The Walking Tour Company

Robert McCloskey’s Story:

Arrival

We will meet guests at the Central YMCA

(There’s a small bathroom in the lobby if they’re open)

As guests arrive we may ask them Robert McCloskey Trivia

As kids arrive we will give them a handout for a scavenger hunt. We can reward them at the end of the tour with a $3.50 harmonic. [Harmonica](https://smile.amazon.com/Schylling-Classic-Plastic-Harmonica-Bundle/dp/B0167H7TQM/ref%3Dsr_1_9?dchild=1&keywords=plastic+harmonica&qid=1618355870&sr=8-9) I will include the price of this in all kids tour prices.

Henry McCloskey (1745 - 1808) was a private in the revolutionary war. He moved his family to Butler County.

John McCloskey (1786 - 1863) - Potentially died in the civil war.

Joseph McCloskey (1816 - 1877)

Johnathan B. McCloskey (1857 - 1951)

Howard McCloskey (1887 - 1950)

John Robert McCloskey (1914 - 2003)

Ask trivia questions.

Here are some sample trivia questions:

* What was Robert’s real first name?
	+ John
* What did his kids call him?
	+ Bob
* What did his high school friends call him?
	+ Clutch
* Names of the books he wrote and years written:
	+ Lentil (1940)
	+ Make Way for Ducklings (1941), Caldecott Medal winner
	+ Homer Price (1943)
	+ Blueberries for Sal (1948), a Caldecott Honor Award
	+ Centerburg Tales: More Adventures of Homer Price (1951);
	+ One Morning in Maine (1952), a Caldecott Honor Award
	+ Time of Wonder (1957), Caldecott Medal winner
	+ Burt Dow, Deep-water Man (1963)
* Names of books he illustrated:
	+ Anne Burnett Malcolmson, ***Yankee Doodle’s Cousins***, Houghton, 1941.
* Robert Hobart Davis, ***Tree Toad,*** Stokes, 1942.
* Claire Huchet Bishop, ***The Man Who Lost His Head***, Viking, 1942.
* Tom Robinson, ***Trigger John’s Son***, Viking, 1949.
* Ruth Sawyer, ***Journey Cake, Ho!***, Viking, 1953.
* Anne H. White, ***Junket,*** Viking, 1955.
* Keith Robertson, ***Henry Reed, Inc***., Viking, 1958.
* Robertson, ***Henry Reed’s Journey***, Viking, 1963.
* Robertson, ***Henry Reed’s Baby-Sitting Service***, Viking, 1966.
* Robertson, ***Henry Reed’s Big Show***, Viking, 1970.
* Names of his daughters
	+ Sally (Sarah) and Jane
* What were his sisters names?
* What street did he live on
	+ He grew up on “G” Street and 552 Franklin Street
* Where did he go to college
	+ Vesper George School of Art - Boston
	+ National Art Academy – New York
* Where else did he go to college
* What was Roberts nickname in school

Stop #1 - The Central YMCA

Sneep says he’s here to make sure no “applesauce” is spread about his friend Clutch. Because unlike the hooty tooty Colonel Carter, Clutch was rather humble and the Bees Knees when it comes to friendship.

Frederick Mueller – Architect that built the YMCA in 1913 – first big project on his own

Other buildings built by FM

* Heritage Hall Building
* First National Bank
* Champion Paper Office
* Anthony Wayne Hotel
* St. Joseph School
* Hamilton Catholic High School
* The Palace Theatre
* Several Churches including…

Frederick Mueller hired Robert McClosky and in a way it was his first big break. We’ll talk more about that later.

This building was built immediately after the flood.

Mention the hydraulic canal. There were still manufacturers on Market Street.

**Stop #1 Dialog:**

Robert McCloskey was actually born John Robert McCloskey on September 15th, 1914 to Howard and Mabel McCloskey. They called him Robert. 1914 was only one year after Hamilon’s greatest natural disaster… the 1913 flood. This 1913 flood killed 200 people and left over 10,000 homeless. Robert McCloskey was born at and raised at 552 Franklin Street. Their home was up a hill and well removed from the destruction of the flood. He was the oldest of three children, including younger sisters Dorothy and Melma.

His childhood was a typical childhood full of activity, exploration and observation. He took piano lessons from his uncle which instilled in him a lifelong love of music. After exploring the piano, drums and oboe, Robert taught himself to play the harmonica. He started a harmonica band when he was a youngster! He thought about becoming a professional musician when he grew up!

Hamilton was a bustling industrial town at the time of Robert’s youth. Our town had some of the world's largest machine shops, the Nation’s largest coated paper mill, the world’s largest safe manufacturer and many other industries. Robert was a witness to all of this industry and as a result loved to tinker with motors and clocks and anything that wizzed and buzzed. With his Meccano building set he constructed contraptions of all sorts and sometimes they worked! He built trains, cranes, a revolving christmas tree and a taffy maker that splattered batter.

Robert also loved to draw. And through art he learned to observe his surroundings. In Hamilton in the 1920’s there was much to observe. The town was filled with all of its factories and their sounds and smells. There was a huge wonderful county courthouse in the town center. The monument to pioneers and soldiers was one of the countries biggest and best. And there were many mansions and shanties which were home to fascinating local citizens. These were characters of all sorts, many with funny faces and twangy voices, who were parading in and out of the shops on Main Street and the businesses on High Street. This is the town that became the stuff of Robert's imagination and creativity.

While at Hamilton High School Robert was one of the best students. And despite his reported shyness he took part in some theatre productions. Robert also was chosen to lead the Big Blue Marching Band as Drum Major. And you may not be surprised to know that he drew pictures for his school yearbook and newspaper.

Robert worked at the Central YMCA after school. He taught people how to carve soap, how to draw and how to play the harmonica. He also did airplane model building and linoleum block printmaking (carving in linoleum).

During the summer months Robert worked for the local YMCA summer camp named Camp Campbell-Gard. The camp was created in 1927 by the Homer Gard family as a memorial to their son Charles Campbell-Gard, a veteran of World War I, who died suddenly in 1921. The new camp had 20 buildings including a huge dining hall, 10 cabins, a recreational building, a playground, and a restroom building with showers. Camp Campbell Gard is about 5 miles north of town.

It was at camp that Robert acquired his nickname “Clutch”. His fellow camper friends were Monk, Swazy, Eagle and Fret.

At Camp Campbell-Gard Clutch became known for putting on some of the best entertainment programs. Him and his friend Huffy, who was the archery instructor, put on a William Tell act. Clutch was standing on one side of the room with an apple on his head. His friend Huffy was to shoot an arrow into the apple on his head. Clutch would stand there looking very nervous. Just as Huffy would pretend to let the arrow fly, the lights would go out and the salute cannon would be fired in the back of the room. When the lights came back Clutch was standing on his head holding an apple on his feet with an arrow through it. And he was playing the Harmonica!

On another occasion Clutch played the harmonica for the kids. He had a smaller harmonica hidden inside his mouth. He would pull the large harmonica away from his mouth and make a face as if something was wrong with it. But the music would continue to play from the hidden harmonica he kept in his mouth!

In 1930 a Souix Indian Chief named Isaac Greyearth was invited to the camp to share his knowledge of Indian lore. The camp director, knowing Clutch was interested in art, asked him if he could carve a totem pole. Well Clutch said he’d give it a try. And try he did. It took him two summers to finish his totem pole! Grayearth coached Clutch on the symbolism of the totem pole. At the time Clutch didn’t realize what a huge impact this fun project would have on his adult career. As you might notice, every experience and opportunity kind of added all up.

Clutch’s totem pole sat in the middle of Camp Campbell Gard for 50 years. As you might imagine it became weathered and rotted. At some point a local named Neil Sohngen recognized the cools story behind the totem pole and moved it to Heritage Hall.

Do you know how this Totem Pole carving affected his career?

Stop #2 - Lentil Park

Back in high school Robert was encouraged by his art teacher, Miss Josephine Slater, to illustrate the school yearbook. And during Robert's senior year his History teacher, Miss Ellie May Cope, chose Robert to illustrate the George Washington Bicentennial calendar. This calendar was a project of the school’s history club. But Robert didn’t just draw the illustrations, he did them in woodcut! Woodcut is a difficult medium. After graduation Robert presented Miss Cope a woodcut print created especially for her.

With the success of these rather substantial high school projects, Robert decided that he wanted to become an artist. His art teacher, Miss Slater, God bless her, submitted some of his work to the National Scholastic Competition, which was sponsored by Scholastic Magazine. And guess what… Robert won first place! The prize was a four year scholarship to the Vesper George School of Art in Boston Massachusetts.

The art scene in Boston at the time was alive with activity centered around a movement at the time called “American Scene Art” also called Regionalism. Which depicted scenes of typical American life. At the Vesper George School of Art, academic skill and accomplished technique were still revered. They rejected a worldwide movement at the time, which is now called “Modern Art”. Academic skill and accomplished technique were still revered in Boston and at Vesper George. Perhaps as a result, Robert also didn’t really like the Modern Art movement of his day. He thought that perhaps the reason for the popularity of abstract Modern Art by artists was due to the emergence of photography. He stated that it’s difficult to compete with an exact photo. In order to protect their turf artists needed to do something better than a photographer. You may notice that one way Robert made his art better than a photograph was by making some characters more cartoonesque than in real life. Also Robert also was able to incorporate many different places into one sketch and make them more interesting to look at than a photo of one single location.

Not yet 20, Robert McCloskey was observing everything and taking it all in. Robert began to see the full range of what was available to him as an artist. He set out to experiment to see what he could do.

Vesper George specialized in scenes of typical American life. Do you think Robert picked up on any of that movement while he was there?

Stop #3 - The Mueller Building - High Street Side only

* Time for Blueberries for Sal
* Mural; Talk about the three books – Blueberries for Sal, Make Way For Ducklings and Homer Price shown on the mural.
* Tell the kids that they will see the real donut machine.
* Guess what the name of the dog is?

Back in Hamilton during the summer of 1934, Robert was contacted by Hamilton’s leading architect, Frederick Mueller. Mueller was building a new municipal building for the City of Hamilton. McCloskey’s totem pole carving experience and his woodcut carvings landed him a big job. Mueller hired Robert when he was only 19 years old. Robert was commissioned to create all of the architectural details on this building. These included the bas-reliefs and also a couple of leaded glass windows! Can you imagine an architect nowadays turning a 19 year old boy loose to do the sculptures for a building this size?! Especially it being the newest and most important building in town.

Robert was no longer carving soap or wood, he was carving stone. The bas-reliefs represent the arts and history of our town. There are more than 20 bas-reliefs and also two cast aluminum pieces. Robert finished them all in just six months and he learned a lot from this job.

Chief Grayearth’s guidance must have made an impression on Bob. If you look at the reliefs they have an emphasis on Native Americans. At one entrance, the steps are flanked by bas-reliefs of oxen, which were animals essential to the agricultural life of the Ohio pioneers. At the other entrance the door is flanked by Buffalo, animals essential to the nomadic life of the plains Indians. The oxen look like oxen. But the buffalo have the faces of men. This is because Grayearth told Bob that for Native Americans, animals are people just like humans.

A series of scenes over the Buffalo entrance show the Subjugation of the area around Hamilton by pioneers with rifles, axes and plows. The final scene shows a pioneer brought to his knees by the struggle but victorious and still strong. He is gesturing “Bring it on”. In front of him a Native American is lying on the ground and hangs his head in defeat.

At the other entrance a series of circles show the many trades that pioneers adopted in their new home. One circle shows an artist with a brush and palette in hand. But the background of all the circles is corn, corn and more corn. This was the great gift that the Native Americans gave to the pioneers.

(Tim - Tell the folks that we are going come back to the museum).

Stop #4 - The Bakery

Point out the Elite Bakery at 212 High Street

Donut machine – Perhaps show a snippet of the movie video [Donut Movie](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXeYNmqp8X4) From 8:58ish

This Mueller Building project inspired Robert. When he returned to his studies at Boston he decided he was going to create great art. He made elaborate and dramatic wood carvings for an exhibition. McCloskey’s exhibition paintings were noticed by an art director from a well known Boston publishing firm, Houghton Mifflin. He met with the director but nothing came of it right away. You’ll hear that name again later.

Robert graduated from Vesper George and he moved to New York to attend the National Academy of Design. During the next two years, although he received some awards, he only sold a few watercolors. McCloskey soon found out there wasn’t much money in selling paintings and his future in art may have seemed somewhat bleak. He began to have doubts about his career choice. Remember that this was during the Great Depression of the 1930’s and many people didn’t have extra money. Robert began experimenting with art to see what he could do to make money.

In the summer of 1935, Robert went to meet with a woman named May Massee, head of Junior Books for Viking Press. Ms. Massee was the aunt of Robert’s boyhood friend, Stuart Fitton, so she agreed to meet with Robert. Though she was unimpressed with the subject matter of his portfolio, Massee saw potential and encouraged Robert to “go learn to draw by drawing things you know more about”. This meeting was the beginning of a relationship that would last over 30 years.

Taking Miss Massee's advice, after Robert graduated, he returned to Hamilton where he began to draw the familiar subjects of his youth. And it was here that a story began to take shape in his head about a boy and his harmonica. Robert didn’t know what to name the boy so he put in a placeholder name, Lentil. The early concept was about Roberts own failed attempt at piano lessons. Lentil eventually became the story of a boy who couldn’t whistle or sing so he learned to play the Harmonica.

Stop #3 - The Candy Shop

* Get lemon candy
* Give kids a hamonica

Armed with a renewed confidence and a mockup of his new book, Robert returned to New York for another visit with May Massee. He submitted the book to her, and he had a perfect dummy of Lenti, and asked her if she liked it. Miss Massee said that she liked it very much. Robert said “Miss Massee, you wouldn’t remember but I was here three years ago with my work and you told me to go home and learn how to draw, and so I did.” Miss Massee told him to finish the book and she would publish it. She also told Robert not to change the name. She said the name Lentil was perfect.

Stop #4 - Grandpa’s Camera Shop

* Coincidence that his Grandpa owned a camera shop

Stop #5 - Paramount Theatre

It was at this time that everything seemed to pop all at once for Robert. The same month he signed a contract for Lentil he met his wife-to-be, Margaret (Peggy) Durand . Peggy was a children's librarian and the daughter of Ruth Sayer, a well known children's book author and Newbery Medal winner for a most distinguished contribution to American Literature for Children. Peggy went to a cocktail party with her mom thrown by Viking Press for its children's authors. It is here that Peggy caught the eye of Robert McCloskey. The we’re married two years later on Thanksgiving Day in 1940.

Stop #6 - Post Office

Also at this same time there was a federal art program named the Public Works of Art Project. This was a program that started by President Franklin Roosevelt to help put people to work and stimulate the economy. A significant part of this program was mural painting resulting in thousands of murals decorating the nation's buildings.

McCloskey, and his New York Art Academy classmate and friend from Paris, Marc Simont, were hired to help a friend of Marc’s, artist Francis Scott Bradford. Bradford was commissioned by the Lever Brothers in Boston (Lever Soap) to paint six murals of famous Bostonians. Robert moved to Boston and shared a flat on Beacon Hill with Marc Simont. There he worked on the murals and finished up the drawings and text for his book, Lentil. Because of this commission and the connection with Francis Scott Bradford, Robert won a prize called the Prix de Rome. The prize included money for art studies in Rome. However because of World War II it was unsafe to travel to Europe so McCloskey had to postpone the trip for 10 years. Of note is that Francis Scott Bradord had previously won the Prix de Rome in 1923. Also of note is that Robert’s friend Marc Simont also went on to write and illustrate children’s books. And… Mr. Simont also won a Caldecott Award in 1957 and a couple of Caldecott Honors. These are not all coincidences, they are the result of making connections in life.

The concept for another book had been brewing in McCloskey’s mind while living in Boston and finishing up Lentil. Years earlier, when in school in Boston, Robert used to live around the corner from Louisburg Square and he walked through the square every day on his way to the Boston Common Gardens. He would see these ducks and feed them. He thought that the ducks were so fun and ready to be put in a picture book. Several times he noticed what a ruckus the ducks caused to traffic when they attempted to cross the busy streets.

Now, being back in Boston, Robert decided to write a book about the Boston Public Garden and the ducks. Robert thought a good story would be about Mr and Mrs Mallard trying to find a safe place to raise their family. The book would be written from the duck's perspective. Robert pitched the idea to May Massee. She liked the idea but she suggested Robert learn more about ducks. She also changed the title from “Boston is Lovely in the Spring” to “Make Way for Ducklings” due to a suggestion by her secretary.

After McCloskey got married, he continued to share an apartment in Boston with Marc Simont. This time Robert’s wife Peggy was with them. So what does Robert do? He bought some ducks! Robert spent weeks crawling around on the floor with the ducks. He also put them in the bathtub of his apartment so he could watch them swim. He perfected his sketches of ducks. You see… he worked very hard to become a good artist.

Robert wanted his drawings and his book to be in color. However Viking Press thought it would cost too much to print the books in color. So his 2nd book, “Make way for Ducklings” was published in 1941 in black and white. The New York Times said it was the merriest children's book ever.

Stop #7 - The Courthouse

* Show picture of Sneep sitting

Because of his new found success, in 1941, Robert started receiving commissions from other publishers, including Houghton Mifflin, (remember them?), to illustrate some of their tall tales. Viking Press even offered Robert some commissions to illustrate some of their books. This represented a new direction for him. While working on these commissions, mostly of tall tales, Roberts' imagination began working on a new tale of his own centered around the adventures of a young boy named Homer Price.

Homer took the short story about Homer Price and the Skunk to May Massee. Ms. Massee suggested that Robert make this skunk story one of many about Homer. She also told Robert that the text should come first and the illustrations must add to and carry the story.

Homer Price is a typical midwestern boy who is learning to whistle and spit, to whittle and spin tops. Homer’s from a small town named Centerburg, not unlike Hamilton, with big adventures and a cast of characters that leap in and out of imagined reality. Homer is a resourceful kid who keeps getting the adults in his life out of trouble. In each story Homer’s life is spun out of control, only to be brought back into control by his common sense and ingenuity. These stories took a few years to come together. Robert simultaneously wrote the text and drew the illustrations. He always thought of himself as an artist first. His illustrations were both fun and packed full of information about the stories. The illustrations invite the reader to pause and investigate. If you look closely you’ll find clues in the illustrations that are not found in the text.

What would the story of the donut machine be without being able to see the crazy machine and the stack of hundreds of donuts on the counter?

While continuing to work on Homer Price in 1942, Robert got a call from May Massee informing him that MWFD’s won the Caldecott award for the most distinguished picture book for children. Robert didn’t even know what a Caldecott award was. But he did understand that he was being recognized as a first rate children’s book author and this was great news.

But now Robert was off on his own adventure. The 29 year old Robert McCloskey joined the Army in 1943 as WWII raged on in the Pacific. The end of the war was not yet in sight. Years later Robert recalled that the Army didn’t know what to do with him. He was sent to Fort McClellan in Alabama and became a sergeant. His artist skills were recognized and he was asked to draw troop movement charts. His mechanical abilities were also utilized as he was asked to create a device to help flip large charts while they were being blown in the wind.

After entering the Army, Homer price was published to favorable reviews. The book was praised as American comic genius. After the great depression and into the World War, Americans were reaffirming their collective values of hard work and perseverance. Without really intending to, Robert McCloskey spoke to those values in the tales of Homer Price. Robert knew the importance of family and community, he had a strong moral sense and a great respect for common sense. His creation, Homer Price, is a boy who is very level headed, inventive and skeptical of scam artists. The traits were quintessentially American at the time.

After WWII ended in 1945, Robert went to Maine to move in with his in-laws. He became enamored with the beautiful state full of nature. Fortunately when he came out of the Army he had a little nest egg of money due to royalties from MWFD’s. He and Peggy bought three small islands off the coast of Maine. He found a home for his family, just like Mr. and Mrs. Mallard in his now famous book. Since the winter months in Maine can be brutal, in the coldest months the McCloskey moved to the summer home of May Massee in upstate New York.

Between 1945 and 1948 the McClockeys had two daughters, Sally (Sarah) and Jane.

In Maine McCloskey continued some illustration commissions and began to write his next book, Blueberries for Sal. This story features a little girl, Sal, and her mother as they go to pick blueberries to store for winter—and on the other side of the same hill a bear cub and his mother as they go and eat blueberries to store fat for winter. Everything turns out OK as, after a mix up of the kids, they head down opposite sides of the hill with their own moms. McCloskey's youngest daughter Jane still lives on the same island, Scott Island, which is a part of a series of large and small islands named Deer Isle.

Guess who lived on Deer Isle before the McCloskeys? A man named Frederick Law, who coincidentally designed public gardens all over the country such as Central Park in New York, Riverside Park in Chicago, and the “Emerald Necklace” in Boston which includes the Boston Public Garden, the setting for MWFD’s.

Stop #8 - The Presbyterian Church

* Show the flood marker

Did anyone notice that Robert changed his drawing style in the book Blueberries for Sal? This book is entirely brushed. He learned this during his previous commissioned illustrations for others and he liked it. Previously he used conte crayon. Robert reverted back to conte crayon in his sequel to Homer Price, the Centerburg Tales. In Centerburg Tales, all the familiar characters returned including Grampa Hercules and his never-ending tall tales, Dulcy Dooner, the uncooperative citizen, unbusinesslike Uncle Ulysses and his friendly lunchroom, the flustered sheriff, and the pompous judge. Centerburg Tales is reliant more on tall tales in the style of Mark Twain.

McCloskeys daily Maine life became the inspiration for four of McCloskeys next books, Blueberries for Sal, One Morning in Maine, Time of Wonder (About his daughter Jane, which also won the Caldecott award), and Burt Dow… Deepwater man. Staying with the advice from May Massee, Robert continued to draw what he was familiar with.

After Jane was born, and it was once again safe to travel to Europe, the McCloskeys cashed in on the Prix de Rome prize and the family sailed to Italy and lived there for a year while Robert studied mosaic techniques with glass and marble.

In 1953 Robert worked on a book with his mother-in-law titled “Journey Cake Ho!”. In this book McCloskey used three color printings. The book won a Caldecott Honor award.

Commissions were coming in regularly.

Then in the 1950’s do you know what was happening? Television started to become more available to the masses. Howdy Doody and Captain Kangaroo became instant hits with kids. Captain Kangaroo read “MWFD’s” on one of his first shows.

Robert was approached by a man named Morton Schindel. Mr. Schindel was interested in making films based on Roberts books. Mr. Schindel’s company was named Weston Woods and they went on to film seven of Robert's books. While MWFD’s was a big milestone for Weston Woods, their biggest hit may have been “Where the Wild Things Are” in 1963.

In 1957 Robert wrote “Time of Wonder”, which was recognized for both it’s poetic prose and it’s art. Many feel that in this book the writing exceeds the art. Robert McCloskey wanted us to look at the beauty that surrounds us, look at it and appreciate it. Some say this book belongs in the great tradition of American nature writing alongside Thoreau’s “Walden” or E.B. White’s “Charlotte's Web” who also wrote about the changing seasons and the harmony of the natural world. Time of Wonder, which took three years to make, was produced in water colors and was McCloskey’s first book to “finally” be printed in full color! Time of Wonder won the Caldecott Award and Robert McCloskey was the first person to win the award twice, and for two books with uniquely different illustration styles.

Robert McCloskey now began a collaboration with Keith Robertson to create four “Henry Reed Inc.” books over the next 12 years. Henry Reed is a boy who, like Homer Price, finds himself in the center of a series of humorous misadventures. McCloskey’s illustrations are a bit more restrained in these books, but reflect everything that’s going on in Henry Reed’s life.

With the 1960’s came change for Robert McCloskey on several different levels. May Massee retired from Viking Press. MWFD’s was still selling over 10,000 books a year. May said that the spirit of a good children’s book will live on for years. Ms. Massee continued as Roberts' close friend and advisor over the next six years. Ms. Massee died in 1966. After her death Robert helped develop a museum dedicated to the work of May Massee. The museum is located in the William Allen White Library in Emporia, Kansas.

Roberts wrote his last book over a two year span. Burt Dow... Deep Water Man combines his earlier work of exaggerated tales and adventure with his current life on the water. Burt Dow Deep Water Man is loosely based on a real friend of the McCloskeys who lived near them in Maine. As with all of his other books, McCloskey has Burt Dow return home safely after a mis-adventure and forever changed by the experience.

By 1963 the McCloskeys were now spending their summers near Weston, Connecticut. As a result Robert spent a lot of time with Morton Schindel. Together they produced the first live action movie for Weston Woods based on McCloskey’s story of Homer Price and his Uncle Ulysses Doughnut Machine.

A year later Morton Schindel talked his friend Robert into creating a documentary about himself. The title of the documentary was simply titled “Robert McCloskey”.This was the first of a series of books about the author.

Stop #9 - The Monument Building

In the mid 1960’s, the US seemed more divided than it had been for 100 years, since the Civil War. President Kennedy had just been assassinated, the cold war with the Soviet Union lingered on, the US was beginning a long war in Vietnam, and the civil rights struggle was heating up. At the same time it seemed that children's literature was changing. Robert McCloskey once again changed gears in his life. Perhaps he felt he reached the pinnacle of his children’s books career. After all, he had already won two Caldecott awards. How could he top his previous success? What he did was spend the next 30 years attempting to perfect extremely intricate and finely crafted mechanical puppets. Yes I said 30 years. Robert became somewhat of a reclusive soul on his small island. The success of Robert McCloskey caused him to look for his freedom away from the public eye and the demands of fame. He spent a huge portion of his life doing what he loved as a kid… tinkering. This was just after Walt Disney opened up Disneyland in California, and puppets had always been the rage for children television. McCloskey also had a television show in mind. In the end the puppets ended up being too time consuming and too complicated to produce. McCloskey’s puppets are now in the Ballards Institute and Museum at the University of Connecticut.

McCloskey never expected his books to become so popular, and he was amazed. He never sought recognition but he did get some recognition throughout his life. He received honorary degrees from three colleges, a library room was named after him here in Hamilton, and a museum dedicated to his work is now located in Hamilton, Ohio. Robert was named a living legend by the Library of Congress. Nancy Schoen has created three of McCloskey’s book characters in bronze. Make Way for Ducklings is located in Boston and Russia; Lentil is located in Hamilton, Ohio; And Sal’s bear in Blueberries for Sal is located in Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine

In 1990 Robert’s wife of 50 years, Peggy, died. In many ways Peggy was the stabilizing force in McCloskey’s life. She balanced Robert’s creative side and she understood her husband's need for solitude and she focused on the practical things in their lives.

Robert McCloskey died in 2003 in his beloved Maine. His legacy is a body of work that has been duly recognized as a significant contribution to children’s literature. Robert McCloskey always kept his eye on the beauty that surrounded him, and his mind on the humor and happiness of the world. That is his greatest contribution.

Stop #12 - The Muller Building Inside

* Show everyone the donut machine and totem pole
* McCloskey Museum and allow people to look around for 5 minutes. Promote buying a book etcetera.

Robert McCloskey rarely spoke about his artistic process. Whenever people told him about their idea for a book he would always respond by saying “don’t talk about it, do it“. Robert always thought of himself as more of an illustrator than an artist. Obviously he liked drawing cartoon-like characters. He liked making pictures that had meaning and action and told stories. His sketches of anatomy are very accurate.

Robert did talk about his artistic skills once at one of his Caldecott award speeches. What he said was very insightful. He pointed out the proportion of a good illustration. What he said was studied later by his daughter Jane and the findings are fascinating. The proportion of 1.618 to 1 was an important one to Robert. According to McCloskey there are six elements he kept in mind when drawing: 1) Repetition with variation (example: seagulls on a rock). 2) Rhythm of time in the scene. 3) Colors must harmonize with each other. 4) Textures must be natural to the scene. 5) Form must fit the scene and 6) Proportion (which Robert considered the most important element)

Animals and people are often symmetrical around a center plane.

While some artist use the “Dynamic Rectangle”



McCloskey loved to use the “Golden Rectangle”







McCloskey told his daughter Jane to construct her cabin to a ratio of 1.618 to 1. It wasn’t until long after her fathers death that she realized why this was suggested by him.

Next time you looks at your Robert McCloskey books, see if you can find the Golden Rectangle in them.

We hope you have enjoyed this tour.

Longer Tours -

Miami School

Colonel Carter’s House

Walk past the old Hughes Drugstore (now Village Ice Cream)

Show guests the “When it Rains it Pours” Sculpture

Point down the street towards Clutch’s G St. home

Action items:

Tim – Ask Visitors center for Robert McCloskey Kids Scavenger Hunt

Tim – Print and laminate all Robert McCloskey drawings of buildings or offer QR codes to website

* [Scott Island, Maine](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Scott%2BIslands/%4044.2852498%2C-68.7360765%2C156m/data%3D%213m1%211e3%214m5%213m4%211s0x4cae86c1fe51140d%3A0x589f29c67576259b%218m2%213d44.2853565%214d-68.735861?hl=en&authuser=0)
* [High School Photo](https://www.thewalkingtourcompany.com/qr---robert-mccloskey-in-hs.html)
* May Massee
* Morton Schindel
* Peggy
* Photo of old Bakery
* Photo of Grandpa’s Photo Store
* Photos of Lentil book

Tim - find McClosky illustrations from high school yearbook and newspaper if available

Tim - find and carry examples of soap carving and a wood cut

Tim - Print some pictures of McCloskey characters in different artist styles