

Flathead War Party

The Story Behind the Hamilton, Montana Post Office Mural

by

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INTRODUCTION

Between 1933 and 1943, four separate Federal art programs operated in an effort to bring struggling artists back into the economy under the Works Progress Administration (WPA); the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), the Federal Art Project (FAP), and the Section on Fine Arts (SFA).¹ Though contemporary scholarship on New Deal-era art programs tends to lump these programs together in a jumble of acronyms, each was a distinct entity and followed its own rules, regulations, and goals.² The PWAP was funded by the Civil Works Administration, and divided the country into sixteen regions, each chaired by a Regional Committee. The program was concluded in June 1934. Over seven months, the PWAP employed 3,749 artists nationally at the cost of approximately \$1,312,000.³ TRAP concluded in June 1938, having spent \$833,784 for 10,000 easel paintings, 43 sculptures and 89 murals.⁴ The FAP became the visual arts arm of the Great Depression-era WPA. Funded under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, it operated from August 29, 1935, to June 30, 1943. This project employed more than 5,000 artists at its peak in 1936, and probably double that number over the eight years of its existence. It produced 2,566 murals, more than 100,000 easel paintings, approximately 17,700 sculptures, nearly 300,000 fine art prints, and about 22,000 plates for the Index of American Design, along with innumerable posters and objects of craft with a federal investment of \$35,000,000.⁵

In October 1934, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. established the Section of Painting and Sculpture, known thereafter, not as an acronym, but as “The Section.” The Treasury oversaw the funds for building new federal buildings, and thus could allocate funding for murals and sculptures in an effort to “decorate” them. As a general rule, 1% of the budget for each new federal building was designated for murals and sculptures. In contrast to the PWAP, the goal of the Section was to commission public art on quality alone.

⁶ In addition to post offices, Section projects included the murals in the Department of the Interior and other federal buildings in Washington, DC. George Biddle, an artist and former schoolmate of President Roosevelt at the Groton School and Harvard,⁷ in a concern for the dire economic circumstances faced by artists in the Great

Depression, had appealed to the President to do something to provide artists with such relief.⁸ Biddle himself would later be recruited to create the murals in the Federal Justice Department. Virginia Mecklenburg, Senior Curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, says of his work, "The whole scheme of all the murals [done by Biddle at the DOJ] was really a grand epic view of the role of law in American society."⁹

In the fall of 1939, the Section announced a "48 States Competition" with the goal of placing a Section mural in every new post office in every state of the Union. The Section was to be overseen by Edward Bruce and operated at the ground level by the Assistant Chief of the Section, Edward Beatty Rowan, nationally known as a proponent of the arts. Rowan received a Master of Fine Arts degree from Harvard University (1928). "In a pilot program, he established the Community Art Center of Cedar Rapids with a \$75,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (1928)."¹⁰ During its nine years of operation, the Section under Edward Rowan commissioned 1,124 federally-funded murals at a total cost of \$1,472,199.¹¹

FEDERAL INFLUENCES ON POST OFFICE MURAL ART AND ARTISTS

Meghan Navarro observed "Section administrators advocated for mural scenes that would appeal to local audiences through regional imagery, and would uphold all that the American dream encompassed. The New Deal programs explored what it meant to be American, and how to move forward into a positive future without ignoring the scars of the Depression."¹² Jennifer McLellan, Assistant Professor of Art History at Northern Arizona University, assessed the Section to have "carefully controlled the artists' production, offering advice and instructions throughout the entire production process."¹³ WPA-era artist, George Biddle stated "for the first time in history many thousands of artists are working for the government almost without censorship."¹⁴

This can be seen in the correspondence regarding the evolution of the Hamilton, Montana Post Office mural. It was not only the Section who exerted influence over muralists during this time. Other opinions were to step up to serve as a natural democratic clearinghouse. In some communities local voices suggested changes to the preliminary drawings before the mural had even made it onto the walls. Postmasters also had a high degree of influence over murals, and Section officials frequently advised artists to consult with them before submitting designs so they could determine what subject matter would be most positively received in the community.¹⁵ Despite the Section's concerns about designs and subtle censorship, it had not seriously considered the reactions of local people. Not only did citizens have defined tastes about what they would accept, they had distinct preferences for the artists as well. The Section utilized competitions to save money and appoint favored artists to paint in another town. Sharing art, bringing it to the common people, proved a larger project than they

expected. Rather than allowing the average citizens to live with their decisions, the Section was free to impose its own will and suggested changes in the design or artists.¹⁶

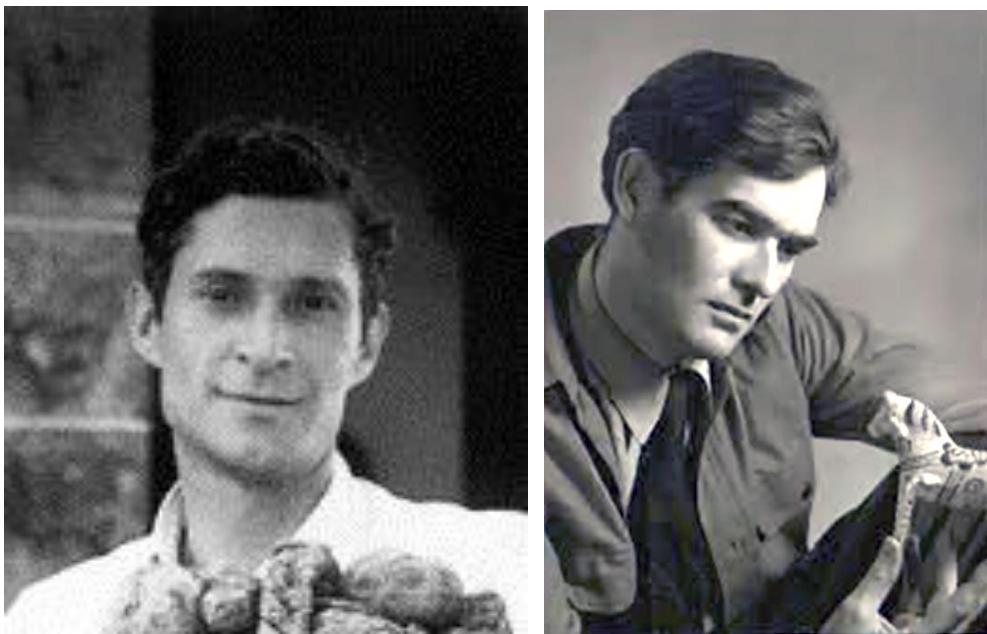


Fig. 1. Edward Rowan and Henry Meloy¹⁷

The important point is that the competitions proved to be rarely truly democratic. It has been claimed that Edward Rowan never hesitated to unilaterally “appoint” an artist to paint. In fact, three artists won commissions from the submissions to paint a mural for the city of Glasgow, Montana, and the second artist chosen from the Glasgow entries, Montana native Henry Meloy, who taught art at Columbia University in New York City, was then appointed by Rowan to design the Hamilton post office mural who wrote to him stating that Section officials deeply admired his design (Fig. 1).¹⁸ The record files show no correspondence from the town or postmaster regarding Meloy’s commission or mural theme.¹⁹ The federal government had entertained noble ideas in its efforts to paint America, and the bureaucracy established a process to implement their plans. However, the program neglected to take human nature into account.

AMERICAN INDIAN LIFE AND CULTURE AS SUBJECT IN WPA-ERA MURALS

Almost 400 of the approximately 1,600 New Deal-era commissioned murals depicted American Indians and the variety of approaches to their representation shows the wide range of impressions about American Indian history and culture that were held by the artistic and public imagination of 1930s America.²⁰ The fact that most of the selected artists knew little or nothing about these original citizens of America seemed not to be a concern as a requirement for appointments to create post office murals about their history and culture. Predictably, scenes of isolated Indian life were the most popular thematic choice, closely followed by instances of peaceful contact with pioneers, as well as conflict with those pioneers and other tribes. Only 24 post office murals are the work of American Indian artists themselves.²¹ American Indians had only recently received the privilege of U.S.

citizenship in 1924 under the Indian Citizenship Act, but the power of states' rights of denial allowed the American Indian right to vote in all states to lag until 1962. They were understandably hesitant to leap into a clear risk of controversy with the government in the 30s and 40s as expressed in Elizabeth Mentzer's 1989 University of Montana thesis:

"Another incident which the Glasgow [Montana] citizenry never knew about was that James L. Long, a frequent contributor to the magazine, Indians at Work, and a member of the Assiniboine tribe, desired to have the Native Americans play an active role in the Glasgow mural. His letter to Rowan failed to state if he preferred a Native American to paint the mural or if several should pose as models for the artist. Rowan responded promptly, stressing that the Section had tried without much success to have Native Americans work for them. Rowan appreciated the interest shown and implied that if the Native Americans wanted to paint a mural, the Section would willingly study the matter. Rowan wrote to Long: This office in the past has made an effort to discover American Indian artists in your region and has not been successful. If you have Indian painters in mind will you kindly send me their names and addresses at your earliest convenience. A final possibility Rowan considered for the Glasgow mural was a design done for the Forty-Eight States' Mural Competition depicting a legend which explained the origins of an Indian tribe. If this design should prove acceptable to Glasgow residents, the artist would receive an invitation to paint Glasgow's mural. When a Native American artist failed to materialize, the responsibility for the mural decoration fell on Glasgow."²²

Although it does not appear that the Section ever thought of the depiction of Indians as a controversial issue, they subtly encouraged the chance of depicting violent conflict within the original competition guidebook when looking at depicting Indian interference with the mail wagons. The controversial mural series "Dangers of the Mail" by Frank Mechau which is displayed at the Ariel Rios Federal Building in Washington DC, once the original post office and now the home of the Environmental Protection Agency, is a case in point. This mural has even incited the concern of the 21st century Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) who attempted to sue the government for its removal. Since the Section took no official position on the negative, and in most cases inaccurate depiction of Indians in murals, "Indian scenes" became highly popular subject matter when expressing the popular memory of a small town about its history within the American experience of Manifest Destiny.

"As a result, complex and varied depictions of Native peoples grace the walls of post offices across the country. Some were portrayed as part of a mythical, legendary past that separated them from factual history and glossed over the present-day realities of many Indian communities. Alternatively, they became symbolic of a past that was slowly fading out of non-Native memory and recognition. Murals became vehicles for artists to explore the role of Indians within their own concepts of history, culture, and the American art narrative."²³

Thus, "All of these visual stories, created as a result of this national contest, were the work of mostly non-Native artists whose chosen themes were also influenced by the desires of local post office communities. Many of the artists were unfamiliar with the region connected to the post office they were assigned, and most, unless they were Native artists themselves, were unfamiliar with American Indian culture. While some mural images succeeded in capturing the importance of Native peoples in the American historic tableau as a result of an increased national consciousness, others were based on rumor, legend, and stereotype resulting in dramatic and sometimes bizarre inaccuracy. Post office murals across the United States are telling and re-telling these American Indian stories to the general public every day."²⁴



Fig. 2. Hamilton, Montana Post Office Mural painted by Henry Meloy²⁵
[Used with the permission of the United States Postal Service®.]

Flathead War Party, The Hamilton, Montana Post Office Mural

Artist Henry Meloy was appointed to create the mural at Hamilton, Montana (Fig. 2). Although born in Townsend, Montana, Meloy's career was mostly centered in New York City influenced by the American Ashcan School under Robert Henri followed by a period of Abstract Expressionism. Meloy chose to illustrate

an historic story about the Flathead Nation of Indians [known today as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nations] as they prepared to battle against the Blackfeet, who had come into the valley and stolen some of their horses. The “Flathead” brandish spears and shields; five are mounted, although two Indians who are not on horseback appear to be an integral part of the action. To add a measure of authenticity to his mural, Meloy included the Bitterroot Mountains with an emphasis on Mt. Como, thus pinpointing the locale satisfactorily.²⁶

While the Native Americans dominated the mural, Meloy included a White man in period garb who stands nearby watching the activity without participating. This was a device also used in other post office murals; a method to include a cameo portrait of the artists themselves after the style of Michelangelo. Sometimes mural models were chosen as a political favor to important persons in the town where the post office was located such as the use of the face of the postmaster of Natick, Massachusetts to represent Captain Prescott and that of a local politician as model for Puritan missionary John Eliot himself in the mural, “John Eliot Speaks to the Natick Indians.” [Elizabeth Mentzer’s 1989 research discovered the White man was modeled after Frank Mechau, a longtime friend and fellow artist of Henry Meloy and the creator of the controversial murals at the Washington, D.C. EPA building. The raised arms, shields, spears, flying capes and general action actually duplicate in some instances those found in Mechau’s *Dangers of the Mail* mural. In 1938, Mechau also painted *Long Horns* in the Ogallala, Nebraska Post Office, commissioned by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts, and in 1940, *Ranchers of the Panhandle Fighting Prairie Fire with Skinned Steer* for the post office in Brownfield, Texas.²⁷]

It is interesting to review the correspondence between the artist Meloy, and the Federal Government representative, Rowan, concerning the mural development found in the National Archives Record Group 121 – Montana, Box No. 60, Entry 133.²⁸

September 18, 1941. Letter to Henry Meloy in Townsend, Montana, from Edward B. Rowan, Assistant Chief, Section of Fine Arts. “Dear Mr. Meloy: The Section of Fine Arts invites you to submit designs for a mural decoration for Hamilton, Montana, Post Office on the basis of competent designs submitted in the Glasgow, Montana, Post Office mural competition.”²⁹

September 21, 1941. Letter to Edward Rowan from Henry J. Meloy. “I am very sorry the local committee in Glasgow “couldn’t see” my design, but it is most pleasant and compensating to know that it was liked by the section of Fine Arts. Also your invitation to submit a design for a mural in Hamilton [Post Office] Montana arrived. I have begun research and my brother [Peter Meloy] in Montana is digging up material on Hamilton and the Bitter Root Valley.”

October 2, 1941. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. "The Postmaster has been informed of your commission so you may feel free to write to him relative to suitable subject matter, to check the mural space and to determine if there is a lighting fixture in the space. It might be possible for you to use your Indian design in Hamilton and I enclose herewith a photograph for you to send to the Postmaster to see if the subject matter would be appropriate. I should very much like to see the design carried out. I remember lunching with you very well but do not recall which of the two gentlemen you were."

February 3, 1942. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. "Our records indicate that the last communication we have had from you was September 29, 1941, at which time you accepted the invitation. Kindly let me have a progress report on this work at your earliest convenience."

May 23, 1942. Letter to Rowan from Meloy. "I am sending by express two sketches of the mural for the post office in Hamilton, Montana. After constructing a scale model of the post office lobby, I found that the painting should be kept as light in key as possible without losing the feeling of substance throughout the forms...I chose the subject matter after considerable research on the present aspect and historical background of Hamilton and its environs. It represents a group of Flathead Indians making up a war party to fight against an approaching band of their traditional enemies, the Blackfeet of Northern Montana. The incident, though not specific as to place or date, is one that happened many times in the Bighorn Mountains, as these two tribes were constantly at war. The subject lends itself to a fine arrangement of movement and color, expressive of the Indian and wild mountain country."

May 28, 1942. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. "Permit me to acknowledge the receipt in this office of a small preliminary sketch and large three-inch scale color sketch, representing your proposal for a mural decoration of the Hamilton, Montana, Post Office. I must urge you not to delay in the progress of the work."³⁰

June 2, 1942. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. "It is my feeling that the comments [of my previous letter] still hold. The large color sketch which you submitted was too thin in painting quality to be interesting. The finished work need not be carried as low in value as the small color sketch, but some happy medium between this and the large sketch should be established."

June 3, 1942. Letter to Rowan from Meloy. "I share somewhat your feeling that the small sketch is richer in tonal value than the larger one; but I would like to say in behalf of the large one that after a lot of eye-testing

with many small sketches in a box representing the lobby (color lighting, etc.) I was convinced that the final mural – to be most effective as a decoration in the room must be kept as light in key as possible. In painting the large sketch (which I did in water color and then varnished) I kept it meager in segmentation to get as much luminosity as possible. My idea in doing this was that in working from this sketch upon the final mural in oil, I would, because of the nature of the medium and my way of working go deeper in value in bringing the forms to their final definition. As to the landscape, which you found weak, it was my desire to find some large shapes which worked well with the horses and figures and work it out in detail when I was actually in Montana in sight of such mountains as to have it organically “right.” In my letter to you sent with the sketches [May 23rd] I did not suggest this and am not surprised that you felt a lack of character in the background.”



Fig. 3. Photograph of Henry Meloy with *Flathead War Party*, collection of the Meloy family.³¹

August 11, 1942. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. “Reference is made to the photograph of the full size cartoon [sketch] of the mural decoration for Hamilton, Montana, Post Office. It is the feeling of the members of this office that the figures are not drawn with very much strength and that anything you can do to give them the vitality promised in the large color sketch which you submitted in competition will be to the good. Frankly, I was a little shocked at the weakness of the figures and want to urge you to continue strengthening them in the final painting.”³²

September 18, 1942. Letter to Rowan from Meloy. "With this letter I am sending you the required photograph and negative of my painting. Your comment in your last letter [August 11] and also your suggestions have been in my mind throughout the painting and I have profited from them." (Fig. 3 shows Meloy painting the mural.)

September 24, 1942. Letter to Meloy from Rowan. "Thank you for your letter of September 18 with your enclosure of a photograph and negative of the completed painting for Hamilton, Montana, Post Office. The photograph indicates that you have taken into account the suggestions offered in previous correspondence relative to this work and I am pleased to tell you that you may now proceed with the installation."

October 2, 1942. Letter to Rowan from Meloy. "I installed it last Sunday [September 27]. It looked good and the people of Hamilton who came in during the process and afterward seemed to like it and feel that it finished and enhanced their Post Office Building...I hope the Section of Fine Arts somehow keeps intact thru this hectic time and continues its work in the peace time to come." [The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945. The United States entered the War on December 8, 1941.]

October 14, 1942. Letter from Rowan to Meloy. "Thank you for your letter of October 2. I was particularly pleased to learn of the happy reception of your work in Hamilton. You no doubt chose wisely in selecting the subject matter which was used."

October 27, 1942. Letter from H.G. Hunter, now Asst. Commissioner to Meloy. "Contract fulfilled and voucher for \$350 is attached."

October 27, 1942. Section of Fine Arts Form requesting cleaning instructions from the artist [Henry Meloy completed this form.].

1. *To insure the proper cleaning of your mural will you kindly state in detail the recommendations for such work.* Hamilton Montana is not a smoky town. The mural will stay clean for a long time. It can be wiped clean of dust with a damp cloth after a year or so.
2. *If you gave your mural a coat of varnish at the time it was completed, please state the name of the manufacturer and trade name of the varnish used.* The painting was varnished with Grumbacher's retouching varnish, which is not a final varnish. But can be varnished in a year or so with a heavier varnish. I hope to do it myself on some future trip to Hamilton. [There are no notes indicating Meloy applied a final varnish.]

THE COMMUNITY REACTION

Daily Missoulian September 28. “Action Picture of Salish Indians Ready to Head Off Marauders”

Hamilton, September 27, “A mural that tells a story of early Indians in the Bitter Root Valley, was hung Sunday in the Hamilton Federal Building’s post office lobby. The painting is the work of Montana-born artist Henry Meloy of Townsend. Hung on the lobby’s west wall, the mural is a scene of splendid action. Some twenty Indians are gathered, the young braves mounted on their ponies, ready to charge after a thieving horde of Blackfeet savages. The Blackfeet have come into the valley from the north to steal ponies and a scout having forewarned the Salish, there is a quick making-ready-for-fight. A lone white man with long golden hair, is somewhat passive figure, but he apparently counsels with the Indians. The wet Bitter Root Mountains, painted in a general rugged background feature the Como Peak.” [The Salish were the first recorded inhabitants of the Bitter Root Valley. They are related to the Coastal Salish, as a small band they traveled east from the Columbia Basin area. Originally called the Flatheads by Lewis and Clark, the tribe's name for itself was and is Salish, which means The People. The Bitter Root Valley became the primary wintering grounds for the Salish and other smaller tribes.]

IN CONCLUSION

The federal arts programs were generally considered to have succeeded in the governmental engagement of artistic communities across the whole of the country, and in creating greater and more widespread public interest in the arts than at any other time in history. Edward Bruce, first to oversee the Section of Fine Arts, stated that he “preferred murals that made him feel comfortable about America,” an attitude designed to prevent social criticism.³³ But to the contrary, they served as a venue to express closely-held biases and misunderstandings about all non-White Americans. Concerning American Indians, the mural images endure as indelible reflections of the specific ideas held in the early 20th century about their role in our national history, their relationship to foreign White settlers, and their unique culture.

NPM, NMAI, USPS COLLABORATIONS

In 2013, a History and Culture research team at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) examined the 1,630 black and white images of post office murals and sculptures from archived discs on loan from the United States Postal Service (USPS). The review showed that 400 of those murals contained images of American Indians, and that only 24 were actually created by American Indian artists. This review resulted in a project titled *Indians at the Post Office: Native Themes in New Deal-Era Murals*, addressing both the virtues and the inaccuracies in these 400 historical depictions which was then became content for a web-

based virtual exhibition on the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (NPM) website.³⁴ This virtual exhibition is an example of a new kind of “digital humanities” lesson, looking at murals depicting the political, economic and cultural lives of American Indians. Areas presented in the exhibition include the following themes: Indian Lifeways and the Native Artist, Indian Lifeways and the Non-native Artist, Encounters, Trade and Commerce, Evangelization, Conflict, Treaties, The Myth of Extinction, Legend and Lore. Now approaching its third online iteration, it has garnered 20,000 viewers internationally.

In 2001, The Smithsonian NPM and NMAI along with the USPS also developed an online virtual stamp exhibition titled, *The American Indian in Stamps: Profiles in Leadership Accomplishments and Culture Celebration*.³⁵ The stamps, supported by images of artifacts and cultural histories from NMAI, illustrated Profiles in Leadership, Restoring Economies, and American Indian Arts as Renaissance of Traditions. In 1990 the United States Postal Service issued a stamp illustrating an historic “Flathead” headdress made of felt and large golden eagle tail feathers alongside ermine skin and white cow-tail hair tied to the end of each feather. (Fig. 4) The headdress in this illustration of that stamp is similar to the one in Henry Meloy’s mural.



Fig. 4. Flathead Headdress

[Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Image No. 1993_2015_0033_4]

¹ O'Connor, Francis V., 1969, *Federal support for the visual arts: the New Deal and now; a report on the New Deal art projects in New York City and State with recommendations for present day Federal support for the visual arts to the National Endowment for the Arts*, Greenwich: New York Graphic Society.

² Kalfatovic, Martin R. 1994. *The New Deal Fine Arts Projects: A Bibliography, 1933-1992*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press. <https://archive.org/details/newdealfineartsp00kalf> accessed 7/30/2015.

³ Greengard, Stephen Neil, Ellen Sragow, Gustave von Groschwitz, Jerry Roth, Riva Helfond, Harold Lehman, Minna Citron and Harry Gottlieb, 1986, “Ten Crucial Years: The Development of United States Government Sponsored Artists Programs 1933-1943 A Panel Discussion by Six WPA Artists,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 1:40-61.

⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. “Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP)”, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Treasury-Relief-Art-Project>.

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. “WPA Federal Art Project”, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/WPA-Federal-Art-Project>.

⁶ Watson, Forbes, 1939, “New Forces in American Art,” *The Kenyon Review* 1(2):119-134.

⁷ Stevens, Robert L. and Jared A. Fogel, 2010. “Conflict and Consensus: New Deal Mural Post Office Art,” *National Science Journal* 33(2): 160-165.

⁸ Mathews, Marcia M., 1974, “George Biddle’s Contribution to Federal Art,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society Washington, D.C.* 49:493-520.

⁹ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98783331> accessed August 7, 2015.

¹⁰ <http://projects.mtmercy.edu/stonecity/artists/rowan.html> accessed August 7, 2015

¹¹ Greengard, Stephan Neil, et al, 1986

¹² Navarro, Meghan, A. 2015. Indians at the post office: New Deal era murals and their legacy of American Indian representation. *The 2015 Congress Book*, The American Philatelic Congress. p. 59.

¹³ McLellan, Jennifer. 2009. *A New Deal for Native Art: Indian Arts and Federal Policy, 1933-1943*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. P. 176.

¹⁴ Biddle, George. 1940. Art Under Five Years of Federal Patronage. *The American Scholar* 9(3):327-338.

¹⁵ Mentzer, Elizabeth. 2003. Made in Montana: Montana's Post Office Murals. *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 53(3):44-53.

¹⁶ Metzner, 1989, pp 81.

¹⁷ Edward Rowan as photographed in *Stone City Art Colony, Summer Faculty, 1933*, 11 x 14 inch silver print on paper by John W. Barry, Jr. from the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art Study Collection and Henry Meloy illustration found in “Henry Meloy: The Portraits, A Narrative of the Exhibition,” 2008 Kathryn L. Rodriguez. *Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers* (University of Montana Scholar Works), Paper 1250, p. 1.

¹⁸ <http://www.wpmurals.com/MtPOMrls.pdf> accessed August 7, 2015

¹⁹ Elizabeth Mentzer, 1989, *Made in Montana: Montana's Post Office Murals*, A thesis made in partial requirements of a Master’s Degree at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana, p 80.

²⁰ Park, Marlene and Gerald E. Markowitz. 1984. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; ---.Nd. Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz. Research material on New Deal art, circa 1974-1999. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

²¹ <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/indiansatthepostoffice/index.html> accessed July 29, 2015

²² Metzner, 1989, pp.63-64

²³ Navarro, Meghan A, 2015, pp 60.

²⁴ Starr, Sandra L., 2013. Preface, ‘About Indians at the Post Office and Murals as Public Art’, “Indians at the Post Office: Native Themes in New Deal-Era Murals”, <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/indiansatthepostoffice/index.html> accessed July 29, 2015

²⁵ Mural photograph taken by Thomas Lera July, 2015.

²⁶ Metzner, 1989, pp 105-106.

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Mechau. Accessed July 25, 2015

²⁸ From Record Group 121 – Records of the Public Buildings Service, concerning Federal Art Activities, Textual Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration, and its Predecessors. Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-43. Montana, Box No. 60, Entry 133.

²⁹ The letter also stated “Upon approval of your new design by the Commissioner of Public Buildings, a contract for the execution of the painting will be prepared for your signature. The proposed mural is to be designed for the space 12 feet 2 inches wide by 5 feet 4 inches high at one end of the public lobby over the Postmaster’s door, as indicated on the enclosed blueprints. The total amount to be paid for the mural is \$800, which is to cover the complete cost of execution and installation. It is required that the work be completed and installed within eight months’ time from the date of this letter.” [Later changed to specific contract dates listed in the May 28, 1942 letter.]

³⁰ The May 28, 1942 letter included two Section forms to be completed. They were: Information for the Preparation of Contract: Meloy answered the form questions. *Artist*: Henry Meloy; *Post Office*: Hamilton Montana; *Title*: “Flathead War Party”; *Medium in which you will carry out the work*: Oil Paint on Canvas; *Exact dimensions of the space*: 6'6” x 14' 5” [about 94 square feet]; *Date you can complete and install*: September 15, 1942. Rowan penciled on form: Contract dates June 2, 1942 – September 30, 1942, \$800 in three installments \$175, \$275 and \$350.

Technical Information required of the Artist on all Jobs Using the Medium of Oil, or Tempura, or Combination. Meloy answered these questions:

1. *What technique does the artist propose to use?* Oil
2. *Name of manufacture and trade names of paints to be used. If dry colors, name of dealer supplying the same.* State if artist or decorator’s colors. Permanent Pigments, Cincinnati, Ohio and Schmincke “Finest” from Max Grumbacher, N.Y.
3. *If wall is painted, paint must be removed.* Wall is painted and the paint will not have to be removed as the surface is in perfect condition.
4. *Method of installation to be followed. What adhesive does the artist propose to use?* Varnish and White lead.
5. *Condition of the wall, is it damp?* No
6. *Give exact dimensions of the space to be painted.* 6'6” x 14' 5”
7. *Sample of the canvas or board to be used must be submitted.* Canvas sample was attached.
8. *Give list of colors artist uses on his palette.* Black, White (Zinc) Light Red, Indian Red, Cadmium Red, Burnt Sienna, Raw sienna, Raw Umber, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Yellow, Permanent Green, Vert Emeraude, Cerulean Blue, Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Terra Verte.
9. *State medium used in painting and give formula, either oil medium or tempera emulsion.* Oil
10. *State briefly method of working as to technique. (Does artist underpaint, how and with what?)* No planned underpainting to be followed by glazes. But a beginning with colors thinned with turpentine and general lay in for correct values then an all over development with linseed oil added to the medium slowly as needed but to avoid getting too much oil (that is more than necessary to thoroughly bind the pigments.)

³¹ Henry Meloy illustration found in “Henry Meloy: The Portraits, A Narrative of the Exhibition,’ 2008 Kathryn L. Rodriguez. *Theses, Dissertation, Professional Papers* (University of Montana Scholar Works), Paper 1250, p. 23.

³² The letter enclosed is a voucher covering the two payments [\$450] due you at this stage. Kindly furnish this office with a photograph and negative, actually 8 x 10, of the completed painting before undertaking installation." There were no photographs or sketches were in the files]

³³ Dennis, James M. 1974. Government Art: Relief, Propaganda, or Public Beautification? Review of *The New Deal for Artists*, by Richard D. McKinzie. *Reviews in American History* 2(2):275-282.

³⁴ <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/indiansatthepostalcode/index.html> accessed July 29, 2015

³⁵ <http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=4&cmd=2&eid=385> accessed July 29, 2015