

Monument Proposed to Utah's Sacred Sea Gulls

Young Salt Lake Sculptor Draws Beautiful Design Embodying the Story Told By Pioneers of the Destruction of Devastating Hordes of Crickets.

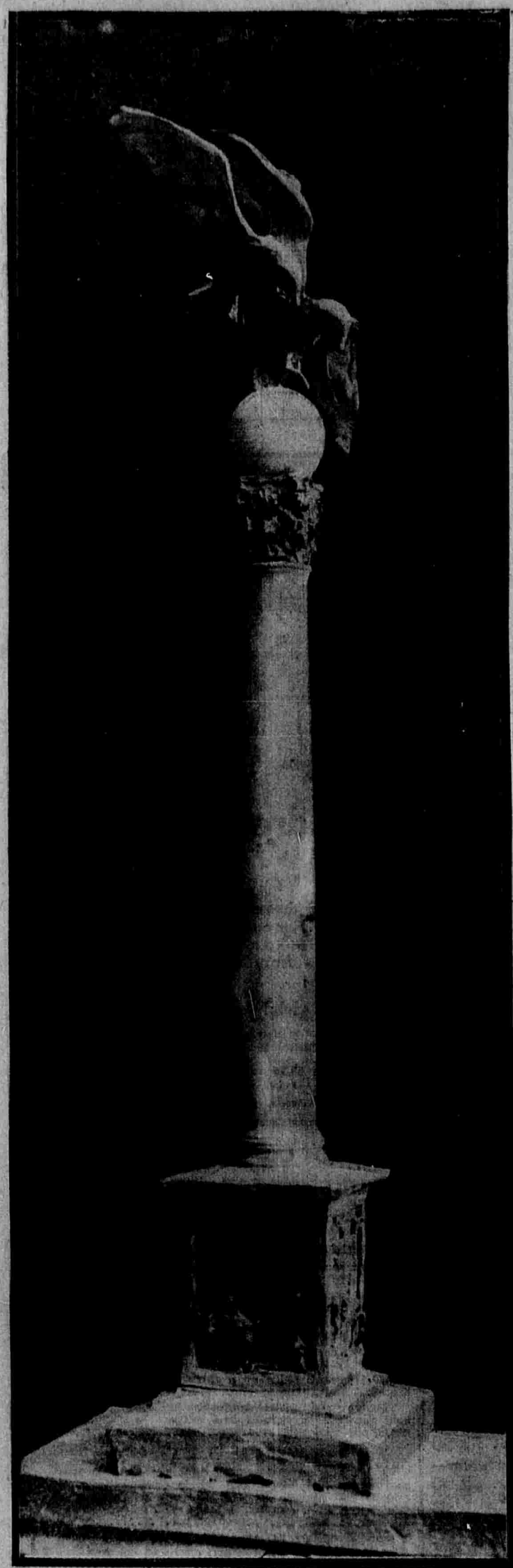


Photo by Johnson.

MODEL IN THE ROUGH.

UTAH has many opportunities to see men at work getting money for money's sake, but of men laboring on art subjects for the sake of art, the examples are more rare.

If the times are propitious for all the people to unite in doing something that will merely add an item of beauty and of interest to the city, then an opportunity is offered in erecting a monument to the sea gulls that flew into Salt Lake valley in 1849 and ate crickets steadily for a summer, when they were devouring the first Utah wheat crop, three deep to every head of wheat.

The monument itself is already prepared in the rough, a clay sketch having been made by Mahonri M. Young, president of the Society of Utah artists, and a young sculptor and painter who has achieved marked success at home and abroad.

So far the lot of Utah painters and sculptors has been largely to "work for nothing and pay their board" or else quit the state and then receive complimentary notices on eastern success, such as Dallon is just now receiving.

UTAH'S YOUNG SCULPTOR.

Mr. Young was born in Utah, was reared in intimate touch with the state's traditions and frontier problems, and has now established his studio here after a long course of study in Paris to work out into clay and on canvas, the things that touch his heart as worthy of such treatment in the experiences of the first Utah home builders and their children of the Wasatch valleys.

He has already done a number of things of historic as well as of artistic interest, but the sketch of a monument for the sea gulls which first occurred to him less than two weeks ago and in ten days was worked out to completion, appeals to many as his masterpiece up to date.

IT OUGHT TO APPEAL.

If it appeals to enough people, the monument is assured for some public park. Otherwise it is destined to remain an artist's dream of a beautiful thing the people could do to carry out the obligation the first body of Utah lawmakers felt when they passed a law imposing a \$5 fine on anyone who should kill a sea gull within the state's border.

What the geese whose cackling aroused the city's defenders to an attack, were to Rome, the sea gulls that ate up the crickets and saved the first crops, have long been to Utah.

TELLS THE STORY.

The monument handles the story based on proven facts and only slightly mellowed with tradition, with peculiar force and sympathy. If it is erected, the two large gulls, poised in the air with delicate skill, will be seen as far as any portion of the monument is visible. A. O. Tregenna, a naturalist as well as an architect, and a close student of the lake gulls, has collaborated with Mr. Young in furnishing proportions and measurements for the birds, until they are absolutely perfect as to shape and distinctive features of size and manner of flight.

The monument is a Corinthian column with four panels of bronze relief at the base, in which the story of Utah's earliest fight for community existence is worked out. At the base of the cap the enrichment is of alighting sea gulls with wings touching overhead instead of the conventional leaves which are distinctive to this style.

WHAT THE PANELS TELL.

Below the four panels each tells a

strong and vital story. On the first there is a plowing scene, in which the first soil is being broken. Two oxen are coming forward with the plow, straining under the task of uprooting the sagebrush. Behind follows the sower, spreading seed broadcast with his hand, and in the distance are shown the Twin Peaks, so prominent along the Wasatch range.

This background of familiar mountain peaks is carried out throughout, for in the next panel, the point of the mountain to the westward is shown. This panel is given up to the gulls, for it symbolizes their coming with a view of a disheartened pioneer stooping down with grief beside a mother and starving child in the foreground, with the mother raising her eyes to the west, where the gulls are seen in the skies. Then follows a third panel carrying the story forward to the harvest time after the rescue. A reaper with a scythe, followed by a woman binding sheaves, and another standing near with a reaping hook, all the foreground, while the first house ever built in the valley is reproduced in the background, and behind that is sketched Ensign peak as it appears from Main street. The fourth space is reserved for an inscription plate, yet to be worked up.

PRAISE FOR DESIGN.

Wherever the design for the monument has been seen, it has received praise, and the suggestion that a fund be started for its erection has already received sponsors. Joseph George, says that he considers it one of the finest monument sketches he has ever seen, and that he would be glad to see it erected in Liberty park, or elsewhere. The directors of the M. and M. association have asked for the model to exhibit in their headquarters, and what the board of governors of the Commercial club are willing to do is a matter for future consideration. Vice President C. S. Burton who is greatly impressed with the sketch will bring it to their attention.

TRIBUTE OF AN ARTIST.

Lee Greene Richards, a fellow artist with Mr. Young, says that he considers it the most original art conception that has yet been brought forth in the west. "You cannot overstate the enthusiasm I feel for it," was his manner of expression. "It is a great work of art, and a signal triumph for Mr. Young, whether it is ever erected or not. For myself I cannot think the people will allow such an opportunity to pass completely by, although it may take some time to finance the proposition. I myself would like to donate to it to the full extent of my financial ability."

Heber J. Grant, who had charge of the work of raising funds for the Brigham Young monument, is not so confident that the people will respond in any large numbers for he says it took five years for the funds to be raised for that monument, and that they came in very slow, and only after great labor on the part of a large organization. He however is enthusiastic in his praise of the sketch for its artistic qualities, and thinks it would be an ornament to any part of the city where it might be erected. The Pioneer monument cost \$30,000 but it is thought that this will only cost about half as much. The surrounding gulls and panels are to be of bronze, the shaft, cap, and base of granite.

STORY OF THE GULLS.

The story of the gulls and their relationship to the people of Utah is too well authenticated to be classed either with traditions or legends. Everyone who was in this valley in 1849 or 1850 remembers the hordes of crickets that made the fields black and the great right of gulls that settled down upon them until the fields were snowy with fluffed feathers as if it were winter. They also will remember the harvest that followed after all hope of reaping one had been abandoned.

Children who played about the wagon boxes that had been lifted off their wheels to form the first rude habitations, remember that the gulls neither feared nor harmed them but pursued the crickets right to the very edges of the wagon boxes, and sometimes chased under them in the fight of destruction on the pests.

And another fact that is well authenticated is that the gulls had no mercenary motive of getting a fat cricket

dinner, for every pioneer who had a field of grain and a water ditch will testify that as fast as the gulls had stuffed themselves they went to the water ditches, drank water, and then disgorged only to fly back into the fields and again fill themselves.

DISORGED HEAPS.

On the first Sunday after the gulls arrived in June, 1849, the settlers left their flight against the crickets to attend religious services, and when on Monday they returned to their fields, they found heaps of dead crickets all along the ditch banks where the gulls had disgorged.

The deliverance of Utah by the gulls is a sacred matter to the older settlers. It was not an affair of a day or a week, but of years, and the end is not yet for the Farmington and Bountiful plowman still finds the gulls fraternizing with him on plowing day, and the crickets and grasshoppers are kept down to small numbers on the bench lands. In 1848 it was a problem of raise a crop or starve to death, and many an aged pioneer will tell you now how he sat down in those critical days, disheartened after fighting the swarms of crickets to the point of exhaustion. The food was nearly all eaten, the seed all planted, and the condition became so critical that word was sent east not to encourage any more immigration westward until the problem of the crickets should be solved, as another winter in Utah meant probable starvation.

PREST. SMITH'S EXPERIENCE.

President Joseph F. Smith is among those who vividly remember the coming of the gulls and their work in ridding the fields of crickets. "I drove an ox team into Salt Lake valley," he says in an interview, "on Sept. 23, 1848, and made our winter camp on Mill creek half a mile west of Neff's mill. After remaining there during the winter, we moved in the spring of 1849 farther down into the valley, and commenced plowing. We planted 20 acres of grain, the field consisting of barley, oats, and wheat, and it began to come up very nicely. Then the crickets came. They were not the grasshoppers with which you are familiar, but big black crickets, much more ugly and repulsive. They came sweeping from the bench lands down upon our crops in great hordes, and we almost despaired of being able to raise anything. We were living at that time in our wagons, the boxes having been lifted down from the gears in order to make our homes. A day or two after the cricket army came, the air became filled with an innumerable number of gulls. They came from the lake to the west and after they had alighted on the grain, what before had been a swarming plain of black, became now a field of snowy white, so crowded were the birds together.

"The gulls were ravenous in their attack on the crickets. On a little water ditch running through the fields they disgorged after drinking and then returned to attack the crickets. I remember some of the gulls chasing crickets right under our wagon boxes, and they never seemed to fear us children, or to fear our presence.

"Year after year the gulls came at the same season, returning each night to their inland homes in the lake, until finally the crickets were wiped out completely, and the gulls became as tame as a flock of chickens.

HOPE FROM DESPAIR.

"There is another story I remember. One kinswoman of mine who was the mother of a large family, whose husband and she were almost on the verge of starvation, settled west of the Jordan. They planted a field, and just as their grain was getting a good start, the crickets began to attack it. The family fought them with fire and brush, but they were too numerous and too persistent in their attacks, and finally they swarmed completely over the grain. Aunt Helen went home and sat down and cried. Presently the gulls came and settled over the field until it was white with them. Then she said to her husband, 'The Lord must be against them for first the crickets had come to ruin the crop and then the gulls had come to finish the work of destruction. But she soon found the gulls had come to deliver, and not to destroy. They saved their crop. It recuperated after the devastation and they had a good harvest.'

SACREDLY REGARDED.

President Smith is not at all doubt-



GIFT OF THE PRESIDENT.

J. Stewart Barney, of New York, has completed the beautiful lectern which President Roosevelt will present to the ancient Bruton Parish church at Williamsburg, Va., to support the Bible which is to be presented by Edward VII.

The angel of peace stands upon a globe, one foot resting on America, the other on England, the upraised hands and wings of the figure supporting the desk of the lectern. Beneath the globe, and supporting it, are the American eagle and the British lion, while between these is the coat-of-arms of the English forbears of George Washington. Three tablets at the base bear the following inscriptions:

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The formal presentation of the lectern and Bible will take place in October.

ful in his own mind, as to the providence which sent the gulls, and made them friends and assistants of the settlers. "We hold the gulls in very high esteem," he declared. "There was so much value placed on the gulls in early days that one of the first laws passed was to protect them from hunters, and the sentiment of the people at large has always been so strong that the principle of making friends with them has been adhered to. I have known farmers who would shoot the horses rather than injure the gulls that stood in their way in the fields. They eat

nothing of value, do absolutely no harm to any man, and yet they have done infinite good in helping the people to harvest their first crops. I hope never to see the day when they are not tenderly and sacredly regarded and safeguarded by the people."

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