



Postscript: The Auction

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

This article is copyrighted by History Nebraska (formerly the Nebraska State Historical Society).
You may download it for your personal use.

For permission to re-use materials, or for photo ordering information, see:
<https://history.nebraska.gov/publications/re-use-nshs-materials>

Learn more about *Nebraska History* (and search articles) here:
<https://history.nebraska.gov/publications/nebraska-history-magazine>

History Nebraska members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* annually:
<https://history.nebraska.gov/get-involved/membership>

Full Citation: Postscript: The Auction,” *Nebraska History* 93 (2012): 212

Cataloging Information:

Photographs / Images: a mural painted by Kenneth Evett for the Pawnee City post office, 1941



NSHS H673.5 4863

When artist Kenneth Evett received a commission to paint a mural for the Pawnee City post office in 1941, he wanted to avoid what he saw as hackneyed subject matter.

"I don't like to be uncooperative but must we do historical murals indefinitely?" he wrote to his supervisors in Washington.

Instead, Evett portrayed the social aspects of a contemporary livestock auction.

"It looks very well and the people seem to like it," he wrote after the installation. But despite his intent to portray a "colorful" affair, Depression realities were not far from the minds of the public.

The local newspaper interpreted the mural differently from how the artist intended it: “[F]rom the expression on the faces it appears a foreclosure or forced sale is in progress.”

The Auction, tempera and oil glaze on canvas, can still be seen at the Pawnee City post office, and is featured in a new book published by the NSHS, *Nebraska's Post Office Murals: Born of the Depression, Fostered by the New Deal*, by L. Robert Puschendorf. Evett may have preferred painting contemporary subjects to historical ones, but from our perspective his work has become a valuable historical artifact in its own right. 