

Dayton Tribune - Top 7, 1890 Dedication of fountain in park printed in 1917

(Editor's Note: The Dayton Historical Society recently decided to sponsor the restoration of the fountain in the Courthouse Square City park. For more information Carolee Norris, a 30-year resident of Dayton, volunteered to assist in doing research into the background and construction of the fountain. The following information was printed in a May 18, 1917 issue of the Dayton Tribune).

By Carolee Norris

The Dayton Historical Society has become interested in the restoration of the Martin Miller Fountain in the Dayton City Park. From tapes ordered through the University of Oregon holder of Dayton Tribunes from years past, copies from 1913 through 1918 were reviewed.

Main information sought was who was Martin Miller? Why was the fountain dedicated to him? Was he a World War I soldier killed on the battlefield? Was there a picture of the fountain or a sketch to be found?

No mention of Martin Miller was found in these papers until the May 18, 1917 issue that told of the dedication ceremony of the fountain. From 1913 till then, many familiar last names of grandfathers and great uncles were noted, but as to whose relatives they might be to present Dayton residents was not known. Neither was there a picture or sketch of the fountain.

What was discovered about Martin Miller?

Through the long article written regarding the dedication ceremony which also included a flag raising

ceremony and dedication of a "keep right" sign, R.I. Harris, ex-mayor, stated that Martin Miller was a prosperous and generous farmer who many years before had "given the gift of the water right" which they were enjoying by the using. Without the generosity of Martin Miller they felt it was a serious question whether the blessings of pure water would be their's that day.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Dayton Commercial Club and the Pleasant Hour Reading Club had decided the city park would look even more attractive with a fountain. The ex-mayor stated, "Without the cooperation, encouragement and generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Miller, we might not have had the fountain." He goes on to say, "It is a symbol of the most noble trait of humankind — there are those among us who have the will and heart to do for others."

Architect of the fountain, Mr. E. Kroner of Portland would not accept compensation for his plans and contractors Messrs. Hord and Watson performed their work without profit to themselves.

The fountain was "dedicated to the use of all who pass this way. That time, the destroyer, will deal kindly with it and that it may be preserved and utilized through many years for the purpose for which it has been constructed, is our wish, our hope and prayer."

In response the acting mayor, D. A. Snyder, spoke about the Block House being a fitting monument to the memory of General Joel Palmer, of the greatest enterprise and public spirit he had. He was beloved by both Indian and white man "but he had gone on and never knew that he was thus appreciated."

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about the Block House being a fitting monument to the memory of General Joel Palmer, of the greatest enterprise and public spirit he had. He was beloved by both Indian and white man "but he had gone on and never knew that he was thus appreciated."

"This fountain comes to us from ladies of the Auxiliary and the Pleasant Hour Reading Club, who wishing to show their appreciation of the services rendered the city by Mr. Miller took this means of doing so while he is still with us. Mr. Miller, the city has long ago accepted your generous gift of the water right which we are enjoying, by the using, but we do not remember that we have every publicly thanked you for it. Therefore, on this occasion, we, in behalf of the city of Dayton, wish to thank you for your generosity."

In a March 8, 1918, issue of the Tribune, upon reporting of the marriage of Martin Miller's son to Miss Hurner, the editor referred to Martin Miller as county assessor and "had long been identified with the best interests of the county. The Millers have a farm near this city —" he did not say where.

Many of you may know more details about the fountain and about the Martin Miller family. It would be interesting to add to what information has been given. Please send any information to Jo Wendish at 615 Ferry St., Dayton, OR 97114.