

## An iron legend in time



One man's sculpture is... well, it isn't always appreciated. At first, anyway.

By Helen K. Kelley  
Editor

This is my personal Metal Moment. From the instant I first laid eyes on the Iron Horse as a college student, I was fascinated by it. Who made it? How old was it? And, most important, how on earth did it come to stand in the middle of a corn field on a rural Georgia highway?

There were all sorts of stories and myths that circulated about the Iron Horse. Many a traveler on Highway 15 was startled by the strange equine-like figure that appeared to rise up out of a field in the early morning mist.

The true story of the Iron Horse is this. In the mid-1950s, Abott Pattison was a visiting art professor from Chicago at the University of Georgia.

While there, one of Pattison's goals was to create special sculpture and public symbols for the university campus. One of these — which, at the time, was done in the “new” art form of metal sculpture — was a two-ton horse, forged from hundreds of pieces of iron welded together. The horse was installed in front of one of the school's dormitories.

Now, many of the dorm's residents and other students did not care for the Iron Horse, and they came up with their own creative plan to make their feelings clear. They painted their opinions on the horse, shoved some hay into its mouth, and threw manure on the ground behind it. Finally, they placed a mattress under the poor horse and set it on fire.

Naturally, Pattison was highly

offended by the students' discourteous actions and defensive of his creation. But University officials, fearing further incidents, removed the Iron Horse and sent it home with an employee who had property in a neighboring county. A few years later, retired horticulture professor L.C. Curtis gave the sculpture a permanent home on his farm in Greene County on Highway 15.

Although the Iron Horse was put out to pasture 50 ago, it will never lose its allure for people like me. We'll continue to pull over on the side of the highway and traipse out into the middle of a corn field to gaze and reflect upon a really cool work of art that was once so maligned. ❁

*(Thanks to my Mom, Frances King, for crunching across that field to help make the photos.)*

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