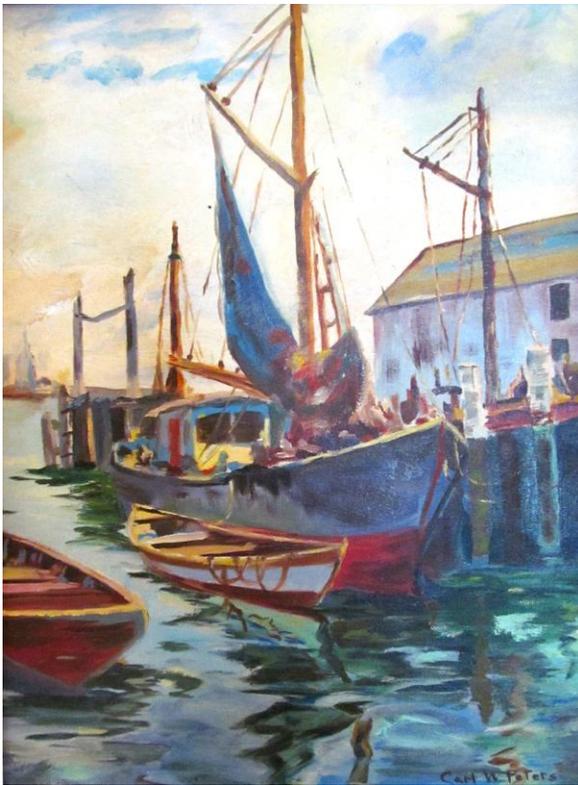


A Great American Artist - Jefferson Avenue's Carl Peters

Part Two

For an artist, national acclaim and prizes do not necessarily mean financial security. Married with two young children, it was during the 1930's that Carl William Peters and many of his peers turned to government sponsored mural work, as a means of survival during the Great Depression. The Rochester area is fortunate to have several murals created by Peters. One such mural was commissioned for the new Fairport Public Library, a Works Project Administration (WPA) initiative opened in 1938. The mural, a composite scene of agricultural and canal life in Perinton, has been called a masterpiece. The former library at 18 Perrin Street is now the home of the Perinton Historical Society, which operates the Fairport Historical Museum. The impressive mural created by Carl Peters, eighteen feet in length, is a focal point for visitors to the museum.



Rockport Harbor Scene – By Carl W. Peters, (from a private collection)

After his first marriage failed, Carl's focus on creating his art was stronger than ever. He spent his winters in Fairport, painting outdoors, or "*plein air*", along frozen creeks, in the woods, hills and fields. He most often painted with oils, but worked with watercolors as well. He often painted the same scene repeatedly over a period of years, from different vantage points, in spring summer, fall and winter, and with varied lighting. He painted scenes in of the village of Fairport, of farms and canal scenes in Perinton and other locations in Monroe County, and often ventured to the southern tier and the Finger Lakes region as well. As summer approached, Carl and many other artists would migrate to the artist colony communities of Rockport and Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was here he met the woman that would become his second wife and partner for life, Blanche. They came back to their cottage studio

in Rockport every spring for decades, where Carl painted daily, and also supplemented his income by providing lessons to vacationers. To this day, the Rockport Art Association and its members hold Peters in the highest esteem.

Back in Fairport, he also shared his skills with aspiring artists in small groups, usually for a dollar or two per lesson. Carl's instruction often was more physical than verbal. He could demonstrate a technique with a few strokes of his brush with great eloquence, and more effectively than with verbal instructions. After the lesson, Blanche sometimes invited the students back to the Peters' little home on Jefferson Avenue, to warm up with a cup of hot cocoa. A visitor might be startled to see an enormous number of completed paintings in his studio. Although he painted daily, Carl often resisted selling, sometimes refusing to give in to pleas from potential buyers.

Peters is a highly respected name in the art world today. Western New York winter scenes and nautical harbor views with the distinctive signature of Carl W. Peters are coveted by art collectors, and sell for many thousands of dollars. His oil and watercolor paintings reside in the collections of some of America's most prestigious galleries and art museums. Along with the mural at the Fairport Historical Museum, Perinton is fortunate to have two Peters paintings permanently on display at the Fairport Public Library. One is a winter scene near Bushnell's Basin, and the other a lush green, heavily treed landscape painted near Fairport.

Creating art and sharing the beauty he saw in the world were incredibly important to Carl Peters, and to his wife Blanche, as well. In pursuit of this goal, they lived a simple, even austere life in their tiny studio-home on Jefferson Avenue. Carl quietly went about his business of painting, day after day, for virtually his entire life, until his death in 1980. A good friend once said, "This is how I remember Carl Peters... quiet, humble, withdrawn, a wry smile while amused, a gentle man."

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian Published in the Fairport-ER Post, 04/11/2013