

News



Dave Williams/Staff Photographer

Jim Guy, Midtown Citizens Association president, said there hadn't been much trouble with the fountain in Victoria Park until vandals recently stole the three lions that adorned it.

Lion-Lover Offers Reward For Some He's Never Seen

By Laura Addison
Staff Writer

Gerald Scott likes lions. Not the Clyde Beatty, Barnum & Bailey kind of lions, but the kind that decorate fountains and buildings around town.

He likes them enough to offer a reward for some that he never has seen.

Three lions used to adorn a fountain that sits in the middle of Victoria Park, the small triangle at 17th and Park Place, with red petunias, brick walkways and old-fashioned benches and streetlights.

The fountain — a bowl of marble on a square pedestal, with another square above it — was provided by the National Humane Alliance in 1910, an attached plaque says. Three sides have holes and circular marks showing where the 6-inch lions, cast in bronze or brass, were attached.

"My legal assistant, teacher Kip Dawson, took a picture of those lions on Wednesday, Aug. 8," said Scott. But, when Scott drove by the next day to take a look for himself, the lions were gone. A park employee working there told Scott that the three had not been removed for repairs or refurbishing and apparently were stolen.

"I don't know that they would have any value," Scott said, other than historical value. "But we have so few historical things of art within the city that we should try to save every one we can."

Scott, a resident of the College Hill area, ran an ad in the paper for four days offering a reward for the return of the lions. The amount of the reward was not specified, but Scott said he would negotiate with a caller.

The lions' return to the Victoria Park fountain doesn't appear likely, however. Lt. Dennis Burnett of the Adam North police team that patrols the area said no burglary report had been filed. And Scott has had no responses to his ad.

"Either kids took them for the fun of it," said Scott, "or somebody has them hanging in the back yard. It was just an act of vandalism."

The fountain, which originally sat at the corner of St. Francis and William and then was moved to Central Riverside Park in 1922, provided drinks for horses from the marble bowl on top and for dogs and cats from the smaller cups below. The National Humane Alliance, which installed it, "was a forerunner of the Humane Society," said Rick Johnson of the Board of Park Commissioners' Park Operations Department.

When the fountain was again moved in the early 1970s, this time to Victoria Park, there were problems with keeping the water fresh and with toxicity when the water was treated, Johnson said.

Jim Guy, president of the Midtown Citizens Association, doesn't remember any trouble with the fountain — except for the time someone dumped soap in it. The park has been appreciated, Guy said, and served as the center of the Midtown walking tour a couple of years ago.

Scott started noticing lions around town after he moved his law offices into the Buttermilk Lion Building, 532 N. Market, last October. He estimated that he had photographed about 50 so far.

"There are a lot more lions than you would ever think," he said. "Every time you turn around, you see them somewhere."

Whicita lions heads stolen. 1984-08-25



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