

TELEVISION NEWS REPORT OF DISCOVERY OF MURAL
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Newsman: The Wright Brothers changed the life of many of us, but it changed the life of one Hoosier in a very special way. Washington Bureau Chief Tom Walker tells us his story.

Tom Walker: We'll begin the story here. A small museum in Dorchester County, Maryland, filled with the local artifacts you might expect to find here.

Unknown Museum Docent: All these artifacts have been found within a mile or so of this building.

Tom Walker: But you might not have expected to come across this 18' by 7' mural depicting the earliest pioneers of flight.

Unknown Museum Docent: It starts with the early gliders of the Wright Brothers....

Tom Walker: The mural did not come from around here and its whereabouts has been a decade's long mystery for the artist's family.

Bill Smart: No one had any information as to what had happened to it. It just doesn't exist.

Tom Walker: It was an important painting to Indianapolis native, Bill Smart. You see, it was painted by his uncle, Justin Gruelle, who grew up in Indianapolis and whose brother became famous as the creator of Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy. Gruelle's art work was never as famous, but he became a source of inspiration for Smart who had watched the mural being painted as a young boy and who would dream of places far away from Indiana.

Bill Smart: Justin was fascinated with the whole concept of aviation. In fact, the concept of the whole universe and what's out there that man does not know.

Tom Walker: Gruelle had taken pains to make sure his drawing of the Wright Brothers' Flyer was as close to the real thing as possible.

Bill Smart: Exactly. All the struts—he had all the drawings and designs and the wires. Everything is very intricate as you can see here.

Tom Walker: The mural actually hung for a while here at the Smithsonian for a while in what a building that preceded what is now the Air and Space Museum, but the painting disappeared, not even the artist knew how.

Bill Smart: He died in 1978, really saddened that it was not known where it was.

Tom Walker: Smart says that it was his uncle's dying wish that someone find the mural. Smart resolved that he would.

Bill Smart: I was determined that even if it had been thrown in a dumpster, I wanted to know that, what had happened to it.

Tom Walker: Eventually he discovered that the Smithsonian had donated it to this museum [Dorchester Heritage Museum, Maryland] which has decided to give it to Smart who is returning it home to Indiana where it will be part of a display at the Indiana Historical Society.

Bill Smart: He truly is an Indiana artist, so I think it's very important that he is finally being recognized in his home town.

Tom Walker: And for Bill Smart, his quest propelled by an appreciation of the history of flight and by a painting created long ago by a man he admired is now a story with a happy ending. In Washington, Todd Walker for Eyewitness News.

Newscaster: And, a quick update to the story. You will soon be able to see the end result for yourself. The mural, entitled The Early Birds, recently arrived at the Indiana Historical Museum. A truck brought it in from Maryland. It will be restored and eventually will become part of a special aviation display at the museum which opens next April. Bill Smart, who rediscovered the painting, says he hopes to be on hand.