

'(The project) wasn't supposed to last the semester, but once we all started it, we couldn't stop.'
— Rachael Stelbow, a South Dakota School of Mines & Technology student who began working a year and a half ago on the restoration of a vintage fountain



Dick Kattawell/Journal staff

Civil engineering students, from left, Kari Kilian of Rapid City, Rachael Stelbow of Rapid City and Amanda Kost of Mitchell, were involved in the project to restore Rapid City's historic horse fountain, shown here in storage on the campus at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

Tech project restoring fountain to downtown

By Dan Daly
Journal Staff Writer

A forgotten piece of Rapid City's history will soon return to the downtown-sized corner where it started out in 1911.

The ornately decorated fountain once quenched the thirst of horses, pets — and perhaps people — in the middle of the street at Seventh and Main. It was a gift from the estate of a wealthy New York businessman and animal lover.

But with the advent of the automobile, Rapid City's downtown fountain became merely a traffic hazard. It was carted away, stripped of its hardware and all but forgotten for decades.

Now, through the efforts of the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, sculptor John Lopez, a long list of donors and a tenacious group of civil-engineering students at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, the old fountain has a new life.

Scott Kenner, head of the civil engineering department at Tech, persuaded some of his students to take on the project to restore and install the old fountain.

"Dr. Kenner ... offered our class a deal. He said whoever worked on this restoration project didn't have to do a semester paper," student Rachael Stelbow of Rapid City recalled. "A small group of us took him up on that deal 1-1/2 years ago. It wasn't supposed to last the semester, but once we all started it, we couldn't stop."

The newly restored fountain is to be installed at Seventh and Main Streets with water flowing and the lights on sometime before May 8 — graduation day for Stelbow.

Replacing the long-missing lion head fixtures on the Rapid City fountain was the hardest part of the restoration project. A lion head on an identical fountain in Illinois, pictured above, was used as the model for the Rapid City fountain.



Courtesy photo

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