

The Art of Michigan Avenue School



THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN A SMALL HISTORY OF THE ARTISTS WHOSE ARTWORK APPEARS ON THE WALLS SURROUNDING THE STAIRCASE OF THE MICHIGAN AVENUE SCHOOL. THE ARTWORK IS BY:

FRANK LEWIS VAN NESS - 1864 TO 1944 - SCHOOL PAINTING

CARL HOERMAN - 1885 TO 1955 - WALL MURALS

ATTENTION ALUMNI

At the farewell party held by the Alumni Association of the Paw Paw High School last Friday night it was voted to have an oil painting of the old "Red Brick" painted by F. L. Van Ness, to be hung in the new school house as a gift from the Alumni Association.

About \$175 was raised for the painting, but it is desired to raise about \$125 more that the picture may be suitably framed and inscribed. Any alumnus who desires may make a contribution and send same to A. L. Free, who is chairman of the committee.

It is hoped that this additional sum may be received soon.



THE OLD RED BRICK
PAW PAW, MICHIGAN

1869 - 1923

PRESENTED BY ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

BY

FRANK LEWIS VAN NESS

Frank Lewis Van Ness

Frank Van Ness was born in Paw Paw, Mich., in 1864, and received a common school education until sixteen years old. His father, who still lives in the town of his birth, could not get his boy to continue his studies as drawing pictures of the boys and girls continually got Frank into trouble with his school master. So Mr. Van Ness concluded art was all he was good for and made arrangements to let him go East and cultivate his born taste for drawing. It was while studying art in New York City in portrait painting under various artists of ability and experience, and while working in color with moderate success that his teacher selected him to answer a request of a newspaper for a man to make sketches for them, on account of his ability to sketch rapidly from sight and also to make drawings from written descriptions of events. Newspaper illustrations from etchings was in its infancy in those days and artists who could make line drawings suitable for etching were scarce, so the young student received an offer of salary to travel and make sketches that dazzled him and he eagerly accepted it, laying aside his color work, learning shorthand and plunging with enthusiasm into his new field of labor. During the next few years he was ordered all over the country. He has been with the cow-boys and Indians of the West and Northwest. Tiring at length of the constant travel, Van Ness returned to Chicago and opened a studio in the Masonic Temple and devoted his time to serious study, of portrait painting.

Michigan, Deaths and Burials Index, 1867-1995

Frank L. Van Ness

Name:	Frank L. Van Ness
Birth Date:	29 Sep 1864
Birth Place:	Paw Paw, Mich.
Death Date:	8 Feb 1944
Death Place:	Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo, Michigan
Burial Date:	10 Feb 1944
Burial Place:	Paw Paw, Michigan
Cemetery Name:	Prospect Hill
Death Age:	79
Occupation:	Artist (Retired)
Race:	White
Marital Status:	Married
Gender:	Male
Street address:	735 Clinton
Residence:	Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo, Michigan
Father Name:	John Van Ness
Father Birth Place:	Paw Paw, Mich.
Spouse Name:	Rose A. Van Ness
FHL Film Number:	2075055



FRANK L. VAN NESS.

SHORTHAND PICTURE.

Clever Trick of Mr. Frank Lewis Van Ness.

HELPED CONVICT A MURDERER.

One of the Many Interesting Experiences of the Artist Who Has Painted a Picture of Chicago's Veteran Fire Chief.

Frank Lewis Van Ness, the well-known portrait painter of Chicago, who painted the life-size painting of Chief Denis Joseph Swenie, of the Chicago fire department, which was presented to the city last December 4 in honor of Chief Swenie's fifty years' faithful service for the city as a fireman, has had an interesting career. It was Mr. Van Ness who first succeeded in obtaining the picture of the chief criminal in one of the most famous murder cases that ever startled the country. The manner of getting it was novel, and it was the picture, truthful in its likeness, that ultimately led to the conviction and punishment of the murderer. It was during the excitement that followed the Maxwell-Freller murder in St. Louis, while the murderer was in jail and the authorities were vainly trying to identify him, that Van Ness received orders from a New York city daily paper, as he was employed then as correspondent and sketch artist, to go to St. Louis, interview the murderer and get his picture.



CHIEF DENIS JOSEPH SWENIE.
[Copyrighted by Frank L. Van Ness, 1899.]

When he got there he was informed by the authorities that it was a hopeless task; the prisoner was protected by the laws of the State, which forbade the photographing or sketching of persons arrested on suspicion until after they had been convicted in a court of record, when they could be photographed for the rogue's gallery. Then Van Ness apparently gave up the pictures as hopeless, but demanded an interview with the prisoner, during which he offered to take down Maxwell's story and print it verbatim, offering to let him see the shorthand notes after the interview, that he might be sure there was no picture. To the surprise of the prison officials Maxwell consented to this and gave Van Ness the first interview anyone had been able to obtain from him. He carefully examined the notes at the interview and expressed himself well satisfied. Van Ness wrote out the interview and sent it to the New York paper together with a portrait sketch of the murderer which was printed and led to his identification promptly through recognition by a former pal in London, England, who picked up the paper in a cafe and took it to the prisoner's father, who said: "That is my son." He was only known in this country then as Brooks. The authorities were greatly surprised at the picture, supposing it to be done from memory only, until long afterward. Van Ness explained that during the pauses in the conversation he had mingled the characteristic lines of the prisoner's face with his shorthand notes and had been able to reconstruct the portrait that led to the conviction of the murderer and his death by hanging. The New York paper claimed great credit for obtaining the picture and Van Ness kept the story to himself, thinking that perhaps he might have occasion to resort to the same means again and fearing that publicity might destroy its value. His portraits of Chief Swenie in action shows traces of the Dutch school in its attention to detail and strength of lighting, while the ideal is combined with the realistic in a manner that elicits much commendation from the men who have been going to watching the surrounding buildings, his right foot resting on a lead of hose; back of him roll dense clouds of smoke from the burning buildings, and a pipeman is dragging a lead of hose into position in the rear. The sweep of smoke and fireman supply the ideas of intense action demanded by the subject, yet everything is subordinate to the principal figure—the chief, calm, alert and watchful.

Biography

Carl Hoerman (1885 - 1955)

Born in Babenhausen, Germany, Hoerman worked in a Hamburg shipyard before emigrating to the United States in 1904. Settling in Chicago, he studied architecture and opened an architectural office in 1909. By 1920, Hoerman was devoting most of his time to painting, and he opened a studio and gallery in the resort town of Saugatuck, Michigan. There he became known as a painter of the Lake Michigan shoreline and sand dunes.

Hoerman probably was a self-taught artist. He painted in a realistic manner with slightly simplified drawing and vivid color.

In 1927, Hoerman and his artist wife, Christiana Ackermann, began making trips to the Southwest where they painted desert and mountain scenes and, most especially, the Grand Canyon. They also enjoyed painting other exotic landscape and genre scenes from their travels to Europe, Mexico, and North Africa. They may have maintained their home in Michigan throughout their lives, but they also had residences in Palm Springs and Riverside, California, and are most associated with the West in their later years.

November 8, 1955

Artist Who Painted School Murals Dies

Carl Hoerman, artist who painted the murals on the walls of the Paw Paw high school building, and one of America's best known painters of dunes scenes died in Douglas hospital Tuesday, Nov. 8, after a long illness. He was about 70 years old. Hoerman came to America from Germany at the age of 19 and had only \$3 in his pocket and no job when he landed in New York. He "discovered" Saugatuck while on his honeymoon. He and his wife liked the area so well they decided to stay. Hoerman, an architect, wrote poetry and philosophy for several years after settling in Saugatuck and then began painting dune scenes on the shore of Lake Michigan. His art was credited with helping to make Western Michigan a popular resort center.















The End

A PawPawWapPaw.com project by:

Dan Smith

October 1, 2014