PRESS RELEASE FROM CITY-COUNTY-TOURIST PUBLICITY COMMITTEE
DATE: 4/20/62

Some six years ago, local artist, Anthony D. Zimmerhakl, was com-
missioned to design and create a 25 foot statue of Hiawatha. This
was authorized by the La Crosse City-County-Chamber Publicity Com-
mittee, composed of equal representation from the Common Council,
County Board and the Chamber of Commerce, a group of instructed
purpose: that of attracting tourist traffic to this community and
county. To all practical purposes, the committee, acting within
it's powers, named the statue when it commissioned Mr. Zimmerhakl
to construct this concrete-over-steel-frame replica of the legend-
ary Hiawatha.

Through his extensive studies of Longfellow's poetry, Indian lore
and tribal garments, physical traits and the history of the Indian
peoples of which Hiawatha was an attributed member, the artist
faithfully fulfilled his commission: the statue represents his
artistic impression of the legendary Hiawatha. No changing of label,
no switching of names can change that fact.

Choosing the legendary Hiawatha was in no way disrespectful of the
Winnebagoes who peopled this earlier area nor were the historical
contributions of such Chieftains as Decorah, Winnishiek & Blackhawk
ignored. Their fame is of an area scope rather than of national
knowledge whereas "Hiawatha", based on generations who have read and
loved Longfellow's poetry, is universally familiar. The words "see
the 25 foot Hiawatha" offers a complete explanation whether viewed
on a road sign passed at 65 miles per hour or read in a space-limited
tourist ad in an expensive big city newspaper. It is also true that
someone reading a tourist brochure, 1200 miles from La Crosse, will
recognize from the same brief description that this Indian statue is
an outstanding tourist attraction in La Crosse, Wisconsin. This would not be true of an Indian personage whose fame is more local of nature.

The choice of Hiawatha is fortunate in other respects, too. For example, Longfellow's words gave Hiawatha the finest virtues of all Indians, making him a fitting symbol for the Winnebagoes, Chippewas, Sioux and other tribes who gathered in Prairie La Crosse, (which inspired the city's name). Whereas the population of Prairie La Crosse was predominantly Winnebago, they were not the sole occupants of the area, and so a statue representing all Indian tribes is certainly suitable.

The success of legendary figures as tourist-attracting magnates has impressive precedent. Communities in northern Minnesota & Wisconsin have captured thousands of tourist dollars on the Imaginative appeal of Paul Bunyan. Pecos Bill has served the southwest, and Walt Disney has based a profitable amusement center on largely legendary personalities and events.

Then, too, in having a statue of Hiawatha, we have the outstanding attraction (other than scenic beauty) of the much publicized Hiawatha Valley, the river stretch between La Crosse and Hastings, Minnesota. Whereas much of our scenery can be enjoyed through the windows of a car in motion, hundreds of tourists traveling the "Second most scenic route in the Country" will be encouraged to stop in La Crosse to study the statue of Hiawatha! Further development of the Wisconsin side will focus even more tourist interest on the statue. Thus, in having the Hiawatha statue, La Crosse capitalizes on the aggressive national tourist publicity campaign of the Valley group.
From the large 8 X 10 foot sign, which will flank the statue, tourists attracted by Hiawatha will learn something of the earlier history of La Crosse. The copy on this sign, written at the Committee's invitation by a member of the County Historical Society states that which the Indian statue is symbolic of all Indians, it is dedicated particularly to Winnebago Braves. It pays tribute to Chieftains Decorah and Winnishiek, suggests something of the early nature of Prairie La Crosse and gives the reason behind the naming of the community. This sign, the Committee feels, serves the historical interests without diluting the tourist-attracting potentials of a statue named Hiawatha.

In view of the controversy over the naming of the statue, the La Crosse City-County-Chamber Tourist Publicity Committee has frequently reviewed the situation; and, as often, has confirmed the decision to call it's statue "HIAWATHA".

Leonard G. Anderson
Committee Chairman