

MITCHELL MURAL

## New Deal mural damaged in Mitchell fire



19 HOURS AGO • BY [LINDSAY BULLOCK](#)

RACINE — A 1940s-era mural by a famed Wisconsin artist was among the items damaged in the fire last week at Mitchell school, Unified spokeswoman Stacy Tapp said Wednesday.

The mural was finished in September 1941 by Santos Zingale, one of Wisconsin's most notable 20th century artists and a longtime art professor at the University of Wisconsin, according to Journal Times archives and Bruce

W. Pepich, executive director and curator of collections at the Racine Art Museum.

The three-panel oil on canvas mural depicts the arrival of Racine's founder, Gilbert Knapp. In the center panel, Knapp is shown landing on the shore of Lake Michigan and being greeted by natives. Panels on either side show settlers working the land with horses and plows.

It was commissioned as part of a New Deal program to combat the Great Depression, Pepich said.

"Along with paying people to build roads and dams and bridges, they also paid artists to make works of art," he said.

Much of the art was for schools and post offices. Some also traveled the country to boost morale, Pepich said.

Zingale's Racine mural, measuring about 12 feet by about 43 feet, was installed in a multi-purpose library room at Mitchell. But it got ripped off the wall in the 1950s as part of a modernization effort.

"It was rolled and folded up and put in the basement of the school," Pepich said.

It was still there Feb. 27 when a fire broke out in the school's gymnasium. Much of the school, 2713 Drexel Ave., sustained significant fire, smoke or water damage. The basement in particular suffered water damage, Tapp has said.

Workers located the mural's panels Tuesday, Tapp said.

"They are water damaged but we have pulled them aside," she said. "When they are allowed by the professionals out there to remove items, they will remove them and set them aside."

Then RAM staff will see if the mural is salvageable, Tapp added.

Pepich hopes it is.

“It’s a wonderful community asset,” he said.

The proposed value of the piece, before the fire and now, is not known.