

Exhibition of Fox River paintings opens April 13 at the Little White School Museum

The Conservation Foundation is partnering with Oswego's Little White School Museum to exhibit a selection of original oil paintings of the Fox River created by The Conservation Foundation's artist-in-residence Joel Sheesley.

The paintings have been completed as part of The Conservation Foundation's Fox River Education and Outreach Initiative which aims to connect residents with the river, better understand its issues, and engage them to become environmentally conscious through local projects.



The exhibit, 'Selected Works from A Fox River Testimony,' will run from Saturday, April 13 through Saturday, May 18 during the museum's regular hours.

Sheesley, an Emeritus Professor of Art at Wheaton College, begins each work "en plein air." Working outdoors in all weather, his paintings have captured the beauty and many moods of the Fox River as it flows through Kane, Kendall and LaSalle counties.

The paintings for the exhibit have been selected from the original 73 works commissioned by The Conservation Foundation for Art of the Fox under the Fox River Initiative, but several new river paintings will be added.

Sheesley originally planned to produce 50 to 60 paintings, but after spending nearly two years along an 80-mile stretch that took him from Dundee down to Ottawa, the collection grew to 73. He admitted he couldn't see a place to stop, and that number "has a kind of indeterminate feel — as if in midstream."

The project took Sheesley along the banks, hiking on trails, and even canoeing to some locations, all with his French easel and paint box across his back. He even camped overnight to capture the light from the sunset and sunrise on the river's surface.

The works selected for the exhibit show the changing geological and seasonal character of the Fox River down into LaSalle County, where the sandstone cliffs offer a unique beauty showcasing the river's geological past.

The exhibit can be seen during regular museum hours Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m.

The Little White School Museum, located at 72 Polk St. in downtown Oswego 60543, archives the rich history of the community and reflects the spirit of its early residents. The building is now owned by the Oswegoland Park District and is operated by The Oswegoland Heritage Association.

The Conservation Foundation working with the artist has compiled photos of the paintings and the artist's writings engendered by his field experience in a 160-page coffee table book entitled "A Fox River Testimony." This publication, high quality prints of selected works, and the original oils will be available for purchase at the opening reception. They are also available for purchase online by visiting artofthefox.org.

The Conservation Foundation is one of the region's oldest and largest not-for-profit land and watershed conservation organizations, with more than 4,000 members. Founded in 1972, TCF has helped preserve more than 35,000 acres of open space, restored and cleaned miles of rivers and streams, and educated thousands of kids by engaging them in nature and the outdoors.

TCF's mission is to improve the health of our communities by preserving and restoring natural areas and open space, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of our environment.

Work is focused in DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will Counties to preserve and restore nature in your neighborhood. Find out more at theconservationfoundation.org.

PHOTO: Waubonsie Creek, Oswego, December 12