

Story of “The Rock”
City Honors School at Fosdick-Masten Park

CHS Centaurs,

Each fall, classes at our school spend ‘Cardinal Craze Week’ fiercely competing to win ‘The Rock.’ However, do you know why The Rock is just so special and how this tradition began? Take a moment to read the mystical, mysterious and remarkable tale below. Whether you are reading it for the first time or a long-time Centaur, it will become clear that your efforts to claim The Rock go well beyond merely defeating another grade level. The competition to become ‘Guardians of The Rock’ is tightly intertwined with the very special spirit and heritage of your school.

With great admiration and optimism,



William A. Kresse, Ph.D.
Principal

Origins

The story of “The Rock”, more formally “The Rock of Mount Pelion”, begins with Dr. Amelia Trant in 1912. Dr. Trant was a member of the faculty of Masten Park High School (now City Honors School) from its founding in 1897 until she retired in 1925. Dr. Trant was a remarkable individual. Not only was she an English and Psychology teacher, she was a medical doctor. She was beloved by the students of the school for her calm mentoring and the way in which she gently but persistently challenged each of them to grow and arrive at their full potential. When a few of the crankier Masten teachers complained that some of the students entering their nationally prestigious public school did not have the skills or motivation to succeed, she rejected these complaints and famously commented, “Well why am I here if all the children come to us as perfect packages?” There is a moving tribute to Dr. Trant cast in bronze located outside room 118. This marker was placed there by the students of the school.

After Masten Park High School burned to the ground in the great fire of 1912, Dr. Trant decided she needed to take a vacation to get her mind off the tragedy. Dr. Trant was a life-long learner of anything and everything so her vacation was not sitting on a beach. She travelled to Italy and Greece to study the ancient empires and mythologies of those lands. While travelling through Greece she was encouraged on one her stops to visit Mt. Pelion, the mythical home to Chiron the Centaur: teacher to the great heroes of Greek myth. Although remote, rugged and rural, Dr. Trant made the trip up Mt. Pelion. While there, locals shared with her the location of a rock formation said to have special powers. Dr. Trant not only visited this out cropping, she spent several days camping there. During this time, she found a unique sense of physical and spiritual renewal. This renewal may have been one of the reasons that by the time of her retirement, Dr. Trant had managed to teach for fifty years, a full 20 years beyond the average teacher these days!

Arrival on the Hilltop

One of the things Dr. Trant did before she left Greece was to have one of the rocks from that special formation at Mt. Pelion shipped back to Buffalo at great expense. Dr. Trant presented the rock to a confused principal, Pop Fosdick, upon her return. She assured him that if the “Rock of Mt. Pelion” remained a part of Masten Park High School, the school would be protected and they would never again face a fire or tragedy as they had in 1912. Pop Fosdick did this and indeed good fortune followed for the school and school community. Not only was the school free from future fires, it seemed to have an extraordinary effect on all who came in contact with it. Examples include teachers claiming that after touching the rock they were more patient with their students and knowledgeable about their subject matter. Students noticed after touching the rock, their grades improved, discipline referrals diminished, the sports teams were victorious and their acne cleared. The Rock of Mt. Pelion, or simply “The Rock” as it became known, was held with such reverence that each year a different grade level was assigned as its guardians.

Vanished

The Rock of Mt. Pelion was a fixture at the school until 1977 when it was brought out at a school disco dance for students to view and celebrate. Somehow, amidst the glow of twirling lights from the mirror ball and multicolor dance floor illuminated from below, it disappeared never to be seen again. In a strange coincidence, a few months later, the school lost its playing field out front and had a street run through the campus. A few years later, the school suffered the misfortune of being closed and then abandoned. The loss of The Rock clearly led to tough times. The City Honors program took over the abandoned building in the early 1980’s. Although the founders of City Honors did not have the Rock of Mt. Pelion, they knew of it and how it had kept the school safe and helped its students. In tribute to the legend of The Rock, they selected Chiron the Centaur as their mascot. As the years passed, only a few knew of the legend of The Rock.

Discovery

On August 28, 2014, I was in our school’s massive attic with some CHS student leaders trying to locate our trusty popcorn machine for school activities that year. The summer heat made it boiling hot in the dark attic and frustration grew as the popcorn machine was not to be found. Our group worked their way into a remote back section of the attic in hopes of finding the elusive corn popper. Eventually, we made our way into a narrow passage between two walls when the usually surefooted senior, Ben Reading, took a tumble to the ground. We picked him up, dusted him off the best we could in the dark and sarcastically poked at him for his clumsiness, but he insisted he had fallen over something. In searching with our hands, we found an opening along the floor and a small object protruding from that opening. With great effort, we were able to extract the full object and drag it to one of the only windows in the attic. There, in the dim light, we brushed an inch of dust and soot off the object and could just make out an inscription that confirmed what had been found was what had been lost for decades. On the object, it said “The Rock of Mt. Pelion” with the initials A.T. for Amelia Trant and the year 1912. All present sat quietly in amazement while other wept with joy for the lost treasure that had been found.

Strange Happenings

Since that August day in 2014, the Rock of Mt. Pelion has been safeguarded in a very special fashion. It spent time in the school vault and then was transported by school security officers to the labs of Mr. Mueckl and Dr. Minervino where our CHS geologists worked late evenings to analyze its composition.

The very best of their efforts have yielded no match with the make-up of any other rock known to this earth. Since The Rock has come back into the school's possession, I can attest to some strange things happening. I have been able to climb the massive staircases of our building without being winded or the pain to the knees I might usually experience. For the first time in my life, I have been able to complete the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle in a day's time. I have beaten Mr. Krause repeatedly during weekly meetings of the Faculty Arm Wrestling Club. And, although disputed by many students and Mrs. Kresse, I feel that some of the hair on my head has been growing back.

Guardians

In the fall of 2014, for this first time in decades, the school resumed the tradition of assigning a grade level of students to be the guardian of the Rock of Mt. Pelion for the year. This is not a task to be taken lightly as the rock holds great symbolic and literal powers. Therefore administration, faculty and students determined to use the week of Cardinal Craze to select the class most worthy of serving as guardian through a series of challenges and tests. The class that accumulates the most points through these challenges is named "The Guardians of The Rock" for the upcoming year at a ceremony that culminates the week. The Rock has become a sort of Stanley Cup at CHS if you will. Each class is asked to use all their skills of ingenuity, team work and good sportsmanship to determine if they have what it takes to be the guardian of this one-of-a-kind Hilltop treasure. Since the tradition was reinstated, all agree that the quest itself, whether their class wins The Rock or not, brings us closer together and highlights all that we have to offer each other and our beloved school.