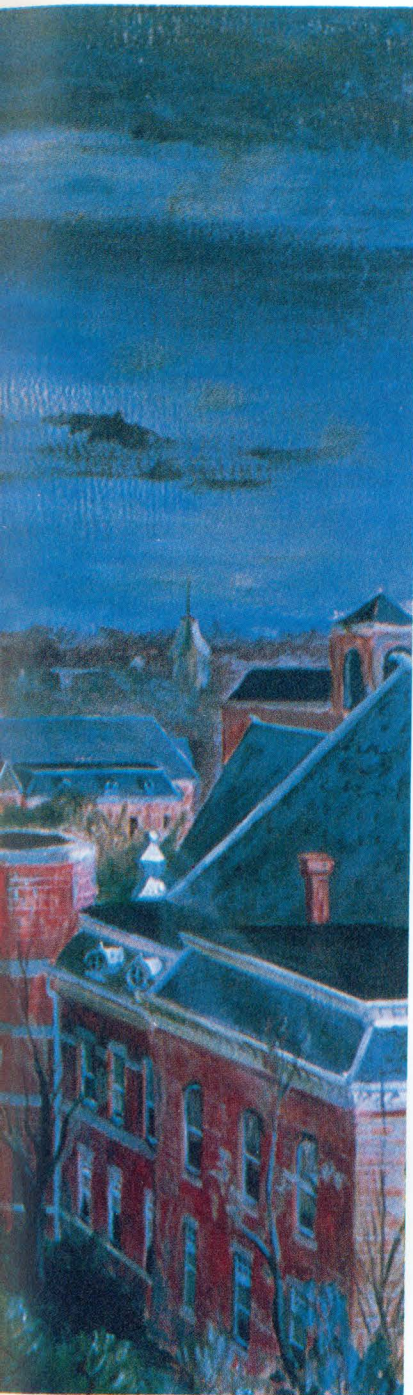




UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
by Fred Shane

By LARRY BOEHM

THE HIDDEN TREASURES OF JESSE HALL



THEY'RE like hidden treasures, except they're in plain sight. The 100 paintings of the Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney collection have hung on Jesse Hall walls since Jan. 25, 1950. When the collection first came to Columbia, it attracted the largest number of visitors ever at a Campus art exhibit. Three decades later it's become a fixture, unnoticed and, maybe even, unappreciated.

Frank Mayfield, president of Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney, then St. Louis' oldest department store, commissioned Missouri: Heart of the Nation to commemorate Scruggs' 100th anniversary. He wanted the project "to depict the natural beauties, industrial activities and cultural characteristics of the state." He hoped to share with others "the charm, the strength, the beauty, the way-of-life of Missouri."

Mayfield admitted another motive. "We would lend it out for publicity. We hoped it would help the store's business. I wasn't entirely altruistic." However, Scruggs went out of business in the 1960s.

Before it took up permanent residence at Mizzou, the collection had been exhibited in 13 cities in Missouri, two in Illinois, one in Kansas and New York City. It premiered at the City Museum in St. Louis on

Aug. 22, 1947. A showing at the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City followed. More than 75,000 saw it at the State Fair in Sedalia and many individual works were reprinted in various publications.

Sponsored art wasn't new or unique. In the postwar period several large collections bore the names of commercial enterprises. "It was an entirely appropriate thing," said Howard Derrickson, art critic for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "for the merchant princes to become patrons of the arts." What makes this collection special is that it was the first to document a state, and it has remained intact.

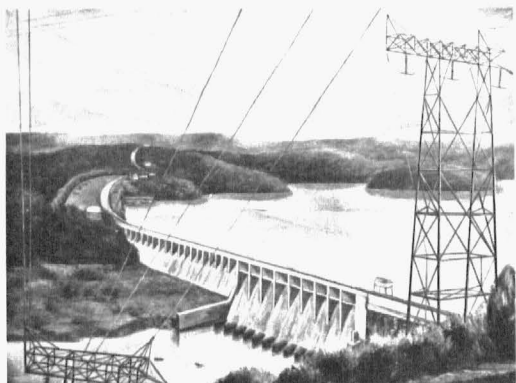
THE 14 ARTISTS, five from Missouri, were selected by the Association of American Artists in New York, to create this unique portrait of the Show-Me state. They talked about their work in a catalog published for the collection's exhibition tour.

Howard Baer painted the oldest Ozark settlement. "In the General Store, the live-stock auction, on the courthouse square and the farms," said Baer, "the people impressed me with their gaunt, sharp, strong faces, their clear, shrewd eyes squinting through a web of humorous wrinkles."

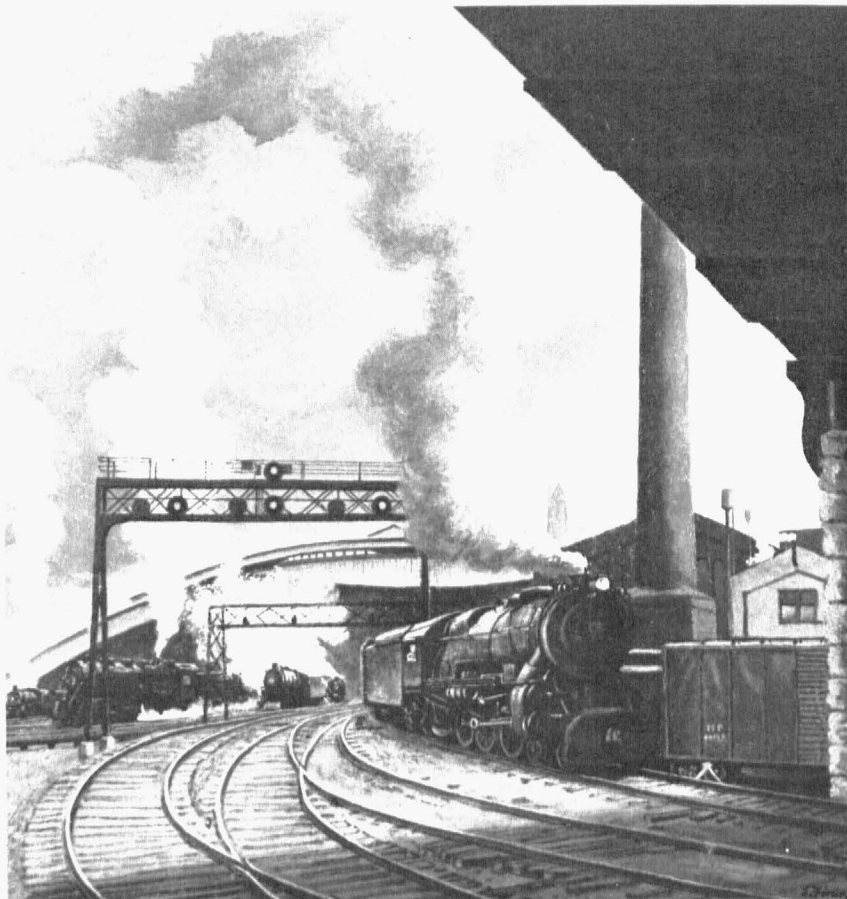
Aaron Bohrod's stockyards, parks and



A GOLDEN STALLION
by Peter Hurd



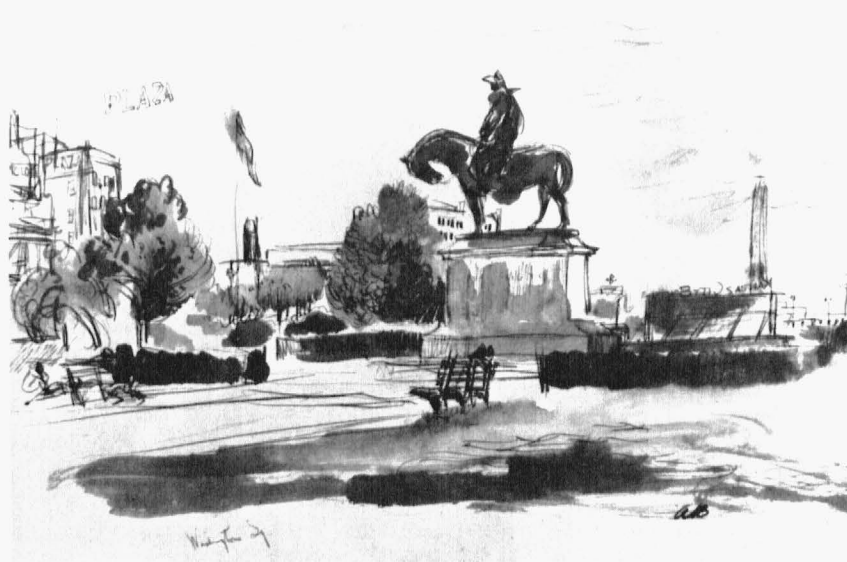
BAGNELL DAM
by Fletcher Martin



8:00 A.M., UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS
by Ernest Fiene



SEDALIA PEANUT STAND
by Lawrence Beall Smith



WASHINGTON SQUARE, KANSAS CITY
by Aaron Bohrod

streets were "an approach to the special and elusive character of Kansas City," with its intermingled industrial, urban, suburban and country atmosphere.

Nicolai Cikovsky submitted paintings of St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve.

Fred Conway, a St. Louisan, interpreted St. Louis scenes. "The pulse of a large city," Conway said, "with its exciting mixture of human emotions is evident in every street and sidewalk. It becomes most intense at common meeting and intersections points."

ADOLF DEHN painted in Hannibal, Louisiana, Glasgow and St. Joseph. "My main purpose was to tell as much as possible about the sweeping landscapes; its fields and farms, its rivers and towns."

Ernest Fiene painted Missouri's industry, old and new. "Seeing the quaint town of Washington after St. Louis, then driving through the Ozarks to Joplin, the lead and zinc center in the southwest corner of the state, was an experience of excitement and contrast."

Peter Hurd captured with brush and canvas saddle horses, mules and stock around Mexico. "It was certainly thrilling and delightful to see so many prize-winning aristocrats of the saddle-horse world in their native habitat."

Frederic James, a Kansas Citian, depicted the urban and the rural, "I am particularly happy to have had the opportunity to put some of my very personal and life-long observations of my beloved Missouri on record. What I have painted is a mixture of sentiment, experience and pride, executed in a Missouri manner — as literal as we pride ourselves on being."

Fletcher Martin's works portray life on the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. "My sketches were made for these paintings during June. People were making friends with the rivers again after the alienation which occurs each spring. The mood was tranquil. All the people who came to the edge of the water, no matter how distracted, seemed to be touched by its magic and its strength."

Jackson Lee Nesbitt grew up in Kansas City. He painted steelmaking, stockyards and a subject he thought most characteristic of Missouri. "Farm auctions are usually held once a week throughout the year. All kinds of farm animals, implements, machinery, household goods and an endless variety of odds and ends go under the hammer. Farmers come, sometimes with their

families, not only to buy or sell . . . but to exchange news and views, discuss crop conditions and just make a day of it."

Georges Schreiber painted "the Missouri Ozarks in the winter to show what the people of southern Missouri do when no summer tourists are around to watch them."

Fred Shane, then a faculty member at the University, contributed paintings of the Red Campus, the State Capitol, a cemetery in Ste. Genevieve and local musicians. "My participation in the Missouri art project seemed the most natural thing in the world to me — as a considerable portion of my work has been 'painting Missouri' for many years."

Lawrence Beall Smith showed how Missourians enjoyed themselves. "Thus evolved such subjects as the peanut stand at the State Fair and the backstage scene at the St. Louis Municipal Opera."

Wallace Herndon Smith of St. Louis painted two hunting scenes. "I have roamed the hills of this state with a gun ever since I was a boy. I have the idea that we best portray the things that we know well and have been interested in for years."

IS THE COLLECTION good art? "They had the best kinds of painters," said Derickson, who reported on the work as it progressed. He describes the artists as "topflight, but not highly inventive."

"Artistically it gets about a B," says Robert Bussabarger, a UMC professor of art, "but historically it's very valuable. That kind of project would be too expensive and political to do today."

The artists played on local sentiments, Bussabarger says, "by presenting a picturesque and wholesomeness rather than attempting some ultimate timeless statement."

Of course, times and tastes change. Regionalism as an art style went out of fashion even in Missouri. "Ten years after the project was completed," says Osmund Overby, director of the museum of Art and Archaeology, "its dollar value would have been much less." Overby regularly sends students from his American Art and Architecture class to study paintings in the collection. "They're real works, good works and right here. It puts students through their paces to look at art and see if they can understand it." Overby says the collection is representative of the time. The artists worked in various kinds of real-



UNCLE PAUL AND AUNT LUCE
by Howard Baer



GRAND AND OLIVE — ST. LOUIS
by Fred Conway

ism, each with a different approach. They used some distortion of shape, color and forms to add their own interpretation to the subject matter.

"They were a well trained and well informed group of artists," Overby says. "Knowing what was going on in 20th-century art, they could pick and choose from the various theories and styles."

NO MATTER the final verdict on its artistic merit, the collection, like a time capsule, offers a glimpse at Missouri in transition. "The year 1946," says Bussabarger, "bridged an older style of living to modern times." The collection is an asset.

That's exactly what Shane hoped when he found Scruggs had no permanent plans for it. "The ideal place for it was the University of Missouri. I immediately brought it up to Elmer Ellis, dean of Arts and Science at the time."

Ellis contacted the Scruggs people and told them "we'd like to house it here." They liked the idea. "The University," said Mayfield, "is representative of all the people of the state which the collection depicts and can most ably provide the opportunity for all to see and enjoy."

In accepting the collection, Frederick Middlebush, then University president, called "every canvas a unique and priceless historical document as well as an artistic treasure." All students and parents will profit, whether they are specialists in art, agriculture or engineering, "for here is the Missouri that we know and love."

When Mayfield presented the collection to the University 33 years ago, it was valued from \$75,000 to \$100,000. In 1983, its combined intrinsic, historic and artistic value is much greater and more difficult to estimate.

Something not as hard to figure is that the paintings are due for some maintenance. "The time to start a program of conservation is now," Overby says. Nothing very elaborate needs to be done, but restoration work is not cheap. It could cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 over the next three years just to catch up with the basic cleaning and repair that has been neglected.

All in all the paintings are in good shape and good repair for their age. "They are at a point where they need to be checked," says Kee Groshong, assistant business operations officer. "We're hopeful we can get private funding to take the paintings down, redone and rehung, because they are truly a part of Missouri's heritage." □



FARMYARD IN MISSOURI

by Adolf Dehn



MISSOURI FARMER

by Frederic James



STE. GENEVIEVE, TRAIN FERRY BOAT

by Nicolai Cikovsky