

# Mural in Caledonia post office among a treasured few nationwide

By [Caledonia Argus](#)

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Ron Campbell of Clinton Township, Michigan, crossed seeing the mural at the Caledonia post office off of his bucket list after a recent stop to the area.

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Ron Campbell of Clinton Township, Michigan, is a “very big promoter of the postal system in America.”

“The postal system employs more U.S. Veterans than any other organization in our country.”

The Chippewa Valley high school government and psychology teacher also has his students write letters, mail them and “read newspapers... not online!”

In today’s society where many high school students are unable to fill out a check, read cursive writing or properly address a letter, Campbell is a throwback to, perhaps, a by-gone era.

So too is the WPA mural in the Caledonia post office.

Painted by Edmund D. Lewandowski and titled, “Hog Raising,” the treasure at the Caledonia post office has graced the walls since 1942.

Campbell paid a visit to Caledonia earlier this month to view and photograph the mural.

“The purpose of my visit was to view and take photos of the WPA mural in the post office,” Campbell said. “A hobby of mine. I have wanted to see this mural for many years and decided that this was going to be the year I drive to Caledonia.”

While here, Campbell said he had the opportunity to meet a few residents while in town.

“I always like to run a little test and ask people, ‘I am here in town to see the mural in the post office, have you seen it?’” Campbell said. “Very few people ever say they have seen it, even though they have been in the post office.”

## **Art during the great depression**

On May 6, 1935, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) was created to help provide economic relief to the citizens of the United States who were suffering through the Great Depression. The artistic community had already become inspired during the 1920s and '30s by the revitalization of the Italian Renaissance fresco style by the inspired creations of Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Certain visionary U.S. politicians decided to combine the creativity of the new art movements with the values of the American people. The Federal Art Project was one of the divisions of the W.P.A. created under Federal Project One. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had made several attempts prior to the F.A.P. to provide employment for artists on relief, namely the Public Works of Art Project (P.W.A.P.) which operated from 1933 to 1934 and the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture which was created in 1934 after the demise of the P.W.A.P. However, it was the F.A.P. which provided the widest reach, creating over 5,000 jobs for artists and producing over 225,000 works of art for the American people.

Many of these works of art found in post offices in Alabama to as far away as the Virgin Islands, have been destroyed or stolen. Those that remain must be preserved and efforts to do so are underway.

“During the Depression, the government put people to work by building post offices across America and one percent of the building fund was set aside to employ out of work artists to create artwork, mainly murals,” Campbell said.

## **Minnesota WPA murals**

“The significance of the mural from an art standpoint is that it is a priceless piece of work that portrays the area to which it was placed,” Campbell said. “A mural that I feel is a priceless treasure that residents are very fortunate to have in their community.”

In Minnesota there are about two dozen murals still remaining, though some have been moved from their respective post offices and into history centers or museums.

In addition to Caledonia, Ely, International Falls, Hutchinson, Shakopee, Rochester (moved to Olmsted County Historical Society), Marshall, Litchfield, Saint Cloud, Wabasha, among others, are the communities where the murals still hang.

Established in 1934, the 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.