The State of The Stark Center

We decided to use the editorial pages and “The Iron Grapevine” letters section of Iron Game History to provide subscribers with a construction update and a progress report related to The H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports at The University of Texas, since IGH is published under auspices of The Stark Center. In the next issue, we’ll return to our regular use of an editorial as well as to our letters to the editor in “Grapevine.” As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments. Please note our new mailing address: Iron Game History, The H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, 403 23rd Street, NEZ 5.700, Mailcode: D3600, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712. Or, you can email us at the addresses on page two.

Final Phase of Stark Center Construction Now Underway

In April of 2009, the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutcher Stark Foundation of Orange, Texas, formally awarded an additional $2 million to The H.J. Lutcher Stark Center to assist with the Center’s burgeoning construction budget. This grant was in addition to the $3.5 million given to The Stark Center by the Stark Foundation in 2006, a gift which allowed Phase One of The Center’s two-phased construction plan to begin. However, as the total costs of the construction of Phase One exceeded the Stark Foundation’s initial 3.5 million dollar gift, additional funding was needed to offset those expenditures and to allow the construction to begin on the museum and gallery areas of The Stark Center. In appreciation of this second gift, The Center’s just-completed conference room has been named in honor of W.H.

A replica of the Farnese Hercules was recently installed on a rotating dais in the Stark Center lobby. To assemble and finish the statue, we brought to Texas Jan Swartenbroekx (pictured) and Hughes Dubuisson of the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels. They made the statue in the museum’s plaster cast workshop and it was shipped to Texas in four pieces. For scale, Jan is approximately 5’8” tall and weighs about 175 pounds. The statue is 10’6” tall and weighs approximately 2000 pounds.
Stark, Lutcher Stark’s father, who expanded the family holdings of timberland to a remarkable—even for Texas—600,000 acres. So extensive was their property in Louisiana and East Texas that it was said a person could drive from Orange, Texas, across the Sabine River from Louisiana, to New Orleans without losing sight of Stark land. W.H. was also a former member of the U.T. Board of Regents.

In any case, because it was not possible for us to begin Phase Two of our building program before completing Phase One, it will probably be early in 2010 before we are able to officially open the Sports Gallery and the Joe and Betty Weider Museum of Physical Culture. However, construction of the 11 galleries in Phase Two is now underway, and the museum design and final finishes have all been chosen. As the construction moves forward, watch our website at www.starkcenter.org for news on the progress of the museum/gallery project. We will also use the website—and a future issue of IGH—to announce the date of the formal opening we plan to hold when the entire facility is finished.

The Library is Open

On November 4, 2008, our contractors began work on Phase One of the Stark Center construction project. Phase One began after we were given access to the 4.5 million dollar concrete and metal shell on the
The reading room of the Stark Center library is filled with comfortable chairs and two long, antique walnut tables at which researchers can work. The statues in this room are part of the Battle Cast Collection and are on loan from the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas. The statues date from the late 1890s and first two decades of the 20th century and were purchased by Dr. William Battle of UT’s Classics Department. A fourth statue, of the huntress Artemis, will soon reside on the dark wall at the far end of the reading room. The three figures currently on display include the “Discobolus,” at the far end of the room, the larger-than-life reclining Herakles figure in the center, and the “Idolino,” a physique study of a young male athlete. Other athletic statues from the Battle Cast Collection will be used in the art gallery of the Stark Center. To learn more about the statues, go to the Director’s Blog at: www.starkcenter.org.

second level of the north end of the university’s football stadium. Phase One involved building nine staff offices, our 6500 square-foot archival storage area and processing rooms, our lobby and information center, the W.H. Stark Conference Room, the public reading room, a small photography gallery, the rare books research room, the art gallery, the staff kitchen and break room, and several other storage areas. Phase Two will involve the construction and installation of exhibits in the Joe and Betty Weider Museum of Physical Culture, and in the Sports Gallery.

When construction began last fall, the contractors told us that barring problems they would be finished in late May and that we could move into the space in early June. Throughout the spring the construction project moved along almost exactly on schedule, and on June 10th and 11th, after packing and sorting the Todd-McLean Collection for several months prior to the move, we watched happily as 30 men, using five trucks, moved our collection across campus over a two day period and into its new home.

Then, trouble came calling. In the week after the big move—as we moved our furniture into our offices and began settling in and using our kitchen—we noticed that there was a problem with the recently-stained concrete floors. Whenever water dropped on the floor, white spots developed in the floor finish, and they did not wipe away. So, to our great disappointment, we had to move back out of the offices and into the unfinished part of our space, remove all the furniture that had been put in place, and wait while the contractors searched for a solution to this unexpected problem. We hoped to have a quick fix, but our hope was in vain. For reasons too complicated and sorrowful to explain, it took eight attempts and more than two months before the floor was more or less acceptable and we were able to move back into our offices and begin fully using our new facility. So, as we go to press with this issue of Iron Game History, the first from our new facility, we’ve

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