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Recovered by the Chicago Conservation Center the mural "Mind, Body and Spirit," by William Edouard Scott, depicts 1930s African American Life.

Historic African-American mural restored

*Birthplace of Black History Month
gives painting new life*

BY GARY WISBY
AND NANCY MOFFETT
STAFF REPORTERS

For Black History Month, restoration has been completed on a mural at the Chicago site where the idea was born.

The Chicago Conservation Center has removed more than 60 years of grime and pollution from the mural, at the former Wabash YMCA at 3763 S. Wabash.

Cater G. Woodson conceived the idea of Negro History Week there in 1976.

Titled "Mind, Body and Spirit" and depicting African-American life in the 1930s, the mural was painted to commemorate the YMCA's guiding purposes by William Edouard Scott in 1936.

Scott, a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago, also painted murals at Lane Technical High School, Schoop Elementary School and the David Park Field House.

As a young man of 23, Scott won first prize for a mural he painted in 1907 for the Chicago Shakespeare Festival.

He went on to travel to Haiti to study African American portraiture in 1931 and after his return to the United States, he created murals on public buildings like the one at the Y here and in Washington D.C., and Indianapolis. Many of his murals are lost.

He also studied in Paris with Henry Ossawa Tanner, considered an African American master and creator of religious genre painting.

Scott created impressionistic scenes of families and focused on everyday life...

The YMCA and other Bronzeville buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places are remnants from the days from the 1920s to 1950s when the area was an entertainment hub and center of social and economic life.

The 30,000 square-foot red brick YMCA was built in 1912. It closed in the late 1970s.

Woodson, a leading black historian in the first half of the 20th century founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 and it began publishing The Journal of Negro History in 1916.

He wrote 16 books and is best known for Negro in Our History.