



Visit Post Office Murals in the Puget Sound Region

The New Deal murals, sculptures, and other artworks in post offices and federal buildings were commissioned primarily under two projects from 1934 to 1943: the Section of Fine Arts (Section) and the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP). They ran separately at first but eventually were merged into a single program.

There were only a few TRAP projects in the Northwest but there were six Section artworks commissioned in both Montana and Idaho, nine in Oregon, and a staggering 18 in Washington State.

This brochure offers a driving tour of six post office murals in the Puget Sound region so you can experience some of these works in person. Four of these works are located in post office lobbies and can be viewed during lobby hours; two others have been moved to other settings with varied hours. We recommend checking USPS.com and the web resources listed in the entries that follow for Mount Vernon and Snohomish for building hours in case they have changed since publication of this brochure.

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New Deal Puget Sound ROAD TRIP



FORGOTTEN STORIES
NORTHWEST PUBLIC ART OF THE 1930s

A Guide to Selected Post Office Murals
in the Puget Sound Region



Lynden

Mordi Gassner (1899–1995)
Three Ages of Phoebe Goodell Judson, 1941–42
Tempera on canvas
5 feet 3 inches x 12 feet 4 inches



This mural was one of the last Section contracts in Washington State. It was awarded to the New York artist Mordi Gassner. He chose the town's founder, Phoebe Goodell Judson, as his subject. He enthrones her at a massive desk in the center, highlighting her love of learning and her founding of the Northwest Normal School, one of the first teacher training colleges in Washington State. She is surrounded by vignettes of her arrival and the farming and industrial activities attracted to the area by the town.

The Lynden Post Office is located at 600 Front Street in downtown Lynden. The mural is in the lobby which is currently accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Sedro-Woolley

Albert C. Runquist (1894–1971)
Loggers and Millworkers, 1939–41
Tempera on canvas
6 feet 10 inches x 11 feet 11 inches



The post office murals were overseen by a committee in the Washington, D.C. Section office and they scrutinized every detail. Among the comments sent to Albert Runquist was the interesting note that the expressions of the workmen were overly serious. Runquist was a known labor activist who was also on a police list of suspected communist sympathizers in Portland. Administrators wanted to make sure his workers didn't look unhappy and thereby possibly suggest a political message.

The Sedro-Woolley Post Office is located at 111 Woodworth Street. The mural is in the lobby which is currently accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Mount Vernon

Ambrose Patterson (1877–1966)
Local Pursuits, 1936–38
Oil on canvas
5 feet 3 inches x 11 feet



American agriculture was one of the most popular subjects for the federal art project murals. Celebrating farming as one of the nation's strengths was designed to help tie communities together and counter the grim reality of the millions of acres of farmland destroyed by the Dust Bowl. This mural links the growing and processing of food, harking back to America's farming history but also acknowledging industrial progress.

This mural is now in the care of Skagit Valley College, in the main stairwell of Hodson Hall at 2405 East College Way, Mount Vernon. Check www.skagit.edu for campus building hours.



Snohomish

Lance Hart (1891–1941)
The Construction of a Skid Road in the 80's, 1939–40
Oil on canvas
4 feet 8 inches x 14 feet



Born in Aberdeen, Washington, Lance Hart received his professional training at the Chicago Art Institute and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Stockholm, Sweden. He was commissioned to paint this mural while teaching at the University of Oregon. Like many post office murals, Hart focused on a local industry for his subject. His logging image celebrates the determination and hard work that founded and supported the town.

The old Snohomish Post Office is now Snohomish City Hall. The mural is still in place in the lobby at 116 Union Avenue in downtown Snohomish and can be viewed during building hours, currently Monday to Thursday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and Friday by appointment. Check <https://www.snohomishwa.gov/> to confirm.



Bremerton

Ernest Norling (1892–1974)
Northwest Logging, 1937–38
Oil on canvas
6 feet 3 inches x 23 feet 3 inches



New Deal murals promoted regional histories and characteristics. The naval air base in Bremerton was crucial to the town's founding and its economy. However, Ernest Norling specialized in pictures of the Northwest lumber industry and chose his favorite subject of loggers at work. His dramatic, expansive mural is further enhanced by the unusual marble paneling which surrounds it.

The Bremerton Post Office is located at 602 Pacific Avenue. The mural is in the lobby which is currently accessible Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 6:30 pm and Saturday, 6:00 am to 5:00 pm.



Shelton

Richard Haines (1906–1984)
The Skid Road, 1940
Tempera on plaster
4 feet 10 inches x 12 feet



Richard Haines, a Minneapolis artist, was selected for this mural commission based on his entry in the Forty-Eight States Competition, a national call to artists to submit designs for post offices. His image reflects the history of Shelton as a timber company town. Despite some controversy about his lack of regional knowledge, Haines bravely chose to paint directly on the wall and to talk with residents as they came through the post office, making numerous alterations based on their feedback.

The Shelton Post Office is located at 218 Mark E. Reed Way in downtown Shelton. The mural is in the lobby which is currently accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.