

The rise of the eagles

by [Emily Shelton](#) on February 21, 2013

The impressive amount of eagles sprawled about Hillsdale College have become a somewhat worn, if well-loved campus joke ever since the 1990s, when students witnessed eagles land throughout campus, courtesy of one particular donor.

If back issues of *The Collegian* offer any representation of the campus' bent and interests, then it is quite clear that Hillsdale students of the mid-90s loved joking about the incoming flocks of eagles, while still claiming annoyance at the surplus of birds.

In an October 1994 issue, *The Collegian* ran an article of "Top Ten Alternate Uses for the Eagle Statue," referring to "The Hillsdale Eagle" located at the intersection of Hillsdale Street and College Street. The article reveals a sentiment similar to that held by current Hillsdale students: the campus was clearly designed to make walking from one place to another more difficult (alternate use No. 9: Obnoxious monolith to obstruct students). Students of yesteryear even possessed the odd inclination to mock-offer sacrifices to statues (alternate use No. 3: Centerpiece for pagan rituals). It's not just Reagan.

"There was a donor," librarian Linda Moore said, referring to donor Brian Bex. "He was also involved in donating materials that went into the Heritage Room — I think all the eagles that are in the Heritage Room came from his collection. He was quite involved on campus and there were a lot of eagles that came in a very short amount of time."

The donations of eagles across campus were primarily gifted by Bex and Remnant Trust, which he founded. In 1994, in commemoration of Hillsdale's sesquicentennial, the Remnant Trust, on behalf of the class of 1994, funded "The Hillsdale Eagle," which also marks the beginning of the "Alumni Walk."

The trust donated another bronze eagle in 1995 that was placed just outside of Central Hall. This was "the last of a series of eagles," Administrative Vice President Tony Fowler said in a September 1995 issue of *The Collegian*. This statue was replaced in 2008 by the Thomas Jefferson statue on account of the sinking foundation. The eagle is now in storage, though most of Remnant Trust's other donations are still viewable in The Heritage Room.

Buzz about the eagles soared, however, when students returned to campus in the fall of 1995. Late at night on August 25, the sesquicentennial eagle was tarred and feathered. The administration and the Hillsdale police flew into full inquiry to find those responsible. They even offered a reward.

The Collegian ran on the front page of the Sept. 7 issue: "LaMar Fowler, vice president of maintenance, and Dean Barker have announced that the sum of \$2,500 or a semester's free tuition will be given by Hillsdale College to an individual who provides information which leads

to the apprehension and conviction of the person(s) responsible for the defacing of the eagle statue located at the main entrance of the college.”

A month later, two sophomore students turned themselves in to the Hillsdale police after warrants had been issued for their arrest. The two students faced up to four years in prison and \$2,000 in fines, but they agreed to split restitution costs and volunteer for community service in exchange for dropping the charges held against them to avoid a costly trial.

Jokes became more subdued after the tar and feathering incident, since many students were disgusted by the prank, but that has not stopped students from lovingly joking about Hillsdale’s unofficial mascot. (97)

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