

***EGYPTIAN MAIDENS* TILE MURAL**

BY ELSA VICK SHAW



Cleveland artist Elsa Vick Shaw designed the *Egyptian Maidens* tile mural (also known as a mosaic tile panel) in 1930 at the Cowan Pottery Studio. Another Cowan artist, Thelma Frazier, applied the polychrome decoration. This large piece measures 48”h x 30”w, and was produced in a limited edition of only five. In a 1930 Cowan advertisement the price was listed as \$750. Of course today’s value of this piece far exceeds the original price.

Elsa Vick Shaw and her husband Glenn Moore Shaw both taught at the Cleveland Institute of Art (as did R. Guy Cowan, Viktor Schreckengost, and many other artists associated with Cowan Pottery). Mrs. Shaw is well known for her creation of the 14 murals above the doorways of the Grand Foyer at Severance Hall. Glenn Shaw was the creator of the Freedoms Mural now located in the foyer of Rocky River’s Don Umerley Civic Center.

The Cowan Pottery Museum at Rocky River Public Library acquired the *Egyptian Maidens* tile mural as part of the original Brodbeck Collection purchased by the library in December 1976. Even though the mural has had several missing pieces ever since the library acquired it, this did not detract from its distinctiveness and beauty. The *Egyptian Maidens* tile mural has always been one of the highlights of the Cowan Pottery Museum’s collection.

At the end of the library’s renovation (April 2007), it was decided to restore the *Egyptian Maidens*. Once the funding was assured, thanks to the generosity of the Cowan Pottery Museum Associates and the Rocky River Public Library Board of Trustees, work began in the fall of 2007. Included among the treatment measures were creation of replacement tiles, in-painting to cover cracks, and creation of a new backing of honeycomb aluminum to replace the old wood backing. The *Maidens* tile mural was re-installed on February 20, 2008, in honor of the Cowan Pottery Museum’s 30th anniversary. It hangs on a wall near the library’s entrance, across from the Cowan Pottery Museum’s introductory display case.