

COME, LET US CHANGE CHIEFS

The Conclusion of the Post Office Murals Controversy

Will Ross



In our previous issue, the first part of this article focused on the commission and execution of two murals by Rockwell Kent for the U.S. Post Office headquarters in Washington, D.C. The paintings, which saluted postal service in the U.S. territories of Alaska and Puerto Rico, were installed in September 1937. Kent had added an inscription in an Eskimo language to the Puerto Rico mural, and its translation encouraging the people of that island to seek independence sparked the controversy that Kent relished. One of his “conspirators” in the scheme was Ruby Black, a Washington-based journalist with ties to the Puerto Rico independence movement. She had the connections, the know-how and the drive to see that the mural’s questionable inscription made news across the country.¹ In the months that followed, she and Kent would collaborate to keep the story in print.

THE SECTION of Paintings and Sculpture at the Department of the Treasury had offered Kent the \$3,000 commission two years earlier and waited patiently as the artist failed to meet one deadline another. They were relieved when the paintings were mounted, but stunned by the furor that followed. Their contract with the artist called for decoration, not altercation.

Politicians in Puerto Rico took note of the mural and quickly made their displeasure known. What incensed these men was not the message, but the mural itself and its portrayal of Puerto Ricans as Negroes. Rafael Martinez Nadal, a supporter of statehood rather than independence, was president of the Senate of Puerto Rico. He was quoted in the *Washington Post* on Sept. 12: “[The mural] is a libel, a calumny, and a ‘gran insulto’ to our culture.... It must be wiped out—we will send a Puerto Rican artist who will not represent us as a bunch of African bushmen.... It is insolent. We have artists in Puerto Rico who will not make a funny paper of our culture.”² Senator Nadal was quickly joined by Puerto Rico’s nonvoting delegate in the U.S. Congress Santiago Iglesias. Iglesias, a union activist before becoming a politician, stated, “It is nothing but perverse propaganda against our country.”³ Both, however, were dismissive of the inscription. As Nadal explained, “[W]ho should care about a supposed message from the Eskimos that it takes an Arctic explorer like Vilhjalmur Stefansson to translate. I ask you!”⁴

Delegate Iglesias also protested in an official way, writing to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau. In the letter, Iglesias called Kent’s painting libelous and further stated, “I went to see for myself and, as I expected, I found that the mural neither portrays or



Mail Delivery in the Tropics was one of two murals installed in the Federal Post Office building on Sept. 4, 1937.

Three days later, Kent wrote to a friend: “[P]ublicity on them is due any time now. People who came into the corridor while the pictures were being mounted were immediately attracted to the letter and made their speculations as to what the language was and what it said.”

resembles Puerto Rico in the least.”⁵ Morgenthau responded promptly, describing the procedures used to select Kent and others for the job of decorating the Post Office building. He also acknowledged that the preliminary drawing showed no inscription, “which constitutes a departure from the original intent; the translation and purpose of the message is now being investigated by the Procurement Division.”⁶

But there were also positive reactions from Puerto Rico. Luis Muñoz Marin, at that time editor of the newspaper *La Democracia* and president of the Liberal Party, published an editorial on Sept. 16 lauding Kent. He was particularly taken with the artist’s “spirit of the purest Americanism in the service of art.”⁷

The three men at the Department of the Treasury’s Section of Painting and Sculpture who had commissioned the murals and had to deal with the aftermath were not the usual faceless bureaucrats. Edward (Ned) Bruce, a lawyer and accomplished artist, served as director of the Public Works of Art Project. Edward Rowan, also an artist, was his deputy chief and handled most of the day-to-day operations of the Section. Finally, Forbes Watson, the director’s chief advisor, had worked as a newspaper art critic and edited *The Arts* magazine in New York City. All three were firm believers in the value and importance of public art and concerned that the inscription Kent added to the mural would have adverse political consequences on the public art program.⁸

Kent, sensing an opportunity to stir the pot in two different directions, sent a four-page letter on Sept. 17 to the Procurement Division of the Section in which he acknowledged that “almost a controversy” had arisen over the murals. He went on to describe how an anonymous reporter (in reality, Ruby Black) worked to get the message translated: “The translation finally obtained, I believe, from Vilhjalmur Stefansson is, I may say, absolutely correct.” This statement is, of course, untrue since Kent had provided the translation himself through a go-between to Stefansson, who then passed it on to Black. The letter continues, pointing out how unnecessary it is to worry about the inscription since it is in an obscure Alaskan Kuskokwin Eskimo dialect that no one, particularly illiterate Puerto Rican girls, could read anyway. Then Kent turned to the painting itself, particularly the figures of the girls receiving the letter. Feigning innocence, he states that on his trip to Puerto Rico he had seen poor, black Puerto Ricans outside of San Juan: “As an artist I was moved

by the picturesqueness of their primitive existence, and as a humanitarian I was distressed by their ignorance and poverty.... As a humanitarian, then, I chose the Puerto Rican Negroes for my picture.” Then Kent twisted the knife, offering to “paint in an adequate number of assorted members of the Camara de Representantes, presided over by Señor Nadal himself.... and I’ll do the whole thing absolutely free of charge. Moreover, I’ll represent the President of the Senate himself as in the act of tearing up that message of good will to the people of Puerto Rico!”⁹

The *Washington Post* responded to the controversy editorially on Sept. 18. The newspaper, while ever so politely scolding Kent, pleads for understanding, “[E]ver since art became essentially aesthetic in its aim, the artist’s right to draw as he pleases has been asserted.” However, it also supplies these words of warning, “Such an incitement to revolt, were it painted under governmental aegis in any of the regimented countries, would not sit so well. Mr. Rockwell’s head, indeed, might by now be rolling in the shavings of his own finely carved wood-cuts.”¹⁰

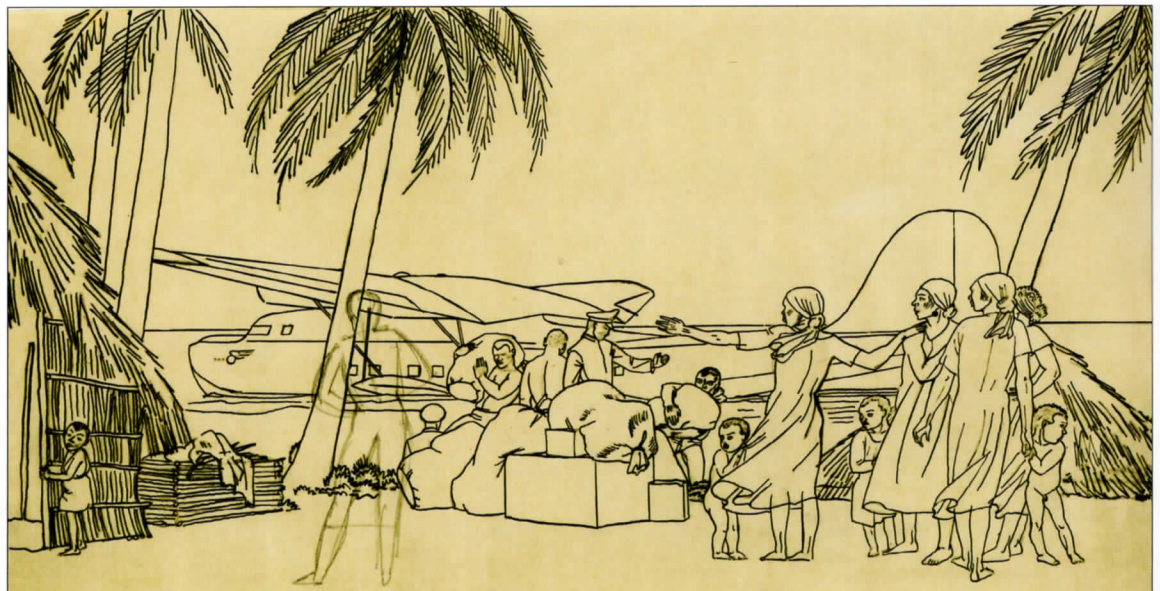
After the *Post* editorial appeared, Kent, in a Sept. 22 letter to Ruby Black, made a striking concession. He admits that the message “occupies so trivial a place in the composition” that he would be hard put to “refuse to paint it out, or even to protest its being painted out by the Government.... [T]he wisest thing that the authorities can do is just forget the matter.” He admits that the ultimate jury is public opinion and that he must convince editorial writers of the rightness of his cause and provide them “with a reasonable pretext for fairness that favors me.” He closes: “In case I do have to change it, what do you think of making a big press party of the event, getting newsreels there and making it the occasion of speechmaking all around?”¹¹

That night, Black telegraphed Kent: “Confidentially Ned Bruce told me tonight your mural would not be accepted because you quote broke contract since sketch included no writing unquote. I told him that as a journalist I thought that would be fine because I could make many front pages with rejection story while acceptance would merit only one paragraph inside.” She advised Kent to immediately write to Ned Bruce or Forbes Watson with his concerns, and do so without acknowledging his awareness of the Section’s plan to reject the mural or his association with her.¹²

Kent took her advice and wrote to Watson, feigning “astonishment” at the controversy before defending himself and attempting

An early version of *Mail Delivery in the Tropics*, ink on paper, c. 1936. (Plattsburgh State Art Museum)

Kent based his depiction of the Puerto Rican people and their way of life on photographs taken at a village near San Juan in July 1936. The Treasury Department’s Section of Paintings and Sculpture rejected his first two submissions as “completely hopeless” and directed him to choose a different approach “to tackle your mural problem.”



to transfer blame to the Section. The truth, of course, was that Kent had conspired with Black to publicize the whole thing; far from being “astonished,” he was ecstatic. He goes on to basically issue a threat to the Section: “If I must change the writing, you will understand that I may not in self-respect creep in there at night and secretly change it.” Instead, he hints that he will have the press watch him do it, then tries to add some sugar to this dose of castor oil: “I tell you this as I would tell friends of mine, for that’s what I hold your department to be, about something I know must happen if certain eventualities arise.”¹³

Ruby Black met with Bruce and Watson over lunch on Sept. 24. An unsigned memorandum in the Section’s files recounts their meeting: “I was interested in the fact that she [Black] agreed with me one hundred percent that any move on our part to compel Kent to change the mural would result in an amazing volume of publicity which would be most embarrassing all around.” Their discussion then turned to the political situation in Puerto Rico and, finally, to the race of the women depicted in the mural, with Black warning her lunch companions that they would be insulting the “entire Negro Race” if Kent were forced to repaint the women as white.¹⁴

The next day, Black sent Kent a “confidential” blow-by-blow account of the meeting. According to her, Bruce opened the conversation saying, “That mural will be accepted only over my dead body.” Why? Because Kent broke his contract: “There was no writing in his sketch. Here we’ve worked to get the government to sponsor art, and that’s tremendously important. If things like this go on, the government will say, ‘to hell with art, if artists are going to play dirty tricks like that.’” Black then attempted to pour oil on troubled water, reiterating the point that leaving the inscription alone would result in virtually no publicity. As to the race question, she tells them that no matter the reason, the rejection of the mural will be seen as racial in nature, pointing to an article in the current issue of *Newsweek*. She makes much of the fact that she is being altruistic, since it would be a better story for her, as a reporter and supporter of Puerto Rican independence, if the mural were rejected. Bruce then relented somewhat, stating, “I won’t say we should reject it. I won’t ask him to paint it out. But I’ll be damned if he will ever get the rest of the pay due him, or will ever set foot in the department again.” There then ensued a discussion of who would own the painting if Kent were not paid, with Black making the point that Kent would

get tremendous publicity out of taking the murals out of the building. Their lunch ended with a discussion of Eleanor Roosevelt and her friendship with Black, a fact that impressed Bruce. In a postscript, Black wrote, “If I did too good a job of convincing, you can doubtless prod them into rejection if you want to.”¹⁵

AS SEPTEMBER ended, the Section continued in its attempt to obtain a proper translation of the inscription, sending a photograph of the inscription to anyone they located who had knowledge of Eskimo languages. The Bureau of Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution was the first to respond: “There is no one in Washington who is fully competent to read the inscription in the Eskimo language.”¹⁶ Dr. Franz Boas, an anthropology professor at Columbia University, confirmed that the writing was “undoubtedly Eskimo.” While he could not translate it himself, he offered to forward it to a colleague in Denmark.¹⁷ Bruce had also written to Otto W. Geist, an archaeologist with the University of Alaska and was awaiting his reply.¹⁸

Kent, having already received \$1,950 of his fee on account, wrote to Watson on Oct. 2, asking for the balance he was owed. He rather humorously refers to the biblical King Balshazar as being “much more punctilious in the fulfillment of his agreement with Daniel than the Painting and Sculpture Section of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department has been with me.”¹⁹

The next politician to become involved in the controversy was Anthony J. Dimond, the Alaska Territory delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives. He waited until Oct. 17 to write to the Postmaster General with his concern about the misrepresentation of his Eskimo constituents and their feelings towards the United States. He closed his letter by requesting that the message be painted out: “It is not necessary to employ any person who calls himself an artist to do the job, for any ordinary house painter can perform the work effectively.”²⁰

Kent wrote to Watson again on Oct. 18, with a slightly revised translation of the inscription, “To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends: Go ahead, let us change our leaders [in place of chiefs], that only will make us equal and free.” His revision was based on Stefansson’s response to media inquiries about the alleged cry for revolution in the original translation.²¹ Kent proceeded to say he believed “the Government has shown itself to be extremely stupid



Two of the photos from Kent’s ten-day visit to Puerto Rico. (Archives of American Art)

and inefficient in not being able to get from its own Indian or Eskimo department this exact, literal translation of the inscription. There has not, and never has been, anything secret about it." From there, he goes on a tirade about not being paid and not receiving the photographs of the murals he had earlier requested, accusing the Section of being "extremely and wantonly inefficient, neglectful of their duties, and in general discourteous." Aware that the Secretary of the Treasury had informed Delegate Iglesias that there would be an investigation of the mural project, Kent continued, "It now becomes my business to investigate the conduct of a department of my Government, its integrity in the fulfillment of contractual obligations and its general human fitness to conduct such important projects as the Procurement Division is entrusted with." In a postscript, he also objects to the publishing of an early sketch of the mural in the *Washington Evening Star*: "Your giving it publicity is a violation of common decency. I did not have the sketch copyrighted, to be sure, before I sent it to you. Your reproducing it is, however, a case of plagiarism, and one on which I may care to take legal action."²²

The Section's response to Kent's bombastic letter was commendably restrained. William McReynolds, Morgenthau's administrative assistant, wrote: "In our opinion, the message on the letter in the panel illustrating the delivery of mail in the tropics should be in English in order that it may be read and understood by the general public. Accordingly, you are requested to submit for the approval of the Director of Procurement several messages, satisfactory to you, any of which could be substituted."²³

Kent quickly responded, setting forth several alternatives in English. In this letter, he notes his preference—"To the people of Puerto Rico, our brethren: Let us in the spirit of America fight for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."—explaining that "I am an American; and I am an ardently patriotic American because I take literally the statements of principle upon which our country was established." Coincidentally, an exhibition of his Greenland paintings and prints was to open at the Gallery of Modern Masters in Washington on Nov. 1, and "equipped with the paints and brushes," he offered "to make the desired change in the decoration" that day.²⁴

HAVING INFORMED Delegate Iglesias that Kent would repaint the inscription,²⁵ Rowan and Watson sat down with Kent at the Procurement Division office on Nov. 1. It was their second face-to-face meeting—and newsworthy enough to appear on the front page of that morning's *Washington Daily News*.²⁶ Afterwards, each party set forth in writing their recollections of the meeting. Watson's memorandum begins:

At first Mr. Kent laughed at any idea of changing the letter. He said he thought it a great tactical error on our part to have the message changed. He said that he was completely surprised by the amount of publicity given to the matter but that, in the light of the publicity given to the matter and of the letters received by him congratulating him on his stand for Puerto Rican independence, he was very much on the spot. Mr. Rowan said he deserved to be on the spot since he had put himself there. Finally, after a strong plea by Mr. Rowan Mr. Kent agreed to accept the following message: "May you persevere and win that freedom and equality in which lies the promise of happiness."

Rowan then left the meeting and returned with word that senior management (William McReynolds and Procurement Division Director Admiral C.J. Peoples) had vetoed it in favor of something sim-

pler: "To commemorate the far-flung front of the United States Postal Service," which Kent rejected out of hand, stating that it would be seen by his supporters as going back on his principles. He agreed to allow the Section to hire someone else to repaint it and reduce the balance of his fee by \$100, stating once again that "the message had nothing to do with the design of the mural and was extraneous material." According to Watson: "The conference concluded without harsh language."²⁷

Two days later, Kent wrote to Watson, accusing the Section of violating their verbal agreement not to publicize the meeting, as evidenced by "the announcement in the press that I had refused to make the alterations and that your Department was going to have the alteration done at my expense. Your Department's bad faith justifies me in now putting my entire case against the Treasury Department before the public." What followed is his very different version of their meeting:

After considerable absence, Mr. Rowan returned, apologizing for the time he had been away. He reported that the message was not acceptable to Mr. Reynolds [sic] and the Admiral. Thereupon, I told you that the discussion was at an end, that while I had made every reasonable attempt to make the message one that would express my own American ideals and at the same time be acceptable to every faction in America, I now recognized that there could be no agreement between myself and your Department. It was clear to me, I said, that your Department wanted to suppress every suggestion that the ideals of our Declaration of Independence were still living issues. I told you that the very fact that a Department of our Government would want to suppress such an expression was proof of my contention that it was necessary now in America to contend for them....

I now inform you that my decoration on the walls of our Post Office building remains my property until it has been paid for in full, and that if you tamper with that picture in any way, even were it to but to changing of a comma in the decoration message, I will hold your Department and its head, Edward Bruce, strictly responsible. I inform you too that I will not accept any tender of payment that is less than the full amount still due me under our contract.

He then attacked Bruce, who was absent from the meeting, calling for his removal from leadership. Somewhat incongruously, Kent concludes, "I want in this letter to again express my appreciation of the friendly courtesy of yourself and Mr. Rowan during the last conference."²⁸ The truth of what actually happened during their meeting probably lies somewhere in the middle, but it's clear that Kent agreed in principle to change the inscription to a more innocuous one in English.

While things were happening behind the scenes, Kent and the Treasury Department engaged in a public war of words over his compensation: Kent, on the one hand, arguing that the paintings belonged to him and that he would sue if not paid;²⁹ a spokesman for the Treasury Department, on the other hand, saying, "If he is going to be unpleasant, we may have to return the painting and get back the \$1,950 we paid him on account."³⁰

A memorandum Rowan prepared for McReynolds emphasizes Kent's agreement to change the message and his having no objection to someone else making the change with his final payment reduced. The memorandum ends by stating that repainting the mural will be delayed until a satisfactory translation can be obtained: "There is

some question that the message painted by Mr. Kent is meaningless with the exception of the word 'Puerto' which refers to Puerto Rico."³¹

On Nov. 5, Ruby Black telegraphed Kent: "Treasury today, after long conference, instructed Peoples to send you immediately check for \$1950 complete final payment and then to have inscription obliterated at taxpayers' expense if translation proves correct."³² The draft of a letter to Kent that accompanied the voucher for payment indicates that a nominal fee of \$15, as opposed to \$100, was deducted.³³ In a formal letter to Kent, Adm. Peoples wrote: "Although the inscription does not appear to the Division to be in keeping with the intent and spirit of the mural, this is regarded as not of sufficient importance to withhold full payment to you."³⁴ However, after receiving the voucher, Kent, had to write to Ed Rowan that it had been "irretrievably lost": "Through my own carelessness, it was allowed to be near a mass of dead correspondence and empty envelopes which were to be consigned to the flames in the fireplace. It was gathered up with the rest of the papers and burned up. I must confess to a grim sense of humor at such an anti-climax to our ardent controversy, and I do hope that you will all so share in that grim humor at my expense that it will compensate to your Department for the trouble that I begged them to take to issue me another."³⁵

The voucher was promptly replaced.³⁶ In the meantime, Kent had written a scathing letter to Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, setting forth at length his bill of particulars against the Section and, in particular, Ned Bruce.³⁷ The Procurement Division responded to Kent that the check had been cashed, a fact that "renders further discussion of your contract unnecessary."³⁸

WITH ROCKWELL KENT finally out of the Section's hair, Bruce was still concerned with determining whether the inscription was an incendiary message about revolution or merely gibberish. As he awaited responses from Prof. Geist at the University of Alaska and Dr. Boas's Danish colleague, unsolicited offers to help translate the inscription arrived from T.S. Hansen of Houston, Texas,³⁹ and Ferdinand Drebert, a Moravian missionary who had lived in Alaska's Kuskokwin district.⁴⁰

On Nov. 11, they received Boas's response from William Thalbitzer, a professor of Eskimo studies at the University of Copen-

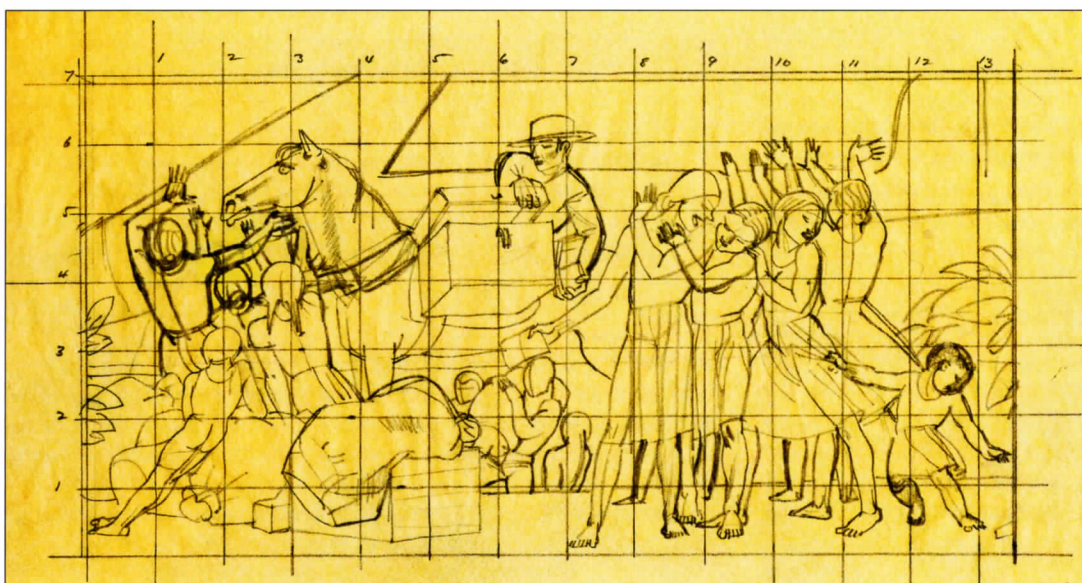
hagen: "I have now carefully examined the photo you sent me of a letter written by an Alaskan Eskimo to the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, (a remarkable thing)," continuing, "I feel very uncertain concerning many of the words and endings, although they are all no doubt pure Eskimo."⁴¹ Boas and Bruce were apparently unaware that Kent and Thalbitzer were acquainted. When Kent had learned, apparently from a newspaper article, that Thalbitzer had been asked to translate the inscription, he wrote to him: "If you have not already answered the United States Government in its silly request, it would amuse us all very much if you would write and say that on the authority of your friend, Rockwell Kent, you send them the following translation, and then do send them the translation that I have just written."⁴² By then, Thalbitzer had already responded, and his admittedly rough translation tracks the gist of Kent's published translation.

But then a week later, Prof. Geist telegraphed the Section From Alaska to say he knew who had made the original translation for Kent.⁴³ Bruce had not given up on getting to the bottom of the translation and responded: "Please wire all details."⁴⁴ Geist did so, confirming that Kent had composed the original message and sent it to a woman in Nome (Edith Wheeler) for translation. She then took it to a priest (Father La Fortune), whose limited knowledge of Kuskokwin resulted in the inscription painted on the mural.⁴⁵

Other responses confirmed what had by then become obvious. Hansen in Texas had sent the message to his brother, a long-time resident of the Kuskokwin region, who replied, "Your request to translate—nobody understands it."⁴⁶ Ferdinand Drebert, the Moravian missionary, weighed in on Nov. 30: "The message sounds as tho it might be in Eskimo, but is certainly not in the Kuskokwin dialect.... I am sorry that the message cannot be satisfactorily interpreted."⁴⁷

Writing to Rev. Drebert, Ned Bruce had the last word: "[I]t seems to have been a rather elaborate hoax in bad taste that Kent played on the Government."⁴⁸

As for the repainting, Ruby Black wrote to Kent in January 1938: "I too believe that the Treasury will not alter the inscription. But I think they now want the whole incident forgotten and intend never to make a formal decision."⁴⁹ She was right. The murals stand today, a little worse for wear, just as Kent painted them.



Mail Delivery in the Tropics, pencil drawing, 1937. (Plattsburgh State Art Museum)

Kent used this scale drawing of the approved design to facilitate its transfer to a canvas measuring six feet high and more than thirteen feet long. Once he began painting, numerous minor changes would be made, and the little letter (centered horizontally at eye level) would become a distinctive feature.

NOTES

Any author worth his salt recognizes the people who helped along the way. While I am responsible for this article and its predecessor, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge all the help and encouragement I have received. Many thanks to Tonya Cribb in Plattsburgh and my friend Scott Ferris, who provided important leads. Other Kent friends, including Richard West, Jake Wien and Bob Rightmire, also provided great support and advice. A special thank-you to my niece Katie Herring, who acted as my research assistant in New York, working with Columbia University. My wife Joanne has been a source of constant support, including letting me use our dining room table as a writing desk for about a month. The entire article can also be viewed online at the Rockwell Kent Forum, <http://www.rockwellkent.us>.

Items from the Rockwell Kent Papers in the Archives of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution are cited as RKP. Items from the Records of the Public Building Service, Case Files Concerning Embellishment of Federal Buildings, 1934-43, National Archives and Records Administration (Group 121/Entry 133), are cited as Record Group.

1. On Sept. 10 alone, six days after the murals were installed, articles about the translation appeared in at least 37 newspapers, from the *El Paso Herald Post* to the *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*. "Learn Mural Words Meaning" with Ruby Black's byline made the front page of the *Daily Register* in Oelwein, Iowa.

2. "Island Senator Brands Kent's Murals 'Libel,'" *Washington Post*, 12 Sept. 1937, 16.

3. "Mural Stirs Ire of Puerto Ricans," *New York Times*, 15 Sept. 1937, 26.

4. "Another Quarter Hits Kent Mural," *Sunday Star* (Washington D.C.), 12 Sept. 1937, A-13.

5. Record Group, Santiago Iglesias to Henry Morgenthau, undated.

6. Ibid, Morgenthau to Iglesias, undated.

7. RKP, "The Message of Rockwell Kent," *La Democracia*, 16 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frame 64. Marin would become Puerto Rico's first democratically elected governor in 1948.

8. Eleanor Mahoney, "The Public Works of Art Project in Washington State," on the Civil Rights & Labor History Consortium gateway at washington.edu.

9. RKP, Rockwell Kent to Procurement Division, 17 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frames 73-76. See "Kent Quite Willing to Paint White Men," *New York Times*, 22 Sept. 1937, 29. Kent, in a letter to Earl Hanson, describes the legislature as a "horrible looking gallery of thugs." (RKP, Kent to Hanson, 17 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frame 63.) Kent had written to Black: "My tardiness in getting the translation into Stefansson's hands must have caused you a little uneasiness. I knew that Stefansson would have to have the translation because there are so many Eskimo dialects and so many different systems of spelling that no man who has not specialized in a particular dialect could be expected to understand it all." (RKP, Kent to Black, 14 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frame 59.)

10. "Kent's Eskimo Letter," *Washington Post*, 18 Sept. 1937, 6. (Note the *Post's* mistaken reference to Kent as "Mr. Rockwell.")

11. RKP, Kent to Ruby Black, 22 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frames 90-91.

12. Ibid, Black to Kent, 22 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frames 92-93.

13. Ibid, Kent to Forbes Watson, 23 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frames 98-102.

14. Record Group, 24 Sept. 1937. The memorandum includes a handwritten notation, "Shown to Director Sept 24."

15. RKP, Black to Kent, 25 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frame 108-111. (She refers to "Murals: Puerto Rican Senator Objects to Kent's Color Scheme," *Newsweek*, 27 Sept. 1937, p. 25.)

16. Record Group, Matthew Stirling to Edward Rowan, 8 Oct. 1937. Stirling also refers Rowan to O.W. Geist at the University of Alaska.

17. Ibid, Watson to Franz Boas, 28 Sept. 1937, and Boas to Watson, 30 Sept. 1937.

18. Ibid, Edward Bruce to O.W. Geist, 11 Oct. 1937.

19. RKP, Kent to Watson, 2 Oct. 1937, reel 5224, frames 126-127.

20. Record Group, Anthony J. Dimond to James Farley, 11 Oct. 1937.

21. RKP, draft of article by Ruby Black, 21 Sept. 1937, reel 5224, frames 84-89.

22. RKP, Kent to Watson, 18 Oct. 1937, reel 5224, frames 132-33. Kent referred to "Wrong Note In Artist's Mural Joke" by Leila Mechlin, published in the *Washington Evening Star*, 16 Oct. 1937, B-3.

23. Record Group, William McReynolds to Kent, 22 Oct. 1937.

24. RKP, Kent to McReynolds, 26 Oct. 1927, reel 5224, frames 152-53.

25. Record Group, McReynolds to Iglesias, 29 Oct. 1937.

26. "Rockwell Kent Defends His Use of Walls for Propaganda," *Washington Daily News*, 1 Nov. 1937, 1.

27. Record Group, Memorandum, 24 Sept. 1937. The memorandum includes the handwritten notation "Shown to Director Sept 24." The revised inscription is written in a hand other than Kent's on the original of his Oct. 26 letter.

28. RKP, Kent to Watson, 3 Nov. 1937, reel 5226, frames 269-72. Kent's reference was probably to "Farley Censorship Hits Kent Mural; New 'Message' to Puerto Rico Asked," *New York Times*, 1 Nov. 1937, 27.

29. "Kent Threatens Suit Over Mural," *New York Times*, 4 Nov. 1937, 21.

30. "Treasury Warns Kent Mural May Go," *Washington Evening Star*, 5 Nov. 1937, A-2.

31. Record Group, Rowan to McReynolds, 4 Nov. 1937.

32. RKP, Black to Kent, 5 Nov. 1937, reel 5226, frame 297. The correct amount of the check was \$1050.

33. Record Group, Adm. C.J. Peoples to Kent, undated.

34. Ibid, 4 Nov. 1937. See "Kent Paid In Full By Treasury Check," *New York Times*, 6 Nov. 1937, 19.

35. RKP, Kent to Rowan, 8 Nov. 1937, reel 5226, frame 312.

36. Record Group, Peoples to Kent, 11 Nov. 1937.

37. RKP, Kent to Morgenthau, 6 Nov. 1937, reel 5226, frames 305-06.

38. Record Group, McReynolds to Kent, undated.

39. Ibid, Hansen to Treasury Department, 9 Nov. 1937.

40. Ibid, Gapp to Treasury Dept., 5 Nov. 1937.

41. Ibid, Boas to Treasury Dept., 11 Nov. 1937; with attachment, Thalbitzer to Boas, 27 Oct. 1937.

42. RKP, Kent to Thalbitzer, 11 Nov. 1937, reel 5226, frame 330.

43. Record Group, Geist to Bruce, 19 Nov. 1937.

44. Ibid, Bruce to Geist, 20 Nov. 1937.

45. Ibid, Geist to Bruce, 24 Nov. 1937.

46. RKP, "Zeal of Houstonian May Prove Big Embarrassment to Explorer Stefansson," *Houston Post*, 19 Dec. 1937, reel 5226, frames 347-348.

47. Record Group, Drebert to Bruce, 30 Nov. 1937.

48. Ibid, Bruce to Drebert, 3 Dec. 1937.

49. RKP, Black to Kent, 11 Jan. 1938, reel 5226, frame 354.