

# Nick Engelbert (1881-1962)



Engelbert Kloetnik was born in 1881 in Austria. He changed his name to Nick Engelbert when he was an adult. As a young man, he traveled the world, eventually sailing to Baltimore, Maryland, at the age of twenty-eight. Upon his arrival, Engelbert toured the United States for a few years. When he met his wife in the Midwest around 1913, Engelbert settled in Hollandale, Wisconsin.

In 1922, he purchased a farm he called "Grandview." After seeing the **Dickeyville Grotto** in nearby Grant County, Engelbert was inspired to transform his property into his own roadside attraction. Using a technique he developed for building sculptures with concrete, he created more than forty sculptures that celebrated farm life, **immigration**, and family. He also **embellished** the entire exterior of his farmhouse with concrete inlaid with stones, shells, and bright bits of glass. As Engelbert grew older, sculpting in concrete became increasingly difficult. From the comfort of his living room, he painted memories of his life and captured moments as a youthful traveler, as a young father, and as a builder of an incredible **art environment**.



Artist Overview

Today, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center cares for several of the more fragile sculptures from Grandview as well as Engelbert's collection of seventy-six paintings. Between 1991 and 1997, Kohler Foundation, Inc., acquired and preserved Grandview, and gifted it to the Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation, Inc. Visitors can see the site as part of the Wandering Wisconsin consortium, a group of nine art-environments situated across the state.

# Ernest Hüpeden (1855-1911)



Ernest Hüpeden (Hoop-eh-den), **immigrated** from Hamburg, Germany, to New York City in 1889. He settled in Valton, Wisconsin, and became known for his **murals** and his paintings on furniture and household items such as bottles and pie pans. Hüpeden created his largest work, a mural covering the walls and ceiling of a lodge belonging to the Modern Woodmen of America (MWA), between 1899 and 1901.

The MWA **panoramic** mural was titled "The Painted Forest", after Hüpeden's death for its inclusion of the piney hills and valleys near Valton. The final scene of The Painted Forest narrative depicts Valton one hundred years in the future (1999), which provides insight into how people at the turn of the twentieth century envisioned the future.

The MWA Lodge remained a public building until the 1960s, when it was purchased by a private party. In 1980, Kohler Foundation, Inc., acquired The Painted Forest and began restoring the lodge and murals. Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, is now the steward of both the preserved building and an additional art studio and study center built near the site.

Nick Engelbert, *Grandview* (site view, Hollandale, WI), c. 1930–1960. Photo: 2006.

Ernest Hüpeden, untitled, c. 1880–c. 1900; wood, metal, and paint; 98 5/8 x 82 7/8 x 26 1/2 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.



**Dickeyville Grotto**

An artist-built environment in Dickeyville, Wisconsin, created between 1918 and 1931 by Father Matthias Werneru.

**Immigrate**

Move permanently to another country.

**Embellish**

To add decorative materials to the surface of an object.

**Art Environment / Artist-Built Environment**

A unique place—frequently a home—that is transformed. Often inspired by the life experiences of the artist, these works of art typically are made of materials that are easily accessible and found nearby.

**Mural**

An artwork, typically a painting, created directly onto a wall.

**Panoramic**

A wide view of a scene or picture.

# Literacy Link

*We Came to America* by Faith Ringgold reminds us that people of all colors, races, and religions are part of the American story. They come from different countries, in different ways, and for different reasons. Along with them, they bring new foods, fashions, music, dances, and art—things that make our country unique and wonderful. People who move here from other countries are Americans, the same as those people born in the United States.

**Discuss Together**

*We Came to America* suggests there are many reasons why people came to America. Some people, like artists Nick Engelbert and Ernest Hüpeden, wanted to come. Others were forced to come. We also know that people who were already here, such as the American Indian tribes, were forced to leave their land and move somewhere else. How do you think each of those different groups felt about leaving their homes?

Have you ever moved? Maybe your family changed apartments or houses. Maybe you moved to a different city or state. How did you feel about moving? What memories do you have about the previous place you lived? What memories have you created in your new home?

