

The Gentle Giant Monument: Forever At Work

By Wendy Oaks

The first thing you'll see as you arrive at the Nevada County Fairgrounds is the giant statue of a Draft Horse – a Gentle Giant – that stands at the edge of the Fairgrounds. She is a figure of massive power. The great body of the Gentle Giant strains perpetually against her burden of three large logs.

The magnificent bronze monument was modeled after a local Belgian Draft Horse named Kate, and it welcomes all who enter the Nevada County Fairgrounds. It represents our pride in our heritage and our pride in the Draft Horse Classic.

Read on for the history and some facts about the Gentle Giant Monument:

- The monument that so powerfully greets visitors to the Fairgrounds is the artistic creation of local sculptor Todd Andrews.
- In 1987, artist Todd Andrews and Cosa Mikiska, who is now deceased, teamed up and presented the idea of the Gentle Giant monument to former CEO, Ed Scofield. The fundraising for the statue began that same year.
- The monument was completed in 1997. It took 10 years from presenting the idea to casting to being put on its current concrete base.
- Artist Andrews did extensive research to create an authentic representation of the early 1900's tack for the monument.
- The public art project symbolizes the spirit of California's pioneers and provides a tribute to the work horse, which played a major role in the development of the gold country and the Sierra Nevada.
- Embodied in the Gentle Giant are the timeless qualities of strength, perseverance, gentleness, and the ability to pull together. Those qualities enabled the pioneers to overcome obstacles that threatened their survival.
- The Gentle Giant monument is the largest bronze monument of its kind in California. The Gentle Giant weighs 10,000 pounds, is more than 18 feet tall, 44 feet long, and eight feet wide.
- The original logs pulled by the Gentle Giant were furnished by saving an ailing Sugar Pine from the Nevada County Fairgrounds. The current logs are from a cedar tree from the Nevada County Fairgrounds.

- The Gentle Giant monument was built through the efforts of community volunteers and funded almost entirely by public funds raised through contributions commemorated on the attached plaques that surround the monument.
- Historical Landmarks, Inc. (a 501 c3 organization) was formed for the sole purpose of raising funds to complete the building of the monument.
- Did you know there are a few gargoyles located around the base of the monument? Take a look while you're out visiting the monument and see if you can find one.

Perseverance and teamwork, qualities innate in the work horse and the pioneers, were crucial to making the Gentle Giant monument a reality. It stands as both a tribute to the Draft Horse and to the community of people who made it happen.