



Artist's drawing of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park shows a life-size bronze statue, arched entrance and a fountain. The design was intended to utilize the current mini-park on the

corner of County Road 78 (old Hwy. 24) and Ala. 33 in downtown Moulton.

Plans exist for Jesse Owens park

By Steve Oden

of the Advertiser staff

Several people have asked why *The Moulton Advertiser* reprinted articles about the Jesse Owens monument controversy. Some have said rehashing the issue only opens old wounds.

In addition to the reprinted stories, the newspaper has published editorials and columns on the need to further honor the Lawrence County native who won four Olympic gold medals and embarrassed Nazi dictator Adolph Hitler.

It has been 10 years since Owens' death. His widow was honored last month by President George Bush, who presented her a Congressional medal to commemorate her husband's humanitarian deeds.

Here in the county of Owens' birth, we have the annual 10-K Jesse Owens Memorial Run and a memorial park at Oakville, the south Lawrence community where he was born in a sharecropper's family.

Is this enough? We, at *The Advertiser*, don't think so.

It is right and proper that the place of Owens' birth, Oakville, be marked because of its historical significance. Also, the 10-K run is a means of providing a contemporary connection to the athletic events at which Owens excelled.

But, in addition, Lawrence County needs to remember and honor this famous man in a manner that causes people to think about Jesse Owens and the meaning of his life.

The reprinted stories about the monument controversy are intended to provide background information. Contrary to what many believe, not all Lawrence County residents are aware of the "water over the dam." Many recall the events differently than what was actually reported. And, there are sides of the story that were never printed or told.

The Moulton Advertiser does not intend to start another fight. Far from it: We desire to see a Jesse Owens memorial -- a statue, museum, park or combination of

these things -- in Moulton, the county seat.

Although it is not widely known, a plan was commissioned by the City of Moulton to develop the mini-park into a facility honoring Jesse Owens.

The artist's rendering that accompanies this column is a copy of the actual plan, which is on file at Moulton City Hall.

The Jesse Owens Memorial Park plan would have utilized the corner of one of the busiest traffic intersections in Moulton: Ala. 33 and Co. Rd. 78 (old Hwy. 24).

The location has high visibility; it is easy to find; and -- due to the current state of disrepair at the mini-park -- it has the potential to turn an eyesore into something beautiful and noteworthy.

The plan already exists. The mini-park is already there. Why not use this site as a tribute to Jesse Owens' life?

The idea to erect a monument to Jesse Owens did not start back when Roger Dutton and the county commission locked horns over the

issue. Certain individuals -- who have asked to remain unnamed -- hatched the idea before Dutton took it as his crusade.

People were thinking about it and working on it before the Jesse Owens monument controversy became fodder for national publications.

People are still thinking about it. Let's start over. Let's not forget about what happened -- lest we make the same mistakes -- but let's do something for Jesse Owens and ourselves.

The statement Owens made through his athletic performance in the 1936 Olympic games is what all the monuments and memorials should try to preserve.

Owens doesn't belong just to Lawrence County or Ohio State University or the U.S.

The indomitable human spirit, which he symbolized, is the same, regardless of skin color or place of birth. We need to remember this everyday. Owens did.