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**MID** *Michigan* **NEWS**



**DEWITT ARTIST**—Joe Wheat, self-taught DeWitt artist, is shown with two of his most recent paintings, a water color of U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy and an oil of the late President Kennedy. (State Journal Photo)

## *Self-Made Artist Prefers Portraits*



# Self-Made Artist Prefers Portraits

By FAYE HANSON  
State Journal Special Writer

DEWITT — Joe Wheat, who feels his talent with the brush is God-given, is fast becoming recognized as a portrait artist.

But to use this ability, Wheat, 39, has had to overcome a constant series of obstacles. Despite the barriers, he has spent all his free time at his easel and his latest efforts are an oil painting of the late President Kennedy and a water color of Sen. Robert Kennedy.

## LACKED TIME, MONEY

Wheat has always been interested in art, but as a child

never had the time nor money to pursue his interest. Born in Gleason, Tenn., he was one of the younger members in a family of nine children. His father died when he was eight and Wheat went to work in the fields, picking cotton and digging potatoes to help his mother make a living. He worked behind a soda counter to put himself through high school and then spent two years in the Army as a military policeman.

Whenever he had a chance, Wheat picked up his brush and painted, teaching himself as he worked. His only training was a commercial art course in 1954. He said his talent is God-given and he will use it to the best of his ability.

## ILLNESS HIT HIM

Then in 1959-60 trouble hit again and he spent 11 months in bed because of rheumatic fever. While convalescing he spent many hours painting.

Wheat does some scenes and murals, but he prefers portraits. Other well known persons he has painted are former Gov. G. Mennen Williams and the Rev. William Koenigsknecht of St. Therese Church. Wheat also did a full length painting of St. Therese for the Women's Guild of the church.

Married and the father of five children, Wheat lives at 605 Birchwood St., DeWitt. During the week he is a painter for a local sign company.



2/10/66



DeWitt's Grange Hall, one of community's oldest buildings, is up for sale.



# 100-Year-Old Hall Offered for Sale

By FAYE HANSON  
State Journal Special Writer

DEWITT — One of DeWitt's oldest building, the Grange Hall, is for sale.

Over 100 years old, the frame building has been the home of DeWitt Grange 459 since 1875, one year after the local chapter of the organization was formed. Prior to that it was Woodruff's carpenter shop.

The building has been put on the market because Grange

membership has dwindled from a high of 246 members in 1923 to only a handful today.

To continue using the building the Grange would have to have a new well and hook into the city sewer system, and members feel their organization is no longer large enough to warrant the expense. Oscar Johnson is grange master and meetings are held in the Memorial Building.

At one time there was a stable at the rear of the hall to house the horses of members on meeting nights and those of townspeople who used the building for various functions.

Gasoline lights were installed in 1905 and electricity was installed in 1914.

Through the years the Grange Hall has been a center of community activity and figured in the history of DeWitt. It was damaged in 1928 when fire destroyed the adjacent Methodist Church, and in 1936 when the DeWitt Public School burned the lower floor of the Grange Hall was rented for classrooms until the new school was built.

The hall has been rented by various groups. The Lady Macabees used it at the turn of the century, and it has been the scene of wedding receptions, was loaned to churches for vacation Bible school, was used for card parties, and at least one funeral was held there.

The future fate of the hall is not known.

## DeWitt Wins Top Ratings

DEWITT — DeWitt High School's band Saturday presented the director, Robert Berube, a farewell gift in the form of two first division ratings in the State Band Festival at Flint. Berube has announced he will step down as director at the end of the school year, after 16 years with the DeWitt schools.

Saturday his bandsmen won a first division ratings in concert work and in sight reading.

The band qualified for the state festival by rating high in the regional competition in Midland in March.