

THE WORKS PROGRAM

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A Mural Presented at West Point Alumni Exercises.

Annual alumni exercises at the United States Military Academy, held at West Point yesterday, were signalized by the presentation to the Academy of a mural, "Decisive Battles of the World", General John J. Pershing, hero of the United States' participation in the World War, back at the Point to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation, accepted the mural in behalf of the academy. The mural was painted by Tom Loftin Johnson under the auspices of the Federal Art Project, of the Works Progress Administration.

Presentation of the mural, which covers 2450 square feet of wall in Washington Hall, was the high point of the annual alumni exercises, which were presided over by Major General William D. Connor, Superintendent of the Academy. The WPA artist, Mr. Johnson, described briefly his purpose in creating the mural.

Executed in egg tempera on plaster, the mural has required over a year of study and many paintings for its completion, preceded by a year of research studies and preparation of designs and scale enlargements. The panorama of history, with battles which were deciding factors that swayed the course of events, is its theme. It is largely derived from Lord Crecy's "Fifteen Decisive Battles of History". The first

On the second floor, one large and a series of smaller rooms, give both informality and the advantage of pleasant and congenial groupings for various types of work. In the main gallery, long wall spaces provide an excellent background for the mural sketches for several schools in Illinois which are one of the features of the exhibition.

sketches were made by Mr. Johnson in 1934 for the Public Works of Art Project, which was followed by the WPA Federal Art Project. To finish the panel, 70 by 35 feet, took from April, 1935, to the present, about six months alone being needed to make the cartoons which were transferred to the wall for the final painting. Egg tempera done with earth colors is a permanent medium and gives a palette similar to the buon fresco.

Of primary interest to Americans is the section dealing with the World War, which shows Joffre, the hero of the first battle of the Marne. Beginning with the fall of Cyrus at Babylon in 538 B.C., the mural traces the chronology from Marathon and Alexander the Great through the crucial conflicts of ancient times up to the Crusades, the battles of Hastings and Crecy, Constantinople and Granada and so to modern days, Saratoga of American Revolutionary fame, Waterloo and Gettysburg, ending with the battle of the Marne. This panorama of war in history is decorative and factual, showing among other things the progress in invention as applied to military arms from the bows and arrows of Cyrus which were shot from chariots to the air-craft and 14-inch howitzers of the World War.

In working out the mural, Mr. Johnson followed the naturalistic school, painting with minute detail and exactitude. The composition is a highly complicated one, with figures nine feet high. It will suitably adorn the hall, great care having been observed that costumes and military equipment are faithful to the period represented.

Born in Denver, Col., in 1900, Mr. Johnson studied painting with Ezra Winter and also with Lucien Simon, in Paris. He is a member of the Society of Mural Painters. His work includes, besides several residential murals, "Victorian Ezra", in the Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, and "Surrender at Yorktown", in the George Washington High School, New York.