



# Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00  
or by appointment**

## *Chilton Post Office - Mural*

By Debbie Barany



The original mural located in the Post Office, Chilton, WI

**T**he Chilton Post Office was built in 1938 and designed in the Georgian Revival style. The building was added to the National Register of Historical Places on October 24, 2000. However, it isn't the building that is so special but what is inside. For those of us who have been in the Post Office you may have noticed the beautiful mural above the doors as you leave the Post Office. For those of you who have not seen the mural, we highly recommend that you step inside our little Post Office and take a look up.

The mural is called "HARVEST" (Threshing Barley). It was painted in 1940 by a popular artist of the day - Charles Thwaites. In 1933-1934 he worked for the WPA (Works Progress Administration) on the Public Works of Art Project, Federal Art Project and the Treasury Relief Art Project. Thwaites painted four WPA Post Office murals, two in Wisconsin, one in Chilton, 1940, Cheese Making in Plymouth, 1941. He also painted two out-of-state murals, Lumbering in Greenville, MI, 1940 and in 1943 he did one in Windom, Minnesota.

The mural was commissioned by and is still owned by the Federal government. The mural depicts men threshing barley, something which remains sort of true today, in the form of Briess Industries, as the Chilton industry supplies the nation with specialty malts and grains. This particular mural is the only one that was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Charles Thwaites was born 1904 in Milwaukee, Wi. He started out studying engineering at the University of Madison in 1924 - 1925. After dabbling in portrait painting, he gave up on engineering and in 1928 enrolled at the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. He became the go-to artist in Wisconsin during the 1930's and 40's for portraits of politicians and judiciary's. He eventually moved to New Mexico where he died in 2002.

How lucky we are to have such a unique and exquisite piece of artwork in our community. So the next time you are at the Post office, stop, turn around, and take a little time to admire the beautiful work of art. HARVEST.



**Copy of mural at the Smithsonian American Art Museum**