



From the Office of Secretary of State

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Nebraska art in the Secretary of State's office

There are numerous "hidden gems" at the Nebraska State Capitol; visible only to those who look closely. Many can be found in the architectural details, tiles carvings and paintings that are on display.

There are also a few in my office, off the beaten path. It's been my fortune and honor to display several paintings in my office, reflections of my roots in west central Nebraska – an area rich in legend and history.

When I was appointed to complete the term of then Secretary of State Scott Moore, I was the only constitutional officer from west of the 100th meridian. When I settled into my office, I wanted to display something that would demonstrate my pride for that area.

My wife Carol and I owned a number of paintings acquired in North Platte with western themes and images. Some we placed in our home but the others are on loan to the Secretary of State's office. Our art hangs in the office reception area, conference room and election office. They are from a variety of west central artists including: Thelma Reicks, Twila Kramer, Lex Treat, Virginia Thomas Kay Cooper and others.

While those came from my own collection, there is another painting of which I am equally proud and which I think speaks directly to Nebraska's unique history. It is called "Moving the Great Seal" by Harold Wilkins of Bellevue. Painted in 1972, it depicts Nebraska's first Secretary of State, Thomas Kennard, preparing his buckboard in secret to move the seal press from the territorial capitol of Omaha to what became the new State Capitol in Lincoln in 1868.

For a number of years the painting hung at Buffalo Bill Cody's Scouts Rest Ranch. Then in 2009, Wilkins son-in-law Steve Kemper, who was supervisor at the ranch, donated the painting to the Secretary of State's office, where it remains today. The seal press, while no longer in use, is also on display.

I am proud and pleased to show off the art collection that has been gathered at the Secretary of State's office to visitors, guests and tourists. It is a testament to the local artists and the level of talent that enriches our Sandhills culture.

It's my hope that the development of the Prairie Arts Center which will be located in the historic 1913 Post Office Building in North Platte will allow emerging artists another venue to showcase their talent. In addition to serving as a gallery the facility will host classes, performances and other opportunities for artists of all types to showcase their talents and network with other budding regional artists.

I wish the board success as they continue fundraising efforts to complete that project.

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