



Alton Museum of History & Art Honors Local Artist

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A dedication ceremony for naming of the art gallery in honor of Ruth Means is Friday May 31st.

The Ruth Means Gallery reflects the museums dedication to the arts and provides a space where artists can share their insight with the community. The museum's main focus is American artists from the area.

Ruth Means gave generously of herself and her talent to the community. She was a charter member of the Alton Museum of History & Art and its first art director. She allowed her artwork to be used for the benefit of the museum. A collage of a number of landmarks titled "Alton / The Bluff City", available in numbered prints, sold nearly 400 copies.

Ruth painted flowers on canvas in acrylic & oils. Mrs. Means devised a method to soften the acrylic by using rice paper over canvas. Many of her works are washed with turpentine for an alternative effect. Ruth also painted flowers and houses using watercolor. She used thin layers of paint for a crisp, architectural appeal. Her pen and ink drawings are elegantly precise.

Ruth was born into a family of creative talent. Her father, John Waggoner, and her sister Earlene Yancey painted with a small group of Alton artists as did Ruth in earlier days.

A graduate of Alton High School, Ruth attended Shurtleff College and also earned a degree in fine arts at Washington University in St. Louis. Mrs. Means began working for the Aeronautical Chart Plant in 1945 where she spent years drawing topographical maps, produced a training manual and developed several important map-making techniques.

Ruth and Charlene Gill were friends all their lives. They attended Shurtleff and Washington University together and later worked many years at Defense Mapping Agency in St. Louis, sharing a car pool to and from work.

When Ruth and Bill Means' lovely home burned, many of her paintings were destroyed. Fortunately for us, an exhibit of her work was on display at the Alton Museum and consequently saved from oblivion.