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Government and Private Agencies Team up to Restore Historic Mural

Mural Created Under 1930s Federal Arts Project

NOAA Fisheries Service, the City of Gloucester, the Gloucester Committee for the Arts and Oliver Brothers Fine Art Restoration are pleased to announce the successful restoration of one of seven murals painted by Gloucester artists for the Hovey School under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Federal Art Project. The mural, which is owned by the City of Gloucester and until recently hung in Gloucester's Stage Fort Park visitor center, will now be on display in NOAA Fisheries Service's Northeast Regional Office in Gloucester.

"We are really grateful to NOAA for providing the funding to complete this important restoration effort," said Gloucester Mayor Carolyn Kirk. "I also want to thank the **Gloucester Committee for the Arts** for working so diligently to find a good home for this wonderful representation of our city and hope that this stimulates further interest from other funders to help us restore our other lovely murals."

The 16-foot mural painted by Oscar Anderson, had deteriorated due to exposure to cold, damp weather conditions in the winter months when the visitor center was closed. Gloucester has one of the largest collections of WPA murals in the state, many in serious need of repair. These murals reflect the combined efforts of a vibrant local arts community and a generous program of the Federal Government during a difficult time in our history, when the country was suffering from the devastating effects of the Great Depression.

Oliver Brothers Fine Art Restoration, of Beverly and Boston, worked on the mural in their Beverly restoration studio. Greg Bishop, one of two co-owners of Oliver Brothers, said that "this was definitely one of more challenging projects that Oliver Brothers has worked on recently. The sheer size of the mural presented numerous technical issues that were both challenging and interesting to deal with." Peter Tysver, Greg Bishop's partner, a lifelong Gloucester resident, has been immersed in the Cape Ann Arts Scene since he was a young man. Throughout his 42 year career at Oliver Brothers, Mr. Tysver has restored paintings by such Cape Ann artists as , Fitz Henry Lane, D.Jerome Elwell, Childe Hassam, J. H. Twachtman, A. T. Hibbard, Frederick Mulhaupt, W. Lester Stevens, Emile Gruppe, Anthony Thieme, Gordon Grant, and Oscar Andersen.

"The Gloucester Committee for the Arts is pleased to have played a role in saving this mural! The WPA murals are an important part of Gloucester's great history and heritage. We thank NOAA for making this restoration a reality and for helping the City and the Committee for the Arts in their ongoing efforts to preserve these wonderful works of art for future generations. The Committee also acknowledges the support of Mayor Carolyn Kirk, Christine Pantano, and City Attorney, Suzanne Egan, in helping us fulfill this goal," said Judith Hoglander, chairperson, Gloucester Committee for the Arts.

The 1930s in Gloucester were a lively time for the arts. Important American artists had been coming to the city regularly since about the 1880s, after Fitz Henry Lane had make his mark and drawn Winslow Homer, William Morris Hunt and others who planted the seeds of a flourishing art colony. By the 1930s, artists of the stature of John Sloan, Stuart Davis, Milton

Avery, Marsden Hartley, and Edward Hopper had spent a great deal of time in the community too. For about 100 years, this was one of the most important places in this country for the development of American art.

Oscar Anderson, originally from Gotland, Sweden, settled in Gloucester in 1908 and opened a gallery on Rocky Neck. He was the first vice president of the Gloucester Society of Artists when it formed in 1922, and then was president for many years. Anderson's WPA murals were in the Hovey and Central Grammar Schools, both now made into housing. His style is the least classical of the Gloucester muralists, softer and more ethereal, and his subject matter less idealized.

Restoration efforts over the past eight months have included stabilizing the work for safe transfer to the restoration site, cleaning, removing the wrinkles and buckling, adhering a new linen canvas to the piece and repairing areas of the painting which had undergone the most significant deterioration.

“NOAA Fisheries Service has called Gloucester its home for over 200 years and we are delighted to help the city in this preservation effort,” said Patricia Kurkul, northeast regional administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service. “Art, like our fishing industry are the founding trades of this coastal community.”

Gloucester Committee for the Arts mission is to further the City's deep cultural heritage and promote its contemporary arts by: maintaining Gloucester's WPA murals and other City-owned art; developing and promoting educational programs; establishing awards and honors that recognize local artists, including the position of Gloucester Poet Laureate; implementing a City-wide public art policy and commissioning process; developing mutually beneficial arts partnerships; encouraging the creation and promotion of arts projects created in and/or about Gloucester; advising City officials of the value of a diverse, cultural life for all citizens; and encouraging arts programs within the public schools.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

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