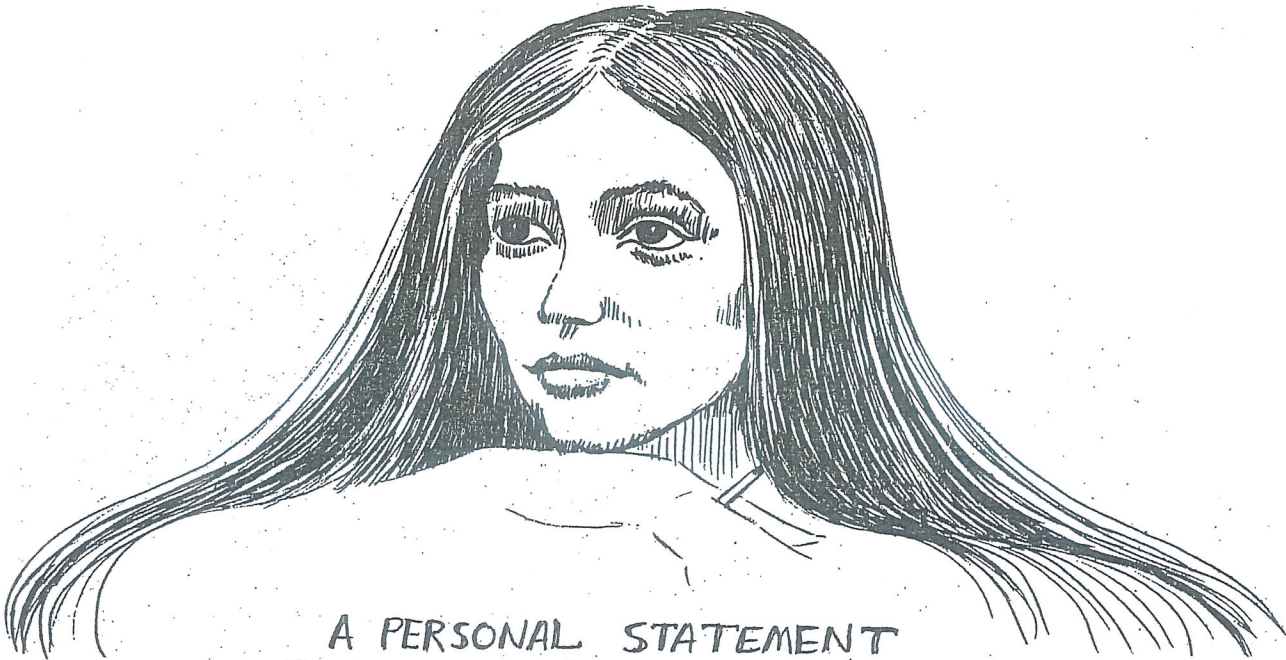


Pete Felten

Artist Statement ~ July 1969



A PERSONAL STATEMENT

I NEVER THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BECOME A PUBLIC ARTIST BUT IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK AS IF I MAY. HEAVEN KNOWS, WE OUT IN WESTERN KANSAS HAVEN'T HAD VERY MANY SO FAR. WE HAVE AS MUCH TO COMMEMORATE AS ANY PEOPLE EVEN THO RECORDED HISTORY HERE MAY BE LESS THAN OTHER PLACES.

WHO WERE THE GREAT MINDS AND SPIRITS OF A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, OR TWO THOUSAND OR TEN? ALL FORGOTTEN AND UNRECORDED. WE FIND A FEW ARTIFACTS, A FEW DRAWINGS ON CLIFFS AND MANY GRAVES. WHAT WILL THE FUTURE FIND OF US? A FEW PILES OF BRICKS, DECAYING ASPHALT AND CEMENT? WHAT DO WE HOLD AS IMPORTANT? DO WE HAVE PEOPLE WORTHY OF RECORD, EVENTS, IDEALS? I THINK SO. I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE WHAT I HAVE DONE, WHAT I AM DOING AND WHAT I HOPE TO DO. I'LL HAVE ON DISPLAY MY MODEL OF A PIONEER FAMILY I EXPECT TO START VERY SOON AND A COUPLE MODELS OF AMELIA EARHART I HAVE RECENTLY FINISHED. ALSO SOME WOODCUTS AND ODDS AND ENDS.

WE HAVE SEVERAL NEW MEMBERS IN THE CELLAR THIS SUMMER SO YOU CAN SEE THEIR WORK AS WELL AS OUR OTHER MEMBERS WORK.

WE ARE ALSO FORTUNATE TO HAVE A ROOM FULL OF NEW DRAWINGS BY SUE GWYNN SO I HOPE YOU'LL COME DOWN AND SEE. WE ARE OPEN EVERY DAY NOW. 7-9 P.M. WEEKDAYS AND 1-5 P.M. ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.

THE DENVER POST

EMPIRE PAGE

The Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1966

12

LIFE-SIZE KANSAS STATUE

Bison Emerging From Stone

By GROVER BRINKMAN
FORT HAYS, Kan. — After a long ride from the quarry at New Bedford, Ind., a solid block

of limestone weighing 24 tons, has come to rest at a historic spot in Kansas, an old frontier town named Fort Hays.

Today, the huge piece of Indiana's famous stone, mounted on a high pedestal, is fast becoming a life-size bison.

The young sculptor doing the painstaking job is Peter Felten, a native son. The huge buffalo when complete, will grace the lawn at restored Fort Hays, the old pioneer military post that gave this booming railroad town its name. Felten intends to have the sculpture completed in time for the town's centennial next spring.

NOTABLE CREATIONS

Felten has been a professional for nine years, and has several notable creations to his credit, including a statue of "Buffalo Bill" Cody.

Just across the road from Felten, a herd of buffalo grazes in a pasture of the Kansas Frontier Historical Park, so he had no trouble in getting an animal to "pose" for him. He admitted that some choice tidbits of food at the right place kept an old bull in sight, almost continually.

Asked what the completed statue would weigh, Felten said he would chip at least 6 tons of stone off the original block, to turn the block into an image of a prairie buffalo (bison) bull. He uses nothing but a hammer and a chisel. It's laborious work, but to Felten it is a work of love, for each blow of his hammer adds a bit of realism to that cold stone, changing it into a statue of great naturalness.

STONE CHOSEN

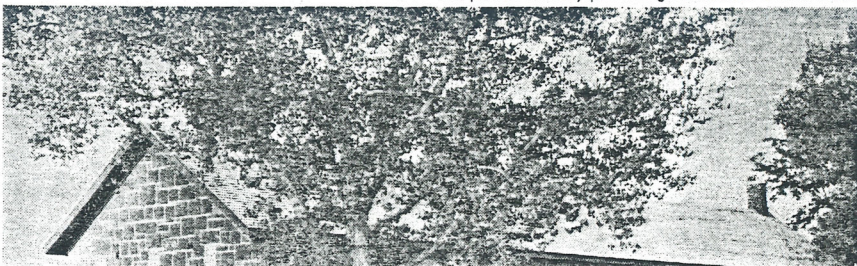
Felten chose the Bedford, Ind., stone for its quality and true grain.

"True grain means a lot to a sculptor," he confided. "If the grain of a stone doesn't run true, I'm in trouble."

Felten has been fast changing the shape of his 24-ton block of



CHIPPING OFF SIX TONS OF ROCK FROM SOLID BLOCK TO FORM IMAGE OF HUGE BISON IS LONG, SLOW TASK
Sculptor Peter Felten is working on statue at Fort Hays, Kan., pioneer military post that gave railroad town its name.



Felten, Fritz



PETE F. FELTEN JR.-Sculptor of Stone

From a heritage where utilitarian stone fence posts were cut by hand, Pete F. "Fritz" Felten, Jr., has become a sculptor of ever increasing renown. His grandfather operated a livery stable and hauling business in Hays. This was later carried on by Fritz's father, Pete, Sr., as a successful trucking firm.

Fritz, a track star in high school and an expert swimmer, spent one year of college at Fort Hays Kansas State College in Hays. Natural course of events would have been to join his father in business. Not so.

Service in the U. S. Navy from 1952 to 1956 exposed Fritz to art museums and treasures on the east and west coasts and Hawaii. Following this, he made an art and museum tour in St. Louis, Washington, New York, Kansas City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Hartford and Baltimore. He talked with the famous Russian sculptor, Naum Gabo, in Connecticut who advised, "Don't be a sculptor unless you want a life of hard work and little money."

Fritz attended an art league school in New York for a short time followed by more art courses at Fort Hays Kansas State College. Working in a studio converted from a garage, he has improved his techniques largely from experience and prodigious output, over 150 works in one four-year period.

Felten's latest creation is a black Angus bull placed on top of a monument in Victoria commemorating the centennial celebration of the first Angus cattle brought to the United States in 1873. **EARLY SETTLER**, carved from a two-ton chunk of Indiana limestone was unveiled at the original Boot Hill site in Hays last May.

MONARCH OF THE PLAINS, eight feet high and 10 feet long, stands on a seven-foot high base at the site of Old Fort Hays located on Highway 40 By-Pass south of Hays. This massive attraction, which took almost two years to create from a 24-ton stone, overlooks one of the few remaining buffalo herds in the state.

Kansas! #3 1973

PUBLIC LIBRARY
ANSIS 8004

Felten, Pete Jr.
(Fritts)

Los Angeles Times

LARGEST CIRCULATION IN THE WEST, 1,037,963, DAILY, 1,244,713 SUNDAY

VOL. XCIV

SIX PARTS—PART ONE

106 PAGES

FRIDAY MORNING, JULY 4, 1975

REVIVAL FOR '76

Town Keeps Frontier Era Roots Alive

BY GAYLORD SHAW
Times Staff Writer

HAYS, Kan.—The heritage of Hays is as fertile as the prairie, now golden with waves of grain stretching to meet a cloudless summer sky.

Here on the streets a century ago walked Gen. George Custer, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Cody, Calamity Jane. And here the refugees from European despots and czars found new homes, driving out the bandits, murderers and dance hall girls to build a stable, enduring society.

But heritage is much like a slender stalk of wheat—once trampled there is no way to harvest it. Here in Hays, they are working to preserve bits of their rich heritage, to keep a growing America from trampling it under the boots of progress.

Adolph Reisig, the local Texaco dealer, is banging away with his hammer, patching a hole in the wall of the old stone church being converted into a museum.

Lawrence Weigel, the concrete plant manager, is singing in his basement, recording the melody and words of a folk song written by his Volga German ancestors who settled this land a century ago.

The Rev. Blaine Burkey, the prep school librarian, is peering through a magnifying glass at the fuzzy images of a faded photograph

on Pacific Northwest
plans to leave Hays.
One morning in July, as the sunrise paints the prairie with hues of pink, they intend to point their 1968 VW toward Belize, the Central American country once known as British Honduras. There they say they hope to buy land and find a new life.



PART OF A TOWN'S HERITAGE—Statue of Buffalo Bill Cody stands outside the public library at Hays, Kan. At right, the sculptor, Fritts Felten, who is recording the town's history in stone.

Times photo

Gen. Custer

Wild Bill Hickok

The teen-ager nods.

When dusk settles on Hays, the ritual begins. Cars driven by teen-agers move slowly up and down Main St., honking their horns as they meet. It's called Draggin' Main, and they do it in Hays just like they do in a thousand other small towns.

And, like everywhere, teen-agers seem to be wary of strangers over 30.

One in Hays agreed to an interview but did not want to give his name.

What do teen-agers do in Hays for entertainment?

"Not much. There's not much to do. We may go to the drive-in (theater) or the Fox (the downtown movie), or maybe go to someone's house for a party. But mostly we just drive around."

What about drugs?

"Grass isn't that hard to get. Some of the guys are into it. I'm not. You don't see much of the harder stuff except among the freaks at the college."

What about drinking?

"Yeah, we'll get a six-pack and go park and drink it."

At midnight, a half-dozen cars sit in the shadows of the

Like many places, teen-age drinking is a growing problem

trees of Custer's Island, an abandoned park surrounded on three sides by Big Creek just outside town. Legend has it that Custer camped here one summer. Now the kids drink beer here, tossing the cans out the window into the dusty weeds.

Like almost everywhere else, teen-age drinking is a growing problem in Hays. "Northwest Kansas teen-agers will spend \$10,000 this week alone on alcohol," said Julius Cohen, assistant director of the High Plains Medical Health Center where 108 persons were treated for alcoholism last year. "What does it say for us adults if we don't have the time, energy, interest or commitment to be concerned?"

At the big round table in the corner, the bankers, doctors, dentists and businessmen of Hays are having lunch.

nt lot on Main St., Fritts Felten is chipping ge chunk of limestone. Hammer against chis- inst stone. Chink-chink. Chink-chink. Chink-chink.

sculptor, and a good one. His statues record history of Hays. A massive buffalo, even big- ones which freely roamed this prairie, looks entrance to Old Ft. Hays. Buffalo Bill Cody's the public library. A stern-faced lawman is for City Hall. Now, with townspeople watch- pass by, Felten is sculpting a pioneer Volga- nity to kneel before a wooden cross in next- ration.

and in cut-off blue jeans, the bearded, long- n looks out of place on Main St. in Hays.

When he came back from the Army 18 years ago and decided to begin preserving Hays' heritage in stone, people thought he was a little crazy, a shiftless Bohemian who really ought to settle down and go into his father's trucking business.

But today they're proud of him and his statues. And his influence is felt at the nearby college, which has developed into one of the best art schools in the state.

Felten could live elsewhere and probably find nationwide acclaim.

But he won't.

"I like it here in Hays," he said. "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

You hear those same words a lot in Hays.

Hays has its Michelangelo

(Continued from Page 17)

After he'll have started sculpturing, though, he'll find out he prepared himself well for the art, because he will have studied geology, botany and anatomy, subjects stone sculptors and painters often apply to their work.

When his father sees his son's sculpturing ability, he will urge him to go to Italy to study the art. But the son won't go. He'll reason, "Every time I go somewhere, I think I should really be home working."

"Besides, I've been all over Italy — mentally. I'll get over there sometime... If I live long enough."

Too, he'll find that after 19 years of sculpturing, most everything he'll do will be related to his work.

"If I'm not doing it, I'm thinking about it," he'll say. "It sort of takes over your mind... no matter what you're doing. It's continually intriguing to me."

"I don't know why, but I can work on the thing everyday for 10 months and not get sick of it," he'll say as he stops chipping away at the monstrous Hereford. "It just fascinates me."

"It's the perfect combination of physical activity and mental activity — always the challenge of something new."

Almost all of our sculptor's sculp-



tures will take shape first in his garage-turned-studio, which is cluttered with carved portraits; uncarved stones and bulky tree trunks; casts of works to come and of those that have been finished; hammers and chisels; "odds and ends;" and Gus, an affectionate white cat.

He will evolve the ideas for his works from drawings, pencil sketches and photographs he takes with his miniature Olympus camera, a tool he carries in a leather case that's strapped to his belt.

"Usually when I work and see someone intriguing, I run and try to take a picture of them for an idea," he'll say. "It's just a way of recording things."

When we're finished sculpturing our sculptor, he'll be introspective and at peace with himself.

"I've got my life so under control it's just amazing. I know that sounds a little strange but I just don't have any limits—except mentally."

"You're not likely to find a more happy, well-adjusted person than me," he'll say. Then, he'll smile and say, "That really sounds stupid," and begin carving at his Hereford again.

"Oh, they say that only an idiot is completely happy, but," he smiles again, "I just really don't have any problems. I just don't get any static."

And that, he'll say is why his life is dull. "I don't have anything to knock down."

Our sculptor will be famous in Kansas for his sculptures of a bison for Fort Hays' centennial, a pioneer family for the city of Oberlin, his lawmaker for the city of Hays and many more.

But fame won't really concern him, because "you can't really sum up an artist's career. Besides, most artists don't get famous until after they're dead."

Anyway, fame could be more elusive to him now than ever, because he'll say his life already has peaked.

"I suppose I hit my peak about 10 years ago with my buffalo. I'm on my way down."

Our sculpturing of our sculptor is nearly completed, except for the name. Who knows our sculptor just may become famous after he dies.

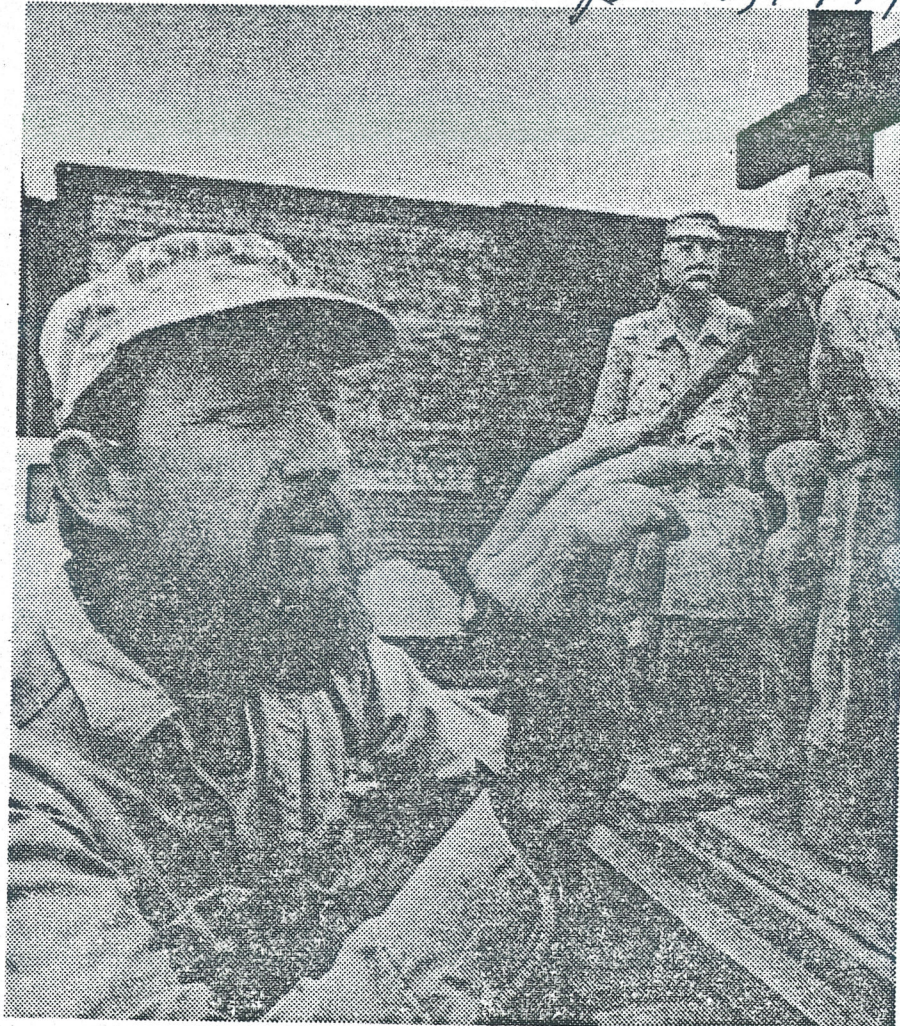
His name: Fritz Felten. "The Michelangelo of Hays."

Early Felten

Hays Sculptor Gets Capitol Project

Felten, Pete

Wichita Jan 6, 1979



File Photo

**FELTEN, RESIDENT OF HAYS, AT WORK
... He'll use Kansas limestone for statues**

From Staff and Wire Reports

A lifelong resident of Hays was chosen Friday to sculpt four statues of famous Kansans to be placed in the rotunda of the State Capitol.

Pete Felten, 45, was the unanimous choice of the Capitol Murals Committee, says Tish Rogers, chairman.

THE RECOMMENDATION does not become final until the Kansas State Historical Society rules on it, but approval is expected to be routine, Rogers said.

In return for the four statues, Felten will receive \$60,000, which was appropriated by the Kansas Legislature in 1978.

His subjects, chosen by the historical society, will be Dwight Eisenhower, the former president from Abilene; Amelia Earhart, the aviatrix from Atchison; William Allen White, the newspaper editor from Emporia, and Arthur Capper, the publisher and former governor from Topeka.

Felten said the statues will be sculpted from native Kansas limestone taken from the Silverdale quarry near Arkansas City. Arkansas City is southeast of Wichita, near the Oklahoma border.

He said he planned to select the limestone and begin sculpting in a few months. "Right now is not exactly the

best time of year to be in a quarry."

When completed — sometime in 1982 — the 8-foot-tall mini-monuments will be placed in four wall niches in the rotunda. They will be surrounded by a series of murals completed last year.

Felten originally proposed to sculpt the statues out of wood because the niches had been considered too weak to support stone.

The state architect's office, however, concluded that the limestone statues, expected to weigh about 1,700 pounds each, would not be too heavy, Rogers said.

Felten said he has worked extensively in limestone. Examples are statues of a buffalo, a pioneer and a peace officer at Hays and a bull at the Fort Hays Experiment Station.

HE STARTED sculpting in 1957 and studied at the Art Students League in New York.

His rivals for the statehouse statue commission included John Learned of Oklahoma City, a creator of bronze castings, and Lumen Winter, a native Kansan living in Santa Fe, N.M. Winter painted the murals that will surround Felten's statues.

RIGHT: With the aid of a rented crane, a statue of William Allen White is lifted to the second floor of the Capitol. BELOW: After the Eisenhower statue is placed in its niche, the Capitol Statue Crew poses for pictures.

June 1981

A capital move

Four famous Kansans find their niches

Sitting in his studio on Shinbone Alley, artist Pete Felten Jr. Saturday morning was relaxing and scanning a pile of unopened mail. Outside, in the back yard, is a block of limestone that awaits his artistic attention but he isn't sure whether he'll chip at it today.

This relaxation seems fitting. Sculptor Felten, assisted by volunteers, last week moved four limestone statues of famous Kansans, each weighing a ton, into niches in the second floor Rotunda of the State Capitol at Topeka. They used brawn rather than machinery to handle Felten's artwork because of weight limits on the Statehouse floor. The job was finished late Friday.

Felten is pleased. The eight-foot-tall statues, he said, look great in the huge niches that are part of the circular Rotunda wall, which is faced in marble.

Felten is proud. He is honored to have his work displayed in such a revered building. Thus there was no melancholy when he turned his back on the artwork Friday night and headed west for Hays.

"It's nice to have a place for statues," he said Saturday. "They have a nice home."

"It's a little different than when I carve something and hope to sell it."

The statues of former president Dwight Eisenhower, politician Arthur Capper, aviatrix Amelia Earhart and editor William Allen White now belong to Kansans, he said. He'll carve no credit for himself. He didn't sign the artwork and his name won't be included on the plaques that later will be installed to identify the figures.

"This is Kansas' work, not mine," the 48-year-old artist said. In his opinion, "nobody cares" who created the statues.

The statues were created to complete the Rotunda of the Statehouse, which was built nearly eight decades ago. The 1978 Legislature authorized the spending of \$60,000 to create statues for the 10½-foot tall niches. The State Historical Society selected the four Kansans to be honored and a Capitol Murals Committee selected the sculptor, picking Felten over two other finalists, Lumen Winters of New York and John Learned of Oklahoma.

Felten initially planned to create the statues of wood. But the Historical Society preferred limestone and that suited Felten, who has worked extensively with that material.

But because of the added weight, the change to limestone made difficult the task of moving the artwork into the Statehouse.

The move was coordinated by Ted Mize, Topeka, a sergeant with the Air National Guard who was granted leave to move the artwork. Mize for 25 years operated a crane and moving company at Topeka. He describes himself as one who "likes challenges." He donated his talents to this project.

Mize wore his uniform throughout the three-day move, coordinating it with military precision. His troops were a band of artists, friends of Felten's who worked without pay to help him place his artwork.

Chuck Ellis, an art teacher at Scott City, said the opportunity to work with Felten and the knowledge he gained in the art of moving heavy statues is a reward in itself. He described

himself as honored to be part of the crew, which Felten dubbed as the "Capitol Statue Crew."

The crew included Carla Kroell, who manages Felten's Stone Gallery on Shinbone Alley. She became adept at moving the 96 pound timbers used during the move.

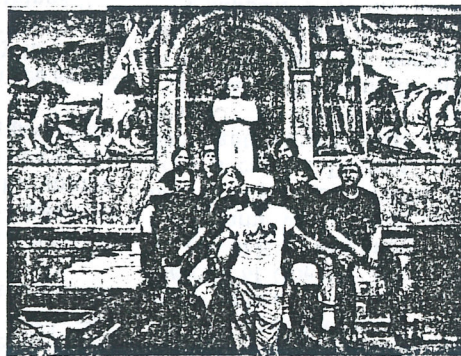
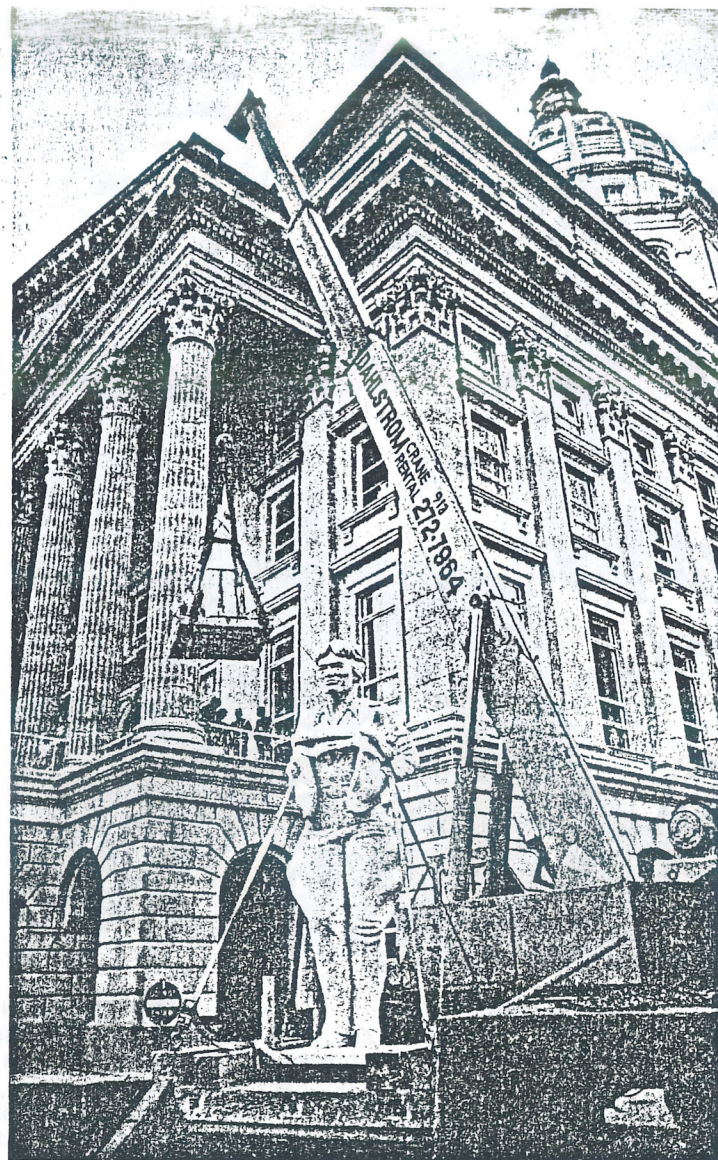
Felten praised his crew. "To pay guys to work as hard as they did — you couldn't do it. They were really heroic."

Mize described the task as dangerous but the move was completed with no serious injuries, though Bob Lortscher, a Greensburg teacher, sprained his wrist. Lortscher also was limping Friday but that injury was caused when a co-worker stepped on his foot while they were climbing into a car to go to dinner.

Felten's only labor cost was for room and board for the crew of seven. "These guys are making more money than I make," he said.

Mize said the statues were moved into the Statehouse at a remarkably low cost — probably less than \$1,000. The biggest expenses were for a crane to lift the statues from the truck to the second floor porch of the Capitol and for lumber, needed to keep the weight of the statues on the iron beams in the Statehouse floor. Cottonwood timbers were used and, as they dry, they will become warped and worthless.

The placement of the statues drew crowds of Statehouse workers and tourists. The biggest audience gathered when the crew pushed the first statue, that of Eisenhower, into the southeast niche. When the tedious task was completed, the crowd of more than 100 persons, some of whom observed the operation from the upper floors of the Rotunda, applauded and dispersed.



The Capper statue was placed in its niche just a couple hours later and that operation went almost unnoticed. The task finished, Felten alone applauded his crew.

The crowds built again Friday, though, and an especially large gathering watched the placement of the final piece, the statue of William Allen White, whose big belly protrudes a bit beyond the niche.

Felten is accustomed to working in front of crowds. Curious onlookers stop by at will when he carves statues along Sixth Street, behind his studio and gallery.

The crowds were especially large. In recent weeks as Felten finished his four Kansans and loaded them onto pallets, the scene took on a circus-like atmosphere, prompting Felten to say at one point: "I feel like I should get a funny hat and put a bulb on my nose."

A CAPITAL MOVE

Continued on page 6

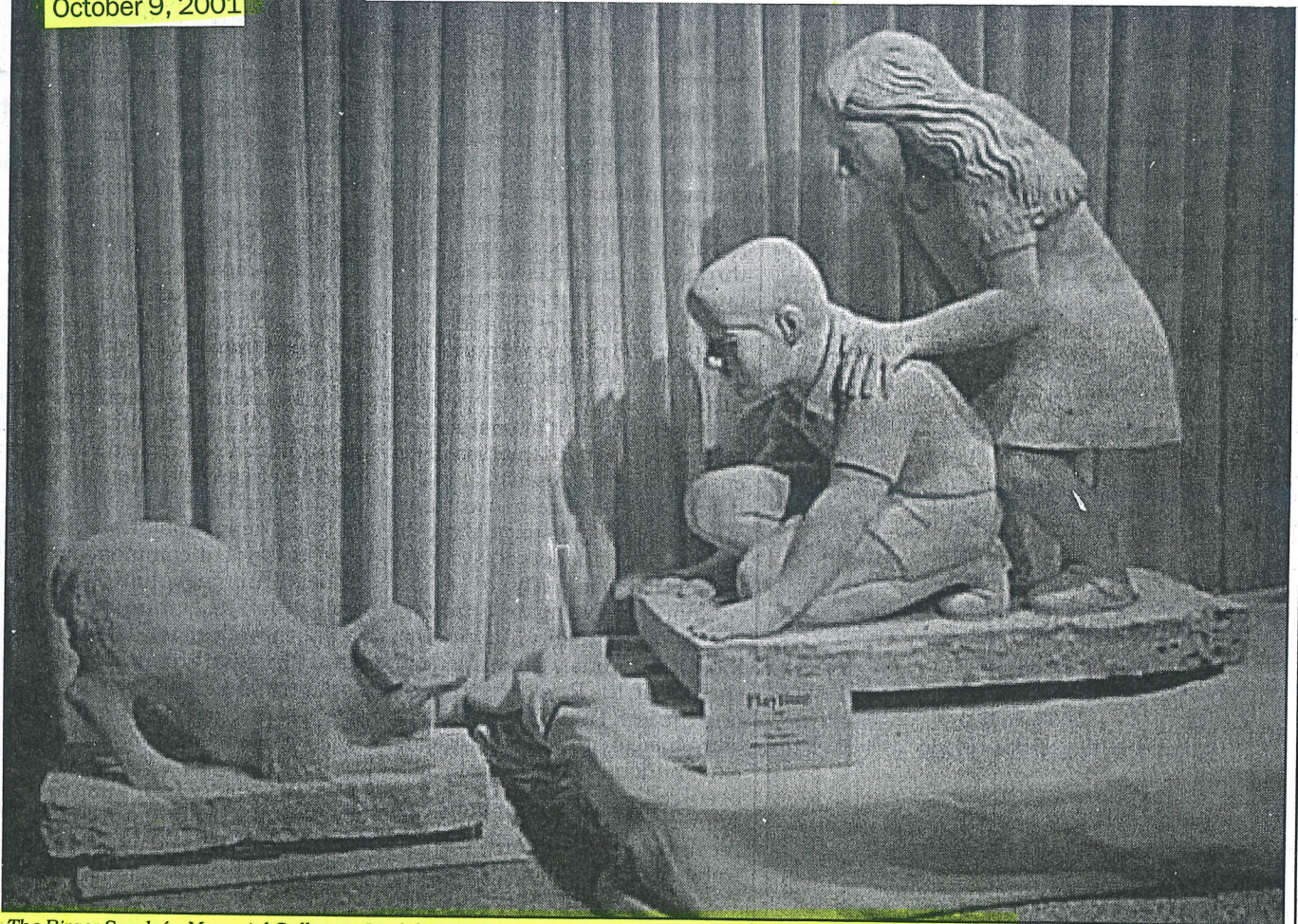
24th Annual Smoky Hill Art Exhibition
Douglas Freed, Sedalia, Mo, - Juror



Pete Felten

Hays, KS
Four Tutus
\$250 Cash Award

October 9, 2001



The Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery in Lindsborg has recieved a new piece of art for its permanent collection. "Playtime," a limestone sculpture commissioned by Hays sculptor Pete Felten was delivered Sept. 23. The piece is carved from two blocks of limestone. **COURTESY PHOTO**

Hays local Pete Felten carves sculptures for displays across state of Kansas

10-9-01

BRYAN VALENTINE
The University Leader

Editor's note: Some of the material for this story came from various news sources and Brenda Meder, Hays Arts Council director.

Give Pete Felten a chisel, a hammer and some limestone, and he'll give you a work of art.

Felten, who has been carving sculptures out of limestone for nearly 45 years, has another one of his commissioned pieces being displayed in the Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery in Lindsborg.

"Playtime," a limestone sculpture of two children playing with a dog, is on display in the lobby of the Gallery. Its future home will be in the south part of the Gallery's courtyard.

"The Birger Sandzén Memorial Foundation made the commission for the Gallery," Larry Griffis, director of the Gallery, said. "The subject of the work represents Margaret Sandzén and a grade school classmate playing with Rags, the Sandzén family dog."

Griffis said that Felten studied gallery archival photographs of Sandzén's long, flowing hair which she had as a young child, and photographs of the family dog.

Felten spent four years in the military, then he attended FHSU. He left in 1957 to pursue his sculpting full-time and start up the Stone Gallery, 107 1/2 W. Sixth.

"I discovered one day that I

could carve," Felten said. "I dropped the paint brush and took up carving. The tools were simple, and I found out that I could do it, and it is fun."

Felten has been producing commissioned work for nearly 40 years. His first commissioned piece was the limestone bust of Buffalo Bill Cody in 1961. The bust sits on the grounds of the Hays Public Library, 1205 Main.

One of his biggest commissions was the four statues he carved for the state Capitol in the late '70s and early '80s. He created the four eight-foot tall portraits of famous Kansans Amelia Earhart, aviatrix; Dwight D. Eisenhower, former president; William Allen White, author and editor; and Arthur Capper, politician.

"It was a real honor to do that project," Felten said. "We were worried about getting the stone into the building. I wanted to do the project out of wood, but they (the Historical Society) wanted the carvings to be done in limestone."

The statues were created to complete the Rotunda of the Statehouse, which was built nearly nine decades ago.

The 1978 legislature authorized the spending of \$60,000 to create statues. The State Historical Society selected the four Kansans to be honored and selection of the sculptor was up to the Capitol Murals Committee, which picked Felten over two other finalists, Lumen Winters of New York and John Learned of Oklahoma.

"His medium is primarily

Kansas limestone, a natural resource and creative medium whose impact and importance to the state is celebrated by no one else in the way that is by Pete Felten," Meder said.

Besides the Cody sculpture, Felten's work includes the lawman at Hays City Hall, 16th and Main; Elizabeth Polly; Boot Hill man; pioneer students at FHSU; Monarch of the Plains at Old Fort Hays; the Hereford at the Experiment Station; a Volga-German pioneer family in Victoria; St. Francis in Munjor; and a child reading at the Hill City Library.

"I've also done lots of religious statues, school mascots and eagles," Felten said. "I have also done things out of clay and do paintings when I cannot carve during the winter time."

Felten said that he has three more commissioned pieces to finish before he is done producing commissions.

"I have one to start, one to finish and one that I just got started doing," he said.

"Pete represents what it means to be a true artist," Meder said. "He is both one of the state's most interested and interesting citizens. He has been pursuing his passion and interests for stone carving for nearly all his adult life. He approaches each creation with a fresh vision and an enthusiasm that never seems to wane."

"He is continually being sought out for new commissions and most of his sculpting time is spent filling those requests," she said. "He readily welcomes any and all visitors to his studio, turning each visit into its own educational and artistic experience."

Felten likes to make

sculptures around his studio as well. In his spare time, he continues to work on the wall that surrounds the back side of the studio. Felten said that he wanted to do something for the children. In his backyard there is a wall that children can play on without getting hurt.

"I let my imagination go wild on this project," he said. "I work on the wall whenever I have time. I just wanted something that the kids can play on."

When he is not in his studio, he is an active volunteer for the Convention & Visitors Bureau's art and history tours, 1301 Pine. He also gives special presentations and demonstrations; including the Hays Arts Council's summer youth art program, where he delivers lectures and presentations to the sculpture and limestone carving classes. He also volunteers the stone for the projects.

Through the Stone Gallery, Felten has exhibited numerous artists for no commission or charge to either the artists or the visiting public.

"He is a vocal supporter of the arts," Meder said, "and an active financial contributor to the Hays Arts Council, public television and public radio. He is one of the most honest and straightforward artists one will ever meet and that honesty are reflected in each of his pieces."

Felten said that individuals who want to get into carving should make their own path because there are no rules individuals have to follow.

"It works for me," he said. "It's not complicated; just get a rock or a part of a tree and carve it. It suits my personality."

Felten plaques installed in Kansas Statehouse

Press release

New bronze plaques were recently installed in the Rotunda of the Kansas Statehouse to give credit to Hays sculptor Pete Felten for his sculptures displayed there.

The Kansas Capitol Building displays many works of art, including murals depicting prominent moments in Kansas' history. Felten's native limestone sculptures were commissioned to honor four notable Kansans: former U.S. Senator and Governor of Kansas Arthur Capper, aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and journalist and politician William Allen White. The finished

pieces were installed in 1981.

During a tour of the Statehouse, Hays Convention & Visitors Bureau director Melissa Dixon noted there was no signage to let visitors know who created the sculptures.

"I felt that it was important for Hays' most well-known artist to have recognition in such a prominent location in our state," Dixon said.

With help from Kansas Representative Barb Wasinger and Kansas Senator Elaine Bowers, Dixon submitted a proposal to the Capitol Preservation Committee to add a bronze plaque next to each sculpture that gives Felten credit for his work.

Representative Wasinger presented to the committee on April 4, 2024, and the committee voted to proceed.

"I was so honored to be able to help Melissa recognize Pete Felten and his amazing talent," said Wasinger.

Over 40 years after the installation of the sculptures, the bronze plaques were added on June 28 with the assistance of AllSigns of Topeka. Wasinger, Bowers, and Dixon were present for the addition.

Ellis County is home to more than 25 of Felten's limestone sculptures that are easily accessible to visitors. For a map of locations, visit the Hays Welcome Center at 2700 Vine St. or go to VisitHays.com.



COURTESY PHOTO



STONE GALLERY

107