



2014 Olympia Preservation Award

Nomination Form

Nomination Submissions Due: April 15, 2012

BUILDING / PROJECT / PERSON / ORGANIZATION BEING NOMINATED:

Name of Nominee: _____ Ira Coyne _____

Address of Nominee:

_____ iracoyne@gmail.com _____

Type of nomination (check one):

- ☐ Project: Recognition for excellence in restoration of a historic building in Olympia
- ☐ Person: Recognition for a person's lifetime achievement in historic preservation in Olympia
- ☐ Other: _____ Hand painted signs and murals that reflect and celebrate the rich heritage and history of downtown Olympia and its environs _____

PROPERTY OWNER OF BUILDING / PROJECT BEING NOMINATED:

Name: NA

Address:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

ARCHITECT / DESIGNER / PRESERVATION CONSULTANT FOR PROJECT BEING NOMINATED:

Name:

_____ NA _____

—

Address:



2014 Olympia Preservation Award

Phone: _____

Email: _____

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT OR PERSON:

Attached

ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECT NOMINATIONS:

Year Property Built: _____

Year Rehabilitated: _____

Historical Name of the Property: _____

Original Owner: _____

Original Architect/Builder: _____

Original Use: _____

Current Use: _____

Heritage Designation Status: _____

IMPORTANT: Please include **images** that document the entire project, documenting the preservation project before and after completion. Images may be submitted in hard copy or digital format on a thumb drive or DVD, or by using the City of Olympia FTP site (contact Michelle Sadlier for details).

Please attach additional information on the building or person nominated as needed.

This Form Completed By:

Name Deborah
Ross _____

Address:____1316 Evergreen Park Drive SW #6, Olympia, WA
98502_____

Phone: _____ Email:
____nrgdeb@msn.com_____

Please send completed form by April 15, 2014 to:

Michelle Sadlier, Historic Preservation Officer
City of Olympia Community Planning & Development
P.O. Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Tel: 360-753-8031

Fax: 360-753-8087

msadlier@ci.olympia.wa.us

Nomination of Ira Coyne for 2014 Heritage Preservation Award

In recent months, sign painter Ira Coyne has received national attention for reviving and celebrating the art of hand sign painting. Mr. Coyne is responsible for painting many of the commercial signs in the Downtown National Historic District. He varies the style, color, and other elements of his signs to reflect the historic nature of each individual building. A 2013 Olympian article notes:

Among artists, those who paint signs can be virtually invisible. Their work, appearing on buildings and in windows, can have a powerful impact on the way a city looks, but few people think about the work as art or the person who did it as they're walking down the street.

A new documentary, "Sign Painters," recognizes the work of Mr. Coyne and other practitioners of this vanishing art form.

In addition to signs, Mr. Coyne is also responsible for two recent historic murals that are rapidly becoming icons of Olympia's downtown and port area: the mural on the side of the Bread Peddler celebrating Rebecca Howard, and the Paddle to Squaxin Mural next to Percival Landing, which was created to commemorate the Squaxin Tribe's hosting of the that 2012 event.

Examples of his work:





Sign installed at Sherwood Press, on the heritage register in West Olympia



Paddle to Squaxin Mural

Many more examples of his work can be found at his website: <http://iracoyne.com/>

Olympia is fortunate to have this nationally recognized artist living in our midst.



Rebecca Howard Mural



Ira Coyne – Local Sign Painter Leaves His Mark in Olympia

by ThurstonTalk Editor

By Kelli Samson

We take them for granted, but signs are incredibly important. They invite us in or keep us out. A sign can tell us a lot about a business owner or the wares and services inside: playful or practical, fancy or funky.

How many times have you really taken a look at the sign of a local business and wondered about the artist?

A few years ago, I was jolted into curiosity about the signage in Olympia was the gorgeous, colorful sign painted on the window of the hair salon [Snip](#), located on Fourth Avenue downtown. I began to inquire around town about the artist.

I learned that the work I was admiring was created by none-other than the Seattle-born, [Ira Coyne](#), son of an art teacher.

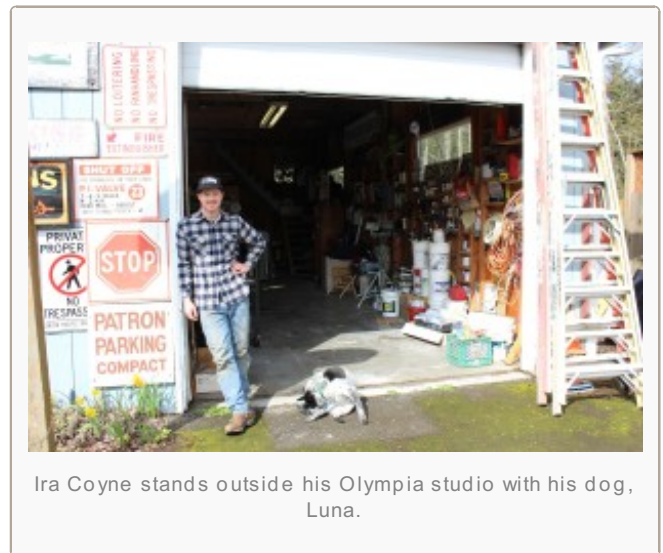
After spending an evening with him and lots of other locals at the downtown Olympia branch of the [Timberland Regional Library](#) last month, my drive home through downtown and up the west side sparkled for me in a whole new way.

As I left the library for home, the sign for [Drees](#) – with its shiny letters and simple, bold design – jumped out at me because now I recognized the work. Could it have been made by Coyne's friend and fellow local sign maker, John Hannukaine?

As it turns out, I am a good student: the sign was, indeed, made by Hannukaine from hand-cut letters covered in gold leaf.

Just when I thought I knew everything about my community, an evening listening to Coyne share his inspirations via a very entertaining slide show convinced me that there are still things to be illuminated.

So much artistic history abounds in the letters marking our favorite haunts, new and old, across our community. Coyne taught me to see with new eyes.



Ira Coyne stands outside his Olympia studio with his dog, Luna.

Before meeting him and learning about his passion for signage, I never thought about the people behind the letters. I never really considered old signs as part of Americana or important parts of our community history.

Coyne does. He collects hand-painted signs and displays them around his Olympia studio.

"I really appreciate old things," he says.

Coyne first came to Olympia in 1997 to attend The Evergreen State College. While in Minneapolis on what he calls "a leave of absence" from college, he was introduced to sign painting by Phil Vandervaat.

Coyne connected with local sign maker Vince Ryland in 2007. "I have been learning the traditions of the sign painting trade from him ever since," he adds.

At the library, Coyne shared his own critique on local signage. He tries to learn from every sign he sees. "What really drives me to make signs is to do better, or at least to try."

Sign making connects him to our community. While he is out painting in his white Converse sneakers and paint-spattered jeans, he is watching the tides of our community ebb and flow.

There are some doors of downtown businesses that Coyne has painted up to four times as businesses fail and new ones have begun. Though it is painful to scrape off one's own hard work, "I don't feel like I own anything that I make. When I'm done, it's theirs," he explains.

He knows which buildings are in good locations for success, which landlords maintain their property, and he is a voice for getting Olympians to come downtown.

"I am driven by respecting my community and my craft," reflects Coyne.

The work he has done for [The Reef](#), the downtown haven of hip and epicenter of classic diner-style food, is his favorite. When asked about a sign he would love to paint, Coyne expresses his desire to create something for the state that would remain on the Capitol Campus.

"My goal is to be permanent in Olympia, much like the [Sherwood Press](#)," he adds.

For now, Coyne is content making and painting signs, indulging his hobby of photographing other sign painters' paint kits and studios, and having fun.

"A lot of what I do in life is about fun," he states.

If you have left your home and gone anywhere in Olympia, chances are you have already seen Coyne's artistry. You can find his work at places like the [West Olympia Food Coop](#), [Vic's Pizzeria](#), [Matter! Gallery](#), [Olympia Supply](#), the mural at Percival Landing, and [Lucky Lunchbox](#), to name a few. He is also part of the recent film "Sign Painters," which premiered at the Smithsonian Museum.



Coyne's handiwork can be found throughout downtown Olympia including this sign for a local hair salon.



Coyne's toolkit has all his essential supplies.

For a complete photo gallery of his work, you can visit his website at iracoyne.com.