

# **Plymouth's 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mural**

## **A Beautification Committee Project**

Water is the unifying element of the mural. The Pequabuck River, named after the Algonquin word for “clear or open pond”, was used by Native Americans for fishing and transport. Later, its energy was released by dams to drive water wheels and turbines to power clock and lock factories.

Other themes that emerge include tolerance, freedom, kindness, and innovation.

Take a long, close look. There are many subtle images. The sky gradually changes from daylight to nighttime. There is also a change in the seasons; spring on the far left, transitioning to summer and autumn in the center, and winter in the upper right corner.

There are many species of wildlife hidden in the shadows. How many can you identify?

There are 10 hidden keyholes. Can you find them all?

### **The Key to the Mural**

Starting in the upper left corner, the Terryville Fair is represented by the Ferris wheel, the dairy barn, oxen, and of course, food. Look for the raccoon sneaking into the garbage can!

Silas Brooks, born in Plymouth in 1824, was a famous aeronaut. He flew his hot air balloon all over the country and made almost 200 ascensions. His original wicker basket is displayed at the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks. It is described as the oldest surviving aircraft in the United States. It is worth a visit.

In the upper middle portion, many churches in town symbolize the immigrants that have come to Plymouth from all over the world seeking religious freedom and a better life. Each group brought their culture and enriched our town and our country.

Just below the churches is Lake Winfield. It was originally Reservoir #5 that supplied water for the Eagle Lock factory.

The bald eagle symbolizes the Eagle Lock Company, which had its origins with Eli Terry, Jr. His son, James Terry created the company in 1854. It was one of the largest lock manufacturers in the United States until it closed in 1974.

In the upper right corner, the Henry Terry House on North Street was a stop on the Underground Railroad. The Big Dipper points to the North Star of the tail of the Little Dipper, a reference point for slaves escaping to freedom. The water flowing out of the Big Dipper is inspired by the folk song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd".

Notice the former Plymouth Library, a charming colonial-style building constructed in 1932.

Moving back to the left side, Horseshoe Falls was built in 1850 by Eli Terry to power yet another clock factory. It is on Canal Street, which got its name because water flowed down a canal to turn a water wheel.

In the upper center, the Plymouth Burying Ground, created in 1747, is portrayed. Thirty-eight soldiers from the Revolutionary War are buried here.

Looking at the cemetery are Dorence Atwater and Clara Barton. Atwater was born in Plymouth and enlisted in the Union Army. He was eventually captured by the Confederates, and sent to the notorious prisoner of war stockade at Andersonville, GA. He kept a secret list of the 13,000 Union soldiers who died in captivity and snuck it out when he was freed.

After the War, he and Clara Barton, who later founded the American Red Cross, returned to Andersonville and helped create a National Cemetery. Atwater has been described as the most important enlisted man in the Union Army for his efforts at identifying MIAs.

Atwater and Miss Barton were lifelong friends. She visited Terryville twice; in 1895 for Plymouth's Centennial celebration, and in 1907 for the dedication of Atwater's monument in Baldwin Park, depicted by the cannon.

The monument to "The War of 1861" located on the Plymouth Green is shown nearby.

The Ives Toy Company originated in Plymouth. They adapted the spring driven wind-up technology used in clocks to make toy trains. Their motto was

“Ives Toys Make Happy Boys”. The company later moved to Bridgeport and became Lionel Trains.

The Terryville Tunnel is the longest tunnel in Connecticut. It was built in 1910, mostly by immigrants, and is still used by freight trains.

The image of Eli Terry is surrounded by the gears that powered his clocks. Terry came to Plymouth in 1793 as a young clockmaker. He revolutionized American industry by introducing the mass production of interchangeable parts. He has been called “Connecticut’s Most Important Nutmegger”.

Eli Terry, Jr. built a clock factory powered by the Water Wheel, and later made locks on the same site.

In the lower left corner are symbols of two famous personalities from Plymouth. Betsey Johnson, world famous fashion designer, got her start as a cheerleader at Terryville High School in 1959. Ted Knight, born Tadeusz Konopka, grew up on Allen Street. He starred in television in “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and in “Too Close for Comfort”. He also played Judge Smalls in the movie “Caddyshack”. His star is on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In 1834, what is now Main Street (Rt. 6) was a privately-owned road. The barn-red toll house at the Plymouth Historical Society is illustrated, along with a sign showing the toll rates back then. Also featured is the stone watering trough on the Plymouth Green, used by horses and oxen to quench their thirst after climbing up the hill from Thomaston.

The Lock Museum of America is pictured. It contains the largest collection of locks and keys in the United States, as well as antique safes. It’s a must see!

The Leatherman is shown walking through Plymouth. In the mid-1800s, this strange fellow hiked a regular circuit of 365 miles every 35 days in eastern NY and western CT. He rarely spoke and slept in caves at night. Residents treated him with kindness, leaving food for him as he walked by.

### **Acknowledgements**

The mural was created entirely by volunteers. It was designed by Gina Ritchie and Diane Boylan, art teachers at Terryville High School and Plymouth Center School. Gina, Diane, and Debbie Williams led the painting effort. The

Beautification Committee received a grant from the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation to pay for the supplies. Jeff and Fran Scott, the owners of the building, gave permission without even seeing a sketch of the proposed mural. Jeff Peterson of Lee Hardware was extremely helpful as was the Lyceum.

The names of the volunteers are shown on the “signature gear” to the right of the mural. Take time to thank them when you see them around town. Maybe this will be the first of many “Murals on Main Street”!