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Fountain History and Care

Since it was first presented on October 6, 1871, Cincinnatians have viewed the Tyler Davidson Fountain as a symbol of Cincinnati. The People's Fountain, as it is also known, was conceived in the early 1860s as a gift to the people of Cincinnati from Tyler Davidson and Henry Probasco. Probasco and Davidson viewed the fountain as an object of beauty, which could speak to the very souls of the people of Cincinnati. However, Davidson died in 1865 before any specific plans for the fountain could be developed. Probasco chose to pursue the purchase of a fountain as a gift to the people of Cincinnati and a memorial to Davidson.

Probasco traveled Europe in search of a fountain that bore no mythological intent or conventional design. When Probasco came upon the Royal Foundry of Bavaria, in Munich, Ferdinand Von Miller introduced him to the drawings of August Von Kreling. Von Kreling's design depicted people in everyday pursuits enjoying the many blessings and uses of water. Probasco placed the order for the fountain based on Kreling's drawings. After three years of casting, the Tyler Davidson Fountain was dedicated on October 6, 1871 in a lavish ceremony on Probasco Place - later renamed Fountain Square.

Symbolism of the Fountain

Each figure of the Fountain represents the manifold uses, blessings and benefits of water. The central figure is the "Genius of Water", signifying Mother Nature and the origin of water as rain. The Fountain consists of three main sections, the bronze pedestal with its four main bowls, the shaft with its four groups of figures, and the Genius figure on top. Standing nine feet tall and weighing more than nine tons, the Genius sits atop the Fountain and has become a symbol of the City of Cincinnati.

The Fountain Over Time

For over 130 years, the "Genius of Water" has presided over Cincinnati gatherings, from wartime victory celebrations, World Series championships and Christmas ice skating to summertime concerts and brown bag lunches. The Fountain underwent some restoration when the Square was renovated in the 1970's and the Fountain was completely restored and rededicated in 2000. The 2000 restoration was made possible by gifts and efforts of the citizens of Cincinnati.

Fountain Care

The Fountain was the first item removed from the Square in the weeks following the

Square's closing for revitalization. During construction, the Genius of Water was on public display at the Cincinnati Art Museum. The four smaller fountains surrounding the Tyler Davidson Fountain's basin were on display at the home of the Cincinnati Historical Society in the Museum Center at Union Terminal. The remaining pieces of the Fountain were held in a secure location throughout the project.

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