

Muncy Art Walk organized by many volunteers

May 1, 2012

by Barbara C. Barrett (bbarrett@muncyluminary.com) , The Luminary



Volunteers were available at the Muncy Art Walk to guide visitors to the works of Eugene Mohr. Sitting left to right at the Fort Brady Hotel are Brenda Bitler, Kim Wetherhold, and Susan Vanorder. A mural was painted by the late artist at the Hotel dated 1944.

Nine stops were highlighted during the first annual art walk that took place in Muncy on Friday night. The event was organized by several volunteers from the Last Friday Committee and the Muncy Professional Business Association.

The event marks the kick off to Muncy's Last Friday events which are scheduled every month until December 21, 2012. "This is a special event to help us raise money for some of the upcoming programs we want to have for our Last Friday events," said coordinator and volunteer Becky Fought. Besides selling tickets to the event, a basket raffle was also held with donations and gift cards from ten local businesses. Almost \$750 was raised.

One of the most interesting stops on the art walk was the old Opera House which has a mural embedded into a front wall and painted by Eugene Mohr. It depicts a scene of a volcano supposedly on an island from his many travels, before the artist returned to Muncy permanently. Other scenes show more of what early life was like along the river shores of Muncy during the canal days. The old building houses apartments upstairs but the downstairs remains closed, although it was open for the art tour.

Another interesting stop was the Fort Brady Hotel where owner, Eugene Walburn spent several hours cleaning paintings and murals that were originally painted by Mohr in 1944. "It took several rags and plenty of water to wipe away the layers of grime and smoke," he said. "You couldn't see the colors in the paintings. Everything looked gray," said Walburn. It is believed that Mohr painted directly on the wall perhaps using wall paint while he frequented the tavern in order to pay for his bar bill.

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Eugene Mohr, the artist, traveled a lot. His styles and themes changed over time," said volunteer Brenda Bitler from Muncy Bank. She said she did lots of research about him before the art walk. "He worked with pencil, charcoal, watercolor and oil," she explained. He was an artist for Good Housekeeping, the New York Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and North American. He died in 1960 at the age of 84.

Some of his later paintings were on exhibit at Providence Engineering. They were part of a private collection of Eva Grenoble, a neighbor who looked after Mohr and took care of him during his last days of life when he lived in his kitchen, painting with just a cot to sleep on. "These paintings are a testimony to Muncy," said Jen Fiene from Providence Engineering, 23 S. Main Street.

Jim Edkin from Picture Rocks enjoyed explaining the Rachel Silverthorne mural to the public at the Muncy Post Office. She was known for her ride in August 1778 when she rode her horse to warn the townspeople of the Iriquois Indian attack. The painting was part of the New Deal project and painted by John Beauchamp. It was worth a few hundred dollars when it was painted in 1938. Today its value is worth over \$10,000 according to Edkin.

Another featured stop was the Muncy Fire Hall where Jill Morrissey and Dave Mayer explained the mosaic on the outside of the building was possibly made from real life characters. Muncy elementary students displayed some of their work at the Muncy Library, and for the more adventuresome walkers, tours were available at the home of Victoria Thompson Hess and a photo window display by photographer, Michael Coppes.

A wine tasting was supplied by Florence and Howard Drought from Yore Wine Shop and mini cupcakes made by Joanne Mihalick, owner of Muncy's new bake shop on John Brady Drive.