

FORREST FLOWER - (PHS 1930)

The Portage High School Hall of Fame (PHS HOF) was created to recognize distinguished alumni or others, whose outstanding professional, athletic, or civic endeavors have brought honor to PHS and serve to inspire future graduates to perform and serve in the same spirit.

It includes musicians, a NASA scientist, multi-Gold Medal Olympian, State Champions, Professional football & baseball players, 2 Pulitzer Prize authors, a Governor, philanthropists and others. Forrest Flower (PHS '30) will be its 3rd artist.

Flower was one of 8 siblings. He showed his tremendous talent in his senior yearbook illustrating numerous drawings throughout. Word of his abilities spread and Pulitzer Prize winning author Zona Gale encouraged him to attend art school. He applied for, and won several scholarships to attend the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. There he studied under Gerrit Sinclair and Charlotte Partridge, graduating in 1934.

According to an article in the Milwaukee Journal in May, 1936, the depression-era director of Federal Arts Projects, Holger Cahill, believed Flowers would become a first rate American artist of the future. It notes Flower was under contract "painting for the government".

He received Treasury Department commissions to paint murals at Federal Post Offices in Rice Lake and Viroqua. He also painted murals at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Michigan. The Federal Arts Project was a New Deal program created during the Great Depression.

Flower was also hired by the University of Wisconsin to paint a mural at the Law School Library. Beaver Dam High School asked him to paint a large mural called "Power". He was a prolific artist who took top honors in competitions and had his art exhibited at New York's Rockefeller Center, The Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C., The Boston Museum and The Art Institute of Chicago.

Mr. Flower's painting of Native Americans capturing army horses during the Blackhawk War was included in a 1948 Life Magazine article the year of his death. All these years later, Flower still has 2 works on display at The Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington ("Physical Examination" & "Forest Scene"). He also has a painting on display at The Museum at the Portage, 804 MacFarlane Rd.

Upon his death from cancer at the age of 36, Gimbles Stores created a scholarship in his honor. Professor Partridge said, "Forrest Flower's influence on the art of Wisconsin is real and enduring.seldom satisfied, because his goal was high".