze at 4th and St. Joseph.
- Kansan and Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower wears his Army uniform at 5th and St. Joseph, near the South Dakota Stock Growers Association.
- Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson will long be remembered for escalated involvement in the Vietnam War, the creation of Medicare and Medicaid, and for the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. Maher depicts him sitting on the edge of a small cement structure at 7th and Main.
- With one hand on a saddle and another holding a cowboy hat, Republican president Calvin Coolidge, who spent a summer during his presidency in Rapid City and nearby Custer State Park, commands respect at 5th and Main.

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