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## PROLOGUE

# The spirit of 1910 returns in a '90s sort of way

**T**he late Louise Beard Moore was a kind and forgiving person—most of the time. But she could never bring herself to absolve the redesigners of Parrington Oval for the wanton destruction of the Spoonholder. Alumna, faculty member, student of history, lover of tradition, this remarkable Sooner lady knew desecration when she saw it—and reducing the 1910 class memorial to rubble was textbook sacrilege.

Well, LBM would have experienced a feeling of delayed satisfaction this spring. The Class of 1999 has recreated the Spoonholder as its own memorial gift to the University—at the same time righting the wrong done its statehood-era predecessors.

Readers who must ask, “What’s a spoonholder?” date their college days as pre-1910 or post-1983. For those 73 years a nearly circular, two-tiered, concrete bench, stood approximately three feet high in front of Evans Hall, forming a focal point for the south half of Parrington Oval.

It somewhat resembled a spoonholder, but tradition links its name to a quaint dating practice called spooning, in which a fellow sat with his arm around his girl while they gazed at the moon, etc., etc. Why couples chose a site in front of the administration building for this activity remains something of a mystery.

Members of the Class of 1910, supposedly with the tacit approval of President A. Grant Evans, worked all one drizzly spring night to construct the Spoonholder, molding its imperfect sides by hand. Exhausted, they left

one of their number, “Honk” Douthitt, to guard the drying concrete. Honk fell asleep, subsequently to be overpowered and tied up by a group of junior classmen, who proceeded to paint the Spoonholder bright yellow, the first of many indignities it was to suffer.

The Spoonholder was not a thing of beauty. Apparently there were no construction engineers in the Class of

classes, a platform was erected atop the Spoonholder, from which President Joseph A. Brandt and a host of precariously perched dignitaries proclaimed OU’s Golden Anniversary Celebration.

The 1983 Parrington redesign caught the guardians of tradition by surprise. Pedestrians crossing the oval on August 1 found the ‘06 Rock had been moved (and now resides just north of Old Science Hall), and the Spoonholder had disappeared. In all fairness, the plan called for its relocation, but the concrete literally disintegrated into a thousand pieces, none larger than a grapefruit. Dismayed and reluctant to incur further the wrath of departed Sooner spirits, OU Physical Plant workers transferred the remains to the North Campus.

Intrigued by this saga, members of the Class of 1999, looking for a suitable memorial project, seized on a new, improved Spoonholder. In keeping with current

standards for campus development, the ‘99ers did not recreate history by pouring their own concrete under cover of darkness. Their budget allowed for professional workmanship. They did keep faith with the past, however, by incorporating the ground-up remains of the original in the concrete for the replacement.

The naysayers of 1913 notwithstanding, the new Spoonholder is completely “in harmony” with David Boren’s spruce-up, fix-up campaign of the last four years. But just to be on the safe side, perhaps he should post a guard to be on the lookout for juniors bearing bright yellow paint. —CJB



The Spoonholder, circa late 1940s.

1910, for the free-form concrete creation soon cracked and took on the patina of age long before its time. By 1913 a move was under way to bulldoze the Spoonholder as well as the ‘06 Rock, another homemade class memorial on the oval. Both, it was claimed, were in the way of and out of harmony with campus improvements.

Sentiment prevailed, however. The Spoonholder survived as symbol and occasional gathering place for seven more decades, making annual year-book appearances as the photo site of choice for countless small groups. On September 15, 1942, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University’s first day of