



July 24, 2010 - Custer's Gold Discovery Days Festival

Each July this small "Old West" town has its weekend long festival celebrating the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1876. Activities include a myriad of events that bring both resident and visitor together for a such things as an antique car show, "bed races" by the local hospital staff, a downtown "kids fun park", quilt and garden displays, a horseshoe tournament, and a big two hour long hometown parade. There are a lot of food events as well, including a Lions Club pancake breakfast and a Senior Center "sloppy joe" lunch. Of particular interest to me was the 6:00 AM en mass hot air balloon ascension from nearby Pageant Hill. At the time of the morning launch it was 45 degrees outside.

However a few days before the event started I wandered around downtown taking in some of the sights of this quaint city of under 1,800 full time residents. Walking alongside Mt. Rushmore Drive, I took notice of the 100 foot wide "main street" which was engineered so as to allow the extra long oxen and mule trains to make a "U" turn after loading/unloading their supplies. Throughout town there are live sized buffalo "art" statues that will soon go up for auction. Each has its own distinct theme designed and painted by local artists. These include scenes, murals, or designs painted on the original "grey" colored statues that eventually will bring from \$2-5 thousand for each piece.

I also had a chance to visit the 1881 Custer County Courthouse, now converted to a Museum, which has a very comprehensive exhibit of Native American (mostly Sioux tribe) culture and artifacts as well as antique taxidermy on wildlife done in the early 1900's by a local man. There is a gold mine replica and a display of tools used back in the late 1800's, including many farm and ranch implements. Upstairs is the old working courtroom and there is a large display of knives, rifles and shotguns from the 19th & early 20th century in the basement, as well as a replica of the County's single cell jail (reminiscent of Sheriff Andy Taylor and Barney Fife from Mayberry). I spent a full 2 hours touring this very interesting and informative building. This worked out to be \$2/hour for the \$4 entrance fee charged. Just across the street in Way Park is the actual log cabin built by the towns first Doctor and later converted into a military officer's residence and office. It has a furnished interior representative of the times.

I hope that you will enjoy this two page photo spread of my day spend at the Gold Discovery Days Festival here in Custer, SD.



Wide downtown Main St. with its Buffalo Art



Auction will determine winner of Buffalo Art



This log cabin is one of many downtown museums

Custer's Gold Discovery Days Celebration 7-23 thru 7-25, 2010



Old 1800's Court House, now a museum



The Old Bank Building, now a Steak house



7/24 6:00 AM & 45 deg. F - Balloon Launch



3 of the 8 Hot Air balloons, together in flight



7/24 7:00 AM 48 deg. F - Pancake B'fast



7/24 10:00 AM 66 deg. F. - Car Show starts



7/24 noon 72 deg. F - Hometown Parade, complete with Fire Trucks and the H.S. Band

