

# New Alton Mural to be Painted in September

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - A new mural is set to be painted at 136 Front Street in Alton starting in early September.

The organization [Alton Main Street](#) has commissioned Robert Fishbone and [On the Wall Productions](#) to paint the mural. Fishbone has created nearly 200 murals in his 50-

year career. The Alton mural, titled “Alton Flyway Mural,” will be a recreation of a painting by local artist James K. Schmidt.

“One of the things that distinguishes the work that my company does is everything we do is site-specific. That means it’s geared toward the community and the history of the people,” Fishbone said.

The Alton mural is no different. Schmidt is based in Elsah and has had several exhibitions at Jacoby Arts Center in Alton. The mural will feature blue and green squares with several birds flying over the background, an homage to the rivers and bird species in our area.

This project is sponsored in part by the Audubon Center at Riverlands in West Alton, Missouri. The Audubon Center focuses on conservation and rehabilitation of wildlife in the Mississippi River region. They specialize in birds, and their Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary is a stopover site for 326 species of migratory birds every year.

“This is an official Audubon mural,” Audubon educator Ashley Lockwood explained at the [recent “What’s Up Downtown” information exchange](#) in Alton. “What we’re trying to do with this mural is remember that it’s not just the people, but it’s the rivers that run here as well. It’s all of the birds that are migrating up and down this corridor. And we want to take that space to remember that we have a whole lot of amazing friends right over the river, and we are all a part of the same family.”





On that note, On the Wall Productions is a family business. Fishbone founded the company with his wife Sarah Linquist in 1974. They have painted murals throughout the Greater St. Louis region, including the famous 1977 “[Lindy Squared](#)” portrait of Charles Lindburgh. This mural took two years, 72 shades of gray paint and 1,200 squares. It was well-loved in the St. Louis community, until the building was torn down a few years later.

“The lesson we realized is, murals, however permanent we think they are, they are impermanent,” Fishbone said. “But we want to do them anyway because every mural brings life to its location, each one differently.”

For the Alton mural, Fishbone explained that he plans to adjust Schmidt’s painting in some ways but will “keep it authentic” to the artist’s design. His first step was to superimpose Schmidt’s painting onto a photo of the wall using Photoshop, which helped him visualize how the painting will fit. Using Photoshop, he also switched a few blue and gray panels so that the location of the gray panels corresponds to the windows.

Fishbone pointed out that it’s difficult to transfer a hand-painted design onto a wall with textured bricks, windows and water and gas meters. Schmidt’s painting is a watercolor, so the panels aren’t solid color. To mimic this effect, On the Wall Productions will use solid blocks of color for the first coat, and then go back in to add texture with the second coat where needed. Additionally, they plan to work with Audubon to make the different bird species more recognizable in the mural.

“Part of the challenge is, how do I take all these factors...and come up with what I believe will be the best interpretation of James’s design?” Fishbone added.

He anticipated that the project will take a month to complete, including one day devoted entirely to cleaning the wall before they start painting. They will follow this with two prime coats and then lay out the design on the wall so they can follow it as they paint. Two coats of paint will complete the project.

“I’m looking forward to helping to bring James Schmidt’s beautiful design to life,” Fishbone said. “When I do a job, I don’t leave until everyone is happy, including me. So it will be the best it can possibly be and be faithful to the original intention.”

Fishbone will begin painting around Sept. 12.



