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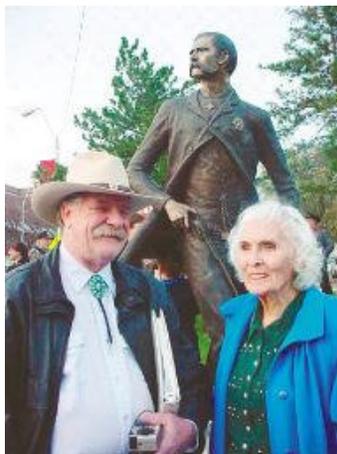
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Historic lawman returns
Trail of Fame unveils statue of Dodge City icon

By Charlene Scott
Dodge City Daily Globe



Mary Spurgeon, the Oklahoma artist who sculpted a statue of Wyatt Earp for Dodge City, stands in front of her sculpture that was unveiled Friday evening. Beside her is Jim Johnson, head of the Trail of Fame committee that commissioned the statue. *Charlene Scott*

Wyatt Earp strides the streets of Dodge City once again.

The eight-foot bronze sculpture of the famed lawman of the Old West was unveiled at dusk Friday in a ceremony that drew guests from hundreds and even thousands of miles away to admire the statue and its creator Mary Spurgeon.

"Mary is marvelous; she's the eighth wonder of the world," a woman at the Santa Fe Depot reception following the unveiling was heard to say.

"This has put Dodge City back on the map," noted one of the ceremony's speakers, Dodge City Mayor Mark Pingsterhaus. "This is something we can all be proud of. It's one of the most exciting things going on in Dodge City right now."

Jim Johnson - who with wife Carolyn heads the Trail of Fame committee that commissioned the statue - was the first to welcome the many guests who huddled around the looming statue in the early evening chill.

"I want to start by asking you a question," Johnson said. "Two years ago when you heard about the Trail of Fame, how many of you actually thought you would see a Wyatt Earp statue standing here?"

Following the unveiling at the corner of Central Avenue and Wyatt Earp Boulevard, Spurgeon commented on her work, saying "The statue looked better than I expected, and I think it's going to show up well. It's in such a good location. People riding by can see it from both directions.

shadows from the day light brought out the features. Personally, I like Wyatt's expression and his hand on his gun. I

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really wanted to do him because I thought he had an interesting face."

watch a shot video of the statue dedication. *(Quicktime plug-in needed)*

Ford County Commissioner Kim Goodnight told the statue's admirers that "We have what other communities strive for: instant recognition.

"We have a renewed spirit of pride in Dodge City," he added. "If you like this statue, we ask you to get more involved. And the next time somebody asks you where you're from, make sure to boast that you're from the town where Wyatt Earp still walks the streets!"

Johnson called the downtown neighborhood where the statue will stand guard "the Dodge City historic district," explaining, "This is our history down here, and we have got to save it. We are getting some businesses in here and revitalizing and developing our history."

Spurgeon reflected on the statue, admitting that Wyatt Earp's long-barreled, 18-inch gun, a "Buntline Special," gave her pause when she first was commissioned to do the statue.

"I'm not much of a gun enthusiast, so I had to learn a lot about guns," she said. "There are a lot of questions as to whether Wyatt Earp actually had a Buntline Special, but people associate him with that. Men say it would be a little hard to do a quick draw with a Buntline Special."



Of course, Spurgeon's immediate family was on the scene and obviously proud of their 86-year-old talented matriarch. Spurgeon was surrounded by her extended family, and in one photo of her with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren standing by the statue, Wyatt Earp looked like he was one of the clan.

Dressed in a colbalt-blue coat, Mary Spurgeon is joined at the unveiling of her statue of Wyatt Earp Friday in Dodge City by her family; a daughter, three sons, several grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Michael Schweitzer/Dodge City Daily Globe

Family members at the unveiling included Spurgeon's

daughter, Linda, owner of Trails West in Dodge City, and the artist's three sons, Shannon of Wichita; DelRoy and his wife, Susan of Gate, Okla.; and James and his wife, Sheila of Alva, Okla.

Grandchildren on hand for the ceremony were Brandon Rockenbach; Leslyn Price; Will Spurgeon and his wife Toni; Janetta and Krista Spurgeon; Katy Spurgeon; Sadie and Riley Spurgeon, and Shauna Scott and Tawny Spurgeon.

Great-grandchildren Lindee and T.W. Price and Linda Spurgeon's grandchildren - also attended the ceremony to share in the glory of their renowned great-grandma.

"There are so many friends who have come a long way to be here," Spurgeon said. "They came from Stillwater, Edmond and Shawnee, Oklahoma, and the woman who worked with me at the foundry, Maria Spahn, from Loveland, Colorado."

"Our minister and his wife, Timothy and Linda Heemstra, from the Gate United Methodist Church, were here from Oklahoma, and my doctor, Dr. James Moffitt of Dodge City, was here."

Spurgeon's nephew, Oscar Penka, arrived from Fowler and another nephew, J. L. Spurgeon, and his wife Karen came from Mullenville. Spurgeon's sister's son, Willis Warner, and his wife, Ann, and their daughters Marcella and Melissa, also joined the celebration, as did Elaine and Jack Warner.

"Alan and Arlene Broadie, friends of my husband Bill and I even before we were married, also came to be with us from Shawnee, Oklahoma," Spurgeon said. "Drs. Jim and Linda Newby were here from Edmond, Oklahoma. They are collectors of my work, and have a 'Mary Spurgeon' room in their house for my pieces they have acquired."

"Other dear friends who came to the unveiling were Richard Degan, who is like a son to us, his wife, Carolyn, and their daughter Kelly of Ashland. Chuck and Carla Couch came from Kingsdown, Kansas, and Perry and Pat Turner from Freedom, Kansas."

And all the way from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, the crew of Zoom Communications - in Dodge City to film a pilot movie about Old West cowboys - arrived at the scene of the unveiling.

Spurgeon, wearing a big smile, was feted at the Santa Fe Depot reception, and afterwards proclaimed it "just perfect."

"I thought the Trail of Fame committee did a really good job," she said. "They were very supportive of the project, and Jim and Carolyn Johnson did so much."

"We have talked about doing Bat Masterson as the next statue, but nothing has been finalized," disclosed the artist who lives in Gate, Okla.

"If they want me to do it, I would try, but right now I'm working on a life-size running colt for a private buyer," she said. "I should be finished by January or February."

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