

## **New Deal Mural of Airport in Madison, WI - 1936**

Artist: Cal N. Peters, 1903-1980's, born, Port Washington, WI

The Airport (today the Dane County Regional Airport) mural, painted by Wisconsin artist Cal N. Peters in 1936, was commissioned by the federal government as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's Depression era relief effort, called the New Deal, to stimulate all aspects of the economy, including the arts.

The mural, in the American Scene Style, depicts the airport not as it was, but as it was projected to be. It is an aerial representation of the airport from the Truax Field side and shows old Hwy. 51, busy with traffic. The Art Deco terminal in the center and six hangars in the foreground show an optimistic view of what was supposed to be built, though only a portion of these were eventually constructed. Passengers, with their luggage, are waiting to board a modern two-engine plane. Security guards in yellow are posted nearby.

The mural represents a summer scene, but the green paint of the landscape has faded to golden yellow due to prolonged exposure to sunlight. The frame is the original, built by the artist. Peters was paid \$436 for his work.

After the mural was taken off public display, it was stored and almost forgotten in a government hangar at the airport, even apparently used as target practice at some point. Darts and BB guns made over 200 holes, concentrated on such "targets" as the airplanes, runways and billboard. Some of the BB's are still lodged in the frame.

In 2005, members of the Dane County Regional Airport Commission raised private funds to restore the mural. Conservation took nearly five months, accomplished under the direction of Tony Rajer, art conservator, with help from UW-Madison students, local artists and community members.

With gratitude to

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