

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

Over the past few weeks you have heard us tell you that our new spirit week known as Cardinal Craze “will rock.” Well, we meant that literally. The grand prize for the grade level accumulating the most points during Cardinal Craze week will win a rock. Yes, a rock. But before you chuckle or dismiss the value of this prize, I ask that you suspend judgment, while I tell you a little about this rock.

The story of “the rock” begins with Dr. Amelia Trant in 1912. Dr. Trant was a member of the faculty of Masten Park High 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?” If there is anyone who doubts the existence of the incredible Dr. Trant, I ask you to visit the display case outside the IB office and look closely, where you will find a moving tribute to Dr. Trant cast in bronze that 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 50years, a full 20 years beyond the average teacher these days! One of the things she did before she left Greece was to have one of the rocks shipped back to Buffalo at great expense.

Dr. Trant presented the rock to the principal Pop Fosdick upon her return and 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.

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. I myself, heard the story from a 101 year old Masten Park graduate just before her death. She shared with me the tale I am telling you now, and even at 101, she still held out hope that the rock would one day be found.

On August 28 of this year, I was in our school's massive attic with some of our student leaders trying to locate our trusty popcorn machine for school activities this year. The summer heat made it boiling hot in the dark attic and our frustration grew as the popcorn machine was not to be found. We worked our way into a back section of the attic I was less familiar with 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. While we

found no obstacle on the floor, we did find an opening along the floor and a small object protruding from that opening. With great effort by three of us, 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 this object and could just make out an inscription that confirmed what we had 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. While I will not name names, I can tell you that some of us sat quietly in amazement while other wept with joy for the lost treasure we had found.

Since this August day, the Rock of Mt. Pelion has been safely stored in our grand vault in the main office. Security officers Molenda and Gunsaley moved it for a few evenings to the labs of Mr. Mueckl and Mr. Minervino where these geologists worked late evenings to analyze its composition. I can tell you that 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 our possession and I have had several opportunities to touch it, I personally have noticed some strange things happening. I seem to be able to climb the massive staircases of our building without being winded or the pain to my 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 four times in a row during weekly meetings of the faculty arm wrestling club. And, I can’t prove it, but I feel like some of the hair on my head has been growing back.

This fall, for this first time in decades, we will need 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 we will use the week of Cardinal Craze to determine 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 will be named “the guardians of the rock” for the upcoming year. Although we will continue to display the rock for all to see as much as possible, as the rock belongs to all of us, the guardians will have the privilege of using the rock and sharing the rock throughout the year at special occasions such as class picnics, ceremonies, parties etc. Think of the Rock as a sort of Stanley Cup if you will.

The rock will be viewed by public eyes for the first time since that fateful evening in 1977 when it is unveiled on Tuesday, October 14. For security purposes, we are having a special display case constructed and additional cameras installed around the building. In the meantime, I encourage you begin the process of considering how you and your classmates might win the rock during Cardinal Craze week. How will you decorate the hallways you are assigned? How much food will you bring in to help those in need at the Macedonia Food Pantry? How many of you will dress for the theme days ? How many will wear class color t-shirts to CHS sporting events and on the Friday of the Cardinal Craze assembly? All of these things will earn your class points. I encourage you to look deep within yourself and your classmates to determine if you will have what it takes to be the guardian of “THE ROCK”!