

SAVAGE Pacer



100 years later, Dan Patch is reborn in brick

Submitted by [Nancy Huddleston](#), Editor, Savage Pacer on November 17, 2006 - 2:14pm.

Dan Patch first arrived in Savage in 1903 and now, more than 100 years later, he has been reborn in a brick sculpture on a wall of the new police station next to city hall.

The sculpture, or frieze, depicts Dan Patch setting his world record time of 1:55 at the Minnesota State Fair in 1906 in a grand fashion. The sculpture measures 7 feet tall and 30 feet long and weighs 9,000 pounds.



The details of Dan Patch are even more striking close up.

John Albright of the Special Shapes department of Belden Brick Co. in Canton, Ohio, said this is one of the largest sculptures the company has ever made. It took the sculptor, Sherry Crilow, two weeks to complete. She worked on two large easels – one that depicted Dan Patch and the other that shows three horses chasing the famous pacer.

Crilow, a local art teacher in Canton, uses a variety of special tools that give the brick texture and depth. “She’s very careful about the details,” Albright said. “There’s a lot of intricate carving that goes into something like this.”

The artist worked with a mass of soft brick that is continually sprayed to keep it malleable. It’s slow work and the artist not only has to pay attention to the details, Albright noted, but also the proportion of the entire piece, from end to end.

Crilow did the image of Dan Patch and his driver first and the rest of the horses, the racetrack and the surrounding area second. “The toughest part of the entire piece was Dan Patch himself,” Albright said.

But before Dan could be cast in brick, the brick company worked with local distributor, Corning Donohue Inc., to make sure it was a doable project. “This was one of the largest sculptures produced by Belden and it has a lot of intricate work,” said Bret Nodin of Corning Donohue, “We knew we’d be putting together a landmark piece for the city of Savage and we wanted to do it right.”

To start with, a photo of Dan Patch winning the race was scanned in and rendered into a larger image. In turn, that image was sent to the artist to see if she could make it come to life on brick.

Once the artist gave the project the thumbs up, the project was a go.

The soft brick was set up on the two easels with small pieces that simulate the mortar between each brick. The artist worked with a template of the image in order to create the outlines. Once that was done, she got down to the detail work.

At the end of each day, Crilow sprayed down the entire piece again and then covered it tightly in a blanket of thick plastic to retain the moisture.

Once she was done, the bricks were carefully cut out, numbered according to row and position, and put into the kiln to be fired. “Then we hold our breath,” Albright said.

“We try and capture the image as best we can, but in the end it’s all in the eye of the artist and the beholder,” Albright said.

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