

Description of the Restoration

The significance of The Painted Forest has been recognized through the years and the building has been saved from inappropriate alterations and destruction several times. In funding the extensive restoration of both the building and the mural, Kohler Foundation, Inc. has preserved one of the most unique examples of folk painting and fraternal lodge halls in The United States.

The Painted Forest was first seen by Tom Farley and Don Howlett (restorer, with Sharron Quasius, of The Fred Smith Concrete Park in Phillips, WI) in 1979. They both became interested in preserving the extraordinary Hüpeden mural. Don determined the causes of deterioration and extensively researched the various methods of restoration. He compiled a restoration proposal which was accepted by Kohler Foundation, Inc., which has a history of preserving historic sites in Wisconsin. They decided to fund the restoration with Don as project director and Peter Kulish as consultant for mural and curtain restoration. Kulish is a conservator from Chicago, who worked on the restoration of The Bishop Hill Settlement in Illinois, and other similar projects.

An invaluable crew of skilled people contributed to the restoration process. Their consistent commitment to high quality work has been much appreciated and has resulted in successful revitalization of The Painted Forest.

As the building was originally placed on a foundation of fieldstone with mud mortar, it had settled unevenly over the years causing a network of hairline cracks and other structural damage in the mural. It was necessary to raise the building, remove the old foundation and construct a zero-settlement foundation. The building was lifted by Eugene Prichertt of Beaver Dam. The foundation requirements were prescribed by Warzyn Engineering of Madison. The foundation was constructed by Kluge Masonry of Portage.

The central wall was reinforced with Gunnite application by Cost, Inc. of Rockfield. The new foundation was faced with a layer of fieldstone, to resemble the original foundation. The surrounding area was then regraded, with landscaping by The Flower Barn of Wonevoc.

Extensive carpentry and repair work was done by Vern Thompson and Tim Moore, with help from Rick Thompson and Rodger Burbich. The rafters were repaired and reinforced, a new stairway was installed, exterior boards were replaced and cedar shakes were put on the roof.

The ceiling plaster was removed and the ceiling was then replastered by Ed Edblad of Wonevoc. (Ed also carefully replastered other damaged areas of the mural.) The ceiling was then retexturized and painted by S & S Painting of Wonevoc, who also painted the stage, ante room and exterior of the building.

Don Howlett did extensive solidification work on the mural itself, epoxying large sections and small pieces which had shifted as the building settled. The hairline cracks were injected with a plaster substance by Don, Tom Farley and Lisa Stone. Many interior details were worked on by Connie Poelstra.

Repainting the cracks and missing areas, as well as painting a cloud pattern on the ceiling was prescribed by Peter Kulish and skillfully carried out by Ann Fuller, Harry Burger, and Elliott Medow. The stage curtain was removed and restored in Chicago by Peter Kulish.

The physical restoration of the building was accompanied by time consuming but rewarding research on the life of Ernst Hüpeden by Joan and Vern Thompson and David Rhodes. By combing the extended area they uncovered numerous other works by Hüpeden, and information about his life in the

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