

Check out the 2018 YouTube video of the Mayfair and Paducah fountains at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Iagu2GtFb4>

Direct link to this story at: <http://mclib.net/blogs/history/?m=201407>

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



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

HUMANE SOCIETY

FOUNTAIN WILL BE SHIPPED AT ONCE

Mayor Yeiser today received a letter from Louis M. Sevier, Secretary of the **National Humane Alliance**, stating ~~that the~~ **summon** ~~is ready~~ to ship the \$1,000 drinking **fountain**, secured for Paducah by Mr. Frederick B. Tilghman, vice president of the organization, and a former Paducahan.

The mayor today notified the secretary that the **fountain** will be erected at Tenth street and Broadway in front of the Yeiser park and will be under the control of the board of public works.

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 piece of solid granite highly polished. The entire fountain will consist of blocks of granite. At the base will be four cups or basins to contain water for dogs. The large basin for horses will be four feet from the ground and in such a position that unhooking of horses will not always be necessary.

Above the bowl will be a carved block of granite containing on one side the following inscription:

"Presented by the **National Humane Society.**"

"Herman Lee Ensign, Founder, 1902."

On the other side are three large lion heads with streams of water flowing from their mouths into the bowl below.

Herman Lee Ensign, the founder of the **National Humane** society, who provided in his will a large sum for the erection of drinking **fountains** in the cities, was a native of Carlisle, Pa. He was a telegrapher by trade but was later the inventor of a number of useful devices in newspaper stereotyping, from which he accumulated a fortune. At one time he was editor of a religious journal, which was widely humanitarian.

From his childhood he was a lover of domestic animals and founded the **humane alliance** for the purpose of carrying out cherished ideas, but died in 1899, leaving a large portion of his fortune for the carrying out of his life's work.

The **Humane Alliance** has offices at 513 United Charities building, New York. The officers are Harrison Gray Fiske, president; Frederick B. Tilghman, vice president, and Louis M. Sevier, secretary and treasurer.

FOUNTAIN FOR MEN, HORSES AND DOGS ERECTED IN PARK

Plans for the park on Broadway at the intersection of Tenth street have been formulated by the board of park commissioners, and the erection of the fountain shows that the park will be a reality. The fountain for the horses and dogs is 40 feet from the sidewalk, and was presented to the city by the National Humane Alliance, which was founded by Hermon Lee Ensign, a wealthy capitalist, who left his fortune for the organization of humane societies. The fountain is a handsome piece of work constructed out of polished granite. At the base of the monument is the drinking fountain for dogs and above is the large bowl for the horses.

From the street to the fountain the commissioners will have the bituminous street placed and it will be convenient to drive from Broadway to the fountain. Forty feet from the fountain the grass plot will begin and on both sides there will be a gravel driveway, 30 feet wide, extending to Kentucky avenue. Bordering the driveway will be a concrete walk five feet wide. The improvement of placing the material to the fountain will begin as soon as work is started on the reconstruction of Broadway. J. E. Williamson & company erected the fountain yesterday and it has attracted much attention.