



AARRE KOTIVALO LAHTI

April 27, 1908 - January 21, 1993

Mr. Lahti was born April 27 1908 in Helsinki, Finland, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Lahti.

Aarre Lahti was a Luther L. Wright Ironwood High School graduate, class of 1927. He attended the Chicago Art Institute, class of 1932 and received his M.F.A. in 1947.

Aarre Lahti was the winner of James Nelson-Raymond fellowship, enabling further study in Paris and Southern France from 1932 - 1933 and while there exhibited paintings at the Salon d'Automne in Paris.

While attending the School of Art of the Art Institute of Chicago, he met his wife Irma Solo, also a student. They were married in 1945. They had two sons, Aleksis Lahti and Ahde Lahti. (At the time of his death five grandchildren.)

From 1936 to 1938 he operated his own Gallery of Fine Art and Photography. The Gallery, named Lahti Photo Gallery, was located at 121 E Ayer St. in Ironwood. Subsequently he served as designer and supervisor of the Upper Peninsula W.P.A. Art and Craft Projects.

University of Michigan 1941- 1974

Aarre Lahti was appointed an instructor in Design in 1941 and was successively appointed Assistant Professor in 1948, Associate Professor in 1953, and Professor in 1958.

In his specialty area of industrial design, he has been a skillful and effective teacher. His students accord him their highest regard and commendation. His research activities have included such diverse areas as work on veneers, prefabricated housing, and design motivation studies in Finland. He has served as consultant and lecturer for many industrial and professional organizations. The Regents now entitle this dedicated teacher and gifted artist Professor Emeritus of Art.

Aarre Lahti died at the age of 84 in Miami, Florida.

Ironwood Daily Globe Article Excerpts

January 25, 1934

Lahti Asks Candid Judgment of Art

Aarre Lahti, speaking at a meeting of the Woman's club art department yesterday afternoon, urged Ironwood women to form their own opinions of works of modern art and to have the courage to express those opinions even if contrary to criticisms they may have read in various publication*. He addressed a large group, including members of the department and their guests, in the club rooms at the Memorial building. Mr. Lahti told the women that any painter, however unworthy, but with financial means, may have books and magazine articles published so favorably commenting on his work that he becomes overnight, a "genius." The public's willing acceptance of such painters, through fear of expressing legitimate opinions, does the world of an much harm, he said, and tends to distract attention from artists of merit. During his talk Mr. Lahti told, in a delightfully conversational manner, of his travels in Europe last year and gave his impressions of various European cities. At the conclusion of his talk he answered questions put to him by an enthusiastic audience. Asked if he had decided what the theme of his mural to be painted at the Luther L. Wright High school would be, Mr. Lahti replied that it would in some way depict the aims and progress of education, although he had not yet a definite plan.

December 4, 1935

Choirs to Present Christmas Concert

The combined A Capella choirs of the Ironwood Junior college and the Luther L. Wright High school, numbering more than 120 voices, will present a Christmas concert on the evening of Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 8 in the Memorial building. The choir will be directed by Prof. Sigvart J. Steen, who has already won much praise for his accomplishments in the Ironwood public school system. Elaborate plans are being made to make this one of the most unique and impressive performances ever witnessed in Ironwood. Aarre Lahti, artist, who has charge of staging and lighting effects, is planning a Christmas setting out of the ordinary. Mr. Lahti demonstrated his ability and originality in staging in connection with Little Theatre plays last season. Prof. Steen came to Ironwood last year to direct the Junior college A Capella choir. Under his direction the group won approval on the Gogebic range and in other Upper Peninsula towns. This year Prof. Steen was placed in charge of vocal music in the high school as well. Both choirs have been heard on several occasions this fall as separate groups. The performance on Dec 18 will mark the first appearance of the combined choirs.

April 15, 1935

Will Unveil Mural on Tuesday

The unveiling of a mural painted by Aarre Lahti for the Ironwood Woman's Club will take place tomorrow afternoon at a three o'clock tea in the Woman's Club rooms. Arrangements for the tea proper have been made by Mrs. W. C. Conley and Mrs. Everett Keainey with the assistance of Mrs. Ernest Gardner. Mrs. R. K. Springer, who is in charge of the afternoon's entertainment, has arranged a program of musical numbers to supplement the indentation of the mural. Aarre Lahti will offer a few comments upon the unveiling of his mural. This will be preceded by a piano duet by Mrs. G. F. Coons and Miss Lillian Ladin and followed by cello selections played by Mrs. Earl Holman. The last part of the program will be a vocal number by Mrs. C. E. Gunderson, accompanied by Mrs. G. F. Coons and Miss. Earl Holman.

JANUARY 8, 1941.

Events of Interest in Social Sphere Woman's Club Devotes Meet to Talk on 'Art'

A remarkable collection of pictures, oil paintings, water colors, sketches and wood and metal carvings by Upper Peninsula artists was on display yesterday afternoon in the Ironwood Woman's club rooms at the Memorial building and may be viewed there between the hours of 4 and 5 o'clock this afternoon. Mrs. R. K. Springer, who was chairman of yesterday's program, will be on hand this afternoon to explain the pictures for members of the public interested in art and art students from the seventh grade and up. A large group of club members yesterday viewed the exhibit, which includes a number of paintings by Mr. and Mrs. Aarre Lahti, of Marquette and formerly of Ironwood.

Aarre Lahti - Obituary Ironwood Daily Globe - February 22, 1993

Aarre Lahti

MIAMI, Fla. — Aarre Matti Lahti, 86, of Miami, formerly of Ann Arbor, Professor Emeritus of Design at the University of Michigan, died Thursday, Jan. 21, 1993, at his winter home in Miami.

Mr. Lahti was born April 27, 1908 in Holsieki, Finland, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Lahti. While attending the School of Art of the Art Institute of Chicago, he met his wife, the Irma Lahti, also a student. They were married in 1948.

He graduated with a fellowship which culminated in an exhibition of his paintings in Paris at the Salon d'Automne.

After operating a gallery of fine art and photography in Ironwood, he became the designer and supervisor of the Upper Peninsula WPA Arts and Crafts project. He came to the University of Michigan as an instructor of design in 1943 and taught for 22 years.

Mr. Lahti also worked with the Engineering Research Institute and the Marketing Research Department of the Ford Motor Com-

pany. In 1967, he presented his paper "The Gas Turbine Family Car" at the 15th anniversary meeting of the Society of Automotive Engineers. A Rankine Grant was presented to him in 1967 to make a comparative study of American and Finnish designer motivation.

In 1960, he received a second grant, enabling him to travel to Cape Dorset, Fuffin Island, to work for the administration with the Eskimos on bathing and shelter problems. Professor Lahti's views on industrial design education were published in "Industrial Design" magazine and he was a regular contributor to "School Shop."

He was a member of the Industrial Design Institute, the Industrial Design Education Association, the Industrial Designers Society of America, and the American Association of University Professors.

Survivors include his wife, Irma; two sons, Aleksis of Whitmore Lake, Mich. and Albin of Los Angeles, Calif. and five grandchildren.

May 2014

Ms. Denise Woodward's Music and Arts Classes of Luther L. Wright High School in Ironwood, Michigan begin researching the connection of the Aarre Lahti Painting "Superstition" in the Luther L. Wright study hall, Room 232 to the painting displayed in the Women's Club Room in the Memorial Building, City of Ironwood.

With the help of Phil Kucera, John DeMario and Gary Harrington, members of the Historical Society in Ironwood, Ms. Woodward's students began to piece together information about Aarre Lahti and his paintings through their research. On Wednesday, May 28, 2014, Music in the Arts Students toured the Memorial Building and fell in love with the photo featuring Aarre Lahti's painting being unveiled in the Women's Club Room to members of the Women's Club seated around the perimeter of the room. This photo was taken during the unveiling that took place at 3:00 p.m. on April 16, 1935 and features velvet curtains revealing the painting above the fireplace in the women's club room. Aarre Lahti can be seen seated next to the fire place.

Students inquired as to the cost of sponsoring this photo restoration and were informed of the cost of \$275.00. Realizing the school year was coming to an end the students quickly organized a bake sale and sold baked goods in the school hallways for 50 cents an item. At the end of the school day students worrying they had not raised enough money for the sponsorship counted the money down to the last penny. They had raised \$275.11.



Superstition

The painting titled “Superstition” by Aarre Lahti is currently on display at the Luther L. Wright High School and in need of restoration. Mrs. Woodward’s Music and the Arts Students have been having ongoing discussion as to the meaning behind the painting.

It is noted that central to the painting is a young boy and his mother. In front of them is a little red school house depicting an elementary school. Behind the red school house is the Luther L. Wright High School Building. Further in the background, a university, a city, the world. It is the opinion of the students studies that this painting represents the educational process and all that is out their in the world. The left hand side of the painting features crime, alarming newspaper headlines, prison, war, gambling, politics, wall street and war. The temptations and devastations. The center top portion of the painting portrays scientists, doctors, clergy, lawyers, philosophers, judges, musicians, artists, poets, instrumentalists, painters, writers. In other words all of the “good” in the world or the things an education will afford you. To the right of the painting one will note symbolic idolatry, ancient philosophy and Greek mythology. Greek philosophy developed much of the basics of science, math, philosophy and government that we have today. The Greek myths have had a profound and lasting influence on our culture because they teach us that the human condition is very adaptable and they continue to be a major source of inspiration to contemporary artists, philosophers, writers and educators.

Much of Ms. Woodward’s class discussion has been about the title of the painting “Superstition”. Perhaps this is referencing how a mother might be worried about sending her child off to school and all of the influences education and the world may have on their child. All parents have fears of how their child will grow up and what he or she will become when exposed to others ideas and the world. What do you think?

The possibility for restoration of the painting Superstition is currently being discussed.