

Perinton Remembers Carmen Peck

Carmen Peck hasn't lived in this community for over forty years, yet many of our residents hold vivid memories of her, as a teacher, artist, neighbor, and friend. She has resided in Madison, Wisconsin for many years, and it was there that she passed away on October 22. When the Germans invaded Liege, Belgium 100 years ago in the first battle of World War I, Carmen was there. In fact, she was born as the artillery shelled the city. Her Romanian family's story of survival in war-torn Europe took them to Russia, France, England, and finally the United States, when Carmen was ten years old.

Despite her father's concerns, Carmen enrolled in art school in the midst of the Great Depression. Money was scarce, but the determined young student worked her way through school at the Dayton Art Institute, the Columbus School of Art, the Layton School, and Illinois Wesleyan University. While a student, one of her portraits was chosen for a juried show at the Chicago Art Institute and was featured in full color in the Sunday Chicago Tribune, a rare honor at the time. Carmen and her art eventually arrived at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, where she won the coveted Juror's Award in an important exhibition.



Carmen and Hal Peck at their home on Potter Place, Fairport

Carmen and Hal Peck married in 1936 and lived their first few years in Rochester. When Hal enlisted in the navy, she and their young son moved to Fairport. After the war, the Pecks purchased a home at the south end of Potter Place, where they raised their two sons. She began teaching art at neighborhood classes and local schools, and participated in numerous exhibitions and one-person shows, where her regional landscapes and portraits of local people were featured. An image of the Filkins farm, painted from her front yard at 73 Potter Place, holds special

interest for those of us interested in local history. It was Carmen who first raised the prospect of relocating the farmhouse when it was to be razed to make way for the construction of Minerva Deland School. Today the home, relocated two tenths of a mile in 1954 to 110 Hulburt Road, is a designated Fairport landmark.

Carmen Peck holds the unique distinction of having two exhibitions of her paintings at the Perinton Historical Society, the first in 1945, and the second in 1992, 47 years later. She referred to the latter as her “coming home” exhibition. Among the many paintings featured were several of local scenes, including the Main Street lift bridge, West Avenue, the Oxbow, and Brooks Hill. Her unique artistic perspective and style have provided us with a view of our community which would otherwise be lost.

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

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