

## A History of Art at the Library

From its earliest days, the Topsfield Town Library has been dedicated to supporting the arts in many forms to enrich the cultural life of Topsfield. Plans for the 1935 library incorporated fine art as a permanent part of the building. The central square-shaped lobby with skylight became a viewing room surrounded by murals painted by the architect of the building, Mr. Harold Fields Kellogg. The space was meant to represent a typical New England town common around which the rest of the settlement could be seen. The series of eleven murals depict the life of the town from the 1600s to the 1800s. In the first two murals, Topsfield's roots are traced to its sister town of Toppefield, England and the arrival by ship of the first settlers. The activities required to found the community occupy the next eight murals. In the last two murals, Topsfield is a well established town. Some of its sons are shown departing to join the battle of Lexington and Concord in 1776. The final scene is of Topsfield Academy opening for the instruction of students.

Mr. Kellogg also fashioned three muses from plaster and mounted them above the door leading to the stacks. These muses represent the three branches of knowledge. The upper floors of the original library had separate exhibit rooms on either side of the atrium. One was used for display of historical materials, the other for fine and decorative arts. In addition to these features of the original building, musical performances were held at the Library.

In later years, local artists were encouraged to display their work throughout the building. Through the kindness of Family Bank, Richard Wyman's painting of the Topsfield Common joined the historical mural in the lobby. A wide variety of music and art appreciation programs, performances, and writing workshops have been held at the library. These programs are sponsored by the library, the Friends of the Library, and community groups.

## Current Displays

The Topsfield Town Library has funding for the arts due to a generous trust fund left to the Library by George Lambert Gould, a former summer resident of Topsfield. In the planning of the expanded Library, new works of art were commissioned or collected to continue the Library's tradition as a center for the arts. A well known muralist, David Fichter, was engaged to create a colorful mural spanning the length of an entire wall in the Children's Room. With an emphasis on young readers, it weaves together many local scenes and events and is entitled "Topsfield Reverie." A portrait by Cameron Bennett of benefactor George Lambert Gould is displayed in the new lobby. Above the circulation desk is a four-panel work entitled "River Road." The piece is created entirely from handmade paper by local artist Meg Black. In the Young Adult department,

Masconomet students have the opportunity to exhibit their own original work.

Symbolic of the Library's commitment to the visual and performing arts, the Muses created by Mr. Kellogg are now located above the doorway of the Friends' Meeting Room. The flexible space of the Meeting Room allows for monthly art exhibits and performances of many kinds. In addition to these events, the library also hosts a music series with at least three concerts each year. Performers are staged throughout the library and at other venues. The Music Committee's goal is to offer a broad range of concerts appealing to a wide audience. These events draw an audience from surrounding communities as well as from Topsfield. All art programs are funded through the Gould Trust Fund and are free of admission.

Topsfield's history is celebrated throughout the second floor. Fifteen framed historical photographs circa 1900 hang in the Topsfield Room, the work of Topsfield resident Otto Lake. The 1794 library bookcase with its original collection is displayed in the Library's periodical room.

A permanent collection featuring local artists is housed in the balcony gallery on the second floor. This collection has been developed by the library's Art Committee, and includes significant works by nationally known artists. These paintings are displayed alongside DeCordova artwork that is replaced every six months to give the Library cultural interest and enrichment.

The Topsfield Town Library welcomes you to enjoy the artwork on display throughout the Library. Thanks to the Gould Trust Fund, the library is able to exhibit fine art for public enjoyment. Please remember that many works are on loan from the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park and should be treated as though they are in a museum setting. Please do not touch the art and no photographs are allowed without permission of the Director.