



PIONEER COURAGE

INTRODUCTION

“What I like about the story of the great wagon train migration across America is the daring, the tenacity, and the innovativeness of the pioneer spirit that opened the West,” said Bruce R. Lauritzen, chairman of First National Bank. “My great, great grandfather, Tom Davis, was one of these young pioneers who helped found Omaha in 1854. Three years later, in 1857, four brothers in their 20s started

The Kountze Brothers Bank, trading primarily in gold dust and buffalo hides. In 1863, they joined with Edward Creighton and reorganized as First National Bank of Omaha – the oldest bank from Omaha west.”

Pioneer Courage conveys the spirit and heritage of the region around the time First National Bank was founded, while contributing to the cultural and aesthetic landscape of today’s downtown Omaha business district. Individual sculptures by artists Blair Buswell and Edward Fraughton depict pioneer families with their covered wagons as they proceed along a dry creek bed surrounded by native Nebraska plantings and more than 2,500 tons of limestone blocks. Each bronze sculpture is 1.25 times life size and weighs several hundred pounds to as much as 6 tons for the largest wagon.

“The main objective of *Pioneer Courage* is to tell the story of the hundreds of thousands of pioneers who migrated to the West, many of whom stood on this very ground. I can’t think of a better way to experience that journey than to fall in line and walk a few steps with a larger-than-life wagon train,” said Buswell, who is recognized as one of the finest figurative sculptors in the U.S.

“The opening and settling of the American West is a record of heroism and human sacrifice that speaks to the heart of the world,” noted Fraughton who is a descendant of pioneer ancestors. “Unequaled anywhere as to its complexity and scale, *Pioneer Courage* memorializes the countless thousands who forged their way westward to define the great American dream.”

FEATURES OF THE PARK

Landscape – The landscape of the park generally follows the procession of the pioneer families as they traverse the dry riverbed. Several grasses are used to represent both the meadow grasses of the river edge as well as the prairie grasses of the plains. Other plants chosen to represent the diversity in Nebraska’s riparian forests include: cottonwood, river birch, white ash, willows, American plum, upland species of oaks and several species of large pines. The edges of the park begin to blend into the urban landscape by using commercial plantings of limber pine, crabapples, redbuds and groundcovers.

Sculpture – Leading the westward procession are 4 wagons. The lead wagon, pulled by oxen, has just been freed from mud and, with some pushing and guidance from drivers continues on. The following wagon is drawn by a team of mules driven by the father; two children ride while the mother and daughter walk alongside. Four Belgian draft horses pull the next conveyance, which is accompanied by three women, a father, several children, and a milk cow. Farther back the procession is completed with another ox-drawn wagon and its family. The mounted wagon master falls behind, brandishing his hat to guide the rest of the train.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location – Bounded on 14th and 15th Streets and Capitol Avenue.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Blair Buswell, a figurative sculptor and **Edward Fraughton**, a Western sculptor, are recognized as two of the leading sculptors in the world. Although both artists are from Utah, this is the first time they have worked together. Fraughton of South Jordan, Utah, holds five gold medals from the National Academy of Western Art. Buswell has received numerous awards and honors for his work, which has appeared at the National Academy of Western Art and the Prix de West shows at the Cowboy Hall of Fame. Since 1983, Buswell has completed nearly 40 busts of new inductees for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Also closely involved with the project is Steven C. Boody, president of Boody Fine Arts, Inc., of St. Louis; JVR & Associates, an architectural landscaping firm in Hancock, New Hampshire.