



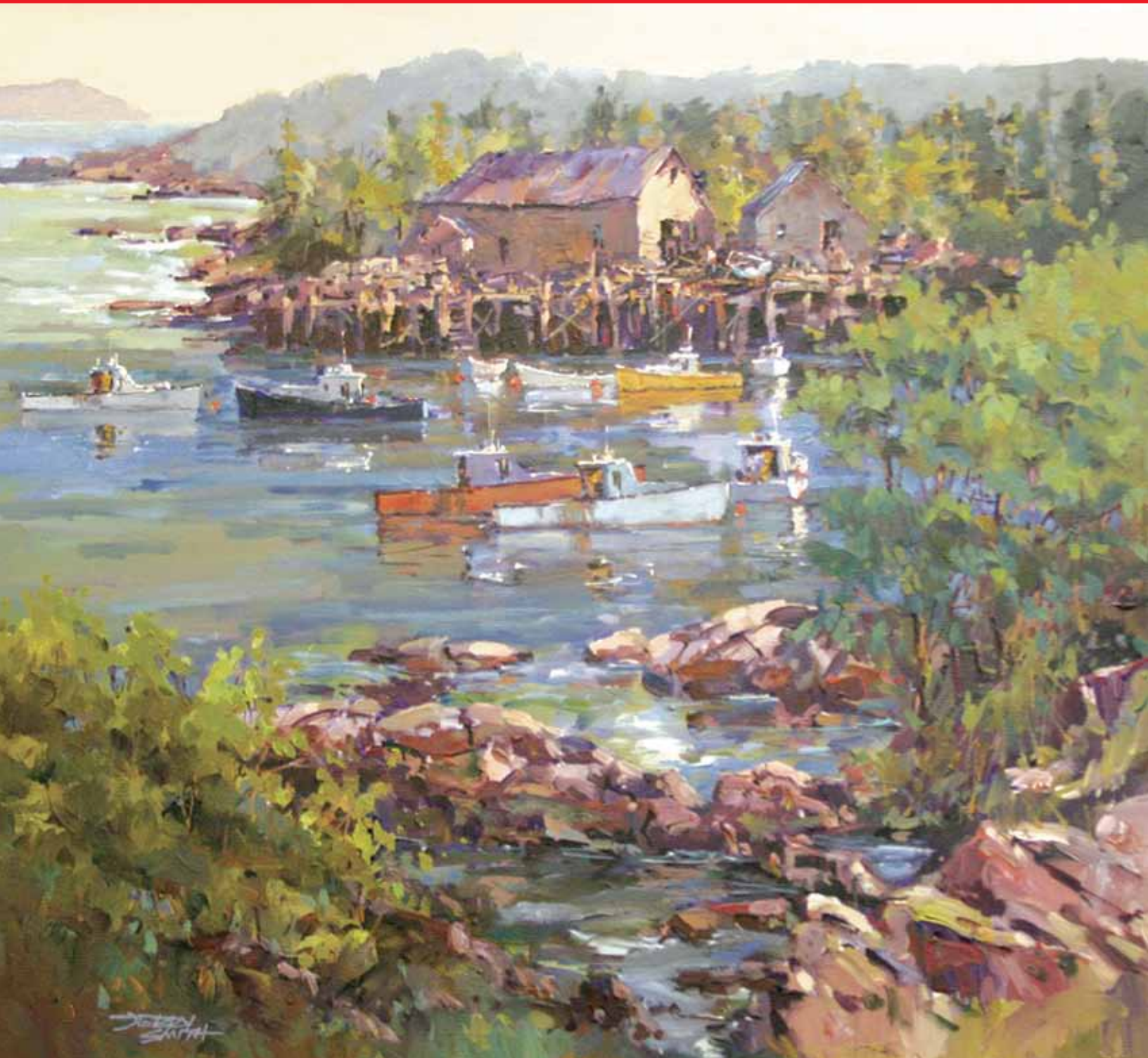
ASMA

NEWS AND JOURNAL

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ASMA JOURNAL

Notes From Brush Hill

by Charles Raskob Robinson
Brush Hill Studios, Washington, CT

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of this column, which has been produced every quarter since. It began a series of “notes” or suggestions about things that I had either made or found that facilitated painting in my studio but then evolved into recording opinions ASMA artists had about art topics. Some of these were quite controversial and generated a good deal of interest. What color is the Pacific and does it differ from the Atlantic and, if so, why? Oddly, this led to focus on the artists who had these opinions and thus was born the biographical format that we have used for years – a format that the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution and others value sufficiently to collect the articles as part of their ongoing effort to document the lives of American artists.

In the last issue we met a new member of the Society who, with her typical energy and sense of direction, has already become quite engaged in the Society. Sheri Farabaugh, who celebrates her tenth year as an artist this year, brings the disciplines of two former careers – a biochemist in the brewery industry and a tax accountant – to her art to produce a fresh and singular approach to painting water. In this issue we turn to two ASMA artists who have developed their own special and successful approaches to marine painting.



"Brown County Winter" - 21" x 29" - Acrylic on Paper

JERRY SMITH
Signature Member,
Crawfordsville, Indiana
[Web site: jsmithstudio.com](http://www.jsmithstudio.com)



Anyone would be proud to have achieved what Jerry Smith did in the first three decades of his life in Indiana for it is quite remarkable and, for his family, unprecedented. However, what he did after that few have the courage and fortitude to do. Encouraged and with the support of his wife, Cindy, a professional teacher and mother of their two children, Jerry left the comfort and security of corporate America to become an artist.

Commendable, indeed, but there was a problem. "I have always been able to draw – even as a kid – so I thought naturally I could paint and be an artist. Soon, however, I found this was not

necessarily so and I had better find someone who could teach me how to paint. Unlike today, artists' workshops were not so common but after some research I found an artist in Maine, Don Stone, whose weeklong workshop looked promising and, importantly, whose work I admired. So I signed up."

This was in 1976 when Don and Jerry were young men. It also was the year the modern marine art movement in America began when a parade of "tall ships" sailed into New York Harbor on July Fourth to commemorate the Bicentennial of the nation's Independence. Unknown to either man, this set wheels in motion that created the American Society of Marine Artists in 1978 – an organization that would play an important role in both of their professional lives. Jerry is now an ASMA Signature Member and Don a Fellow of the Society.

Notes From Brush Hill



"Sticks and Stones" - 11" x 29" - Watercolor

Reflecting on the Stone workshop, Jerry says, "Don was a great guy and a great teacher. He was more on track than anyone I ever worked with and he did a lot for my career and me. At the time, I was painting watercolors while Don and most of the workshop was into oils. It did not matter to Don for he worked in both mediums and said, 'Focus on painting not the medium – the composition, values and elements of the painting.' Not knowing much about painting at the time, the more Don taught me the more I wanted to learn. It took a while – years – for me to absorb all the information he gave." In subsequent years, Jerry went on to study under Louise B. Hansen (1946 - 2014), a Signature Member of the American Watercolor Society who lived and taught in Indiana until she died last month. Jerry and his wife attended her memorial service. He also studied under Floyd D. Hopper (1908 – 1984) whose career spanned six decades and "who was the guru of watercolor in Indiana."

(Footnotes)

¹ There appears to be a consensus about the origin of the name "Hoosier," namely that there are a lot of opinions but no established facts about its etymology.

² Jerry notes, "My father was named after Lorain, Ohio. My grandmother was riding the train through Ohio and liked the name of the city. I'm glad I wasn't a Junior!"

³ Founded in 1864, R. R. Donnelley & Sons has grown to about 57,000 employees with manufacturing and printing operations in North America, Latin America, Asia and Europe. With sales of over \$10 billion, the company ranks 264 of the *Fortune 500* listing of America's largest corporations.

⁴ Other attractions include Wabash College that was established in 1832, two years before Crawfordsville was incorporated. The

A Man of Many Mediums

Jerry continued to paint in watercolor for many years after his workshop with Don Stone. However, Jerry has, as we shall see, a bent for experimenting – a basic curiosity about art itself. Soon this led to another aquatic medium, acrylics, and he became as adept in it as he was in watercolors. "It offered the richness of oil, the transparency (if needed) of watercolors but with the additional virtue of drying fast. Some dozen or so years ago things slowed down a bit so I had time for more experimenting so I joined a new organization, the Indiana Plein Air Painters Association (IPAPA). I had long done direct sketches from subjects in the field and would translate these into paintings in the studio so it was not so much plein air that was new for me but rather the medium they used, oil. It seemed to work so much better in the circumstances. Gradually I began to favor it and now do most of my work in oils."

beautiful Henry S. Lane Antebellum Mansion, the Colonel Isaac C. Elston House and the Montgomery County Jail are open to the public.

⁵ Wallace served on the Military Commission that tried John Wilkes Booth's assistants in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln as well as presided over the court that resulted in the execution of Henry Wirz for the Union deaths at the infamous Confederate Andersonville Prison. In addition to his post-war writings, he served as Governor of the New Mexico Territory and Ambassador to Turkey. The design of the museum with its Byzantine, Greek and Romanesque styles reflected Wallace's interest in that part of the world and the leading characters in books are found in the frieze running around the top of the walls.

The Christmas Gift and Its Appeal

Before Jerry left the comfort of corporate life, he had mentioned to his young spouse that he always had an interest in art and that "someday I might try it." Knowing her man probably better than he knew himself, Cindy gave him a paint set for Christmas. Jerry soon realized art had more appeal than what he was doing working in the Human Resources Department of R. R. Donnelley & Sons so he launched out on a new career. Jerry does what appeals to him and he has been fortunate to retain this attitude as an artist: He paints what he wants to paint, not what a prospective collector or the market wants. This is best seen in his choice of subject matter: His beloved Indiana and his adopted maritime New England.

Love of the Land: Indiana the Hoosier State ¹

Jerry was born in Terre Haute to Clarice Ethel Orth Smith and Lorain Smith² on January 31, 1944 and grew up in Sandcut, Indiana with two sisters who were considerably older. (If you view Indianapolis as being in the center of the state, Sandcut would be about seventy-five miles to the west.) His father had a farming background before he became a steel worker and semi-rig truck driver while his mother was an elementary school teacher before she owned and operated a rural grocery store and gas station in Sandcut. "I doubt if you'll find

Notes From Brush Hill

Sandcut on the map anymore – it was just a crossroad in the middle of fields of corn.” Surprisingly, it still does appear on the map but a Google Earth visit shows only the gas station remains. Jerry remembers helping his mother in the grocery store while pumping gas at that station. He attended rural elementary school and high school and graduated from Terre Haute Garfield High School after the county schools were consolidated. There he met Cindy Kay Buchholz. They went on to Indiana State University where they both were the first in their respective families to graduate from college – she in three years and he in the usual four. They married November 25, 1964 while still in college. Following graduation in 1966 Jerry got a job with R. R. Donnelley & Sons, a large and leading printing company with headquarters in Chicago and offices across the country including a large operation in Crawfordsville, the county seat for Montgomery County.³ (Crawfordsville is about fifty miles northwest of Indianapolis.) The young couple moved to Crawfordsville and continued to accumulate their credentials – she getting a MS in education and he an MBA. Cindy began teaching kindergarten, worked her way up to higher classes and then to media and library services in a career that spanned forty years in the school district. In the mid-1970s she gave him the fateful Christmas present and soon he was painting watercolors while running a framing company he established in Crawfordsville. Eventually he began to paint fulltime and closed the framing company. “It was a business that took me a long time to close down because old customers kept appearing and asking me to handle just one more job.” Meanwhile Cindy taught and both raised their two children, Mark born in 1967 and Suellen born in 1970. Now both married, they have provided five grandchildren but Jerry reports that no artistic genes appear to have been passed down although he still holds out hope for the youngest grandson. Recently Cindy and Jerry moved out of the home where they raised their family into an attractive brick building constructed in 1892 to house a local newspaper, the *Journal*. The ground floor houses his studio and



"Heartland Connection" - 21" x 29" - Watercolor

office while living quarters are on the upper floor.

Indiana is a beautiful state with wonderfully varied topography – from flat farmland of endless cornfields like those around Sandcut and in the northern part of the state to the rolling hills found in the southern half. Crawfordsville has a bit of both and is situated on a bluff overlooking Sugar Creek. Dating back to the early Nineteenth Century, it is like many Midwest towns with populations of several thousand except that it, unlike many, still survives with a viable economy and has some distinguishing landmarks, two of which are the “Ben-Hur” Museum and the nation’s only surviving circular jail.⁴

Lew Wallace was a Crawfordsville resident and Renaissance man. In the late 19th Century he built the “Ben-Hur” Museum (formally known as the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum) as a “pleasure house for my soul” and as a study and library for his considerable collection of books. Attorney and celebrated Union General in the Civil War, Wallace was an inventor and artist who also became a famous author of several books including *Ben-Hur: A Tale of Christ* which was published in 1880 and became the best

selling novel of its time until eclipsed by *Gone with the Wind* in 1936. It has never gone out of print and has been adapted for four movies including the famous 1959 blockbuster directed by William Wyler and starring Charlton Heston. A fifth movie, reportedly based more closely on the original book but even more spectacular than its predecessor of over fifty years, is scheduled for release in 2016.⁵ There must have been something in the Crawfordsville air in the early 1880’s for not only did Ben Hur dramatically race chariots in the Roman Coliseum in the fertile imagination of Wallace but two years after the book was published, two inventors designed and constructed a three story brick jail that contained a single large circular cage that could be rotated to allow a single permanent door access to each of several cells in the cage. This facility served as the Montgomery County Jail until 1973.⁶

Jerry loves his Montgomery County and all it has to offer an artist with the beautiful Sugar Creek that flows through it and the surrounding farms but he feels that way about the entire state. “The beauty and diversity of Indiana provides an artist endless opportunities. We are surrounded by native beauty. My roots

Notes From Brush Hill

are deep in Hoosier soil.” Like many artists before him, Jerry is particularly drawn to the countryside, lakes and parks of Brown County. Artists were attracted to “Paradise Valley” of Brown County in the late Nineteenth Century and by the early Twentieth Century an artist colony had formed around the small town of Nashville. (It is some fifty miles south of Indianapolis.)⁷ Out of this grew the Brown County Art Guild of which Jerry is a member and is well represented on their web site.⁸

Jerry’s devotion to art in Indiana is evidenced by the several other art organizations in the state that he belongs to and has been active in. In addition to the Brown County Art Guild, the list includes the Indiana Artist Club, Indiana Heritage and the Indiana Plein Air Painters Association (IPAPA). He is a charter member and Cardinal Fellow of the Watercolor Society of Indiana. (The state bird of Indiana is the cardinal.) The Hoosier Salon is a statewide non-profit arts organization that dates back to 1926 and its mission is to create an appreciation of visual art by promoting Hoosier artists. Jerry is an active member and has participated in over thirty Hoosier Salon exhibitions since he began painting.

Love of the Sea and Foreign Shores

Although Indiana clearly commands Jerry’s attention, ever since he went East to study with Don Stone nearly forty years ago, the sea has called to him. A Crawfordsville friend and collector introduced Jerry to a gallery (now closed) in Bar Harbor, Maine in the 1980’s and this launched frequent pilgrimages to the New England coast, primarily Maine. Jerry

and Cindy are a perfectly matched couple for they not only enjoy traveling together but also Cindy loves to read which she does while she keeps Jerry company when he plein air paints. She thinks this marine attraction is only natural for Jerry. She notes, “He has gone from waves of corn in Indiana to the waves of the Atlantic off New England.” For Jerry this attraction is more mysterious. “Although I grew up in the midst of cornfields and have never had an inclination to own a boat or learn to sail, the call of the water and shoreline has always been loud and clear to me as a painter. For a variety of reasons most artists are attracted to water. It may be some primal instinct or the way it contrasts with the land to make pleasing compositions. Whatever the reason, water any form is always an inspiration for me.” Much of his Maine time has been spent in Stonington, Deer Island, Bar Harbor and Arcadia National Park. “I am drawn to small seaport towns and working harbors.” However, one will find water in many of his Indiana paintings as well.

One could argue that travel constitutes a third love after Indiana and the sea. “For me vacations and painting go hand in hand. Planning a trip means I am thinking more about painting equipment and supplies than what clothes I am going to take.” He and Cindy have visited Ireland where they did a lot of walking and painting in different parts of the country and also painted in England and Scotland. He has also traveled to give workshops. “I got involved in giving workshops when an artist friend wanted to retire from programs he gave at the Indianapolis Art Center and asked me to take over. I did for three or four years

and eventually I was giving three or four workshops of my own in the spring and fall, mostly in Indiana. “These involve committing time a year or more in advance and ever since Cindy retired five or six years ago I have tried to restrict the number since we both like the freedom of being able to pick up and go whenever we want. In 2014, for instance, he attended the Plein Air Annual Gathering in Easton, Maryland and a number of similar events in Indiana.

This interest in the broader picture beyond Indiana and marine art is seen in his association with art organizations outside the many he belongs to in Indiana. It also reflects his multi-medium capabilities. He maintains Signature Memberships in the American Watercolor Society, the International Society of Acrylic Painters, the Rocky Mountain National Watermedia, the National Oil and Acrylic Painters Society in addition, of course, to the American Society of Marine Artists. He has also exhibited in the National Society of Painters in Casein and Acrylic and the Transparent Watercolor Society of America and the American Impressionist Society. These and the Indiana art organizations he belongs to enable him to exhibit frequently and in many states across the country. He has exhibited in various Mystic Seaport exhibitions as well as ASMA Nationals. His *Harbor Tones*, a 20” x 28” acrylic on gessoed museum board is in the ASMA 16th National and can be viewed at www.americansocietyofmarineartists.com.

ASMA Nationals as well as Books, Sketches and Experiments

Jerry and his work have been written

(Footnotes)

⁶ More secure and labor efficient, this invention of Messrs. William H. Brown and Benjamin F. Haugh was replicated in sixteen other locals. However the Montgomery County Jail is now the only one left in operating order. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

⁷ Early artists to visit and paint included William McKendree Snyder (1848 – 1930) who began as early as 1870 but artist Adolph Robert Shulz (1869 – 1918) is considered the founder of the Brown County Art Colony since from the turn of the century when he and his artist wife Ada Walters first visited Brown County, he encouraged many artists from Indiana and elsewhere to come to the county to paint. (The Shulz-Walters story is a testimony to the deep roots art has in Brown County and worth a story itself.) By 1907 Theodore Clement “T.C.” Steele (1847 – 1926), revered as the dean of Indiana Impressionist painters, built

a home and studio outside of Nashville. By the mid 1920s an art association had been formed and incorporated with Carl Graf (1892 - 1947) serving as its first president. Over the following decades this led to both the Brown County Art Guild and the Brown County Art Gallery and Museum.

⁸ www.browncountyartguild.org

⁹ *Expressive Landscapes in Acrylic*, Jerry Smith, International Artist Publishing, November 2005, ISBN-10: 1929834497, ISBN-13: 978-1929834495, 96 pages

¹⁰ *Common Ground: A Retrospective of Works*, Jerry Smith, Sugar Creek Publishing, 2008, ASIN: B00EO9N64

¹¹ *Gems of Montgomery County*, Cindy and Jerry Smith, Sugar Creek Publishing, 2009, ASIN: B00CM2D62S, 144 pages.

¹² There is a fascinating exhibition that demonstrates the importance of sketches in painting currently at the Amon Carter

Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas. In 1868 the mayor of St. Louis, John How, donated his collection of 112 sketches done by George Caleb Bingham (1811 – 1879) to the Mercantile Library in St. Louis. The library fell on hard times and it was only in 1974 the sketches were found in forgotten tin cans and were about to be sold off at auction. But the former Governor of the state Christopher “Kit” Bond rallied to the cause, raised funds to buy the collection to keep it together, enlisting school children to give nickels and quarters to challenge their parents. He was successful and now the collection belongs to the “People of Missouri” and was lent for this exhibition of Bingham paintings to show the very sketches that were used in the Bingham paintings. Unfortunately, the exhibition closes early this year

Notes From Brush Hill

up in a number of magazines and books and, again, they reflect his multi-medium capability and landscape/marine mix of subject matter. International Artist published a book he wrote called *Expressive Landscapes in Acrylic*.⁹ More recently Jerry wrote *Common Ground: A Retrospective of Works*. This presents paintings he has done by categories, principally Indiana, marine and overseas subjects in Ireland and England.¹⁰ In 2009 he teamed up with Cindy to write *Gems of Montgomery County*. This tribute to the beauty and diversity of their home county presents a series of 6" x 8" plein air paintings.¹¹

Two aspects of Jerry's work are particularly noteworthy: the importance of his sketches in his painting process and a never-ending curiosity about the process of creating art and a willingness to experiment. When Jerry goes on a painting trip he brings a sketch book and ends up with dozens and dozens of quickly done sketches usually 6" x 8", some with ink, some with pencil and



"Stony Edge" sketch - 6" x 8" - Watercolor

others with watercolors or combinations of ink and watercolor washes. These are meant to capture the moment – like notes to himself back in the studio about what he felt at the scene. He also carries a camera to help document details but months later the latter provides only pictures while the former brings him right back to the subject and the spontaneity he experienced when sketching it.¹² The sketch *Vinalhaven*, depicted here, was the working sketch for *Stony Edge*, a 14" x 21" acrylic done for the ASMA *Thirtieth Anniversary National Exhibition* in 2008 – 2009.

In both sketches and studio paintings, "I am more interested in the painting



"Stony Edge" - 14" x 21" - Acrylic on Paper

(or sketch) than the subject matter. I focus on the composition – the shapes, the effect of light on things, the values. Because watercolor and ink dry quickly, I find these fast sketches are best done in watercolor. When it comes to creating a large painting based on the sketches, I use a limited palette – favored by my teacher long ago, Don Stone. Basically this is made up of a cool and warm version of the three primary colors plus white but I also use earth colors. Since I am trying to recapture the spontaneity of the sketches, I try to keep loose and let colors mix themselves on the painting and brush as opposed to mixing them on the palette."

"All through my career, I have taken time to experiment. Often this leads to new things such as moving from watercolor to another water medium, acrylics and collages. Plein air introduced me to oil and all of the opportunities that medium has to offer. With oils I experimented with different materials to paint on and found, for instance, that oil on paper creates a very nice feel." At the Pennsylvania Academy of Art they have in their collection some pieces done by Nineteenth Century American artists that demonstrate the beauty and, as Jerry says, the "feel" of oil on paper. "Although I liked the result, the market did not take to it largely because the works were framed under glass." He also experimented to a

considerable degree with cityscapes to see what shapes and wet surfaces (on the roads and sidewalks) would produce compared to his landscapes and marines. In one of his writings he talks about recycling paintings that never really did "sing" and were put aside. He looks at them upside down or applies some bold strokes of paint and then looks at them anew to see if there is another painting hiding in there that needs help emerging. It all forces an exercise in imagination and sometimes results in a good work even if very different than the original painting.

Since ASMA did not exist when Jerry studied with Don, it was not through him that he learned about the Society. It was much later when Jerry attended one of the Society's Regional Exhibitions at the Krasl Museum in Saint Joseph, Michigan that he found out about it and joined. "It has been an honor and a pleasure for me to associate with experienced marine artists and to share the stage with them through various exhibitions and gatherings. I am in awe of the work produced by these artists and the knowledge and experience they possess."

When asked what advice he would give to young artists, his answer is his own life story: "Paint from the heart; paint what inspires you; paint your own way; and, continually develop your skills accordingly. Learning never ends."

Notes From Brush Hill

ROBERT JAMES TANDECKI
Member
Sumner, WA

Web Site:
www.tandekistudio.com



"When Robert James Tandeki was young, he heeded the advice that journalist and preacher John Babson Lane Soule gave in an editorial he wrote for the *Terre Haute Express* newspaper, "Go West young man, and grow up with the country." Tandeki left his native Minnesota and headed west to Seattle, Washington and worked there for a while before he heard the "Call of the Wild" and shipped off to the boomtown of Dyea, Alaska where he joined thousands of other miners bound for the Klondike goldfields in the Yukon Territory. Like the rest, he packed sixty or more pounds of gear and provisions on his back and began the hike too steep for horses up the Chilkoot Trail across the Coastal Range Mountains to reach the Stewart River and down that through another five hundred miles of uncharted wilderness to the Klondike. There he braved rain and snow, staked claims and panned for gold and, after some rough times in places like Dawson City, returned home by rafting down the Yukon River through Alaska to a seaport town where he shipped back to the West coast. Although he failed to find gold, he did strike it rich in terms of the ideas he brought back with him which would, indeed, represent pay dirt."

Well, . . . sort of.

As Mark Twain, the great American storyteller, said, "Why bother with the facts when the details will do?" Yes, Robert Tandeki was born in Minnesota (Little Falls) but on March 4, 1948, not the Nineteenth Century. And he did "go West" as a young man¹³ (at the age of three) when his parents took him and his five older siblings to live on a farm near Seattle where his father worked both as a farmer and machinist for Boeing Aircraft Company. However, after some years, Bob Tandeki did hear the "call of the wild," became fascinated with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896 – 1898 and,

following the route of the prospectors, shipped up the Inside Passage of the Alaskan panhandle to the still prospering but once boom port town of Skagway, Alaska. There he took the old narrow gage railroad through the White Horse Pass to the Yukon. "It was decades ago and at that time it was the same old train

the Inside Passage, Dyea provided the shortest way to the Yukon goldfields but it had no deepwater harbor so it was treacherous to get to and, once there, one had to hike up the strenuous Chilkoot Trail that led over the mountains to the Yukon. Several times Tandeki visited the few remains of Dyea – stubs of wharf pilings on the coastline and cemeteries – and he even hoofed part of the steep Chilkoot Trail to better understand what the prospectors endured. But Dyea disappeared when the railroad opened. Moreover, when gold was discovered far to the west along the Bering Straight beaches of Nome, Alaska in 1898, the Klondike Rush ended as thousands of prospectors made their way to the new goldfields by going down



"Nevermore" - 10" x 14" - Watercolor on 300lb Arches Paper

used during the gold rush and I remember seeing out the window the skeletons of the once-white pack horses that were all killed in an avalanche and thereby lent their name to the pass."

Before the railroad was built, the best way to the Klondike was through a nearby Alaskan port town known as Dyea. Located at the headwaters of an inlet on

the Yukon River, the third longest in North America, to the Bering Sea and on to Nome.

Nome is nearly two thousand miles from Tandeki's hometown but only 164 miles from Siberia. It is a hike to get there but Bob was determined to also share the panning experience that thousands had when they lived in tent cities along the



"Ghosts" - 15" x 28" - Watercolor on 300lb Arches Paper

beaches during the summers of the Nome Gold Rush (1898 – 1908). All of this led Bob to more wilderness travel in a state that he increasingly identified with. It was during these years in the waters of Alaska and Puget Sound that he developed a love for marine art and found his voice and his signature style: “painting cold” – a mood that is cold and where you can smell the salt sea air. Although he did not find much gold in the metal form, the ideas he brought back to the studio became valuable paintings. One done of the remains of pier wharfs in Dyea (now a National Historic Park) titled *Nevermore* won the \$10,000 Grand Prize in the 2003 Arts for the Parks Mini 50 Competition.

A Kindred Spirit

John Griffith “Jack” London (1876 – 1916) published *Call of the Wild* in 1903 that launched his successful writing career. He wrote over fifty novels, essays, and treatises including *White Fang* and *The Sea Wolf*, which was adapted into the first full-length American movie. Before *Call of the Wild*, London had dropped out of high school and had seen much of the United States as a hobo. However, determined to make something of himself, he returned to his native San Francisco, finished high school and attended Berkeley for a year until he was drawn to the excitement of the Klondike Gold Rush. Like Tandecki, he shipped to Dyea, Alaska in 1897 in order to pick up the trail to the Chilkoot Pass. There he and his party packed fifty to a hundred pounds of gear on their backs, ascended the steep and dangerous Chilkoot Trail to cross the Coastal Range Mountains to gain access to the Stewart River, a tributary of the Yukon, and on to the Klondike gold fields. London, like Bob, wanted to develop his



“Sanctuary” - 12” x 18” - Watercolor on 300lb Arches Paper

voice by experiencing the place.

London lived for a time with thirty thousand other miners and service providers, in the boomtown of Dawson City (which today it is largely deserted) with its saloons, an opera house and a street of brothels before he moved to a nearby winter camp.¹⁴ After almost a year in the Yukon he began to suffer from scurvy (a common consequence of having no fresh produce) and decided to return home by rafting down 2,000 miles of the Yukon River. Once he reached the Bering Sea, he joined the crew of a ship and sailed back to the States. Much like Bob had his formative artistic experience in Alaska and its waters, London said, “It was in the Klondike I found myself.” Certainly London’s style of writing – his voice – grew out of the tough existence he experienced.

From Crayons to Painting Planes

Bob is a self-taught artist. “When I was a kid, I always loved color crayons. I never liked drawing with pencils much and, even today, I draw on a painting with a brush. In school I always did very well in art but never thought much about it. I attended Seattle Community College where I got a degree in advertising art. We didn’t do much painting but I learned the advertising part and composition, etc. Jobs were hard to find in 1969 when I graduated so I moved to Los Angeles where I was successful in getting work but it was not art related. During my spare time I painted watercolors. I learned mostly on my own, teaching myself by looking at the work of my favorite artists, the Wyeths and Whistler. I really like the mood they put into their paintings.”

Bob returned to Washington and

(Footnotes)

¹³ The original “Go West young man” quote is often, but wrongly, attributed to Horace Greeley (1811 – 1872), the founder and editor of the *New York Tribune* newspaper. The quote first appeared in John Babson Lane Soule’s editorial in 1851. Greeley, the outspoken Abolitionist who had a much larger readership, used the quote in his own editorial fourteen years later at the end of the Civil War. By way of coincidence, when the town Bob Tandecki lives in was incorporated in 1891, it was named after a Greeley friend and peer, Senator Charles Sumner, the famous Massachusetts Senator and Abolitionist. The town not only has historical connections but also a sense of humor for it boasts of being the “Rhubarb Pie Capitol” and celebrates “Pi Day” on March 14th. (In math, pi equals 3.14159265359.)

¹⁴ It just happens that this article about Bob Tandecki appears

with one about our ASMA Signature Member J. Smith. There was, however, another, very different “J. Smith” of Klondike fame known as “Soapy Smith.” The titles of two recent biographies about him succinctly describe this professional American con man and gangster: *Soapy Smith: Skagway’s Scourge of the Klondike* and King Con: *The Story of Soapy Smith*. The former is by Sauerwein Stan, Heritage House Publishing, 2005, ISBN-10: 15544390117, ISBN-13: 978-1554390113, 144 pages and the latter is by Jane G. Haigh, Hillside Press, 2013, ISBN-10: 0962753076, ISBN-13: 978-0962753077, 126 pages.

¹⁵ Founded in 1889, the Foss Company is a story unto itself. Thea Foss, a young Norwegian immigrant and her husband, Andrew, turned one rowboat into what eventually became a world class fleet. It started in Tacoma, Washington when Thea Foss bought

a used rowboat, hoping to rent it out to help with the family’s finances. After painting it pristine white with green trim, she sold the rowboat at a profit and used the money to buy several more boats that she rented to fishermen and duck hunters and used to transport customers and supplies in the Tacoma waterways. She continued to purchase more rowboats and launches while her husband, a carpenter, began building them. Soon, the fleets were up to 200 boats. Thea then expanded the business by transporting logs with towboats. World War I propelled the small towing business to a new level, allowing Foss to purchase interests in a Seattle-based towboat company. Today, the green and white colors she painted the first rowboat are still used on the company’s powerful state-of the art tugs, which can now be seen in waters throughout the world.

Notes From Brush Hill



"San Juan Playground" - 15" x 28" - Watercolor on 300lb Arches Paper

"really got into painting watercolors. It almost controlled me. I sold my first painting in a group show in a church basement. It was of a couple ducks swimming and sold for \$40. Man, I was then hooked and it all started for me there. I was determined to be a full time fine artist. In the 1970's I learned more and more about the life of being an art gypsy and loved traveling and sleeping in my van but just couldn't sell enough to make a living. So I got a job at Boeing painting airplanes while continuing to paint watercolors whenever I got a chance."

Never Looked Back

He kept painting and, even though he "had the bad habit of painting for himself and not the buying public," he kept selling his work. "I am not married and have no children so my needs are not great. In 1980 I quit my job at Boeing to try again to live as a full time artist. I have survived on art ever since. It has been and continues to be a tough living at times but I wouldn't have it any other way."

Bob then began to read and do research about historic shipping in Puget Sound and the Pacific waters of the Northwest and developed an interest in the surge of activity surrounding the Klondike Gold Rush. Eventually his fascination led to several ferry trips up to Skagway to learn more about what happened and what it was like. "I sought out the cold. I would wait for bad weather and would

run down and catch the ferry to Skagway in the middle of a snowstorm. I would sleep out on the decks in a sleeping bag and experience the feel of being on that cold water. This really helped in my paintings in the studio later on. I always feel that if you want to focus on mood and weather in a painting as I do, it is best to experience the elements directly as much as possible.

From day one and up till now I focus on this before I start a painting. I want the viewer to feel the cold or dampness or even smell the salt air in my paintings."

On his many Alaskan ferry forays, Bob witnessed the active shipping commerce on Puget Sound and surrounding waters. Frequently seen are the Foss tugboats and Bob began to take an interest in them and entered local Foss tugboat calendar contests.¹⁵ "Foss tugs used to pull barges with trains cars loaded with logs from the islands in the Sound and even now Foss

still hauls trains to Alaska every week. I once painted a restored red caboose on a barge and that led to similar fanciful paintings of trains at sea. In doing these marine works Bob came to know and was encouraged by ASMA Fellow Bill Ryan who lived in the Northwest at that time and got a further boost when Kirsten Gallery, the premier marine art gallery of the region, began to exhibit his work. When Bob travels he always has his camera handy to document potential subjects. He had an ideal arrangement a few years ago when "I hooked up as a guest artist for Cruise West Alaska tours in which I painted on the boat for a ten-day nature tour of Alaska and took lots of great photos." He also has a small boat for photo shoots and fishing.

Drawing with a Brush and Breaking the Rules

I paint usually with transparent watercolors and some gouache. I like Aches 300 lb. rough paper that can give the weather effects I want. You can beat it up pretty good and use both sides in case the first painting is a bust. I never use the original white of the paper (even for snow scenes). First I do a complete wash with a large brush over the entire paper. If it is a snow scene then I use just a small amount of Payne's gray (my favorite color) and a



"Adelaide Foss" - 15" x 21" - Watercolor on 300lb Arches Paper

little light blue. A rainy scene would be a darker shade of the same colors. It ends up being a flat, even wash. Since drawing with a pencil damages this paper and it shows under the paint, I draw a light trace using a small brush with Payne's gray. Then I start my painting. I use a very limited palette. I don't know most of the names of the colors and types of brushes I use. My large brush is a house painting brush I got at a hardware store. I guess I'm not your traditional watercolorist." That might be but he is a Signature Member of the National Watercolor Society and the International Society of Marine Painters. He heard about and joined ASMA through his showings at Mystic Seaport where in its 2006 International Marine Exhibition he won the David Thimgan Award. The late Thimgan was an ASMA Fellow who specialized in historical West Coast shipping; ASMA Fellow June Carey is his widow.

"Like most artists, wherever I am I see things that would make a good subject for a painting. I have tons of photos I have taken over the years and I like the history of my area so there are plenty of possibilities. When I get an idea for a painting, then I sketch it in my mind. Composition and perspective are next followed by what kind of weather and mood I want."

Bob notes, "Art is always a challenge and I am always learning. I tell new artists that often. And I say that rules are made to be broken and never be afraid to try new ideas. Paint what you like and find your own style." Just like Bob Tandecki and Jack London did.



Charles Raskob Robinson is a Fellow of the Society. He paints at Brush Hill, a studio built in 1752, located in Washington, CT and formerly owned by Connecticut and New Mexico artist Eric Sloane. Some of Charlie's work may be seen on his website at: www.brushhillstudios.com.

Open Letter to Charlie... *from an Indomitable Spirit!*

Frank Handlen is a retired Fellow of the Society.

Dear Charlie,

K'port (Kennebunkport)
11/17/14

Again I thank you for sending ASMA's publication along. You do a splendid job with your subjects.

I'm still perking along on two cylinders – so whose drag racing? (Just turned 98!)

I've sold the boat (**Salt Wind**)¹ to the fellow who owns the marina across the river. I was in the process of de-commissioning her when he offered to take her off my hands and preserve it. Now, having so much spiritual investment in her, he lets me work on her: painting, etc. I spent some time in the rigging re-rigging the gaff halyard. I do wear a safety harness.

When the new owner first took over the boat last December, he left me at my mooring through the month even though he has a berth for her. I was losing sleep. I had covered the cockpit with a tarp and had gone out in my dingy to retie it. I was trying to lift a fifty-pound lead ingot onto the schooner when the dingy flipped and I went into the water. Soaking wet but not cold, I got back to my job of retying when two fellows pulled along side and said, "You fell into the water." I shot back, "How the hell do you know?" "We saw you from the restaurant!" Well, they got me in and into a hot shower but now the whole town knows. (*Since they also called the police and an ambulance. CRR*)

Just to be perversely consistent, I was, this spring, engaged in installing the re-worked bowsprit. I had a boom and tackle rigged but was having trouble getting the sprit heel into the gammon iron. When suddenly the rig jumped loose and knocked me over the rail and, yes, into the water. Fortunately, it was not on the channel side. With the ebb running, I doubt I could have made it ashore. I broke the tibia near the ankle plus a fracture that made walking a bit painful for two or more months.

We've just had a large schooner (120 feet) come in and berth just across from me. It's to be a restaurant. It's a magnificent sight though comparatively it makes my schooner look like a tug.

Love to Barbara.

As Ever, Frank

(Frank still drives and reports he minds the speed limits but on the highways "goes with the pack" at 80+ mph. And he still paints actively. CRR)

¹Frank and his late wife, Mary, built this ferroconcrete schooner in their back yard only to realize when completed it was too big to move out the drive way so it was hoisted by crane over their roof, They sailed it actively over the years.

