



Town of Aurora Historic Murals

by Rixford Jennings

East Aurora artist Rixford Upham Jennings created the murals in this hallway, which depict the history of the town, in 1978. They were part of the original Aurora History Museum at the Town Hall, which was located at the Roycroft Chapel at Main and South Grove Streets. The murals were moved in 2012 to the Southside Municipal Center and again in 2020 to their present location in the Aurora Municipal Center on Oakwood Avenue. We are proud to have been able to preserve these wonderful murals as a tribute to the accomplishments of those who came before us. We invite you to enjoy looking at the murals, but to ensure that they will be around for future generations, kindly avoid touching them. Please be sure to visit the Aurora History Museum in the rear lobby of the Municipal Center.

Office of the Historian

*Open Wednesdays and Thursdays
from 1-4 p.m., and by appointment.*

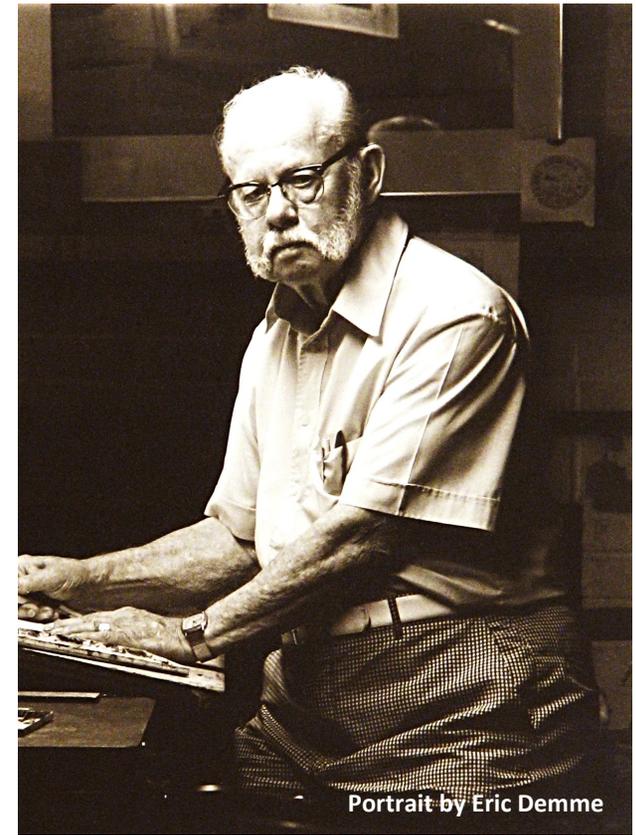
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About the Artist...

Rixford (Rix) Upham Jennings (American, 1906-1996), Western New York artist, painter, commercial illustrator, designer, etcher and teacher. Raised in East Aurora, NY, Rix was the son of Walter U. Jennings, a skilled coppersmith (“Chaser” hand-tooler) and master bookbinder at the Roycroft Campus, founded by writer-philosopher & businessman Elbert Hubbard. Rix studied at the Albright-Knox Art School in Buffalo, NY, the Buffalo School of Fine Arts, the Buffalo Art Institute, and later furthered his studies at the Art Center in Los Angeles, CA. His professional career as a commercial artist started in the mid 1920’s. Around 1945, he entered the animation school at Walt Disney Studios in Anaheim, CA, and worked on Disney’s movie, “Fantasia.” He moved back to Western New York in the 1950’s, where he remained with his wife, artist Sydney Jennings, and their children.

He traveled extensively and painted in New York City, Grand Teton National Park, New England as well as Western New York. Rix taught art classes at the University at Buffalo and held a position on the board of directors of the Professional Art Guild of Buffalo. Rix held active memberships in many art organizations including the American Watercolor Society (AWCS), the Buffalo Society of Artists (BSA), the Buffalo Print Club and the Philadelphia Watercolor Club. He was a founding member of the Roycrofters-at-Large Association (RALA), for which he designed the RALA Renaissance trademark, which is still in use today.



Portrait by Eric Demme

In East Aurora, Rix contributed numerous art works to various public and professional buildings throughout the community. In 1928 he designed stained glass windows for St. Matthias Episcopal Church. He created the East Aurora village seal and graphics for the town’s 1968 sesquicentennial celebration.

Rix is also remembered for murals featuring the Iroquois Nation at the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY. His work included illustrations for the West Point Academy yearbook, and the first ten years of covers for *Buffalo Spree* magazine. Rix died on January 20, 1996, at the age of 89.

“The selection of material used in these panels was based on a combination of historical importance and suitability to the overall design of each panel.”
—Rix Jennings, 1978

To tour the murals in chronological order, begin at the panel closest to the Assessor’s Office and make your way counterclockwise around the hall.

OUR EARLIEST HISTORY

- 500 B.C. Woodlanders
- 1603 Kahquah Indians
- 1645 Senecas
- 1700 Claimed by Massachusetts
- 1786 New York by Act of Congress
- 1797 Big Tree Treaty establishing Indian Reservations
- 1800 Joseph Ellicott Surveying for the Holland Land Co.



BEFORE THE SETTLERS CAME

In this large landscape, Rix Jennings imagines Aurora before the first settlers arrived in 1804.

THE MIDDLE ROAD

- 1804 First settlers arrive along the Middle Road, now Main Street, U.S. Route 20A

PIONEER SETTLERS

- 1805 Log Cabin
- 1807 (top) Oldest house still standing in the village, North Willow and Fillmore. (Moved from Hamburg St.)
- 1807 (bottom) Oldest still standing outside village, 595 South
- 1809 Griffins Mills Saw Mill
- 1810 First School, Olean near Main
- 1814 771 Main Street
- 1816 William Warren’s Tavern
- 1818 162 Pine Street
- 1819 (top) Greek Revival, 194 Olean
- 1819 (bottom) Nathaniel Fillmore Home, Olean at Lapham
- 1820 (top) 509 Main Street
- 1820 (middle) Pine Tree Tavern, Jewettville
- 1820 (bottom) 1778 Mill Road, Griffins Mills

THE TOWN GROWS

- 1815 The First Permanent General Store
- 1823 (left) 340 Main Street, Shearer House
- 1823 (right) 893 Main Street
- 1824 The Globe Hotel
- 1826 319 Main Street
- 1826-1830 President Millard Fillmore House, originally on Main Street, now on Shearer Avenue
- 1826-1830 Millard Fillmore Law Office, burned 1904. Present site of Vidler’s at 686 Main Street.
- 1829 Enos Adams Home, Olean Road
- 1830 (right) First Aurora Library, Main and Whaley
- 1830 (left) General Riley House, originally on Main Street, now on Oakwood near Elm.
- 1831 Presbyterian Church, Griffins Mills
- 1832 227 Olean Road
- 1838 Jewett Brick Yard, Jewettville
- 1840-1889 West End School, 61 Hamburg Street
- 1840 Original First Presbyterian Church, Main near Church
- 1846 Plank Road, Toll Gate on Seneca Street
- 1880 Feed Mill, Elm Street

WORLD-FAMOUS TROTTING MECCA

- 1855-1905 Hamlin Village Farm
- 1857 Gibson’s Store on The Circle
- 1864 Covered Bridge, Griffins Mills
- 1865 115 Buffalo Road
- 1866 34 Maple Street
- 1866 Aurora Woolen Mill, Mill Road
- 1867 Railroad Station, west side of the tracks
- 1872 The Persons House Hotel, Main near Church
- 1873 Adams Pioneer Farm, Olean Road
- 1874 Darbee and Peek Mill, Oakwood and King
- 1877 West End Fire Hall at The Circle
- 1879 Willink Post Office
- 1880 Persons Block (current 700 block, Main Street)
- 1882 Hamlin’s Horse Mambrino King (center oval)
- 1885 (left) Jewett Farm Covered Racetrack, Grover Road
- 1885 (right) 866 East Main Street
- 1897 Hammond Hotel at The Circle



TURN OF THE CENTURY

- 1880 Jewettville Station, Davis Road
- 1884 Baptist Church, Main Street and Temple Place
- 1891 First Electric Power Station, Elm Street
- 1893 Opera House, Main and Church Streets
- 1895 Original Roycroft Buildings, South Grove Street

- 1896 Pufferling Block, Main and Elm Streets
- 1897 First Methodist Church, Main and Center Streets
- 1900 Donner’s Creekside Park, South Street
- 1902 Immaculate Conception R.C. Church, Oakwood
- 1903 Mill Road Power Station and Dam
- 1905 Presbyterian Church, Main and Paine (burned 1933)

ROYCROFT ERA

- 1899 Building the Chapel
- 1900 Cabin in the Woods
- 1908 Well Sweep on the Roycroft Campus
- 1912 Elbert Hubbard on his horse, Garnet
- 1915 The Roycroft Inn



THE TOWN CHANGES

- 1907 Darren’s Drug Store, Hatch Hardware and Lange’s Hotel, Main near Hamlin
- 1913 Ice Cream Parlor, South Wales
- 1915 Union Free School, Main and North Grove, in front of the 1897 addition to the Aurora Academy building. Torn down in 1916 for a new (and current) building.
- 1916 East Aurora Country Club, Girdle Road
- 1917 The new Pennsylvania Railroad Station
- 1928 (top) Baker Memorial United Methodist Church
- 1928 (bottom) St. Matthias Episcopal, Main and Maple
- 1929 East Aurora Village Hall, Main and Paine
- 1932 Union Free School District #1, Main and North Grove
- 1933 West Falls Library
- 1935 First Presbyterian Church (rebuilt), Main and Paine
- 1941 Aurora Players Roycroft Pavilion, Hamlin Park

SUBURBIA

- 1959 Aurora Village Shopping Center, Grey Street
- 1963 Aurora Public Library, Main and Whaley
- 1966 Community Pool, South Street
- 1967 Aurora Park Nursing Home
- 1969 Emery Park Ski Lodge
- 1972 (top) Oakwood Plaza, at King
- 1972 (bottom) South Wales Community Hall
- 1978 Upper Main Street, East Aurora



TO OUR FUTURE

- 1965 Route 400, Main Street Exit
- 1971 East Aurora High School and BOCES, Center Street
- 1977 Fisher-Price World Headquarters, Girard Avenue
- 1978 Immaculate Conception R.C. Church, Oakwood