

Editor's Note

By now you have probably spotted the most recent incantation of our Law School symbol, the Gargoyle. Yes, now you too can own a Gargoyle tie! Each tie has a field of embroidered Gargoyles marching across, row after row. But why, many of you might ask, does this Law School use such an unusual symbol?

According to the dictionary, a gargoyle is "a roof spout carved to represent a grotesque human or animal figure, and projected from a gutter to carry rainwater clear of the wall." The term comes from the French "gargouilles," an onomatopoeic for the sound of the rushing water from their mouths. It has come to include any ornamental figures at or near the roof of a building. Some believe that they were carved to represent those fallen from the faith, or in our case, those who missed an exam.

On the original Law building, circa 1893, four ornamental statues or gargoyles were included at the corners of the main roof. No one seemed to attach any significance to these gargoyles until, during demolition of the building in 1961, one (or possibly two) of them fell undamaged as the wrecking ball swung. Dean George Young, who took great personal pride in obtaining the new building, was nearby and must have felt that there was some significance in this miraculous deliverance and ordered that one of the gargoyles be saved. That gargoyle became The Gargoyle, and is displayed today outside the main entrance of the current Law building.

What became of the other original is open to speculation. Upon becoming building manager, a few years ago, I decided to check out the rumor of a second gargoyle. The number of nooks and crannies in this polyglot building is truly amazing, but none of them contained the rumored second gargoyle. Just recently, however, I discovered that I may have been looking in the wrong place, in the wrong city as a matter of fact.

According to Prof. Margo Melli, the second gargoyle was discovered on the ground by a law student, who carried it away. The student she thinks has, or at least had, the gargoyle now lives Texas. Has anyone out there seen a brownstone gargoyle that bears some resemblance to Bucky Badger?

By the time I began as a student in 1969 the Gargoyle had become firmly attached to the Law School. When this magazine was founded by Dean Spencer Kimball in 1968, he chose The Gargoyle as the title and drawings of the little beast began appearing not only in the magazine, but also on anything else that we wanted to identify as belonging to the School.

Seventy years at the top of the building and a seventy foot fall might be expected to cause some wear and tear, but no one seems to remember any visible signs until very recently. During the winter of 1985/86, Madison was graced with even more snow than normal. In fact, snow got piled over the top of our Gargoyle. When it finally thawed (about June 15th!) we discovered that several fist-sized pieces had broken off. Gone were part of the lower jaw and fangs, part of the nose and the tip of one ear. In an effort to preserve the Gargoyle for another 90 years, we contracted with a graduate Art student, Kurt Wold, to restore the damage. He pointed out that the Gargoyle was also suffering from acid rain damage, and fine features were beginning to disappear.

Dean Thompson, who has witnessed the decay of carved facades at Cambridge as a Rhodes Scholar, decided to seek a long term solution. We decided to have a mold made, and a replica cast. The process was most interesting to observe, involving an inch-thick black plastic coat, followed by several inches of plaster to stiffen the mold. After the mold was removed, it was reassembled and a hydrite copy made. The copy weighs about 200 pounds.

It is possible that we will make a limited number of copies available for purchase, but delivery will not be included and you will have to provide a medical release.