Intarsia by Artist Jim Ryan

My father James Gerald Ryan (Jim) had a lifelong career as a Cement Mason. After his knees wore out, he was forced to retire. He found a new hobby in woodworking. First, he built himself a scroll saw with help from a magazine. He explored different types of woodworking and eventually found his niche in Intarsia.

Intarsia is an ancient Italian technique of word sculpturing. His intention was always to keep this as a hobby not a business. He displayed his work at various craft shows, County Fairs and the Minnesota State Fair where he continued to be rewarded for his artistry. The people at the Rockler Woodworking Store were also interested in his work and asked him to present the Art of Intarsia to interested woodworkers. There he taught and made connections with other woodworking enthusiast.

He fine-tuned his craft and eventually began mentoring others who were interested in the Art of Intarsia. His brother Bud, nephews and other relatives became interested as well. His work was sought after as people asked him to create Intarsia pieces in remembrances of their pets, animals, etc. His pieces included Native America Chiefs, Horses, Eagles, Dogs, Birds, Ducks, Pheasants, Golfers, Religious Crosses, Roses and much more. A Tiger he designed and carved was displayed on the cover of an August 2002 issue of the Creative Woodworkers and Crafts Magazine. The designs are shared with other Intarsia woodworkers.

| Dove and Cross | Eagle Landing | Tiger Head |

In 1999-2000, the Savage Friends of the Library and Museum conducted a search for a local artist who could bring Savage history to life. After a lengthy process, they chose Jim Ryan to create six individual pieces of Intarsia to present a visual history of Savage that would be on display in the Savage Library. On February 11, 2001, the Art of Jim Ryan was unveiled along with the historical story each piece told. At the unveiling Joan Wilebski, President of the Savage friends of the Library and Museum along with Will Williams from the Dan Patch Historical Society explained the significance of each piece. The following are the following six pieces:

Taj Mahal

Between what is now Highway 13 and the Minnesota River, M.W. Savage purchased 750 acres of land for the International Stock Food farm where he built his world famous stable with its five 155-foot wings, running water, steam heat, and an octagon dome. It was truly state-of-the art and was referred to as the "Taj Mahal" because of the design of the entrance. The stable had two tracks; the half mile was covered to permit training in all kinds of weather. Across the river on the bluff in Bloomington, Mr. Savage built a lavish summer home where the Masonic Home stands today. From this wonderful spot Mr. Savage could look across the valley to watch and time his horses as they worked out. The stable fell ruin after the death of Marion Savage and his horse, Dan Patch, in 1916. On the night of August 18, 1922, the famous barn burned to the ground.

Boiling Springs

The Boiling Springs on Eagle Creek is a geological curiosity and historic site. Most importantly it is a spiritual site of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Souix Community and other native Americans. The Dakota have a strong oral tradition telling the spiritual significance of Boiling Springs and Eagle Creek. The boiling action is created by fine clay in the spring settling to the bottom and restricting water flow. As the pressure builds up, the spring bursts forward in bouling action. The action makes Boiling Springs unique. Boiling Springs became a popular tourist attraction in the late 1800's. The Hattenberger Family, which owned the land, created a park like landscape around the springs. Many families gathered for picnics at the scenic overview. The Hattenberger Farm later became the Hirscher Farm. The area is located below the bluff line east of County Road 18.

Hanging Tree

The Hanging Tree is a huge oak tree, 6 to 8 hundred years old with a 12'-6 ½" diameter. Located originally in Archie McColl Sr. homestead farm on County Road 16, west of the Library. Bands of the Dakota Indians used the strong high branches of the tree in freezing weather to hang their dead. When spring came the bodies were removed from the tree and carried to a mass burial site on Teepee Hill near the Credit River. This majestic oak was damaged in the 1998 summer hail and windstorm.

Savage Bridge

The Savage Bridge was built in 1910 for the Dan Patch Line. It was adapted for road traffic in 1929, when it had one track for the train and one lane for road traffic. An agreement with MN&S (Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern) Railroad and the counties of Scott and Hennepin, on February 5, 1940, allowed vehicular traffic on the bridge with a five-ton weight limit. In1965 the flood washed away the approach spans. In 1968 there were plans to build a new bridge at this site but it was decided that the crossing should be Bloomington Ferry Bridge, The bridge permanently closed on December 31, 1976. The bridge still stands on the Minnesota River west of Port Cargill and north of the abandoned road.

Port Cargill

Port Cargill was opened during World War II by dredging a nine-foot channel in the Minnesota River down to the Mississippi. During the war the port built eighteen ocean-going tankers for the US Navy and four tour tugboats for the Army. The tankers were 310 feet long and able to carry 600,000 gallons of gasoline. In the 1950's Cargill began a course of innovations where they continued to build and develop the complex into the fast, innovative, efficient commodity handling facility that it is today.

Credit River

The Credit River is a picturesque stream that meanders through the city of the Minnesota River. Legend has it that the stream was named by the fur traders from the Larpenteur Trading Post located on the river, west of Quentin Avenue between County Road 16 and the railroad. The Dakota received credit from the trading post and when they got their money from the government, accounts were settled. Thus the stream was named the Credit River. This part of the Credit River running through Hidden Valley Park in Savage was known as "the place of the elk" to the Dakota; and the bluff at Quentin and County Road 16 was called "stag point" by the early French explorers and fur traders. This was the home of Little Eagle's Band of the Dakota at the time that European Settlers began arriving.

Now locals visiting the Savage Library can learn more about the history of Savage. A few years later they asked him for more Intarsia Art. Then on July 30, 2006 there was another unveiling of four more pieces of Jim Ryan's Art. Frank Wilebski from the Savage friends of the Library and Will Williams from the Dan Patch Historical Society introduced the following:

Eagle and Flag of the United States

This piece speaks for itself, as it celebrates pride in American. His Intarsia pieces include many varieties of wood species. The blue in the flag is one of the few times where artifical color is added. He has collected exotic wood from various small lumber mills in different parts of the country.

Child on Stack of Books

"The Child on Stack of Books" has some personally significance as the child is Chase Ryan, my son and my Dad's youngest grandchild. My wife Linda assisted with my dad on this one. She took a photo of Chase sitting on a stack of books. From there she drew a line drawing which he used to create his Intarsia pattern.

Savage Train Depot

"The Savage Train Depot" was obviously a center of the Savage Community in its early days but it also holds some unique stories. In the Summer of 1923, prior to Charles Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, he damaged the propeller on his plane during an emergency landing in the field across from the current depot location and what is now known as Port Cargill. As the story goes, Charles Lindbergh stayed in the Depot for three days while awaiting replacement parts for his plane to arrive from his hometown of Little Falls. Years later after completing the historic Atlantic Crossing, during a barnstorming tour on his way to the Minneapolis/St Paul, Charles swooped down on the town as he flew by to greet the Mr. McCarthy, the Depot Worker who hosted Charles's stay years earlier as he and others watched from the Savage Train Depot.

The Great Dan Patch

In 1902, M. W. Savage purchased Dan Patch from Manley E. Sturgis for $ 60,000.00. It was under Savage's ownership that the racehorse excelled- setting records and charming crowds until his death in 1916. M. W. Savage heavily promoted Dan Patch prior to each race. He advertised in the local newspapers, and assigned his employees to distribute posters and flyers about the horse's pending appearance. The world grew to adore the horse, and in 1904 the folks of Hamilton renamed their town for the man who brought them Dan Patch. Love for the famous pacer only grew when is 1906 Dan Patch broke the world record by completing the mile in 1 minute 55 seconds. This famous race occurred at the Minnesota State Fair. It would be another 54 years before that record could be broken. Dan Patch retired from racing in 1909, after injuring one of his legs. He continued however to make public appearances. Both Dan Patch and M.W. Savage took ill on July 4, 1916. While Mr. Savage was recovering from surgery July 11, he learned his favorite horse had died. Mr. Savage died less than a day later. His physicians claimed Mr. Savage's death was caused by the shock of losing Dan Patch.

"The Great Dan Patch" piece is a tribute to the fastest racehorse at the turn of the Century. Jim has contributed an Intarsia piece as the button drawing prize at the Dan Patch Days in Savage for many years. His Intarsia Art is displayed in many homes, offices and even City Council Chambers. The following pieces are a few more example of his artistry:

Dan Patch Days

Horse Head

Bird on a Tree Trunk

Cross

The Woodlands

Chase and Jim Ryan

Tiger head

In 2009, Jim and two fellow workers started the first Minnesota Scrolling Club called North Star Scroller. The Club has grown over the years and in September of 2019 celebrated their ten-year Anniversary where member displayed their work and shared stories of the club's growth. The following was written in the book celebrating 10 years of the North Star Scroller:

It all started with relationships! John Engler ran across Intarsia expert Jim Ryan at a craft show. Jim mentored John for a couple of years. They often talked about of starting a scrolling club — but at that time — It was just talk.

Carol "Swede" Bengston discovered Jim Ryan in a roundabout way. Seeing that needed "spark" in Swede. Jim coordinated a breakfast meeting with himself, John and Swede. That was the perfect combination of people to start Minnesota's first scrolling club. As the mentor for both of the other two… Jim was the "glue" that originally connected the trio. As the guy who would come up with so many great ideas and execution experience… John was the "visionary". As the guy whose personality, enthusiasm and amazing way with people… Swede was the "catalyst" It took all 3 men for the club to start and be so successful from day one!
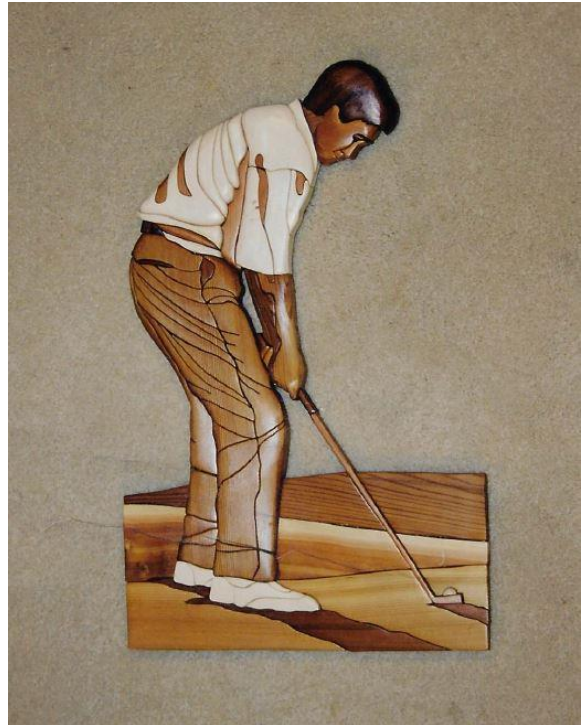
Crucifix

Rodeo Cowboy

Female Golfer

Male Golfer

End of the Trail

American Flag with Lady Liberty

Raccoon

Isaiah

Large Tiger
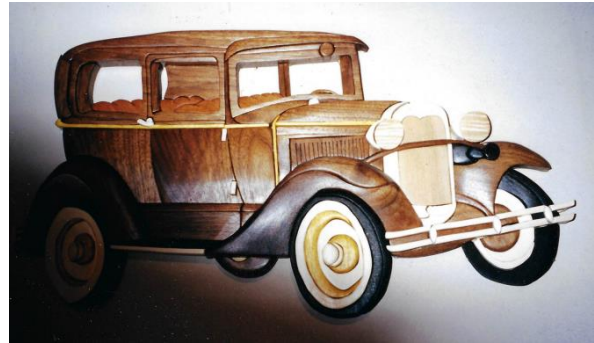

Wild Horses

Warrior

Wolf
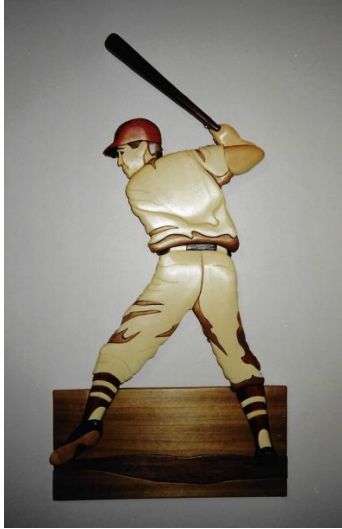
Indian Chief

Angel

Angel with Horn

Ford Model A
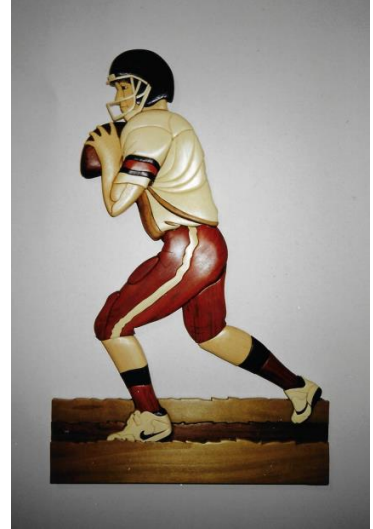

Teddy Bear

Teddy Bear with Hat

Teddy Bear with Glasses

Baseball Player

Basketball Players

Football Player

Hockey Player

Soccer – Female

Soccer – Male

Ice skater

Hot Air Balloon

Horse on hind legs.

Carousel Horses

Horsehead

Horsehead

Lady and a Horse

Viking Ship

Clown – Female

Clown – Male

Clown with big shoes

Dolphin

Sunfish

Jumping Fish

Duck on a pond

Loon on a pond

Elk

Polar Bear and Cub

Dog with Duck

Dog with Pheasant

Birdfeeder

Bird on a branch

Black Lab

Bulldog

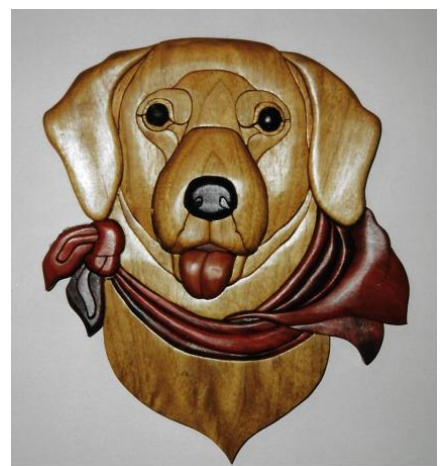Chihuahua

Cocker Spaniel – Buff

Cocker Spaniel – Black and Tan
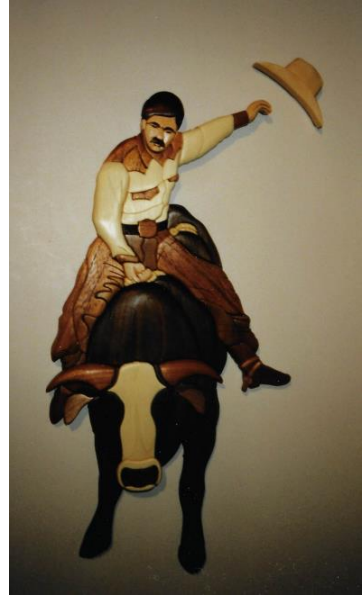

Collie

German Shephard

Golden Retriever

Springer Spaniels

Bull Rider and hat

Bronco Rider

Bull Rider