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HOT SPRINGS NEWS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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World's Third Bronze Statue of Babe Ruth Unveiled At Majestic Park Complex in Hot Springs

(Accompanying this release is a companion article in which sculptor Chad Fisher's father, Fran Fisher, explains the creative process that resulted in the statue, as well as a link to high-quality video footage of the pouring of the molten bronze used to make the statue.)

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK, Arkansas — On the 128th anniversary of his birth, the world's third bronze statue of baseball immortal Babe Ruth was unveiled and dedicated Monday (February 6, 2023) at the main entrance to Hot Springs' Majestic Park baseball complex, where Ruth played and trained in the early years of the 20th Century.

The eight-foot bronze statue created by Pennsylvania sculptor Chad Fisher stands at the entrance to the Majestic Park baseball complex on the site where Ruth, Honus Wagner, Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron and dozens of other Baseball Hall of Fame members trained and played in the 20th Century when Hot Springs was recognized as The Birthplace of Major League Baseball Spring Training.

The statue shows Ruth in his New York Yankees uniform, in mid-swing, bat in hand, watching another home run ball sail toward the outfield fences.

There are only two other bronze statues of Babe Ruth in the world, one in Japan and one at Camden Yards in Baltimore. (In Waco, Texas, there is a sculpture of Ruth and fellow New York Yankee immortal Lou Gehrig sitting on a bench, but that work is not a solo depiction of Ruth alone.)

Tim Reid of Boca Raton, Fla., is a nationally recognized baseball historian who helped document Hot Springs' role as the spring training birthplace. Reid served as part of the Hot Springs Baseball Trail Research Team, with Bill Jenkinson, the late Mike Dugan, Don Duren and Mark Blaeuer for the filming of the award-winning documentary film, "The First Boys of Spring," which documents the early days of spring training in Hot Springs. The film is narrated by Academy Award-winning former Hot Springs resident actor Billy Bob Thornton.

Speaking at Monday's unveiling of the Ruth statue, Reid said, "What a glorious day for baseball history."

He said, "It is such an honor and joy to be here, right here where Babe Ruth himself was 100 years ago this month, on his seventh visit to the Springs — in the year he led the Yankees to their first World Championship, which was also the inaugural year of Yankee Stadium, The House That Ruth Built.

"Babe was so enormously popular in 1923 — the most famous man in America — that Damon Runyon himself also came to town that year, reporting on everything from what Babe had for breakfast — ham and eggs at the Majestic Hotel — to how he dressed when he took the baths. Babe was 'Hercules in Pinstripes,' 'The Colossus of Clout,' America's superhero, both superhuman and a supremely human man and humanitarian. There will never be another man like him.

"The City and Citizens of Hot Springs are heroes themselves, and have made history in their own right by building this Majestic Park and commemorating this majestic baseball immortal."

Sculptor Chad Fisher and his father, Fran, said they needed to return to Pennsylvania Sunday after supervising the installation and final preparation of the statue on its base at Majestic Park.

Before he departed Chad Fisher told Visit Hot Springs and Friend of Majestic Park representatives:

"Thank you Mary Zunick, Steve Arrison and Friends of Majestic Park for this incredible honor and privilege. We are excited beyond words to participate in the continuous sharing and remembrance of the Great Babe Ruth. [Arrison is the CEO of Visit Hot Springs and Zunick is VHS's cultural affairs manager.]

"Fisher Sculpture believes in creating monuments to preserve the memory of the most exceptional individuals. The legendary stories of Babe Ruth are many and vast. We are personally attracted to his beautiful documented acts of kindness regarding his authentic caring for the well being of children, especially orphans. George Herman Ruth Jr. is symbol of hope, growth, and the will to dream.

"Thank you again, and special thanks to Susan Dugan and family. May God bless you all, Mike Dugan will always be remembered."

The idea for forming The Friends of Majestic Park was that of Mike Dugan, the late Hot Springs resident who was one of the country's leading baseball historians and the person who led the effort to establish Hot Springs as The Birthplace of Major League Baseball Springs Training. Dugan passed away in early 2021. His wife, Susan, was an honored guest at today's (Monday's) unveiling and dedication.

Ruth's grandson, Tom Stevens, of Las Vegas, was among those on hand to witness the unveiling of the statue.

"The Ruth family was thrilled to be invited back to Hot Springs for the unveiling of Chad Fisher's latest masterpiece," Stevens said.

The Ruth family had been in Hot Springs on March 17, 2018, to help mark the 100th anniversary of The Babe's legendary 573-foot home run, which Ruth smashed out of Hot Springs' Whittington Park baseball field, across Whittington Avenue and into a pond at the Arkansas Alligator Farm. The spot where Ruth stood that day is memorialized with a plaque as part of the Historic Hot Springs

Baseball Trail, a self-guided tour that marks locations throughout the city where legends of the game took part of spring training.

Also on hand for the unveiling were the donors whose gifts made creation of the statue possible: Dr. Robert Muldoon, M.D., the Hamby Family in honor of the late Daniel B. Hamby Jr., and businessman and restaurateur Lee Beasley. No public funds were used to fund the statue.

"These three donors have enabled us to create an artwork that will stand as an object of pride for our city and also as a guiding light for the kids of Hot Springs who will benefit for years to come from the healthy recreational opportunity Majestic Park will provide for them and future generations," said Minnie Lenox, a member of the board of directors of The Friends of Majestic Park, the private nonprofit organization that led the drive to fund the Babe Ruth statue as well as provide support for the complex. "All Hot Springs residents are grateful to them for their generosity and for their affection for their hometown as shown by their support of this project."

Visit Hot Springs CEO Arrison said the statue is certain to become a tourism attraction in its own right.

"Baseball fans from everywhere will come to see this monument to the most famous man who ever played the game," Arrison said. "It will outlast all of us and stand tall in front of Majestic Park for future generations to remind them of the history of the site and our community."

For more information contact Steve Arrison at 501-321-2027.

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