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UA1B3/5 The Story of the Statue

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*As finally given
over radio on
Nov. 16, 1937*

The Story of the Statue

In 1926 a group of President Cherry's friends conceived the idea of having a bronze statue carved of him while he was living and at the proper time having it erected on the campus to honor him and his many years of unselfish service to Kentucky childhood and education.

Advice was obtained from the late Lorado Taft, internationally known sculptor, and the late Henry Wright, of New York City, landscape architect of Western's campus for more than a quarter of a century.

President Cherry finally gave his consent to go to Chicago where he spent several days at different times in the studio of Lorado Taft. The statue was finished in clay in 1934. It was the last piece produced by this great sculptor.

Mr. Wright's first location of the statue was down on the west side of the hill looking toward the Kentucky Building and Dr. Cherry's old home. After the new classroom building, which bears the name of Henry Hardin Cherry, was assured Mr. Wright changed the location to where the statue now stands. He did this on his last visit to the Hill.

This trio of great men passed off the stage of action within a short time of each other. Henry Wright, the landscape architect of College Heights, who reduced President Cherry's dreams to blue prints, died July 16, 1936. Mr. Taft, who had more pieces of sculpture in the United States at the time of his death than any other living artist, died October 30, 1936, and President Cherry left us August 1, 1937.

The statue is ten feet high and stands on a pink granite pedestal five feet in height. 1657 contributors have made this event possible. The names of all the donors with other records were buried in a copper box beneath the pedestal of the statue, November 11, 1937. If some generation in the far distant future digs into that strong box, they will be able to know something of the spirit of Western as we know it today.

The citizens of this, his native community and state, will not remember very much that is said here today but they cannot forget what he did down in the valley and on this acropolis during his forty-six years of faithful service. Someone has said President Cherry's monument is the nineteen beautiful buildings which crown this Hill, but this statue is an exact reproduction in bronze, carved from life of the man who saw the vision, and in whose mind these buildings were created. The words of Horace when he spoke of the endurance of his poems would be as descriptive of the work of him whom we honor today: "I have reared a monument more enduring than bronze, and loftier than the royal pyramids, one that no wasting rain, no unavailing north wind can destroy, no, not even the unending years nor the flight of time itself. I shall not wholly die."

Those of us who are numbered among his 32,000 students and have seen and loved him did not want to be selfish; we wanted future generations to see him in bronze as we saw him in the flesh. He was spoken of most often as a human dynamo--the spirit of the Hill. That dynamo who electrified every human individual with whom he came in contact to do his best in life, has been stilled, but the spirit of Western lives on.

The unveiling of this statue today will commemorate the closing of an epoch in the history of this college whose destinies were so long directed by this great educator, inspirer of youth, and philosopher. Then while not forgetting the past we shall turn our eyes toward the future, but a future in which his influence will continue to live in the lives of men and women long after this bronze monument, erected to his memory, has crumbled into dust. President Cherry is not with us today encouraging, cheering, inspiring every one near and forgetting himself, but his words carved on the granite pedestal upon which his image stands will echo down through the ages: "No citizen can turn his back upon the school without turning his back upon the flag."