

## The Post Office — A Community Icon

Every community, from the smallest village to the largest city, has a post office. Whether a corner office in a general store or a massive edifice occupying a city block, the postal service touches almost every citizen on a nearly daily basis and, as such, is one of the most visible manifestations of the federal government.

The development of the United States Postal Service closely corresponds to the growth of the nation's transportation and communication infrastructure. Reliable mail service necessitated the development of postal roads. Later railroads, shipping lines, and airplanes provided service throughout the country and the world.

The establishment of a post office was an important event in the life of a town. Its creation often formalized the name and spelling of a municipality and helped define its borders. Post offices played a daily role in the life of most citizens: in addition to sending and receiving mail, customers visited with neighbors. The post office often housed other governmental functions such as IRS offices, draft boards, even a postal banking service. The post office also provided meeting rooms for community organizations such as the Boy Scouts.

Until the 1950s, post office buildings were typically located in the center of towns, making them a quintessential feature of the Main Street America.



*The Mifflinburg Post Office in Union County.*

## Post Offices — Architectural Styles

Until the mid-20th century, all federal buildings, including post offices, were built with funds appropriated by the Treasury Department and were designed by the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. Originally the Supervising Architect favored monumental, elegant structures built from high quality materials. These buildings were meant to exemplify architectural excellence in the cities for which they were built.

Some post offices from the late 1800s, like the massive Williamsport Post Office, were built in the Romanesque style. Philadelphia, like New York and St. Louis, boasted monumental post offices built in the Second Empire style. Early 20th century post offices reflect a preference for classical and early American styles. Concerns about expenditures led to a classification system, where the design of a post office was related to its postal receipts and the size of the municipality in which it was located.

In rare cases, post offices were designed by private architects. Lorimer Rich, the designer of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for Arlington National Cemetery, also designed the Johnstown Post Office (1938). Harry Sternfeld, a Philadelphia architect known for his Art Deco buildings, designed the Milton Post Office (1936) as well as the Moderne-style Post Office and Courthouse (1940) for downtown Philadelphia.

During the New Deal the federal government embarked on massive public works projects to provide employment. To streamline the design and building process, the Treasury Department developed ten stock post office designs chosen from a national competition. Most of these plans were simple, symmetrical designs usually in brick, in the colonial revival or "classical moderne" styles. Designs and building materials were selected to harmonize with the surrounding architecture of the town.

Post office design changed dramatically following World War II, reflecting aesthetic and demographic trends of the time. Post offices became more functional and stripped-down in appearance and lost the stylistic



*The Williamsport Post Office, built in 1891, now functions as the City Hall. Its massive scale reflects Williamsport's importance as a county seat and an economic center.*



*The Milton Post Office is a superb example of the Art Deco style.*

hallmark of government buildings, such as entrance steps and the symbolic eagle. Post offices were now located in suburban areas with ample parking, to better accommodate automobile traffic. Some facilities even experimented with drive-through service. Since the 1950s, the official preference is to lease space in privately-owned commercial buildings for postal service.

## Post Offices in the New Deal Era

During the New Deal the government built hundreds of post offices across the country. The majority of these buildings remain in use, and as a group, represent an interesting period in the history of federal architecture. The smaller post offices, based on stock designs, were less costly to build, and allowed the Treasury Department to locate them in smaller communities which had previously been ineligible for federal buildings.

The Treasury wanted buildings of "simple government character in consonance with the region in which they are located and the surroundings of the specific site." Most of these plans were simple, symmetrical designs usually in brick, in the colonial revival or "classical moderne" styles. Although modest in scale they still conveyed the dignity and formality of larger government buildings. The flagpole communicates its federal function: elevated steps and an American eagle over the front door create a ceremonial entrance. Details such as cupolas, weathervanes, lighting fixtures allowed the basic design to be individualized.

When a town was selected to receive a post office, an official was sent to make a field report. Potential building lots were identified and evaluated during the typical 3 to 5 day-investigation. The field officer also solicited public opinion about preferred sites, taking note of the prevailing architecture and building traditions of the town. This information was then used by the Supervising Architect's Office to select a design that would be stylistically appropriate for the town. In this way, the government created a post office that both expressed its federal functions while accommodating local preferences.



*The Mercersburg Post Office (1937) is based on the Colonial revival style plan but is faced with field stone rather than the more typical brick .*



*The Danville Post Office (1937) is a "classical moderne" building — a simple symmetrical design with little ornamentation.*



*Eagles with upright wings, such as Milton's (1937), fell out of favor during World War II due to its resemblance to the Nazi eagle. Eagles with outstretched wings, such as Mifflinburg's, became the preferred style.*





## Post Office Art in the New Deal Era

Many of the post offices built during the New Deal contain artworks created for a specific location. These were commissioned by a department within the Treasury known as the Section of Fine Arts (known simply as the Section). Formed at the beginning of the New Deal, the Section invited artists to enter national competitions for large post offices around the country; runners-up were offered commissions for smaller post offices.

The artworks were expected to reflect the town's heritage in some way. Popular subjects included local industry, agriculture, and history. Artists were expected to travel to their assigned post offices, meet with the post master and other residents (often a local historian or librarian) and generate several ideas for subject matter. After a sketch was approved by the Section's administrators, the artist could proceed to create his or her artwork.

The Section was active from 1934 to 1943. During this time, Pennsylvania received 94 commissions for murals and sculpture for federal buildings (88 post offices, 5 courthouses, 1 customs house). Nationwide, 80% of post office artworks are murals and 20% are sculpture. In Pennsylvania, almost half of our artworks are sculpture, giving Pennsylvania the most sculpture of any state, and the second largest collection of both murals and sculpture in the country. The artworks were distributed across the state in urban and rural locations.

The following survey shows artworks in nine Pennsylvania post offices. They are located across the state in both cities and small towns, and their artworks represent the major themes of industry, agriculture, and history. The murals and sculptures are displayed in active post office facilities and may be viewed by the public during regular business hours. With the exceptions of Belle Vernon and Union City, all artworks are in the post office buildings for which they were created. Whenever possible, color photographs have been provided; archival black and white images have been used for the others.



*The mural in the Renovo Post Office shows the typical placement of the painting — over the postmaster's door. "Locomotive Repair Operation" (1943) depicts Renovo's main industry.*

- 1) Allentown
- 2) Belle Vernon
- 3) Chester
- 4) Mount Union
- 5) Pittsburgh (Squirrel Hill Branch)
- 6) Renovo
- 7) Selinsgrove
- 8) Union City
- 9) Wilkes-Barre (Kingston Branch)

# The Post Office — Preserving Your Community Resource

All of the post office buildings are of high quality construction. The majority of those built before World War II still survive and function as postal facilities. A post office located in your downtown is an anchor that brings business to the commercial area. Even those that have been decommissioned are usually repurposed as libraries, municipal offices, or some other kind of public building and remain a source of local pride.

## Community Initiatives

There are a number of things your community can do to encourage the appreciation and preservation of your post office. First, learn everything you can about your post office. A great deal of information will be in the post office itself. Usually a copy of the blueprints is stored in the building. Ask the postmaster if you can examine the plans. Find out if your post office was designed by a prominent architect or, in the case of a stock plan, if any modifications were made to harmonize with neighboring buildings. Check your library for newspaper reports. The construction of postal facilities was usually well documented by the local press. Dedication ceremonies were often attended by state and local politicians, and postal officials, who addressed thousands of residents.

Some communities feature their post office in walking tours of the downtown. If your post office has an artwork that relates to your town's history, consider incorporating it into your town's heritage day. Always discuss your plans with the postmaster to make sure there is no conflict with postal business.

## The National Register

Your post office may be eligible for Nation Register status. Consult the "National Register Bulletin #13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices" which outlines the categories of significance: architecture, art, commerce, communications, community planning and development, economic, education, exploration/settlement, politics/government, social history, or transportation. Also consider a multiple listing nomination. A group of post offices in a county or region might better represent a theme that one individual building.

To request copies of Bulletin #13 contact:  
The National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 250  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127  
[www.nps.gov/nr](http://www.nps.gov/nr)

If your community's post office has a mural or sculpture, consider forming a group to promote it. If cleaning or restoration work is needed, contact Dallan Wordekemper, the Federal Preservation Officer, at:  
phone: 703-526-2779  
email: [dallan.c.wordekemper@usps.gov](mailto:dallan.c.wordekemper@usps.gov)

Restoration services are coordinated and paid for by the U.S.P.S. There have been cases of public/private funding for restoration projects, ask Mr. Wordekemper if your group would like to explore this possibility.

## Community Success Stories

**Mifflinburg** — In the 1990s, the Mifflinburg Revitalization Association decided improve the appearance of their post office as part of its downtown revitalization effort. Residents along with the Boy Scouts and Kiwanis Club landscaped the grounds with plants donated from a local nursery. With the help of the officers at the U.S.P.S. Harrisburg Division, funds were provided to replace the rusted flagpole, replace the windows, and build an access ramp.

**Milton** — Milton participates in Pennsylvania's Main Street Program and has formed a subcommittee dedicated to preserving its Art Deco post office. The Federal Preservation Officer has provided funds for an architectural and engineering analysis of the building and a restoration report has been submitted. The Milton Garden Club found the original landscaping plan in the post office and plans to recreate the 1930s design as a restoration activity.

## Allentown Post Office

442 West Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101

### MURALS

Title: various (ten mural panels)

Artist: Gifford Beal

Date: 1939

Medium: Oil on canvas



**The Liberty Bell.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.

The typical post office artwork consists of a single mural or sculpture, usually mounted over the postmaster's door. Since the money available for embellishment was based on one percent of the funds appropriated for a building project, the larger the project, the more money for art. The appropriation for the monumental Allentown Post Office was \$820,000, but only \$3,700 was spent on the murals. This amount was less than one-half of one percent, however far more than the usual artwork commission.

Artist Gifford Beal painted ten mural panels which were mounted throughout the post office lobby. For subject matter, Beal depicted scenes of Allentown and Lehigh County in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Three murals feature important historical events:

- 1) *The Liberty Bell* shows the bell arriving in Allentown for safe keeping. In 1777, while the British occupied Philadelphia during the Revolutionary War, the Liberty Bell was moved to Allentown's Zion Reformed Church.
- 2) *The Walking Purchase* depicts the 1737 agreement in which the Lenape Indians agreed to sell to the proprietors of Pennsylvania, all the land that a man could walk in a day and a half. Rather than walk a trail, three run-

ners were hired to run on a path cleared for the "walk." They covered about 70 miles rather than the 40 that the Lenape had anticipated. Through this agreement, Pennsylvania acquired all or most of Pike, Monroe, Carbon, Schuylkill, Northampton, Lehigh and Bucks counties.

3) *Departure of the Jordan Rifles* depicts a group of Civil War volunteers. They are leaving for Harrisburg being led by the Allentown Band.

Four murals depict the area's important industries. Two murals feature the early iron and cement industries. *Kimmett's Lock* and *Transportation* suggest the importance of the Lehigh Canal system for commerce and pleasure travel. *Trout Hall* depicts wealthy Allentown residents during the early days of the town's founding. The two smallest panels, which are located above doorways, show Pennsylvania German barns with hex signs and Riflemen during the Revolutionary War.

**About the artist:** Gifford Beal (1879–1956) was born in New York City and began painting with William Merritt Chase at the age of twelve. He later studied at the Art Students League in New York. Beal's work was popular in the first half of the 20th century. His early work was

## Allentown Post Office



**The Walking Purchase.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.

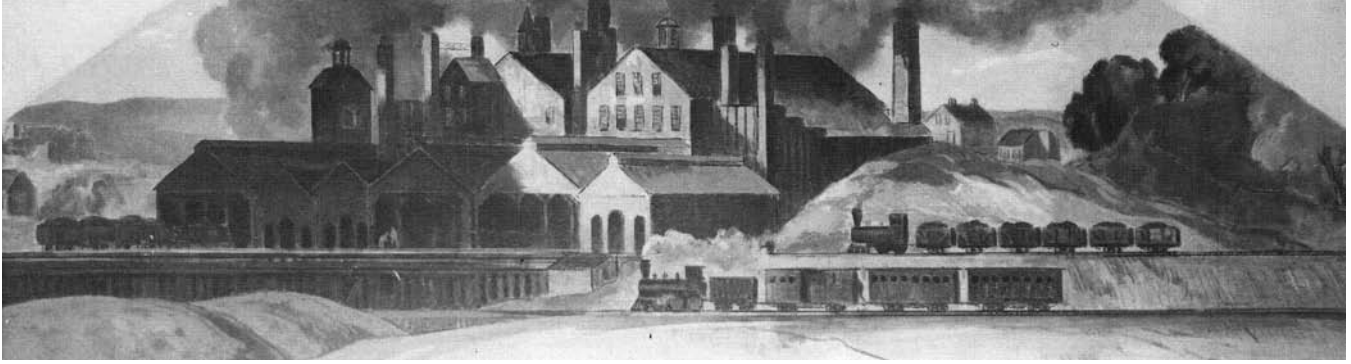


**Departure of the Jordan Rifles (First Defenders) from Allentown.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.

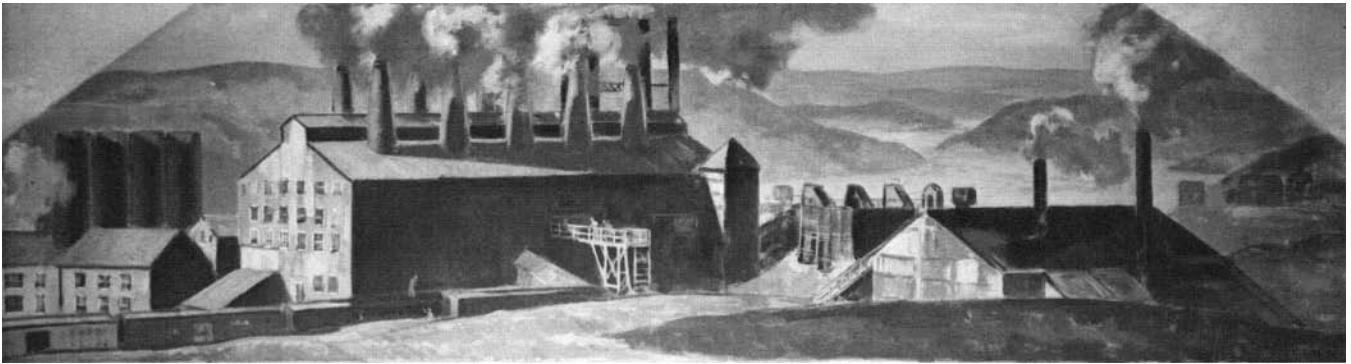
impressionistic reflecting the influence of Chase. In mid-career, he adopted a more realistic style and somber palette to depict the rugged life of coastal villagers in New England. Later in his career, his subjects were the theater and circus. Beal's art is in the Whitney Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC.



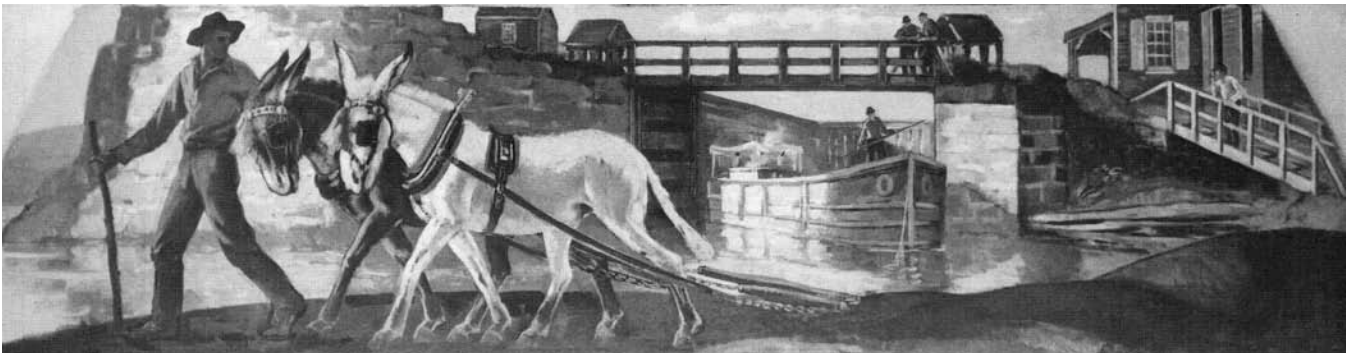
## Allentown Post Office



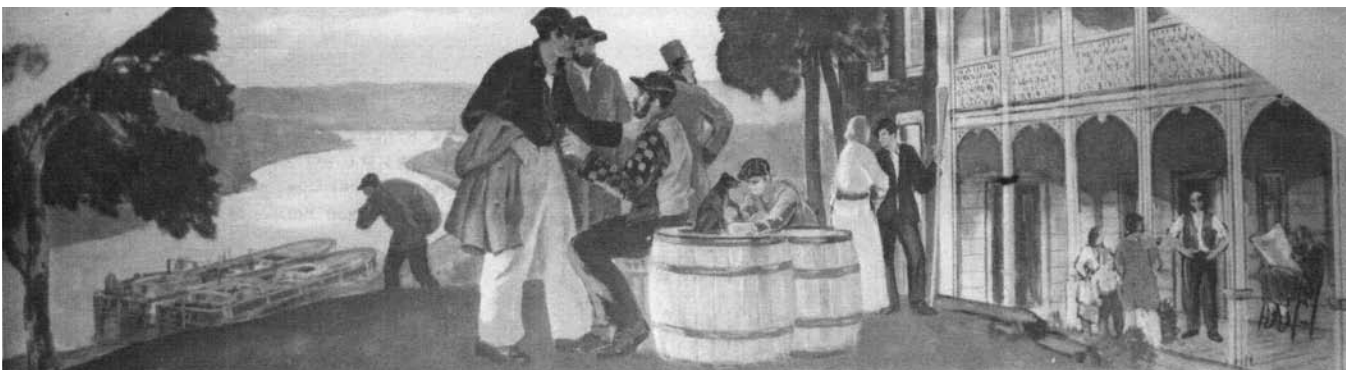
**Iron Industry in Lehigh Valley.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.



**Cement Industry.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.



**Kimmett's Lock.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.



**Transportation.** Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.



## Allentown Post Office



**Lehigh County Barn Signs.**

*Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.*



**Pennsylvania-German Riflemen.**

*Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.*



**Trout Hall.** *Black and white photo of color study, courtesy of the National Archives.*

## Allentown Post Office (1933)

The monumental Allentown post office dominates the corner of West Hamilton Street and 5th Avenue in the downtown. The scale and formality of the building communicate Allentown's importance as the political and industrial center of Lehigh County. The "classical moderne" building was a popular style of architecture for civic buildings in the 1930s. The post office retains the massing and symmetry of earlier neo-classical and revival style post office buildings but largely omits surface ornamentation. Features typical of earlier designs, such as fluted columns, are here streamlined into square columns.

In contrast to the generally simple facade, the massive entrance portals exhibit highly exuberant Art Deco ornamentation. Black granite slabs rise several stories to surround the doorway and windows. A cartouche with an eagle occupies the space between a broken cornice of modillion blocks and sits atop a lintel with five stars. Step banding, the series of incised lines, wraps around the top corners and continues down the outside. Bas relief panels which frame the opening vertically feature a variety of geometric designs and animals including, curiously, a pair of sea horses.

The post office lobby provides its own variety of ornamentation. In addition to the ten Gifford Beal murals depicting scenes of Lehigh County's history and industry, the lobby floor is paved with handmade Mercer tile. It seems likely that the architect was inspired by the Harrisburg State Capitol, built twenty years earlier, which also features a variety of murals and a dramatic Mercer tile floor.



*Postcard featuring the Allentown Post Office.*



*One of three massive entrance portals.*

## Belle Vernon Post Office

611 Circle Drive  
Belle Vernon, PA 15012

MURAL

Title: *Men of Coal and Steel*

Artist: Michael Loew

Date: 1942

Medium: Oil on canvas



Photograph of "Men of Coal and Steel" courtesy of the National Archives.

*Men of Steel and Coal* commemorates Belle Vernon's most important and intertwined industries from the first part of the 20th century, steel making and bituminous coal mining. The figure on the left is a steel worker standing against a background of the towering smoke stacks of the mills. On the right are two coal miners standing along the tracks leading into the mine. The one on the far right carries a lunch bucket and a pick while the second miner holds an air drill on his shoulder. Picks, like the lunch buckets, helmets, and lamps, were personal property and were carried home after each shift but equipment such as the air drill was probably company property. Behind the miners is the mine portal indicating a drift or slope mine. Unlike the anthracite mines in eastern Pennsylvania which typically required a mine elevator to access, this bituminous mine could be entered on foot.

The buildings in the central background are part of the colliery. They are probably the breakers that sorted the coal and tipples, the chutes that loaded coal into rail cars. The logs in the foreground are the timbers used to

support the mine ceiling. Logs were cut to correspond to the height of the coal seam. These appear to be about the height of the workers but some seams could be much shorter.

**About the artist:** Michael Loew (1907–1985) was born and lived in New York. He studied at the Arts Students League, the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts and the Atelier Léger in Paris. In his later work, Loew preferred to paint colorful geometric abstract compositions. His works are in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Philadelphia Museum, the Hirshorn Museum, the Carnegie Museum.



## Belle Vernon Post Office (1981)

The brown brick post office in Belle Vernon exemplifies the spare designs typical of the 1970s and 80s. Post offices built during this time were located away from town centers to provide for plenty of customer parking and easy access for postal vehicles. The spare design reflects an emphasis on functionality and inexpensive construction. Gone are the architectural details of pre-World War II post offices like entrance steps and eagle sculptures. The only feature that remains is the flagpole.



*Photographed by Duane Gallo, courtesy of Jimmy Emerson.*

## Chester Post Office

400 Edgmont Avenue  
Chester, PA 19013

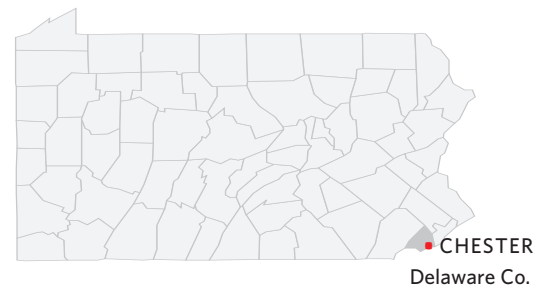
### SCULPTURE

Title: **William Penn**

Artist: Erwin Springweiler

Date: 1938

Medium: Aluminum panel



*Photograph of "William Penn" courtesy of the National Archives.*

Combining images of the past and present was a popular compositional scheme in New Deal art. This aluminum bas relief depicts Williams Penn, Chester's founder, as well as 1930s workers. Penn sailed from England and arrived in Chester, then known as Upland, in 1682. Penn, in his familiar Quaker dress, is placed prominently in the center of the medallion-like panel and faces Welcome, the ship that brought him to the New World. Below Penn are two 20th century machinists and factories. The figure in the right foreground is using a lathe, measuring with calipers.

With its location on the Delaware and proximity to the ocean, Chester became an important center for shipbuilding. During the Civil War, Chester supplied the North. The Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, later Pennsylvania Shipyard & Dry Dock Company, oper-

ated in Chester until 1990. Chester was home to many other industries as well, producing textiles, paper products, and Ford automobiles. From 1927 to 1973 an electric sign proudly announced: "WHAT CHESTER MAKES, MAKES CHESTER."

**About the artist:** Erwin Frederick Springweiler (1896–1968) was born in Germany and studied at the prestigious Munich Academy of Fine Arts. After emigrating to the U.S., he assisted sculptors Paul Manship and Herbert Haseltine. Springweiler received awards from the National Academy, the Architectural League and the National Arts Club. He is known primarily for his animal sculptures which are owned by many zoos including those in Washington D.C. and Detroit.

## Mount Union Post Office

35 West Market Street  
Mount Union, PA 17066

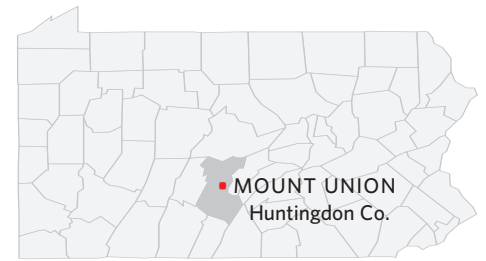
MURAL

Title: *The Union of the Mountains*

Artist: Paul Rohland

Date: 1937

Medium: Oil on canvas



From the late 1800s and for most of the 20th century, the mountains near Mount Union provided the quartzite and ganister rock used to make the town's most important product: silica brick. These bricks were used in paving and to line steel furnaces and coke ovens. At one time three brick refractories operated in town producing 80,000 to 100,000 bricks a day, seven days a week. Mount Union was known as the "Silica Brick Capital of the World."

But artist Paul Rohland rejected Mount Union's industry as a mural subject, writing that he "was not particularly interested in industrial turmoil as a decorative idea." Instead he chose to paint a landscape, the two mountains that inspired the town's name. Nevertheless, a number of interesting industrial details are preserved in the canvas. The belching smokestacks are those of the Harbison Walker Refractory. To the right of the smokestacks is a clearing on the mountain. These were tracts of company housing for the workers. On the left of the mural are three churches: a red Catholic church, a tan Methodist church, and a Greek Orthodox church with an onion dome. These churches indicate the ethnic diversity of the European immigrants who settled in Mount Union to work at the brick refractories.

**About the artist:** Paul Rohland (1884–1953) was born in Richmond, VA and studied art in New York with Robert Henri and at the Art Students League and in Europe. He exhibited at the famous 1913 Armory Show in New York. He painted several post office murals in Louisiana and Georgia.



## Mount Union Post Office (1936)

New Deal era post offices were basically rectangular in shape and had similar floor plans. The simple exteriors could easily be customized to harmonize with their surroundings. The geometric tan brick of the Mount Union Post Office complemented the town's nearby commercial buildings. Architectural presence is achieved through the bold vertical blocks surrounding the entrance and windows and the upright lamp posts on either side of the steps. The Mount Union Post Office has even less surface ornament than the similar Danville Post Office.



*The Mount Union Post Office (2006). The bright "safety" blue metalwork, including the window mullions, lamp posts, and railings, has it has since been painted olive green. Previously the metalwork was black (below).*



## Pittsburgh Post Office Squirrel Hill Branch

1800 Murray Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

MURAL

Title: *History of Squirrel Hill*

Artist: Alan Thompson

Date: 1942

Medium: Oil on canvas



*History of Squirrel Hill*, left half of mural.

A popular compositional device in many post office murals was the combination of the past and present. *History of Squirrel Hill* shows the 1940s Pittsburgh neighborhood on the left half of the painting, while the town's early days are imagined on the right. A Daniel Boone-like frontiersman, rifle in hand, straddles the center. He surveys the contemporary scene, linking the violent past with the bustling present.

The streetscape features about a dozen figures engaged in a variety of everyday activities. Local stores and buildings form the backdrop of this tableau. Artist Alan Thompson was an illustrator as well as a painter, and has an eye for humorous detail. The crying baby in the carriage looks out at the viewer as its mother, cigarette in hand, is engrossed in conversation. The dog on the leash eyes a fire hydrant. Behind it, a man angrily shakes his fist at the red streetcar. At the time, Squirrel Hill was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood and

Thompson includes a bearded man in the traditional Orthodox black coat and hat.

The right half of the mural purports to show the early settlement that would become Squirrel Hill. In the background, men are engaged in farming activities: plowing, sowing, and felling trees. A family is in the foreground. The woman makes thread at the spinning wheel, while her husband works a mortar-like pole in a hollowed log. Between them are their daughter and baby in a cradle. Two muscular Native Americans are at the far right: one wielding a tomahawk, attacks an older settler. Very little is actually known about the founding of Squirrel Hill and there are no records of hostilities between settlers and indigenous peoples in the area. However this version of history went unquestioned by contemporary residents as though felling trees and fighting Indians was the inevitable path to civilization.

**Pittsburgh Post Office  
Squirrel Hill Branch**



*History of Squirrel Hill, right half of mural.*

**About the artist:** Alan Thompson (1908–?) was born in England and later moved to Pittsburgh. He studied at the Carnegie Institute and the Pittsburgh Art Institute. He worked in a realistic style and painted scenes in and around Pittsburgh.



## Renovo Post Office

365 Huron Avenue  
Renovo, PA 17764

MURAL

Title: ***Locomotive Repair Operation***

Artist: Harold Lehman

Date: 1943

Medium: Oil on canvas



Within a few months of his winning his commission, artist Harold Lehman travelled to Renovo to photograph and sketch parts of the community. By the fall of 1941, he had ten preliminary designs completed. Soon after, however, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. Lehman decided to scrap his favorite sketches of Renovo's history in favor of a more current topic. Lehman recalled that, "it happened that Renovo was the center of a big locomotive repair operation of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The major thing they did was to repair locomotives, a very vital concern of the government during the war years."

Renovo's mural depicts a jib crane operation at the railroad yards in Renovo. Locomotive wheels are being removed and stacked by the figures in the center of the mural. To the right of the mural, a man waits with an acetylene torch to heat the wheels before repair. The foreman to the left is holding a poster: "America's Answer — Production." This was a popular poster at the beginning of the war so Lehman felt it would be fitting to include it in the work. Since the Treasury Department was trying desperately to link its art program to the war effort, the poster was a touch quickly approved. The mural was installed on August 1, 1943, two months after

the Section of Fine Arts ceased operations. *Locomotive Repair Operation* was one of the last murals to be installed in a U.S. post office.

The repair yards, just a block from the post office, are now closed and the brick buildings depicted in the mural have been abandoned. If these buildings are demolished, the mural will become the town's most visible reminder of this industry and Renovo's role in the war effort.

**About the artist:** Harold Lehman (1913–2006) studied with famed Mexican muralist David Siquieros. He produced several murals for the various New Deal art projects including an enormous mural for the Riker's Island Penitentiary cafeteria called *Man's Daily Bread*. On the warden's orders, it was destroyed around 1962. Prior to interest in New Deal era art, many works were lost due to neglect, loss, or outright destruction. To learn more about Harold Lehman and his career, visit: <http://haroldlehman.com>

## Renovo Post Office



All of the workers depicted in the mural were based on Renovo residents. Lehman photographed the railroad repair shops and the men working there to use as reference material for his mural.



The Treasury Department discouraged overtly political imagery in the post office artworks, but Lehman has slipped in a reference to the railcar repair workers union. All of the workers in the painting wear blue union buttons on their caps.

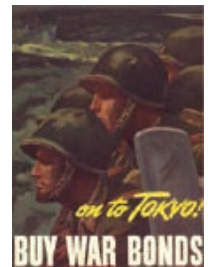
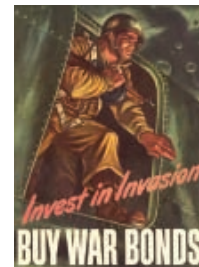


## Renovo Post Office



The foreman in Harold Lehman's mural holds this famous WWII-era poster by French designer Jean Carlu.

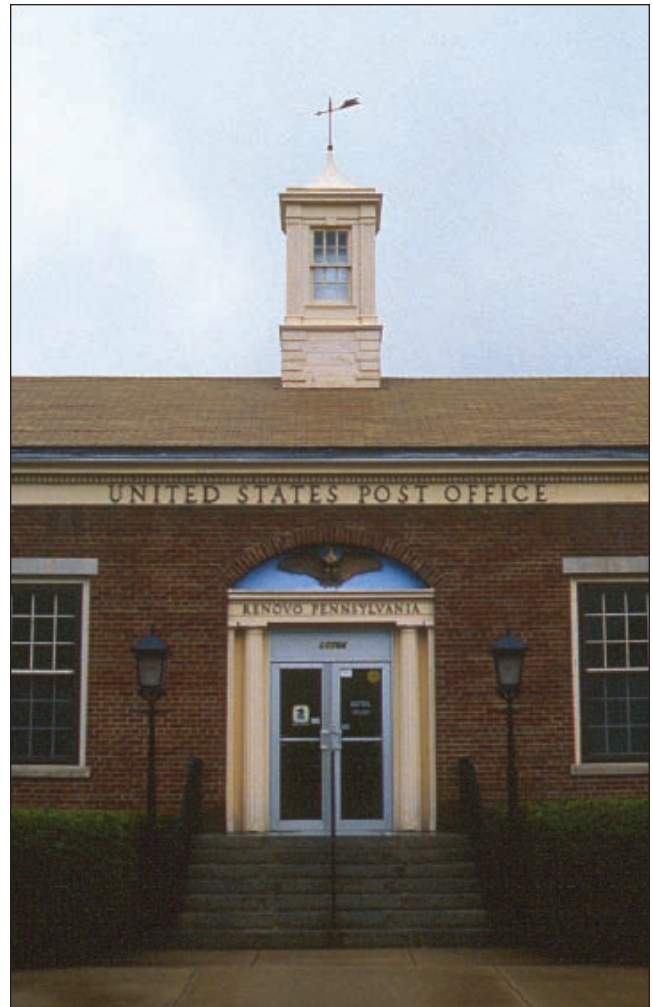
A few years after completing the mural commissioned Lehman to design a series of war bond posters.





## Renovo Post Office (1940)

The Renovo Post Office is a typical Colonial revival style building. It is virtually identical to the Mifflinburg Post Office. Similar details include the white cupola with weathervane and American eagle above the doorway. This style of eagle, which outstretched wings, became more prevalent as World War II approached and also fits the arched space well.



## Selinsgrove Post Office

100 South Market Street  
Selinsgrove, PA 17870

MURAL

Title: *Susquehanna Trail*

Artist: George Rickey

Date: 1939

Medium: Tempera on canvas



This beautiful mural depicts spring plowing and planting in central Pennsylvania, combining richly detailed subject matter with a dramatic use of the lobby space. The artist, George Rickey, decided in his early sketches to cover more wall by having his mural wrap down around the postmaster's door. This allowed his two farmers to be painted nearly life size. The planting farmer on the

left is very close to the picture plane and appears to be ready to step onto the lobby floor and join waiting customers. This illusion incorporates the lobby: rather than being a detriment, the narrowness of the space enhances the rapidly receding horizon of the mural.

The background includes Shriners' Church, the Susquehanna River, the town of Selinsgrove and the

## Selinsgrove Post Office

Mahanoy mountain. In the middle ground is a woman, infant, and child. The letter that the woman holds, as well as the rural mail box behind her, symbolize the Post Office Department's duty "to bind the nation together by mail."

In earlier sketches, the placement of the main figures was reversed — the man sowing was on the right and the farmer plowing was on the left. But prior to executing the finished mural, Rickey observed that the plows used in Snyder county turned the furrow from right to left. Rickey moved the plowing farmer to the right. This allowed the soil to be correctly turned to the left while maintaining the mural's color scheme of the red earth in the center of the composition and the green grass along the sides.

Rickey's mural skillfully integrates many elements which were so popular in Depression-era murals: images of working men, motherhood, fertile land, and a strong community. In the midst of the Depression, his mural presented a stable present and a promising future. Despite the positive reception of the mural by Selinsgrove's residents, the Treasury Department was unhappy with Rickey's work, and he received no further commissions from it.

**About the artist:** Rickey (1907–2002) was born in Indiana and educated in Scotland and England. He was an artist and educator who taught at schools around the country, including Muhlenberg College in Allentown. In the 1950s he began to focus his work on sculpture, and later achieved fame as a kinetic metal sculptor. His works can be found in major museum collections around the world.





## Selinsgrove Post Office (1937)

Like the Mifflinburg and Renovo post offices, the Selinsgrove Post Office is based on one of the Treasury Department's stock Colonial revival style designs. Rather than a cupola however, the red brick building was enhanced with decorative cast stone work above the windows. It was further customized with a beautiful Georgian style entrance portico. During recent renovations, the missing "T" in "STATES" and "S" in "POST" on the portico were restored. The letters had to be fashioned by hand to match the originals from the 1930s.



## Union City Post Office

90 North Main Street  
Union City, PA 16438

### SCULPTURE

Title: ***The Lumberman***

Artist: Vincent Glinsky

Date: 1941

Medium: Wood



Whether alone or clustered as a group, the figure of the heroic worker was a popular New Deal era motif. Vincent Glinsky's lumberman stands confident, one foot on the stump of a tree he just felled. In his hands are the tools of his trade. In his left hand the lumberman holds one end of a two-man cross-cut saw; in his right is an axe. His chiseled features and muscular physique suggest the hard work and self-reliance required for this demanding outdoor endeavor. Glinsky sculpted in variety of media but chose wood as the suitable material for this piece.

With good soil and abundant rainfall, Pennsylvania's Northern Tier produced cherry, oak, chestnut, hickory, ash, and white pine. Lumber, especially cherry and oak, continues to be an important industry for this part of the state.

**About the artist:** Vincent Glinsky (1895 –1975) was born in Russia. He emigrated to America and studied at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York City. The Institute was patterned after the famous Parisian school and emphasized classical artistic training for architectural sculptors. After winning a Guggenheim Fellowship, Glinsky lived in France and Italy, returning to the U.S. in the 1930s. He worked for various New Deal era art projects. Glinsky taught at Columbia University, New York University, and Brooklyn College.

## Union City Post Office (1999)

Like most contemporary postal facilities, the Union City Post Office is located away from the town center to provide easy access and ample parking space. The gabled roof, white siding, and large windows help give this post office a more inviting appearance than the spartan Belle Vernon Post Office. The wood sculpture "The Lumberman," is beautifully displayed behind glass in the lobby.





## Wilkes Barre Post Office Kingston Branch

300 South Main Street  
Wilkes Barre, PA 18701

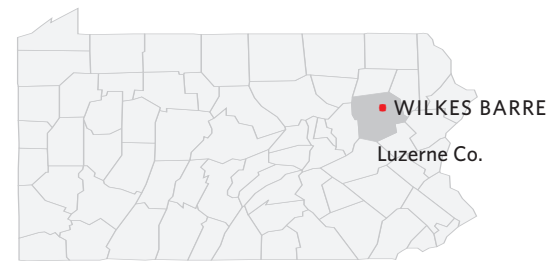
MURAL

Title: ***Anthracite Coal***

Artist: George Harding

Date: 1941

Medium: Oil on canvas



All of the post office artworks in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties feature anthracite coal at a major or minor theme. Artist George Harding captures both the miners and the colliery in his beautiful mural *Anthracite Coal*.

The group of miners on the far left holding straps are descending in the mine elevator, while another group gathers nearby. The figure in the center holding a tripod is a surveyor. On the far right a lone figure rides a filled coal car. Wilkes Barre residents say this scene is a composite of two mining operations, the Huber and Prospect Collieries. The Huber breaker is one of the last surviving anthracite breakers in the country and is still visible from Interstate 81, south of Wilkes Barre.

Harding suggests the rigors of coal mining in the grim expressions of the miners faces. The desolation is emphasized by a winter setting featuring snow and icicles.

**About the artist:** George Harding (1882–1959) studied illustration with Howard Pyle in Wilmington, DE. He



worked for The Saturday Evening Post and other major magazines. Harding settled in Pennsylvania and taught illustration at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

## **ALIQUIPPA**

### ***Western Pennsylvania***

Niles Spencer

1938, Oil on canvas

*Note: Damaged in 1966, stored at the Smithsonian American Art Museum*

## **ALLENTOWN**

### ***Untitled*** (ten panels on the area)

Gifford Beal

1939, Oil on canvas

## **ALTOONA**

### ***Pioneers of Altoona Growth of the Road***

Lorin Thompson

1938, Oil on canvas

## **AMBLER**

### ***The Family—***

### ***Industry and Agriculture***

Harry Sternberg

1939, Oil on canvas

## **ATHENS**

### ***General Sullivan at Tioga Point***

Allan D. Jones, Jr.

1941, Oil on canvas

## **BANGOR**

### ***Slate Belt People***

Barbara Crawford

1941, Oil on slate

## **BEAVER FALLS**

### ***The Armistice Letter***

Eugene Higgins

1938, Oil on canvas

## **BELLE VERNON**

### ***Men of Coal and Steel***

Michael Loew

1942, Oil on canvas

## **BLAWNIX**

### ***The Steel Worker and Family***

Mildred Jerome

1941

Wood relief

*Note: Missing*

## **BLOOMSBURG**

### ***Pennsylvania Farming***

Roy King

1937, Wood relief (walnut)

## **BOYERTOWN**

### ***Harvest / Transfer of Skill / Education / Barnyard***

Moissaye Marans

1941, Plaster reliefs

## **BRIDGEVILLE**

### ***Smelting***

Walter Carnelli

1941, Fresco

*Note: Destroyed*

## **BROWNSVILLE**

### ***Showing the People in the Early Days Transferring from Stagecoach to Boat***

Richard Lahey

1936, Oil on canvas

## **BURGETTSTOWN**

### ***View of Burgettstown***

John F. Folinsbee (Peter Cook, asst.)

1942, Oil on canvas

## **CALIFORNIA**

### ***Monongahela River***

Saul Berman

1939, Oil on canvas

## **CANONSBURG**

### ***Barns***

Peter Blume

1937, Oil on canvas

## **CATASAUQUA**

### ***Arrival of the Stage***

F. Luis Mora

1936, Oil on canvas

## **CHESTER**

### ***William Penn***

Erwin Springweiler

1938, Metal

## **CLARKS SUMMIT**

### ***Communication by Mail***

Harry P. Camden

1939, Aluminum

## **COLUMBIA**

### ***Columbia Bridge***

Bruce Mitchell

1938, Oil on canvas

## **CONSHOHOCKEN**

### ***Steel Workers***

Robert I. Russin

1942, Wood relief

## **CORAOPOLIS**

### ***Racoon, Deer and Fox***

Nena de Brennecke

1940, Wood reliefs

*Note: Missing*

## **COUDERSPORT**

### ***Lumbering in Potter County, 1815-1920***

Ernest Lohrmann

1939, Plaster relief

## **DANVILLE**

### ***Iron Pouring***

Jean de Marco

1941, Aluminum

## **DOYLESTOWN**

### ***William Markham Purchases Bucks County Property***

Charles Child

1937, Oil on canvas

## **DREXEL HILL**

### ***Aborigines***

Concetta Scaravaglione

1942, Wood relief

## **EAST STROUDSBURG**

### ***Communication***

(Marguerite) Bennett Kassler  
1937, Sculpture

*Note: Damaged during remodeling*

## **ELIZABETHTOWN**

### ***Squaw's Rest***

Lee Gatch  
1942, Oil on canvas

## **EVERETT**

### ***Signing the Constitution***

Hazel Clere  
1940, Plaster

## **FARRELL**

### ***Myths of Vulcan and Juno***

Virginia Wood (Riggs)  
1939, mural

*Note: Painted over*

## **FORD CITY**

### ***Glass Making***

Josephine Mather  
1941, Carrara structural glass

## **FREELAND**

### ***Freeland***

John F. Folinsbee  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **GIRARD**

### ***Vacation Time***

Janet De Coux  
1942, Wood relief

## **HAMBURG**

### ***Home***

Nathaniel Kaz  
1941, Wood relief

## **HONESDALE**

### ***Canal Boat / Clearing the Wilderness / Coal / Gravity Railroad / Visit by Washington Irving***

Walter Garder  
1937, Oil on canvas

## **IRWIN**

### ***Puddlers***

Chaim Gross  
1942, Wood relief

## **JEANETTE**

### ***Battle of Bushy Run***

***Untitled*** (Glass Industry)  
Frank T. Olson (design) and  
Robert L. Lepper  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **JENKINTOWN**

### ***General Washington's Troops on Old York Road***

Hersechel Levit  
1942, Tempera  
*Note: Missing*

## **JOHNSTOWN**

### ***Untitled*** (Eagles)

Louis Slobodkin  
1938, Granite

## **KUTZTOWN**

### ***Rural Route Number One***

Judson Smith  
1937, Oil on canvas

## **LITITZ**

### ***The Moravian Communion—Lititz Spring Picnic***

Joseph Nicolosi  
1941, Wood relief

## **MAHANOEY CITY**

### ***Coal Miners Returning from Work***

Malvina Hoffman  
1939, Plaster

## **McDONALD**

### ***Agriculture and Industry***

August Jaegers  
1937, Plaster relief (aluminum finished)

## **MANHEIM**

### ***The First Orchestra in America***

Theresa Bernstein  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **MASONTOWN**

### ***General Lafayette Is Welcomed at Friendship Hill by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Gallatin on May 27, 1825***

Harry Leith-Ross  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **MERCER**

### ***Clearing the Land***

Lorin Thompson  
1940, Oil on canvas

## **MERCERSBURG**

### ***Good News***

Joseph Nicolosi  
1938, Plaster relief

## **MEYERSDALE**

### ***Harvesters at Rest***

Fred De Lorenzo  
1940, Plaster relief

## **MIDLAND**

### ***Steel Workers***

Humbert Albrizio  
1940, Sculpture

## **MIFFLINBURG**

### ***Pioneers of the Community***

(Marguerite) Bennett Kassler  
1941, Plaster reliefs

## **MILTON**

### ***Milton topography*** (bronze plaque)

### ***Native Americans*** (2 reliefs)

### ***Mail transportation*** (5 reliefs)

Louis A. Maene  
1936, Bronze and stone

## **MORRISVILLE**

### ***Canal Era***

Yngve Soderberg  
1939, Oil on canvas

*Note: Building now used as print shop*



## **MOUNT PLEASANT**

### ***Air Mail***

Alexander Sambugnac  
1937, Plaster relief

## **MOUNT UNION**

### ***The Union of the Mountains***

Paul Rohland  
1937, Oil on canvas

## **MUNCY**

### ***Rachel Silverthorne's Ride***

John W. Beauchamp  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **NAZARETH**

### ***Cement Industry***

Ryah Ludins  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **NORRISTOWN**

### ***Local Industry / U.S. Mail***

Paul Mays  
1936, Oil on canvas

## **NORTH EAST**

### ***The Town Crier***

Leo Lentilli  
1937, Cast stone

## **NORTHAMPTON**

### ***Physical Changes of the Postman through the Ages***

Maurice Glickman  
1939, Cast stone relief

## **NORTHUMBERLAND**

### ***Dr. Joseph Priestley***

Tina Melicov  
1942, Red mahogany relief

## **OAKMONT**

### ***Allegheny River***

Franc Epping  
1942, Terra-cotta relief

## **PALMYRA**

### ***Reaping / The Oldest Church in the Valley / Ploughing***

Alice Decker  
1940, Wood reliefs  
Note: Currently displayed at Bindnagle Church

## **PHILADELPHIA [1]**

### ***Philadelphia Waterways with Ben Franklin Bridge View of Downtown Philadelphia Skyline***

Moses and Raphael Soyer  
1939, Oil on canvas

## **PHILADELPHIA [2]**

### ***Mail Delivery / City / Country / Northern Coast / Office / Home / Tropics / History of Mail Transportation by Water***

George Harding  
1939, Tempera

## **PHILADELPHIA [3]**

### ***Iron Plantation Near Southwark — 1800***

***Shipyards at Southwark***  
Robert E. Larter  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **PHILADELPHIA [4]**

### ***Streets of Philadelphia***

Walter Gardner  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **PHILADELPHIA [5]**

### ***Mail Delivery — North, South, East, West*** [four reliefs]

Edmond R. Amateis  
1941, Stone

## **PITTSBURGH [1]**

### ***History of Squirrel Hill***

Alan Thompson  
1942, Oil on canvas

## **PITTSTON**

### ***Indian / Mine Elevator / Campbell's Ledge***

Marion Walton  
1942, Limestone reliefs

## **PLYMOUTH**

### ***Meal Time with the Early Coal Miners***

Jared French  
1938, Oil on canvas

## **QUAKERTOWN**

### ***Quaker Settlers***

Bertram Goodman  
1938, Oil on canvas  
Note: Mural transferred to borough building

## **RENOVO**

### ***Locomotive Repair Operation***

Harold Lehman  
1943, Oil on canvas

## **ROARING SPRING**

### ***Mountain Landscape***

Elizabeth Shannon Phillips  
1942, Oil on canvas

## **SCOTTSDALE**

### ***Local Life and Industries***

Harry Scheuch  
1937, Oil on canvas

## **SCRANTON**

### ***Nature's Storehouse***

Herman Maril  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **SELINGSGROVE**

### ***Susquehanna Trail***

George Rickey  
1939, Tempera

## **SELLERSVILLE**

### ***Carrying the Mail***

Harry Sternberg  
1937, Tempera

## **SOMERSET**

### ***Somerset — Farm Scene***

Alexander J. Kostellow  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **SWARTHMORE**

### ***The Spirit of the Post***

Milton Horn  
1937, Wood relief

## **TUNKHANNOCK**

### ***Defenders of the Wyoming Country — 1778***

Ethel V. Ashton  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **TURTLE CREEK**

### ***Treaty of William Penn and the Indians***

Mildred Jerome  
1939, Wood relief

## **UNION CITY**

### ***The Lumberman***

Vincent Glinsky  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **VANDERGRIFT**

### ***Railroad Post Service***

Fred Hogg, Jr.  
1939, Oil on canvas

## **WAYNE**

### ***Anthony Wayne***

Alfred D. Crimi  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **WILKES BARRE**

### ***Anthracite Coal***

George Harding  
1941, Oil on canvas

## **WYOMISSING**

### ***Industry***

Cesare Stea  
1941, Terra-cotta relief  
*Note: Destroyed*

## **YORK [1]**

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

George Kratina  
1946, Wood

## **YORK [9]**

### ***Singing Thanksgiving***

Carl L. Schmitz  
1946, Wood