

**Boces Adult Literacy Students
Carver Center, Port Chester
ESL 4-5**



Post Office Murals Brochure Staff

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MURALS
PORT CHESTER
POST OFFICE



**Project created by Boces Adult Literacy
Immigrant students from Bolivia, Columbia,
Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala,
Honduras, Peru, Japan and Mexico.
Inspired by their teacher Camille Linen.**

**Port Chester, New York
June 2009**



**KIDS!
LOOK UP!
AND FIND WHAT IS
DIFFERENT FROM
TODAY**

1. Lifting cargo by pulleys.
2. Packaging candy by hand.
3. Small weights for scale.
4. Trough.
5. Hitching post.
6. Worker's hats & no goggles.
7. Classroom globes.
8. Dirty hands.
9. Stop and go sign.
10. Whistle & mailbag.

MATCH TO MURAL

- A. Postman_____
- B. Ward's Castle_____
- C. Teacher_____
- D. Life Saver Factory_____
- E. Policeman_____
- F. RB & W Factory_____
- G. Nurse & Doctor_____
- H. Dock Worker_____

Fun Facts

1. The present Post Office building was built in 1934. Before that the Post Office moved 6 times in 34 years..
2. One percent of the building funds were set aside for "embellishments" (murals) and artists were paid from these funds.
3. Gustavo Cenci, an Italian immigrant, had to become legal-apply 12/04/1936 for a Social Security Card before he could work for the government.
4. TRAP gave artists 5,000 jobs and produced 225,000 works of art.
5. In 1936 Port Chester's Democrats and Republicans quarreled about the murals colors which seemed too loud
6. The man who invented Life Saver candies in 1912 made them look like life preservers which were starting to be used after the Titanic tragedy which happened the same year.
7. The inventor of Life Saver was Clarence Crane, father of poet Hart Crane.
8. The murals were completely restored in 1980.
9. The teacher's hands are dirty with coal dust because she used to start the classroom stove before class every winter morning.

Domenico Mortellito

Domenico Mortellito was born in 1907 in Newark NJ and attended Pratt Institute Brooklyn in the 1920's. He later created works for the 1939 World's Fair. Domenico said "It's my job to keep tradition alive". His daughter said of her father "A lot of his imagery just celebrates human beings and what they were capable of". He eventually became head of the design team at DuPont, where he was probably the first person (and maybe the last) to create art out of Teflon. Domenico Mortellito died in 1994 at age 87.



1891



1934

Gustavo Cenci

He was born on January 27, 1897 in Terni, Umbria, Italy. He and his family arrived at Ellis Island in June 1905. Gustavo studied various painting techniques, and garnered several prizes. Gustavo and his brother Elio, formed the Cenci Art School. During his tenure with TRAP, Gustavo was apparently a prolific painter of murals. Also in 1936, Gus painted another TRAP work which is untitled. It is currently in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington, DC. He died in 1982. Harry Hopkins, President Franklin Roosevelt's relief administrator, said in response to Federal Support for the arts "artists have got to eat just like other people".

Internet Sources

National Postal Museum "Off the Wall"

New Deal Post Office murals, Patricia Raynor 1997

Wikipedia: Life Saver Company

Westchester County archives: Photographs of WPA murals for Port Chester

Post Office 1997. Life Savers Building Photograph ca. 1950.

Mortellito Noah's Ark mural Washington D.C. Zoo

Gustavo Cenci.

Neighborhood Report: Sound view (Domenico Mortellito information) Seth

Kugel September 2004

Art of English.net

Murals in the Post Office

Maybe for some American people the Post Office is just another government business, but for us immigrant people it's more than that it's like a NATIONAL TREASURE. Thanks to it we have contact with our families even though telephones, telegrams and internet are available. Why are these murals in the Post Office? When were they made? How were they made? Who did them? There are so many questions that probably very few people know answers to.

These murals were made in years of the Depression (1929 –1941) and they are Federal property. Created by immigrants they are something unusual that you can't see every day but you can appreciate. You can see in these murals workers like you and me from other countries who sustain their families. They inspire you to continue working. It is this legacy of the thousands of workers who labored at their crafts for little money but with great pride which we have to inspire us today. Although many similar works of art have been destroyed or stolen those that remain must be preserved. They stand as a reminder of a time in our country's history when dreams were not allowed to be destroyed by economic disaster.

These murals were made by Domenico Mortellito and Italian immigrant Gustavo Cenci. They were inspired by the Mexican muralist tradition of Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco.

By: Susana Aguilar & Felix Moran. "I wanted to capture the significance of human beings. What makes a city is its people"
Domenico Mortellito 1936.



The Baker

This picture shows a man baking bread. This symbolizes the culture from Port Chester's Italian community and the work shows the multi cultural faces of this big country. Again the immigrant people are working hard. It is very different from the way the bread is baked now. SA, JCV



The Doctor and the Nurse

A great lunette where we can see the importance of health care through time. In the mural the doctor is checking a baby who a nurse is holding. It is a hospital, a babies floor: scale, babies, basinettes. Now the baby lies down on a changing table and the scale is more modern. The basinettes are more personal. CM, HY, MV



The Grocer

He has different products for selling on his cart. The Grocer is trying to sell fresh produce and meat in the same cart, which today is different. At that time, 1936 they used to do the shopping transaction more personally. The Grocer looks strong, clean and healthy. This lunette was painted during the great depression and represents the reality of that time. HS

Questions and Answers

1. Why was the project done?

To create more jobs for all Americans including artists during the 1930's depression.

2. Who did the murals?

Domenico Mortellito and Gustavo Cenci.

3. When were they done?

In 1936 during a six month period.

4. How were they done?

They were painted on canvas with oil paints. Nine of them are called lunettes because they are shaped like half moons.

5. Who paid for the project?

The U.S. Treasury Department. "Section of fine arts". Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) under the WPA (Work Progress Administration).

6. Why was Port Chester selected as the site?

Port Chester built a new Post Office building in 1934. And it qualified under the government's guidelines.

7. Why did we make this brochure?

We did this project because our teacher Camille had an idea to let us participate in Port Chester community and feel proud of being part of it. And we did. Many people don't know about these murals in Port Chester's Post Office. I love the way we learn in Camille's class; we have the opportunity to learn about history and do important projects like murals. We did this because our teacher Camille Linen likes to teach with art and I'm a person who learns from it.

We thought it should be in a brochure and our teacher gave us the courage to do it; also nobody did this before.

This brochure lets people know the kind of art we have and that it was made in the Depression.

Susana Aguilar, Felix Moran, Clara Munoz, Hermogenes Sanchez, Rie Shibata, Miledy Valerio.



The Postman

We see a popular postman carrying a mail bag full of letters. He is ready to give the correspondence to each person. A difference from today's postman is he is using a whistle to notify the people that he has the mail. In this lunette we can say the muralist immortalized postmen in their own building. *FM, SA, JCV*



The Teacher

A teacher with four pupils is teaching them where each country is located. The teacher looks like she is in her 50s with eye glasses, dark sweater and her hair in a bun. The teacher is using the globe because the group is small. Her hands are dirty, we don't know why. This represents the hard work the teacher did in 1936. *CM, HY, MV*



The Policeman

In this lunette we can see the policeman wearing a blue uniform holding a signal-stop to control the traffic. Behind him is a classic silver car. Many years ago no stop lights were in our community that's why the policeman controlled the traffic on the streets. This mural is very important and interesting to us because we can know about Port Chester history. When you see this mural you think about the past. *GC*



Workers on the Dock

This is one of the greatest murals created by Domenico Mortellito. We can see two strong men working in the port. They are using a crane, but they are pulling a rope by hand to bring up the merchandise because in the 30's they didn't use machinery like today. They are helped by a third person you can't see but you can see a worker with the blue overalls. *FM, JCV*



Ward's Castle

Ward's Castle was built in 1870 by architect Robert Mook as the home of William Ward, a mechanical engineer living in Port Chester. It was the first reinforced concrete structure to built in the United States. In this picture, we see a woman in a dress talking with a man in suit, old type of bicycle, hitching post and trough for a horse. This mural shows a wealthy life in a suburb of New York City in 19th century. *RS*



Russell Burdsall and Ward Nuts and Bolts Factory

This is the Russell, Burdsall and Ward Factory in Port Chester where people made tools, nuts and bolts. In this picture four men are working as hard as they do in the present factories. This mural shows the men using different machines to make the tools. At that time workers wore overalls and hats, now they wear uniforms. We can see strong men showing us their muscles which is one characteristic of Mortellito's style. *GC, CM, SA*



Life Saver Factory

This mural shows who was important in the Port Chester community. This company was one of the most successful businesses in Port Chester. The factory was open from 1920–1985. In sixty five years this company employed approximately 650 people. For 65 years Port Chester experienced beautiful candy flavor aromas wafting through the air. Now the building is home for beautiful condominiums and is still a treasure for everybody. *EC, MG, HS*



The Carpenter

This mural shows a carpenter who is shaving a wood board. There are a lot of tools around him: a saw, a big ruler. He uses an apron to protect his clothes. Maybe he works for himself to make furniture or maybe he is working for some company. He looks strong with his big muscles, he must have worked hard everyday. *RS, GC*



The Musician

This mural shows two men playing their musical instruments: The man in the front is playing cello and the man behind him is playing piano. We can also see a harp at the left corner of this picture. They seem to be so inspired and focused on what they are doing. This must be a scene at a concert where a lot of musicians play their instruments as an orchestra. *RS*



The Fireman

Firemen have hard work to face every time it is necessary. We can see all the basic implements to extinguish the fire. They used to accomplish their job sometimes with injuries. The artist shows us the feeling of a common fire. They are still using heavy and sophisticated uniforms to protect themselves. *HS*