

Narrative on research about Boxer's arrival at Pacific, June 26, 1996. Prepared by Rebecca Weaver, Summer Intern

Rick and I were asked by Kim Dodson of the University Relations Office to pin down an exact arrival date for Boxer. She wanted to see if there was enough evidence to support the claim that Boxer arrived in 1896 as opposed to 1898. If he had arrived in '96, then a celebration for the centennial of the arrival could happen at the upcoming Alumni Weekend.

I started with the articles and clippings in the existing Boxer file, then moved to old handbooks and yearbooks. Another important part of the story eluded us: the question of who actually gave Boxer to Pacific. A majority of the sources pointed to Joseph Elkanah as the donor, but the dates were almost split. A good part of the sources said that his mother, Mary Richardson Walker, gave the statue to Pacific. We discovered that she died in 1897, so if she gave Boxer to Pacific, she must have done so in 1896. We tried to locate a diary from that year by contacting the Washington State University archives. They didn't have a diary for that year and suggested that we contact the Oregon Historical Society. We tried to contact them, but have not yet received a response. Megan Havens (a researcher) mentioned that Mary Walker may not have had a diary for 1896, because her mental capabilities started to fail her during the last five years of her life. There are a few sources that say that J.E.'s brother Samuel gave the statue to us. Because there are many more that implicate Joseph E. as the donor, we were quick to discount the idea that Sam became the donor. Yet, he was living with their mother for a time and may have presented Boxer to Pacific in her name. Mary may have presented Boxer to Pacific in Joseph Elkanah's name. The fact that JE Walker was in Forest Grove on leave from his mission in China between the years of 1896 and 1898 does not help us!

There were many sources that stated that Boxer was "presented" to the University by either Joseph Elkanah or his mother. We thought that if we could find an event with Boxer in it, we could nail down both the donor and date of Boxer. The problem is that we could not find a ceremony at which anything resembling Boxer was presented to the University. We looked through old programs of commencement, Founder's Day, music concerts, and the semi-centennial. We even searched through scrapbooks of Henry Liberty Bates. J.E. was always present and active in these events, but there is nothing that indicates he or his mother gave Boxer at such an event. Nor is there any record of a special event to celebrate solely the gift of Boxer. The most frustrating part of the "presentation" angle is

that when a source states that Boxer was presented, it does not indicate any specific ceremony or any celebration.

Finally, the sources themselves became a distinct problem. In the early sources, the date of Boxer's arrival was 1898. This seemed to be the case until the 1920's, when the sources seemed to be afflicted with collective amnesia. Most of those sources simply said that either Boxer came to Pacific "some years ago" or "in the 1890's." However, many of them stated that J.E. Walker was the donor. At about 1933-34, a date surfaced, but it was 1896. From then on, we're guessing that later writers and researchers used sources from the 1930's for a date and thus was spread that belief that Boxer arrived in '96, even though a definite donor was not mentioned with each date. This may explain the majority of sources that give '96 as the donation year. A majority of the donors that were mentioned had the name Joseph Elkanah Walker.

In my search, I found some interesting facts that cleared up some of the more minor mysteries surrounding Boxer. In discussing Boxer's travels, many of the sources state that Boxer had been in one of the World Wars. Only a very small minority state that he had been in WW2, so we are satisfied to believe that Boxer flew in WW1. Secondly, there was wide spread disagreement on the price that J.E. Walker originally paid for Boxer. In a letter he had written to H.L. Bates, J.E. states that he bought the statue for five dollars. Even in the letter, there is no mention of the date of donation. Thirdly, I found that Boxer had once been held by Richard Nixon, and had indirectly forced William Jennings Bryan (spelled "Bryant" in at least two sources) to postpone a speech when Boxer appeared on stage at the speaker's request and the classes fought over the statue.

A few of the sources mention a remark made by a visiting Amherst professor concerning Boxer. The story (as garnered through examination of the sources) states that the professor, speaking in Marsh Hall's Brighton Chapel in 1900, saw Boxer on his altar. The professor remarked then about a tradition surrounding a similar foreign idol at Amherst: the classes and different groups on campus would steal the idol and fight over it. A few days after the speech, William Faulkner, class of 1902, stole Boxer, and the sources that mention the Amherst prof. hold him indirectly responsible for starting the tradition of the Boxer toss.

I created a graph (please see file) to chart the wide distribution among the sources concerning the date and donor. The tallest, at a total of 22, was the number of sources that pointed to J.E. Walker as the donor. The second tallest, at a total of 19, was the number of sources that pointed to 1896 as the donation year. In at a far third (with a total of 10) were the

sources that stated that Boxer was donated to Pacific in 1896 by J.E. Walker. None of the other five categories went over five on the graph. The other five categories were: Other donors besides Mary or JE in 1896 (5 sources), Mary as donor total (5), Mary as the 1896 donor (4), Others than Mary or JE in 1898 (3), and other years with unspecified donors (3).

If Rick were asked to pin down a date and donor, he would say that Boxer was given to the University in 1898 by JE Walker. He bases his conclusion on the fact that most of the sources before the 20's use this year as the gift date, and since Mary Walker died in 1897, the donor would have had to be JE Walker.

If I were asked to pin down a date and donor, I would suggest that Mary Walker presented Boxer to Pacific (perhaps in JE's name or honor) in 1896. I base my conclusion on the number of sources that use 1896 and Mary.

The whereabouts of the original Boxer statue are still unknown, but we have the name of Denis (Or Moses) Williams, the person that was last known to have it. Rick has used various computer and Internet programs to locate him, using his birthday and social security number.