

THE NATIONAL HUMANE ALLIANCE FOUNTAIN

From the Clinton Daily Democrat

On Tuesday, in a Letter To The Editor, Mrs. Gwen Wells communicated she had noticed the fountain on the southeast corner of the Henry County Courthouse lawn, has not been working for some time. She looked into the situation and found it had been fixed and working. However, vandals on the square broke the lamp and water fall apparatus. Mrs. Wells proposed refurbishing the fountain and getting it to work again, And, at the same time, put in place a surveillance camera to detect whoever was responsible the next time the fountain was damaged. Her letter has drawn a sizeable positive response from a great many people who have also been thinking along the same line. A "Thank You" is extended to Mrs. Wells for addressing the issue in a Letter to the Editor. It has been suggested surveillance cameras should be placed in strategic locations throughout the downtown area in order to document for legal and prosecution purposes anyone bent on destruction of property.

The fountain was presented to Clinton in 1911 by the National Humane Alliance. It was initially located on the southwest corner of the square. Later, the fountain was moved to the northwest corner of the Henry County Courthouse lawn. In more recent times, it was relocated to its present location, in the area of the hand dug well which served our community for decades beginning 173 years ago. The well is now capped and under the pavement just a few feet from the present granite fountain. This now hidden well was a main source of water as the city well for Clinton from 1840 until other sources of water supply were developed. As such, this location was once the focus of a great deal of activity. It was from this well that hundreds, possibly thousands, of people each day drew water. Locals, people just passing through, settlers and military personnel. Clinton was on the frontier then. The War With Mexico had yet to be fought. To the west and southwest, present day Kansas and Oklahoma, was Indian Territory. Further west, was the Empire of Mexico, including what is now New Mexico, a lucrative trading location for enterprising early day Missouri merchants who had caravans constantly traveling the Santa Fe Trail.

John Dorman recalled in a story which appeared in The Clinton Daily Democrat some years after the Civil War, it was from this well Confederate Major General Sterling Price, commander of the Missouri State Guard, quenched his thirst on his march through Clinton with a number of divisions and thousands of Soldiers in 1861. It was, stated Dorman, a thrill to personally present General Price with a dipper of cold water. The old city well was covered over in 1877 as other sources of water were developed. Joe Pollock and Theodore Bolton purchased a Phoenix Stone to cover it. Years later, it was stated in this newspaper, the stone was moved so parking improvements could be made. At that time, the well was still filled with water. It may still be.

The National Humane Alliance was incorporated in 1897. It was dissolved in 1921. Hermon Lee Ensign was the founder. This gentleman developed an advertising business and several

inventions in the newspaper business which earned him what was considered to be a moderate fortune for that time. He also published a series of illustrated stories about animals. From his childhood, he had a deep appreciation for animals and their welfare. The National Humane Alliance emphasized education of people to be gentle with one another and considerate of animals. Through distribution of pamphlets, the publication of a newspaper and chapters in various cities and states, The National Humane Alliance at one time was once very well known and Hermon Lee Ensign devoted his moderate fortune to the cause, including Clinton. Between 1906 and 1912, the National Humane Alliance presented somewhere around 125 granite fountains and horse water troughs to cities and towns across the country. Hermon Lee Ensign, who died in 1899, willed his fortune to funding the National Humane Alliance granite fountain program which was apparently faithfully carried out for many years until the fund was exhausted and The National Humane Alliance ceased to exist.

There is an additional Clinton connection with these granite fountains. Guy Rocha, retired Nevada State Archivist, states a community in each state was presented with at least one. Rocha says there is no definitive list of fountain locations. However, he relates in 1998, he was contacted by Norman and Virginia "Bird" White of Minden, NV. Norman asked Rocha about the Carson City, NV, fountain, observing that while attending high school in Clinton, MO, he noticed the town also had a fountain donated by The National Humane Alliance. Rocha said Norman and "Bird" spent the next ten years periodically traveling around the United States in either their classic 1955 Pontiac sedan or 1955 Pontiac Safari station wagon trying to find and document every National Humane Alliance fountain. The couple told Rocha most had been moved at least once from their original locations. Some were used as planters. Many were still operational, maintained and repaired over the years by counties and cities. Rocha noted Mr. and Mrs. White died in 2008 from injuries in an automobile accident in the Minden, NV, area.

Not all of the fountains are identical. However, a great many do have similar features. The granite was quarried in Maine and manufactured in Rockland and Vinalhavan . Many of the fountains, including Clinton's, served as a water trough for horses with small granite bowls at the base for the use of dogs and other small animals. Birds watered at the fountain. As did human beings, drinking water from streams flowing from the mouth of carved lion heads. Many of the fountains have a number of features in common. The structure is granite and weighs in the neighborhood of five tons. The large bowls are around six feet across. Most are in the neighborhood of six feet tall. According to researchers, the fountain in Clinton is virtually identical to existing troughs in Denver, CO; Paducah, KY; Shawnee, OK; Carson City, NV; Abbeville, SC; Austin, MN; Charlotte, NC; Austin, VT; Albuquerque, NM; Harrisburg, PA; Rapid City, SD; San Diego, CA; Carson City, NV; Ottumwa, IA, and others. Fountains of the National Humane Alliance have also been located in Houlton, ME; Marietta, GA; Clarksville, TN; Seneca, KS; Roanoke, VA; Texarkana, AR; Wilmington, DE; Lawrence, KS; Kansas City, KS; Des Moines, IA; Wichita, KS; Enid, OK; and other communities. Most were placed in 1906 or 1907 with others bearing a date of 1911. Estimates are there were 125, possibly more, distributed. A surprising number have survived the passage of time. Slightly over 70 still existing fountains have been confirmed in various locations in the United States with one in Mexico. Similar to the fountain in Clinton, necessary repairs and rehabilitation have been needed. There have been differing locations and moves from their original sites in some instances. However, most seem to be in central locations in a downtown area or nearby park. Instead of lions heads,

during the repair process, examples of other animals have been used including horse heads.

Mrs. Wells is correct. This fountain needs to be operational and a surveillance camera placed. We're a first class community. This situation has lingered for far too long.

Have a great day. Thank you for your continuing loyalty and support. Your friend, Danny.