

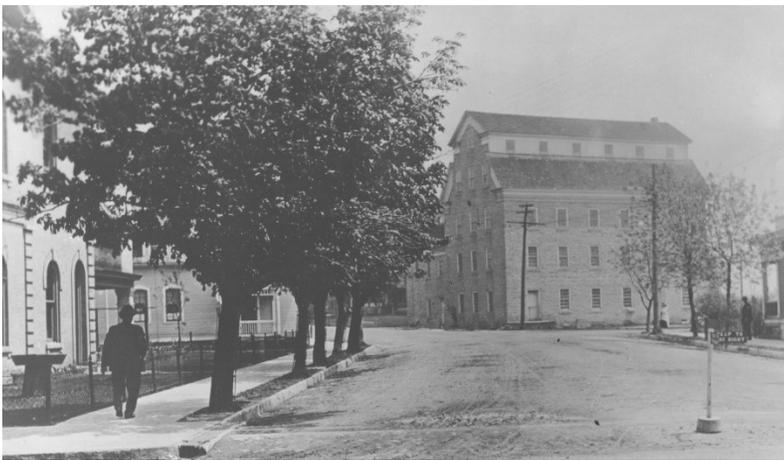
## Generous Gift Spurs Artworks and Exhibition of Cedarburg's Mill History

A special gift to the Cedarburg Art Museum by an anonymous patron with a great love for Cedarburg's history provided the impetus for a project that culminated with the support of local artists, five new artworks for the Museum's Collection, and an exhibition. The exhibition *Remembering Cedarburg's Historic Mills* celebrates the completion of the 18-month Historic Mill Project. In 2018, a local benefactor challenged the Museum to commission five artists to create artworks representing Cedarburg's historic mills for its permanent collection. These mills were the stimulant for the community's 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial and commercial growth.

Because of the donor's special gift, a Call for Art was announced in October 2018. Wisconsin artists responded with sketched images of the local mills or already completed artwork of general architectural subjects. In early 2019, a Museum subcommittee composed of several members from each of the Museum's exhibitions and collection committees helped to determine five artists to create artworks of the five mills.

Cedarburg artists Bruce Hustad, Tom Kubala, and Lynne Ruehl were commissioned to create artwork featuring the 1855 Hilgen-Schroeder Mill, the 1864 Hilgen-Wittenberg Woolen Mill, and Hamilton's 1853 Concordia Mill, respectively. In addition, Benjamin Sloma earned a commission to depict the 1871 Excelsior Mill, a flour and sawmill that was transformed into a wire and wire nail factory by 1890, while William A. Suys, Jr. was awarded the challenge to render the 1871 wind-powered grist mill.

Among Cedarburg's earliest settlers and entrepreneurs were Frederick Hilgen and William Schroeder who found that this geographic area with natural, gradual drops in its vigorous waterway would provide a great area for the use of free waterpower for industrial purposes. By 1845 they had built a log grist mill on the west side of the Cedar Creek. It was so successful for services of grinding grain into flour in its initial nine years that the business partners needed to replace it with a more substantial, improved version.



*This 1906 photographic view of the Hilgen-Schroeder Mill shows mill proprietor Emil Ruck on the sidewalk of Columbia Road. Ruck later sold the mill to the Landmark Supply Company, and later in the 1970s the mill was purchased by the Cedarburg Landmark Preservation Society. Photograph: Edward W. Rappold Collection, Collection Cedarburg Cultural Center/ Cedarburg History Museum.*

By 1855, with the help of architect and builder Burchard Weber and financing from Hilgen's brother-in-law C. Frederick Boerner, Hilgen and Schroeder built a five-story mill of locally quarried limestone with a four-story ell section. A ramp extending to Washington Avenue was built so that heavy limestone blocks could be brought by donkey to the upper levels. The partners built a dam on the Cedar Creek north of the mill with a millrace that powered a horizontal turbine in the lower level of the grist mill.

The Hilgen-Schroeder Mill has stood the test of time since its construction in 1855. Its initial use as a grist mill made it the center of commerce and community news for the farmers that needed its services at least

weekly. This mill has had a commanding and continual presence in Cedarburg's downtown since its construction. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, the building housed the Landmark Supply Company business. By the mid-1970s, the Landmark Preservation Society purchased the building to help ensure the mill's secure presence in Cedarburg. Shortly after its purchase, the non-profit group undertook an extensive exterior renovation. Today this is Cedarburg's longest operating business building, now with Landmark Feed, Seed & Supply serving the community.

Bruce Hustad, Cedarburg, is the artist who rendered the Hilgen-Schroeder Mill as a richly detailed, graphite pencil drawing for the Museum's permanent collection. Hustad is an award-winning Wisconsin artist who has exhibited widely throughout the state. Two of his paintings hang in the Governor's Residence in Madison and his works have been included in many other private collections. He has participated in numerous art fairs around the state including Milwaukee's Lakefront Festival of the Arts and Madison's Art Fair on the Square.



Bruce Hustad, *1855 Hilgen-Schroeder Mill*, graphite pencil drawing, Collection Cedarburg Art Museum.

*Remembering Cedarburg's Historic Mills*

is the first public showing of the finished, commissioned artworks in the Historic Mill Project. Though the exhibition will be installed in May, the Museum anticipates opening its doors to visitors after the Governor's "safer-at-home" order expires by early June. The exhibition is slated to remain on display through August 27 but could be extended. For up-to-date information on upcoming museum visiting hours, go to [www.cedarburgartmuseum.org](http://www.cedarburgartmuseum.org). Watch for later news installments with further information about other artists who have created artistic renderings of Cedarburg's historic mills.

-Mary Chemotti, May 2020