

ERNEST HÜPEDEN

Beyond the Forest



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presented by

Edgewood College Gallery

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Edgewood College Gallery and the Art Department of Edgewood College are delighted to share *Ernest Hüpeden: Beyond the Forest* as the first exhibition in the new Visual and Theatre Arts Center, now named The Stream. We're proud of the College's impressive collection of a type of art often called Outsider, Naïve, Vernacular, Folk, or Untrained. The awe-inspiring Painted Forest art environment in Valton, Wisconsin is one example among many within our collection of why it's not always important where an artist is trained or with whom she or he studied.

Ernest Hüpeden's magnum opus, the Painted Forest transcends simple labels. Encounters with the Painted Forest, which is an entire building filled with murals illustrating secret fraternal rituals and imaging a Valton of the future, offer us a chance to unleash our imaginations by envisioning a turn of the century village and its townsfolk heady with hopes and dreams not unlike ours today. For many Wisconsinites, the ideas and values communicated by the murals are familiar to us through the shared memories of our parents and grandparents.

The objects in this exhibition help us to understand the Painted Forest in the context of Hüpeden's work in other villages in the Valton area as well as larger cities like La Crosse. The paintings that have survived document homesteads and the land they

Introduction & Acknowledgements

were built upon. Today, many of the views the artist painted remain. Others have vanished with time.

Edgewood College Gallery is indebted to a number of people and organizations for helping make this inaugural exhibition in the Visual and Theatre Arts Center and first monographic exhibition of Ernest Hüpeden's work possible. Warm thanks to Sara Leonard, The Harold, Bert, and Mark Dyar Families, The Burch-Bolden family and June Burch Heffernan, John and Julia Bolden, Lisa Stone, Don Howlett, Jim Zanzi, Delores Nash, Tom Moss, Leslie Umberger, Joseph Kapler, Lisa Marine, Benjamin Karl, David Smith, Agnieszka Ligendza, Marguerite Roulet, Brandon Claycomb, Katie Vesperman, John Hromyak, Terri Yoho, Larry Donoval, Christine End, and the Wisconsin Historical Society.

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—Paul Baker Prindle
Director, Edgewood College Gallery
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ERNEST HÜPEDEN'S ATLAS

Lisa Stone



Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation detail, untamed conifer forest. Photo: Paul Baker Prindle

Little is known about the artist Ernest Hüpeden's life in Germany, or his time in the United States, from 1878—when he arrived in New York from Hamburg aboard the steamship *Herder*—and 1898, when he wandered into Valton, Wisconsin. Stories passed down over the years are now apocryphal. The few that are recorded in news articles, unpublished manuscripts, and letters, which vary in their details, describe a well-educated married man with a son, who worked as a banker in Germany. By one account, his wealthy wife served cocktails, leading to his habitual drinking. Falsely accused of embezzlement, he spent seven (or eight) years in prison, where he taught himself to paint. Hüpeden was exonerated and set free upon the deathbed confession of the true embezzler. Broken and alone, he shipped off to America. The name “Ernest Hüpeden” appears on the passenger manifest of the *Herder*, with the occupation “Kaufmann,” or merchant. His birth is listed as circa 1858.

If this is approximately correct, he was around twenty or maybe twenty-five years old when he embarked, calling into question a prior banking career and seven-year prison sentence. Hüpeden's claim that he was imprisoned may have been a cover for evading the “sentence” of German conscription, as he was strongly opposed to

the rising militarism in Germany. In a 1957 letter to a local newspaper, Judson Erwin of La Farge, Wisconsin recalled memories of Hüpeden, who had stayed with his family in April 1904:

His father educated him in Germany, and he also attended two or three different colleges, he told us. He was married and had one son—he left them and came to America. He left because of some trouble with his wife and father, and he hated the German military machine. He voted Republican as near as I know, but in belief and at heart he was a strong Socialist. He said it would come in “Gods own time,” but sooner or later we would have to fight Germany, and he wished he could help to crush the German military power. He also told us how our educational system in the U.S.A. was drifting away from us all the time as well as our other freedoms, and that sooner or later the wealth of the nation would all be in the hands of a few (and he was quite right). He said, “Germany has far better schools and colleges than America but they teach militarism in all of them and in time will try to rule the world.” He hated to see this take place, for it would mean that the Civil War under Lincoln

was nothing but a “sham battle.”¹

Regardless of inconsistencies about facts of his life in Germany, Hüpeden shared what he wished with the people of western Wisconsin, so we will stick with the story, *his* story.

Nothing is currently known about his next twenty years, in which he made his way from the eastern seaboard to Wisconsin, walking and painting, as he claimed, in exchange for room and board. In 1982, I spent several months in Valton, Wisconsin during the restoration of Hüpeden's masterwork, *The Painted Forest*, searching for information from local residents about the artist. More than a few locals suggested that I consult a medium at “Spook Hill,” the local term for the Spiritualist Camp in nearby Wonewoc. Spiritualists had been in the region since 1874 and the Camp began operation in 1893.² Since it had deep roots in the area, I decided to visit. I selected a spiritualist named Mr. Mason, who told me to write a question on a piece of paper and hold it in my hand. I wrote out “Ernest Hüpeden Painted Forest” and clutched it tightly, wavering between skepticism and curiosity. After meditating for a time, Mr. Mason described his impressions: “I see shoes, piles and piles of shoes with holes in the soles. I see a man walking, walking, walking.”

¹ Judson Erwin, letter to *Wisconsin REA News*, Vol. 18—No. 4, October 1957, page unknown.

² Wonewoc Spiritualist Camp website: <http://www.campwonewoc.com/id13.html>

Someday we may find traces of Hüpeden's travels from New York to Wisconsin, perhaps expanding the trail of his paintings recording the post-Civil War/pre-World War I period of American life. Because he was a German artist who chose the format of the panorama for his opus, *The Painted Forest*, it is very likely that he encountered the atelier of German cyclorama painters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Some background on the painted panorama is necessary here.

The struggle to conjoin ideas and representation and convert them into a new visual language has been a primary concern of visual artists throughout the history of art. The painted panorama occupies a transitional period in this history. Out of the

perennial attempt to stretch borders and expand upon established formats to communicate the experience of space, depth, and illusion ever more effectively, and to represent a particular reality by more convincing visual means, the phenomena of the painted panorama was born. One could argue that the urge to communicate visually in a panorama format originated in the ancient cave paintings of Africa and Western Europe. A far more recent appearance of this phenomenon emerged in England in the 1780s, predating the invention of cinema by about a century, while adopting the immersive environment of the theater. In some panoramas, the spectators were seated on a rotating platform in the center of a circular building. In other instances, platforms revolved

in front of enormous, stationary panorama paintings. Movement of the pictorial plane was also achieved by the creation of huge, scroll-like panorama paintings that were unrolled in front of stationary viewers. Panoramas were an interesting precursor to the development of the modern moving picture, and represented a radical artistic development, an urge toward a life-size or larger-than-life, narrative, visual experience. Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Academy in London, was skeptical at first, but later he became convinced, upon seeing a panoramic rendition of *London From the Roof of the Albion Mills* (1792), saying, "Nature can be represented so much better there than in a painting restricted by the

normal format."³

It didn't take long for the panorama to cross the Atlantic and take root in the United States, where it developed into an interesting trans-Atlantic artistic and economic exchange. John Vanderlyn's *Panoramic view of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles*, (1818–1819), at 12 by 165 feet, is a sweeping vista of the grand gardens. Now permanently installed in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the panorama was first shown in lower Manhattan in the purpose-built Rotunda building before touring the country.⁴ These monumental visual narratives had a curious mobility given their cumbersome size and the spaces and equipment necessary to present them, and many American-made panoramas toured around the country and overseas.

In the U.S., capturing the splendor and monumentality of the Mississippi River became a popular subject for panorama entrepreneurs in the 1840s and 50s. John Banvard created a canvas that was about a half-mile long, but was advertised as a "three-mile canvas" that depicted twelve hundred miles of the river. His painting received favorable comment from

both Longfellow and Dickens and also from Queen Victoria herself, at a private command performance.⁵ Other painters, meanwhile, tried to outdo Banvard in length and scope. Henry Lewis made no small plans when he created a canvas version of the landscape along the Mississippi, which he depicted from his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, to St. Anthony Falls, Minnesota. Advertisements for exhibitions of his "Great National Work" in the 1850s described "45,000 square feet of canvas... presented to the public with the assurance that it is all its purpose to be—a beautiful work of art and a correct delineation of the GREAT FATHER OF WATERS."⁶

which the German painters felt right at home. Their salon was active between 1884 and 1889, and their studio could accommodate a canvas 365 feet in circumference and 45 feet high. Their cycloramas primarily depicted historical subjects, and Civil War battle scenes were particularly popular at the time.⁷

Panoramas and cycloramas of this period were eventually deemed obsolete with the introduction of cinema and other factors. Due to the challenges of preserving the large-scale

The craze for these so-called "all-around views" took root in the Upper Midwest in the 1880s, when a group of German painters were imported to Milwaukee to create panoramas and cycloramas. At the time, Milwaukee was known as "little Munich," with a large German-speaking population and a cultural environment in

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, cyclorama painters and paintings, ca. 1880s. Wisconsin Historical Society, imaged 26069

Excerpt from the Atlanta Cyclorama depicting the *Battle of Atlanta*, illustration in *The Sword Was Mightier Than the Pen* By John C. Fazio The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/articles/biography/sword_mightier.htm

⁷ Frances Stover, "The Panorama Painters and Their Work" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Center, 1969).

Panoramic Barn Yard View
Ernest Hüpeden



³ Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 23.

⁴ Metropolitan Museum of art website, http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/american_paintings_and_sculpture/panoramic_view_of_the_palace_and_gardens_of_versailles_john_vanderlyn/objectview.aspx?collID=2&OID=20013426

⁵ William J. Peterson, *The Mississippi River Panorama: Henry Lewis Great National Work* (Iowa City, IA, Clio Press, 1979), 16-17.

⁶ Ibid.

works, panoramas were ultimately ephemeral entertainments and few survived into the twenty-first century. Many panorama paintings deteriorated in poor storage conditions, were destroyed by fire, or were cut up and repurposed for theatre backdrops. *The Battle of Atlanta*, a 42 foot tall by 358 feet in diameter painting created in 1885-86 by the Milwaukee atelier, is preserved at the Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Museum in Grant Park in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1936, dioramas of figures and objects were created to surround the entire circumference of the painting, extending the illusion into three-dimensional space. It has been deemed the largest oil painting and the longest-running show in the world.⁸

Ernest Hüpeden is credited with creating an outstanding, original, and fortunately extant painted panorama was created in a simple vernacular building in the town of Valton, in the dramatic “Hidden Valleys” region of western Wisconsin. Built in 1898 as M.W.A.

Camp # 6190, a fraternal lodge hall, the simple frame exterior belies the complex room within, which is entirely painted with



scenes depicting the principles and activities of the Modern Woodmen of America (M.W.A.), a fraternal order that provided life insurance for its members. From the clouds in the treetops on the vaulted ceiling, to the wildflowers in the wainscoting, every square inch of the walls and ceiling, as well as the canvas stage curtain, are painted in a symbolic “all around” landscape. Known as Wood Hall to the locals,⁹ The Painted Forest (as the building was renamed in the 1960s) is Ernest Hüpeden’s masterpiece. The artist was hired

by the M.W.A., first to paint their stage curtain in exchange for room and board in a local hotel. He spent about two years¹⁰ painting the entire interior of the lodge hall in a panoramic backdrop, custom-made to depict the rituals of the Modern Woodmen of America. Unlike the other panoramas of the time, which were public entertainments, The Painted Forest was not intended to recreate historical events (with the exception of the stage curtain, which depicts the Battle of Manila Bay), and was

made as a setting for secret ritual initiation and other fraternal activities, where the performers and the audience were one and the same.¹¹

The Painted Forest is a complex composition presenting a sequential narrative unfolding in a metaphorical landscape that reflects the actual surrounding landscape and local history and culture with remarkable fidelity. The cardinal points of the

compass have strong symbolic significance in many fraternal rituals, and lodge halls are appointed accordingly. In *The Painted Forest*, each scene reveals its actual and symbolic direction, and several allude to a point in time—past, present, or future—as well. Hüpeden must have been aware of the essential functions of layout and adornment of fraternal ritual spaces. It is possible that he had been initiated into the Free Masonic craft in Germany, or that he saw (or even painted) other fraternal lodge halls along his travels. While he has come to be known as a self-taught or folk painter, and his other known paintings fall neatly into these genres, with *The Painted Forest*

Hüpeden stepped into the larger historical sphere of fraternal history, in which fundamental philosophical tenets are transmitted through symbolic enactments in architectural spaces whose floor plans are designed to represent universal principles. Rather than giving his patrons a grand pastiche in the historicized Egyptian or Moorish styles (common to many fraternal lodge halls), Hüpeden created a singular space in which the M.W.A. could enact their mysteries enveloped in renditions of their home landscape, Valton, in the past, present, and future.

Each section of the painted interior

Ernest Hüpeden’s painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. South elevation with details of the East and West walls. Photo: Mike McGinnis, 1982.

The Painted Forest, Valton, Wisconsin. Photo: Don Howlett, 1981, prior to restoration. <http://paintedforest.edgewood.edu/>

⁸ Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Museum website, <http://www.atlantacyclorama.org/history.php>

⁹ David Rhodes, “Wood Hall,” April 1981, unpublished manuscript, p. 6 of 11 pages.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 6. Rhodes wrote “...differing sources estimate that it took him between six months and two years to complete. He did not paint consistently, would disappear from time to time...”

¹¹ Information about *The Painted Forest* is adapted from Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *Sacred Spaces and Other Places A Guide to the Grottos and Sculptural Environments of the Upper Midwest* (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Press, 1993).

Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. South elevation detail, man riding goat. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

Modern Woodman of America ritual goat. Gift to *The Painted Forest* from the Modern Woodman of America home office, Rock Island, Illinois, 1981. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. Detail, west elevation, south corner: tree with owl and bones. Photo: Don Howlett, 1981.

contains an episode following the journey of the candidate through the M.W.A. initiation ritual, through harrowing tests, into the brotherhood, into daily life, and then into the future, one century hence,

to return back to 1898 and the historical backdrop of its creation.

The narrative begins in the southwest corner with a candidate for initiation riding a wide-eyed goat, heading west, toward a tree with an owl in its branches and a skull and crossbones on the forest floor below. The candidate's terrified expression



is unforgettable. He is injured—his arm is wrapped in a sling. The goat and sling are direct references to the M.W.A. initiation ritual. As in other fraternal orders, the ritual featured a blindfolded ride on a mechanical goat. Prior to the manufacture of elaborate “hoodwinks,” the Modern Woodmen used a sling to blindfold the candidate for the ride. Deprived of sight, disoriented, and at the mercy of not-yet-fellow initiates, the candidate straddled—literally—the primitive animal realm, with all its erotic, earth-bound associations, from which he will be bucked off or emerge intact.

Hüpeden may have embedded more into this image. As an artist, a loner, a homeless itinerant, he stood out from the tight-knit community. Various local accounts emphasize his identity as a drinking man. He was known as the “bum painter.” Valton and environs were strictly dry, so an artist who painted in exchange for alcohol may have been trusted but was ever stigmatized. Dolores Henderson Nash (who, with her husband purchased the building in the 1960s and named it The Painted Forest) wrote a dramatized account of Hüpeden's entry into Valton. After describ-



ing a small, insular village where everyone knew everyone else as “kin,” in came the drifter:

The stranger walked slowly down the street, like a man utterly exhausted from trudging miles in the warm heat of mid-summer.

The hotelkeeper saw the man coming and he was astonished to see this man in a village of kinfolks! The stranger hesitated at the door of the hotel before entering to ask for lodging. **This man was a Tramp!** A filthy man such as this the hotelkeeper had only heard city people tell about. His

clothes were caked with mud and grime; his black hair was long and tangled. He was a massively built man and his jet-black mustache gave him an oddly distinguished appearance.

The woman who took care of the post office next to the hotel also observed the man. She made a mental note that she should be afraid of him and yet... there was something about his face, dirty and unshaven though it was, that made fear seem unnecessary. His eyes were kind and intelligent with a hard-to-explain refinement.

After talking awhile with the hotel keeper, the hall was mentioned. The tramp said that he was an artist and would be “most obliged” to mural decorate its interior in exchange for all the hard liquor he could drink plus his lodging. Valton has always been dry, so it was not without considerable effort that half of the agreement was carried out.¹²

Itinerants—people who wandered and did work in exchange for room and board—were common in American at the turn of the last century. Historical ac-

¹² Dolores Henderson Nash, *The Saga of “The Painted Forest,”* undated manuscript, LaValle, Wisconsin, c. late 1960s, p.2.

counts conveyed (or fueled) condescending attitudes about jobless people who were untethered to property—whether owned or rented—and to the moral values presumed to accompany a life centered at home and by extension, to the community. *Tramping With Tramps*, an exhaustive 1899 study of itinerants in America, categorically frames itinerants as criminals, focusing on their (presumed) physical and moral degeneracy, as contrasted with the accepted norms of conventional, home-based life.¹³

Hüpeden walked into town a stranger and apparently never quite shook the identity of the “bum painter,” a term stigmatizing his status as both itinerant and artist. He incorporated many meanings into the panorama and it is tempting to try to find him within it. It is interesting that the man on the goat does not wear a hoodwink, as he would in the initiation ritual. Perhaps it represents Hüpeden, the artist with his arm in a sling, no longer able to paint, heading west toward symbols of wisdom and death. It is one of Hüpeden's most powerful images and may well contain significance beyond its obvious M.W.A. iconography.

The west and east walls are each divided by three windows. Continuing past the initiate riding the goat, and the owl and bones, past the first window, the next section of the west wall features untamed

¹³ Josiah Flynt, *Tramping with Tramps Studies and Sketches of Vagabond Life* 1899, The Century Company, New York.

conifer forest. A lecture from the M.W.A. *Official Ritual* outlines the metaphorical backdrop of the forest:

How typical of a great forest is life. In the forest are the strong and the weak, the giants and the pygmies, the beautiful and the coarse. It's (sic) shadows hide the beasts of prey, and its foliage shelters the winged songsters. The flowers, bright in the colorings of nature, lift their faces, give sweet fragrance to the shade for a time, and pass. The vine reaches out its tiny tendrils, and on the trunk of some great monarch climbs toward the sun. Differing

Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation detail, untamed conifer forest. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.





Top left: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, center panel, dramatic scene. Top right: Detail. Photos: Lisa Stone, 2011.



in stature, diverse in design, and varied in color are the dwellers in the woodland, yet dependent are they on the same Mother Earth for life. And how wonderful it is that from this common soil each selects those elements which suit its development: that the oak and the violet draw sustenance from the same source; that the birch finds the material for its paper-like bark in the same ground that gives the

rough coat to the elm. Thus we behold the fraternity of nature.¹⁴

The lecture goes on to describe the tempests and adversity in the forest of life, and the M.W.A. as a forest of brotherly love.

In the central panel on the west wall

¹⁴ *Official Ritual (Fourth Revision) of the Modern Woodmen of America 1915* Containing the Opening and closing Ceremonies, and Ceremony of Adoption. Prescribed by the Head Camp. Copyrighted, 1915, by Modern Woodmen of America, 66.



Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, center panel details.

Bottom left to right: candidate forced to witness burning scene, M.W.A. member being burned at stake, murder scene. Photos: Lisa Stone, 2011.



the candidate for initiation is dragged in to the scene from stage left by masked men in unidentified ritual costumes, and forced to witness a tumultuous event. Within a clearing between hills that appear to collapse into the center, black-masked and costumed men¹⁵ burn a Modern Woodman of America member—still very much alive—in a roaring bonfire. His M.W.A. cap lies on the ground in front of the fire. Off to the right, a man in street clothes has just been stabbed to death by one of the

¹⁵ The masked and costumed men may represent a rival fraternity, such as the Improved Order of Red Men.



Left: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, north panel, detail, Candidate being lead past images of death. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Left: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, north panel, detail, M.W.A. campfire. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Above: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, north panel, detail, Forest Patriarch. Photos Lisa Stone, 2011.

bandits. This grizzly scene corresponds to the place in the lodge where the mortality ritual—an enactment of a symbolic death in order to attain wisdom regarding life's mysteries—took place. Hüpeden satisfied his patrons with an imaginatively original image, warning of the need to be conjoined in fraternity, the better to survive the perils lurking in both nature and society.



In the last vignette on the west wall the candidate, still visibly shaken, is lead by his M.W.A. Escort to a darkened forest clearing under a blazing sunset. Skeletons are strewn in the woods. Death, the “inevitable initiator,” is ever-present, but they approach the safety of a campfire with tripod and black cauldron, around which eight Modern Woodmen gather. The gray-robed Forest Patriarch—figure of wisdom and authority in M.W.A. rituals—officiates in a scene conveying the promise of safety in the bonds of fraternity. Thus concludes the dramatic west wall.

Left: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. West elevation, north panel view. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Above: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. North elevation, detail, Forest Patriarch leading Initiate, pointing to the castle. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

Below: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. North elevation overview. Photo: Mike McGinnis, 1982.

The north wall is painted as a lofty expanse of forest, with a billowing fire in the center and an imposing castle on a distant mountain. The candidate (who has possibly achieved initiate status by now) is guided by the Forest Patriarch and accompanied by four axe-wielding Modern Woodmen mem-

bers. The patriarch points to the castle, an M.W.A. outpost with pennants flying from the turrets, one with the M.W.A. motto *Peace Light and Safety*, the other, *M.W. of A. Valton Camp #6190*. The mural mirrors the ritual here as well. The Forest Patriarch was stationed here, and an actual stove was positioned in front of the painted fire. The

mural symbolizes the fundamental tenet of solidity in fraternity after surviving the initiation ritual, while also alluding to the northern compass point, and perhaps the homeland Hüpeden left behind.



Below: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. North elevation, detail, M.W.A. castle. Photo: Don Howlett, 1982.



Above: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation overview.

Center right: East elevation, north panel, M.W.A. woodland scene. Photos: Mike McGinnis, 1982.



A mother with her infant stands in the doorway of a log cabin, apparently experiencing the security that accompanies diligent labor and an ordered, insured life. Hüpeden borrowed the image from a stock M.W.A. engraving. He added a young boy in the foreground, said to be Royal Forest, the son of a Camp #6190 charter member, whose name was also the password to the lodge.

The center scene on the eastern wall portrays a leap from daily life into the future, Hüpeden's vision of Valton one hundred years later, 1999. The diligent labor and ambition depicted in the previous vignette evolves into a cityscape cleared of every single tree. Hüpeden created a rendition of an urban future, in which commerce has flourished and buildings recede down the street into the vanishing point. There's little human activity in the scene: two men talking on a corner in the foreground, a delivery cart with driver and

Below: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation, detail, Valton in 1999, city scene. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



The eastern wall brings daylight, the present, and the future. Departing from the emotional and philosophical imagery on the west and north walls, the first scene on the north end of the east wall features several industrious M.W.A. members splitting logs in a domesticated forest setting, reflecting the M.W.A. rhetoric, "...to clear the forests and let civilization, commerce, and the arts occupy the ground."¹⁶

¹⁶ *Official Ritual*, 67.





Above: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation, detail, street scene. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Right: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation, detail, saloon. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

two prancing horses (similar to the signature teams in several of Hüpeden's "home place" paintings) and the barkeep and two patrons at the town's saloon. The scene has the feeling of a surreal, unpopulated future, similar to the *Metaphysical Town Square* paintings of Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), notable for their lonely streetscapes receding into infinity.

In Hüpeden's city of the future the M.W.A. Bank of Valton looms in the

foreground. It was here that, in the M.W.A. ritual, the Candidate and his Escort approach a banker for aid. The script reads,

Escort: Stranger, we now find ourselves upon the streets of a great city in the busy world. We have heard the noise and tumult of commercial strife in which everybody is seeking wealth, influence, and fame. Nobody appears to have any time to devote to works of charity. We, in our poverty, have been unnoticed, for they can see no chance for gain in such beggars as we appear to be. But over yonder is a great banking house, where many people of wealth enter to deposit their gold; let us enter and approach the opulent Banker and rehearse a story of suffering and want, and see what reply we will receive.¹⁷

They are predictably denied aid. Hüpeden, however, projects the solvency and success of the M.W.A. Bank of Valton in the future, in a cut-away view of the bank's interior, revealing a widow in mourning dress (still in the fashion of 1899) cashing in her M.W.A. insurance policy for \$2,000—quite a sum to imagine at the turn of the last century. A death has occurred, but no Modern Woodmen of America members surround the widow in her time of need, as was promised in M.W.A. insurance literature. While flatter-

¹⁷ Ibid. 50-51.

ing his patrons with an imagined, grand city, Hüpeden predicted the evaporation of fraternity (the M.W.A. eventually abandoned their fraternal trappings, evolving into an insurance company only), and the ascendancy of the commercial insurance policy.

Behind the teller's wickets, Hüpeden painted an amorously formed map of the United States on the left, a clock in the center—its pendulum swinging far to the right, suggesting real time (2:34)—and a list of the *Rates of Exchange* for New York, Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, London, Liverpool, Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna. The scene brings to mind several



signature works by 17th century Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675). In interior rooms of the gentry class, awash in meditative isolation, sublime personal gestures occur: a woman plays a lute, gazing, presumably out a window; a woman holds an ewer, her other hand held hesitantly at a window; a woman engages in conversation with a man; a window—all the windows are on the left—is open to the world beyond, remote from this intensely interior setting.¹⁸

All three paintings have maps or details of maps on the walls directly behind the narrative action, maps of the then-known world, references to the complex geo-political backdrops whose ramifications affect each individual, each interior scene, knowingly or not. Hüpeden projected Valton in

¹⁸ Paintings cited: Johannes Vermeer, *Woman with a Lute*, early 1660s, New York City, NY; *Young Woman with a Water Jug* (Young Woman with a Water Pitcher), c.1660-1667, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; *Officer and Laughing Girl*, 1655-1660, Frick Collection, New York City.



Left: Ernest Hüpeden's painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation, detail, M.W.A. Bank interior, widow cashing in her insurance policy. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

Above: East elevation, detail, map and rates of exchange chart. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

1999, with subtle references to the global political and economic context that Valton would eventually inhabit. His iconography on the entire east wall implies that commerce and growth do not occur without implications to the social, political, and natural landscape. The imagined future is grand but lonely. When Hüpeden arrived in Valton, it was "...a thriving community with two-story framed schoolhouses, three blacksmith shops, several warehouses, three doctors, a lawyer, three grocery stores, two department stores, two barrel stave

shops, two churches, a post office, hotel, two mills, furniture store, creamery, wool packing house, shoemakers, hat shop, sorghum manufactory, and lime burning kiln.”¹⁹ Valton dwindled considerably due to several factors, mainly because the railroad bypassed the village and thus deprived it of its the primary ability to grow beyond a horse-drawn town. Hüpeden did not imagine the entry of the automobile, and in his vision of the city in 1999, Valton remained depicted in the horse-powered era. Valton

in 2012 is an unincorporated village with two churches, the lodge hall and Painted Forest Studio, and a few blocks of houses set among farms in the rolling hills and valleys of western Wisconsin, which escaped Hüpeden’s, and no doubt the late 19th century town fathers’, development dreams.

On the final section of the eastern wall Hüpeden painted a meadow of flowers interspersed with tree stumps, and young growth birch and popple—varieties of succession-regrowth trees that follow deforestation. Here, devoid of ritual overtones, Hüpeden painted the *future* of the future, bathed in early morning light. It is here that the ritual ends and the landscape continues, recovering peacefully, as it were, after a harrowing drama.

Centered in the south wall is a stage with a canvas curtain, which may have

been the single surface that Hüpeden was actually hired to paint. The curtain is framed with *trompe l’œil* drapery, appearing to have just been swept open and tied back, revealing an exotic, patriotic scene: the USS *Olympia* in naval combat with the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, the decisive battle that occurred on May

1, 1898 in the Spanish-American War. The painted curtain portrays an important current event, underscoring the solvency of the Modern Woodmen of America as an insurer, as many benefits were paid to widows of this conflict. At a glance, the maritime scene appears incongruous in a room enveloped in pine forest, but it suggests south as surely as the castle on the opposite wall implies north. Hüpeden signed the stage curtain and dated it 12/20 1899.

Top center: Ernest Hüpeden’s painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. South elevation, stage curtain. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

Below: Ernest Hüpeden’s painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. East elevation, south panel, succession/regrowth forest. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

19 David Rhodes, Wood Hall, unpublished manuscript, April 1981, p. 6 (of 11).



As an itinerant painter, Hüpeden could have encountered panoramas in his travels from the East Coast to western Wisconsin, and he may have painted a stage curtain or two. His itinerary is not known, but he very likely would have passed through Milwaukee during the period when the German panorama painters were in residence. Had he seen their grand cycloramas, he may have stepped into the Valton lodge hall and envisioned a *gesamtkunstwerk*—a total or comprehensive artwork. The Milwaukee atelier disbanded around 1889 when the panorama craze waned, but three of the artists tried to revive the entertainment in San Francisco in 1898, where they created a panorama featuring the Battle of Manila

Above: Ernest Hüpeden’s painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. South elevation, stage curtain, detail, signature and date. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.

Lower Center: Ernest Hüpeden’s painting, known as *The Painted Forest*. South elevation, stage curtain, detail, USS *Olympia*. Photo: Lisa Stone, 2011.



Above: Ernest Hüpeden, *Battle of Atlanta, GA July 22, 1864*. April 1, 1907. Collection of Joseph and Geraldine Kendall, IL. Courtesy of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Next page, lower right: Ernest Hüpeden, untitled (Maritime scene, China sea), detail, paint on wood trunk lid interior, date and dimensions unknown, noted as in the collection of Judson Erwin in 1957.

Bay.²⁰ Hüpeden may not have known of it, as the work was only shown in the West. He did, however, paint an outstanding rendition of the Battle of Atlanta. Hüpeden's composition is strikingly similar to the German painters' version (http://clevelandcivilwar-roundtable.com/articles/biography/sword_mightier.htm), suggesting that Hüpeden had lingered in the Milwaukee panorama atelier, or at least had seen their grand *Battle of Atlanta*.

Hüpeden spent the last chapter of his life wandering and painting portraits of farmsteads in western Wisconsin until his death (he was found,

frozen in the snow, at the Leatherberry

²⁰ Frances Stover, "The Panorama Painters and Their Work."

farm in Hub City in December, 1911).²¹ It appears that he was somewhat of a fixture, the resident itinerant artist in the Hidden Valleys region. Judson Erwin recalled,

...I knew the man well as he spent many days at our house painting for my folks and others. He would paint a fine picture of anything you wished for half a pint of whiskey, but he condemned liquor traffic and swore off drinking many times...In conclusion I would say, he was known all over the county. When not drinking he was kind hearted and would help anybody. He did a lot of painting between and in all the neighbor-

²¹ "Ernest Hüpeden," author unknown (thought to be Gordon Johnson of Valton, Wis.) manuscript dated June 1985, John Michael Kohler Arts Center Archive.

ing towns and except for his drinking was well liked by all.²²

Hüpeden painted on canvas, pillow ticking, wood, or whatever materials were available, including objects. Legend has it that if you gave him a bottle of whiskey he'd drain the contents and paint the bottle. If you gave him a pie, he'd eat it and return a painted pie tin. Erwin recalled,

I have a painting he did for my father on a chest made of

²² Erwin.

Below: Ernest Hüpeden, untitled (painted pie tin); paint on tin, date and dimensions unknown, collection unknown.



camphor wood, a chest that was through the Mexican War. It's a China scene and the boat that carried the chest to China and back from Mexico before coming to Wisconsin.²³

Hüpeden painted at least a few Civil War battle scenes, as well as western Wisconsin landscapes, logging scenes, portraits, and memorials. His most commonly commissioned works were paintings of "home places," a local term for farmsteads.²⁴ The exhibition *Beyond the Forest* includes

Ernest Hüpeden, *Burch-Bolden Family Homestead*, Wisconsin Historical Society. WHS- 90252.

Below: Ernest Hüpeden, *Randolph Homestead*, Wisconsin Historical Society. WHS- 2010.155.1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Research in the Valton area by the author in 1982. Several owners of Hüpeden paintings referred to the subject of their painting as the "home place."



Historical Society of Wisconsin's collection depict the convention of showing off a farmstead to its best, idealized advantage: organized landscapes delineated by neat fences, groves of young trees, orderly crops and gardens, an array of livestock, and neatly kept buildings, often with a couple striking out in a horse drawn buggy. (See *Res of Almon Jewell, Sec 35 Lafayette TP Wis*) The engravings express intense pride in a productive, orderly farmstead. This genre, and the urge behind it—to express mastery over the land and the promise of the American frontier, achieved—likely informed Hüpeden's compositions.

Ernest Hüpeden, *Valley Wis. From The North*, June 7, 1903, oil on canvas, 36 1/2 x 52 in., collection of Don Howlett and Lisa Stone, promised gift to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in honor of Leslie Umberger.

Below: Ernest Hüpeden, untitled (farm scene), oil on canvas, 27 x 37 1/4 in., collection of Jim Zanzi.

five such paintings, capturing the singular features of each property: neat farmhouses anchor tidy landscapes on bright summer days. Smoke rises from a few chimneys; perhaps it is baking day. A windmill powers one farm. It is early in the new century

and poles carrying electric lines appear in a few farmyards. Blossoms are in bloom on newly planted trees. Animals graze contentedly in barnyards, the hay is mown and stacked, laundry dries in the breeze, a child and dog gambol—nothing is out of place. In three paintings, Hüpeden captured the moment when farm couples, dressed in their Sunday best, are nestled in buggies, squired away by spirited, high-stepping horse teams. Enough work has been done to afford an afternoon ride.

Hüpeden's farmstead paintings take their place in the history of the depiction of homes and farms in the region, and they bear comparison with the 19th century combined atlas maps. These outsized bound copies feature divisions of land ownership, generally by county, punctuated by engravings of farmsteads. Several examples from the 1870s in the State

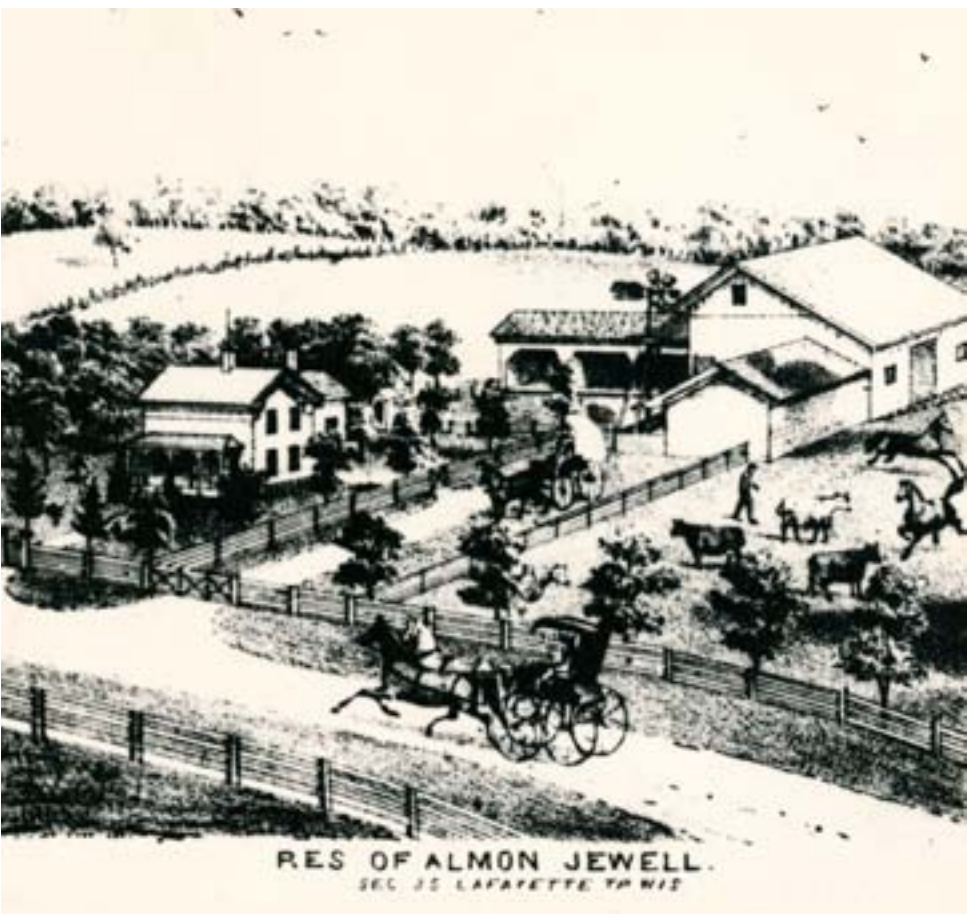
Below: Ernest Hüpeden, *Sauk County Farm*. 1902. Oil on Canvas, 51 1/2 x 32". Collection of Sara Leonard.



Below: Detail from atlas of the home of Almon Jewell who settled in 1845. Wisconsin Historical Society. WHS- 36333

Top Right: Paul Seifert, *Farm Painting of the Pierson Young Residence*. Wisconsin Historical Society. WHS- 74656

Paul Seifert (1840 – 1921) emigrated from Dresden, Germany, to Gotham, in Richland County, Wisconsin, about 35 miles from Valton, the general region where Hüpeden wandered and painted. Seifert was a craftsman and taxidermist who is best known for his exquisite water-color paintings of farmsteads in Richland County and environs. Seifert's paintings are highly stylized portraits of their subjects. *Pierson Young farmstead, Town of Troy,*



Wisconsin (1885) typifies Seifert's use of the imposed grid of fences, fields, and structures on the land, punctuated by uniform trees and carefully placed animals. With muted colors and light line work, the paintings have a distinctive delicacy accentuated by wisps of clouds. Seifert's farmsteads are painted from a distance—not quite a bird's-eye view, but above and away from the subject. Alex Marr notes,

Seifert's paintings mediate and naturalize inscription of a national mythology—of territorial progress and shared belief that rationality accompanied and facilitated such progress—on the land. Seifert affirms the moral rightness of such inscription by representing the fields and buildings that, for the farmers who commissioned the paintings, amounted

to strenuous work. Because he painted for the people who toiled to produce the referent of the paintings, the constructedness of the farm was, historically speaking, given. And Seifert buttressed the purposeful construction of the farms by placing untamed, lissome hills and clouds behind the farms. A view of individual families working the land, the “nature” in the background shows that the people depicted in the landscapes transformed the land. And the domed skies and fences along the bottom give each farm a sense of place and turn each to its own

cosmos carved out of purportedly virgin prairies and forests.²⁵

Both Seifert and Hüpeden satisfied people who *settled* the land, giving them

²⁵ Alex Brier Marr, “Power, Power Being a Comparative Analysis of the Autodidact Paul Seifert's Wisconsin Farm Paintings of the Late Nineteenth Century and Lithographic Reproductions of Elephantine Machines from the 1876 Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in Honor of the Hundredth Anniversary of American Independence,” unpublished paper, 2010

tangible expressions of their hard work, the transformation of owned property into idealized landscapes that express their ideals. No sense of the incessant toil of farm work is conveyed, only the result, captured in rare—perhaps impossible—perfect moments.

Hüpeden painted from a vantage point at the edge of, not quite in, his farm scenes. Hüpeden was, himself, at the edge of, not quite in, the social scenes he trav-

eled through and lingered in. As far as we know, he was itinerant for 33 years. While he never savored the comfort and security of his own home, he imbued his paintings with a utopic sense of order and security, perhaps out of longing, perhaps not. As a transient man he had an intimate sense for the landscapes he traversed and lingered in. *The Valley Where The Bluebirds Sing* expresses a perfect moment in the voluptuous hills of western Wisconsin, on the edge looking in.

Ernest Hüpeden. *The Valley Where the Bluebirds Sing*. 1911. Wisconsin Historical Society. WHS- 1975.143



ERNEST HÜPEDEN: A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Leslie Umberger

Since the early 1970s, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and Kohler Foundation, Inc. have joined forces in saving the work of artist environment-builders. The two institutions have pioneered a model that addresses both the original sites themselves and individual works of art.

Kohler Foundation was established in 1940 by the Kohler family to support the arts, education, and preservation initiatives. In 1959, a group of volunteers who were passionate about the arts, founded the Sheboygan Arts Foundation (SAF). In 1966, Kohler Foundation donated the historic home of Kohler Co. founder John Michael Kohler to the SAF, which, in 1967 formally became the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Preservationist Lisa Stone has noted that institutional attention and commitment to art environments is still an exceedingly rare phenomenon, “Vernacular artists’ environments represent an aspect of our artistic culture that has been neglected in terms of custodianship. While art environments are easily celebrated by visitors and scholars, few are able or willing to step up to the task of acquiring and preserving these often-suffering places.”¹

The Arts Center and Kohler Foundation first collaborated on site preservation in 1974, when Arts Center director and Wisconsin Arts Board chair Ruth DeYoung Kohler advocated for saving Fred Smith’s Wisconsin Concrete Park in Phillips, Wisconsin. Smith had worked on his Wisconsin

Concrete Park for over 23 years, eventually creating over 200 life-size and over life-size sculptures from concrete inlaid with shards of glass, stones, shells, and other objects, and incorporating historic regional artifacts such as farming and logging equipment. His masterful array was created to chronicle and celebrate Wisconsin Northwoods heritage and culture from anecdote to history, local to national, hero to hound dog—and everything in-between.

After Smith’s death, Kohler Foundation was able to purchase the site. The project entailed a steep learning curve for all involved and extensive damage wrought by a severe storm in 1977 seemed almost insurmountable. A dedicated team of volunteers refused to give up on saving Smith’s American masterpiece and efforts redoubled. In 1978, Kohler Foundation gave the Wisconsin Concrete Park to Price County and today the Park is run and maintained by the non-profit organization The Friends of Fred Smith, who diligently see to the tasks of conservation, fundraising, and making the Park available to all.² Since then, Kohler Foundation and the Arts Center have joined efforts to save numerous art environments and thousands of individual works of art from sites that either could not be saved or had already been dismantled.

Kohler Foundation took on preserving Ernest Hüpeden’s Painted Forest in the early 1980s. The mural-bedecked 1897 Fraternal lodge had fallen into disuse in 1925, and, although both structure and murals did survive, time and the extreme seasonal

temperatures of South-Central Wisconsin had taken a serious toll.

As Lisa Stone has described, Hüpeden’s road to Valton was a long and circuitous one indeed. The artist’s known history stems largely from regional memories but records indicate that he sailed from Germany to the United States in 1878 on *The Herder*.³ With a colorful past behind him, Hüpeden headed west, traveling from town to town on foot and finding work as an itinerant painter along the way. Details of his first twenty years in America are scant, but it is possible that Wisconsin was the destination he had in mind from the start. Many immigrants sought landscapes similar to those they left in the Old World, and the Upper Midwest offered just this to great numbers of Northern Europeans.

In Wisconsin, Hüpeden spent time in the towns of Baraboo, Cazenovia, Hillsboro, Hub City, Ironton, LaFarge, LaValle, Platteville, West Lima, and Yuba before arriving in Valton, where the Modern Woodmen of America (the town’s fraternal organization) were looking for a painter to decorate their newly built lodge. Hüpeden tackled the job in 1899 and completed it in 1901. Hüpeden died in Valton in 1911 but lives on in the community through The Painted Forest and the many paintings he did for local residents and businesses.

The peril of Hüpeden’s masterpiece was brought to the attention of the Arts Center in 1980, which investigated the situation and recommended it to Kohler

Foundation as a cultural treasure highly worthy of their efforts. Kohler Foundation was able to acquire the site and, in 1981, began conservation. Efforts on numerous fronts included conserving the entire painted stage curtain, restoring the interior plaster and all of Hüpeden's original murals, and researching the iconography of the Modern Woodmen of America that Hüpeden's murals so evocatively depicted. The building was stabilized and Modern Woodmen themselves arranged the donation of some ritual artifacts appropriate to the era in which the Valton lodge thrived.

In 1982, Kohler Foundation gave the restored Painted Forest to Sauk County, and members of the Historical Society of the Upper Baraboo Valley agreed to maintain the site, make it accessible to visitors, and to provide educational materials about the lodge, the Modern Woodmen of America, and on Hüpeden and his works of art.

In 2001, Sauk County determined that caring for the Painted Forest was beyond their abilities and the site was returned to Kohler Foundation. In the decades that had passed, the Foundation had discovered new ways of making site—especially remote entities such as the Painted Forest—viable for public use. Additional conservation was done to the painted interior, operational facets (heating, cooling, and landscaping) of the building were bolstered, and, on an adjacent piece of property, a multi-use studio facility was built to enhance the site's feasibility as an educational facility.

In 2004, the Foundation gave the Painted Forest to Edgewood College, where it now thrives as a resource for students and educators, artists, researchers, the local community, and visitors from around the world. With the ongoing support of Kohler Foundation, Edgewood College has emerged as an exemplary steward for the work of folk and vernacular artists. With Hüpeden's Painted Forest serving as the cornerstone of this outstanding collection, Edgewood has created a model among academic institutions that successfully merges preservation, history, art, and education.

In 2007, Ernest Hüpeden was included in the major exhibition *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. It was the artist's first inclusion in a major exhibition. Hüpeden was celebrated not only as an artist who compellingly recorded Wisconsin landscapes, life and lore from late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also as part of a continuum of artist environment builders—visionaries able to transform finite spaces into realms of limitless wonder and revelation.

A conference held in conjunction with the exhibition offered tours to the Painted Forest and other Wisconsin art environments, allowing visitors to further appreciate Hüpeden's work within the greater fabric of art environments, and, following the exhibition the Wandering Wisconsin Consortium was founded amongst extant Wisconsin art environments to emphasize

these connections and share resources and networking opportunities.

The Arts Center and Kohler Foundation have been pleased to help bring Edgewood College's *Ernest Hüpeden: Beyond the Forest* to fruition—the first solo exhibition dedicated to the paintings by this Wisconsin treasure. Through the auspices of Kohler Foundation, the Arts Center has formed the largest institutional collection of paintings by Ernest Hüpeden apart from *The Painted Forest* itself.

ENDNOTES

1 Lisa Stone, "The Kohler Foundation and Site Preservation: A Road Well Traveled," Leslie Umberger, *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists*, (Singapore: Princeton Architectural Press and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center), 2007, p. 409.

2 Ruth DeYoung Kohler, "Taking the Road Less Traveled," Umberger 2007, p. 12-16.

3 Leslie Umberger "Heartfelt and Handmade: Six Artists Who Made Their Own Way," Umberger 2007, p. 381-386.

Appendices

3

Ernest Triggs
 Deputy Register of Deeds, Richland County, Wisc.

STATE OF WISCONSIN)
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND) SS.

I, Susan Triggs, Deputy Register of Deeds in and for said County do hereby certify that the adjacent photograph is a true and correct copy of the transcript of file in this office.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal this 2nd day of June A.D., 19 81.

Left, next page:
Ernest Hüpeden Death Record

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
PLACE OF DEATH County of <u>Richland</u> Township of <u>Henrietta</u> or Village of <u>Hick City</u> or City of _____ (No. _____ St. _____ Ward _____)		STATE OF WISCONSIN Department of Health—Bureau of Vital Statistics COPY OF DEATH RECORD Page No. <u>929</u> (To be filled out by the register of deeds)	
(If an infant not named give family name) FULL NAME <u>Ernest Hüpeden</u>		DATE OF DEATH <u>Dec. 8</u> 19 <u>11</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
SEX <u>male</u>	COLOR <u>white</u>	I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from 19__ to 19__ that I last saw h_____ alive on _____ 19__ and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at <u>8-30</u> A.M. The CAUSE OF DEATH was as follows: <u>Heart failure prob about by chronic alcoholism</u> <u>did not see deceased until dead</u> (Duration) _____ days Contributory _____ (Duration) _____ days (Signed) <u>S. P. Niese</u> M. D. <u>Dec 9 1911</u> (Address) <u>Rockbridge</u>	
DATE OF BIRTH _____ (Month) _____ (Day) 19__ (Year)	AGE <u>about 50 yrs.</u>	SPECIAL INFORMATION only for Hospitals, Institutions, Trains, or Street Residences. Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death? _____ Turned or Usual Residence _____ How long at Place of Death? _____ Days	
SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED <u>divorced</u>	BIRTHPLACE (State or country) <u>Germany</u>	PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Richland Co. Prison</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>Dec 9 1911</u> UNDERTAKER <u>14 Jones St.</u> ADJUTANT <u>Richland Center</u>	
NAME OF FATHER _____	BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or country) <u>Germany</u>	THE ABOVE STATED PERSONAL PARTICULARS ARE TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF (Informant) <u>Web Leatherberry</u> (Address) <u>Hick City</u>	
MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER _____	BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or country) <u>Germany</u>	Filed <u>Dec 20 1911</u> <u>E. J. Morrison</u> Local Registrar	
OCCUPATION <u>Farmer</u>	(Address) _____		



Below:
Undated Photograph of Unidentified
MWA Member

ads.
LA CROSSE DAILY PRESS
DECEMBER 28, 1896
PAGE 8 COL. 3

hand embroidered by the doctor's mother, who is over eighty-three years old.

are out for a dance to be held at the Banquet club hall, corner of Mississippi streets, on the evening of January 2.

Professor Earnest Hupden, a noted artist from Berlin, Germany, painted a beautiful picture for engine house No. 5. The entire work represents the John Gend Brewing company's building on fire with the fire department at work in full blast. It was certainly an interesting picture.

The ladies of the North Presbyterian church will give a banner social on Friday evening January 1st 1897, at the church parlors. A pleasing program of music, recitations and an old fashioned spelling class will be followed by refreshments.

"Excuse me," observed the man in spectacles, "but I am a surgeon, and that is not where the liver is." "Never you mind where his liver is," retorted the other. "If it was in his big toe or his left ear De Witt's Little Early Risers would reach it and shake it for him. On that you can bet your big-lamps." J. A. Erhart & Son.

There is
STRAUSS
—for Christmas
Slippers in 2 P
for Ladies and
beats all. Look t
320 Pearl St.

J.C.H
227 N
BICYCLE

Above:
News item in La Crosse Daily Press
"Professor Earnest Hupden, a noted
artist from Berlin..." dated December
28, 1896

Right, next page:
"This man- Ernest Hupden a Painter"
by Ray R. Shuckhart dated October
14, 1984

This man - Ernest H Hupden
a Painter

He use to walk through the country and
stop at places he had made friends with.

I can remember him stopping with my
folks I saw Shuckhart.

He would stay a few days and then move on.
He didnt like children. But I got along good
with him, He use to let me watch him
paint, and usually paint on a bottle with
a deer for me. He didnt like girls around
or some women. If some would come he would
go to his room until they left.

Henry Wilker built a store in Tripville. There
was a dance hall on second floor. and
Ernest Hupden, painted all 4 walls. of
Orchestrata & flowers and dancers. The American
flag and a welcome sign. The building has
been gone for several years now. at one time
on a farm between Bus-Ridge and Valley. Some
one put out some poison for the cows.
Ernest painted some pictures of that on a large
sign board. It showed him driving his team

one large stone above the road, trying to
get him to not put the poison out and the
devil kept urging him on. He put the poison
out and the cows ate it. and was running and
dropping dead. Then it showed he got to
Hell.

The posts in that rotted and fell face down
and rotted away.

My folks had a number of his small paintings
and my folks moved quite a few times and
all those pictures plus a lot of other things
disappeared.

I was about 6 years old when I first remember
him. Many times now I think of him and
wish I had some of pictures my folks had.

Ray R. Shuckhart (at this time I
am 84 years old)

Oct 14 1984

La Farge Wise, Aug. 27-57

Wisconsin Post News

Madison

Wisc.

recd Oct 57

Gentlemen:-

Just read an article in your paper on Ernest Hemingway and his
Valton Painting.

I never heard of the painting before but I knew the man well
as he has spent many days at our house painting for my folks
(all deceased) and others.

He would paint a fine picture of any thing you wished for a "Half pint of
Whiskey"

But he condemned the liquor traffic and swore off drinking many times.

His father educated him in Germany, he attended two or three
different Colleges he told us, was married had one son left them
and came to America.

He left because of some trouble with his wife and father
and he hated the German Military Machine. Voted Republican
as near as I know but in belief and at heart was a strong
Socialist. In politics that was all he talked.

He said it would come in "God's own time" but sooner or
later we would have to fight Germany and he wished he could help
to crush the German Military power.

He also told us all how our Educational System in the U.S.A.
was drifting away from us as well as our other freedoms
Freedom and that sooner or later the wealth of the Nation would
all be in the hands of a few (and he was quite right.)

He said: "Germany has far better schools and Colleges than America
but they teach Militarism in all of them and will try in time
to rule the world and he hated to see this take place for it
would mean the Civil War under Lincoln was nothing but a Sham
Battle." We only have to look back to 1917-18 and 1942-45.

I have one of his paintings (only my name date of birth)
he painted for me which I prize very highly.

He did the work on a little Savings Bank in 1906, that my father
gave me on my 17th Birthday.

An exact reproduction of the People's U.S. Bank (of St. Louis Mo.)
The history of its ^{assassination} and the crime and lawless practices by
the Post Office Wreft and other officials of State and Nation.

This of course has nothing to do with Mr. Herforden but it shows just
what may happen to R.R. and any thing for the common people.

As the report came to us he was in a saloon in Yuppa Wisconsin (not
far from here.

He got drunk, they put him out and he was found dead with five cents
in his pocket.

Of course I am not making this statement as a fact.

This was the report that came to us.

In conclusion would say he was known all over the County
When not drinking he was kind hearted and willing to help any body.

He did a lot of painting between and in all the neighboring towns
and only for his drinking was well liked by all.

Of all the paintings he did (since my father took him in on Saturday
nite in April 1904) they are as fresh as when he did the work (except one)

A painting he did for my father a Memorial to a young wife who lived
on our place with her husband at water.)

A few weeks after he finished this it began to fade and it is nearly gone.

He said that none happened to any paintings of his that he knew of.

I have a painting he did for my father on a Chest made of Camphor wood.
That was thru the Mexican War.

A China sea and the boat that carried the Chest to China and back
from Mexico before coming to Wisconsin.

Will close if this is of any interest to you or our noble reader
You are welcome to publish it
Yours for Better R.R.,
Sincerely,
JUDSON ERWIN. La Farge, Wis. 1911



THE STREAM
Edgewood College