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# THE MUELLER RECORD

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SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER

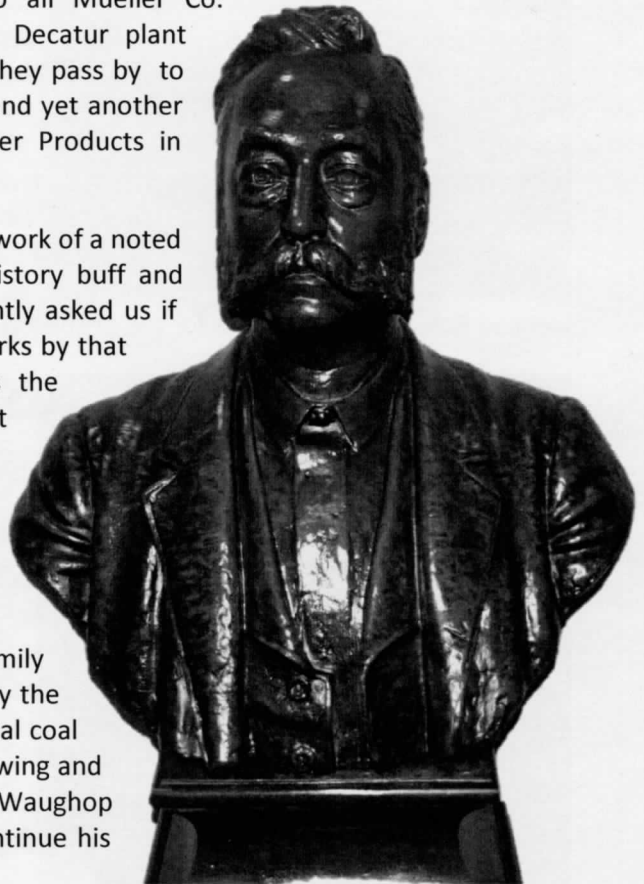
## IT'S REAL ART

The bronze busts of Hieronymus Mueller are familiar to all Mueller Co. employees and retirees. One of the busts sits near the Decatur plant entrance inviting workers to keep the nose well-polished as they pass by to and from work. A copy stands in the lobby of the Museum and yet another graces the lobby of the corporate offices of Mueller Water Products in Atlanta, Georgia.

The bust that we pass by with little notice turns out to be the work of a noted artist and sculptor, Leonard Crunelle. Brent Wielt, local history buff and historian with the Macon County Conservation District, recently asked us if the bust was the work of Crunelle since he knew of other works by that artist in Decatur. That was our first clue and gave us the information to begin searching for an answer. The Internet makes easy work of such tasks and yielded a list of Leonard Crunelle's works on the Smithsonian Institution's database which included a bronze bust of H. Mueller – location unknown. Suddenly our bust became an artwork with serious credentials!

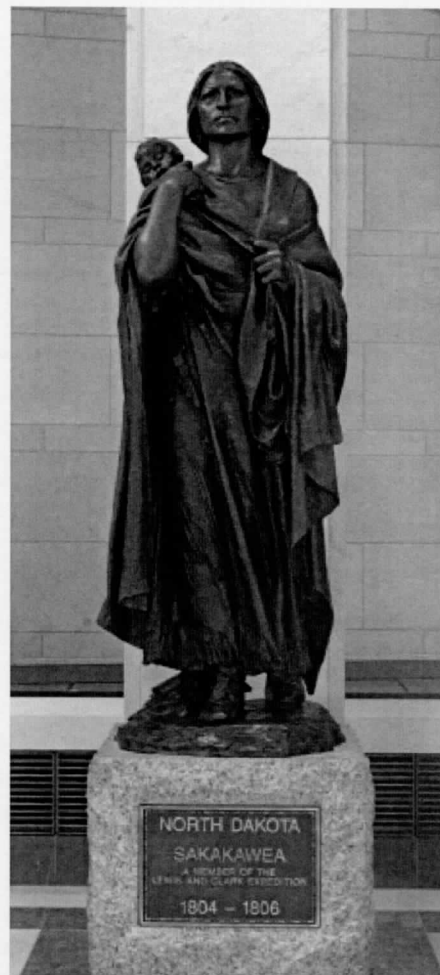
Leonard Crunelle was born in France in 1872 but his family immigrated to America soon after and was living in Decatur by the late 1880's. Young Crunelle joined his father, working in local coal mines while filling his free time developing his passion for drawing and sculpting. His talent was noticed by two local women, Sarah Waughop and Laura Johns, an art teacher, who encouraged him to continue his art studies.

Lorado Taft, a famous Chicago sculptor, was in Decatur during a speaking tour in 1892. Taft was very successful and worked as both an artist and professor while directing a large studio in Chicago. A Decatur woman, Mrs. V. G. Hatch, arranged for Crunelle to privately meet with Taft which resulted in an opportunity for the young man to work as an unskilled laborer on art projects for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Crunelle returned to Decatur and continued with his art until Taft again noticed his work and invited him to Chicago to study at the Art Institute and work in Taft's studio. Several of his pieces won awards at national competitions and as a result commissions began coming his way.

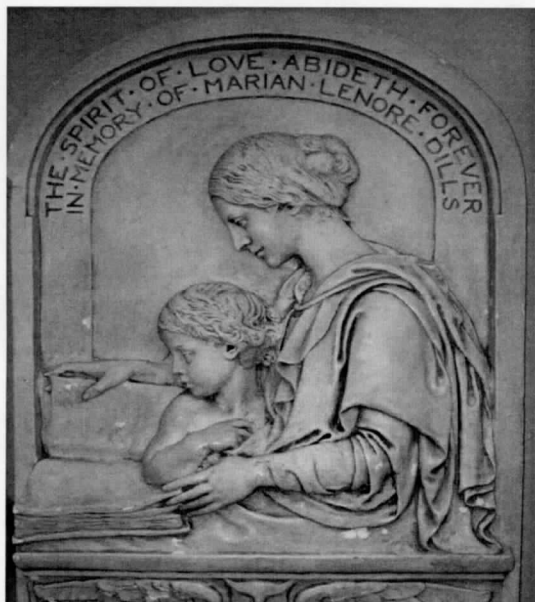


Much of Crunelle's work reflects his roots in Central Illinois – busts of local figures such as Dr. William Barnes, Mary Douglas Shellabarger, Governor Oglesby, E. A. Gastman, and our own Hieronymus Mueller. His Lincoln statues are found in the Illinois Capitol and on a square in Dixon, Illinois. Chicago is home to Crunelle's monuments to Victory Monument (Memorial to WWI Black Soldiers), George Washington, and Gov. Oglesby, as well as fanciful fountain figures and the bronze bas-relief doors of the Museum of Science and Industry. Visitors to our nation's capital can find his statue of Revolutionary War hero General Artemus Ward commanding the center of Ward Circle. Perhaps the most recognized work by Crunelle is his sculpture of Sakakawea (Sakajawea) which stands on the grounds of the North Dakota State Capitol. A new casting of this work was placed in Statuary Hall of the U. S. Capitol Building in 2010.

The first appearance of our bust of Hieronymus is in a photo of the Mueller exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The picture shows a white bust rather than the bronze busts which we now have. It is impossible to know what the materials used in this first but were but it is certainly the same sculpture. After the World's Fair, this bust became a fixture in the company's new offices in New York City. The bronze bust with which we are familiar was cast in 1924 by the Roman Bronze Works in New York City which was the preeminent foundry in the country for casting fine art in bronze. Tiffany Studios, Frederic Remington, and Charles Russell were only a few of the artists who relied on the craftsmanship of the Roman Bronze Works. We have a plaster casting of the bust which was painted with a bronze finish to simulate the final work – presumably a proof piece to gain approval for the final casting. With that piece approved by the Muellers, the work went to Roman Bronze Works for the production of the finished item.



Crunelle's statue of Sakakawea in Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol Building



Sculpted wall plaque honoring a Decatur teacher. This early Crunelle work is located in the Mary French Academy.

The bust of Hieronymus was officially unveiled at the Mueller Co. Annual Picnic in 1924 with his daughter, Leda Mueller Cruikshank doing the honors and A. E. Webber delivering an address on the life and contributions of Mr. Mueller. There is a bit of a mystery concerning the total number of busts that were cast – no reference is made in the 1924 article to multiple pieces. We know that there are four busts with the possibility of other unknown copies. There is a reference in the December, 1931 *Mueller Record* of a visit by Leonard Crunelle to Decatur to discuss matters related to the company's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the coming year. What came of that meeting is unknown but it is possible that additional casting of the original busts may have been made at that time. Whatever happened and whenever it happened, we are very fortunate to have the busts and to know something more of their story – a young Decatur boy came out of the coal mine and made a name for himself on the national stage. It is a story that has parallels to the life of Hieronymus.

*The museum acknowledges the contribution of Brent Wielt of the Macon County Conservation District who provided the background information on the life of Leonard Crunelle used in this article.*

## RETIREE AND VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON – MAY 15

The Hieronymus Mueller Family Foundation will be hosting the Annual Luncheon for Mueller Co. retirees and their spouses on May 15<sup>th</sup> at the Decatur Knights of Columbus Hall. The event serves a dual purpose in honoring the contributions of the company's retired workers as well as thanking those retirees who have given their time as volunteers at the museum. Any retiree who wishes to attend should please call the museum at (217) 423-6161 to add their names (retiree and guest name, if any) to the reservation list. We hope to see a large turnout.

## MUSEUM PART OF HISTORIC HOME TOUR

The Mueller Museum and the Adolph Mueller home at #4 Millikin Place were two of the eight venues included last December's Annual Heritage and Holly Home Tour which is sponsored by and benefits the Near Westside Restoration and Preservation Society (NWRAPS). The theme for the tour was Captains of Industry and Hieronymus Mueller and family were at the head of the list. We decorated the museum and served refreshments to approximately 1000 visitors who came through during the two-day event. It was a highly successful event and gave us an opportunity to be seen by many who barely knew of our existence.



A Mueller Christmas Tree

## LAURA JAHR TO ATTEND CONVENTION IN SEATTLE

Laura Jahr, who is the second-in-command at the museum (she lacks an official title), will be attending the American Alliance of Museums annual convention / conference in Seattle, Washington in May. This is the largest organization of museums in the United States and their conference offers us access to many valuable workshops on new technology, exhibit design, preservation techniques, and presentation strategies. The museum is most fortunate in having the support of the Hieronymus Mueller Family Foundation in allowing us to participate in conferences such as this. The museum was constructed to provide a first class physical facility for the exhibition and preservation of our collection and ensuring the continuing education of the staff is critical to continued proper care and display of the history that we care about.

## KIM LILLOPOP JOINS FOUNDATION BOARD

The retirement of Bob Abbott, Director of Marketing and Communications for Mueller Co., means that he will no longer serve as the company representative on the Hieronymus Mueller Family Foundation Board of Directors. His position on the Board has been filled by Kim Lillpop who is the Customer Service Manager for Mueller Co. and works in the Decatur offices. The dedication and contribution of Bob Abbott to the museum over the past years is deeply appreciated – he truly loves the company and its history. While wishing Bob all the best, we certainly look forward to the enthusiasm and energy that Kim will bring to the organization and know that she will serve us well.