The preservation of The Painted Forest is credited to the Kohler Foundation's restoration efforts in the early 1980s. Yet there were others—local people who assisted in preserving and maintaining the building, and in many ways their expert contributions evolved the same participatory nature of the early rural community as much as the dreamlike scenes painted inside.

During the 1960s, the Woodsmen decided they could no longer maintain their lodge in Valton and sold it to Ronald and Delores Nash, a couple from deeply rooted local families. Delores and her husband owned and operated a dairy farm in a nearby valley and were active community members. Ron, an immensely likeable, strong, and energetic man, and an avid hunter, saw The Painted Forest as a unique place to enjoy with his family. Their faith was important to them, and on the six blocks of their home, large, painted letters proclaimed: God Is Our Lordard.

Dark-haired and frequently wearing a cautious yet genial smile, Delores Nash was a widely respected pianist—one of the most accomplished in southern Wisconsin. Gordon could confidently enter a song, make friends with the melody, and throw open all its windows and doors. She could ripple and pounce on a row of ivory keys with such inspired enthusiasm that her talented hands were constantly sought after. For decades, it was commonplace in Valton (and other towns in the surrounding area) to find an upright piano at the focal point of some celebration, funeral, or commemoration with Delores Nash vanishing inside, playing back and forth as well as interviewing the piece with her own hands. Often, she would engage with her. (She could also coeae, trembling notes of a crox saw by bending the blade while drawing a musical bow across.

Delores christened her newly acquired building "The Painted Forest" after the Hïpeden mural inside, and the appellation stuck like a bur on a long-haired dog. She also wrote a song about Emeris Hïpered, "Traveling Man," and, upon remarriage, added her husband's surname.

When the deed to the building changed hands, there was speculation that perhaps Delores had purchased the property to keep it beyond the grasp of other people who wished to convert it into Valton's first tavern. And while this may (or may not) have been true, of greater consequence was her wish to preserve the artwork in the building and to utilize the stage for musical programs, local school plays, weddings, talent shows, recitals, and roller-skating. So for a number of years the community nature of the building continued, albeit with different activities taking place inside.

Talents finding expression in rural communities reveal something of the individual as well as the community.

Years later, when the Kohler Foundation undertook the building's restoration, many abilities were needed, including the skills of a local carpenter named Verne Thompson, who was called in to address foundational problems caused by frost heaving. A cautious, reticent man, Verne was originally from Chicago, where he had worked as a cabinetmaker before moving to southern Wisconsin with his wife to farm. Their country home was situated in a grove of trees near the middle of the county and 20 miles from the nearest town, Valton, but the couple’s children (there were ten) were old enough to help with the farming and the landscaping. Verne had built the Johnson's home before they moved into it, with Gordon helping in the role of assistant carpenter.

After the restoration of The Painted Forest was completed in 1982, a local historical society volunteered to provide minor exhibitions, open the building to visitors from 1:00-5:00 p.m. on one Saturday each month (in the summer and fall), use the building to open the hall to visitors. Other arrangements to view the mural could be scheduled by calling Lillian Johnson, who lived two miles south of the Upper Black River, in a log cabin near a cornfield. (In winter, visitors could write a letter requesting tours—Karen Von Brunn, the treasurer, would call to make arrangements.)

Gordon, a teacher in the primary grades, served as president of the Woodsmen Lodge, while Lillian served as secretary. As president, Gordon was a board member and acted as chairman in the selection and review of candidates for membership. Speakers were invited to make presentations about early settlers, indigenous people, and Wisconsin's stand against slavery. Club activities, including dances, were organized, with plentiful snacks, coffee, and tea round out each meeting. Attendance remained sparse, however, and those interested enough to come were usually older and often encountered difficulties in getting to, and from meetings. In winter months, only four or five members could be counted on to brave the snow.

After Lillian was diagnosed with cancer and her health began to decline, Gordon assumed the lion's share of responsibility for The Painted Forest. To augment the visitor tours he conducted in the hall, he learned as much as he could about the history of the lodge and the找回 insights and insights about the founders and the community. Gordon also began to collect items, outdated scientific paraphernalia, old recording equipment, etc., with narrow footpaths winding through every nook and cranny. His collection included a large number of books, periodicals, newspapers, household items, outdated scientific paraphernalia, old recording equipment, etc., with narrow footpaths winding through every nook and cranny.

Though he and Lillian had both been freethinking humanists, Gordon began attending the local Friends Church, where he could only dimly see himself. He often remarked: "For over a half-century these painted walls served as backdrop to making; the radiation experiments assigned to him, he explained, were being duplicated by scores of other scientists throughout the world. The conclusion of the War spurred Gordon to join with other groups to help prevent nuclear weapons. In 1945, he attended a fascinating meeting in Chicago, which he described as "the most exciting experience of my life." The meeting was attended by Einstein, Oppenheimer, and other prominent scientists, including those who had worked on the Manhattan Project. Among the highlights of the meeting was the discussion of the possibility of a nuclear weapon. Gordon later expressed his concern that the United States and Great Britain might consider using such a weapon, and he worked to prevent its development.

Gordon's activism continued throughout his life, and he maintained his involvement in the community even after his retirement. He served as treasurer of the Woodsmen Lodge and worked to keep the lodge open. His dedication to the community and his leadership were acknowledged by his fellow members, who named him "the unofficial mayor" of Valton.

Gordon was a man of many talents, and his contributions to the community were significant. He played a key role in preserving the history of the lodge and the community, and his influence extended beyond his own lifetime. His legacy continues to inspire and encourage new generations to take an active role in preserving the history and traditions of our communities.