

Published August 24, 2013 12:30AM

McCLOY, William Ashby

Masterpiece mural saved from trash and now on display in Cambridge

By Amy Alder

A three-part mural that was installed at Madison East High School and is now on display in Cambridge.

The mural depicts the Oneida story of creation and was painted by William Ashby McCloy in 1943.

The murals were originally painted for Truax Airfield as part of a UW program to bring art to service men and women. McCloy himself was a serviceman who served in WWII. The mural was originally on display in one of the Truax buildings. It is unknown at this point why the murals were moved to Madison East High School.

The murals were on display in the school's auditorium until the school began a renovation in the 1980s. The plan for the murals was the dump.

'That's when my client stepped in,' said Rebecca Remmich, owner of Cambridge Furniture Traders & Acme Art Company in Cambridge. "He was an art teacher then and realized that they were a fine work of art so he asked if he could buy the murals. The school agreed to sell him the murals but because of the size, the new owner had to build up the sides of his pick-up truck to get them home."



Figure 1MM - Oneida panel of the mural

Remmich went on to say, "It's a great story and were it not for this art teacher, the murals would be lost forever."

When the former teacher learned of a new gallery opening in Cambridge, he contacted Remmich to see if she would like to sell the pieces.

"All I could see of the murals in the dark storage space was the face in the center mural under a lot of dust. Even in low light I could see how spectacular they were and agreed to bring them into the gallery."

The artist, William Ashby McCloy, was a professor of art at UW-Madison in the 1940s and while in Madison worked on some murals done by another accomplished artist, John Steuart Curry.

McCloy was commissioned to complete one other set of murals while in Madison and that mural hangs to this day in the Wisconsin Historical Society building on the UW-Madison Campus.