



Bruce Bennett

Nature lover, Stone carver, Deep thinker, Dreamer

Bruce could look at a hunk of stone and see what was inside of it--often a fish, sometimes a snake, a caterpillar, a torso, a saint. While much of Bruce's work was architectural, he was responsible for some of Knoxville's notable public art.

For many years Bruce's office and workshop were at the site of the old Candora Marble Company. He moved into the building when it had been vandalized and the stone was covered with paint and filth. He slowly and lovingly restored it and rescued it so it could become the community treasure it currently is.

Bruce collaborated with Jack Neeley on the Story Stones at Volunteer Landing. Secret history stones and pavers line the boardwalk with quotations, stories, and anecdotes. The stories celebrate facets of Knoxville's history. Text is etched into Tennessee marble and limestone of various shapes. The stones tell stories in short, concise formats, and lead the reader to pavers located along the path which are engraved with names and titles linked to Knoxville. The stories present history, literature, and natural features. For many years I had a paving stone under the clothesline that said BLOODYFELLOW. It was a bit disconcerting, but I learned it was the historic name of a tributary to the Tennessee River. I was never sure if it was rejected from the 'story' or if it was a sample.

In 2003 Bruce conceived the Tennessee One Ton Show. He gave 12 artists, who primarily worked in other media, one ton of Tennessee marble, workshop space, tools and guidance to create sculptures. The creations were displayed at Sequoyah Hills Park before taking permanent residence at the University of Tennessee Gardens on Neyland Drive. For the show, Bruce did "Darts," stone spears reminiscent of the Huichol urus, ceremonial arrows thrown into the air or taken to the coast as an offering to Haramara for good health, rain, and harvests.

Theresa Pepin convinced Bruce to make a table sized for children to use at the UT Gardens. Bruce decided to sneak in an educational facet. He researched the seven sacred trees of the Cherokee: the beech, birch, hickory, locust, maple, oak, and sourwood. He carved for each a leaf and the Cherokee name, along with insects and flowers, in relief so children can make etchings. The table will soon be the centerpiece of a new garden area to be called the "Birch Grove Garden," supported by a generous donor to the Gardens and designed by Knoxville landscape designer Jack McCoy. Among Bruce's other contributions to the Gardens is the Donor Wall at the Plaza entrance.

brucebennettmarble.com

