

Carson Now (NV)

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Horses gather at the refurbished watering fountain during Nevada Day Parade

Article Text:

Photo by Carson City Sheriff Ken Furlong It didn't take long after the recent refurbishing of the horse trough watering fountain before units from the Carson City, Washoe, Reno, and Sparks law enforcement units stopped by to water the horses during the Nevada Day Parade on Saturday. This was a wonderful flashback to the original purpose of the fountains and the rebuild this year.

The following bit of history of the fountain was written by retired Nevada State Archivist Guy Rocha:

With much fanfare Carson City dedicated the Hermon Lee Ensign National Humane Alliance fountain on Labor Day, 1909. The polished granite fountain, then-located at the intersection of Carson and King streets in front of the State Capitol, was manufactured in Derby, Maine, and donated by the New York City animal rights organization. It was moved to its current location — some fifty feet to the west — by 1936 when the portion of King Street between Carson and Curry streets was condemned for the construction of a new Supreme Court and Library building.

The five-ton, six-foot plus high fountain, which includes a light fixture at the top, is composed of a six-foot diameter bowl with three lion head spouts where "men, horses and dogs" could drink. There are small cups at the bottom for cats, dogs and other animals. A plaque notes that the fountain was donated by the Humane Alliance in 1909.

The story goes that each state received one fountain, making a total of forty-eight in 1912. People occasionally contact the Nevada State Library & Archives believing that the fountain in their city and the one in Carson City are the only two left in the country.

Wrong on all counts!

While no definitive list of fountains is known to exist, there appear to have been as many as one hundred and twenty-five distributed throughout the nation. Some still exist. Nevada's only fountain is found in the state capital.

Unfortunately, it has operated just sporadically over the years. The fountain last worked in the early 1990s thanks to a grant from Nevada's 125th Anniversary Commission and the efforts of Terry Sullivan, then director of the Nevada Department of General Services.

Notably, benefactor Hermon Lee Ensign died in New York City in 1899 before any fountains were manufactured. The self-made man who had acquired his fortune in journalism and advertising was