

## Marion (Mion) Jordan Gilmore (Hulse) - 1909-1960

Born in Ottumwa, Iowa in 1909, Marion Gilmore studied at the School of Fine Arts and Crafts (the Child-Walker School) in Boston, and then at the Art Students League in New York. She later turned to the study of commercial art at the Phoenix Art Institute, working under Norman Rockwell, Franklin Booth, and Thomas Fogarty. After moving to Chicago she attended the Art Institute and the American Academy.

This WPA artist illustrates the recognition dilemma that has plagued women for years. She returned to her home town and established herself as a noted painter, illustrator, cartoonist, and teacher with two WPA murals in Iowa to her credit. She won prizes in the 48 States Competition held in Corning, Iowa and was exhibited widely. Her art was included in many local collections and institutions. At some point she married, moved to New York City, and her artistic record stops ... under that name. After WWII, continuing to paint using her married name Marion Hulse, she re-establishes herself as a painter, sculptor, designer and illustrator. At some point, probably because of the subtle prejudice against women artists, she decides to sign her paintings with the "gender neutral" name of Mion (Hulse).

Her work, paintings like "Fischer's Tavern", "Ham & Eggs - 45¢", and paintings of ordinary people in Iowa and New York represent Social Realism and the work of the Ashcan School at its most direct and best. There is a gentle humor in much of her work. Both these paintings, "Yard Sale" and "Children in Washington Park", were included in an exhibit in January 1995 at the Seiderman Gallery, Lynbrook, NY entitled: Women Artists. She is discussed in Democratic Vistas, Public Art in New Deal, and Who Was Who in American Art

Photo Caption for one of her works from the files of the US Post Office: "In *Band Concert*, by Marion Gilmore, the mural artist portrayed an idealized view of small town America. Gilmore, one of only a few female mural artists who worked for the Section, shows the residents of Corning, Iowa gathered about to listen to an evening band concert in their town square. The original design, which won the commission, drew inspiration from typical Iowa town squares. It was not, however, an accurate depiction of the square in Corning where the mural was to be installed. Her study added an obelisk and a cannon where none existed in Corning. The Section encouraged Gilmore to change her design to more accurately reflect the Corning town square. Her finished mural eliminated the offending additions. The Study for Band Concert indicates the mural's eventual placement. Most small town post office murals were constructed around the postmaster's door. And, this is where Gilmore's finished mural was eventually hung."

Installed in March 1941, the mural was a stunning success, receiving kudos from citizens as well as the town newspaper. Corning resident T. B. Turner sent a glowing report to Rowan: "the prominence given indicates not only the high esteem in which our people hold our splendid post office building, but also their appreciation of its crowning glory -- this mural which so artistically and yet so truthfully depicts the happy community 'way of life' in the finest little town in the most liveable section of the most prosperous state of the most democratic country in the whole topsy-turvy world in this problematical year of 1941. I think it helps to boost our confidence in the constructive nature and eventual success of our government programs."