

ROWLEY FARM

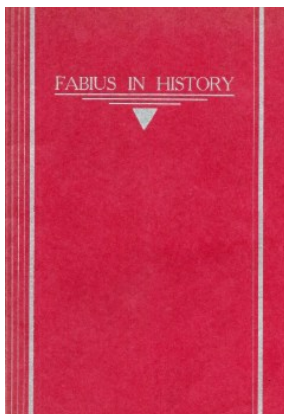
BAILEY ROAD, FABIUS



(Donated by Patricia Heffernan, daughter of Thomas Heffernan who was raised on this farm)

The above painting was created by Ruth Reed Cummings, a self-taught artist from Marcellus, NY, who started her painting career at the age of 63. The painting was done on consignment for Patricia Heffernan's Aunt Katherine Heffernan to create a likeness of the farm she remembered growing up on the Bailey Road in Fabius.

Katherine Heffernan started her teaching career fresh off the Fabius farm teaching eight grades under one roof, first at Southwood, then at Gooseville Corners and then transferring to the new Fabius Central School for the next 11 years. She was a well respected teacher with a deep interest in history. While at Fabius, she directed her eighth grade class in completing the first history of Fabius, NY.

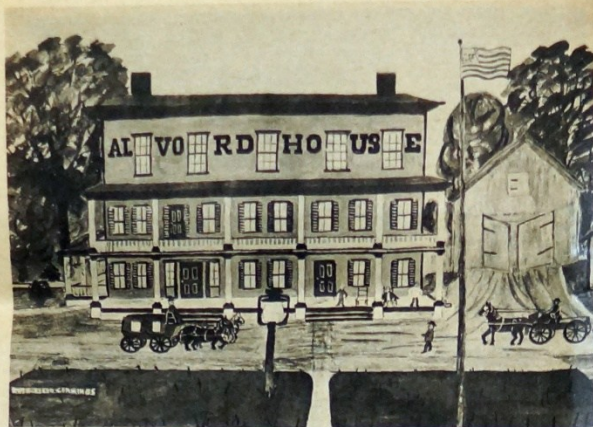


Katherine continued her teaching career at Marcellus in 1941 until her retirement in 1954. After retirement, she began her research, which resulted in her publication of the history of Marcellus entitled NINE MILE COUNTRY.

Reprints of FABIUS IN HISTORY can be purchased at: [FABIUS IN HISTORY](https://www.lulu.com/shop/fabiuis-historical-society/fabius-in-history/paperback/product-1wr524gq.html?page=1&pageSize=4)
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RUTH REED CUMMINGS of Marcellus started painting only a year and a half ago, but already has created a great number of excellent primitives that are widely sought by collectors. For story and pictures see pages 6, 7 and 8.



THE ALVORD HOUSE of Marcellus, as it was about 1910. House still stands, but upper front porch is gone, side porch is enclosed, and old livery is a garage.



A LITTLE BOY with his toys, painted on an old breadboard.

Syracuse Post-Standard Magazine, March 7, 1965



SHE RECAPTURES THE PAST—Mrs. Cummings and her painting of the old freight station at Martisco, between Marcellus and Camillus.



HIGHLY STYLIZED ROOSTER, done in oil on old picture backing board.

The Primitives of Ruth Reed Cummings

By CONNIE MYER

PHOTOS BY DICK BANDY

UNTIL a year and a half ago, Mrs. L. W. Cummings of Marcellus thought the art of painting was reserved for a few lucky people who had lots of talent.

Then, at the age of 63, she took up a drawing board herself and joined the privileged group. Now, at her dining room table studio, she stays up until 3 a.m. plying her brushes.

"I just love it," she said. "It's not work for me. I paint evenings and Saturdays and Sundays and whenever I have spare time."

Her style is early American primitive and her paintings evoke nostalgia for a bit of small town life that has forever faded into history. A native of Marcellus, Mrs. Cummings can remember the way the village looked around the turn of the century when she was a little girl.

Supplied with her rich memories and old photos and postcards, she has recreated such one-time familiar scenes as the Knapp Block in Marcellus, as it was in 1910. There's R. A. Schanzle's grocery store, Nightingale's flour and feed establishment, the post office, and the First Presbyterian Church, which still is standing. Quaint little figures — a boy with a bicycle, a man driving a horse and two-wheeled buggy, a farmer driving by with a cart, and a dog with wagging tail — supply small and intimate details.

She has also painted the freight station at Martisco, as she remembers it used to be. Now deserted and boarded up, the old station is listed among buildings in "Architecture Worth Saving in Onondaga County."

Mrs. Cummings has recreated the Crown Woolen Mills as they were when in operation, complete with the old stone bridge, Nine Mile Creek and the Marcellus and Otisco Lake Railroad in the background.

"I painted that water four times before I thought I had it just right," she said about the mill painting. She signs her work Ruth Reed Cummings.

Though actual painting of primitives is a new field for Mrs. Cummings, she has had a long and loving association with this form of art through the years. As an antique dealer, she has specialized in collecting and selling primitives to a nationwide market.

"I knew what was good and what wasn't before I started painting," she said.

Her feeling for the past, enriched by her experience in collecting, has given the Marcellus woman's work a quality and originality unusual in a new painter.

To fully capture the Americana flavor of her work, one should see the artist in her large home at 31 North St. Its elegant square rooms are furnished with antiques. Its doorways and graceful winding front stairway bespeak the era when it was built, 112 years ago.

A collection of primitive portraits, acquired by Mrs. Cummings and her late husband, supply the artist with an everyday association with what she is portraying now.

Her home, built by her grandfather, Hiram Reed, a Marcellus farmer, always has been in her family. She lived there as a girl, when her father, Edmund Reed, operated a toy manufacturing business and was active in village politics. He also founded the Marcellus Observer in 1879.

Mrs. Cummings has one trick with her paints that almost fools the eye of the onlooker. Her watercolors look like oils because of a special technique she uses in applying them. But when asked about some of her painting secrets, like a true artist, she refused to reveal them.

She admitted, though, that she uses 100-year-old paper for some of her smaller portraits. And she backs her larger paintings with old wood and uses old frames.

An antique breadboard or cutting board also provides her with a background for a quaint portrait of a little boy or a stylized rooster walking along the shore of a lake.

"I couldn't have gotten as far as I have without the support of my children and my friends," said Mrs. Cummings. "My son, Jack, has been my most severe critic and has pushed me along. And then Roy Simmons Jr. and Paul O'Connell (local art gallery owners) have been a big help, too."



MRS. CUMMINGS in her home. Portraits in background are by French artists.



THE KNAPP BLOCK in Marcellus, as it looked about 1910. The buildings remain much the same