



Gutzon Borglum - depicted in this image - is famous for the carvings at Mount Rushmore, but that project was not the first time the sculptor attempted to use a mountain as his medium. The Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial, in Georgia, was effectively the artist's Rushmore "dry run."

We learn more about that story from *The Undeclared*, by Gerald W. Johnson:

Gutzon Borglum was facing a problem as difficult as any that the sons of Adam have to solve... Three days before he had been asked to carve upon that mountain a memorial, and not only had he refused to do it, but so clearly had he demonstrated the inappropriateness of the concept, that he made it impossible for that idea ever to be taken up again.

A group of women, most of them aged women, had broached the subject to him. They had written to him in Connecticut and asked him to come down to Georgia to hear them.

They had heard of him as the sculptor of the great head of Lincoln in the capitol at Washington. They had selected him to render the same service to their own hero. They asked him to carve on the base of Stone Mountain in bas-relief a colossal head of Lee, ten feet across.

He had come, at their expense. He had looked at the mountain. He had told them that to carve such a thing as they had in mind on that vast expanse of stone would be equivalent to sticking a postage-stamp on the side of a barn. It would be absurd. It would be ridiculous.

After a silence, one of them said, "It has been our dream for years. You have destroyed it. What have you to say?"

He said, "Give me three days to answer."

To-morrow was the third day. They would be coming for their answer then, and Gutzon Borglum sat on a stump in the sunset's after-glow, still with nothing to say, and stared at the plum-colored mountain. (The Undeclared, Chapter 1.)

He eventually came up with a plan, which he started, but never finished. A falling-out between the parties caused Borglum to look for another project.

He found Mt. Rushmore.

Credits:

Image of Borglum online, courtesy [American Studies at the University of Virginia](http://www.americanstudies.org/).

PD

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Gutzon-Borglum-Sculptor-of-Mt-Rushmore0>

Media Stream



Gutzon Borglum, The Sculptor.

Gutzon Borglum - Sculptor of Mt Rushmore

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gutzon-Borglum-Sculptor-of-Mt-Rushmore2>