

CALUMET HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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*To identify, preserve and reclaim the natural, historical and recreational heritage
of the Calumet region of Illinois and Indiana*

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ICEWATER IN THEIR VEINS: On the day after the swirling snowing Soldier Field Bears loss to the Patriots, some suited up Chicagoans did a lot better the next day and in even less favorable conditions. Cleotha Blue quarterbacked an outstanding team of four workers from the US Dismantlement (USD) company to a long-awaited victory: movement of the “worker sculpture” from the former premises of Acme Coke to its long anticipated placement outside of the Pullman Factory/Administration Building. It now stands next to the other large artifacts – a large and a small blast furnace bell and an ingot pattern mould -- moved to the site by CHP over the past few years.

Unlike the other pieces, however, this piece was specifically meant for public viewing. Constructed of plate steel by Roy Collins, an employee at the Coke plant, it depicts the plant, its stacks, conveyors, hoppers, and tanks, in a 24 by 14 foot silhouette. Two plywood “workers” – previously salvaged from the site – labor in front of the oven doors. Some further plant details are highlighted by a paint job that survived the indignity of lying face down at the shuttered plant for at least the past five years



[Left: the sculpture just after fabrication and a paint job, in a photo from CHP’s Industrial Heritage Archives of the Calumet Region collection: <http://www.pullman-museum.org/main/chp-cp-00237.jpg>; Center: the sculpture in place in May, 2004; Right: the sculpture just plucked from the snow on December 13; right two photos courtesy of Rod Sellers.]

It had also been given up for lost. But during an EPA-authorized search of the property last August, the sculpture was found. The next question was how to move it? Its odd and ungainly shape, not to mention its weight, would make movement difficult without damaging the piece. Serious thought was given to cutting the sculpture in half.

Enter Harry Gieschen, President of USD (“Surgeons of the Demolition Industry”): <http://www.usdllc.com/> who donated the move. Harry dispatched Cleotha and company, a New Holland Skid Steer, and a truck, and figured out the most expeditious way to get it done. Much time and energy were spent coordinating crew, EPA approval, and secure access to the site, and a date was finally set. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, in the end, nothing really. The move went swimmingly. The fact that wind chills hovered around zero Fahrenheit with a wicked northerly wind, that it was almost impossible to get good traction on the frozen ground, that the sculpture really was more comfortable at rest with its face in the snow and objected to being lifted, really just served to prolong the wait a bit, and to underscore how good Cleotha and his team were.



[Left: Cleotha Blue (second from right) and crew from USD; Right: the sculpture, basking comfortably after its voyage, at Pullman. It's visible from both 111th St. and Cottage Grove avenue. Photos courtesy Kate Corcoran.]

Many thanks to Harry Gieschen, Scott Mortenson, Cleotha Blue, and the rest (Marcos, Alex, Robert) from USD; to Mike Ribordy of EPA; to volunteer Earl Johnson who showed off some front end loader skills of his own at the Pullman end of the move; to Mike Wagenbach of the Pullman State Historic Site; and, of course, to Roy Collins and the rest who put the sculpture together in the first place a good decade ago.

A CHP “SOCIAL NETWORK”: The Oscar goes to Mike Longan for being the point man on Valparaiso University’s hosting of the 2010 CHP Fall conference, for maintaining our website, and, if you can believe it, setting CHP up on Facebook. Check out the photos of the beautiful Fall weather that graced Ron Janke’s field trip to the prehistoric landscapes of the Calumet at the Facebook site. And an Irving Thalberg award to Kevin Murphy, who posted a number of videos of the conference at www.calumetstewardshipinitiative.org. Click on “Video Gallery” and scroll down.

WOLF LAKE WONDERLAND: Navigate to <http://www.wolflakeinitiative.org/> for the scoop on the Wolf Lake Festival, scheduled from 9 to 4 on Saturday, January 15, in both Hammond and Southeast Chicago.

NEXT MEETING: The next bi-monthly meeting of the Calumet Heritage Partnership will be held Thursday, January 20, at 7 p.m. in the Hammond Innovation Center, 5209 Hohman Avenue, Suite 120. The Center is the home base of our board member, Cynthia Ogorek, and her organization, Partners in Presevation.

NEWS?: If you or your organization have items that you'd like to post in this newsletter, email the editor, Mark Bouman, at mbouman@csu.edu.