Charles W. Schwartz Murals

The story of conservation in Missouri is told pictorially by the murals of Charles W. Schwartz which grace the foyer of Department headquarters in Jefferson City.

The murals trace the history of the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state from the pristine conditions of 1700 through the era of settlement and exploitation to the present conservation efforts.

The first two murals depict conditions here before the advent of white settlement; the hand of man is evident only in the small, mostly nomadic population of native Americans and their reliance on hunting and fishing.

Panel 1 illustrates the wildlife species associated with the forests that once covered thirty million acres of the state. The mountain lion was the largest of these, and has since virtually disappeared from the scene. Wild turkey, ruffed grouse, channel catfish, river otters and the bowfin fish caught by the otter were all present in abundance. The colorful Carolina parakeets in the lower right, once common in the river bottoms, are now extinct.

Panel 2 is devoted to the prairies that at presettlement times covered the western and northern third of the state. The Indian plucking a blue-winged teal is seated in front of a clump of native bluestem grass. The lifestyle of the Indian, the herds of buffalo and elk, and the prairie wolf present in the mural have all vanished from the state; only a few of the myriad shore, marsh and water birds remain today.

Panels 3 and 4 show the use and abuse of the state's natural resources by European settlers in the 1800s. Over half the state's forestland disappeared during the first century of statehood. Timber companies and their crews wielding cross-cut saws cut almost all of the native pine timber of the eastern Ozarks. The man hacking a tie from a log depicts how railroads gobbled timber for ties, then transported lumber to markets in the cities. What was left of the forests was "goated off," burned and grazed. The once-vast prairies disappeared beneath the plow.

Missourians at one time considered the fish and wildlife of the state an inexhaustible source of food and income. Panel 4 a gigger has speared a bass, and a hunter aims at a doe with a fawn at her side. The passenger pigeons overhead and in the hand of the pioneer woman are now extinct. The wildlife hanging in the market and the large harvests of fish denote a time of exploitation, with little regard for the future and no concept of conservation.

The dawn of the era of conservation is depicted in Panel 5. A weathered placard urges a vote for Proposition 4, the constitutional amendment that created the non-political Department of Conservation in 1936. An old-timer running a trotline and a youngster hunting cottontails represent activities that would have faded from the scene without regulation and restoration by the Department.

Panel 6 shows the results of conservation efforts. Lookout towers were an important first step in halting the fires-many intentionally set-that destroyed thousands of acres of forestland each year. Halting wildfires and initiating restoration programs for white-tailed deer and wild turkey have improved timber as a market resource and a home for wildlife, and resulted in abundant populations of these game animals.

Scenes in Panel 7 depict wildlife management activities and wildlife protection by the Department. Schwartz says he painted the Canada geese nesting on the arctic tundra to show they, like the mallards in the center of the painting, are wildlife Missouri shares with other states and countries. The trout angler and trout stamp symbolize the many popular cold-water fisheries in the state, while the youngster with the bluegill denotes a simpler, more basic way to enjoy the state's fisheries resources.

Panel 8 concludes the mural series with reminders of progress the Department has made since the conservation sales tax was passed by Missouri voters and *Design for Conservation* was implemented. Funds unrelated to receipts of hunting and fishing permits made possible research on non-game resources such as bats, blind cavefish, crayfish and salamanders, and birds like the pileated woodpecker and great blue heron.

Schwartz began the mural series in 1965; the final four panels were completed after his retirement in 1981. A dedication of the completed series was held April 14 in the fiftieth anniversary year, 1987.

Pristine Missouri

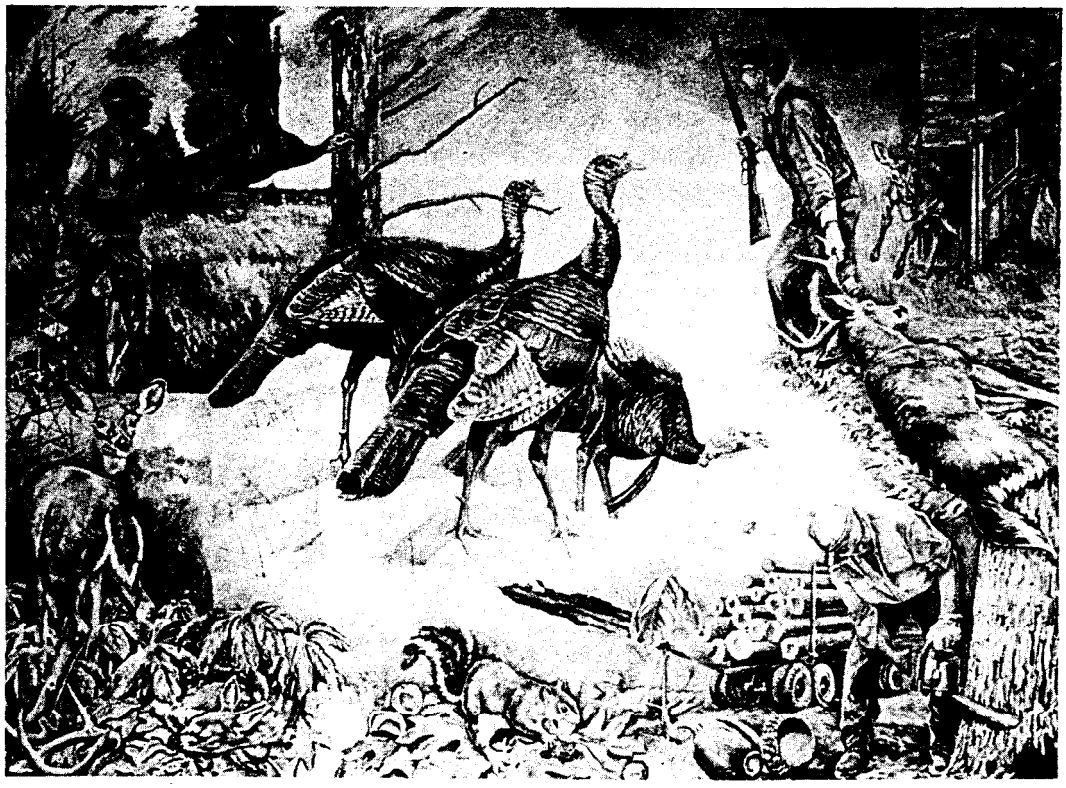
1700

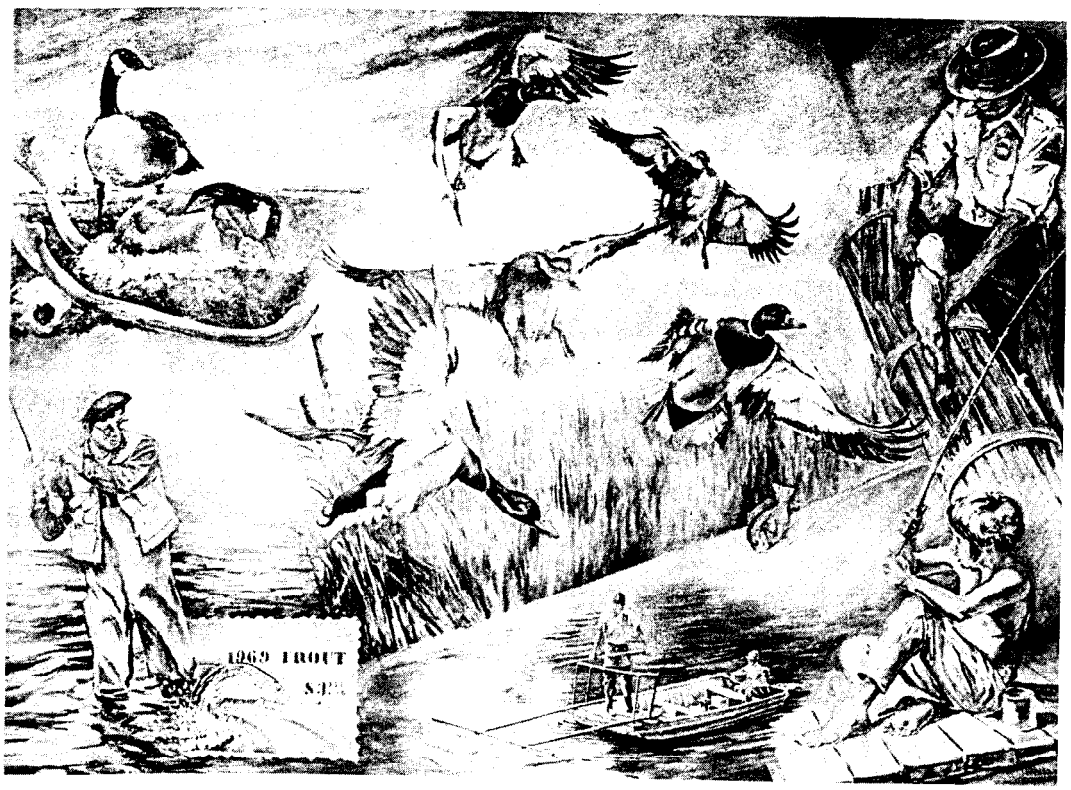
1800s

Exploitation

1930s

Restoration





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