



Sculptor Tony Chytka was born and raised in South Dakota and has his own studio in nearby Spearfish. He has been a rodeo roper and champion bull rider and his commercial sculpting is mainly of rodeos, bull roping, and wildlife. He has been commissioned to do work for the National High School Rodeo and for Ducks Unlimited.

His award-winning works have been shown throughout South Dakota and in many places in the United States and Canada. To commemorate the past, and as a legacy to present and future citizens of Belle Fourche, the Belle Fourche Area Centennial Committee commissioned Chytka to create a bronze statue of a cowboy on a bucking bronco.

The eight-and-a-half-foot statue celebrates the centennial of the state and 100 years of settlement in the Belle Fourche area. Before construction, Chytka modeled an eight-and-a-half-inch maquette of clay. The committee sold a limited edition of these maquettes. Chytka duplicated the statue into a clay model the size of the statue you see here.

He then poured the eight-and-a-half-foot clay model in many pieces using the lost wax method. Pieces were then welded together, and the statue was cleaned and polished. The Time Capsule, to be opened in the year 2089, contains letters from residents, businesses, school children, and government officials.

The letter of instruction requests that the material addressed to the descendants of individuals be delivered to the oldest living descendant of the writer. The remainder of the capsule contents should be exhibited as determined by the governing body of the city of Belle Fourche. Capsule contents include information about the town, its businesses, a map, a bible, a country history book, brochures, a cookbook, a 1989 Belle Fourche High School annual, several newspapers and magazines, Jell-O, Kool Aid, a baseball card, a centennial script, and Polaroid photos of the statues unveiling.

The Belle Fourche Centennial Committee was composed of 12 volunteers and met for over two years to plan the Centennial Celebration. The financing of the statue, the park, and the centennial pageant was funded through donations from governmental bodies, businesses, clubs, individuals, school children, and corporations.

Belle Fourche is located at the approximate center of the nation, and is often called the Northern Gateway to the Black Hills. The name Belle Fourche is French and means beautiful fork, referring to the confluence of Hay Creek, the Redwater River, and the Belle Fourche River, all on the eastern edge of town. Early Belle Fourche was located on the SMB Ranch owned by Seth Bullock and Sol Starr.

A barn from the stage line that ran from Medora, North Dakota to Deadwood, South Dakota was one of the earliest buildings in town. When the railroad was located here, the town became and remained a large cattle shipping point. The first train ran east from Belle Fourche in 1890. The Tri State Museum, located at 415 Fifth Avenue, contains exhibits of early Belle Fourche.

Of major importance to Belle Fourche today is the exportation of bentonite, a volcanic ash clay that is found in beds west of town. Wool is another chief industry of the town, and two of the largest wool warehouses in the country are located here. The irrigation project east of town is one of the first in the nation.

Water from the reservoir has created flourishing farms east of town as well as providing a large body of water for recreation. Thank you for visiting Centennial Park and for listening to the story of the statue.



LISTEN ONLINE:

