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YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER, BUT YOU CAN'T MAKE IT DRINK...ESPECIALLY IF THERE'S NO WATER

[July 3, 2014](#) / [Matt Jaeger](#) / [0 Comments](#)



STOCK FOUNTAIN at Tenth Street and Broadway
[1907—Presented by National Humane Alliance, Herman Lee Ensign, Founder. Through Mr. Frederick Tilghman]

Drinking Fountain from 1910

It's still there.

Likely you pass by it all the time and hardly notice.

You may have even seen a rendering of it on Paducah's flood wall.

What are we talking about?

A drinking fountain...for a horse.

Of course, of course.

Next time you drive down Broadway toward the river, glance to your right as you pass 10th St./Walter Jetton Blvd, and you'll see the horse fountain still standing, only 15 feet from its original spot. Note, too, that it probably has just as much water in it now as when it was first installed in 1908...

...none.

The idea for a horse drinking fountain was first proposed for the city of Paducah by Frederick Tilghman, son of General Lloyd Tilghman, on September 18, 1907. Though born in Paducah, Frederick hadn't visited the city since he was a boy, and was in town to make arrangements for an eight foot tall bronze statue of his father to be erected in Lang Park. Enamored of the city he'd left long ago, Mr. Tilghman proposed the procurement of a second monument: a drinking fountain that would provide clean water to horses, and dogs. It was an issue close to Mr. Tilghman's heart for he also happened to be vice president of the National Humane Alliance in New York, a precursor to the Humane Society.

Because Tilghman offered to foot the \$1000 bill, the city accepted the proposed fountain and decided to place it at the intersection of 10th and Broadway.

Details of the fountain reached the Paducah Evening Sun on October 11 of that year. Under the headline "Humane Society Fountain Will Be Shipped At Once," the article stated, "The fountain will be six feet, six inches high from the ground to the top. The large bowl for the use of horses will be six feet in diameter and carved from a single piece of granite. At the base will be four cups or basins to contain water for dogs." One side of the fountain held a plaque in honor of the National Humane Alliance's president, Herman Lee Ensign. The other three sides held large lion heads with streams of water flowing from their mouths into the bowl below.



Drinking Fountain as pictured on the Flood Wall

Despite the statement that the fountain would be “shipped at once,” miscommunication with the National Humane Alliance’s secretary delayed the delivery significantly. The Evening Sun reported on December 2, 1907 that the fountain wouldn’t be shipped for another couple weeks, and since it was coming from Maine, that likely put the arrival of the sizable granite structure sometime at the beginning of the new year.

While the fountain eventually arrived virtually assembled and ready to be placed, we must flash forward another eight months to August 5, 1908, for it was then that newspaper ran a front page article that the fountain had finally reached its home at 10th and Broadway. With that, one might think the story would end there, that the horses and dogs of the city had finally received their long awaited oasis.

But, no.

Skip forward yet another year to July 21, 1909. Buried in a long column of city news on page 3, the Evening Sun reported that “City Engineer Washington said he would connect the fountain at

Tenth Street and Broadway soon with the water mains, and start the water to running. The fountain has been completed about a year, but has never been put to use.”

That’s right. The fountain was installed but never hooked up.

Two weeks later, the paper reported that the fountain was in need of a reducing valve which was “expected any day.”

And then, after nearly two years , news of the fountain finally ran dry.

We don’t know exactly when the first drop dripped out of the lions’ mouths, but we do know it was sometime before or during 1910 as we do have a photo from that year (pictured below) of the fountain in operation. And don’t feel too bad for our animal friends either. While the fountain may have been a beautiful addition to the city, it wasn’t their only source of refreshment. Troughs were located throughout town, creeks were much more prevalent, and there’s a pretty sizable river nearby, as well.

To learn more about your favorite watering hole, visit us at the Local and Family History Department at the McCracken County Public Library.

–Matt Jaeger



Drinking Fountain Today