

GJ's Missing Animal Water Fountain

The story I shared last month was about the celebrated drinking fountain at the intersection of Fifth Street and Rood Avenue. It was an elaborate artistic drinking trough for horses and dogs. A local woman, by the name of Emma Sullivan and other ladies, contacted the National Humane Alliance, founded by Herman Lee Ensign, a noted journalist, around the turn of the 20th century. Mr. Ensign had a consuming interest in the welfare of animals and gave his fortune to this work. His foundation arranged to have 125 fountains built between 1906 and 1921, in Vinalhaven, Maine and the fountains were placed in 125 cities in the United States. They were made of solid granite and weighed about 5 tons, and the cost in 1911 was about five thousand dollars. Grand Junction was one of the three cities in Colorado that received a fountain; the others were Denver and Colorado Springs. All Grand Junction had to do was pay for the freight bill of one hundred and fifty eight dollars.

The fountain was installed on March 29, 1911, with the Mayor and approximately one thousand citizens of Grand Junction present at the intersection of Fifth and Rood. Mayor Todd said. "In the spirit of gratitude and trust that it may long stand as a thing of beauty and a joy forever in the City of Grand Junction."

The rest of the story... *so far*

In 1911, only Main Street was paved from Second to Seventh Streets, and at the intersection of Fifth and Rood a large square cement base had been poured for the foundation of the five (5) ton granite Animal Drinking Fountain. Over the years as automobiles replaced horses, the fountain became an outdated piece of artwork in the middle of the unpaved street. From 1911 to 1923 this intersection had become very busy and the need for the original purpose of a drinking fountain for animals was no longer present.

By 1922, the Federal Post Office building and Masonic Hall had been built on Rood between Fourth and Fifth, the water and sewer lines were to be updated and the streets were to be paved.

Since the fountain had been a "gift of love" to the city of Grand Junction and no one wanted to cast it aside, on July 5, 1923 the entire city council voted to move the fountain from its downtown location to Washington Park between Gunnison Ave. and Hill St. on the north and south and Eight and Tenth St. on the west and east; the current location of East Middle School.

Plans were for Washington Park to be converted into a model playground for the children, with a wading pool, a general playground and courts for other games like baseball, and the fountain was to be the chief center piece of the community playground for the Park system. On July 18, 1923, the five ton granite fountain which had been in the middle of Fifth and Rood Ave. for just over twelve years was moved to Washington Park for installation at a later date.

After the fountain was moved the cement base which was left behind in the intersection proved to be a different matter. It was built to hold the weight of a five (5) ton fountain and after much work trying to remove the base the city crew finally had to blast it out of the ground.

By 1924, the fountain had not been installed at Washington Park and change in local government was coming to Grand Junction with the march of 800 white robed members of the Ku Klux Klan down Main St. at nine o'clock in the evening. They marched east down Rood Ave. from Second to Seventh St., then south on Seventh to Main, and west on Main to Second St. and finally north on Second back to Rood. It was to show the size of the membership in the Klan to several thousand townspeople who came out to watch the event. All was done in silence, with just the beat of a drum, a fiery cross and a large American Flag. A similar showing was repeated within the month in Fruita. Several weeks prior to the march as stated in the Mesa State College Journal, "By the end of July, the Klan began to announce its presence in and around Grand Junction. Three crosses were burned simultaneously in various parts of the valley. They were strategically located so that most residents could view one or more."

Within the year every member of the city council were replaced by members of the Ku Klux Klan and all of the Grand Junction City Administration was under their control. It was reported in the Daily Sentinel that the real headquarters of the Grand Junction Municipal government were in the offices of D.B. Wright the local leader of the Klan.

Every city appointment and selection made by the new city council had to first meet the requirements of the Klan's standard of measurement and they took over every city job from the Mayor to the humblest appointee of the city of Grand Junction.

The city records are sparse in the years the Klan had control, and there is no reference in the records to the Granite Animal Drinking fountain again. After the fountain was moved to Washington Park it just dropped off the face of the earth. The Klan was voted out of the city council and county commissioners offices by 1927 and thus disappeared from local government, but apparently so did the animal water fountain from Washington Park.

Early aerial photos starting in 1937 from the Mesa County Assessor's office does not show a large fountain at Washington Park. Baseball fields, and other items for children were found, but no fountain. Also research of the Grand Junction High School year books do not show any fountain in the background photos. And lest you think the old half cement drinking fountain currently at the corner of Fourth and Ute is the missing granite drinking fountain, it is not. It's close but not the original.

Now the buildings on Fifth and Rood that were there at the time of the water fountain are gone. The YMCA was torn down in 1969 and the Masonic Lodge in 1971 to build the Valley Federal building which is now the Alpine Bank Building. The only buildings today that saw the National Humane Society Animal Drinking Fountain put up in 1911

and leave in 1923 is the Roper Music (Odd fellows Hall) building, the Federal Building, and the Bank Building, now Dalby Wendland, on the corner of Fifth and Main.

A friend of mine suggested the fountain might be buried under the old pitcher's mound that used to be at Washington Park or stored with the Ark of the Covenant in a warehouse somewhere. Or maybe the Klan has it. But where?

Someday, someplace, someone walking about Mesa County will just turn a corner and say! Hey "Is that the Old Granite Water Fountain?"

Good Hunting.

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Photos: Museum of Western Colorado, Loyd Files Room, Michael Menard: David Bailey: Vinalhaven Historical Society, Bill Chilles; Jack Walsh, Derby, CT: Grand Junction News: The Daily Sentinel files: Mesa County Library: Snap Photo: City of Grand Junction Kristen Ashbeck, Melinda Catapano, Jessica Dennison, Juanita Peterson, Debbie Kemp, Deana Pietro; Mesa County Assessor's Office, Lavada Palmer: Richard Tope History of Mesa County: Mesa County Library; Marie Tipping; Office of School District 51; John Handley Roper Music: Mesa State Journal of the Western Slope Vol. 4, No 1: Mesa State College Journal.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The water fountain looking north on Fifth Street taken in 1912.

