



THE MUELLER RECORD

SUMMER 2013 NEWSLETTER

Defeating “The Cup of Death”

The Story behind the Museum’s new acquisition:

The Mueller Sanitary Drinking Fountain

In the summer of 1911, Decatur newspapers were filled with the buzz of the new state law abolishing the public drinking cup. “**The Cup of Death**”, would soon be a thing of the past. Medical science had identified the communal drinking cup which was chained to a faucet in public places as a source for the spread of deadly epidemics which were sweeping through communities. “The battered tin from which we have been accustomed to quench our thirst at the drinking fountains on Lincoln Square and in Central Park will disappear forever.” (Decatur Review 6/14/1911) The concern became how to secure a drink of water at public locations if the cups were no longer available. The immediate solution was found in the sale by retailers of wax cups at about half a cent each or small collapsible metal cup that could be had for ten to thirty-five cents depending on the quality. Many of these cups became advertising devices with store names and information imprinted on them.



While retailers were trying to meet the immediate needs of the public, manufacturers were looking to the long term needs created by this new law. Some versions of drinking fountains were already appearing in public places prior to the passage of this law but, for those citizens who were already microbe conscious, these early fountains didn’t seem to offer much more protection than the cup of death, in that people did not seem to understand how to use the device. “It was pointed out by a traveler that the cup [bubbling cup, early term for the drinking fountain] has no advantages over the old, battered, germ-laden tin cup...for the reason that some be-whiskered, and unsanitary looking individual had glued his lips to the cup [fountain] in drinking, instead of holding his mouth apart and drinking from the stream. Bubbling cups are an innovation and it will probably be some time before the entire public is educated to their proper use.” (Decatur Herald 7/2/1911) Editorials carried comments such as “only loafers fail to carry their own cups” or “beware of borrowers.” One story told of a boy who was asked by a hobo for the loan of his cup. The boy knew he was not to share his cup, so he simply gave it to the hobo who promptly used it and then passed it onto the next fellow waiting. Many people seemed confused about the whole sanitary issue.

It became apparent that a long term solution was needed and so the race was on amongst manufacturers to create a sanitary drinking fountain for public use. Mueller Mfg. found itself at the forefront of the issue. They had been working on a bubbling fountain and were very close to having it available to the public. In fact, the company had already promised the city one new bubbling fountain for Central Park as a gift. After the city commissioner inspected the fountain prototype, he declared that 4 more fountains in addition to the gift fountain would be purchased for Central Park and Lincoln Square. The Decatur Review published an article describing the benefits of the Mueller bubbling fountain. "It is not only ornamental in appearance but is practical in every way and has a sanitary feature about it that is not possessed by other bubble fountains. This is a fine spray that prevents a person putting his mouth down on top of the nozzle. The fountain is operated by a foot lever. When a person wishes to take a drink, he presses the lever with the foot and the water sprouts up several inches from the nozzle in the center of the fountain. Around this nozzle is a perforated band through which a fine spray is forced up. This spray does not spurt up so high as the column of water in the center but high enough to wet a person's face if the person drinking gets his mouth too low. No one wants to get a dunking, so he will naturally not try to get the nozzle into his mouth. The moment the foot is taken from the lever the water ceases to flow."

MUELLER Sanitary Pedestal Drinking Fountains
(Patented)
QUADRUPLE HEAD—HAND OPERATED



E 3699
Cone—Foot
E 3675
Cone—Foot

CHILD'S STAND
Galvanized Iron

E3699 List, each, With Child's Stand (Hand Operated), \$125.00
E3675 List, each, Without Child's Stand (Hand Operated), \$102.50

Dimensions: 24" to top of Pedestal Head.
18" to top of Bubbling Head.
Height from top of Child's Stand to top of Bubbling Head, 24"

Note: See Sample to measurements on Page 216.

MUELLER Sanitary Pedestal Fountains are made of highest quality white enameled iron. Having no angles nor corners in which dirt or sediment can lodge, they are easily kept clean and are absolutely sanitary as well as gracefully ornamental.

The supply of water to the drinking head is controlled by a self-closing valve. This valve contains a regulating device that insures a steady, non-swirling flow from the bubbling head and also permits of the entire shutting off of the water for repairs.

Head E3675 will be furnished on these fountains at no additional charge. If desired, specify. All pedestal fountain heads are attached with a swivel device that prevents theft. See illustration.

When ordering be sure to specify
CATALOG "E"

MUELLER
MANUFACTURERS OF HIGH GRADE
WATER PLUMBING & GAS BRASS GOODS
FULLY WARRANTED

The fountains that were purchased by the city for Central park were to have 3 bubblers on each fountain, while the ones for Lincoln Square around the transfer house would have four. By 1913 Philip Mueller, along with Mueller employee Anton Schaueremann, had received a patent for "The Bubbling Sanitary Fountain". In 1915 Mueller Co. received an order for 1,850 bubbling fountains for the St. Louis public schools who, after exhaustive research, concluded that the Mueller fountain was the best. Mueller had done its part in vanquishing *THE CUP OF DEATH!*

A Sanitary Bubbling Fountain

The Mueller Fountain is the antithesis of the unclean, undesirable, contaminating public drinking cup, with which every community was so long acquainted, but which now, happily for our finer sensibilities and our health, is being relegated to oblivion.

The flow of water is through a central opening and narrow openings radiating toward the edges of the bubbling head. The water bubbles up, covering the head to a half inch, and from this veil of water one may drink without danger of miscellaneous sprays dampening the face and clothing. The flow of water is controlled by a self-closing valve—the principle being identical with that of Mueller's celebrated self-closing faucets. This valve is operated by a pedal at the base of the fountain.

In many places these fountains have been presented to schools or organizations as a memorial or to towns or public institutions to commemorate events. With proper inscription on plate this is most appropriate. Perhaps some one in your town would like to follow out this idea.



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In Memoriam – Carl E. Floren

Long-time Mueller Co. employee Carl Floren passed away on May 25, 2013. Carl began working for Mueller Co. in 1953 and continued to serve the company until 2007 – a career spanning 54 years. He was Technical Director of the Engineering Division and worked as an advisor on engineering issues at the corporate level. Mueller Co. has made a kind contribution to the Hieronymus Mueller Museum in Carl's memory.

Retiree Luncheon a Success

The Hieronymus Mueller Family Foundation hosted the Mueller Co. retiree luncheon at the Decatur Knights of Columbus Hall in May. The event drew a crowd of over 100 who enjoyed both a good meal and the time to visit with old friends. Kim Lillipop and Ron Grant of Mueller Co. took some time off from their customer service duties to speak to the group. This was the third luncheon the Foundation has sponsored since the company dropped the traditional event. It is an important opportunity to recognize the contributions of the employees who, over many years, have worked to build the company. The Foundation also uses the luncheon to thank the many retirees who help as volunteers at the museum.

Not in the Mueller Co. Catalog

Not every item produced in the Mueller Co. plant found its way into the official catalog. In fact, it is likely that most folks in management were never aware of the existence of most of these "products." I have heard rumors of a few such clandestine operations and one of them finally appeared in the museum. It must have been a slow day in the iron foundry when employees decided there was a need for some boot-scrapers in the form of a duck. The duck has been loaned to the museum by Sue Badorek whose mother, Wilma Maleska Badorek, worked for Mueller Co. from 1942 to 1959. We're not going to say who actually poured the iron since we don't want any paychecks docked after all these years.



Marion Mahony and Millikin Place

The museum now has copies of the book, *Marion Mahony and Millikin Place*, which gives the history of the country's first licensed female architect and her designs for the Robert and Adolph Mueller homes on Millikin Place in Decatur. Mahony took over the project from Frank Lloyd Wright when he left the country to work on a project in Europe. *Softcover, 84pp. \$27.00 to members, \$30.00 to public, \$4.00 shipping.*