

Students help keep history alive



ORADELL

THEN
AND
NOW

BY ANTOINETTE RAINONE

They may not have realized it, but nearly 50 students from Oradell Public School helped keep the history of their town alive.

Through a PTA program, "Blauvelt Junior Artists-in-Residence," first- through fourth-graders created wildlife art – something close to the heart of Hiram Blauvelt, previous owner of the Blauvelt Mansion who collected wildlife art and encouraged conservation around the world.

Aaron Yount – the Marijane Singer Artist-in-Residence at The Blauvelt Art Museum – led the students in a workshop to create their own animal art, currently on display at The Oradell Public Library. He showed the students how he creates realistic paintings and sculptures of the animals he loves, then guided them to create their own interpretations of their favorite species.

The students were especially fascinated with Yount's striking depictions of wolves – the expressions, the eyes, the stance of the wolves in the wild. You could almost hear them howl.

"I don't believe that's a painting," said one student. "It's just too real looking."

It's no wonder that Yount, who is a member of the Society of Animal Artists, Audubon Society, Illinois Art League, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Parklands Foundation, recently won a prestigious poster competition for "Ice Tracker," selected to be the poster for 2012 Wolf Awareness Week by the Timber Wolf Alliance.

During the two-day workshop, children combined their love of art and animals. By drawing their favorites – everything from frogs and rabbits, to snakes and skunks, to wolves and bald eagles – they honored the legacy of a man who lived in the Blauvelt Mansion from 1922 until his death in 1957.

Hiram Blauvelt was ahead of his time in many ways. He was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate from



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Aaron Yount - the Marijane Singer Artist in Residence at The Blauvelt Art Museum - recently conducted a two-day workshop for students at Oradell Public School. He showed them how he creates realistic paintings and sculptures of the animals he loves - including this snowy owl - then guided students to create their own wildlife art. The children's wildlife art is now on display at Oradell Library.

and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. In his lifetime, he traveled about 30,000 miles on safaris throughout Africa. He often wrote to his friends around the world telling them that environmental problems were going to be a major concern and that they must begin to have foresight and contribute what they could to solve this global problem.

Global environmental problems have turned out to be true, haven't they?

Hiram died, after a brief illness, on his 60th birthday, Oct. 16, 1957. A wire, found open on his nightstand, read:

"No man has contributed more to the national conservation effort and asked so little in material awards in return."

Hiram had always envisioned sharing his love of wildlife with the public, and in 1958, that vision was fulfilled.

The 1893 cedar shingle-and-turret carriage house, next to the Blauvelt Mansion, was turned into a museum. The museum was established by the Blauvelt-Demarest Foundation, with Hiram's cousin, James Bellis, the Board President.

This is where Hiram's dreams of promoting conservation worldwide as well as showcasing an international collection of wildlife art – including Hiram's early collection of artwork by world-famous animal artist and onetime Oradell resident, Charles Livingston Bull – are lived out to this day.

The children of Oradell are lucky to have The Blauvelt Art Museum in their very own backyard. They're lucky to have an award-winning fine artist like Aaron Yount teach them. And they're lucky to participate in