

## **Rockford Bicentennial Mural Dedication Program prepared by Twyla Hayes, Rural Rockford.**

### **Welcome Rockford Residents, Community Members and Friends of Rockford.**

My name is Twyla Hayes.

In August 2014 I attended the first organizational meeting for the Rockford Bicentennial.

Norm Van Tilburg, President of the Shanes Crossing Historical Society shared activities and events that made the Rockford Sesquicentennial celebration successful 46 years prior. Norm then, went around the table and asked those present to share ideas that we would like to see take place in 2020 for the Rockford Bicentennial celebration.

Queen contest, Grand parades, Time capsules were all mentioned. Along with a suggestion of a birthday party. What a successful New Year's Eve Birthday Party we had! Our Birthday Party started our 2020 Bicentennial celebration off with quite a *bang*, as the Rockford Area Development Corporation (RADDC) sponsored Barry Peel's fireworks for our community to enjoy at midnight.

There were other suggestions as well that first meeting.

Mona Thompson and I shared the vision of a mural. After several meetings, I was asked to lead the mural project. Three artists were interviewed, and I knew after meeting with Dan Keyes (3/17/16) that he would be the ideal person to paint our historic mural.

Securing a location was next on the list, and the south wall of the fire station and gateway to our downtown would be an ideal spot. When you want something done, the saying is, "Go to the busiest person you know, if you want to get something accomplished." So, I called Rob Belna on August 24, 2016. He *is* a busy person, but I called, and he was in his office, I went right down to show him the plans and ask about painting on this wall. Two and half hours later and with all the world's problems solved we had a location for the mural. Thank you goes to the Rockford Fire Department for the use of the building and grounds. AND Thank you, Rob, for your hours of help and use of your equipment.

This wall was unpainted cement blocks that needed to be prepped. Thank you, Dick Pontius, for doing most of this prep work and Barb and Mike Pedroza for arranging the gray paint in August of 2018.

- Dan Keyes will speak to the painting and process of the mural shortly.

There are always those people that come right along beside you to be the help in projects like this. A special thank you to Janet Riley. We needed an enclosed place for painting the mural panels and Janet offered the Quonset on Main Street. Janet along with her husband Mike were the runners for supplies and when Rob Belna needed a nudge, Janet was the gal to do the nudging. Janet weed wacked along the building so the cement wall painting could begin. Dan needed a trailer for paint supplies, Janet and Mike came through again. A sincere thank you to Janet and Mike Riley for all their help.

Mike Schumm, the Rockford Bicentennial Chairman, is also one of those people that came right along beside me to see that his project was a success. After the welding of the frames by Kevin LaBrun, Rob Russell and Ted Samaniego. These frames were moved from Belna's shop to Main Street Riley building by Stober Farms. A dibond substrate needed to be attached and Mike Schumm, Norm Van Tilburg and Mike Riley were right there getting it done under the direction of Dan Keyes. Mike Schumm, as the

Rockford Bicentennial Chairman, has just done a wonderful job of pitching in and doing...whatever was needed! Thank you, Mike.

The community members were given an opportunity to paint on the mural as well. Once a rough outline was developed, paint was mixed and those showing up went to work under the direction of Dan Keyes during the summer of 2019.

Thank you to Barb Bowen, Nancy Leighner, Barb Pedroza, Pete Hayes, a Schumm couple, and there may have been others that showed up to put their mark on Rockford. Even my 3-year-old grandson Henrik Hayes put a few paint strokes on the wall.

Moving of the panels was possible with help from the crane operator Austin Barna, Rob and Jordan Belna and the use of Bob Maurer's wagons. It was so fun for me to watch the social media channels as community members noticed the wall was almost complete. They noticed people had instantly appeared where only the background with big gray boxes stood out for over a year. I'm sure many people were wondering what the mural would look like during that unfinished period.

Our lazy river was a first curb job for A and A Greenhouse. Aaron and Andy Fent along with their crew, probably thought I was crazy for wanting a curvy path, but it and the landscaping turned out just as we wanted. Thank you, Aaron and Andy, for complimenting the mural with grasses, cedar logs, rocks and a curvy path.

In a dry summer you water grass, and the Rockford Bicentennial Committee were faithful to water the grasses at the mural. Thank you to all who kept our grasses alive.

If you haven't been by the mural at night you must do so. Chad Ransbottom wired and installed the lighting and what an impressive site it is at night. Thank you, Chad.

Village workers, Blair Shaffer and Joe Roth poured the concrete pad and anchored the beautiful walnut benches that Larry Stephenson made for people to sit and enjoy the mural. Thank you, Blair, Joe and Larry.

Johnny Harrod from Mercer Metal welded our stand. Brand It Marketing designed the flyers and the art on the display sharing the history from Harrison Frech's research. We look forward to hearing Mr. Frech speak to that history in a few moments.

I will elaborate on the display for just a moment. On the flyers and display you will find a QR code, a funny looking group of black and white boxes with the words SCAN TO LISTEN above it. If you have a **smart phone** you can open your camera and point it at the QR code. It will scan the code and you will click a white box, then a video with Harrison Frech narrating the history of each person represented on the mural left to right will begin to play. You will have a chance to try it after our program.

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•I had a hand stitched saying in my kitchen wall for years that read, *"You can't see much in a small town, but what you hear makes up for it."* BUT that *isn't* true in Rockford! WE have plenty to see in our small village. Our store fronts on Main Street our full. We have new and expanded businesses, a beautiful Shanes Park, a very special Veteran Memorial at Hedges Park, Our Main Street is lined with Bicentennial

and Veteran Banners that honor our history and veterans AND now this historical mural that educates our local people as well as people passing through about what a special place Rockford Ohio really is!

This mural is dedicated to you, everyone of you that organized a fundraiser, who bought tickets to dances, lasagna or ham meals, gun raffles, stain glass raffles, donated and participated in auctions, purchased t-shirts, or medallions, or memorabilia, to Cooper Farms and others who generously donated funds and time. You have helped to make the vision of the 2020 Rockford Bicentennial mural possible. A BIG THANK YOU TO YOU!

\*I will turn this part of the service over to the very talented artist, Dan Keyes.

Thank you, Dan.

We are a very fortunate community to have someone like Harrison Frech who researched and studied our local history. Harrison Frech is no stranger to the Rockford area. In fact, he was my 6<sup>th</sup> grade History teacher and is a respected retired Parkway HS teacher. Please help me welcome Harrison Frech.

\*Mike Bruns to Sing (Proud to be an American)

Thank you, Mike Bruns for providing the music and sound system. Another example of good people of Rockford coming together to help. Mike, and the people recognized earlier, are what make our community so great.

Thank you Barry's Market for supplying mums.

Thank you RCS for having chicken dinners available.

The COVID situation has played havoc on everyone's 2020 plans, the Rockford Bicentennial Committee met for six years to plan one year of celebrations and events where most have been postponed.

Please watch the local papers, The Daily Standard, The Parkway Independent, The Photo Star and tune into our local radio station 101.3 for information on more Rockford Bicentennial news and events to come. We hope to hold our planned events in 2021.

This dedication program, while later than originally planned, **we are extremely happy to present our "BIRTHDAY GIFT" to Rockford, Our Rockford Bicentennial Mural.**

Thank you for attending and being part of the Rockford Bicentennial Mural Dedication. This concludes our ceremony. God Bless and enjoy the rest of your day.

**Agenda:**

Music and sound system provided by Mike Bruns of Bruns Plumbing and Heating.

**Presenter:** Twyla Hayes, Rockford Bicentennial Mural Organizer

**Mural Artist:** Dan Keyes

**Historian:** Harrison Frech

Rockford Bicentennial items, Harrison Frech's books are available for purchase.

We want to thank Barry's Market for supplying the beauty fall mums and RCS for having chicken dinners available for purchase after this program.

Watch the local papers, The Parkway Independent, The Photo Star and tune into our local radio station 103.1FM for information on more Rockford Bicentennial news and events to come. We thank everyone who has supported our fundraisers and efforts in making the vision of the Rockford Bicentennial Mural come to fruition.