

## A Library Treasure

The Library has a treasure on its wall.

In 1959 noted muralist Henrik Martin Mayer worked with the town's building commission and the architects of the new town hall/library complex to create a mural that would memorialize the importance of history to the community and celebrate the diverse knowledge that the Library provides to its residents.

The mural incorporates a map of Wethersfield in the olden days. To the left of the map are representations of the ten original settlers, and to the right is a multi-generational, multi-racial group of people representing various forms of culture and knowledge, literature, music, and science.



*“Map of the towne of Wethersfield, one of the State’s earliest settlements on the plain along the west bank of the Connecticut River.”*

Many people wonder if ours is a WPA mural. It does look similar to many created under the Works Progress Administration, which provided employment to many out work artists during the Depression. Since our building dates from 1959 ours is not a WPA mural , but in fact Mayer was the first painter to receive a mural commission in Indiana under the WPA’s Federal Art Project.

### *About the Artist*

Henrik Mayer took his art training at the Manchester Institute of Art in New Hampshire and the Yale School of Fine Art, from where he earned a B.F.A. Among his teachers were Maud Briggs Knowlton and mural specialist Eugene Savage. In 1931, he studied in Europe as a Winchester Fellow, and the following year he married Jessie Hull, whose birth place was New Haven and whom he met at Yale when they were both art students.

He accepted a teaching position in New York City, and also served as designer and decorator of the New York Cosmopolitan Club including an octagonal room, a job in which he was assisted by his wife. In 1934 he moved with Jessie to Indianapolis where he became Assistant Director at the John Herron Art Institute.

To supplement his income, Mayer filled mural commissions, becoming the first painter to receive a mural commission in Indiana under the WPA's Federal Art Project. One of his murals is at the post office building in Lafayette, Indiana, the result of a competition in which his wife, entering as Jessie Hull Mayer, was the runner-up choice.

In 1946 the Mayers moved to Essex, Connecticut where Henrik became Director of the Hartford Art School of the Wadsworth Atheneum. In 1956, he became Dean of the Art School of the University of Hartford in Connecticut, a position he held until 1963. He also served as Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum.

Henrik Mayer died in 1972. The artist’s widow Jessie Mayer said the library mural was one of many that her husband painted, including three large outdoor mosaics at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and another mosaic at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. "He always did a great deal of research before he started, to find out about the historic interest," Jessie Mayer said.

AskART: the artists’ bluebook-WorldWide Edition. April 19, 2008. Sources include: Judith Vale Newton and Carol Ann Weiss, *Skirting the Issue*, 102-110 Peter Falk, *Who Was Who in American Art*. <http://www.askart.com/>

*The Ten Original Settlers*  
*Also known as "The Ten Adventurers"*

John Oldham  
Nathaniel Foote  
Abraham Finch, Sr.  
Robert Seeley  
John Strickland  
John Clarke  
Andrew Ward  
Robert Rose  
Leonard Chester  
William Swayne



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# The Wethersfield Library Mural

