

# History on paper

By Marilyn Forbes

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The Fayette County Law Library is taking on an unlikely look these days. Works of art and unique crafted creations share the space with the thousands of books that line the shelves.

For the past several months, displays featuring local artists and craftsman have graced the library located in the Fayette County Courthouse.

This month features something different. Visitors can enjoy -- and even to purchase -- specially crafted gift wrapping tissue paper created by artist and photographer Margie McKinley of California. What is unique about McKinley's paper is that each sheet is a mini history lesson, featuring historic scenes from the area.

McKinley's family owned the Telegraph, a Brownsville based paper. McKinley worked as a photographer and in advertising at the newspaper, which has closed.

"I really got a sense of community," McKinley said. "I started to pay attention to the wonderful architecture that we have right here in our own area."

McKinley set out to find both obscure and well-known historical locations, photographing them and then researching them.

"I would walk around and think what can I do that is different?" McKinley said.

The idea struck McKinley in the late 1990s when traditional gift wrapping was taking on a new form.

"Gift bags were coming out and tissue paper was getting very popular," McKinley said. "I thought it was a great idea but I didn't have an idea how to produce it or how to do anything."

After contacting several large-name greeting-card companies, McKinley found a small New England company that would take on the project.

With a way to produce the paper all McKinley needed were the images.

"I drove all around the area to see what I liked," McKinley said.

In addition to the images on the sheets, McKinley paid attention to the background of the sheets, featuring a specific image that would surround the focal photos.

"I wanted to come up with something simple and not clutter up the backgrounds," McKinley said.

The end result is four different sets of tissue paper with sketches that feature scenes from Brownsville, Fayette County, California and Washington County.

The Brownsville sheets feature 17 sites such as St. Peter's Church, the Monongahela Railway and the Thompson Mansion. The background of the paper is an ironwork design that is found on the Inter-County Bridge.

The Fayette County sheets feature 20 sketches that include Nemaquin Castle, coke ovens and the Jumonville cross. The background is an ironwork design that is featured on the Fayette County Courthouse.

The California sheets show sketches such as the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot, the boat building and the Soldier's Memorial Monument. The background for the sheets features an ironwork design that is found on Old Main.

The Washington County sheets show 17 different sites that include Krepps Inn, the Century Inn and Duncan Glass, with a background of an ironwork design found on the LeMoyne House in Washington.

"I get a lot of nice feedback from young students and from people who have moved away from the area," McKinley said. "Kids get excited because these aren't the White House or the Washington Monument, but things that are found right here, right in the area."

The tissue paper will be displayed until the end of November.

"I think these are wonderful," said Barbara Pasqua, assistant law librarian. "This is exactly what we want here. We want people to see that there is just so much right here in Fayette County and that you don't need to leave the county to find great history and art."

Margie McKinley's tissue paper, which sells for \$2 for a package of eight sheets, can be purchased at the law library or by contacting her at Margie's Marque, 119 Third St., California, PA. Call 412-938-9585.