

## Artists Almanac- October 2020

A creek is the perfect playground for kids. And for adults – their parents or guardians = for whom children are a perfectly acceptable excuse for getting out and enjoying the soothing sound and liveliness of clear running water. Every bend of the creek offers a new experience – skipping stones, floating ships as imaginary battleships as targets, wading, tracking flashing schools of silvery minnows, painting a lively watercolor of a living subject, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*.

Here we may happen upon a gravel bar, scattered with brachiopods, cephalopods, crinoid stems, or fossilized coral from an ancient sea, 300 million years ago. Middle Tennessee Ordovician limestone exposed in the central basin of Tennessee is some of the oldest fossil-bearing stone known to mankind.. Curiosity about these strange objects almost made a geologist of me, and would have, but for the requirements of chemistry and physics.



brachiopod



Crinoid stems

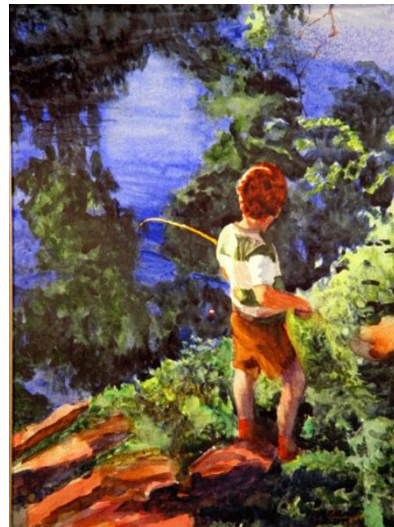
Still, these evidences of the incredibly ancient time infected me with a lifelong curiosity about the nature of time, and this obsession found an outlet in my art. For time is a perfect metaphor for the swift passage of time, and of the sliver of it we inhabit. This led to a lifelong question as to the nature of time. If the creek is the perfect metaphor for time, the question then arises: are we the stream, moving eternally to the distant sea, to rise as rain steam in cumulus clouds and return to the earth as rain, or are we the flashing school of minnows fluttering in the tailwaters of a falls? Or are we the earthen banks, watching time flow by, gnawing us away? It is a mystery.

Plato tried to unravel this mystery in his allegory of the cave. He thought The stream and all that surrounds us are but flickering shadows of the light coming through the entrance of the cave we inhabit, which we can only glimpse in facing the back wall, and trying to make sense of the shadows we call reality when reality is in fact out in the sunlit world outside the cave in the sunlight. We have but the tiniest sliver of time in which to make sense of it all.

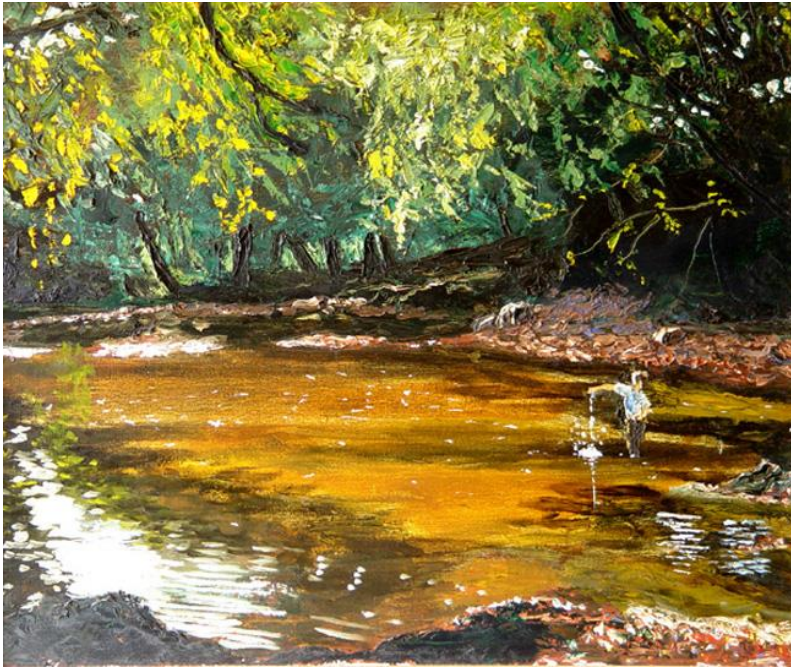
That's where the artist comes in. He is charged with trying to give us the merest glimpse of reality in that sliver of time we all share. This is the reason I so often choose as my subjects streams, history, and historic buildings. And churches. Churches' steeples represent mankind's innermost yearning for sunlight and skies, and the reality there. Here are a few of my attempts.



Bledsoe in August



Waiting



Time Spent in the Creek



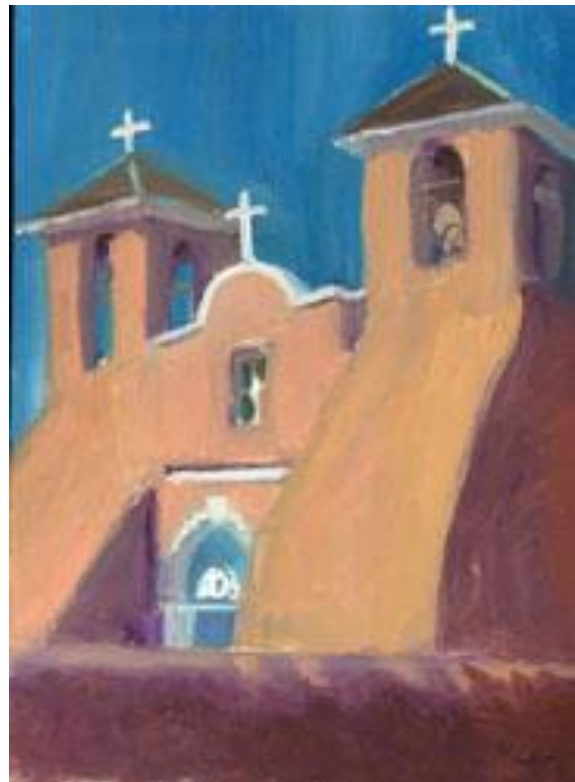
Like the earliest artist that tried 17,000 years ago to interpret reality in the cave paintings of Lisieux, France, even the youngest of us today feels the compulsion to interpret reality in paint.

In the poorest communities, the most beautiful building is often the church, sometimes built and maintained with the members' own hands.



Dry Fork Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the first in the area

One such as the hand-patted adobe church at Ranches de Taos which the New Mexican artist Georgia O'Keefe so loved to paint





*Hope beyond the  
skies = Bill Puryear*

Gallatin First Methodist, on busy Main Street, points its tall steeple skyward, where its hopes lie. As traffic streams by horizontally at its foot, it reminds us of another dimension to life.

If Art imitates Nature, no music portrays a flowing stream like Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. Click on it below to see if it affects you the same. Turn your computer's sound up, ignore the ads, if any, and enjoy!

Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, "The Pastoral" 5<sup>th</sup> Movement,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIfEs4jSXQc>