

DINOSAUR PARK
940 Skyline Drive
Rapid City
Pennington County
South Dakota

HABS SD-27
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DINOSAUR PARK

HABS No. SD-27

Location: 940 Skyline Drive, Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota

The coordinates for Dinosaur Park (taken at roughly the location of the *Apatosaurus* sculpture) are 44.077964 N, -103.245844 W. These coordinates were obtained in March 2012 from Google Earth and with, it is assumed, WGS 1984. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Dinosaur Park was built as a tourist attraction and city park by the Works Progress Administration and the City of Rapid City in 1936. The hilltop park features five concrete dinosaurs representing the prehistoric history of the Black Hills region.

Description: Dinosaur Park was built at the top of a hill overlooking Rapid City, South Dakota with Works Progress Administration Project funding. The park included stone stairs and five concrete dinosaurs. The dinosaurs included a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *Stegosaurus*, *Triceratops*, *Apatosaurus* (formerly *Brontosaurus*), and *Anatotian* (formerly *Trachodon*). Originally the dinosaurs were painted gray and the site had less hardscaping. Currently the sculptures have a green and white color scheme that dates to the 1950s. Two additional prehistoric creature sculptures added later – a *Dimetrodon* and a *Protoceratops* – are located near the gift shop and parking lot on the other side of Skyline Drive. Skyline Drive was built with New Deal-funding as a companion project to Dinosaur Park.

History: Dinosaur Park is an unusual New Deal project intended to capitalize on the tourist traffic going through Rapid City to Mount Rushmore National Monument. The work began in February 1936 as Works Progress Administration Project #960. The official dedication was May 22, 1936 with construction continuing until 1938. The dinosaurs were designed by lawyer and sculptor Emmit Sullivan (b. 1887- d. 1970) and constructed with a two-inch metal pipe frame covered with wire mesh and a concrete skin. Sullivan later did sculptures for Dinosaur World in Beaver, Arkansas and the Christ of the Ozarks statue in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The Rapid City Chamber of Commerce was involved, as was Dr. C. C. O'Hara, paleontologist and retired President of the nearby South Dakota School of Mines. Dr. Barnum Brown, curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, served as a scientific consultant. The specimens were chosen to represent the dinosaur fossils found in the Western United States. Their scale is generally correct, but their concrete forms reflect an outdated view of dinosaur anatomy. The current gift shop and parking lot were added c. 1968 and the site became an official city park that year. Dinosaur Park has been changed over the

years with additional asphalt paths, stone retaining walls, terraces, and railings, but still serves as a unique tourist attraction.

- Sources: Torma, Carolyn. "Dinosaur Park," Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1990. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.
- "Dinosaur Park," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur_Park (accessed March 14, 2012)
- Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Historian, 2012