

About the Artist...

Rixford (Rix) Upham Jennings (American, 1906-1996), Western New York artist, painter, commercial illustrator, designer, etcher and teacher. Raised in East Aurora, NY, Rix was the son of Walter U. Jennings, a skilled coppersmith ("Chaser" hand-tooler) and master bookbinder at the Roycroft Campus, founded by writer-philosopher & businessman Elbert Hubbard. Rix studied at the Albright-Knox Art School in Buffalo, NY, the Buffalo School of Fine Arts, the Buffalo Art Institute, and later furthered his studies at the Art Center in Los Angeles, CA. His professional career as a commercial artist started in the mid 1920's. Around 1945, he entered the animation school at Walt Disney Studios in Anaheim, CA, and worked on Disney's movie, "Fantasia." He moved back to Western New York in the 1950's, where he remained with his wife, artist Sydney Jennings, and their children.

He traveled extensively and painted in New York City, Grand Teton National Park, New England as well as Western New York. Rix taught art classes at the University at Buffalo and held a position on the board of directors of the Professional Art Guild of Buffalo. Rix held active memberships in many art organizations including the American Watercolor Society (AWCS), the Buffalo Society of Artists (BSA), the Buffalo Print Club and the Philadelphia Watercolor Club. He was a founding member of the Roycrofters-at-Large Association (RALA), for which he designed the RALA Renaissance trademark, which is still in use today.



Portrait by Eric Demme

In East Aurora, Rix contributed numerous art works to various public and professional buildings throughout the community. In 1928 he designed stained glass windows for St. Matthias Episcopal Church. He created the East Aurora village seal and graphics for the town's 1968 sesquicentennial celebration.

Rix is also remembered for murals featuring the Iroquois Nation at the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY. His work included illustrations for the West Point Academy yearbook, and the first ten years of covers for *Buffalo Spree* magazine. Rix died on January 20, 1996, at the age of 89.



Town of Aurora Historic Murals

by Rixford Jennings

East Aurora artist Rixford Upham Jennings created the murals in this hallway, which depict the history of the town, in 1978, as part of a new Aurora History Museum. They were relocated to the Southside Municipal Center from their original location in the former Town Hall at the Roycroft Chapel when the town moved its offices in 2012. The Aurora Historical Society and the Town of Aurora are proud to have been able to preserve these wonderful murals as a tribute to the accomplishments of those who came before us. We invite you to enjoy looking at the murals, but to ensure that they will be around for future generations, please do not touch them. The exhibit cases of the Aurora History Museum, to which Rix Jennings refers in the opening panel, are now located in the Town Historian's Office in the southeast wing of the Municipal Center.

Office of the Town Historian
Open Wednesdays from 1-4 p.m.,
and by appointment.

716-652-7944
historian@townofaurora.com

“The selection of material used in these panels was based on a combination of historical importance and suitability to the overall design of each panel.”
—Rix Jennings, 1978

To tour the murals in chronological order, begin at the “Welcome” panel and make your way counterclockwise around the hallway.

OUR EARLIEST HISTORY

- 500 B.C.** Woodlanders
- 1603** Kahquah Indians
- 1645** Senecas
- 1700** Claimed by Massachusetts
- 1786** New York by Act of Congress
- 1797** Big Tree Treaty establishing Indian Reservations
- 1800** Joseph Ellicott Surveying for the Holland Land Co.



BEFORE THE SETTLERS CAME

In this large landscape, Rix Jennings imagines Aurora before the first settlers arrived in 1804.

THE MIDDLE ROAD

- 1804** First settlers arrive along the Middle Road, now Main Street, U.S. Route 20A

PIONEER SETTLERS

- 1805** Log Cabin
- 1807** Oldest House Still Standing in the Village, North Willow and Fillmore. (Originally located on Hamburg St.)
- 1807** Oldest House Still Standing in the Town, 595 South
- 1809** Griffins Mills Saw Mill
- 1810** First School, Olean near Main
- 1814** 771 Main Street
- 1816** William Warren's Tavern
- 1818** 162 Pine Street
- 1819 (top)** Greek Revival, 194 Olean
- 1819 (bottom)** Nathaniel Fillmore Home, Olean at Lapham
- 1820** 509 Main Street
- 1820** Pine Tree Tavern, Jewettville
- 1820** 1778 Mill Road, Griffins Mills

THE TOWN GROWS

- 1815** The First Permanent General Store
- 1823** 340 Main Street, Shearer House
- 1824** The Globe Hotel
- 1826** 319 Main Street
- 1826-1830** President Millard Fillmore House, originally on Main Street, now on Shearer Avenue
- 1826-1830** Millard Fillmore Law Office, burned 1904. Present site of Vidler's at 686 Main Street.
- 1829** Enos Adams Home, Olean Road
- 1830** First Aurora Library, Main and Whaley
- 1830** General Riley House, originally on Main Street, now on Oakwood near Elm.
- 1831** Presbyterian Church, Griffins Mills
- 1832** 227 Olean Road
- 1838** Jewett Brick Yard, Jewettville
- 1840-1889** West End School, 61 Hamburg Street
- 1840** Original First Presbyterian Church, Main near Church
- 1846** Plank Road, Toll Gate on Seneca Street
- 1880** Feed Mill, Elm Street

WORLD-FAMOUS TROTTING MECCA

- 1855-1905** Hamlin Village Farm
- 1857** Gibson's Store on The Circle
- 1864** Covered Bridge, Griffins Mills
- 1865** 115 Buffalo Road
- 1866** 34 Maple Street
- 1866** Aurora Woolen Mill, Mill Road
- 1867** Railroad Station, West Side of the Tracks
- 1872** The Persons House Hotel, Main near Church
- 1873** Adams Pioneer Farm, Olean Road
- 1874** Darbee and Peek Mill, Oakwood and King
- 1877** West End Fire Hall at The Circle
- 1879** Willink Post Office
- 1885** Jewett Farm Covered Racetrack, Grover Road
- 1885** 866 East Main Street
- 1897** Hammond Hotel at The Circle
- 1882** Hamlin's Horse Mambrino King (center oval)



TURN OF THE CENTURY

- 1880** Jewettville Station, Davis Road
- 1884** Baptist Church, Main Street and Temple Place
- 1891** First Electric Power Station, Elm Street
- 1893** Opera House, Main and Church Streets
- 1895** Original Roycroft Buildings, South Grove Street
- 1896** Pffferling Block, Main and Elm Streets

- 1897** First Methodist Church, Main and Center Streets
- 1900** Donner's Creekside Park, South Street
- 1902** Immaculate Conception R.C. Church, Oakwood
- 1903** Mill Road Power Station and Dam
- 1905** Presbyterian Church, Main and Paine (burned 1933)

ROYCROFT ERA

- 1899** Building the Chapel
- 1900** Cabin in the Woods
- 1908** Well Sweep on the Roycroft Campus
- 1912** Elbert Hubbard on his horse, Garnet
- 1915** The Roycroft Inn



THE TOWN CHANGES

- 1907** Darren's Drug Store, Hatch Hardware and Lange's Hotel, Main near Hamlin
- 1913** Ice Cream Parlor, South Wales
- 1915** Union Free School, Main and North Grove, in front of the 1897 addition to the Aurora Academy building. Torn down in 1916 for a new (and current) building.
- 1916** East Aurora Country Club, Girdle Road
- 1917** The new Pennsylvania Railroad Station
- 1928** Baker Memorial United Methodist Church
- 1928** St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Main and Maple
- 1929** East Aurora Village Hall, Main and Paine
- 1932** Union Free School District #1, Main and North Grove
- 1933** West Falls Library
- 1935** First Presbyterian Church (rebuilt), Main and Paine
- 1941** Aurora Players Roycroft Pavilion, Hamlin Park

SUBURBIA

- 1959** Aurora Village Shopping Center, Grey Street
- 1963** Aurora Public Library, Main and Whaley
- 1966** Community Pool, South Street
- 1967** Aurora Park Nursing Home
- 1969** Emery Park Ski Lodge
- 1972** Oakwood Plaza, corner of King
- 1972** South Wales Community Center
- 1978** Upper Main Street, East Aurora



TO OUR FUTURE

- 1965** Route 400, Main Street Exit
- 1971** East Aurora High School and BOCES, Center Street
- 1977** Fisher-Price World Headquarters, Girard Avenue
- 1978** Immaculate Conception R.C. Church, Oakwood