

Empire Saloon Mural

By Linda Heune-Solomon Photos by Jan Vick

Many weeks of planning preceded the actual painting of the mural at Books Rio V at 2nd and Main owned by Hale Conklin and his wife Sue. The Conklin's wished to help jump-start RioVision's mural project by supplying the wall and many of the needed supplies.

A community contest was held to determine the mural theme and subject matter. The winner was Chris Quan for his unique idea of depicting the contents of the building one hundred or more years ago. The intent was to convey the idea that the wall has fallen and exposed the past by showing the interior of Empire Saloon in the late eighteen hundreds. On the same wall to the right is a depiction of the door and window of Foord's Barber Shop that was also housed in this building. Some "artistic liberty" was taken as the Barber Shop was originally located in the front of the building.

The original drawings of Empire Saloon were done by artist Linda Heune- Solomon with help from Amy Schmidt, Sue Williams, and Lucia Keeler. Artist Amy Schmidt was responsible for the Barber Shop. Both Amy and Linda were the project leaders, making sure things moved along in a timely manner.

Once the content was determined a workshop with John Holland, a well known California muralist, was held at the Veteran's Memorial Building attended by thirty future volunteer's providing some tips and pointers on mural painting.

The drawings were completed on graph paper with a scale of one inch to one foot and the first week of August, 2014, work on the wall began. A grid of one foot squares was applied to the wall, followed by the background of the bar with its many details.

All the work was done by volunteers and the supplies paid for with donations collected from the public before and during the painting process.

The overwhelming positive response from the public kept the artists going on days when the going was tough. All day the artists heard cries of "Good job ladies" or "Keep up the good work" and "It's just beautiful! There were also plenty of "Have you seen the mural in _____?" along with some suggestions of how and what should be doing instead. Volunteers experienced many highs and lows during the process, yet they persevered.

Rio Vista's notorious wind blew supplies into the street, and artists were only able to work until the sun became too high and hot, making the paint dry too quickly in the heat and wind. To the other extreme, some days were cold, keeping artists bundled up and stiffening aging hands. Most of the workers were in their late sixties and some in their seventies, making a four or five hour day seem long.

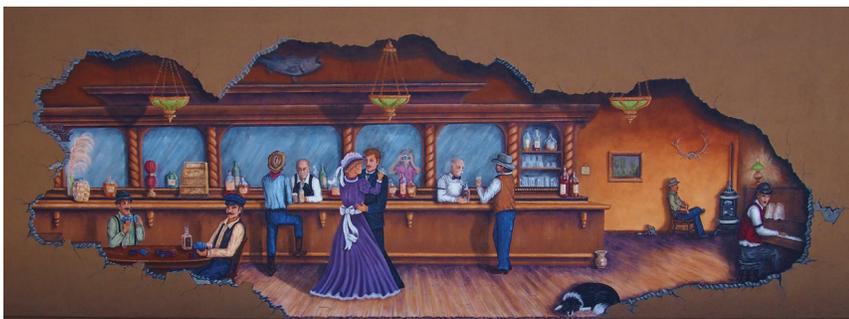
RioVision was the driving force behind this project in an effort to help revitalize our lovely small town. The mural project was seen as an early short-term project that helped jump-start enthusiasm for other longer term ideas and keep the energy high with very visible results.

Be sure to stop by 2nd and Main and take a look.

The Beginning



Almost Done



Completed Empire Saloon and Foords Barber Shop