

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# New mural inside AJ's depicts west side history



The mural depicts 20 landmarks from the history of the city's West Side.  
Photo: Emma McPhee/Telegraph-Journal

🕒 Published 18 hours ago



---

Emma McPhee | Telegraph-Journal

---

SAINT JOHN • Visiting AJ's Lounge & Restaurant on the city's west side is now like taking a step through time, thanks to a new mural unveiled on Wednesday.

Images of Centracare, the Old Lancaster Post Office, Fairville Train Station, the Reversing Falls suspension bridge and 16 other west side landmarks are painted in sepia tones along the back wall of the restaurant.

The painting, created by Saint John's renowned Norman Jackson, will be the artist's last major work, or so he says.

"This is probably the last big picture I'll do," said the artist, who is known for such paintings as "In the Decade," which depicts the ghost of John F. Kennedy looking down at the first lunar landing. "I'm 80 years old in February. I think that's it."

AJ's Restaurant was as full as Public Health guidelines allowed on Wednesday night with Jackson's friends and supporters to view the unveiling, including MLA for Saint John Lancaster and Social Development Minister Dorothy Shephard.

After giving a speech that included the highlights of his life, Jackson signed the mural, marking the first time the artist had ever signed one of his works in public.

The mural was commissioned by Greg Stewart, the owner and operator of AJ's Restaurant after he and co-owner Rob Connolly took over the restaurant earlier this year.

After refreshing the restaurant, Stewart said they felt like something was missing.

"It needed something, a statement, if you will," Stewart said. "And because of the history that's in Saint John, but more specifically west Saint John, we had a vision that we wanted to see some of the icons, the landmarks of west Saint John, on a wall."

The mural measures 16 by six feet and Jackson said it took him 200 hours to complete. He worked with two local historians, Bill Thompson and Harold Wright, to narrow down the landmarks to just 20, something Jackson said was a challenge.

Some of the landmarks date back almost 200 years, Stewart said, while others will provide visitors to the restaurant a chance to take a walk down memory lane.

"The immediate one that's going to get your attention is the old suspension bridge of the Reversing Falls that dates back to the late 1800s," Stewart said. "Some of [the landmarks] don't exist anymore, but so much history is going to be unveiled on that wall."

For Jackson, whose life highlights already include an interview with Neil Armstrong, meeting Muhammad Ali and an appearance on CBC's Dragon's Den, this new mural is what he wants as his legacy.

"It's the last big thing," he said. "Historical Saint John that people will come and look at forever."

🕒 Published 18 hours ago

