

Mark's "Fountain"

The history of the original Bayliss Park fountain



The fountain that once stood proudly in the center of Bayliss Park in downtown Council Bluffs, which was purchased in the late 1800's has quite a history. Our oldest son, Mark 'adopted' it as his favorite 'Fountain' when he was just learning to talk nearly 40 years ago. Even with his limited vocabulary, he was able to express his desire to see the old fountain as we approached that area by pointing toward the park and repeating, "fountain, fountain!" I'd better head for the old fountain or I'd never hear the end of it! Needless to say, we usually did and that made Mark very happy.



It was a landmark for many years in the center of the park where thousands of folks visited and enjoyed the cooling wind-blown spray of water on a hot summer day. Lovers walked hand in hand around the fountain while the magical sound of the flowing water added to those special moments.

Each time we went anywhere near that part of town, Mark insisted we drive by his 'Fountain'.

The fountain was originally black and over the years it received several layers of paint, but sadly one year, whoever, for whatever reason decided to paint it a very bright ORANGE! This was the beginning of the end.

Mark eventually gained a younger sister and then a brother. They were all very fond of the old fountain even if it was orange but it had lived out its life in Bayliss Park; the end was near.

It was in serious disrepair so the flowing water was finally permanently shut off. The decision was later made to completely remove it from the park. Naturally this made the kids and many Council Bluffs residents very unhappy.

There were plans for a new



In 1967 Mark pointing proudly to 'his Fountain'.

fountain, very expensive, with multi-colored lights, electronically controlled and with many spouts of water ~ but it just couldn't be the same. Too many happy memories were associated with the old fountain to just let go.

Some time passed after it was removed from the park and on one special day while our family was visiting Big Lake Park, Mark came running to tell us he 'found' the old fountain!

At his insistence we followed and saw a most distressing sight. The dismantled rust covered fountain sat like so much junk in the far end of the park beside some old sheds. This was too much!

I worked for the local newspaper at that time and was very emphatic in letting the editor know I thought we should let the people know the sad fate the old fountain had come to.

An article was run in the paper on the following day, followed by calls from some interested readers. Then another article ran followed by more calls and letters. The movement had begun

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Tammy, Mark and little brother Joe enjoy one of their last trips to the old fountain in Bayliss Park before it was to be removed. One of the last orders given them each time they visited the pool of water below the fountain was, "Don't get wet!" It was a silly thing to tell them because most of their enjoyment was derived from 'accidentally' splashing one another.

(Mark's Fountoon, continues...)

"Let's restore the old fountain", was the cry! Happily, enough public interest was aroused and work began to restore the fountain. Progress was slow because some of the parts were missing. Some could be recreated but not so easily the missing cherub.

One day while browsing in a local 'antique' (junk) store I noticed in the corner what looked like the missing cherub. I reported this to our City Editor and the action that followed was swift.

The cherub was recovered and progress resumed toward total restoration of our old fountain. It was a long arduous job but when completed the fountain was once more its original lustrous black color. But now with the fancy new fountain having been placed in Bayliss Park, where could our old 'fountoon' reside?



"It's still my favorite fountain, even if it IS ORANGE!"



They claim their last day of entertainment from what's left of the old retired fountain. Now the basin that attracted thousands of children, and many young at heart adults to its side, lay stripped of its attraction. No water, no fountain, no fair!



One of the saddest events for our family was on the day Mark happened across the remains of the Bayliss Fountain at Big Lake.



Well gone, but not for good! When the citizens of Council make up their mind to get something done, they persevere until their goal is reached. Maybe not quite the same as it was while occupying Bayliss Park, but the old fountain would live again in its second location, **The Dodge House**.



The fountain's next home was the historic Dodge House



The next location for our elusive fountain was the Historical landmark, the Dodge House. The fountain was installed just between the Dodge house and the Beresheim House on Third Street, both now listed in the National Register of Historical sites.



This was a respectable location but much more secluded than its first home in Bayliss Park. WHITE cherubs? I think not! This was better than in the junk pile but still not 'home'.



The new Bayliss Park Fountain



It would be remiss of us not to mention the fountain that took the place of the original Bayliss Park Fountain. It is a mega-thousand dollar work of wonder with its electronically controlled multi-spouts of water and the beautiful illumination program with its ever changing colors, patterns and variety of heights the water reaches. It is no doubt a creation of beauty and not at all like the very simple old worn-out, moved around old fountain that once occupied this space. The very young will grow up calling this fountain 'their' Bayliss Park Fountain, but for we who are a bit older . . .

...we find it difficult to visit the attractive new fountain without flashes of the past popping up reminding us of those days gone by when that proud old fountain sat in that very same spot that the new, fancy one now occupied.

The Dodge House was not the last 'resting place' for the old fountain, and who knows if it will some day in the future find yet another place of prominence? Now only the pedestal remains where 'Ol Bayliss' sat during its short stay at the Dodge House.



I have a strong belief though that if a fountain has feelings, our old wonderful fountain must feel a sense of pride now in its present location. The area was built with the fountain in mind with its several tiered foundation, flowers surrounding it and the ornate light posts which once graced most of the uptown area when the fountain was much younger. A tall clock nearby, with faces visible from all four directions, ticks away the time, possibly reminding the fountain of how many minutes, hours, weeks, months and years it has seen come and go. We hope our favorite fountain will see many more.

In the years to come someone may be talking about the 'old' fountain that graced the area between Pearl and Main Streets in Council Bluffs, as we now remember it from Bayliss Park.

