

TOURISM, TRAVELS & TALES

Winter 2021 HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Munich and the Harrison County Courthouse - Renea Anderson

When the Courthouse was built in Logan in 1911, it was built as a sister courthouse to the one in Muscatine County. The beautiful marble used throughout, the wonderful woodwork, as well as the architecture, are unfortunately unnoticed by most who enter its doors. One special feature that the Harrison County building possesses, is unlike that of Muscatine's are the breathtaking murals located along the two stairways.

Frank Enders was a painter, much revered in his time for his paintings. He had studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, one of the oldest and most significant art academies in Germany. Located in the Maxvorstadt district of Munich, Bavaria, Germany. He studied there from 1879-1884 with Alois Gabl and Wilhelm von Lindenschmit, Born the son of a saloon owner in Milwaukee's German district, Frank was trained by Henry Vianden, who is considered the "Father of Wisconsin Art."

When Frank came to Harrison County, he did not disappoint. Four distinct murals were painted to adorn the walls on either side of both staircases in the courthouse. They remain there to this day. Thousands of people walk up and down the halls and in and out of County offices each year, but few take the time to enjoy the delicate strokes, colorful palettes and intricate images located there.

As a building on the National Historic Register, the Harrison County Courthouse holds a special place in our County's history. Built in the Classic Revival style by architect Joseph E. Mills, it was added to the National Historic Register in 1981. Far too often people come to the Courthouse to pay their taxes, get a driver's license, pay a fine, etc. and fail to truly appreciate the gorgeous detailing of the moldings, ceiling in the courtroom, stained glass in the dome and most certainly the four murals.

These works of art are part of their own free art exhibit on permanent display for all of Harrison County's citizens to enjoy, The next time you are in the courthouse, take a moment to enjoy the beauty of four paintings made just for you, the people of Harrison County, by a famous painter of the 20th Century. Below are two of the murals for your enjoyment.

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The Women’s Movement , a Nude Painting and Frank Enders - Renea Anderson

The Milwaukee Press Club decided she had to go. “Emma”, who had been a fixture in the club for decades, was now a point of contention. Oh, she was pretty enough, her fair complexion and flowing hair were the envy of many, but her lack of clothing—now that was a different issue, especially in the 21st century.

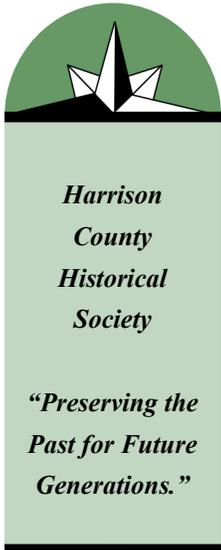
You see “Emma” is a painting. She was created in 1920 by well known artist, Frank Enders. Emma Becker is said to have been the model and she graced the halls in the gallery of the Milwaukee Athletic Club for years. At some point, she was subsequently sold to the Milwaukee Press Club for the sum of \$75 and it was agreed she was to be displayed publically in the Press Club’s bar.

When the Press Club changed locations over the years, Emma went along. She became a staple of the Club and even though she had really nothing to do with the press, she remained just the same. That is, until some women began to question her presence in the bar. Until 1971 women had not been permitted to be members of the Milwaukee Press Club. Upon their acceptance, some of them reportedly threw drinks at Emma. This resulted in restoration work to the painting, but Emma stood her ground so to speak and remained a regular part of the décor .

Over the years, a number of individuals, mostly women, asked for the painting to be taken down. They cited their displeasure of its placement in the establishment and what, in their beliefs, it represented. It even had to be covered up when an Archbishop came and gave a speech in 2010.

Several votes had been placed before the organization to take her down or at least move her but, to no avail until December 27, 2017. That day Emma was removed and appraised for possible sale. The women of the club had been able to finally persuade enough members and more importantly their much-needed votes that the painting represented sexism. A unanimous vote was cast in November 2017 to remove the painting. Emma removal was a result of the widespread acknowledgment of the #metoo movement and awareness of sexual assault,

Who would have ever guessed that the famed painter of our beloved Courthouse murals could be the same painter whose work is part of the modern day Women’s Movement? The Press Club didn’t really know why she had been there for so long. There was nothing about news or journalism that Emma conveyed. She was a leftover reminder of when nude paintings adorning the walls of bars was common place. When old Western movies are played this image is seen over and over . Many of us see it and don’t stop to think who it is or what it may be conveying. You can be the judge. Below is the painting of Emma.



WPA, the Missouri Valley Post Office and the Iowa Fair - Renea Anderson

Iowa New Deal Art is often found at post offices across the State. These painted treasures are part of our past that many forget about, or even fail to notice all together. These murals were painted between 1934-1943 and showcase a myriad of activities and events in Iowa everyday life. This allowed high quality art to be enjoyed in public places where it was accessible to many individuals. 1938 Missouri Valley's Post Office joined the elite list of those who were home to "Iowa WPA" art. Francis Robert White painted "The Iowa Fair" that depicts various things that occur at a fair including showing horses, getting cattle ready to show and neighbors greeting one another and enjoying the Fair.

White was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa. He succeeded Grant Wood as director of all WPA federal art projects in the state of Iowa in 1937. While doing so he also became the director of the Sioux City Art Center after it opened in February 1938. According to the Sioux City Art Center "While Grant Wood portrayed rural Iowa in a beautiful and whimsical way, White wanted to portray the struggles of blue collar workers in town. His paintings in the permanent collection are vivid examples of the manner in which White thought that Regionalism could be most effective. Rather than painting lighthearted images of rural life, White wanted to use his paintings to demonstrate the ongoing need for support for the working class." This support of the working class is very evident in the Missouri Valley mural.

While the murals across America in Post Offices are commonly called WPA murals, there is a bit more to that story as well. "Often mistaken for WPA art, post office murals were actually executed by artists working for the Section of Fine Arts. Commonly known as "the Section," it was established in 1934 and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. Headed by Edward Bruce, a former lawyer, businessman, and artist, the Section's main function was to select art of high quality to decorate public buildings if the funding was available. By providing decoration in public buildings, the art was made accessible to all people." from *Articles from EnRoute* : [Off The Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals](#) by Patricia Raynor

How many times have you been at that Post Office and never noticed the painting on the wall? Have you seen it but dismissed it instead of appreciating it's historic and intrinsic beauty? Throughout this newsletter a common theme of local murals, paintings of our past if you will, are pointed out and discussed. Hopefully you take a few minutes the next time you are in Logan or Missouri Valley and look at them with fresh eyes. See them for what they are—historic gems of our painted past that need to be treasured and revered for the future.

What other hidden gems of the County do you know of? Please contact us and let us know. You can call Jim Perley at 712-649-2991 or email him at jperley@windstream.net and let him know where they are so we can so a story on them as well.



**THE HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS
LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS!**

The Harrison County Historical Society works to ensure local lore and heritage are preserved for future generations. This endeavor is of the utmost important to protect historical items, buildings, first-account recollections of the past, and many other significant endeavors.

Preserving history is like reading a real map; to understand where you are going, you need to know where you've been. The Historical Society hopes you will consider joining them on their journey. The membership year begins July first each year; new members are, of course, gladly welcomed at any time during the year.

Life members and those choosing the gold, silver, or bronze levels never need to pay membership dues. With your membership comes a quarterly newsletter and other benefits; please see below for the list of benefits at each donor level.

Membership Options:

Gold Membership (1 time fee) \$200

Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, free admission to Historical Society activities, a recognition certificate, and the quarterly newsletter.

Silver Membership (1 time fee) \$100

Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, half-off admissions to Historical Society activities, a recognition certificate, and the quarterly newsletter.

Bronze Membership (1 time fee) \$50

Benefits include name plate recognition on the Historical Society Register, discounted admission to Historical Society activities, and the quarterly newsletter.

Annual Member (yearly fee) \$10

Each annual member receives the quarterly newsletter.)

Remit payment to:

Harrison County Historical Society
c/o Mary Zahner
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