

Arts & Entertainment



Gerald Sargent Foster

Westfield Rotunda - American Revolution Scene

Martin Sweeney for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Westfield Artist's Historical Mural Makes History Again

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - This year marks the 20th anniversary of the death of Westfield artist Gerald Sargent Foster, and the recent attention given to one of his murals has brought his name and his work into the local forefront once again.

After a restoration project of several months, Mr. Foster's oil-on-canvas, "The Battle of Cranford during the American Revolution," hangs once again in the lobby of the Cranford Post Office.

Parma Conservation, a fine-art conservation laboratory located in Chicago, restored the mural, which measures 70 feet long by four feet wide.

Mr. Foster created "The Battle of Cranford" for the Cranford Post Office sometime after 1935. It represents but one of a host of artistic

pieces in Freehold, Millburn and Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Two of his murals - both painted in 1954 - hang in the rotunda of the Westfield Municipal Building.

One depicts the Westfield Train Station in the 1800s when it was a stop on the "Elizabethtown-Somerville Rail Line."

Former Mayor and Westfield historian Garland "Bud" Boothe explained the significance of this mural.

"The coming of the railroad to Westfield is one of the most important events in Westfield history," said Mr. Boothe. "The railroad is what made Westfield what it is today. At one time, one out of every seven people living in Westfield traveled by train. This mural depicts the importance of the railroad to the Westfield community."

The other mural shows Redcoats confiscating goods from colonial farmers and Native Americans.

"This mural depicts an important period in both American and Westfield history. While the American Revolutionary War was being fought, both sides took what they could from the land. That was the way war was fought in those days. Supplies weren't delivered by a Hummer," said Mr. Boothe.

Born in 1900, Mr. Foster studied at the American Academy in Rome, Princeton University, the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League.

The artist was also a member of the Westfield Art Association, according to Christine Glazer, past president of the Cranford Historical Society and present chair of the Board of Trustees.

"Cranford is privileged to have the work of such a talented artist dis-



Westfield Rotunda, Train Scene - Martin Sweeney for The Leader/ Times

played so predominantly in our post office," she said, adding that relatively speaking, Mr. Foster was a young man when the works were completed.

His work was exhibited in Chicago at the Art Institute and at the World's Fair, and in New York at the Whitney Museum of American Professional League and the MacBeth Gallery.

One year prior to his death in Orangeburg, S.C. in 1987, Mr. Foster donated papers, letters and photos related to the creation of the post office murals to the Smithsonian Institute.

Included in this memorabilia is an autobiographical speech about portrait painting entitled "Reflections of an Artist."

Mr. Foster often painted scenes of Princeton's Carnegie Lake.

Several of his paintings are presently part of the Smithsonian Art Museum collection.



Cranford Post Office, "The Battle of Cranford during the American Revolution" - Michael Pollack for The Leader/ Times

projects commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, a department created during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" administration.

Mr. Foster, known professionally as Gerald S. Foster and Gerald Foster, also painted murals for post-

Wine Library TV - Raising The Bar Of Social Media, One Vlog at a Time

By LINDA B. CONDRILLO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SPRINGFIELD - With the exploding popularity of a new video-sharing web application called Viddler and a little help from his friends, wine expert and videoblogger Gary Vaynerchuk is changing the wine world.

Mr. Vaynerchuk is the genius behind winelibrarytv.com (WLTV), a virtual wine-tasting program that he videotapes himself and broadcasts over the Internet from the Wine Library in Springfield. Recently expanded, the 40,000-square-foot retail store also features a gourmet library where the shelves are stocked with a wide range of delicacies and glorious cheeses.

Five nights a week, Mr. Vaynerchuk delivers a wine-tasting program directly to the personal computers of a growing audience of fans known as "Vaniacs."

Monday through Thursday night's tastings are filmed at his table, where Mr. Vaynerchuk is joined by The Thundercats, plastic figurines from a 1980's cartoon series, and occasionally, a live guest.

Palate training is a key focus on WLTV, where Mr. Vaynerchuk routinely shares vivid descriptions of what he is seeing, smelling and tasting. After dunking his nose into a glass of a 2004 Razon Valscaro and giving it his signature "sniffy-sniff," Mr. Vaynerchuk had this reaction: "Color-big. Nose-big, cherry, little Kirsch, dark chocolate. Taste-wow, wild and gamey, venison with cherries...hit a deer on the road...let it fall down...throw a bunch of cherries on it...take out your knife that you always have on you...cut the deer...bite it...that's the flavor profile; dry sour cherry on finish." (That quote inspired a T-shirt design.)

His antics are captivating and outlandish, but effective. However, Mr. Vaynerchuk told The Westfield Leader and The Times that the over-the-top showmanship equates to only about three minutes of his 20- (give or take a few) minute program, which is mostly solid wine education. He remarked that someone recently sent him an e-mail that read: "You're tricking me into learning about wine."

On Fridays, WLTV is filmed in front of the sofa where the host of The Thundershow sits back comfortably, reads viewers' e-mails, talks football and scores the wines. Occasionally, wines are paired with cheese brought to his office from the gourmet library. Selecting a piece of Zamarono to accompany the \$9 Razon Valscaro proved to be "a great combo" and truth be known, Mr. Vaynerchuk remarked, "I love cheese even more than wine."

He is obsessed with the New York Jets (a diehard fan since the age of 5)



GARY AND THE THUNDERCATS...Gary VAY-NER-CHUK, the host of a virtual wine-tasting program called The Thundershow, wants to have the largest collection of Thundercats, own the New York Jets and change the wine world. Tune in to winelibrarytv.com and goleader.com to see his friends, both plastic and carbon, help him score at least two out of three of those goals.

and shows his affection by spitting into a silver spit bucket sporting Gang Green's insignia.

Although he rates the wines he presents, Mr. Vaynerchuk emphatically stresses the importance of "trusting your own palate."

His own unorthodox method of palate training was recently unveiled on network television when he coaxed



A FEEL FOR WINE...Mr. Vaynerchuk checks for color by the deepness of the shadow cast on the palm of his hand from red wine.

Conan O'Brien into licking a rock soaked in salt water to acquaint him with the blue stone minerals found in Sancerre. Before the five-minute palate-building demonstration was finished, O'Brien found himself chewing on grass, eating dirt and munching on a cigar (all were real). But the "Late Night" host drew the line when Vaynerchuk suggested he take a taste of his (Vaynerchuk's) sweaty sock wrapped around a sprig of asparagus in order to experience the "earthy-mushroomy essence of Burgundy."

WLTV was born out of Mr. Vaynerchuk's passion for the fruit of the vine and his desire to share his expertise beyond the suburbs of New Jersey. His Russian immigrant father started the Wine Library, formerly known as Shoppers Discount Liquors, more than 20 years ago. They changed the name, expanded the building

(you'll come for the wine, but stay for the cheese) and employ salespeople who couldn't be happier to help.

Mr. Vaynerchuk has visited every major wine region in the world and, when he's not traveling, commutes from his New York City apartment to the Springfield store where he serves as director of operations. Mr. Vaynerchuk said, "I'm in the trenches. I didn't need to be a sommelier because I had a family business to go into."

Mr. Vaynerchuk told the newspaper that he was inspired to produce WLTV after watching a "Saturday Night Live" skit (Chris Parnell and Andy Samberg's "Lazy Sunday") explode onto the YouTube scene in December 2005. He said, "I was turned onto YouTube early on and knew right then that America was ready for video." Mr. Vaynerchuk's vlog (video blog) is uploaded onto Viddler, a video-sharing web application similar to YouTube (but some say faster).

One of the things that makes WLTV different from other vlogs is that comments from viewers are posted in real time and links can be inserted as the show is progressing, giving WLTV an interactive edge. Lively message boards unite the Vaniacs in an intelligent and entertaining cybercommunity where newbies are welcomed aboard with collective virtual cheers, and lurkers are scolded by Mr. Vaynerchuk for not introducing themselves onto the forums or posting comments.

Since its inception in February 2006, Mr. Vaynerchuk's program has evolved and, like its host, is constantly being reinvented. Look for a more reserved Mr. Vaynerchuk in the earlier days of WLTV and expect to find a wilder, crazier host somewhere after the first hundred episodes.

Mr. Vaynerchuk told The Leader/ Times, "In the beginning, I was concerned about letting my true personality come out for fear the serious customers would walk away. But somewhere around 50 or 60 episodes, it was more about embracing it."

With more than 300 segments under his belt to date (all are archived), Mr. Vaynerchuk's commitment is formidable. He said, "No matter what, I will never stop doing WLTV. I am where I want to be and doing what I want to do."

Committed, caring, smart and funny, so what if he sometimes has a potty mouth. (Did I mention he's a Jets fan?) He's been featured in The Wall Street Journal, GQ, The New York Times and last month, in Time Magazine. But despite enormous success, he remains ever so humble.

Mr. Vaynerchuk told the newspaper, "As big as I get, and when I buy the Jets, it's still going to pale in comparison to what my dad Sasha did coming to America with \$100 and not a lick of English; and within a couple of years, he was managing and then co-owning a store in Springfield." He continued, "As long as my parents, my wife and my brother and sister are healthy, I am one happy boy."

If you want to be happy, check out The Thundershow at winelibrarytv.com And if you don't agree that this is one of the most addicting websites on the planet, I'll eat Gary Vaynerchuk's sweaty sock.

Choral Art Society Invites All Singers

WESTFIELD - Singers, all voices, are invited to join The Choral Art Society of New Jersey. Rehearsals are held weekly on Tuesdays from 8 to 10 p.m., September to May, at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, located at the corner of Mountain Avenue and East Broad Street.

Singers interested in joining are invited to attend a rehearsal and meet with James Little, the society's musical director.

The fall semester will be spent preparing for the Saturday, January 19, 2008 performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

The winter/spring semester rehearsals will start Tuesday, January 22, 2008 in preparation for a performance on Saturday, May 17, 2008 of Randall Thompson's *Frostiana* and a concert version of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

This year, the Choral Art Society will be out and about Union County with its January 19, 2008 concert scheduled at Calvary Episcopal Church in Summit and its May 17, 2008 concert at the Union County Arts Center in Rahway.

On Friday, December 7, the Choral Art Society will host its annual Messiah Sing starting at 8 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield.

Mr. Vaynerchuk Recommends

With the convenience of online ordering and big-screen PCs, wine-taste-along parties could easily become the latest craze.

Mr. Vaynerchuk recommends first-time viewers acquaint themselves in the archives with episode 125, which sums up many "best of WLTV" moments.

For a lesson in glassware, try episode 111; palate training, 148; and if you're in the mood for a bottle of red tonight, choose episode 122 and

watch the Opus 1, Insignia, Mondavi and Caymus Taste Off. (Click on "past episodes" and type the number of the segment into the search box, or scroll down to search by subject.)

Mr. Vaynerchuk also advises members new to the wine community to create their own wine libraries. He said, "Keep notes, write in your palm pilot the names of what you like to drink and for every one that you like, pick another one you haven't tried before."

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