

History of the Hanover Area Arts Guild by Jane Alcott

Sometime in 1968, members of the Y.W.C.A. evinced interest in the forming of a group of active artists and crafts people. Telephone inquires of known painters and craft producers were made and an initial meeting was held in the Y.W.C.A. At first, the idea was nebulous, but became defined as the group began voicing needs and hopes for an effective organization. The Greater Hanover Creative Arts Guild became a reality with Mrs. Marie Weintraub as the first president. Meetings were held regularly at the Y, and the membership grew. Speakers were obtained and demonstrations of techniques and craft methods created a camaraderie that strengthened the fellowship of art interests.

Soon, the need was felt to become more independent as an active organization. The assembled members were most grateful for the impetus the Y.W.C.A. had provoked, but also felt the need to grow into a separate community identity. Consequently, rather unique quarters were found in a building at the rear of 39 Carlisle Street. Affectionately called the Alley Gallery, the rooms were rustic to say the least! Angled steps had to be negotiated and heads dipped to clear the rafters! But it was “Arty” and the Guild flourished. Even an exhibit, of sorts, was held.

The Guild was on its way, soon moving to “Five Points” on the first block of East Walnut Street. Years ago, people went there for Sunday dinner! There, it was possible to branch out a bit more. Various classes began and it was possible to serve refreshments. Food is essential to creativity!

Before long, someone discovered the availability of former law offices above the Hanover Shoe store at 10 Carlisle Street. There we had lots of room for classes, meetings and storage. It was not suitable for exhibits, however. It was agreed that the public would not climb those dark narrow stairs to look at art work. So, the Guild concentrated on the yearly Fall Art show. This began hopefully, but quickly became the main activity of the Guild.

Large exhibits were not easy to produce. A suitable space was necessary—a large area with good wall space and light, easy access and cheap rental. The first “Big Show” was held in the Cue Lounge. Today, the Farmers’ Bank parking lot occupies the space. It was a surprisingly successful show and two or three exhibits there followed each November. Each show required a lot of preparation but certainly proved worth the trouble. Hanover began to know about the Greater Hanover Creative Arts Guild. Membership was open to residents of York, Adams and Carroll Counties. The talent thus represented was awesome.

The next venture was held in a recently vacated store room on Broadway. It was a controversial show with “too many cooks” creating a wild and woolly set up. It was a very satisfying effort, none the less.

Next came two or three shows at the old Bon-Ton on the Northwest corner of the Square. There it was plenty of room for a garden furniture set up where visitors could rest a bit and have punch and cookies. By 1977 the Guild had incorporated and become the Hanover Area Arts Guild, Inc.

The first area Mall opened about that time and the big Sears storeroom on Frederick Street became available for rental. For two years, the Fall Show was held there beginning the high visibility of yearly effort that brought the public in great numbers.

During this time, a Large street banner was prepared by some members, to hang first on Frederick Street and then over the third block of Carlisle Street where it has hung each year ever since.

When the Bon-Ton building was sold and renovating begun, our show moved upstairs for one effort. Staging a show there required a great deal of ingenuity since the walls had been stripped. Burlap was hung on the laths in two large rooms and the results were attractive and profitable.

It was agreed that the best and largest show was held in the ex-G. C. Murphy building. It was a glorious success. There was TV. coverage and spectators pressed against the doors awaiting the opening hour. Its been a milestone in our development ever since. Size, visibility and location were perfect.

It was with a great deal of excitement that the Guild board learned that 45 Baltimore Street was available to rent. The little blue Victorian house became a happy home to the Guild for several years. The Guild was able to hold shows in the house all year long. Specialty exhibits and one and two artist shows were work and crafts. With volunteers manning the gallery, it was open Friday and Saturday plus special occasions. Classes and demonstration days became standard offerings. General meetings with programs were frequent and once a month critiques were held. An art scholarship was formed in 1973 which was open to area high school seniors already accepted at art schools and colleges. It was a serious undertaking based on portfolios and interviews followed by an all student art show. The first scholarship was small, but the attending publicity was welcome. To date the Guild has given \$10,000 in scholarships. Because there was a home base, it was possible to organize a summer show in Wirt Park. More hard work, but proving to be a good public service.

In 1988, the Guild moved again. This time to 32 Carlisle Street. Here was a beautiful exhibition area, two great display windows, excellent light and a fine location. Known as The Art Gallery, the Guild is happily ensconced in a perfect situation.