

**Friends of Fred Smith Conservation Committee**  
**Wisconsin Concrete Park Conservation Project Synopsis, August 2002**

**Planning**

With much assistance from our new managing directors, a National Endowment for the Arts grant application was completed for 2003 conservation. Sculptures proposed for treatment include:

- **Paul Bunyan:** Standing 13<sup>4</sup>feet tall, the Paul Bunyan figure is the most prominent figure in the park, and is an icon to Fred Smith's early years as a lumberjack. One of Smith's favorite sculptures, it is a completely unique work in his oeuvre. The sculpture is threatened by instability of the legs; one arm is detached and broken; the strength and condition of its foundation is unknown.
- **Lion and Tiger:** These two animal sculptures in the *Lion, Tiger, and Angora Cat* tableau, are of Smith's most enigmatic and original works. Inspired by paintings by Morris Hirshfield, another self-taught artist (which Smith saw in the book *They Taught Themselves*, Sidney Janis, 1942), they combine animal forms with curious, human faces. One sculpture has a deteriorating torso armature; both have detached appendages, resulting in significant loss of visual integrity.
- **Mary Todd Lincoln:** The Lincoln Todd Monument is one of Smith's most ambitious patriotic sculptures and has strong symbolic meaning to the WCP, while illuminating Fred Smith's artistic and intellectual processes. Referencing a traditional bronze sculpture of Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln (by Frederick C. Hibbard, in a Racine, WI park), Smith entitled his tableau "The Second Monument of its Type in the U.S.A." This sculpture has a high degree of integrity but is threatened by armature instability, and uneven settling of its pedestal.
- **Moose:** Smith used original animal skulls to form the armatures for many of his animal sculptures, and original antlers for his Moose, Elk, and Deer sculptures. Despite efforts to preserve these organic materials in an outdoor location, many antlers are in varying states of deterioration. This project will address the conservation, or possible replication of a pair of Moose antlers. Consolidants will be tested to determine a material for preserving the remaining antlers.

The grant-writing process pushed us to complete other FoFS organizational tasks. The FoFS organizational history with current board profiles, and WCP Conservation history were both updated. A preliminary Advisory Board was formed. Most people who were asked to serve on our advisory board responded enthusiastically, and are glad to have a formal, advisory affiliation with FoFS. Grants to support the 2003 conservation project will also be submitted to the Kohler Foundation, Inc., the Ann Marie Foundation, and the Jeffris Family Foundation, and perhaps other funding agencies.

**Conservation, site maintenance**

Crew: Stefan, Barbara, Maciek, and Jacob Niedorezo: 7/31 – 8/9; Lisa Stone, 7/27 – 8/9.

WCP Preservation activities strive to maintain the sculptures, house, and landscape as integrated entities, as close as possible to their original state and context, during the time period of Fred Smith's artistic activity, 1948 – 1964. Preservation activities are planned according to the highest preservation and conservation standards achievable. The scope of the site and the conditions it is exposed to, necessitate annual maintenance and conservation. Preservation activities necessarily address sculptures and tableaux in order of prioritized need.

The FoFS conservation committee drafted a five-year conservation plan, presented to the board 2001. The overall goal of the plan is to achieve structural stability for all interior armatures, and visual integrity of all sculptures, so annual maintenance and minor conservation will replace major conservation projects by 2005. (We admit that this end date is ambitious and may not be

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achievable, but a strong momentum toward this goal has been established.) The success of the 2001 conservation project, during which a methodology for stabilizing deteriorated armatures was achieved, laid the groundwork for this year's project. The Niedorezo family team bring invaluable skills, an outstanding level of sensitivity to Smith's work, and excellent solutions for its preservation to the project, and we are very grateful for their commitment to the site.

**Sculptures addressed include:**

- **#27 South Woman Leg pipes** had deteriorated at ankles, threatening to fail. A substantial cribbing system was created to support the figure. Footing was excavated to a depth of 12". A system of telescoping stainless steel pipes, fitted with diagonal pins, was installed, inside and outside of the existing west leg pipe. Mortar was fed into the interior through a hole drilled for boroscope testing, to a depth of 8 inches, encasing stainless pipe system. Footing was filled with concrete and a finish cap of mortar applied.
- **#8 Cow Original mortar** from front legs had been lost for some time. Replacement mortar applied in 1987 had failed due to severely corroding leg pipes. Replacement mortar was removed, corroded leg pipes were removed from footing up 24 inches each. 3/4" stainless steel pipe was fitted with 2 smaller sections of decreasing diameter stainless pipes, for increased strength. Pipes were inserted into existing leg pipes in footing, telescoped up into existing interior pipes to cow shoulders. Two layers of stainless steel mesh were formed around legs. Using vintage photos, layers of mortar were applied replicating original shape. Rear hoofs, calf tail, and horns received surface mortar to seal seams and/or cover exposed wire. Footing hole filled.
- **#16 Oxen Granite stone embellished concrete leg mortar** had become detached from four legs due to severe corrosion of leg armatures, and earlier settlement. (In 1998 a sub-grade footing was installed beneath and around Smith's original footing to stabilize Oxen positions.) Embellished concrete surfaces were carefully removed and catalogued. All interior pipe was cleaned of corrosion. Weak areas were removed entirely. Leg pipes were fitted with stainless steel rods and mesh. Original fragments were carefully reattached with mortar, lost areas filled with mortar infill.
- **#22 South West Owl** The Owl body had become detached from its feet and tail supports in 2001 so it was removed, and stored in the studio for one year to allow a wet rotting log to dry out for removal. Entire log was removed. Owl was fitted to legs and tail, positioned. Corroded steel plate, installed in 1977, was removed, revealing interior pipes embedded into the full length of each leg. Two stainless steel pipes were fitted into each leg pipe, extending diagonally up into the Owl body 12 inches, fitting tight to the walls. Stainless steel mesh was applied to the lower half of the interior, held in place with a ring of stainless wire and a layer of mortar. Leg and tail voids filled with mortar. Stainless mesh armature was installed in the bottom of the Owl, and a mortar cap applied (leaving a drainage hole), resembling the bottoms of the other Owls.
- **#34 Woman Footing settled** causing figure to lean forward at approximately 35 degree angle. Using leverage, figure was righted to original, upright position, based on photo documentation. A substantial cribbing system was constructed to support figure completely. Footing was excavated to a depth of about 10 inches. Footing rocks were washed thoroughly, a layer of concrete applied; a layer of stainless steel mesh was installed, another layer of concrete and a cap of finish mortar applied. Cribbing system will remain on figure for one month.
- **#59 Deer** A 4 inch layer of soil and organic build up covered the base and animal perimeters. This was removed, the deer were cleaned with water and a soft brush, cracks were sealed with mortar, glass was collected, and wood chips were laid around the tableau.
- **#18 Wisconsin Wishing Well** The well was cleaned and refilled, coins returned.

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- **Antler Survey:** A survey of the history and existing condition of all animal antlers was compiled to prepare for future conservation.
- **Embellishment collection.** Fallen glass and other embellishment materials were collected, organized, and stored from all areas except for the east meadow.
- **Bronze plaques service** were installed on the Veteran's Monument. A sign indicating that the monument is a project of Friends of Fred Smith still needs to be created and installed.

**Sculpture concerns**

In addition to the sculptures listed for treatment in the NEA grant, we will address the structural stabilization of the works below in 2003:

**#17 Kit Carson horse** The rear west leg is settling, causing embellished mortar to become detached, revealing a significantly corroded leg pipe, directly threatening the structural stability (This rearing horse surmounted by a figure is one of five such sculptures that defy engineering principles and are still completely intact.) Maciek created wire-frame and other computer simulations of the sculpture's structure, and an animated simulation predicting how the piece might fail, confirming our ideas. A temporary support system was erected to prevent the sculpture from falling.

**#27 Muskie** The west side of the Muskie is listing significantly due to settlement of both of its bases. Time ran out and a structural support was not created. One will be designed and hopefully installed this fall. Restoration of the original position will be relatively simple.

**Documentation**

All sculptures were photographed thoroughly, prior to, during, and after treatment with a digital camera and slides. Digital images are labeled in individual files and backed up on CDs. Treatment reports were entered into the WCP site database. Diagrams were made of some of the structural systems and other conservation activities. Computer simulations were made of some sculptures to assist in conservation planning.

**Expenses**

Niedorezo wages	\$8,000.00
Niedorezo lodging	\$ 606.63
Supplies	\$ 450.00

**Total** **\$9,056.63**

**In kind**

Labor	\$2,800.00	14 days @ \$200.00
Lodging, per diem	\$ 1,200.00	

**Total in-kind** **\$4,000.00**