

The first agricultural fair in Flos-Medonte Townships was held in 1860

by Jessie Thompson
Flos Agriculture
Society

Hillsdale being situated on the Penetang Road was an important stop on the stage route and the business and social centre of the entire area of Medonte and Flos Townships.

The first agriculture fair was held at Hamilton Inn at Lot 60, Con. 1, Flos Township, (in Hillsdale) under the combined efforts of the settlers of Medonte and Flos in 1860. It is recorded that the first fair was well-attended with great merry-making. Thereafter it became an annual event but after the tavern license of the Hamilton Inn, taken out in 1839, had been cancelled in 1860, the site of fair was moved to new locations in and around the Village of Hillsdale.

From an historical standpoint, the most important document to be preserved in respect to the fair is a list of officers and subscribers to "The Medonte and Flos Agriculture Society for 1870 reads as follows: President - John Johnston; Vice-President - Arthur Craig; Secretary - William Harvey; Treasurer - John Craig; Directors - James Small, John Fitzgerald, William Johnston, John Ritchie, James Greenlaw, William Nay, John Craig, William Harvey, James Johnston.

At a meeting held on July 26, 1870, it was agreed that the fair be held on Oct. 14, 1870.

In the 1870's fairs were held at Hillsdale along Gloucester Road on the lot where Jos. Lea's house now stands. Rows of pens for sheep, pigs, and calves were situated along the roadside. Other livestock was displayed on the lot. Hillsdale at that time was a thriving community and provided every accommodation required by "Fair" visitors.

In the early 1880's the fair was held on the land south of the Presbyterian Cemetery. A longshed was there for the purpose of exhibiting produce and horses were shown in John Faragher's barn. A race track was in the field and horses were shown along the road.

The first fair

In 1881 the first fair was held in the Village of Elmvale; the locale being changed from Hillsdale at that date.

The following officers were chosen to form the Agriculture Society for 1891: President - R. Graham; Vice-president - Wm. Mills; Directors - John Anderson, Thos. D. Cooper, Thos. Ritchie, W. Quantz, W. Spring, Jno. Rowat, Harvey Maguire, Harvey Henry Geo. Hickling; Secretary - R. H. Middleton; Treasurer - W.A. Sneath; (Taken from Elmvale Advocate of 1891).

A notice to this effect appeared in The Chronicle and North Simcoe Advocate, now The Lance, issued in Elmvale on Aug. 17, 1893. The notice stated that: "The Flos Agriculture Society will hold its 12th Annual Exhibition in Driving Park (now Agriculture Park), Elmvale on Tues., Wed., Thurs., October 10, 11, and 12. The directors are putting forth every effort to make this the greatest exhibition ever held here."

Prior to a permanent site being obtained it was customary to have fairs in farmers' fields. At different times, fairs were held on the Paterson property, N¹/₂ lot 5, Con. 8, and on Thos. Ritchie's farm near the site of the former Public School. The building used to display exhibits is now used by Mr. Earl Drysdale as a garage. It was situated on the property owned by Mrs. R.A. Cooper and occupied then by Mr. McCrimmon, a wheelwright.

Permanent grounds

About 1885 the present "fair grounds" was put in shape and the same year a grant of \$500 was received from the Simcoe County Council. Little is

now known of the officers who guided the association through the early days but it is certain that "Big John" Ritchie was then president. For the first eight or nine years a large tent was used to display exhibits.

The first and only Agriculture Hall was finished in time for the Fair in 1906. Wm. Rowley did the carpenter work and Albert Ganton put in the cement floor and foundation. This building, a large two-storey structure, was erected on the south east corner of the Agriculture Park. It was a frame building which became weather-beaten with age. To the east end was a long one-storey extension with a stage and office along the east end. In this part, there was enough room to seat 1,000 persons and 400 new chairs arrived in time for the concert in 1906. In the winter, the extension part was used for a curling rink.

In the early 1900's, the concert on the closing night was an important feature of the fair. Entertainers were brought in from large centres and presented concerts of the highest calibre. On two occasions the Forty-eighth Highlanders' Band rendered highly successful performances. The one of 1908 consisted of seventeen numbers. Admissions: 75c, 50c, and 35c.

Trains brought visitors

At fair time special trains ran from Barrie to Elmvale stopping at all intermediate stations carrying visitors to the fair. Such train service was offered in the early 1900's before the arrival of the automobile. The attendance at the fair was great and in 1905, it was stated that 5,000 had attended on the final day.

The year 1952, saw the Elmvale Memorial Arena first used as a display area for the fair exhibits. The old two-storey building was cut down to one storey and moved north to a new location where it became a shed for livestock and the other part was dismantled and the lumber used for sheds.

A grandstand was built in 1901 near the southwest corner of the "Fair Grounds". Many patrons, protected from sun and rain, watched the horse races from it. In the 1920's the grandstand was burned. Incidentally a stable for the race horses was located under the grandstand. Before the arena was built, the race track was a half-mile circular one; the fair buildings were outside the track. Livestock was led across to be judged and midway attractions were in inside the race course as well.

Students play role

In 1948, the Junior School Fair was formed to encourage the pupils to take an interest in bettering farm and garden produce. Mr. Stewart Page, Barrie, gave much advice and encouragement to the School Fair and the junior exhibitors. This fair was successful and was later an important segment of the Fall Fair.

In 1956, the Elmvale Curling Club was given permission to erect a Curling Rink joined to the west of the Arena. At fair time, it is used to display baking, needle work, Women's Institute exhibits, flowers, and industrial arts displays by the high school students.

In 1959, the Elmvale Fair celebrated its 100th Anniversary. To commemorate this important occasion new Entrance Gates were erected. The following is printed on the gate plaques, "Flos Agriculture Society 1859-1959; Presented by Ontario Dept. of Agriculture in Recognition of 100 years' Service. Tuesday, Sept. 22, 1959, and Flos Agriculture Society 1859-1959; To Honour the Pioneers of this Community and all those who during The Past 100

Years, Have served the Community Agriculture. The Ontario Coat-of-arms is shown on both plaques.

Centennial year a success

In Centennial Year the fair was a great success with a very large attendance. A special centennial parade consisted of many articles common one hundred years ago; a surrey "with a fringe on top" with occupants dressed as they did in days gone by, horse and buggies, a "dog" churn belonging to Mr. F. Bumstead, a steam engine elegant with a new coat of paint and brass shined up, a hand-fed thrasher, the old and the new fire engines and gasoline delivery trucks, the old, a horse-drawn Mrs. Clarence Ritchie, the Centennial Queen, rode in a buggy with her nephew, Jack Fleming. The queen, appropriately dressed in a gold-colour taffeta bridal gown of Mrs. Caston, Hillsdale, and was at least one hundred years old. She wore high-laced boots and an old-fashioned black bonnet worn many years ago by Mrs. Jno. Houden Sr. To complete her outfit, Mrs. Ritchie wore her own wedding gloves which matched her dress colour. Her companion

was dressed in tails and a black topper.

For very many years the school parade on the second day of the fair has

been described by many as the best in Simcoe County. The floats have been outstanding depicting national,

seasonal, current history, nursery rhymes, and many other topics. A great deal of planning and work go into obtaining

costumes and decorating floats that the pupils and teachers are to be commended for their efforts.

"Of the glory for the farmer at the Elmvale Country Fair"

Through the days of parching sunshine, through the days of drenching rain, We have wrestled with the meadow-grass, the garden truck, and grain, And at last we're on the journey for to claim our rightful share, Of the glory for the farmer at the Elmvale Country Fair.

You, that come from out the city, to see the horses race, Needn't think you know the pleasures of the country meeting place, For it's no one but the farmers have the good kind eyes to see What's the real inside good time at our Elmvale jubilee.

Mother brings her canned tomatoes, and they stand upon a shelf, And their name in printed letters, and the county judge himself Tries a spoonful, tries another, smiles and says, He'd like to state, "Those the tastiest tomatoes," that he ever, ever ate.

In the "Art" hall, where the ladies go to learn the latest stitch, Sister's fancy work exhibit, 'brodered' tablecloths and such, Draw a monstrous crowd of people and they praise it loud and free, 'Til it's all and all the greatest day in sister's history.

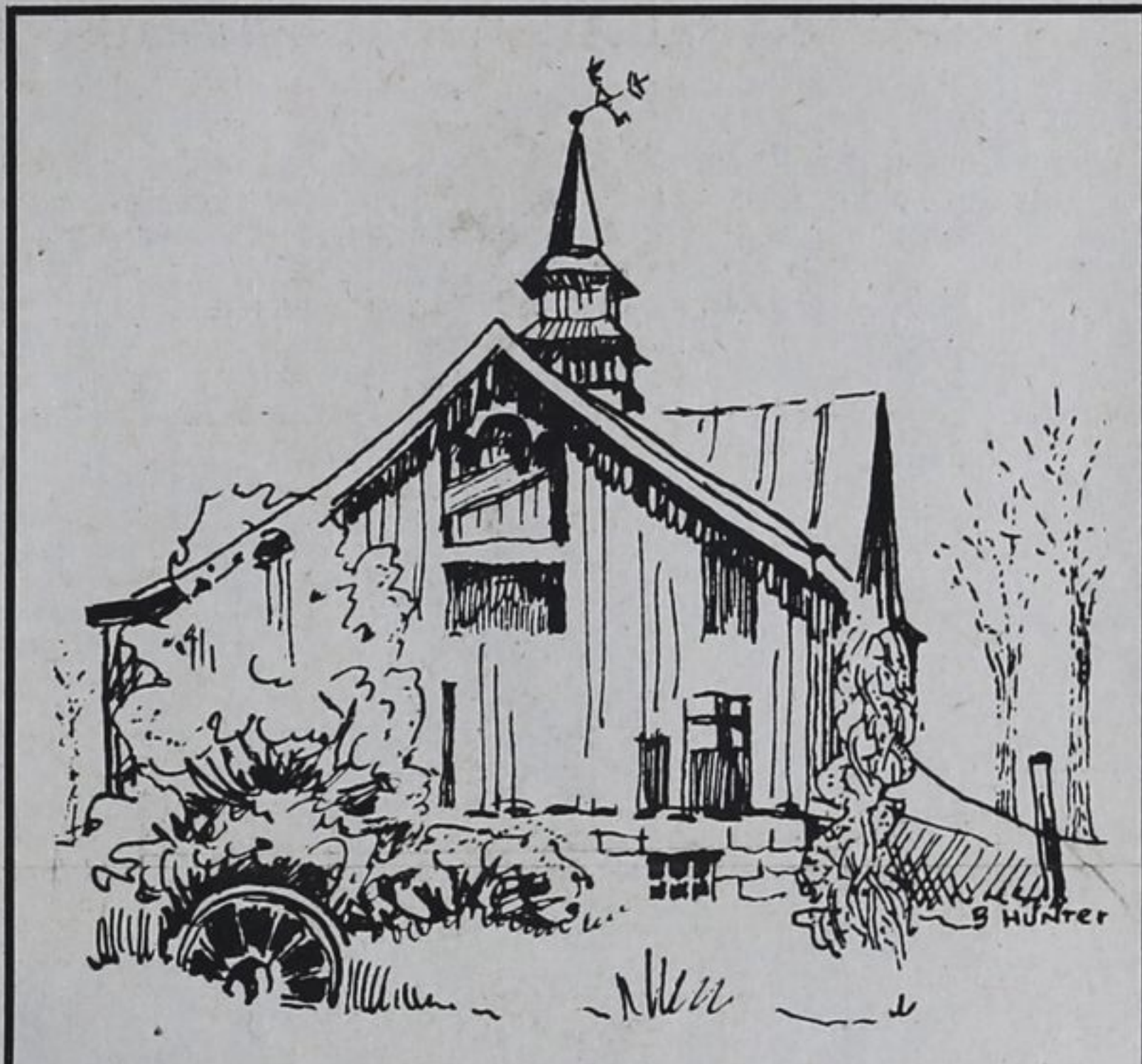
Down among the pens and stables and the heaps of fodder corn Daddy's got a spotted heifer with a ribbon on her horn; Bud has won the silver medal in the watermelon line, And the loudest crowing rooster in the poultry house is mine.

You may talk about Toronto and St. Louis, if you can, With their lakes and lordly buildings, and the camel caravan, But I'll show my crowing rooster against the best that you can dare, And I bet they haven't a chance to win at Elmvale Country Fair.

Past Fair presidents

The following is a list of the Flos Agriculture Fair Presidents and may not be complete:
1870-John Johnston (farmer, teacher);
John Ritchie (farmer);
Robert Peters (hardware merchant);
Richard Graham (farmer, councillor);
Walter Rowley (farmer);
George Fleming (farmer);
Stanley Tipping (creamery operator);
Thomas Smith (farmer, township clerk);
Walter Middleton

(farmer, township reeve, warden of Simcoe County);
Reginald Bertram (farmer);
Cecil French (teacher);
Earl Elliott (farmer);
Donald Bertram (farmer);
Lloyd Dunlop (Furniture dealer);
1975-Larry Clement (farmer).
Owing to the fire in the arena, there was no place to display exhibits, and for the first time in 115 years Elmvale held no Fair in 1975.



Drawing by Bev Hunter, Midland

The musical barn

The Musical Barn - one of Simcoe County's most famous landmarks - is gone now but fortunately many local artists like Midland's Bev Hunter have recorded it for posterity, even down to the cock-eyed weather-vane at the top of the 36 foot spire.

The Barn was built by a Scott, David Darling in 1856 at what used to be Eady Corners. There was a general store there and the sweet peas planted in the garden of that store still survive. They spring

up every year in wild profusion.

Local legend tells us that the barn's cupola was at one time fitted with glass windows and interior benches. The farm overseer was thus able to supervise labourers in the fields below in relative comfort.

Eby Sallows of Coldwater used to visit the farm in later years. He would climb into the cupola and play his accordion, and the music wafted over the valley.

In 1905 the CPR pur-

chased the right of way and cut off the approach to the barn, which had been bought by Andrew Walker. The structure was moved a couple of hundred yards in 1906, and placed on a stone foundation.

The graceful old building was torn down in the summer of 1973. Bev Hunter, a local artist and history buff sketched the barn before its demise, and was able to rescue the fine gothic window frames from the barn's peak.



Penetanguishene's rink fire - 1940

Centre d'Activités
Françaises
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DISQU'O-CENTRE

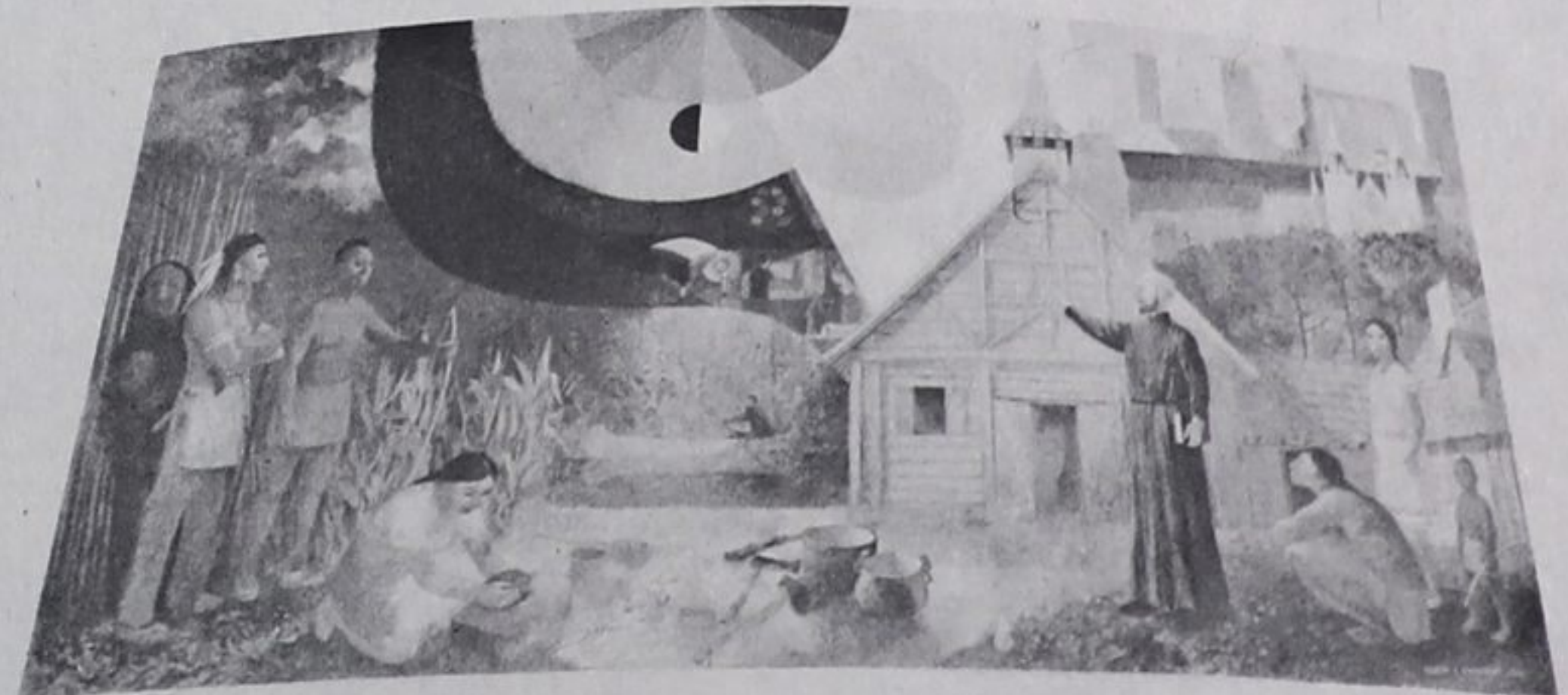
Pour la meilleure sélection de musique française, il faut visiter le Centre d'activités françaises.

Pensez-y, du vrai de vrai comme:

- René Simard
- Georges d'Or
- Mireille Mathieu
- Claude Léveillée
- Nana Mouskouri
- Paul Brunelle
- Beau Dommage
- Michel Fugain et le Big Bazar
- Harmonium
- et bien d'autres

RCA PRESENTS

HISTORICAL PAST along with FUTURISTIC DESIGN in this mural



This 9'x17' Mural can be viewed in our plant lobby

Artist Robert A. Patterson, has captured the history of Midland through early Huron days and combined it with the modern technology of color television.

Two hunters are shown, one with a bow, the other a rifle, in itself an expanse of time to the coming of the white man. A medicine man is on the left. A woman grinds corn into flour and near her is Indian pottery, moving over to the iron pots and implements, including an anvil, later brought from Europe. Included is a delicate vase.

In the left-centre is an archaeologist (Wilfred Jung) and an assistant depicting the efforts to excavate and reconstruct Fort Saint Marie I and the Indian village.

The fort is represented by a portion of the palisade and the church with Father Jean de Brebeuf, one of five priests subsequently martyred in the area while serving their beliefs. He and Gabriel Lalemant were killed in 1649.

Shortly after, the fort was abandoned and it wasn't until over two hundred years later that Midland again came into its own with lumbering and grain elevators and the railway. Grain

elevators and shipping are represented and also the Martyrs Shrine the centre of pilgrimages to the area.

This moves to the present day technology and, in particular, the color television industry, represented by a blue-green-red spectrum, with the black and white "moon" below, showing together the move from black and white television as well as representing the moon and man's quest. To the right of it the earth is represented, with both being touched by the color spectrum denoting the range of communications.

Above the "earth" is the Greek symbol for thought, mathematics, and proportions.

The green, blue and red dots to be seen in the mural are an enlargement of a minute portion of a television screen; a technician looks through a magnifying glass a amid shapes representing photography and development of the television tube."