

HISTORY

MISSING WATER FOUNTAIN FOUND

1911 animal water fountain discovered near Lincoln Park Barn

During the past year, this writer has written two stories about the animal water fountain donated to the City of Grand Junction in 1911 to provide water to horses and small animals. It was given by the National Humane Alliance; and on the north side of the fountain was a plaque dedicated to the founder of the society, Hermon Lee Ensign. The fountain was made by the people of Vinalhaven, a small island off the coast of Maine.

It was a 5-ton, 7-foot-tall, two-piece work of granite art with small basins around

the base capturing water for small animals, a large granite bowl up higher with a brass lion's heads where water flowed for horses, and on the top was a street light.

The fountain sat in the middle of Fifth Street and Rood Avenue from 1911 to 1923, when



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it was removed for street paving and a fountain in the middle of the intersection for animals was no longer needed. The fountain was moved to Washington Park between the roads of Gunnison and Hill, and from there the trail of the beautiful water fountain dropped off the face of the earth, until ...

After reading the stories about the missing water fountain, Larry Murphy, a retired City of Grand Junction parks worker e-mailed me stating he thought he knew where it was. Following his directions I went on a treasure hunt and there on the north side of the Lincoln Park Barn, just south of the football and track fields, on the grass, hiding in plain sight for the past 80 years, was what was left of the fountain.

The fountain had been repurposed, and the story as to why deserves to be told.

In 1934 there was a 25-year-old teacher named Elmer Arthur Schwalm, who taught mathematics, engineering drawing,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Coach Elmer A. Schwalm is shown in his track team uniform while attending the University of Colorado Boulder in 1928.

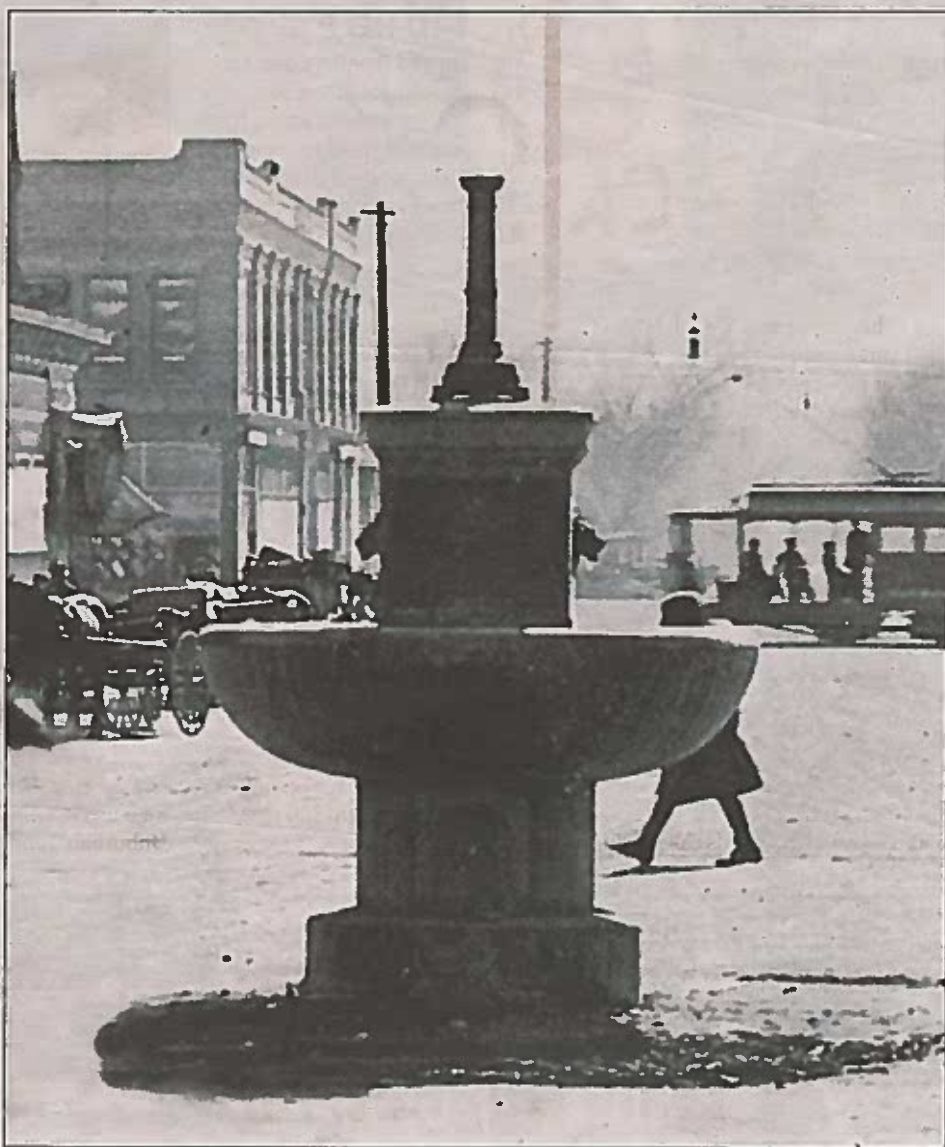
and physical education at Grand Junction Junior College (located between Rood and White, now the site of the Grand Junction City Hall).

Elmer, the son of Emmanuel Adam Schwalm and Agnes Schlegel, was born on Sept. 25, 1909, in Greeley, Colo. He and his older brother, Harold, attended the University of Colorado at Boulder and both were very active in basketball, baseball, football and track. After graduating from the University in Boulder, Elmer moved to Grand Junction in 1931 to become a teacher and coach.

Elmer's team had just won the Western Colorado Independent Championship and on March 4, 1934 he was en route to Denver for a Rocky Mountain A.A.U. basketball game when his car slid on ice and overturned near Fairplay. Along with him were two players, Ralph King and Harold Jones, and a city resident, Gudio Shumate, who had caught a ride with the coach.

Upon hearing of the accident, college dean, Clifford Houston left for Fairplay and found the coach paralyzed below the waist from a broken back. Fortunately the three young passengers were expected to recover fully from their injuries. However, for Elmer the doctors didn't think he would ever walk again.

Back home the Daily Sentinel reported of fundraisers led by the students and Mary Rait, a fellow teacher and friend, along



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Grand Junction's animal water fountain is shown at Fifth Street and Rood Avenue in 1912, looking north on Fifth Street; note the dog bowls at the bottom of the fountain.

with Cook's Sporting Goods for the coach's medical expenses.

After receiving reports that the coach's condition was worsening, Clifford Houston went again to Fairplay on March 12 to check on his friend. Despite the fact that hospital staff stated Coach Schwalm was a cheerful patient and bore the pain of his injuries calmly and didn't want to leave the field of play, on March 13 at 9:05 a.m. he passed away. With Elmer were his father, his fiancée, Virginia Rogers, Clifford Houston and other family members.

Elmer was buried in the Mountain View Cemetery in Longmont, Colo., on March 15, 1934. In Grand Junction at the same time of Elmer's funeral, the college held its own memorial service in the Labor Temple with Mary Rait, dean of women, leading the service.

Mary spoke of Coach Schwalm and how he was to receive his master's degree in mathematics in June, and that he always maintained a high scholastic standing in all of his classes. She also said that though he was taken early in life he had left a great impression on the youth.

The college decided to erect a memorial to the coach and, after his medical bills were taken care of, the money left from the fundraisers covered the cost of the memorial to be placed at Lincoln Park. Armistice Day was chosen for the unveiling.

Tom Gardner, a local monument worker, reworked the old animal fountain. The new memorial used the fountain base of granite, and equipped it with two bubbling outlets for drinking purposes; a third outlet was installed with a faucet for drawing water for athletic teams. It was placed between the entrance to the Lincoln Park Barn and

the park athletic field.

Thus the three lions heads, the plaque to Hermon Ensign, the street light and the large granite bowl were removed from the old animal fountain, and the top of it was dropped on to the base. The dog bowls were cemented in; the original water and electrical lines were plugged up; and a new copper drinking faucet and new brass plaque for Elmer Arthur Schwalm was placed in the north side to cover the hole from the old humane society plaque.

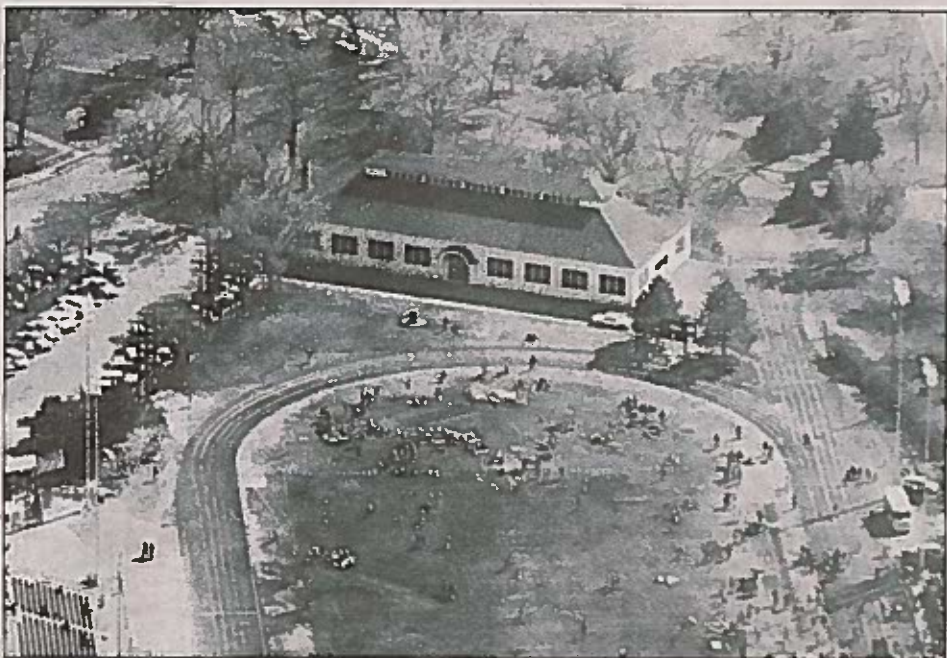
On Nov. 13, 1934, at Lincoln Park, Coach Elmer Schwalm's basketball team and the American Legion unveiled the Memorial Fountain to their Maverick coach between the third- and fourth-quarter football intermission. A brief dedicatory address was made by Dean Clifford Houston, and the fountain brought to Grand Junction in 1911 was once more put to good use.

There, in a new form, the old animal fountain has sat for 80 years as a memorial to an outstanding young coach who never wanted to leave the field of play.

And in a way he hasn't; he's been at every home game played on that field for the past 80 years.

Photos: Museum of Western Colorado, Loyd Files Room, Michael Menard; The Daily Sentinel files Snap Photo: Marie Tipping; Larry Murphy.

Garry Brewer is storyteller of the tribe; finder of odd knowledge and uninteresting items; a bore to his grandchildren; a pain to his wife on spelling; but a locator of golden nuggets, truths and pearls of wisdom. Email Garry at brewer62@bresnan.net.



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For your information, here's the location of the water fountain, between the Lincoln Barn and the track, as seen in 1962. It's on the grass in the round circle. Cool, huh?



Here is the repurposed animal water fountain on Oct 7, 2014. The photo was taken north of Lincoln Barn and south of the track; note the granite bowl was taken off, the dog bowls were filled in, and a new 1934 plaque was put up to Elmer A. Schwalm, coach at Grand Junction Junior College (now Colorado Mesa University).