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Steffen Thomas Museum of Art
(STMA)

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STMA Receives Watson Brown Foundation Grant



The NYA Rug, designed by Steffen Thomas, was created by young workers hired by the NYA during the Great Depression.

BUCKHEAD – The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art was recently awarded a grant from the Watson Brown Foundation for the restoration of one of the museum's very special treasures: the NYA Rug.

During the Great Depression of the 1930's, President Franklin Roosevelt initiated the Works Project Administration (WPA), which employed millions to carry out public works. In 1939, Steffen Thomas was appointed Arts Supervisor for the National Youth Administration (NYA) in Georgia, a WPA program designed to educate and employ Depression-era youth.

One of his finest projects was the NYA Rug. Thomas designed the rug and consulted with the art teachers at Habersham College in Clarksville, GA, who supervised the teenagers hired to create it. Made of wool yarn hooked into burlap, the rug is 12 feet wide by 16 feet long. A recurring theme in the design is the strength and nobility of ordinary men and women and the dignity of their labor.

Thanks to the Watson Brown Foundation, STMA is now able to restore and stabilize this 70-year-old historical artifact from the era of FDR and the WPA. We are most grateful for their help and support.

The Foundation, a nonprofit Georgia corporation, was founded in 1970 by Walter J. Brown. It supports historic preservation in part through its Junior Board of Trustees, a group of talented high school students who award annual grants to worthy projects and organizations in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) of Georgia and South Carolina.

Volunteers with sewing and weaving experience are needed for this project. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Conner at 706-342-7557.