The Artist, the Wheelbarrow, and the Fair Book Rule

For many years, one of the most anticipated exhibitors at the Rockton Fair was local artist Muriel McDonald. Though she spent her weekdays working as a medical secretary in Hamilton, her heart never strayed far from Rockton. Every weekend, she returned to the village and devoted herself to painting scenes of country life, landscapes, and fair memories in both oils and watercolours.

As fair time approached each year, Muriel would paint with determination and enthusiasm—sometimes right up to the very last minute.

Because she worked out of town, the responsibility of delivering her entries often fell to her sister, Blanche Morden. Blanche became an expert in the delicate art of transporting paintings, a skill not listed in any fair handbook.

The challenge was that Muriel's masterpieces were frequently still wet.

Undeterred, Blanche would carefully arrange the paintings in a wheelbarrow, creating a makeshift mobile gallery. With the patience of a museum curator and the nerves of a tightrope walker, she would position each painting so that no canvas touched another. Then she would make the journey to the fairgrounds, steering around bumps and potholes, determined that not a single brushstroke would be smeared.

Time after time, the paintings arrived safely, ready for judging and admiration.

Muriel's talent became well known among fairgoers. Her paintings captured the beauty of rural life and the spirit of the Rockton Fair itself. One of her paintings depicting the fair still hangs in the Rockton Fair office today—a lasting tribute to her artistic skill, dedication, and hometown pride.

And while no one can say for certain, there has long been a rumour whispered among exhibitors that Muriel may have inspired one of the fair's most practical rules. After years of Blanche navigating the grounds with a wheelbarrow full of fresh paint, some believe the fair book eventually adopted the requirement that all entries must be **dry and ready to hang**.

Whether the story is fact or fairground folklore, those who knew Muriel and Blanche can certainly see how the legend began.

After all, when an artist paints right up to the deadline and her sister delivers the evidence in a wheelbarrow, fair officials eventually learn that a little regulation can save a lot of paint!

Today, the painting in the fair office serves as more than just artwork. It is a reminder of two sisters, a shared love of the Rockton Fair, and the extraordinary lengths people have always gone to in order to keep local traditions alive.