



The Mysterious Eclipse Monument

By Brad Young, Astronomy Club of Tulsa

*"Mystery is my mistress – I must heed her sweet call"
- Velma from "Scooby-Doo 2"*

Along our dog walk a few years ago, my wife and I (and I guess, you could say, the dogs) came across a strange metal plate embedded in the sidewalk near 17th and Boulder Ave in Tulsa. It looked like it was a surveyor's monument, the kind you may have seen as a marker at the corner of your property. Those are usually round, but who knows? One glance though showed this was certainly not a boundary marker as it was right in the middle of a sidewalk alongside a large parking lot.

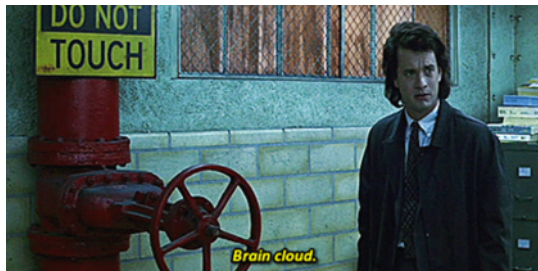


Even more peculiar was that the plate read "Total Eclipse St. Louis". It was not dated; however the sidewalk was relatively new compared to the ragged downtown sidewalks nearby, and we thought we remembered that it may have been poured around 2017. For those of you familiar with downtown, this is catty corner from the "Darth Vader" building that used to house Mapco and Williams, and across the street from the old [Abundant Life Building](#), raised in 1958 as the world headquarters for Oral Roberts ministries. The windowless "modern style" building is unique in a variety of ways but was long ago abandoned and is quite decayed.



Oral ran his fundraising campaigns from here, so the lack of windows seems fitting. It was said that with modern appointments like AC and lighting fixtures it was quite comfortable, but I must think it was more like the office Tom

Hanks endures (with the first of three characters by Meg Ryan) in "Joe vs. the Volcano":



SAVE OUR (?) MONUMENT!

Fun fact: the previous total solar eclipse in St. Louis (before 2017) was in 1442

But where did the marker come from and who put it there? Why would someone commemorate the total eclipse that did indeed pass over St. Louis but wasn't total here in Tulsa? And, unless you gaze at your shoes when you walk, you might never see this marker; why not put it on the fence or on a stand (foreshadowing alert...).

Perhaps it was to describe how both the 2017 and 2024 eclipses were visible from St. Louis. That would explain the lack of a date. There were an awful lot of oddities about the little 2x3 plate in the ground, but I knew I had to find out what the story was, and make sure other astronomy enthusiasts did too. When people came to Tulsa, we could show them the strange little marker, a sort of oddity to match any along Route 66. After all, St. Louis is on the Mother Road too.



17th and Boulder - Very Original Name for new office building

*"It's always something" – Roseanne Rosannadanna
(Gilda Radner)*

I continued searching for information. When I looked up the address and recent news, I found that a [new three-story building designed by 1Architecture](#) will be built where the parking lot is now. According to their website, "17th and Boulder is a 3-story mixed-use building...(that) will house 360 Engineering's new headquarters." And it also mentions

"the project will have a strong presence along the street to support and engage urban pedestrian life."

This was not good. That might mean they would relocate or even destroy the plate! And there might not be much time to act, because, according to their website, the new building was to have been completed in 2023. I have not seen any activity so far, but it could be coming very soon. I considered checking daily when the crews start to show up, with my only hope that when construction begins, I can talk them into either keeping the plate or let me have it so I can save it. Or perhaps I could reach the City, after all, they are responsible for the sidewalks. And shouldn't they already know about this? Isn't this, as small as it is and easy to miss, still kind of a thing?

REALLY?!?!?

"Oh! Never mind" – Emily Litella (Gilda Radner)

Then, another search and I found I'm **not the only person** to have discovered this and thought it was a relic of some import. It was not a marker put in the sidewalk to commemorate the eclipse, it is a *hydrant* that is placed there so you can wash the sidewalk and surrounding area with a garden hose!



The device itself is called a box hydrant and this website describes another person's wonderful discovery that turns out to be a piece of plumbing. I don't know how it works, since the plate is cemented in (just like the one in the comments of the article I found); perhaps it is a different device. There's other plumbing nearby, so who knows?

Even if it has nothing at all to do with it, this strange little item reminds me of a spectacular experience personally, as the 2017 event was my first total eclipse and I watched it in St Louis. I would prefer that they leave it installed so everyone can see it. Then, they can either be pleased to erroneously believe they see the eclipse memorialized or do some digging and find out a funny bit of trivia that has fooled at least a few people.

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MORE PERSONAL CONSTELLATIONS

The Alternate Constellations Observing Program has been around for four years now, with little response from the Tulsa Club (hint hint). Part of it is to include a sketch or description of any "alternative" constellations you enjoy personally, one not recognized on the official list of 88. I know of one Tulsa member who has invented an **Elephant near Camelopardalis**, and I received some quite interesting ones with the submissions for the observing program.

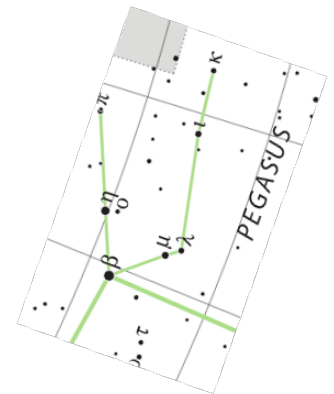
One was a re-imagining of the markings of the Moon. In this case, the observer saw a child with a ball playing soccer:



My version – the Little Box, is part of a defunct constellation Testudo the Tortoise as I discussed in an earlier article "[Your Name Here]" .

My wife sees an old-fashioned TV "rabbit ears" antenna in Pegasus, as it rises:

If you have any to add, please send to me at allenb_young@yahoo.com.



Images by author unless attributed below.

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