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Photo Available Upon Request

Straus the Stag Makes a Triumphant Return to the Oberlin Heritage Center

Straus, a cast iron deer and Victorian era garden ornament that was manufactured in 1880, adorned the grounds in front of the Oberlin Heritage Center's historic Monroe House museum at 73 1/2 S. Professor Street from 2004 to November 5, 2011 when it was badly damaged by vandals and had to be removed. Happily, he has now made a triumphant return, just in time for the holidays!

The stag had previously graced the lawns of several Oberlin homes, beginning with that of prominent Oberlin businessman Marx Straus on South Main Street. Marx Straus came to Oberlin from Bavaria and opened a dry goods store here in 1852. He later operated the Inn which stood where the Oberlin Inn is today. The stag later stood in front of the home of Chauncey Wack at 43 East Vine Street. Later still it stood in front of the Revers family home at the southeast corner of Hamilton and South Main Streets (razed). The significance of the stag in the community's history was recognized as early as 1988 by the late Oberlin historian Geoffrey Blodgett who called it "a beauty" and urged that it be preserved for all of Oberlin to enjoy. The Revers' nephew, Frank Mitro, donated the stag to the Oberlin Heritage Center so that it could be enjoyed by generations to come.

After an extensive restoration by McKay Lodge Conservation Laboratory, the stag was first installed in front of the Monroe House at the Oberlin Heritage Center on November 22, 2004. The Heritage Center held a contest to name the stag, and after reviewing more than 200 names that were submitted by people from throughout Ohio and as far away as Colorado, Georgia, Missouri and Minnesota, they selected the name "Straus" which had been proposed by Oberlin Heritage Center member Marcia Heckert of Wellington, Ohio.

In November 2011 the stag was nearly destroyed by vandals who had knocked it over, breaking its antlers and causing other surface damage. The cast iron stag and its very attached heavy concrete base then had to be transported back to the McKay Lodge Conservation Laboratory for re-welding, pinning, repairs to the broken antlers, and recoating with a new industrial strength paint coating called Ameron PPG PSX-700 that is often used for Navy and Coast Guard ship topsides and aircraft.

On December 15, 2012, the stag returned to the Heritage Center in the back of a red pickup truck. The almost one ton Straus was then lifted up into the sky by a huge Cat fifty foot boom, six ton telehandler and repositioned in place by Robert Lodge, Emmet Lodge and Curtis McCartney while Heritage Center staff and volunteers watched with glee. Heritage Center staff member Prue Richards then quickly stepped forward to adorn one of his newly repaired antlers with a red bow. Back to stay, 132-year old Straus looks good as new and stands at a place where Oberlin memories are created and preserved. Stop by the Heritage Center and admire Straus. It is a great place to take a fun family holiday photo.

For more information, visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call 440-774-1700.

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