

The Two River Times

News

Thompson Family Art Gift To Red Bank Borough Education Foundation

[EMAIL A FRIEND](#)

The Stafford and Florence Thompson Family, formerly of Red Bank and now of Bedford, New Hampshire, has recently made a gift of over 30 pieces of Shona Sculpture to the Red Bank Borough Education Foundation (RBBEF). The pieces, all sculpted by Zimbabwean, Danayi Nyadenga, belonged to the Thompsons' daughter, Eve Thompson Robinson, a graduate of Red Bank public schools, Princeton University, and Georgetown Law School who is currently working with international agencies in the Congo.

Eve had met Danayi Nyadenga in the mid 1980s while working for the UN and CARE in Zimbabwe. Sensing his artistic gifts, Eve arranged for Nyadenga to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. The artist, in gratitude, left the stone sculptures for Eve. The Thompsons, upon learning of RBBEF's Swimming River Discoveries project to convert the 17-acre Primary School tract along the Swimming River into a nature center for education and community enjoyment, decided to donate them to the foundation.

After all, Betty (Florence) Thompson had taught for twenty-three years in the Red Bank Schools and had served as Borough Councilwoman for 13 years. Stafford Thompson was well known as an area attorney.

Shona sculpture is created today much as it was thousands of years ago from simple chisels, and local stone. Most of Nyadenga's sculptures are believed to be of soapstone or opal stone. Semi-abstract sculptures created by Shona artists can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Muse'e Rodin in Paris, Queen Elizabeth II, the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, the actor Danny Glover and other discerning art collectors. The Shona sculptors' work is inspired by their deeply-held spiritual beliefs, folklore and daily life, and have in turn inspired many western artists. It is believed that Pablo Picasso may have been influenced by this art form.

Red Bank art dealer and RBBEF board member, Susan Berke, is currently cataloguing the items donated by the Thompsons which she likens to Inuit art, one of her passions. Now in the process of having the sculptures appraised, Susan says that RBBEF will probably select a few items for permanent display in the Red Bank Primary School and Middle School. They will then auction the remaining pieces at a mid-May fundraiser to be held at the Atrium in Red Bank to benefit Swimming River Discoveries.

The Red Bank Borough Education Foundation is open to all. See www.rbbef.org for membership information.