

Morris The Horse

Morris the Horse, a well loved landmark standing on the corner of Trade and Pacolet Streets, has proudly represented Tryon, NC, since 1928. He is both a symbol of the community's love of horses and a replica of an era gone by when wooden toy horses just like him were made in Tryon and shipped to destinations all over the country.

In the early 1900s, Eleanor Park Vance and Charlotte Louise Yale moved to the Asheville area to help economically deprived Appalachian youth learn craft skills. With the help of George and Edith Vanderbilt, they formed Biltmore Estate Industries to teach the skills needed. This venture grew and prospered and became Biltmore Industries.

In 1915, after the death of George Vanderbilt, the two ladies moved to Tryon and set out to teach the local youth how to make wooden toys. This became Tryon Toy Makers, one of the original members of the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild.

Under the direction of Eleanor Vance, the first Tryon Horse was built of wood by Meredith Lankford and Odell Peeler, two boys employed at Tryon Toy Makers, to advertise the first horse show held at Harmon Field in 1928 and sponsored by Tryon Riding and Hunt Club. For this reason, the boys called the horse Eleanor. Pulled by a car through town, the horse would lift its tail and head when the reins were pulled.

After the parade, it was disassembled and then each year it was rebuilt for the parade. The original horse was destroyed by fire in 1939. Since then, four versions (all smaller) have been made, including the present one, which is constructed out of fiberglass. In the 1980s it was decided that the horse needed a moniker, and Morris the Horse was spontaneously picked.

He has appeared on Christmas ornaments, street signs, T-shirts and more. When you visit, be sure to go by and say hello. [<http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20131010/ARTICLES/>]

