

## **ILHC Interpretive mural project**

To Whom It May Concern,

Over the past few years I have enjoyed a strong relationship with the Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition, the management agency for the Illinois Lincoln Highway National Scenic Byway. Shawcraft Sign Co. is a multi-faceted sign and display company in Northern Illinois and we have broadened our scope of work over the years from traditional signs and displays into large scale corporate branding initiatives - and other projects requiring a craftsman's skills.

With the vision of the ILHC, and the talents of our company, we partnered to create a new means of byway interpretation, taking on one of the largest public art initiatives within the country...a series of large-scale (200 sq ft.) hand-painted historical murals depicting the history and heritage of this famed roadway. A total of 36 hand-painted murals will be created in as many different towns, with stories and images coming directly from historical photographs. It has proven to be both a daunting task - and a rewarding challenge.

Although mural painting is not our primary source of revenues, with the economic conditions facing businesses across the country, replacement or new signage isn't always the first priority. Other revenue sources that match staff skills must also be explored. While not our only source of revenue in the past few years, without this project, the outcome of Shawcraft Sign Co. may be different than where we stand today.

As we look forward, our small business is in a positive place; the economy is slowly improving, we are completing a major legacy project for the Lincoln Highway Byway, and I am fulfilling a personal passion as an arts advocate by creating these murals. Man has painted his story on walls for over 17,000 years, according to historians - so the mere fact that we have a history of re-telling our story with painted scenes creates opportunities to do be both advocate - and storyteller. It's a win-win situation for all parties involved....

Respectfully,

**Jay Allen**

President

ShawCraft Sign Co.