# PAINTING BUILDINGS IN WATERCOLOR

*How to create expressive paintings of historic buildings, village scenes, private residences and vanishing architectural treasures.*

RANULPH BYE

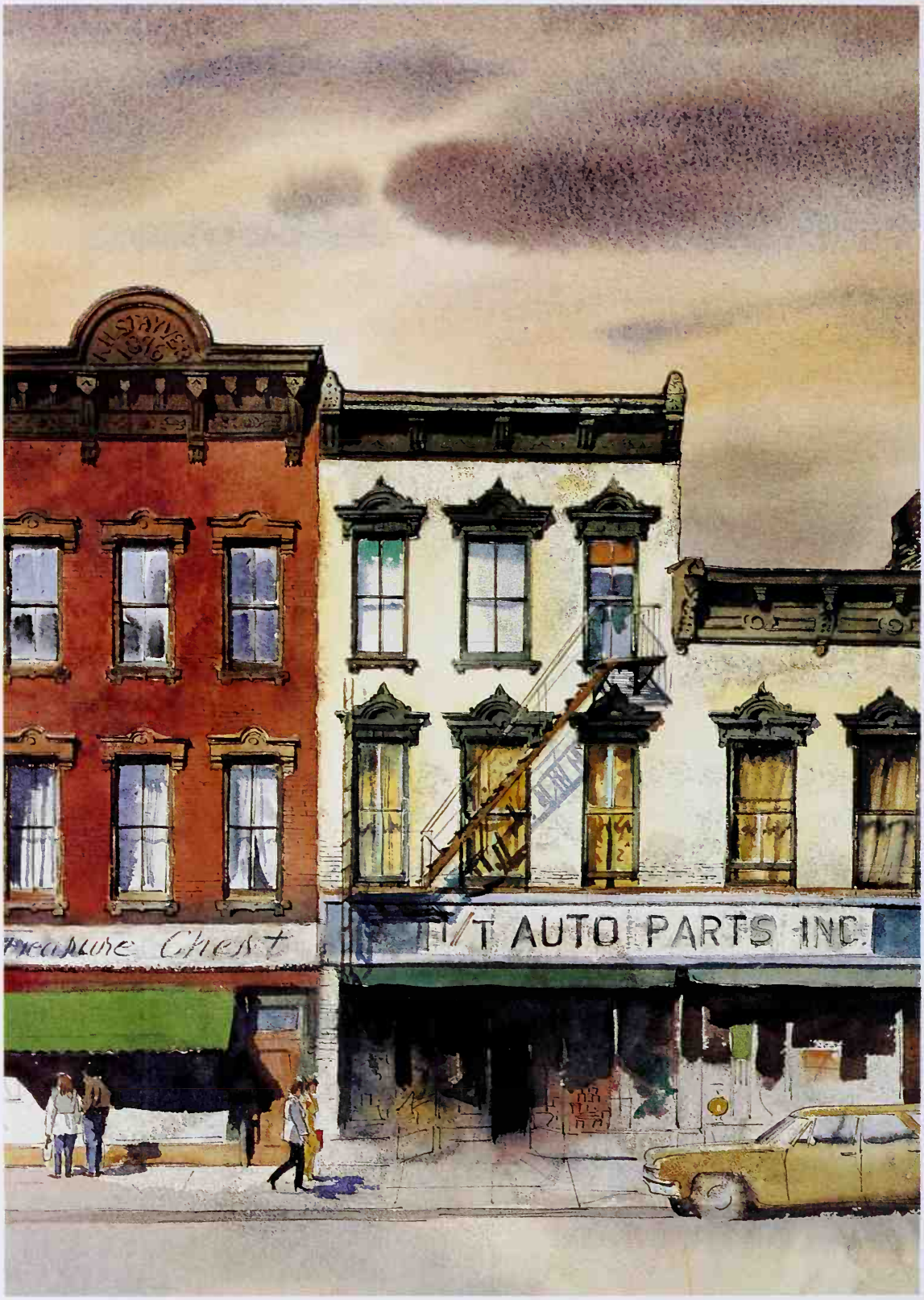
# PAINTING BUILDINGS IN WATERCOLOR

If you're like most watercolorists, you find buildings to be intriguing painting subjects. But they also present some intriguing painting challenges! This book will help you master those challenges, showing you how to paint watercolor landscapes that feature a wide variety of buildings, houses and structures. You'll learn to capture the unique character of these structures while avoiding the lifeless look of an architectural rendering.

A series of eight step-by-step demonstrations teaches you how to make accurate, but lively pictures of the buildings and houses you find in your own community. You'll learn how to:

- Discover and appreciate the potential for great paintings present in the houses and buildings around you.
- Make sketches to record the details of a scene.
- Make perspective work for you rather than against you.
- Use color to capture the quality of light and time of day.
- Create interesting textures with some unusual techniques.
- Compose a striking painting using dramatic lights and darks.
- Capture the unique qualities of local architecture without becoming "corny" or contrived.
- Paint a variety of structures including railroad stations, Victorian mansions, old mills and factories, covered bridges, lighthouses, churches, farm buildings and landmarks.

# PAINTING BUILDINGS
## IN WATERCOLOR




*Detail of Commercial Block, Ossining, New York (c. 1876)*

# PAINTING BUILDINGS IN WATERCOLOR

RANULPH BYE

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## *About the Author*

Ranulph Bye was born in Princeton, New Jersey, but grew up in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. He graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art (now known as the University of the Arts) and also attended the Art Students League in New York under Frank Dumond and William Palmer. In his early years, Bye worked in his father's art restoration business and during his stint in the Air Force was in great demand as a portrait painter.

Bye taught painting and drawing at the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia for thirty years. He was elected to the American Watercolor Society in 1953 and in 1975 became an Associate of the National Academy of Design.

He is most closely associated with the area of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which is the home of some of the nation's most beautiful Colonial architecture. His paintings of the "vanishing railway depot" both in Bucks County and beyond, are treasured for their artistic as well as historic value. Fifteen of the "vanishing depot" paintings are in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of History and Technology. Eleven are in the collection of the William Penn Museum in Harrisburg.

This painting series led to a book, *The Vanishing Depot*, in 1973. A second book, *Victorian Sketchbook*, was published in 1980. Bye currently lives with his wife in Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania, where he continues to seek out and paint interesting architectural subjects.

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**METRIC CONVERSION CHART**

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| Pounds | Kilograms | 0.45 |
| Kilograms | Pounds | 2.2 |
| Ounces | Grams | 28.4 |
| Grams | Ounces | 0.04 |

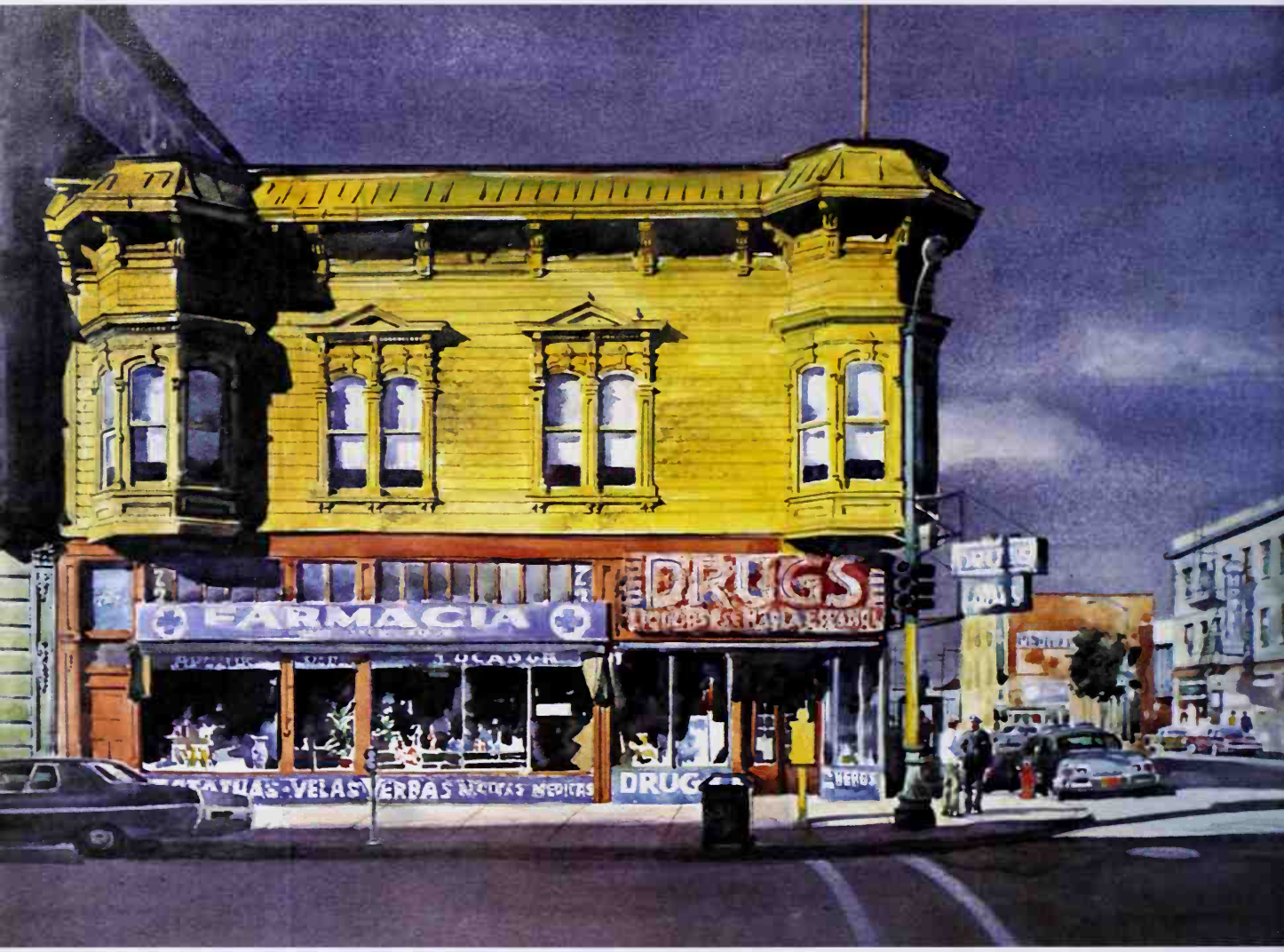
# *Dedication*

Another book for Glenda

# *Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank a number of people—family and friends—who helped me write this book, particularly Stewart Biehl, who encouraged me from the beginning and whose recommendation to the publishers steered a good word for such a book. I thank my wife, Glenda, who provided the impetus I needed to bring this book to reality. I also appreciate the helpful advice and assistance of my editors, Rachel Wolf and Greg Albert, and my stepdaughter, Sherri Reeves, who typed much of the finished manuscript.


*Detail of New Hope Station, New Hope, Pennsylvania*




*Downtown Oakland, 19″ × 28″*

*Collection of the artist. Obrig Prize, National Academy of Design, New York, 1993*

# *Introduction*

When I was a boy growing up in a small town outside of Philadelphia, I used to take walks in a nearby abandoned quarry situated along a creek and wooded valley. There were several old structures, a stone crusher, covered bridge and some vacant homes left empty by the quarry workers.

At the time I was living there, I learned to appreciate building structure, that which is man-made, an expression of man's need to build things of practical use. Years later I discovered that, while buildings take on an unlimited variety of shapes and forms, some are created with a particular functional design: a church with steeple, railroad stations with overhanging roofs, houses with gables, city dwellings with flat rooflines, etc. Enough subject matter here for a lifetime of work.

During my early years in art school I used to visit the quarry to sketch many interesting buildings to use as paintings for my watercolor classes. I remember it was a struggle to master this difficult medium, but always a fascinating challenge. Not only was I confronted with drawing a building but also rendering stonework, weathered wood, the stone cliffs of the quarry pit, trees reflected in the creek and the abandoned railroad tracks. There was enough material here to complete dozens of paintings.

There is nothing left of it today; a four-lane expressway runs like a dagger right through what was once my private domain.

However, buildings have always provided a source of inspiration to me, particularly old buildings. Victorian buildings, whether simple or opulent, have a rich character of their own, never to be replaced, so I took it upon myself to record a number of them before they vanish from the American scene. Many of these images were published in my 1980 book, *Victorian Sketchbook*.

Before that, I had already written and published a book on railroad stations entitled *The Vanishing Depot* (1973). This book came about rather unintentionally. During the sixties I discovered on my frequent trips in rural Pennsylvania and New Jersey that railroad stations had a charming character all their own, quite different from houses or barns. They all had a wide overhanging roof that came down over the platform; some had gingerbread embellishments, towers and steeples. And, of course, there were the tracks and all that they implied.

After a few years, I had collected dozens of watercolors of railroad stations. My colleagues encouraged me to keep the collection intact for future publication because several watercolors of the stations were already being sold. Some of them had appeared in magazines and as prints. Eventually, I found a publisher to reproduce a hundred of them.

Besides painting buildings from an earlier era, I have an affection for a wide variety of structures both urban and rural. Farms, with their barns, silos, corn cribs, farmhouses and outbuildings, are fine subjects to paint. Arched stone bridges over small creeks are paintable; also those made of steel girders. Villages, too, provide a wide variety of themes, and neighborhood streets with clusters of houses make excellent subjects. Very often I will paint the same subject from different viewpoints or at different times of day or season.

From an artistic standpoint, the important thing is creating a satisfactory composition rather than just recording a building or structure on paper. Capturing the light, color, texture and mood of the subject is the key to painting successful watercolors. In the chapters that follow, I will share with you a lifetime of experience in painting a wide variety of beautiful old buildings. I hope you will be inspired to paint them, too.

CHAPTER ONE

# Getting Started

*Outbuildings, 19″ × 28″*

# Materials

For my outdoor work and painting on location, I need a few indispensable items. Whether standing or sitting, I use an Anco watercolor easel to hold my drawing board, a water pail to hold a quart of water, an art bin to carry all my paints and brushes, a paint box, pencils and erasers, liquid masking fluid, etc., and a small folding table to place my materials on. I keep a complete set of materials both in my studio and in my car for convenience. In winter, when it's sometimes too cold to stand outside for several hours, I work in my minivan.

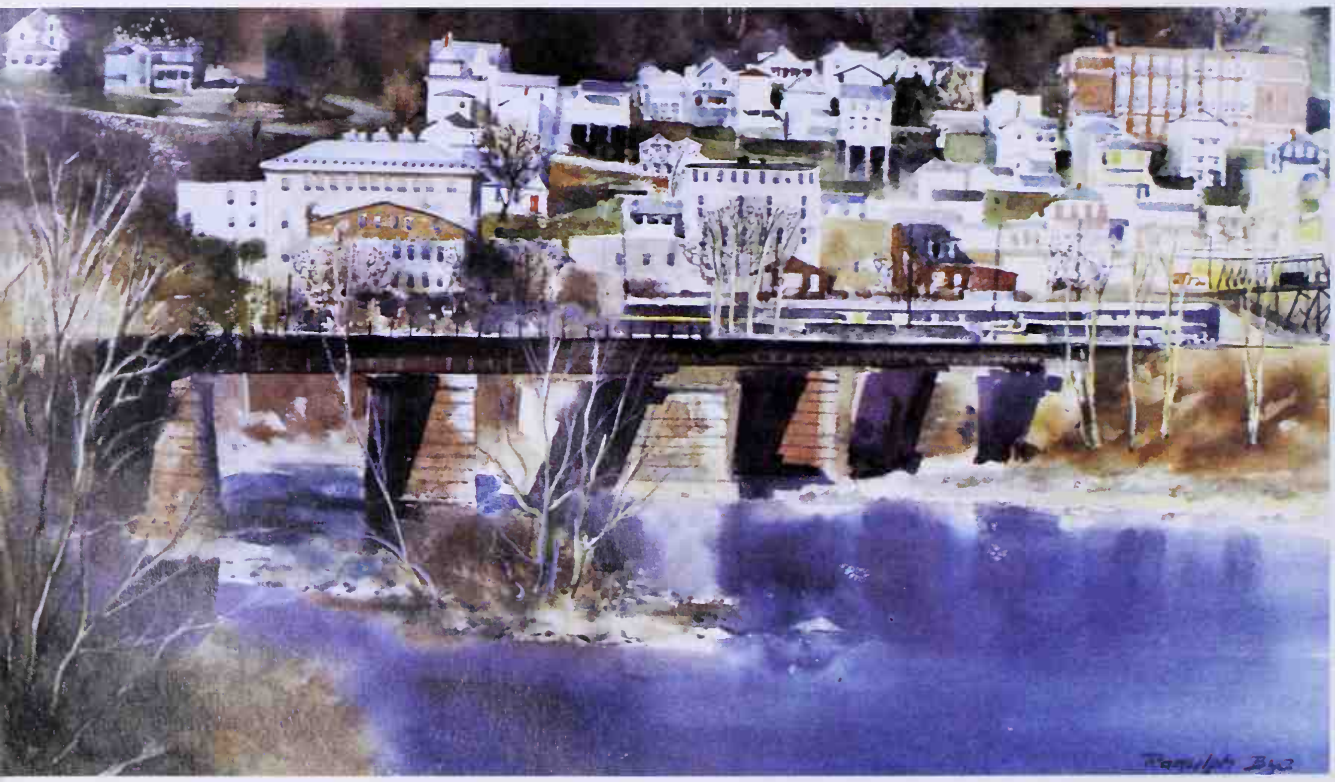
## Paper

I have used a wide variety of watercolor papers over the years, but I find that I like Arches the best. The 300-lb. cold-press paper in 21″ × 30″ single sheets is my favorite. I also use the 140-lb. Arches and the 260-lb. Winsor & Newton paper. Because skies play an important part in my landscapes, I need a paper that doesn't dry too fast when a wash is applied to avoid creating hard edges.

For my architectural paintings, I use a smoother surface, such as Strathmore 3- or 4-ply. This paper enables me to get more detail in the work. Arches also comes in elephant sheets (25″ × 40″), which I use when the subject

*I used my spray bottle of water and lightly dampened a stretched piece of paper. Then I dipped my 1½-inch wash brush into some ultramarine and brushed the color on to the paper with a diagonal sweep. I rinsed the brush and dipped it into some light red and Davy's gray and applied a shadow color above the blue area to form a cloud.*

*In this detail of Grafton, West Virginia, painted on Strathmore paper, you can see the crisp effect of the smooth paper.*

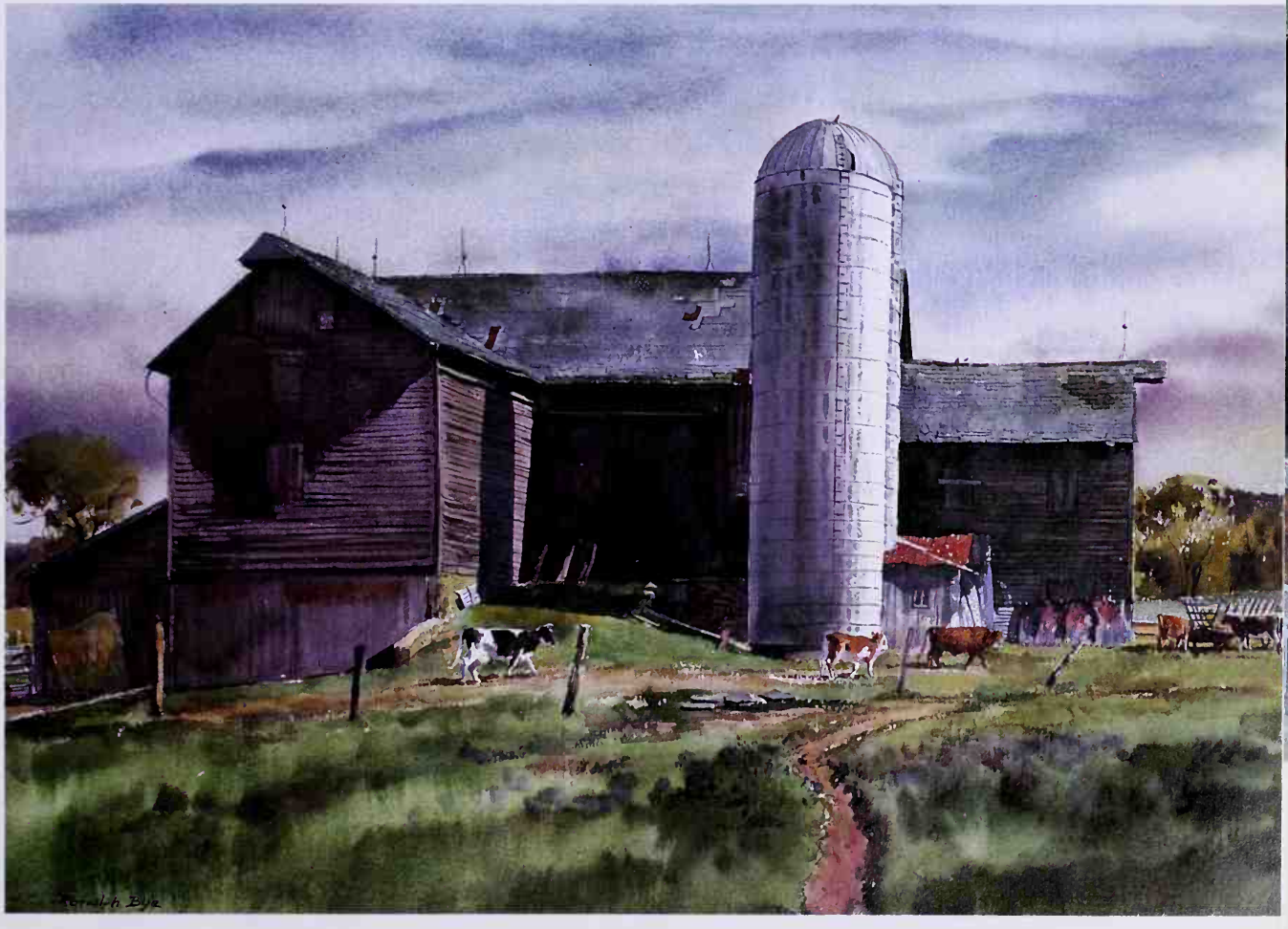


calls for more space. However, when one mats and frames a watercolor of this size, it may become too large to enter in many competitive annual exhibitions. Restrictions on size in such competitions are strictly enforced.

## *Palette and Colors*

I have two watercolor palettes, one in my studio, a John Pike 10½″ × 15″ plastic palette, and another in my art bin, which is kept in my car, a Holbein-type folding metal palette that can accommodate twenty-eight colors, more than you need.

My colors consist of twenty tubes of Winsor & Newton watercolors. The ones I use most frequently are shown at right: yellow ochre, Naples yellow, sepia, burnt sienna, light red, cadmium red light, alizarin crimson, cerulean and ultramarine blue, sap green, Davy's gray, black, cadmium yellow light, permanent magenta and Prussian blue.



***Anna's Farm, 20″ × 29″***

## *Brushes*

The choice of brushes is a personal matter based on comfort and adaptability. I use an assortment of brushes from a 2-inch wash brush to 1½-inch, ⅝-inch, and ¼-inch flat sables. I also use a no. 4 square-tip and a no. 3 round sable quill. The quill has a longer point than the usual small sable and is great for tree branches. I also keep a no. 14 nylon bristle brush handy for lifting out unwanted areas and mistakes.

## *Other Painting Tools*

One item that I use constantly is a wooden bridge for steadying my hand in doing architectural work or making straight lines. You can't buy it, but it's simple to make. Take a small piece of wood from pine or mahogany ⅞ inches wide, ⅜ inches thick and about 18 inches long. Cut two short pieces 2½ inches long from the same piece of wood and glue them under each end. This will give added clearance when working flat on the paper.

Other supplies I keep on hand are razor blades or a palette knife for scraping out lights, small sponges, and a jar of opaque permanent white for touching up or as spatter for snowflakes, etc. The materials and methods I use to create an oil and turpentine patina are explained in the next chapter.


*Here I'm using a flat wooden bridge to control the brush while painting a shutter on a house. A bridge helps when making a sharp vertical stroke or any other straight line.*


*Greenport, New York, 13" × 21½"*

# *Painting on Location*

Watercolor is a great medium for outdoor painting. It's easily carried and quick to set up but it's essential to bring everything you need: your stool, easel, water, small table and art bin. Most important, have your paper secured or stretched on a board so it won't wrinkle. I always stretch my paper by wetting it on both sides, then taping it down on a Homasote board with brown 1½-inch packaging tape. It's best to dry the edges of the paper first or else the tape may not stick. I do this no matter what size sheet I am working on.

I prefer to work on site. There is so much more you can see in nature than from a photograph. Most of the paintings in this book were done on location, though I do use photographs occasionally for practical reasons.

# *Deciding on a Subject*

One of the pleasures of being an artist is the opportunity it gives you to be outdoors to capture a scene that excites you. But first you must have an idea in mind or a subject that will make a good painting. During the many years I have been painting in my home area, it seems I have painted all the farms, towns, mills, bridges and landscapes many times over, so I find myself going farther away from home to get new material. Nevertheless, when I travel in the local area or go on short errands, I keep my eyes open for new subjects. A plain-looking site may look different in the change of seasons or time of day.

Nothing is more frustrating than going out for a painting session, finding nothing and returning empty-handed. So it is wise, and it saves time, to have a particular place in mind. Perhaps you will find, as I did, a location so rich with ideas that you'll want to return there again.

Farbotnik Farm is one of the most enduring farm subjects I have ever experienced. I have painted here over a period of more than thirty-five years. It is a collection of old stone buildings, including a barn, a house, a carriage shed and other structures, all endowed with a special quality of age, texture and a time-worn beauty. The paintings on pages 8-9 were done at Farbotnik Farm.

*From the Meadow, 18" × 27½"*

*This painting of Farbotnik Farm was done in the early fall when the light streams in from the east. Tree and barn shadows create long diagonal shapes—a dramatic moment.*

# *Finding the Main Shapes*

I usually start a watercolor by drawing the main shapes of the building first, including the front, sides and rooflines, all in the correct perspective. Windows, doors and chimneys should be just lightly indicated. Place the building slightly off center so it is not smack in the middle of the paper, and carefully check the proportion of height to width. This can be done by measuring with a pencil held at arm's length. With the arm stretched all the way out, hold the pencil upright with the point at the top of the building and the thumb at the bottom or ground line of the building. Turn your hand level to the horizon without moving the thumb and measure the relationship of width to height. Check the number of times the height will go into the width, then mark the spot on the paper. For rooflines, window courses and street curbs, hold the pencil at arm's length, twist the wrist until the slant of the pencil coincides exactly with that of the roof or curb, then

lower your arm without twisting your hand until the side of the pencil rests on the paper in the right pictorial spot. With a little practice you will be able to register slanted lines quite accurately.

I find a safe way to establish correct relationships is to draw or paint a part of the building near the middle of your paper first, including the height, width and placement, then work outwardly relating all other parts of the painting to this one spot. You'll find that the rest of the composition will fit into place correctly.

If trees are involved, allow enough space for them. Very often only a part of a building may be your choice for a composition, such as a front porch or the side of an old house.

Then start to paint from light to dark. If the sky will be included, put it in first; it may be the lightest value. In the early stage of a painting, it is a good idea to establish a dark area, and relate other sections of the watercolor to it.

***Outbuildings, 19" × 28"***

*I tried to closely knit the farm structures to form a cohesive composition. The light sweeps in from the left and tree shadows play across the ground and house in an interesting way. I was close enough to the nearby house to study the beautiful pattern of stonework. Trees changing into fall colors enhance the color scheme.*

After the basic layers of wash are put down, I like to start in one area and finish it as I go along. When shifting lights and shadows occur, put down the darks and lights you want right away and do the quieter areas later. If animals, figures, boats or automobiles are to be used, mark down their size on the paper before they move away. Reference photos can later be used to finish up. I keep hundreds of slides available for these situations.

*To begin this little value and color sketch, I painted in the light tones of sky, grass and driveway. The sky received a light wash of alizarin and Davy's gray. I painted around the pumpkins with pale yellow-green.*

*Then I established the darker values. The barn was done with blue and Payne's gray, the tree with sap green and sepia. The barn and trees silhouetted against the light sky give a rather dramatic effect. The pumpkins were painted with two tones of light and dark orange. I later developed this color sketch with much more detail on a half sheet of paper with figures standing around looking for pumpkins to buy from this front lawn.*

# *Simplify What You See*

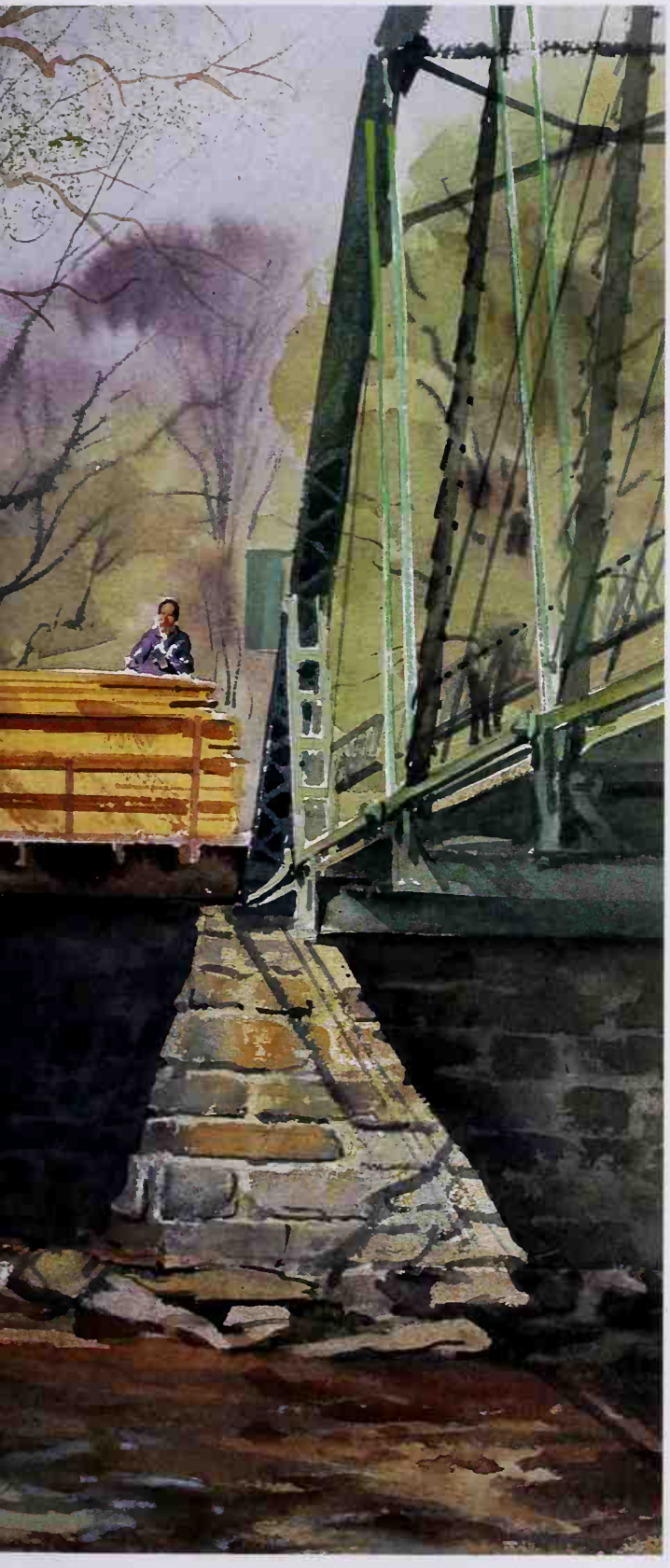
In painting on location, you will usually see more clutter and objects lying around than are necessary for your work. Avoid making your painting too busy or encompassing too much subject matter. Go after the simple shapes. Very rarely does one find a perfectly composed subject ready to be put down as is. It may be necessary to add or subtract something, more often the latter.

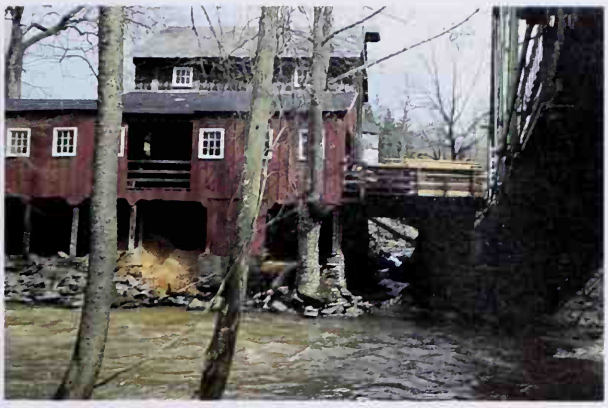
After you reach a point of near completion, take a critical look at your work. Place a temporary mat over it and analyze every part of your painting. Does it hold together? Do parts need darkening or need more emphasis? When you go home, put your painting away overnight. The next day you may see something to improve it.

*This is a famous outdoor market area in south Philadelphia and is particularly active on weekends. Fresh farm produce is displayed in abundance for several blocks along the street. The color, informality and lively activity make for a rich source of subject matter for artists.*

***Italian Market, Philadelphia, 14½" × 21"***

*Looking at the photograph, one could be dismayed by all the disarray of packing crates and boxes, people coming and going, nothing staying in one place, so I thought a free and loose treatment was called for. There is quite a bit of wet-into-wet handling and details indicated by suggestion only. The buildings in the background have been greatly simplified to give emphasis to the foreground huckster. The photo has too many unrelated darks. In my watercolor I selected fewer darks to give a pleasing balance. The painting was done very directly and spontaneously, and I was happy with the result.*





*This is a photograph of Klein's Sawmill. As you can see, it is a very complex subject.*

***Klein's Mill, Rosemont, New Jersey, 20" × 28½"***

*I decided to make a sectional study of this mill, not the whole building. I liked the strong rectangular shapes, both vertical and horizontal masses. To simplify the scene, I eliminated the two trees in the foreground of the photograph. The right side of the photo is too dark, so I waited for an afternoon light, which gave me more interest on the stone foundation of the bridge. I concentrated the light near the middle of the picture, and the small stream with waterfall coming down through the culvert seems to make a focal point, more so than in the photograph. In the photo the water level appears high, but by waiting another day, the stream had subsided enough so I could study the rocks more carefully along the streambed. A figure standing near stacked lumber adds a human touch. This mill is situated in a deep hollow in a wooded valley, and I found several more paintable subjects in the area.*

CHAPTER TWO

# Creating Building Textures

*William Trent House, Trenton, New Jersey, 22″ × 28″*

# Weathered Surfaces

In the demonstrations that follow, I have selected subjects that evoke a timeworn feeling. Time and weather have left their mark, and they are manifested through surface texture. An old stone building has more of a gray appearance than a new one. Bricks collect dust and grime from the atmosphere; moss may collect in the crevices. Unpainted wood dries out and starts to crack and warp. The natural color of the wood comes through where paint has worn away. These textures can present a challenge to the artist.

I have found that by employing my oil and turpentine technique, this feeling can be very well expressed. I have used this method in three of the demonstrations shown here. The following is an explanation of this special technique.

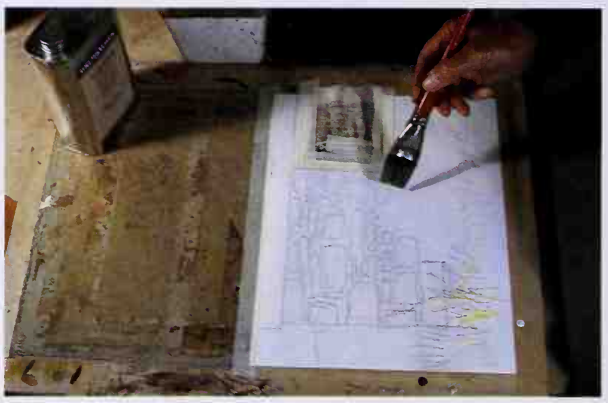
# Oil and Turpentine Patina

I use an oil-and-turpentine patina when I encounter a subject with stone and plaster texture and also for gravelly and uneven ground surfaces. It gives amazing results and it works like this:

First, mask out with newspaper or tape all areas not to be affected, in this case the wood window and foreground areas. Next, put a small amount of turpentine in a shallow cup and squeeze out some light brown, blue and yellow ochre oil paint onto a palette. Very little color is needed. The color you select can be cool or warm depending on the color of the surface you are painting. Take a 2-inch watercolor brush and use water to thoroughly wet the areas not covered by newspaper. With another brush, preferably an oil painting bristle brush, mix the turpentine very thinly into the oil color. Immediately sprinkle the paper with oil color while it's still very wet. You will notice that the oil color will create a fluid reaction on its own and will separate into many channels. Never touch the paper with the brush, only spatter with it.

The paper must lie perfectly flat while you let it dry for a couple of hours. The resulting patina should give you a finely textured surface on which to continue your usual watercolor method.

**Step 1:** *Place masking over any areas to be saved white.*



**Step 2:** *Brush the open area with water.*

**Step 3:** *Next, using your oil brush, mix a small amount of oil paint with turpentine.*

**Step 4:** *Sprinkle the wet paper with oil color. Don't touch the brush to the paper.*

**Step 5:** *Remove the masked area from the paper. Let dry for two hours in a perfectly flat position.*

**Step 6:** *After creating the patina surface in my studio, I return to the barn to paint on location; the painting is about half finished.*

**Step 7:** *Here's the finished painting. Notice how the patina shows through the stonework, giving it added texture.*

# *Painting Stonework*

This stonework building is situated on Farbotnik Farm near my home where I have painted for over thirty-five years. The outbuilding is very old, with the date 1832 carved into one of the cornerstones. It has served as a subject for dozens of my watercolors, mostly in conjunction with other barns and houses on the farm. Notice the three large cornerstones and how they are fitted in alternating courses on the outside wall.

The building material is local limestone and the colors are soft shades of bluish gray, light reds and pale ochres. Each stone is colored differently than the one next to it, and I have tried to paint every stone in the exact location that I saw it on the building.

**Step 1:** *While on location, I drew the composition—the placement of the wall, window, landscape and the springhouse in the middle distance—in pencil. Back at the studio, to make the stone texture more convincing, I decided to use the oil-and-turpentine patina for the underpainting (as demonstrated on the previous pages). I masked out the window and distant landscape first, then applied my spattering method for the patina and let it dry.*

**Step 2:** *I removed the masking and proceeded to paint in the sky, the back woods and the foreground wet-into-wet. I was then ready to lay in the individual stones one by one, following my pencil outline. Near the ground line I purposely let the stones soften and blend together.*

**Step 3:** *With all of the stones in place, I added the window, paying careful attention to the reflections of each pane of glass. Finally, the fence, springhouse and trees were touched up.*

***Stone Barn in the Cotswolds, England, 11" × 17"***

*On a recent trip to England, I painted this farm landscape in the village of Great Barrington as a working sketch for a larger watercolor. On a stretched sheet of paper, I drew in the barn, stone wall and outbuildings. The sky in England always seems to possess a lot of activity. Since they are the lightest in value, I painted in the clouds first with a mixture of cerulean blue and light red. English towns and villages tend to have a predominantly gray appearance. This was the case here, so it became necessary to use some ingenuity and color license to "push" color into the gray areas. The stone colors ran from ochres to browns and bluish grays. The foreground and stone wall were painted in rather loosely with just enough detail to tell what's what.*

***Stone retaining wall***

*This sketch shows a more formal pattern of masonry where all the blocks are rectangular. The color of the stones varied only slightly, and to give them some feeling of solidity, I outlined them on the shadow side with blue gray.*


Randolph Bye

*Union Mills, New Hope, Pennsylvania, 29" × 42". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Louis DellaPenna. Franklin Mint Award, Philadelphia Watercolor Club, 1988.*

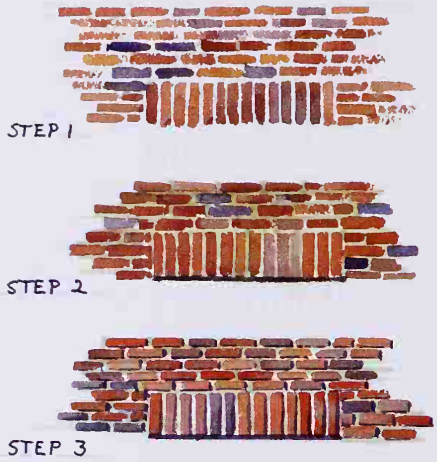
*This old paper mill along the Delaware River had long ago ceased making paper and had fallen into disrepair and been damaged by fire. In the late 1980s, developers renovated the remains along a quarter-mile section of the riverbank, and it was during that stage that I came upon the mill by accident and found this compelling composition. This subject offered a wonderful opportunity to underpaint all the stone and plaster surfaces with my oil and turpentine patina, almost the entire sheet. The mill itself extended hundreds of feet both to the right and left of my chosen spot, but by cropping out everything except this one section, I thought I had found the best design. The Delaware Canal runs along the bottom third of the painting but it is now empty of water. A touch of snow clings to the canal wall and top surfaces here and there and a diagonal shaft of light on the inside wall offsets the rectangular black holes of the window openings. A worker stands on a scaffold repainting a section of brick wall. This was a studio work occupying several days of painting time, but I returned to the subject a number of times to observe color, light and texture. The whole color scheme is muted and I used subtle mixtures of pinks, grays, umbers and ochres. Window openings are pure black.*

# *Painting Brickwork*

**Step 1:** *With a straight-edge, rule out brick courses lightly in pencil. Take a no. 4 square-tipped sable and brush in single bricks side by side. Each course should overlap joints above and below. Vary the color from light red to Indian red or warm gray.*

**Step 2:** *Fill in joints with Davy's gray or Naples yellow.*

**Step 3:** *With a fine-point brush indicate side and bottom shadows under each brick with pale blue.*




## *Brickwork Up Close*

*Small study of a brick wall on a commercial building, 6" × 10"*

*The simplest way to render a brick wall of this type is to lay a light wash of Naples yellow or Davy's gray on the paper first. If there is no perspective involved, I rule out each course of bricks lightly in pencil. I then take a no. 4 sable with a square tip and paint in each brick side by side along every course. I vary the color so that the bricks are not identical. From close proximity the bricks will have thin undershadows. The color of the bricks in this demonstration ranges from blue to brown and different shades of light and Indian reds.*

## *Brickwork From a Distance*

***Storefronts, Danville, Pennsylvania, 14½" × 20½"***

*This is a fine example of Italianate bracketed buildings with much refinement in ornamentation. The front facades are made of brick, the cornices and trim of wood. To give texture to the brickwork, I masked out everything not made of brick. I then made a solution of light red oil paint and turpentine and sprinkled it on the wet paper. This gave me a good patina to work upon. To create a feeling of brick without a lot of detail, I rendered various sections of the front with pen and brown ink, picking out courses of bricks here and there. From my vantage point I could not see cement joints; the bricklaying was very close-fitting. I would like to point out that in painting any building from a distance of one hundred feet or more it is best to suggest a few bricks or stones, rather than render each one you see. Overall colors and values are more important.*

***William Trent House, Trenton, New Jersey, 22" × 28"***

*This Georgian-style house was built in 1719. Rendering the detailed brickwork took me quite a bit of time. I had to be careful to lay each course of bricks in the proper perspective. Although it appears each brick is individually painted, actually I skipped across the paper in some places. Good lighting is important in this study.*

# *Painting Weathered Wood*

**Step 1:** *This is the gable-end view of an old wood shed. I started with a light wash of Davy's gray over the entire area, and while the wash was still wet, brushed in some ultramarine blue and light red.*

**Step 2:** *I went over the first wash after it dried with a little deeper tone of the same colors, letting the first wash show through. I then indicated dark shadows under the eaves.*

**Step 3:** *I dry-brushed a reddish color over the gray and, with a small brush with the hairs spread flat, I painted in the knots of the pine boards and the dark cracks between them.*



*It is not difficult to achieve a feeling of weathered wood. It can be done in two or three steps. Using an old corn crib door as a subject, I laid in a blended wash of grays made of neutral tint and added a little light red and cerulean blue into it. After drying, I took the same colors and repainted the wood with a much drier brush. The overlay should be done with a quick movement of the brush so that it skips across the paper, letting the underlayer show through. Lastly, with a fine-point sable, I painted in the cracks between the boards and where wood had splintered. Take care with rusty strap hinges, door locks or latches, and paint them in separately.*

*Ramp, Fish House, Port Clyde, Maine, 15" × 21". Collection of Ms. Catherine Bye.*

*A study in gray and green. This old fish house is badly in need of a paint job, but I painted it the way I saw it, weathered wood on an overcast day. I rather liked the zigzag pattern of the ramp and lumber leaning against it. The two lobster traps on the right repeat the design in a modest way. A somber mood prevails in this watercolor; simplicity is the key here.*


*Weissport, Pennsylvania, 15" × 21". Private collection.*

*An abandoned railroad station in a bad state of disrepair. The dark, unpainted wood evoked a nostalgic feeling of a bygone era. The building has now been razed.*

# *Painting Natural Elements*

Because buildings do not exist in an empty scene, but usually share the stage with several natural elements, I want to devote at least a couple of pages to the "supporting players." The most common natural elements you will have to paint when featuring man-made structures in your paintings are trees and skies.

It's a good idea to continually do studies, both in pencil and watercolor, of all different kinds of trees and skies. The variety of each is abundant, and in the case of skies, I'd say infinite. Here are just a few examples of studies I've done. As you can see, the degree of finish can vary, from the quick sketch of a fir tree or locust tree to a near-finished painting of an Irish sky.

**Step 1:** *In this watercolor sketch, I drew in with pencil the main outline of a white pine tree and, to give it some spatial relationship, I washed in the foreground and background areas with light green, sap green and blue.*

**Step 2:** *I then painted the pine boughs with Prussian blue and sepia, using a medium-sized flat brush. The tree trunk was painted last with Payne's gray and alizarin crimson.*


***Locust Tree, 10" × 14"***

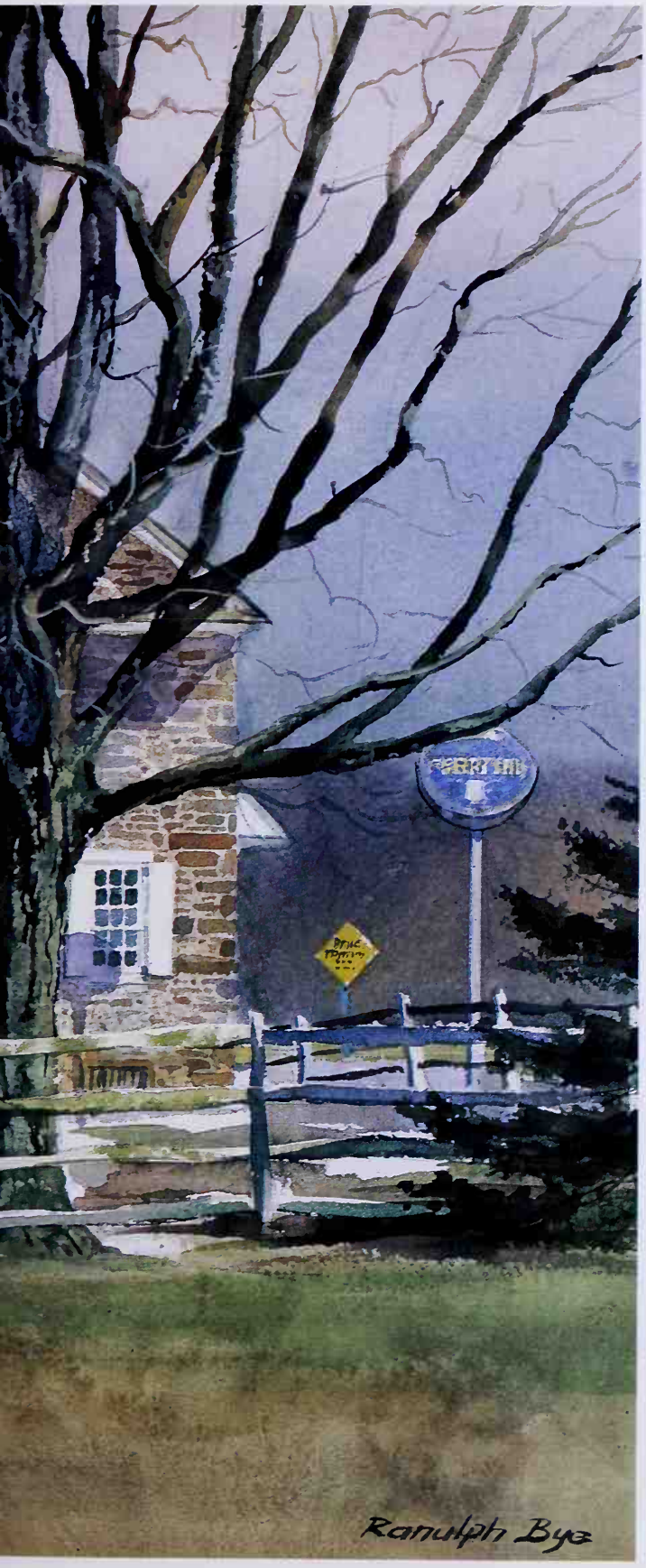
*This was a very loosely painted exercise. I began this sketch with a medium-sized, flat sable brush dipped in Thalo yellow-green mixed with cerulean blue and some raw sienna. Looking for the large foliage shapes, I brushed in the color rather quickly. Notice how the sky breaks through in several areas. After this dried the tree trunks went in with some brown and blue-black. After ten or fifteen seconds, I scraped out highlights with my pointed palette knife.*

*After the Storm, 14" × 19½"*

*This was a very exciting sky, full of movement as the clouds were breaking up after a storm. Patches of blue sky were beginning to appear. I began by lightly spraying the paper with water. I then took a large wash brush and dipped it into a mixture of cerulean blue and ultramarine, and using a diagonal movement across the paper, I let the color flow in. I quickly followed through, painting the undercloud shadows with Davy's gray, light red and ultramarine blue. Notice how the combination of hard and soft edges gives sparkle to the effect. The green field and back hillside were then painted in, followed by the dark woods and foreground embankment. The trees in front were done last after the paper was dry.*

*Ennistymon, County Clare, Ireland, 14" × 20½"*

*In Ireland, as in England, there is often a feeling of turbulence in the cloud activity. This sketch was painted on location on a half sheet of stretched paper. The sky in this watercolor was painted in a similar way to* After the Storm.




CHAPTER THREE

# Using Color Effectively

*Ferry Inn, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, 16" × 21"*

# *Understanding Color*

To understand color a few definitions are necessary. The color we use to paint with is called *pigment* and it can be divided into three dimensions: *hue*, *value* and *chroma*. *Hue* refers to a particular color, such as red, blue or green. But hues may vary in value or intensity.

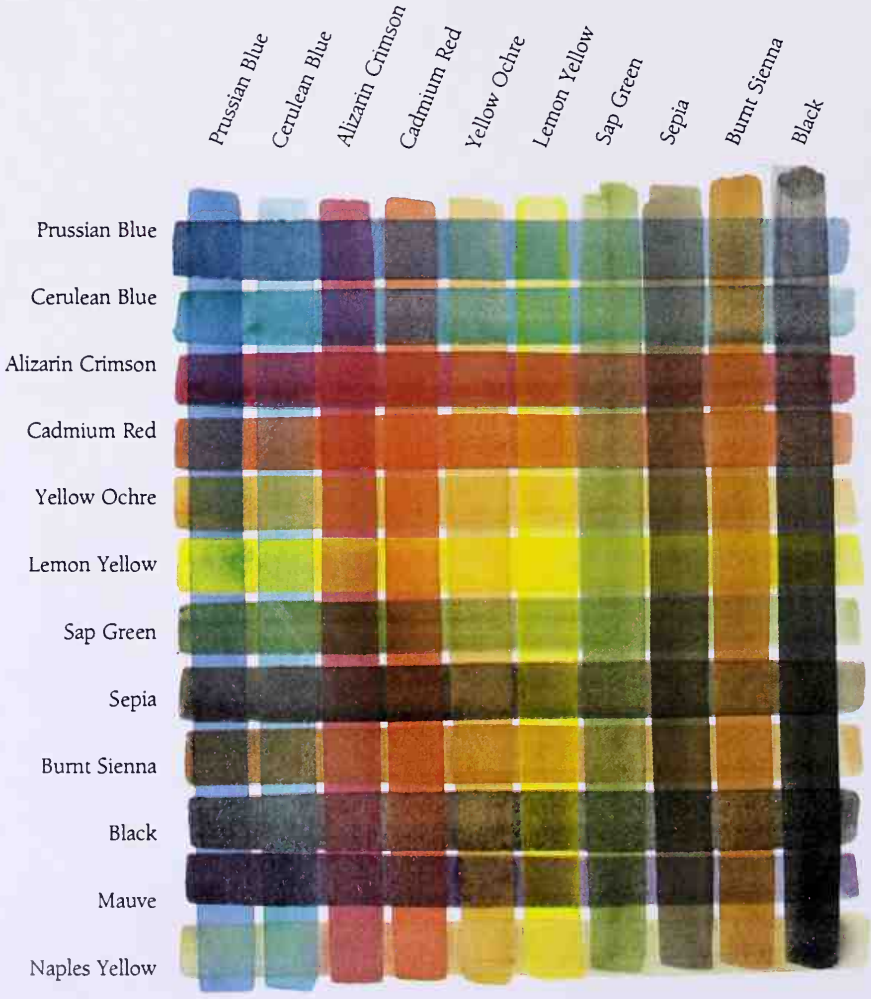
*Value* refers to depth of color or degree of lightness or darkness. Thus a light and a dark blue are of the same hue but differ in value.

*Chroma* or intensity refers to the purity or strength of a color. Thus viridian green is a green of very high chroma. Sap green has a less intense chroma or saturation.

Color can be divided into two basic groups: primary and secondary colors. The three primaries are red, yellow and blue and their three secondaries are orange, green and violet. They are called secondaries because each is a mixture of two primaries.

To understand how to use color in painting, it is important to comprehend the mixture of two or more colors and the resulting change that these colors create. For instance, when I mix yellow and blue, I get green. Likewise, if I mix black with white the result is gray. Rarely do I use a color straight from the tube. I may occasionally use cadmium orange for the light side of a pumpkin or cadmium red light for a flower, but most painting in nature is made up of neutralized colors that can be mixed from any number of pigment combinations.

To illustrate this, I have made a color chart below using ten colors from yellow to Prussian blue placed both vertically and horizontally. I first brushed a horizontal stripe of each color across a sheet of paper. After all of these stripes were dry, I took the same colors and made twelve vertical stripes overlapping the horizontal ones. The change in hue can be seen when one color crosses over another.



Light Clouds

Naples Yellow
Cerulean Blue
Light Red

Dark Clouds

Ultramarine Blue
Light Red

Light Grass or Fields

Cerulean Blue
Yellow Ochre

Warm Clouds

Ultramarine
Burnt Sienna

Dark Shadows of
Stone Buildings or Streets

Light Red
Blue, Mauve

Rooftops or Brickwork

Burnt Sienna
Permanent Magenta

Dark Evergreens,
Pine trees, etc.

Prussian Blue
Sepia

Light Evergreens,
Bushes, etc.

Sap Green
Sepia

Stonework, Houses,
Walls, etc.

Davy's Gray
Yellow Ochre

# *Frequently Used Color Mixtures*

There are dozens of color mixtures you can make, even from a fairly limited palette. Some of the mixtures I use most frequently are shown above. I have made nine squares and within each are two or three pigments together wet-into-wet. I let one color flow into the other naturally, and by not mixing the pigments too thoroughly, I achieved more variety of texture. Two complementary colors are used in each mixture, warm colors against cool ones. These are the mixtures I use most often when painting clouds, houses, streets and grass areas. Of course, I use many others as the need arises. Practicing these mixtures will help you come up with other interesting color variations. For example, I may at times use Prussian blue and cadmium yellow for painting foliage, or burnt sienna and cerulean blue for cloud forms.

A word of warning: If used in equal strength, the two complementary pigments neutralize each other completely. If, however, complementary colors are mixed in unequal strengths, unusual and desirable results may be obtained.

I have no qualm about using either black or white with any other color to achieve more subtlety of hue. However, I do not use white as a crutch to paint a light area, only to touch up in a small spot. The purer method is to mask out lights beforehand. I do not follow a given formula for painting a particular item such as brick or stone; a lot has to do with my visual interpretation of the scene—what kind of day it is, bright or dull, warm or cool.

# Color Harmony

I have noticed in studying some English watercolorists that their paintings have a lovely feeling of unity and tonal presence. This is accomplished by building up several layers of color, one after the other. Color will not become muddy as long as each layer is allowed to dry. The building up of pigment in this way assures that each has a chance to blend with the others and no raw pigment is seen.

As mentioned earlier, I seldom use raw pigment straight from the tube, except when confronted with small objects or colorful fruits and flowers.

I find that watercolor assumes more harmony when colors are neutralized to avoid strong chromatic intensity. Prussian blue and viridian have strong saturation if used directly, but by mixing these colors with a warm color such as burnt sienna or sepia, they become much more subdued—more related to colors found in nature.

## *Museum Plaza*

In *Museum Plaza* (below), I decided to give the subject a warm tone. The sky occupies about one-third of the picture area, and I did not want a bright blue sky which would jump out too much. So I applied a wash of pale burnt sienna over the entire sheet, except for the light side of the house, which I left white. After this dried, I repainted the sky two more times with mixed washes of Prussian blue, sepia and light red. To keep the washes under control, I masked out the houses first. The sky now stays back where it belongs.

The houses went in next. Working from light to dark, I

***Museum Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey, 19" × 30"***

*My fondness for Victorian architecture inspired me to paint this row of houses. They were built in the Second Empire and Romanesque styles of the late nineteenth century. Because the buildings contained so much ornate embellishment, I had to keep the sky and foreground as simple as possible. The modern building on the left contrasts sharply with the older houses along the street. To give this complex subject color harmony, I applied a light wash of burnt sienna over the whole sheet before painting anything else.*

***Grist Mill, Alexauken Creek Road, 21" × 30"***

*This mill is still standing, but only as a ruin. The beauty of the stonework still remains and I wanted to capture the light and tree shadows on the end wall. Repeating the same colors in the foreground and background helped lend harmony to this painting.*

used various shades of cadmium red, light red and alizarin crimson for the brick color. I painted in the walkways with warm grays; the trees and grassy areas with ochres, sap green and ultramarine blue. The muted tones of reds, greens and blues hold the picture together.

In painting from nature, one has to visually evaluate whether a color you see is warm or cool and establish that color's intensity. In my experience, I have found that sepia is a very satisfactory color to mix with blue or green to get a warm tone. I also use cerulean blue a great deal to achieve a cooler shade, since it is not too bright or dominant when mixed with yellows or browns.

Although it's important to accurately evaluate colors in the scene, keep in mind that the relation of colors in the picture to each other is far more important than their relation to the colors in the actual scene. In your painting, you may have to change individual colors to make them harmonize.

## *Grist Mill*

In my watercolor, *Grist Mill, Alexauken Creek Road* (above), painted in winter, the tones of the trees, stone mill and foreground all have a warmish color, which gives the painting harmony.

It is considered axiomatic that cool colors recede and warm colors advance. This may be true when observing a distant landscape; however, there are occasions when this principle does not hold true. The woods behind the mill were distinctly warm in tone with a few cool spots here and there, but because the foreground trees and the shadow side of the mill are so much darker, the woods recede very well.

The value contrast also contributes to this effect. Notice also that I repeated the same colors in the foreground as in the background, which gives the painting unity.

# *Value*

Color must be considered, but value is infinitely more important. A painting does not come off well if values are too light or if there is not enough contrast from light to dark. In my watercolor of *Henze's Place* (below), I painted a winter scene with a range of values from white to black and several intermediate grays or darks in between.

## *Henze's Place*

I started this watercolor by drawing in the composition first, then washing in the sky with pale pink made of Na-

*Henze's Place*, 15½" × 21"

*I painted this watercolor right after a light snowfall, and the sun was out bright and sharp. I wanted to capture the strong lights and darks of the trees and sheds. Bill Henze, who owns this farm, has a sawmill in his backyard. He can easily handle the huge logs, like the ones in the foreground, with his forklift tractor.*

ples yellow and alizarin crimson. After this dried, the clouds were painted in with bluish violet, and the dark woods in the center with mauve and sepia. The snow, of course, is left white paper and the tree on the right is black. These first five value components gave me the range of light to dark. The rest of the painting was completed by just relating each part to what had been done. The color scheme in this painting is fairly simple – mostly browns, blues, purples and black.

In painting a colorful scene or buildings with different hues, the problem of value becomes more confusing. A medium blue and a medium red are entirely different in appearance, though they may be exactly the same in value. It is difficult to separate value from color to determine whether the values of a variety of colors are the same or different. In the country villages of Ireland you will find a street with pink, green, blue and gray houses all in a row. In sunlight or in an overcast they may all have more or less the same value.

To keep your painting from breaking apart with too many value shapes, it is important to look for the larger pattern. I try to let my darks hang together and let the lights do the same. Values in your watercolor should be more unified than they usually are in the actual scene you are painting.

# *Color Relationships*

The terms *color harmony* and *color relationships* are nearly interchangeable. As mentioned earlier, color harmony can be achieved even when a painting may have an overall warm quality or a cool feeling.

### *Victorian District*

When we speak of color relationships, it sometimes means the amount of one color used in relation to another. To illustrate, in my watercolor *Victorian District* (pages 36-37), the facades of the buildings in the city block are predominantly yellowish, but the small areas of blue on the billboard and top cornice of the building on the left balance well with the two areas of brick. It gives the composition an interesting color balance as well as variety of shapes in the overall scheme of things. So it is the relationship of warm and cool colors on the buildings against the gray sky and street that sets off a pleasing effect.

In my own work, I tend to paint buildings or landscapes in subdued colors, but a bright object in the composition will call more attention to itself because the adjacent colors are more neutral. All colors are affected by their immediate neighbors. On a brick house, a window reflecting the blue sky will appear brighter because of the contrast in hue. Orange makes adjacent colors look bluer. Green makes adjacent colors appear redder.

In another context, dark colors emphasize the lightness of contiguous colors, and vice versa. Dark or dirty colors make adjacent colors seem brighter, while the bright ones tend to make the dull ones even duller. Using only subdued colors, one can sometimes develop a sparkling composition by playing one against the other.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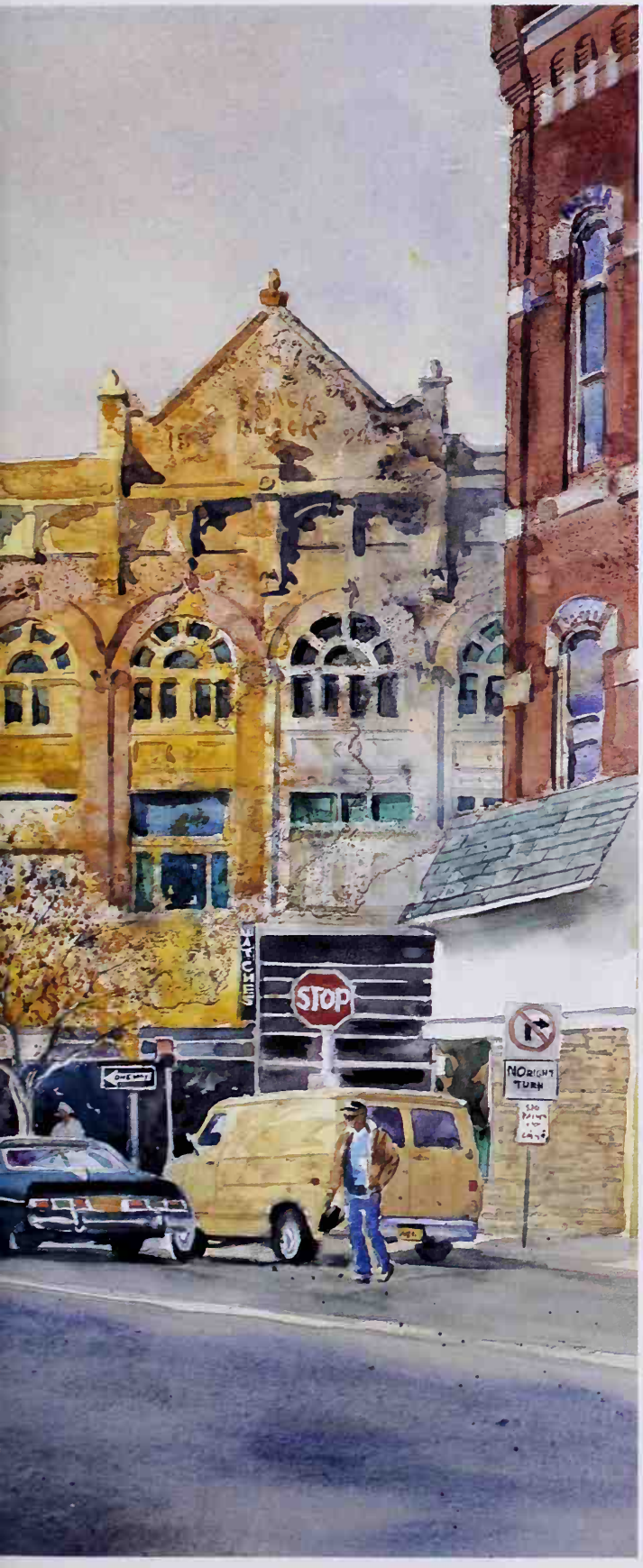



***Victorian District, Chester, Pennsylvania, 20½" × 27". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ranulph Bye.***

*This watercolor reflects my interest in Victorian architecture. The scene shown here was found in Chester, Pennsylvania, a dozen miles southwest of Philadelphia. This town has been going through bad economic times, but I was struck by the variety of building facades in this rather seedy section of the city. The upper floors with their round arch windows show a "Richardsonian Romanesque" influence.*

*I used my oil-and-turpentine patina to give some of the buildings a time-worn texture. Most of the painting was painted from a slide, but with an on-the-spot color sketch, I was able to come off with a careful interpretation of the subject. I made use of a complementary color scheme with yellow as my dominant color and various blues as my complementary balance. It doesn't usually work to use equal amounts of complements. One should dominate.*

# *Light*

Light plays an important part in painting buildings, so I like to paint them on clear bright days if possible. The shape and form of a building are much more evident when there is a strong contrast between light and shade. Light also brings out the color of stone more prominently, as shown in *Ferry Inn* (far right). It is advisable to choose an oblique viewpoint to observe your subject so the front and side can be seen from one spot. When the angle of light changes during the course of a day, the shadows also change, sometimes diminishing the exciting pattern. If a work cannot be finished in one session, I will return at the same time within the next day or two to capture the same lighting conditions. I usually take color slides of buildings just in case I cannot get back to the scene right away. In that case, I finish the watercolor from the photo. Also, sunlight on a house changes slightly every day. As the tilt of the Earth in its orbit changes a little day after day, the direction of light striking a house moves as well. I have noticed this when I carry a work over for more than a week.

Though bright days have some advantages, painting buildings should not be limited to clear weather conditions. I have painted buildings many times under cloudy skies or during snow or fog. Structures then become a simple flat form or silhouette and lend themselves to a particular mood.

***Ferry Inn, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania***

*(Top) This is my line drawing in pencil. With line, you can show the contour of a building and indicate placement of parts. A line drawing will tend to look a bit flat.*

*(Above) Here is the same drawing with a gray wash applied to the sky and background, and a cast shadow painted on the house. Although the first sketch shows some perspective from the front of the house to the back, the wash drawing makes this house more three dimensional by bringing dark against the light. Of course it is possible to paint a building without a strong light on it, as on an overcast day for instance, but I prefer to paint it when the days are clear and the play of light and shadow brings out the color and form more distinctly.*


*Ferry Inn, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, 16" × 21"*

*This is a historic tavern where Washington and his army camped before Christmas, 1776, the date of the famous crossing of the Delaware River. Here again, we have a beautiful example of Colonial architecture and fine stonework for which Bucks County, Pennsylvania, is famous. The dark sky and bare trees give this painting a stark, wintry quality.*


KEEP
RIGHT


CHAPTER FOUR

# Perspective and Architectural Details

*Green Sergeant's Bridge, 21" × 29"*

A good drawing in pencil is a basic requirement for a successful watercolor regardless of subject matter. If I am painting a building, I have to know more than just where to place the color. Every area of the paper must be planned beforehand to avoid mistakes later on.

When I encounter a subject with buildings, I most certainly will have to get the perspective right. This means making the elements of my picture—the street, houses, windows, rooflines, figures, etc.—recede into space in the right proportion.

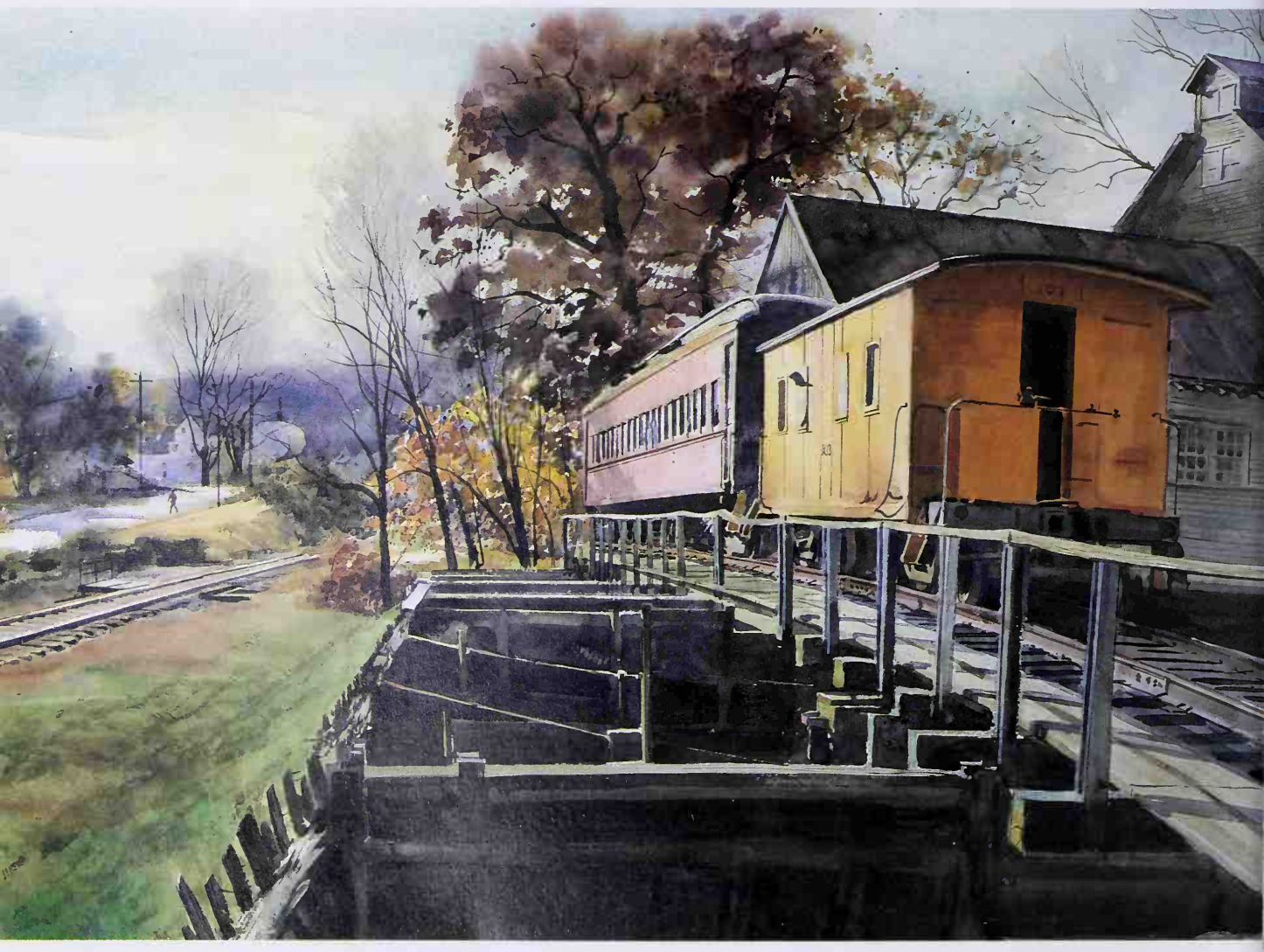
The basis of perspective is the vanishing point. All parallel lines of a building will appear to converge on this point and on the horizon line, which is at the eye level of the artist. This means that no matter where I am standing, the horizon line also coincides with my eye level.

***Wycombe Coal Bins, Wycombe, Pennsylvania, 21″ × 29″. Collection of Lambertville Station.***

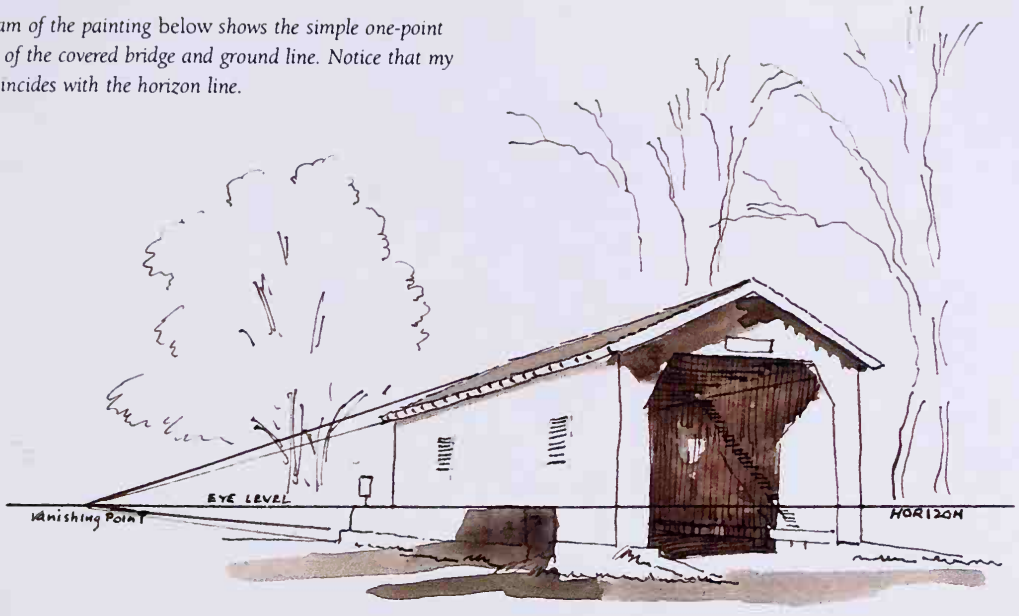
*Here's an example of one-point perspective, where all parallel lines appear to converge on a vanishing point. The walkway on the right not only leads the eye into the composition, but also points the way to the vanishing point in the distance.*

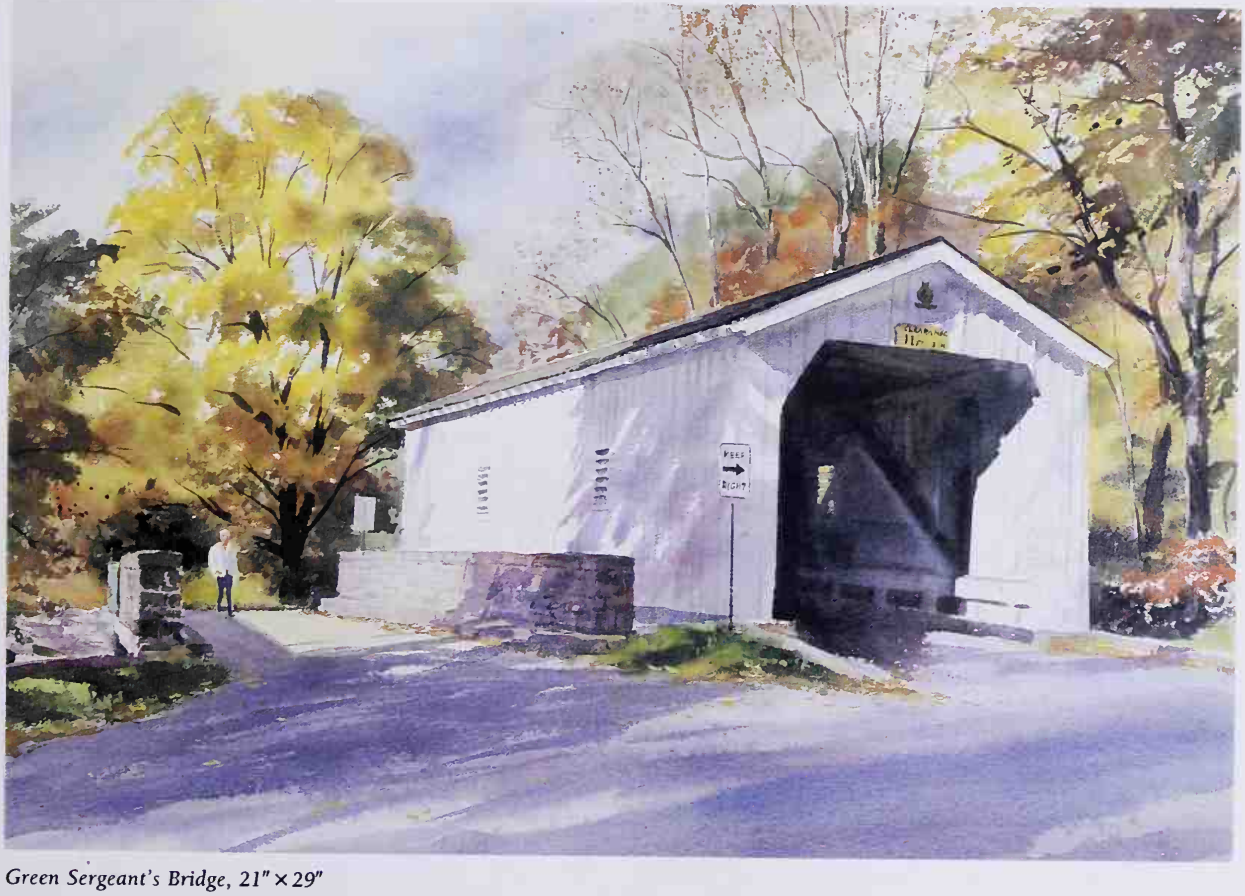
*These coal bins were once used by a local lumber, coal and feed dealer to store coal for distribution in the local community. The demise of the need for coal means the siding becomes a temporary parking spot for a railroad car and caboose.*

*The sharp autumn light offered a chance to play up a strong value contrast of the cars against the coal bins and the mill behind.*



*This diagram of the painting* below *shows the simple one-point perspective of the covered bridge and ground line. Notice that my eye level coincides with the horizon line.*



***Green Sergeant's Bridge, 21" × 29"***

*The only authentic covered bridge still extant in New Jersey was built in 1750 and rebuilt a hundred years later. This watercolor was painted over a period of two days during a beautiful fall setting. The long autumn shadows in front and upon the bridge excited me very much. The strong dark interior against the white created an eye-catching center of interest.*

***Gables and Porches, Lambertville, New Jersey, 15" × 21"***

*One-point perspective is very evident here. The curb of the street and the horizontal lines of the houses converge to a vanishing point just beyond the car in the distance. Eye level runs through the rooftops of the two cars and the heads of the standing figures.*

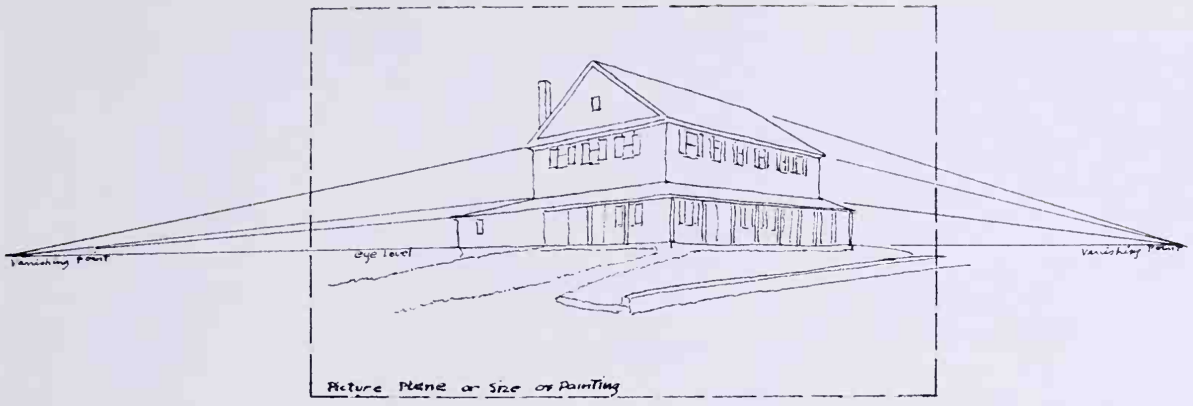
*A common error I have found in students' work is that, in street scenes, the street angle runs uphill too sharply instead of lying level with the ground. Check this line with the horizon line first.*

For example, take a look at the schematic I have drawn of the William Penn Center (right, top). Notice how the rooflines and baselines converge to vanishing points to both the right and left somewhere outside the picture plane on the horizon line. Meanwhile, the vertical lines remain vertical.

Sometimes there will be a situation where groups of buildings are not parallel to each other. They will then have their own separate vanishing points. On the other hand, when I am drawing a house from a front elevation or dead center, there is no perspective to worry about; all lines are either vertical or horizontal.

To get the angle of a line running sharply away, try holding up your pencil on the line, see what angle it makes with the vertical, and bring the pencil down immediately onto the paper, looking up again to check. Be aware that ground lines below your eye level go *up* to the right or left; lines above eye level go *down* to right or left. In the course of time and with experience, drawing buildings in correct perspective comes without much difficulty. (For a more in-depth guide to learning about perspective, see *Perspective Without Pain* by Phil Metzger, North Light Books, 1992.)

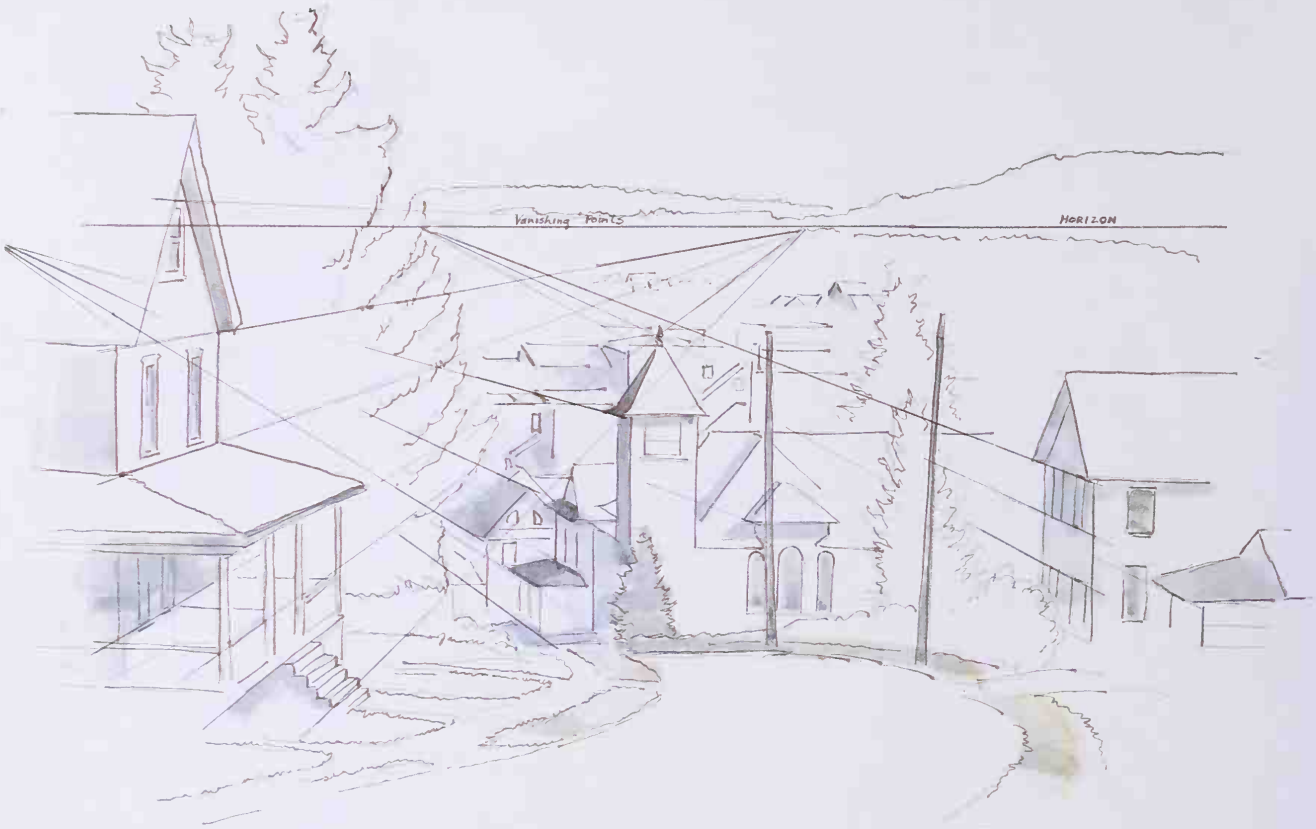
After I have laid out the building in proper perspective, I can then draw in where the windows, doors and chimneys go. Some houses contain a lot of detail, such as corner brackets, cornices, shutters, etc., and these will have to be considered before I start to paint. If cars and figures appear in my painting, I get them in right away before they move, or I allow placement for them. I also make a note on the paper where lights and shadows occur; these change during the course of a day.




*This diagram shows two vanishing points, to the right and left of the meeting house. Note that from my vantage point, my eye level is on a line with the base of the building.*


**William Penn Center, Falls Meeting, Fallsington, Pennsylvania, 16" × 24"**

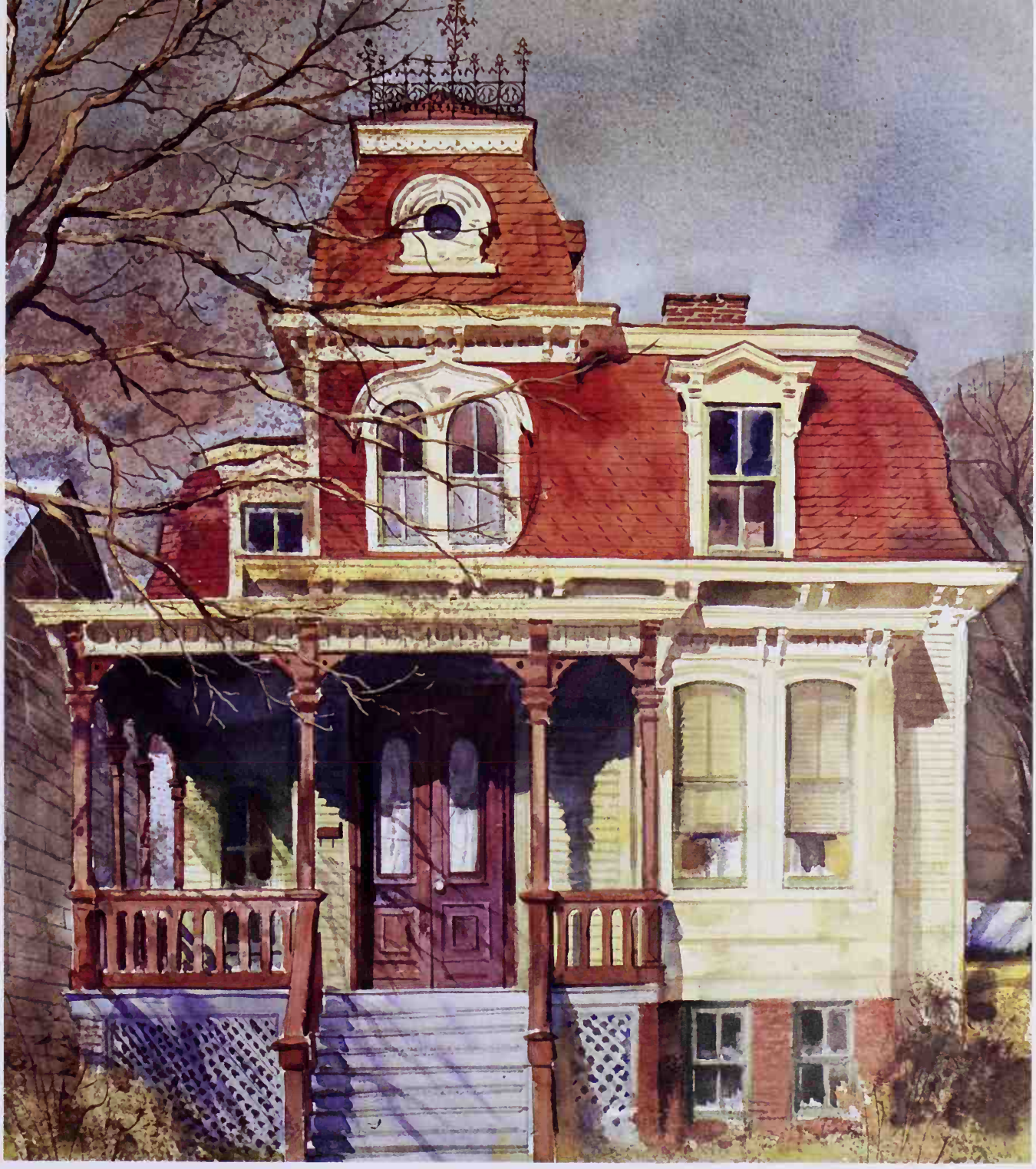
*A fine example of a Friends Meeting House of stone construction built in 1787. I painted this watercolor on location after having drawn it from a slide earlier. I chose a winter setting because it provided the most favorable opportunity to view the building with the least amount of foliage obstruction. The morning light gave me the best chance to capture the angled light on the end gable, and the tree shadows in the foreground help set back the building in a dignified manner.*




***Village Street in Montgomery, Pennsylvania, 14½" × 21"***

*This is an example of a subject with multiple vanishing points. The horizon line is very high, and I am looking down a street showing several buildings below my eye level. Because the houses are not parallel, they each have their own vanishing points; all window lines, rooflines and porch lines go up to the horizon.*

*Here, again, a subject with multiple vanishing points. This time, however, the horizon line (my eye level) is very low, about even with the porch floor.*



*Victorian House, Middletown, New York, 20" × 16"*

*This charming Victorian house embodies many of the gimcracks of the period—a mansard tower with porthole dormers, iron roof cresting, paired windows, veranda-like porch and tall first-floor windows. This watercolor was painted from a dead-center position and no perspective was evident on the horizontal.*

# *Common Errors*

In the workshops I have given and when I have taken a group of students out to paint on site, I have often observed a number of common errors being made in drawing and perspective. These errors mainly have to do with placement of the subject matter, achieving balance without boring symmetry, being more careful with perspective, avoiding placing the center of interest in dead center, and drawing objects in correct proportion.

On these pages I have illustrated a number of the most common problems, as well as my suggestions for solutions to those problems.

Problem: *A row of houses in a small town showing a street rising much too sharply. The street has no perspective.*

Solution: *The same street showing the curb, windows and rooflines receding to a vanishing point on the horizon running about one-third the way up the picture.*

Problem: *Covered bridge crossing a creek—a fine motif but badly conceived. The tree hugging the side of the painting on the extreme left is awkward.*

Solution: *Bringing in more trees creates better balance both to the left and right.*

Problem: *The tree trunk on the right is much too wide at the bottom.*

Solution: *Tree trunks are columnar in shape and flair out only a few inches above the ground line.*

Problem: *The houses along a country road are too much the same size and placed equally distant from the sides of the picture. Such a composition creates a hole in the middle.*

Solution: *Bringing the house on the left into the foreground makes a better balance with the house in back. Balance without symmetry.*

Problem: *Lobster boat unloading at wharf. The point where the bow of boat meets the end of wharf is too close, causing an eye pocket. Also the point where the roof of the cabin coincides with the distant shoreline shows bad placement.*

Solution: *Boat has been moved further away from the dock and the distant shoreline has been lowered below the cabin roofline, improving the composition.*

# *Architectural Details*

I have a fondness for rendering architectural details in buildings, provided I am close enough to study them. Details of cornices, brackets, stonework, spindled porches and decorative slate roofing can add refinement to a painting and richness to design.

Some artists with infinite patience can do this work with photographic realism, but I prefer a more suggestive approach. For instance, if I'm painting bricks, shingles or stone walls, I can do a lot by suggesting a few here and there or by using a dry brush or an oil-and-turpentine patina. I believe getting the feeling of a building or capturing a certain light on it is more important than getting every little detail just so.

On the following pages, I'll show you how I render a number of common architectural details found on houses and other buildings throughout the country. Remember, though, that details are subject to the same careful planning, drawing and perspective process as the buildings themselves, and should not just be pasted on at the end.

***A roof and chimney detail of a house in Georgetown, Colorado***

*The shingle roof was done in drybrush with a few shingle courses indicated here and there. Diagonal shadow shapes in simple washes help to model the form in this sketch.*

*Corner turret and porch detail of a house in Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania*

*The hexagonal turret was carefully studied to render each window frame in correct perspective. Spindles along the porch frieze were individually painted with dark blue spaces between each one.*

*Porch detail of a country store*

*Strong light on the porch frieze is repeated in the shadow on the front entrance.*


*Detail of the Stadsschouwburg Tower at the Leidseplein in Amsterdam*


*The lampposts on Amstel bridge over Amstel River in Amsterdam*

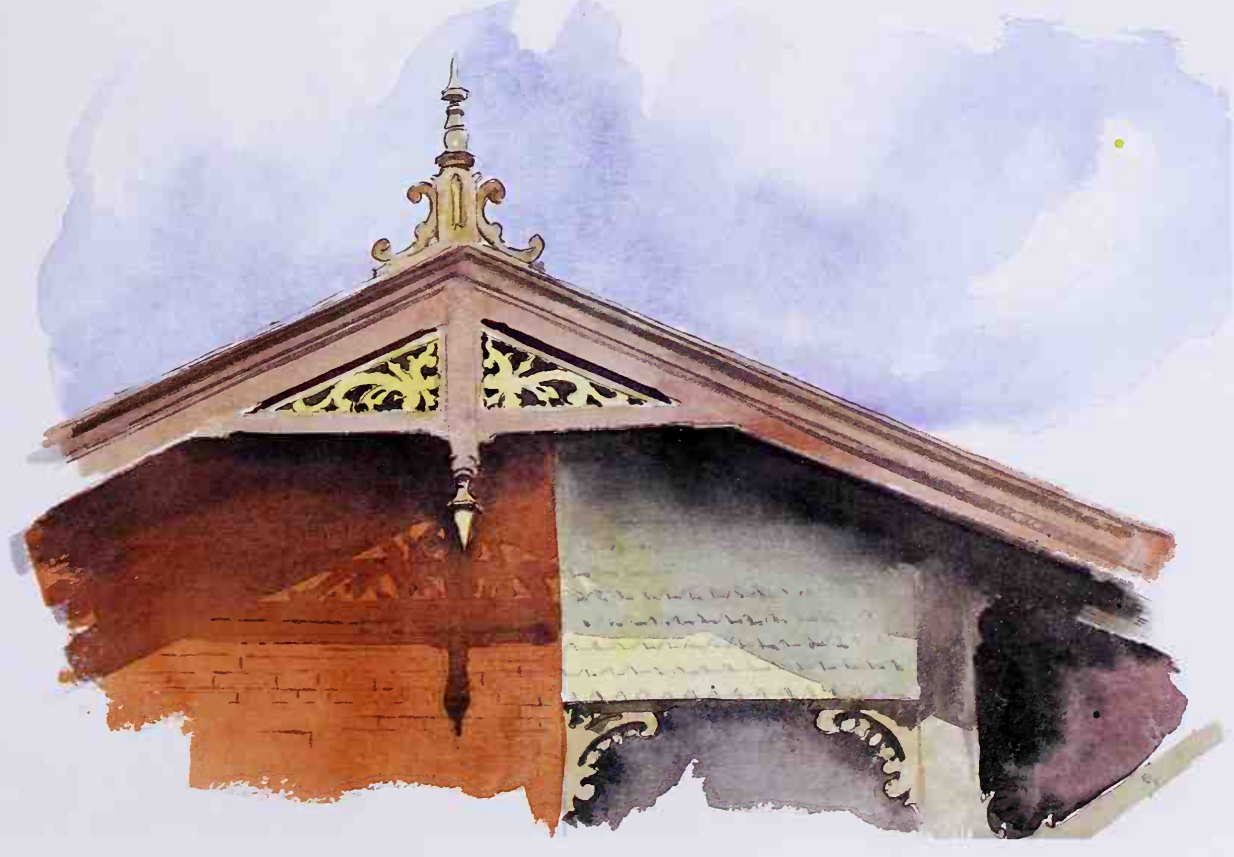

*A commercial building along Lackawanna Avenue in Scranton, Pennsylvania*

***Mansard roof with convex and concave sides, Port Henry, New York***

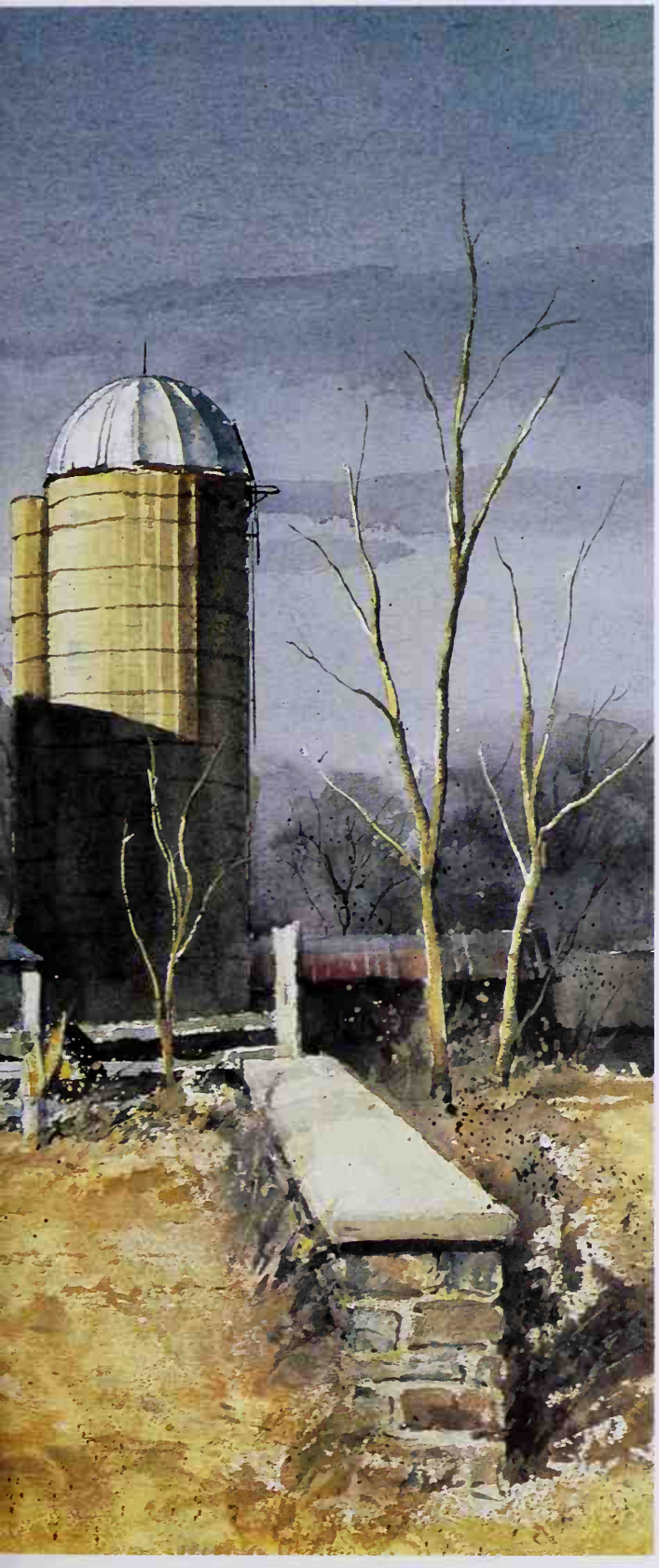
*First drawn in brown pen and ink and then gone over with warm sepia, light red and cerulean blue. Notice careful detailing of the brackets under the cornice.*

***Gable detail of a railroad station, Collegeville, Pennsylvania***

*The scrollwork on top was carefully drawn and painted in a flat wash. Brick and shingle details were only suggested. The shadow from the overhanging roof was painted in last.*




Randolph Boyle



CHAPTER FIVE

# Composition and Design

*Old Barn, Baptistown, New Jersey, 21″ × 29″*

# What Is Good Composition?

After the fundamental elements of watercolor have been mastered or at least understood with some degree of proficiency, the most important thing to consider is good composition. What is good composition? It is the harmonious arrangement of shapes in a painting, so that each area is in correct proportion and has a pleasing variety of color, value and texture. Also, there should be only one center of interest. The eye should be directed to this center by the use of line and emphasis of color and value contrasts. The eye should never be directed out of the picture completely.

There is no formula for good composition or for the pattern of pathways you can make. These patterns can be rectangular, circular, triangular, or take a zig-zag turn. Your painting can have a low horizon or a high horizon. Usually when doing a building, it should be the main focal point, with figures, animals or trees subordinate to it.

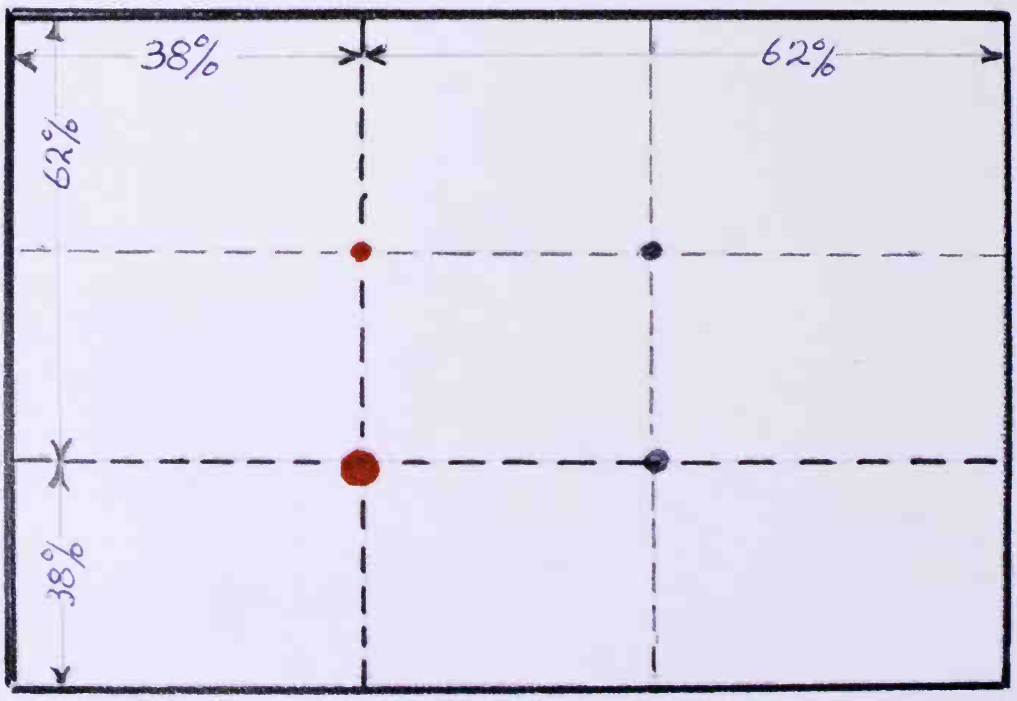
# Golden Section

A well-known guide to explain good proportion in composition is the theory of the "Golden Section," a principle going back hundreds of years. The Golden Section, as shown in the diagram below, illustrates the best place to establish the center of interest – a spot located 38 percent vertically or horizontally versus 62 percent vertically or horizontally, as shown by the large red dot. The three other small dots would serve equally well.

To illustrate this principle of the Golden Section, I have found a wonderful old barn to paint. It is frame construction, and the wood is weathered and dried out. The light is coming from the left, casting strong, sharp shadows across the front. The silo behind is half cast in shadow.

I felt that this desolate scene called for a dark sky and wintry trees. The animals are gone and one senses a feeling of decay. The barn and silo make up the dominant theme so I kept them large but not too crowded for the composition. The stone wall was added to break up the foreground and to lead the eye into the center of interest.

To apply the theory of the Golden Section to this painting, I would say that the large open door leading into a dark interior serves as the center of interest. Compare the location of this door to the diagram of the Golden Section.



*Photograph of an old barn in Baptistown, New Jersey*

*A preliminary pencil drawing with a few watercolor washes establishes the composition, values, and some textures and colors.*

*Old Barn, Baptistown, New Jersey, 21" × 29"*

# *Composition Variations*

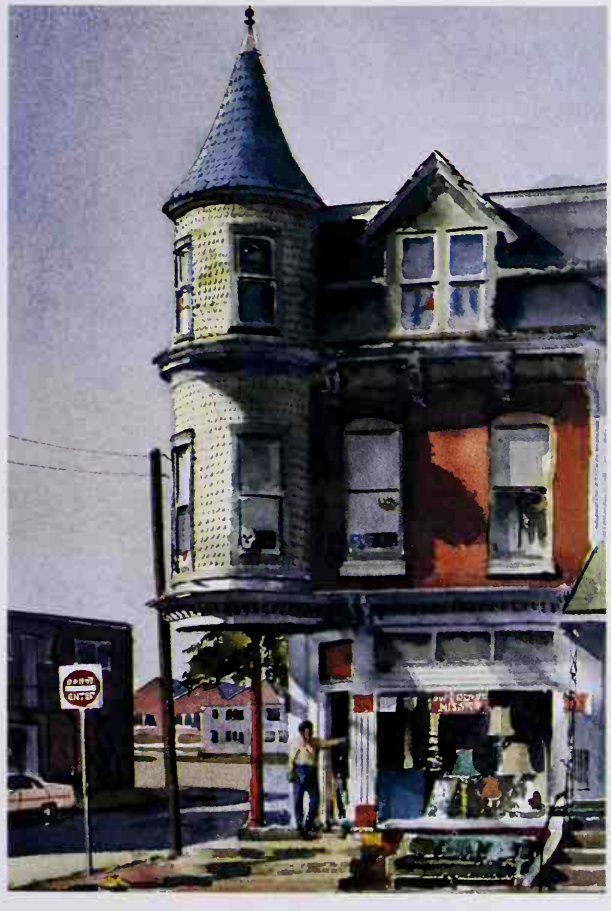
A perfect composition is seldom found in nature just waiting to be copied exactly as you see it. Something will have to be simplified or taken out of the scene, and shapes must be arranged so there is balance. A big mass can be balanced with a small mass. A composition should always have pleasing abstract qualities even if it is not pure abstraction. Forget the subject matter at first. Are the shapes big and small, cool and warm, dark and light? You should always think these things out before you develop your painting into a series of recognizable objects.

When I start a watercolor, I look for an interesting pattern or an exciting feeling of light on a building. I have a predilection to paint old houses, barns and streetscapes with vintage architecture. These show character and age, and I want to capture the mood these subjects suggest. Often the arrangement of shapes you create will set the mood for the painting. Following are several examples of various ways to compose a painting with a building as the center of interest.

***Thatched Cottage***

*These two paintings make use of a similar compositional plan. In each the building is the center of interest, though it is not the largest thing in the picture. Two main principles are used to focus our attention on the building in each case. First, both the cottage and the church are located at one of the key points on the Golden Section. Second, the two buildings are light (or white) objects surrounded by dark to midtone. The high-lighted left side of the cottage and the church steeple are the brightest objects in each painting.*

*Willows, Clinton*



*Porch and Goldenrod, 19" × 28"*

*Halloween Corner, 14½" × 21"*

*These two paintings make use of a very different composition plan from the two on the preceding page. Here we are up so close that we see only a portion of the building, and that portion takes up almost the whole picture frame. In each case, the one large rectangular shape (one horizontal, one vertical) dominates the picture, and that sheer dominance becomes the center of interest. Look carefully, though, and you'll see that I didn't forget the Golden Section. The lower right corner of the white porch and the round turret of the Victorian building both sit smack on one of the key points of the Golden Section.*

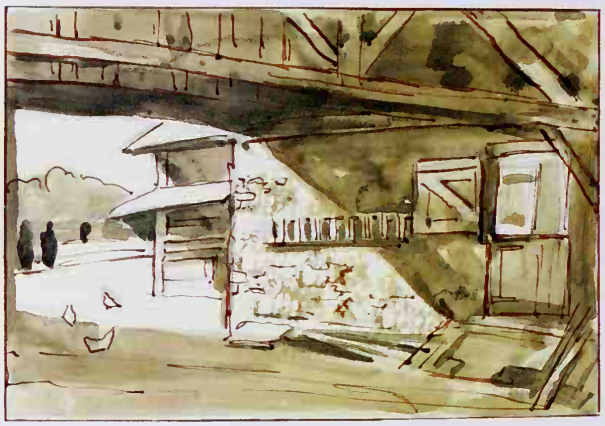
# Design

Design is a concept that enters more into the field of abstraction. A painting can stand alone with only good composition, but to give it a good design means taking a more creative approach. In my view, a design is a "planned arrangement" of the shapes occupying the space in your painting. The shapes may be construed as the subject matter, whether it be a landscape, building or still life. Interrelating these shapes brings a balanced pattern into your painting. This pattern or design has to be created by the artist; it is not usually evident in nature.

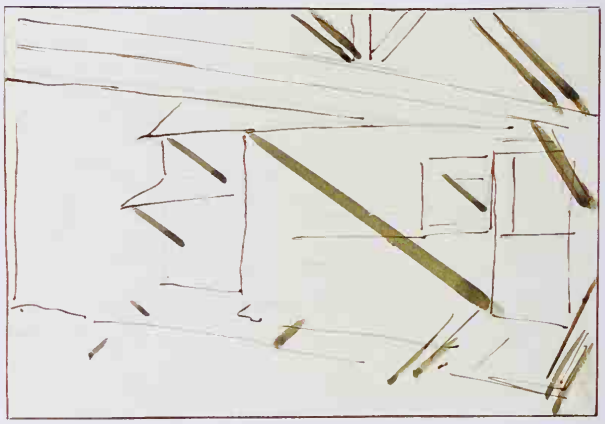
There are perhaps as many ways of designing pictures as there are painters to paint them, and individual painters will usually vary their methods as different problems arise. A most creative way to compose is to begin with abstract color or value shapes, shifting and transposing until a unified abstraction is fully realized. To illustrate what I mean, I will take three finished watercolors and break them into their simplest abstract form.

## *Inner Barnyard, Anna's Farm*

The first example, entitled *Inner Barnyard, Anna's Farm*, is a place I have visited many times for the subjects that abound profusely around the barn and outbuildings. This view was selected in late spring when the light streams in under the overhang, creating a strong diagonal shadow pattern. The first sketch in sepia wash indicates the basic dark and light areas. The second diagram brings out the predominant movement of the shadow on the outside wall. Notice how this line is repeated in four or five places in the beams and braces of the composition. This is one of the principles of design – repetition of line and shape.



*Here the large dark and light shapes are indicated for the painting at right. Notice that dark shapes predominate.*



*The dark lines indicate the diagonal movement of the shadow shapes, which are repeated in some of the braces and beams in the painting.*

*Inner Barnyard, Anna's Farm, 21" × 28½"*

## *The Walkway*

Here's a second example of a design problem. I found this interesting subject near my summer home in Port Clyde, Maine. The walkway was built on top of a fish weir for a lobster pound. It leads to a cottage against a backdrop of pines. The woods behind the house were actually dozens and dozens of pine trees growing together, so I purposely combined them into an almost flat curtain of dark. The color sketch shows how this area takes up more than one-third of the total space.

The walkway creates a lead-in to the center of interest. The composition is well tied together into a cohesive unit by a variety of vertical, diagonal and horizontal forms. The rest of the values are from medium to dark gray except for the water area, which is nearly as dark as the woods.

*The walkway in this color sketch leads the viewer's eye from the lower left corner up to the center of interest—the white house silhouetted against the dark curtain of trees.*


*The Walkway, Port Clyde, Maine, 16½" × 22"*

## *No. 3 Washington Street, Lambertville, New Jersey*

This subject is similar to *The Walkway*. It contains a street leading into the composition and a dark hillside in back. Snow on the ground brings out the contrast of light and dark, a prime reason why so many artists enjoy this factor in landscapes or streetscapes. There is a satisfying relation of warm against cool color, another design principle.

Many artists find that doing simple color and value sketches like the ones on these pages helps them analyze the abstract design of a subject before proceeding to a larger finished work.

*The contrast of light and dark areas as well as warm and cool colors makes this a pleasing design for a snow-covered subject.*


*No. 3 Washington Street, Lambertville, New Jersey, 14½" × 21"*

# *Using the Camera*

Ever since the camera was invented, a great many artists have painted from photographs. This is understandable as it is convenient and one can work in the studio, free from bad weather, noise and insects.

Albert Bierstadt took photographs during his painting expeditions in the 1860s and 1870s, and with his sketches and photos, returned to his studio in New York to complete those marvelous panoramic landscapes of the Rockies. Thomas Eackins used photographs to better understand the movement of the human figure and animals.

Today, some artists use the camera as a tool for reference only and others try to make their work look very photographic. But there are drawbacks to painting from photographs.

## *Exaggerated Perspective*

One problem very apparent in a photograph of a building or street is that the lens exaggerates perspective too sharply – much more so than when viewed with the naked eye. Rooflines and window courses descend too steeply when viewed from the oblique angle. I usually can tell if a photo has been used when looking at work in art shows. To obviate this exaggeration in perspective, try to back away from the subject as much as possible before taking the shot.

## *Distorted Vertical Lines*

Another problem is that vertical lines become distorted and bend away from the perpendicular. To correct this problem, I use a 35mm PC (perspective correcting) lens. This lens can be attached to my 35mm single lens reflex camera, and I can take a picture of a tall building without tilting the camera.

I use my 50mm lens to take pictures of close-up objects. I also have an 80-200mm zoom lens to bring up subjects that are far away. But be aware that as the focal length increases, the perspective is flattened and the image becomes so foreshortened that the natural relationships no longer exist.

For architectural work, the camera is an indispensable tool, but to compensate for photographic drawbacks, I paint as much of the subject as I can on location. The camera is of great benefit in shooting figures and animals that I may want to include in my watercolors. I have a large photo selection of cows, horses, geese, goats and sheep on file to use when the need arises.

However, there is nothing that can replace the feeling of light, color and mood that nature provides on location. I get a better essence of the place if I am right there, and it's easier to simplify what I am seeing. If I am working from a photograph only, the tendency is to copy it too exactly.

*This photo of Ocean Avenue in Jersey City shows how the camera lens exaggerates perspective. A painting copied from this photo would have its rooflines at too steep an angle.*

*Photograph of the Kulp Farm taken with a 50mm lens. Notice how compressed the buildings and distant woods appear. There is also too much foreground. This image is not good enough to paint from.*

*This photo is much better and was taken with a 35mm wide angle lens. If projected on screen it could be translated into a watercolor.*

*These two shots were taken with a 80-200mm telephoto lens and are the best to paint from. The image is much clearer and the foreground is greatly reduced. The relation of buildings to landscape is in better proportion.*

**Kulp Farm, 15½" × 22½"**

*My finished watercolor of the Kulp Farm was painted entirely on location without use of photographs. I depicted a snow scene for brighter contrast and changed the foreground design for added interest.*

*Photograph of a Victorian House in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, taken with a 50mm lens. Notice how vertical lines converge at the top because the camera had to be tilted to include the Italianate tower. This photo is not usable for a truthful interpretation.*

*Here's the same house taken with a PC (perspective correcting) 35mm lens. All vertical lines are parallel to the picture plane as they should be. I would develop this shot into a painting.*

*This shot taken with a zoom lens cuts off large portions of the house. It's useful for clearer detail or if one wanted to paint only a section of the house.*

# *Painting From a Photograph*

As an example of a watercolor painted from a photograph, I have selected a facade of an old warehouse in Soho. Soho is an area in New York located between Houston and Canal Streets and the East and Hudson Rivers where scores of old warehouses still stand from the nineteenth century. Many have been remodeled inside but the exteriors still look the same as the day they were built, although through the years they have accumulated a lot of surface soot and grime. Much of the architecture is derived from the Classical and Romanesque periods. Most American cities have razed what is left from the era.

I have taken many photos of buildings in the Soho area over the years, and I find them very exciting but challenging subjects. This one seemed to have possibilities, and I liked the relationship of the horizontal street, sidewalk and upper cornice to the vertical columns. What sets off the composition are the strong diagonal shadows deep behind the columns. The patterns of the small pedestals along the top add variety to the larger rectangular shapes below.

The photo I used seemed quite satisfactory from a compositional standpoint, so I traced the image onto my pa-

per, making sure all vertical and horizontal lines were squared off in relation to my format. I masked out the fire escape rods and some acanthus leaves on the Corinthian capitals.

I painted in all the light areas first, the street in light gray and the walls of the building facade in light yellow-green. Then I painted in all the dark shadows, and in some places I had to go over them once more to achieve the proper value. The hood of the yellow car acts as a foil to the severe straight lines elsewhere in the composition. I added the two figures after looking through my figure collection for some with the proper action and pose. Here again, the figures to the right of center are placed on one of the key points of the Golden Section.


*Discussion on Greene Street, 19" × 28", watercolor on Arches 300-lb. cold-press paper*

CHAPTER SIX

# Doing Commissions

*Wm. E. Lockwood House (1865), Frazer, Pennsylvania, 19" × 20"*

# Private Homes

A practical way to hone your watercolor abilities, in addition to painting for art's sake, is to promote yourself for commissioned work or to paint a special work on assignment. In my career, I have completed many watercolors of private homes and residences. It seems that a client may be more inclined to purchase a painting of his own house rather than obtain a work from your collection. People are proud of their homes and desire to have a painting of it for the same reason they like to have a portrait painted of a family member.

I seldom solicit commissioned work, but if I am requested to do a painting of a home, I may accept provided the dwelling has some architectural charm. I live in an area where there are many lovely homes dating back to the nineteenth century or before; these are the ones I prefer to paint.

In contemplating a specific job, I always consult with the client, examine the home, and study the most favorable location to execute the painting. I find that autumn, winter and spring are the best seasons to work, because in summer the trees around the house may obstruct the best view. I usually take photographs of the house from various viewpoints, and from these, the client and I will decide what position is the best.

We also consider what trees, shrubs and landscaping to include. The size of the painting and pricing should be discussed at this time. Because of the extra time and effort involved, it is appropriate to charge more for a commission than for a work exhibited in your studio or gallery.

After considering the best light or time of day, I will begin the painting on site with no preliminary sketches. The building will be drawn carefully in pencil and then I will start the actual painting.

There may be occasions when complex drawing problems present themselves. I will then make the drawing on tracing paper first and transfer it to the finished sheet. This will keep the paper free from corrections and erasures.

A commissioned work takes from three to four painting sessions. The finished work is matted and delivered to the customer for approval. Responsibility for final framing is open for discussion, to be done either by the artist or the client. The frame is considered an extra expense to be charged to the buyer.

# Landmarks

Other opportunities also arise in the area of commissions. Institutional buildings can be painted as well as a particular view or scene of a favorite landmark. In these instances it may be more convenient and practical to work from photographs, but it's a good idea to make some sketches first.

Local museums, owners of historic houses, and even long-time residents will often request paintings of local landmarks, including historic train stations. Before beginning this type of painting, it is a good idea to find out a bit about the history of the landmark in question. There may be a particular angle or important detail to include.

I had a singular experience a few years ago when the job I was doing went awry. I was engaged by a woman to paint a portrait of her house in the fall when all the trees were in full color. She wanted the front of the house done, but when I arrived, I found a composition that pleased me much more than the view she wanted so I went ahead and completed the picture.

When I showed her the completed work, she was very upset that I had not followed her instructions. I tried to convince her that my selected viewpoint made a better composition, but to no avail. She was paying for a specific request and would not buy my painting unless I did it over. So I had no choice but to comply.

This incident came to a good ending, however; I was able to sell the first painting to another customer shortly afterward.

On another occasion, I was doing some commissioned work on a farm estate. Along with a painting of the house and grounds, the wife of the owner wanted a watercolor done of a pet angus cow named "Blackie" in her barnyard. I had to shoot some pictures of the cow to include in the painting. The lady assured me that Blackie was a very docile animal and I need not worry about wandering around in the paddock with her.

After taking a number of photographs, it became apparent that Blackie did not care to share her private domain with me, so I prepared to make my exit by climbing over the fence. As I did so, Blackie came up behind me and with her powerful neck gave me a determined shove, and over the fence I flew. No injuries were sustained, but my vanity was somewhat shaken.

*Neidhardt Place, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, 19″ × 21″. Private collection.*

*A new home built in colonial style, complete with a carriage used as a lawn decoration. Painted on location in the fall of 1991.*

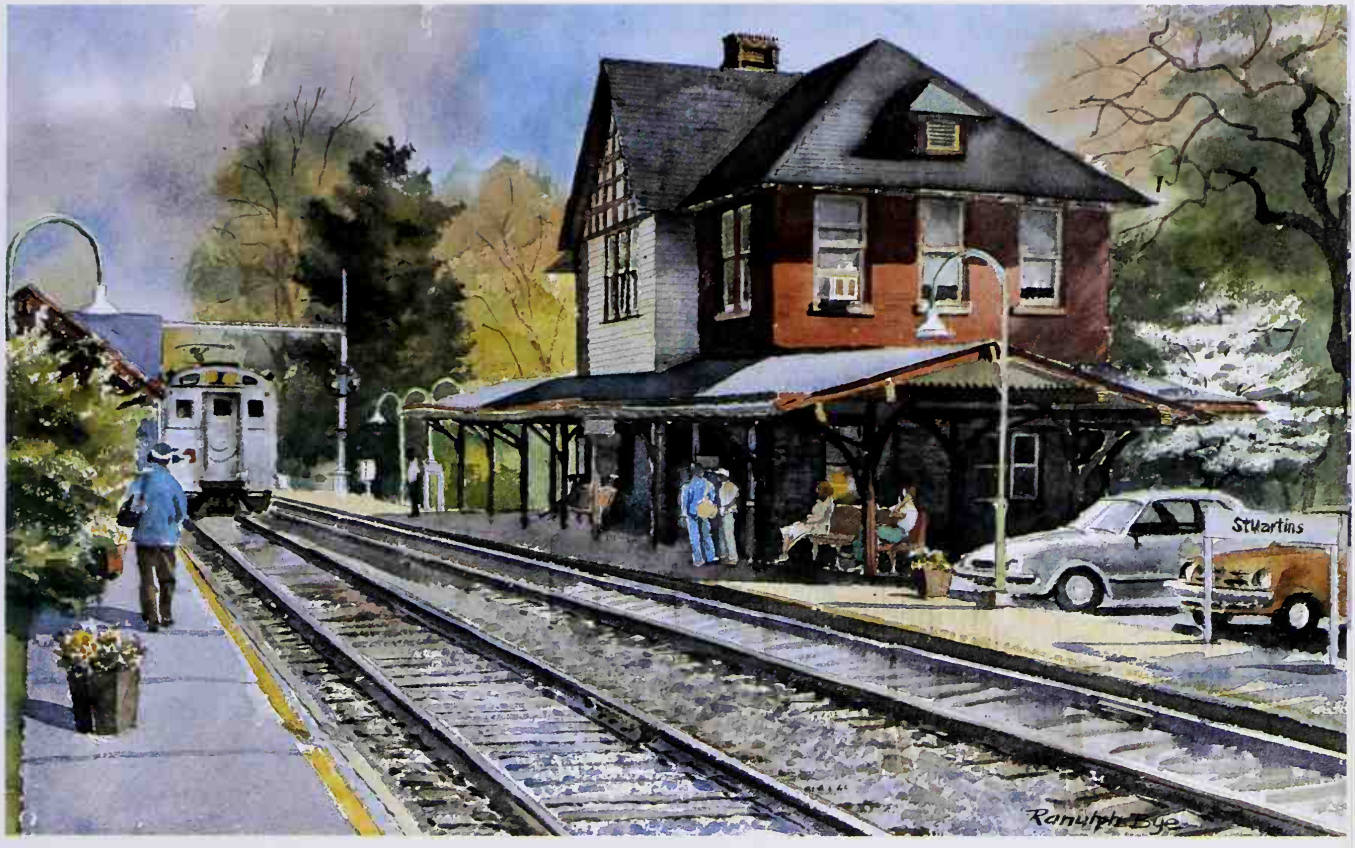
*Kimmel Residence, Solebury, Pennsylvania, 21″ × 28″. Private collection.*

*I enjoyed doing this particular property in the winter with snow on the ground. It offered a fine opportunity to catch the broken snow patterns on the roof and the angular shadow shapes on the dwelling when the winter light comes in from a low direction. I used an oil-and-turpentine patina for the stone areas on the house and retaining wall. A dark sky and bare trees set off the brilliant lightness of the snow.*


*Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1984), 15" × 20½". Collection of Eugene Maginnis.*

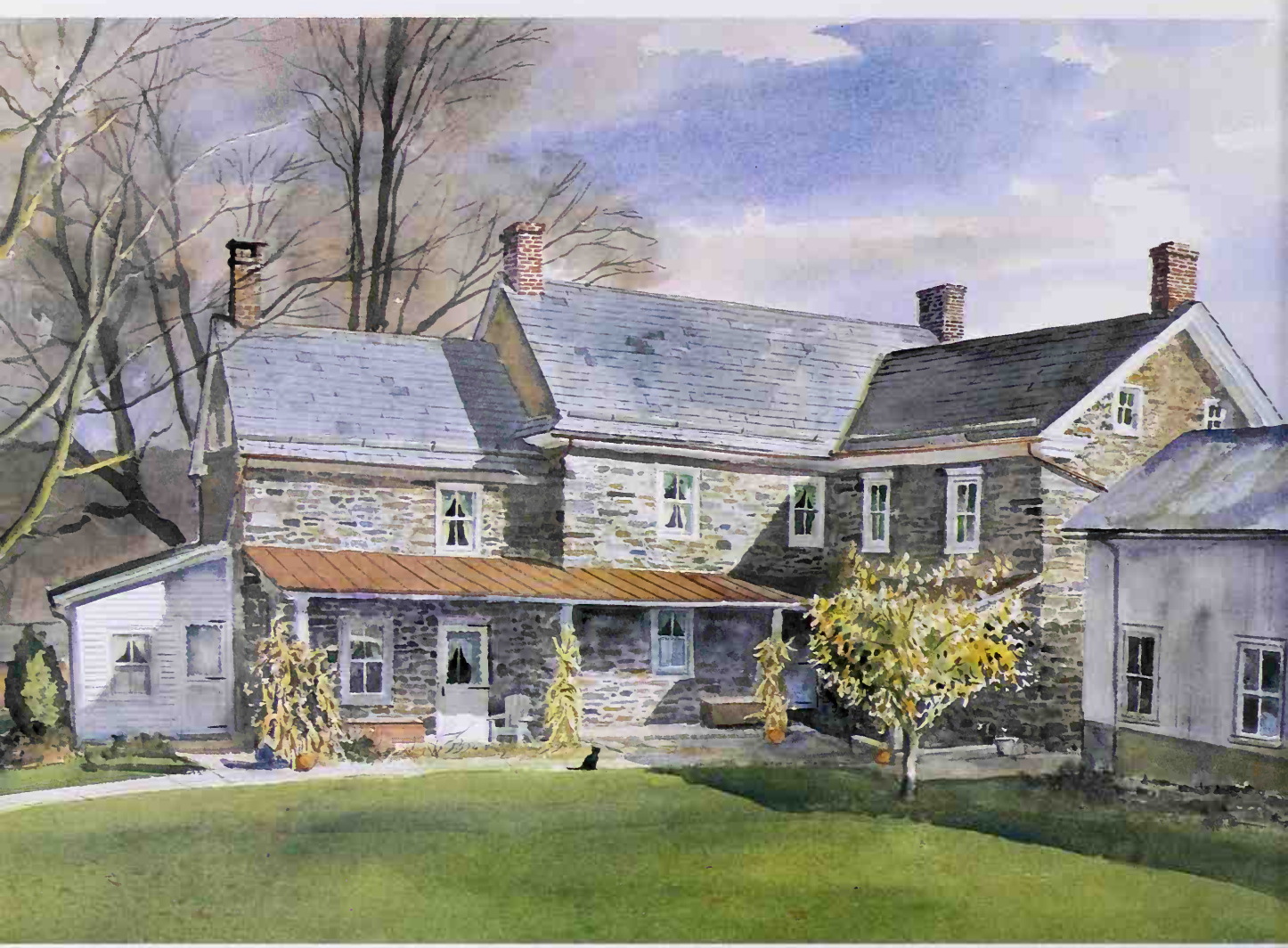
*Living in the suburbs is an old Philadelphia tradition. To breathe fresh air and relax, affluent merchants and politicians of the 1830s escaped, at least for the summer, to the healthful higher reaches. Upper and lower Germantown, and to a lesser extent, Chestnut Hill, became meccas of suburban life.*

*Among the first railroads to be built in the 1830s was the Philadelphia, Germantown and Norristown. By 1884 the Pennsylvania Railroad opened a branch line to Chestnut Hill, which I painted as it looks today. The station still serves commuters and trains run regularly. It is operated by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA).*




***St. Martins Station, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, 15" × 20½"***

*Built in the 1880s, this depot is typical of the stations erected by the Pennsylvania Railroad. They were constructed mostly in brick in the Queen Anne style. In both the Chestnut Hill and St. Martins paintings, I have added figures to give a feeling of human presence. Commuter stations around big cities still function as in the old days, but nearly all country stations are gone or have been remodeled into other enterprises.*



***The Trauger Farmhouse, Pipersville, Pennsylvania, 20½" × 28". Private collection.***

*This is a fine example of a Bucks County, Pennsylvania, farmhouse. The original house probably consisted of one room with a fireplace on the first floor and two small rooms upstairs. Succeeding generations added larger quarters for their families until the house eventually reached the size shown here.*

*This watercolor was painted on site in the fall when most of the trees are bare and corn shocks decorate the back porch. I paid close attention to the colorful stonework, which the sharp autumn light brings out to the best advantage.*

*Benjamin Franklin Parkway (1987), 21" × 29". Collection of Presbyterian Ministers Fund for Life Insurance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

*This painting was done from the front steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum looking down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. From this vantage point one can see Philadelphia's growing skyline, the avenue leading to city hall in the center, and the imposing bronze sculpture of George Washington on horseback in the foreground. The time is mid-October and the trees along the drive have turned a copper brown. Figures going down the steps give a sense of scale to the scene.*

*Stan Snyder Residence, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 20½" × 28". Private collection.*

*This beautifully restored house was a gutted ruin for many years before a new owner came along and gave it new life. The stone retaining wall at lower left acts as a lead-in to the main composition. This work was painted during mid-summer, an unusual time for doing a house portrait; the trees did not obstruct the view but added a good balance to the composition.*

DEMONSTRATION

# Painting a Private Residence

**Step 1:** *This house was painted on commission and I wanted the painting to have a feeling of spring; the dogwood is in full bloom as well as the pink azalea.*

*I drew in the house on site paying careful attention to the perspective of rooflines and windows. The dogwood tree on the right was masked out to allow for white blossoms. I commenced to paint the light tones of the bushes, ivy, roof and grass.*

**Step 2:** *It was a beautiful spring day and the sun was shining on the house and grounds, creating a lively pattern of light and shadows. I started to paint in the door, windows and the foundation plantings around the house. The large old maple on the left was just indicated at this point.*

*I worked at a two-hour stretch to get the early morning light effect. As time elapsed, the pattern of light kept changing. This kind of change can keep you on the lookout for exciting effects and is just one advantage to painting on location; if you're working from a photo alone, the light is frozen to only one particular moment. I worked on this house for two hours a day, over a period of four days.*

**Step 3:** *The silver maple began to take on some form and the foliage around the house received a preliminary wash. The light and dark values on the ground are about finished. Before removing the masking on the dogwood tree, I spattered the house behind it with violet mixed with blue and green.*

*This is a rather complicated subject because of all the shrubbery and broken foliage shapes. Simplicity in these areas is the key as there is the danger of overworking too many details.*

**Step 4:** *I worked on the maple with stronger darks. The dogwood needed more study and I had to resort to using some opaque white to bring out the blossoms. When I returned to the studio, I placed a temporary mat around the painting to critically examine it. A few touches here and there and the watercolor was finished.*


*House Portrait, 21" × 27½". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Satow.*


CHAPTER SEVEN

# Painting Buildings Step by Step

*E. State Street, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 14" × 21"*

DEMONSTRATION ONE

## Farbotnik Barn: Contrasting Snow and Weathered Wood

This is my latest painting of the Farbotnik Farm, which has been one of my choice subjects for many, many years.

It had just snowed, and by walking around the farm I discovered this composition with a horse and barn nicely related in tone and value. The light snow contrasted beautifully with the old gray barn, and I intended to pay close attention to the texture of stone and wood. Keeping the snow-covered foreground simple enhanced the rest of the picture. The old mare was unconcerned about my presence, and content to stand still with her back to the warm sun.

**Step 1:** *I drew in the composition from a photograph. I purposely cropped off part of the barn on the right to create a stronger design and was careful to draw the horse a little to the right of center.*

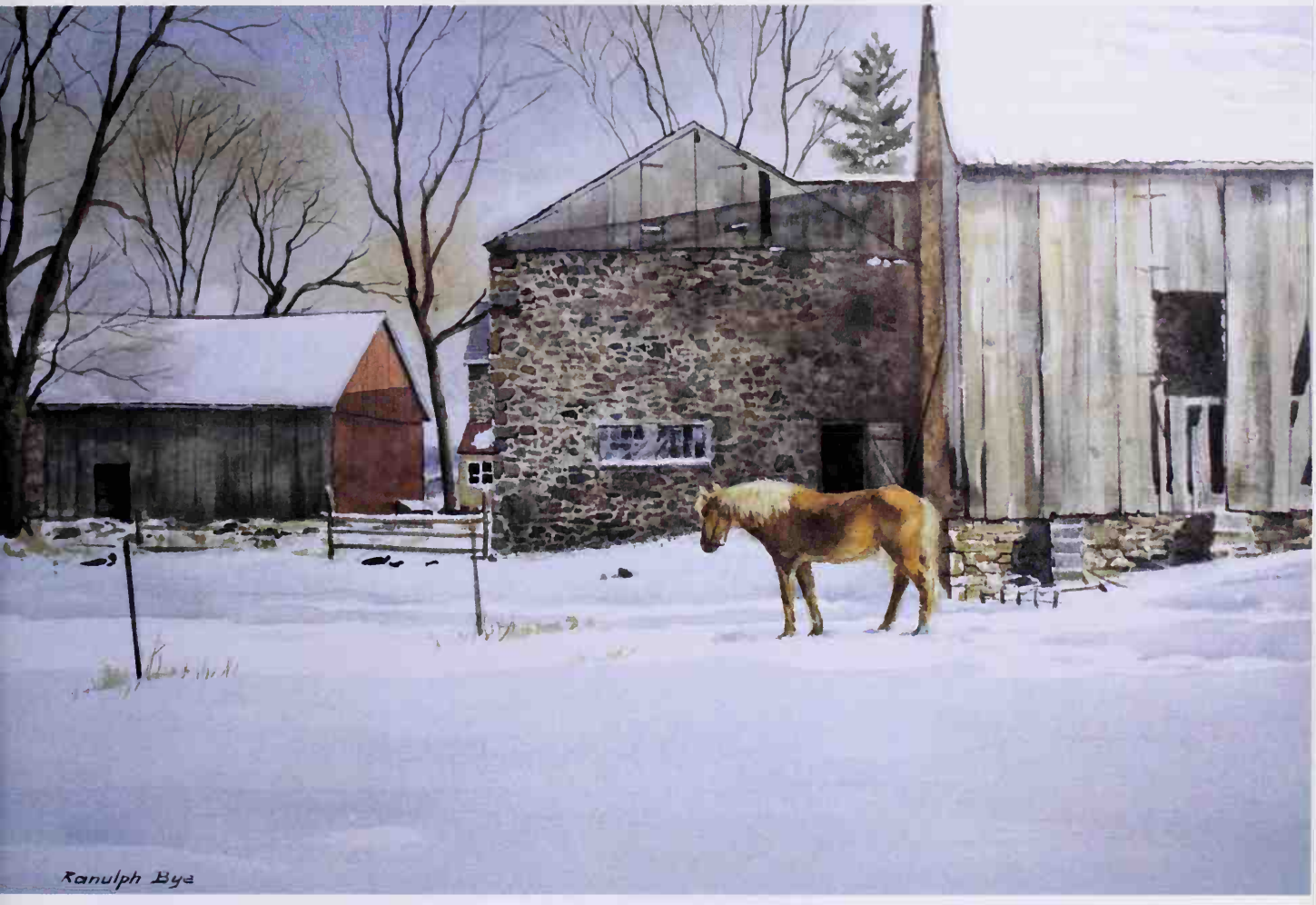
*I masked out all areas except where stonework appears on the end wall of the barn and along the foundation, then applied an oil-and-turpentine patina on the exposed areas. (See pages 16-17 for a description of how to apply an oil-and-turpentine patina.)*

**Step 2:** *I applied a light wash of burnt sienna over the entire sky, barn and outbuildings, leaving white paper for the snow-covered roof areas and the foreground.*

**Step 3:** *Preliminary washes of warm and cool gray were applied over the buildings. A light blue sky (cerulean blue with a touch of cobalt) was painted in with a yellowish tone for tree branches brushed in wet-into-wet. The house behind the barn was painted in.*

**Step 4:** *Another wash of warm gray was brushed over the end of the stone barn. Vertical siding on the right was rendered with tones of Davy's gray, light blue and ochre, then dry-brushed afterward with deeper values of the same colors. Some lifting out of the color was also done at this point because weathered wood is anything but a flat tone.*

**Step 5:** *The entire snow-covered area was first covered with a very pale wash of alizarin crimson—because in the late afternoon, snow appears slightly pink. The snow shadows in the foreground were then washed in with a mixture of pale cerulean and cobalt blue. (I masked out the horse first to facilitate running a wash behind it.) The weathered vertical boards were further developed by suggesting knots and cracks between the boards. I then started the stonework on the end wall, laying it in stone by stone and varying the color. The stones are varying shades of blue, ochre and light red. The trees in back were lightly painted in.*




*Farbotnik Barn, 17" × 25¼"*

**Step 6:** *In this final step, the horse was painted in and the large maple on the left finished. The rest of the stones were put in on the end wall paying particular attention to their irregularity.*

*I selected this subject not only because it is one of my favorite painting locations, but also because it presents an opportunity to render both weathered wood and stonework in a single work.*

*This is not a harsh winter landscape with strong darks and vividly blue shadows in the snow, but rather a more subtle interpretation evoking a soft light casting pale shadow tones on the ground and buildings.*

DEMONSTRATION TWO

## East State Street, Doylestown, Pennsylvania: Portraying a Village Street in Springtime

Spring is an exciting time of the year: Flowers come into bloom, various species of trees produce blossoms that bloom for only a week or so, and the grass turns from brown to light green. This street, with its turn-of-the-century houses embellished with flowering trees, inspired me to paint this watercolor. This scene could be found in hundreds of towns and villages all over the country.

**Step 1:** *First I blocked in my shapes with pencil, then applied an oil-and-turpentine patina to the stone wall along the sidewalk.*

**Step 2:** *I painted the sky, street and houses with an underpainting. The time is May, and I painted around two trees between the houses. These trees will have pink and white blossoms.*

**Step 3:** *I decided to start on the right, applying my finished colors to the trees and house. For the pink dogwood I mixed alizarin crimson with a little opaque white to get the right hue. The greens of the trees in back were made mostly by mixing yellows and blues together, plus some burnt sienna to give warmth in shadow areas. The figure and car were added in next.*

**Step 4:** *The flowering pear had white blossoms, so I left the paper white where the tree was in sunlight; the darker side is a pale bluish gray. The dark tree trunk on the left and some foliage around the roof of the pink house were indicated.*

*E. State Street, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 14" × 21". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gundlach.*

Step 5: *Details of the pink house were painted in including intricately carved posts on the porch. The tree shadows on the street help carry the eye around and up the tree trunk and down to the center of interest.*

*This was a fairly complex rendering because of all the architectural details. The important thing was to keep it fresh and not overworked.*

DEMONSTRATION THREE

## Farmhouse, Middlebury, Vermont: Simplifying Victorian Detail

I found this extraordinary farmhouse in upstate Vermont a number of years ago. It was in a bad state of disrepair and the owners had only partially repainted the front of the house, leaving the rest a dingy gray. The house is a good example of the Second Empire style built after the Civil War.

The late afternoon winter light, casting strong diagonal shadows under the porch and cornices, gave the building an eerie mood. The tower received the most light, leaving the rest of the house in subdued tones. To capture the feeling I had in mind, I decided to make the sky fairly dark. It would have to be built up with a number of layered washes, which results in more transparency and depth of tone.

**Step 1:** *I drew the house from a slide I had taken at the site, making sure all verticals were parallel to the picture plane. I then inked in with pen and brown ink the main outline of the house and the porch and window details. This was done rather loosely because I wanted to be concerned more with color and light than a meticulous rendering.*

*I then put down a light wash of burnt sienna over the entire paper, leaving only the front of the tower unpainted. I also masked out some highlights on the branches.*

**Step 2:** *I applied a wash of Prussian blue and sepia over the sky area and blotted out some clouds to the right and left of the house. I also put down a light green wash over the foreground grassy area. After this dried, I applied a second wash to the sky using the same colors as before. Even this wasn't dark enough, so I gave the sky a third wash, but a little warmer than the first two. While doing that, I mixed a warm tone with light red to mass in the trees on the right. I was now satisfied with the sky and ready to work on the house and distant landscape.*

**Step 3**: *Using ½-inch and ¼-inch flat sables, I began to lay in the shadow tones of the house. Starting at the top rooflines and working the wash down to the ground line with a fairly wet brush, I changed the color from greens to blues and grays as I went along. Darks were put in around the cornices with sepia and ultramarine blue before the wash was dry. Notice how the pen lines have nearly disappeared in the darker wash, but are coming through just enough to define details.*

*Shadow tones and colors often are not definitive from a slide. You can use your ingenuity at this stage to develop your shadow tones, which I find particularly enjoyable and satisfying. Also keep in mind that cool colors can be juxtaposed with warm colors for tonal harmony.*

**Step 4**: *I continued to fill in the unpainted areas following the same procedure as in Step 3. The cast shadows from trees were put in after lightly spraying the area. I took a small piece of sponge, dipped it into some sap green, and touched up the grassy foreground for added texture.*

***Farmhouse, Middlebury, Vermont, 17½" × 25"***

Step 5: *The trees on the left were brushed in loosely with an understanding of tree structure. All trees are different with their own special way of growing from the ground up. I used a ¼-inch flat sable and a no. 3 sable quill for the branches. I find the quill, with its long point, perfect for this work. In the winter the trees expose their branches making it easier to understand branch formation.*

*In this final step, I evaluated every area of the painting, checking the values and seeing that the center of interest is the dominant focal point. The shooting branches on the left direct the eye toward this spot. The light catches the tower from the second floor up; all other areas are subordinate to it.*

DEMONSTRATION FOUR

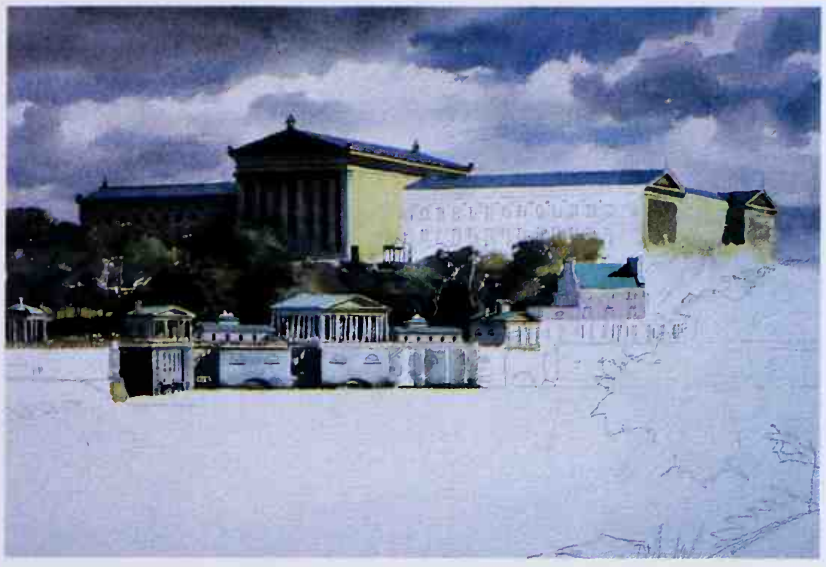
# Philadelphia Museum of Art: Painting a Building of Monumental Proportions

The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which opened in 1928, is one of the world's largest edifices in the Greek Temple style. It is one of Philadelphia's most visible structures, being situated on a higher elevation than the city it faces. The exterior is made of Minnesota dolomite, a yellowish mineral which gives the whole building a warm tonality. The charming Greek revival buildings built along the Schuykill River, called Fairmount Water Works, were constructed between 1811 and 1819. The combination of the art museum and the water works blends together very harmoniously, and it is a favorite subject for artists and photographers.

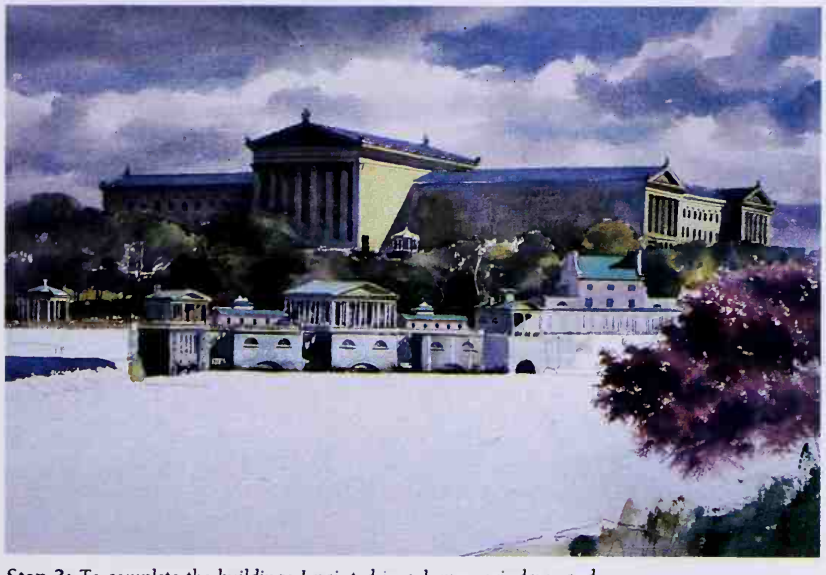
In a subject of this kind—an imposing architectural subject with a fair amount of complex drawing and perspective—it is impractical and, perhaps, hazardous to one's safety to paint this on location because of the heavily trafficked vantage point. So I

**Step 1**: *I selected the photograph that pleased me most, projected it onto a full sheet of watercolor paper, and traced the main outline of the buildings in pencil. I applied a light wash of alizarin crimson over the entire sky area and let it dry.*

*I then repainted the sky with clouds using cerulean blue and ultramarine for the blue areas and Davy's gray, light red and cobalt blue for the under-shadows. Light and shadow areas of the museum and surrounding water works buildings were painted in using combinations of pale ochre, Naples yellow, light red and ultramarine blue.*



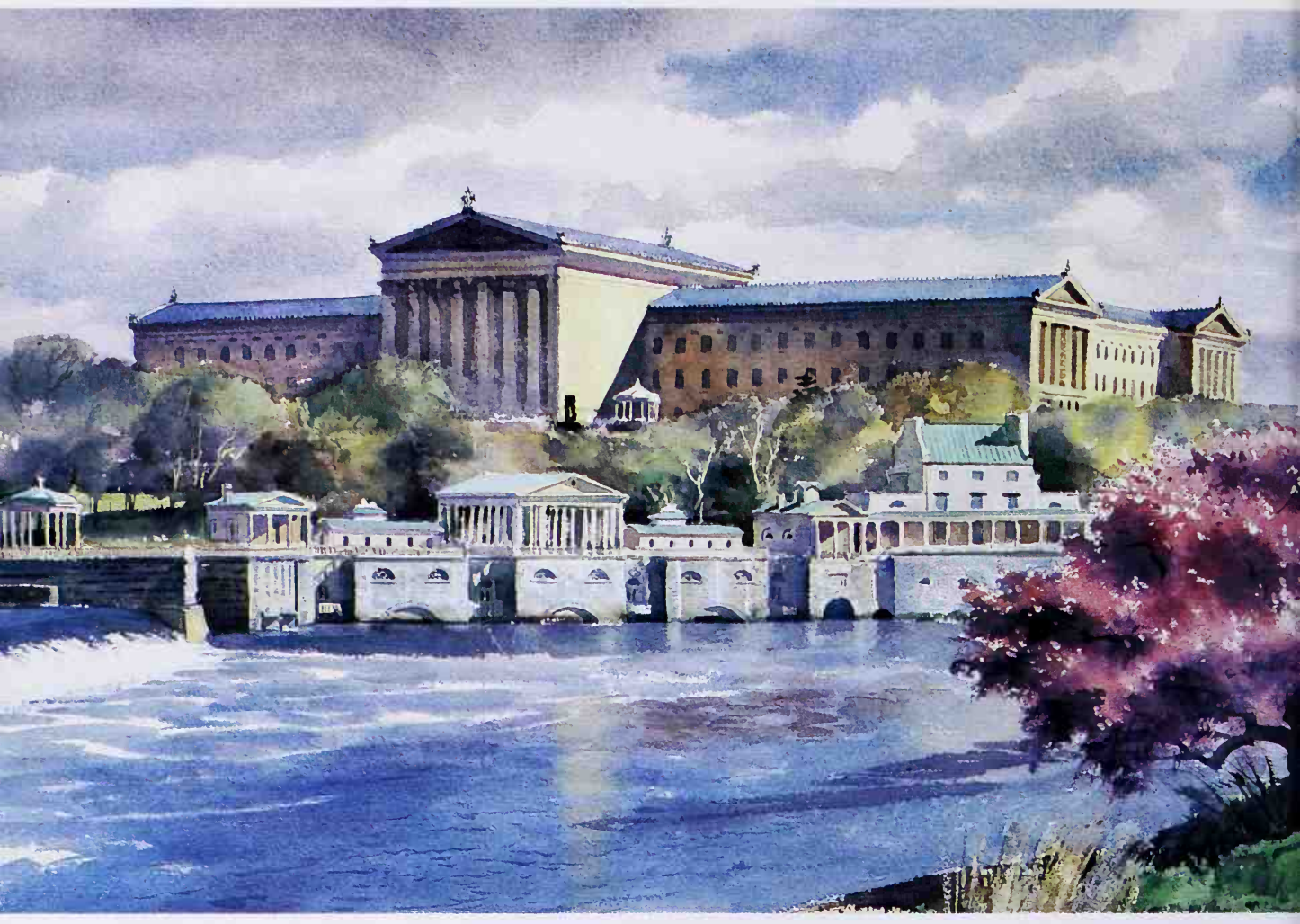
**Step 2:** *I continued working on the shadowed side of the art museum using Indian red, mauve, yellow ochre and blue. Notice the reflected light of warm orange on the right wing of the museum, which gives the outside wall a beautiful glow. The foreground buildings were painted in with light pink first, then shadow values were established with Davy's gray and permanent magenta. Details must be simplified from this distance and it is important to get the values right. Since it is early spring, the trees are just coming out with pale green, but there is still a touch of winter gray coming through the tree masses.*



**Step 3:** *To complete the buildings I painted in columns, windows and finials on the museum gables. The west wing of the museum needed another darker wash on the shadow side. The flowering cherry tree and foreground were washed in with basic tone, and the water going over the dam was suggested. I used alizarin crimson and carmine red for the blossoms, mauve with ultramarine for the dark areas. Notice specks of white on the cherry tree to create sparkle.*

resorted to taking several photographs from various positions with a telephoto lens. Usually, taking pictures of buildings from close proximity results in severe distortion in perspective. But from my vantage point, I was far enough away from the museum so that obvious distortion did not occur. Also, I selected a time of day when the light and shadows played upon the building most advantageously.

In addition to taking photographs, I made a small watercolor sketch (page 90, top) in about twenty minutes at the site to be used for color reference in the final work. Slides are not reliable for true color, especially in dark or shadow areas of buildings.



*Philadelphia Museum of Art, 20½" × 29"*

**Step 4:** *The water in the foreground was done with two washes of cerulean blue and cobalt. I was careful to let white paper show through to indicate streaks of foam. The suggestion of water ripples and tone variations on the surface completed the painting. The overall effect of the painting seems to have unity because all sections are interconnected with each other.*

DEMONSTRATION FIVE

## Tree Shadows on a Carriage Shed: Designing With Lights and Darks

On a recent visit to upstate Pennsylvania, I came across an old carriage shed along a country road. I was immediately struck by the strong tree shadows on the building cast by a few maples in the foreground. It was a beautiful clear autumn day, and I took a number of photographs of the scene and made a quick color sketch for reference. Upon returning home to my studio, I made the finished watercolor. The warped wooden siding gave the building a distinct timeworn character. I was anxious to start work on this painting as soon as possible, while the impression of it was still fresh in my mind.

**Step 1:** *I made a drawing in pencil of the barn, trees and shed, using my color slides as reference, and located the windows and doors and where the shadows appeared. I applied a sky wash of cerulean blue and Prussian blue and, while the sky was still wet, I went over the tops of trees with light red as an underpainting for masses of twigs.*

**Step 2:** *I applied a basic wash for the foreground, using orange and burnt sienna to indicate the fallen leaves and sap green on the grassy areas. I painted in the barn in the background, first with a wet grayish wash, then after it dried, with a darker gray dry-brushed to simulate weathered wood. The colors used for the barn were Davy's gray, yellow ochre and light blue. I next sprayed the sky area behind the barn with water before painting in the evergreen and the yellow maple. The background hill and woods were also brushed in.*

**Step 3:** *The tin roof and the side and front of the shed began to take shape. I used Payne's gray and Prussian blue for the roof and, while it was still damp, I ruled out the metal sections with the tip of a palette knife, letting white paper show through. The front of the shed was done with a mixture of burnt sienna and orange for the warm areas, pale blue gray for the cool spots. The first wash was done wet-into-wet, then I went back with dark brown to define the boards.*

**Step 4:** *The trees on the left were painted in with strong shadows cast on the front of the shed. I used Naples yellow and cerulean blue for the sunlit tree trunks, followed by Prussian blue and sepia for the dark side. Shadows on the shed were painted in with black mixed with alizarin crimson with a flat 5/8-inch sable and no. 3 quill. The technique for painting trees and branches should be direct and free-flowing with enough body color of the proper value on the brush so that going back will not be necessary. Freshness is what counts.*


*Tree Shadows on a Carriage Shed, 16" × 22"*

**Step 5:** *Shadows in the foreground, darkening the roof and adjusting values in the distant hillside provided the finishing touches. I used some green spatter and flecks of opaque orange to give some sparkle to the leaves scattered on the ground.*

*I tried to keep the center of interest on the front side of the carriage shed where there is stronger value contrast. Now that the leaves of summer are gone, one can feel the brisk autumn light, which is so exciting.*

DEMONSTRATION SIX

## Canal Fishing: Capturing the Subdued Light of a Cloudy Day

This canal is named the Delaware and Raritan Feeder Canal and it parallels the Delaware River from Trenton, New Jersey, for about eighteen miles where it joins the river. It passes by Lambertsville, New Jersey, where I selected this spot for my subject in early spring. Forsythia is in bloom and the reflection of the trees in the water was very appealing. The former Belvedere & Delaware Railroad passed between the river and the canal, hence the railroad tracks.

**Step 1:** *I drew the composition in pencil and placed a few fishermen standing along the retaining wall. Then I laid in a basic wash of pale alizarin crimson over the sky and let it dry. I went over it again with a mixture of Davy's gray, warm sepia and cerulean blue for clouds. I applied yellow Polychromos pastel for the forsythia bushes to be later gone over with watercolor. I began to lay in light washes for the rooftops, distant hill, canal embankments and rusty railroad tracks.*

**Step 2:** *This particular day was hazy and cloudy, causing most of the values to be rather subdued. However, the forsythia glowed brilliantly, and I used cadmium yellow straight from the tube to capture it.*

*The background buildings on the right were completed. I prefer to finish each section as I go along to make it easier for me to relate the part to be painted with that of the finished area.*

**Step 3:** *To paint the water in the canal, I started with the sky reflection which is usually darker than the sky above, and then did the dark tree reflections, all done wet-into-wet. I mixed blue with a touch of violet and light red for the sky reflection, Prussian blue and sepia for the tree reflection. In a painting of this kind, I often find it necessary to make a number of color adjustments and do some lifting out where washes have overstepped their boundaries. I worked on this watercolor over a two-day period and found that conditions varied slightly, so I reworked some buildings in the background when I thought improvement was called for.*


*Canal Fishing, 13½" × 20½"*

**Step 4:** *The dark pine trees on the left were painted in, providing the whole painting with a strong impact. I was careful to paint the water reflections directly beneath the objects being reflected. Figures and the railroad tracks were put in, and the retaining wall along the canal was painted in by using a small sponge dipped in reddish brown to give a stonelike texture.*

DEMONSTRATION SEVEN

## Village Street, Montgomery, Pennsylvania: Directing the Viewer's Eye With Shapes

There are many charming small towns and villages in central Pennsylvania that I find very paintable. This one struck my fancy in particular—looking down a street with a cluster of houses, a church, evergreens and distant hills. I could not pass it up.

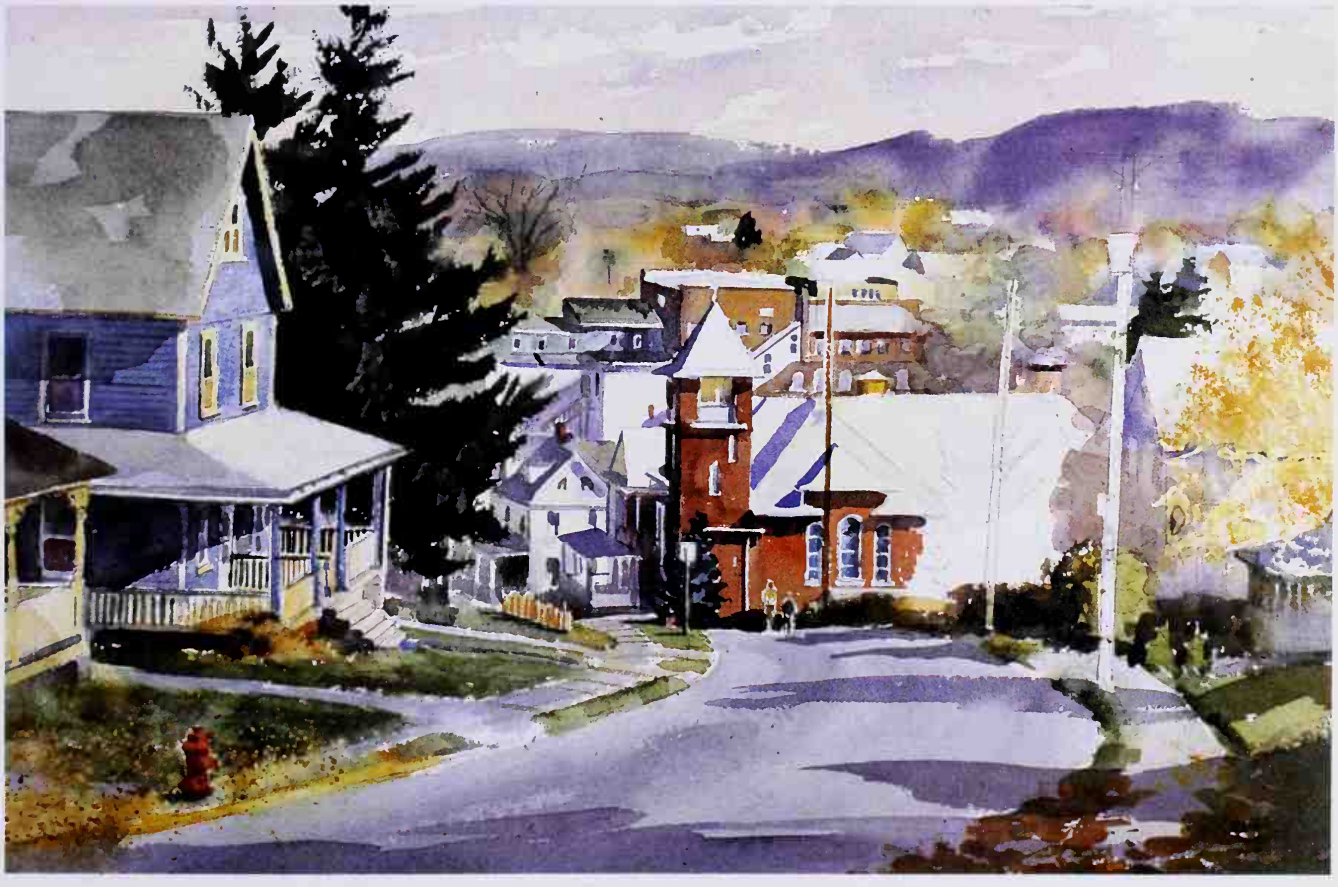
It was a cold morning, temperature at freezing, but I made a quick sketch anyhow for color reference and to note the spatial relationships between the various buildings. I also took two color photos. In starting the finished watercolor, I noticed that the nearest house on the left seemed too large in the photograph, so I reduced it by one quarter. Doing so, I was satisfied that it related better to the middle distance.

**Step 1:** *After completing the drawing in pencil, I started to lay in a few washes including a thinly painted sky of Naples yellow and cerulean blue. The street was pale blue-gray and the rooftops of houses were variations of light cobalt blue. Notice that from this vantage point, the rooflines go up to a horizon line (or eye level) somewhere above the church steeple. (See the discussion on perspective in chapter four.)*

**Step 2:** *At this stage both houses on the left were nearly finished using various shades of Naples yellow and dark and light blue. The sky was gone over again with a pale mixture of permanent magenta and cerulean blue, leaving specks of the original wash showing through for clouds. I painted in the distant hills with cerulean and ultramarine blue wet-into-wet, bringing the wash down to the rooftops and altering the color to pinks and yellows. These are the fading shades of autumn.*

**Step 3:** *In painting in the dark evergreen, I first had to mask out the side of the house next to the tree with masking tape. I sprayed the tree area because I wanted the paper semi-damp, which would enable me to achieve soft edges on the outer branches. A good, rich dark green can be made with Prussian blue and sepia.*

*Working from left to right, the houses down the street were finished and the church tower was painted in — this point is my main center of interest.*



**Step 4:** *The houses in the village were finished and the foreground tree shadows were put in. I indicated various tree colors in this late autumn scene. The buildings with their variegated colors and rooftops created an interesting pattern, almost an abstraction.*

*Village Street, Montgomery, Pennsylvania, 13¾" × 21"*

**Step 5:** *The two evergreens on the right were added in place. By darkening the foreground shadows with another wash of blue and Payne's gray, I considered the watercolor finished.*

*In a subject of this kind, there is a temptation to paint in too much detail, so I purposely left the corners of the painting very simple. I am satisfied with the feeling of distance from front to back, and the street leading into the center of interest is a ready-made device to lead the eye there. The large dark evergreen on the left balances well with the smaller one on the right.*

DEMONSTRATION EIGHT

## Bethlehem Railroad Station: Immortalizing a Local Landmark

The painting of railroad stations as a subject has become a rare motif. The demise of passenger railroad transportation has caused thousands of small and medium-sized depots to be torn down. Only a few are left standing around suburban sections of large cities; many of these are out of service. Stations still extant have been converted into other enterprises such as restaurants, shops and private residences. Even so, sadly, they lack the aura of the railroad era.

I had already painted this station a number of times from various angles, the back as well as the front. Because the Lehigh Canal runs parallel to the railroad tracks at this point, I decided it would make an interesting watercolor if I positioned my viewpoint so that the station was reflected in the water. I wanted the station to be the main focal point in the composition. I had a photo of the station taken in 1964, just after it had been restored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Bethlehem. Built in 1873, the station is a fine example of the Second Empire style. The distinguishing feature is the mansard roof with its hexagonal slate roofing and heavy, bracketed cornices.

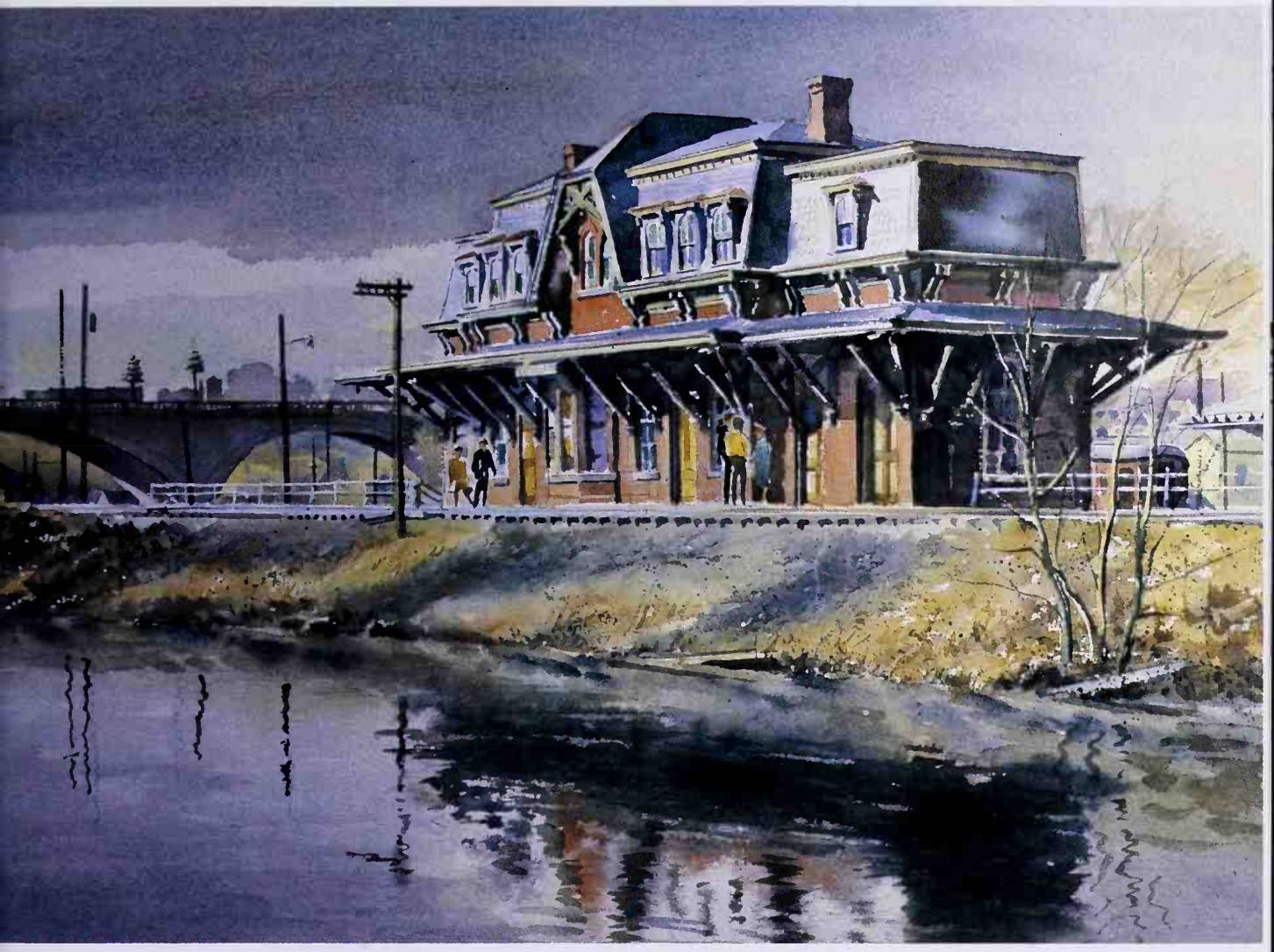
**Step 1:** *I drew in the building carefully from the photograph I had taken. The strong light and shadow pattern gave it a crisp and colorful effect. I planned to paint the sky, background and foreground in subdued colors so as not to detract from the station. To start off I laid a wash of pale alizarin crimson over the entire sky and water areas. I gave the sky a second wash using cerulean blue and pale Prussian blue, starting at the top of the paper and working the wash down and then changing the color to Naples Yellow and ochre toward the horizon. I masked out the tree trunks on the right and the platform railing leading away from the station.*

**Step 2:** *After the initial washes had dried I gave the sky a cloudy overcast using sepia, Davy's gray and blue. I then began to lay in the railroad embankment and the bridge in the background. The embankment will be further developed as the painting progresses.*

**Step 3:** *The bridge in the background was completed. I then began work on the station itself by painting in the dormer windows of the second floor, working from left to right. There was a fair amount of detail in the bracketed cornices along the roof, and I followed the photograph closely. The key here was to capture the dark shadow patterns as convincingly as possible.*

**Step 4:** *With the second floor of the station finished, except for the suggestion of slate, my next consideration was the large supporting braces under the overhanging platform roof. There was a lot of careful work to be done here. Each brace had to be correctly connected to the notches secured to the outside wall. A few figures were introduced to give some life and scale to the composition.*

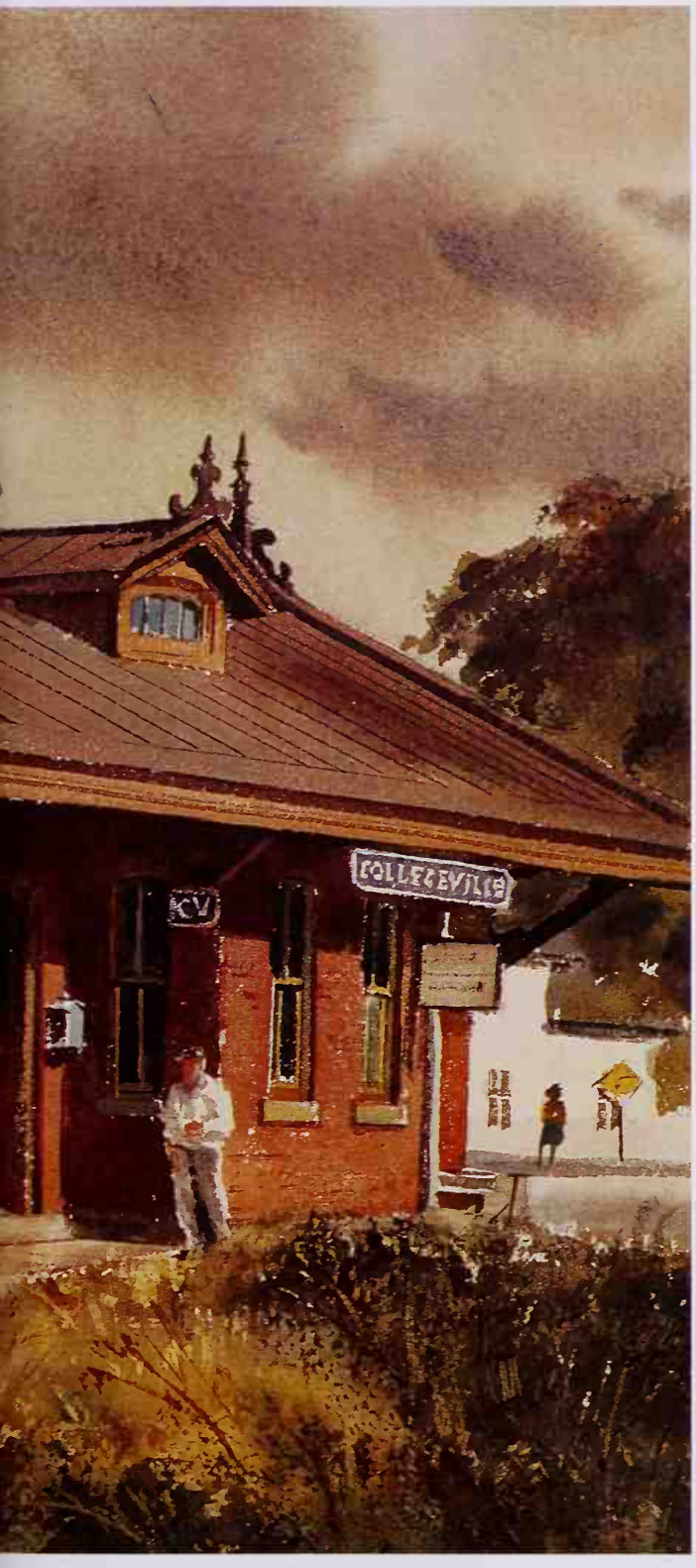
**Step 5:** *The doors and windows of the first floor were painted in. The water in the canal received a preliminary wash and the reflections were indicated. Considerable care was taken to ensure that the reflection of the station in the water corresponds to the part it reflects. In other words, dark reflections should be directly underneath the darks of the station; likewise for the lights.*



***Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Railroad Station, 16″ × 22″***

**Step 6:** *I finished the end portion of the station and a suggestion of the town behind it. Some small trees were put in growing out of the embankment. Additional ripples in the water were needed, and I strengthened the red areas along the front of the station. I decided to stop at this point to avoid making the watercolor look overworked.*


Randolph Bye




CHAPTER EIGHT

# Gallery of Architectural Treasures

*Collegeville Depot, Pennsylvania, 16" × 22"*

# *Farm Buildings*

Farm buildings have always provided good subjects for painting, ever since the seventeenth century in Holland and England where it all started. In our country we have a wide diversity of farm buildings in every corner of the land. Climate and availability of building material dictate how they were built.

In eastern Pennsylvania, local fieldstone and quarries were abundant; consequently, many of our barns and houses in that area are constructed from stone. In central Pennsylvania, as well as in New York and New England, timber was the main source of building material.

Farm buildings seem to be a popular painting subject because of their simple shapes and compatibility with the landscape. They can offer a strong design and color note to an otherwise commonplace landscape. Very often surrounding outbuildings provide a variety of sizes and shapes. These, combined with a barn, silo, springhouse and farm animals, produce a ready-made composition that can be painted from many viewpoints and in any season.


***Barnyard, Road to Mulrany, 15" × 21". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ranulph Bye.***

*This is a typical farm scene to be found anywhere in the Irish countryside, but the crumbling wall defines it as an old place. The donkeys roaming about are common and often used to pull carts or carry peat. This subject was so inviting and the placement of picture components so satisfactory that I had very little rearranging to do; I just set up my easel and painted it as it was. I employed a grayish oil-and-turpentine patina over all stone and wall areas to give texture. The play of light and shadows gives sparkle to the scene.*


*Chew Mail Pouch, Klinesville, Pennsylvania, 16" × 24"*

*These barn signs are a vanishing landmark. A few can be found in rural villages and country roads away from urban centers. It is a form of cheap outdoor advertising from which a farmer derived a small revenue. Why only flour and chewing tobacco brands chose this method to display their names is a mystery. I painted this watercolor from a dead center position, causing all vertical and horizontal lines to be at right angles to each other, which fits well into the rectangular format of the painting.*

*Vermont Farm, 15" × 20½"*

*This dilapidated barn is almost dwarfed by the towering silo beside it. This is an old silo predating modern versions made of concrete. The iron rods are straining to keep the structure from collapsing. I masked out the sheep before laying in the green pasture. The barn, trees and shadows were painted in next with mixed shades of red, blue, green and sepia; it was all done in one afternoon.*

*Under the Overhang, 14½" × 20½"*

*A barnyard study on the Farbotnik Farm. I wanted to interpret a quiet moment at this old farm with a few ducks gathered together in the sunshine. Notice how the sharp diagonal shadow directs the eye to the center of interest. By being close to the subject I was able to render the texture of old stonework, time-worn barn doors and scattered straw in the foreground.*

*Behind the Barn, 21" × 29"*

*Farbotnik Farm, as mentioned before, is a favorite subject of mine. It was early in the morning when this watercolor was painted. A light streak was shooting across the middle ground with shadows thrusting spears of dark into it. Ducks in the foreground provided a center of interest. The play of warm and cool tones gives harmony to the wintery mood.*

*Root Cellar, West Amwell, New Jersey, 18½" × 26"*

*Not easily found today, a root cellar was a rather common facility on farms a century ago. This one descends underground a few steps below ground level and was used to store perishable produce over the winter. The room below might be 8 × 10 feet square with masonry walls and ceiling.*

*I found this subject on a farm where I have painted over a number of years. It was March, the trees were bare but the grass had started to turn green. This piece was painted directly on location over a two-day period. Strong lights and shadows come in from the right.*

***Dooega, Achill Island, County Mayo, Ireland, 14½" × 21"***

*Of all places in Europe, Ireland has inspired me most and has compelled me to return repeatedly. It has a stark landscape with a barren coastline where this watercolor was painted. The proliferation of stone everywhere gives the people the means to erect all dwellings, barns and fences with this material. The lively sky adds movement to the grim severity of the farmhouses. Sheep always seem to be roaming about so I put them in.*

***Springhouse, 15" × 20½"***

*It is late fall on the Farbotnik farm; the trees are bare but the air is still warm and the front of the springhouse glows in the morning light. I cannot remember how many times I have painted this springhouse; yet it never fails to inspire me.*

*The broken roof has been repaired since this watercolor was done. One ash tree has succumbed to old age, and the other still stands alone.*

***Cathedral Cliffs, Achill Island, County Mayo, Ireland, 19¼" × 28½". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ranulph Bye.***

*Ireland is a country of spectacular scenery. Along the coast it can be overwhelming, and because it is sparsely wooded, there is nothing to obstruct the view. Skies play an important part in this country, and clouds are almost always present. Shafts of light break through cloud masses causing brilliant spots of color upon the countryside.*

*The cluster of houses shown here, surrounded by a lush pasture bordered by the ever-present stone fences, is typical in any part of the country. The clouds above caused the mountain to be dark in shadow with a rich bluish-green color. To get the subtleties of this dark mass, I went over it several times, one wash over the other. Some lifting out of the color was done later to bring out certain forms. Opaque flecks of yellow flowers in front completed the watercolor.*

# *Victorian Homes*

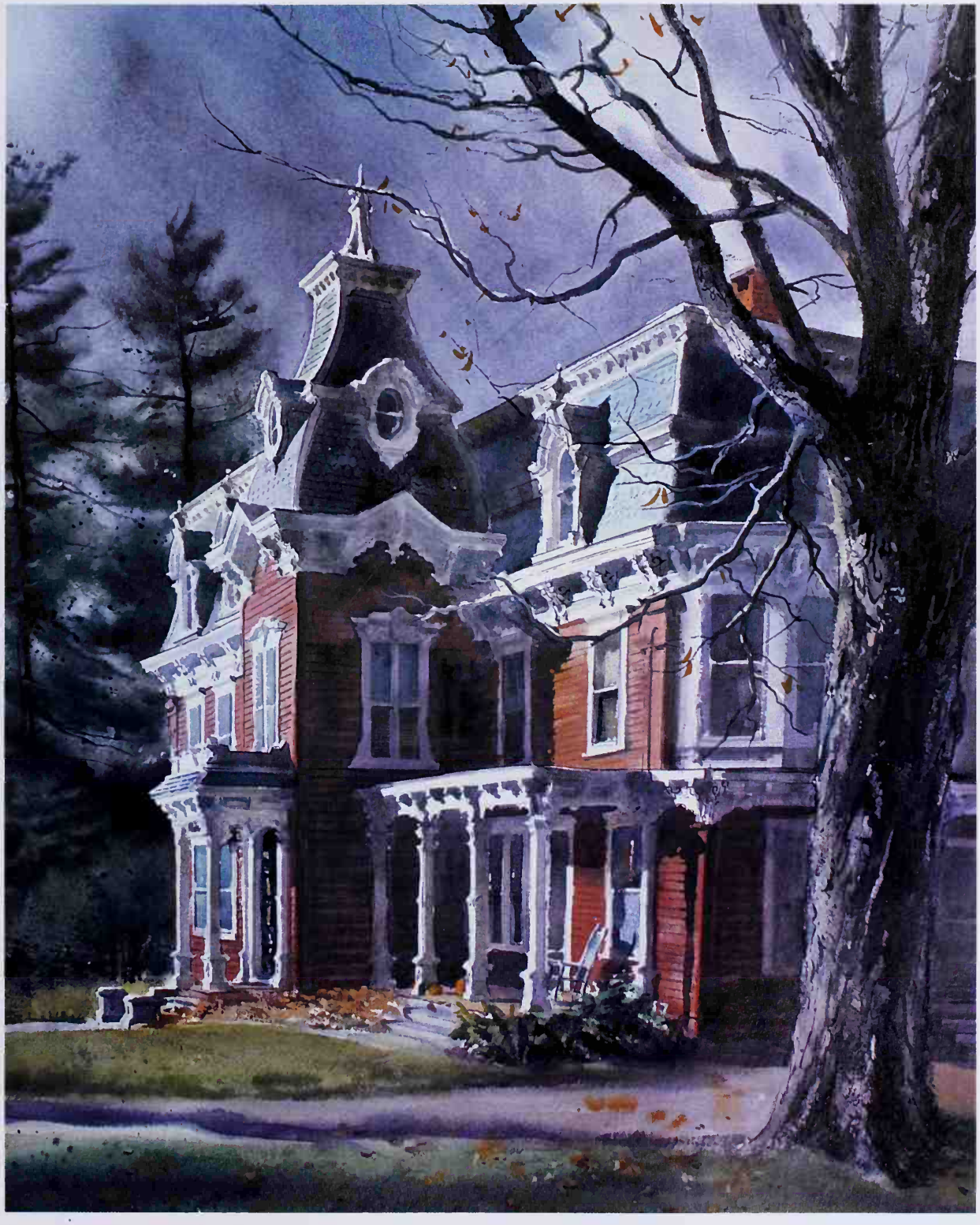
My predilection toward Victorian architecture as a painting subject was a gradual development. I had not thought much about it as a young artist, but I was aware that Victorian houses were something quite special and had more character than an ordinary new house.

Victorian architecture started in England during the reign of Queen Victoria and in America after the Civil War and during the reconstruction period. The era produced an affluent society that expressed itself by building sumptuous residences and richly ornamented commercial blocks.

Painting Victorian houses can be a time-consuming enterprise, calling for careful drawing and attention to detail. I go for a dramatic light effect to bring out the extraordinary richness of what I see.

***House in the Square, Brunswick, Georgia, 14½" × 21"***

*As a respite from northern winters, I enjoy taking short trips to the South where days are warmer, but I select places of historic interest or towns well represented with Victorian architecture. Not as famous as Savannah or Charleston, Brunswick nevertheless is an attractive southern town with many streets shaded with live oak trees. The house shown here has a Victorian flair and the relation it has to the trees around it made a good composition.*



***Wallingford, Vermont, 21" × 15"***

*This house is a gem and very striking in the snow. The style is Second Empire and displays a mansard roof. I painted this watercolor from a slide a year before the house was badly damaged by fire.*


***Victorian Derelict, 20″ × 28″. Collection of the artist. Salmagundi Club Prize 1993.***

*What was once an upper-class neighborhood had become rather seedy over the years. The house still retained much of its former dignity and represents a good example of the Second Empire style.*

*I painted the subject just as I saw it with boarded-up windows and an unkempt front yard. I paid close attention to the variegated stonework, laying each block side by side. The slate roofing was done more by suggestion. Notice how all the windows are different: some are open, others are closed or broken. The sky was painted in a simple wash with two layers of blended blue and sepia.*


**William Emery House, Flemington, New Jersey (c. 1890), 17½" × 24"**

*This complex arrangement was the choice of William E. Emery, a wealthy merchant of Kansas City, who retired to Flemington and "Rose Lawn," located on the site of his birthplace.*

*The exterior of "Rose Lawn" enlists almost every architectural motif in the Victorian catalogue. The bewildering array of roofs, gables, porches, turrets, dormers, windows, brackets and chimneys has been woven into an undefinable vernacular fabric. It is actually three houses joined, which explains some of this architectural confusion.*

*This house still stands but has been chopped in half to make room for a large condominium next door. Most of this watercolor was painted on location.*

***Victorian House, Owego, New York, 16½" × 23". Private collection.***

*Owego is a river town located in south central New York. Some fine Victorian homes stand side by side along the river bank. This house is a combination of Eastern Stick and Queen Anne style, exemplified by the encircling veranda and ornamental spindle work. I was on a trip passing through town and did not have time to paint the house on the spot; it was done later from a slide.*

***The Shamrock, 22½" × 34". Collection of the artist. Paul B. Remmey Memorial Award, American Watercolor Society, 1992.***

*The Shamrock stands on Block Island off the coast of Rhode Island. It's a rather ordinary building of the Victorian period, quite run-down in appearance but to me a paintable subject for that very reason. In this watercolor, I liked the rectangular format with diagonal shadows coming down from the dormers and bays, creating an abstract pattern. Painting buildings realistically does not offer much opportunity to employ abstract design. This becomes more apparent when one focuses on a detail rather than the whole subject, which is what I tried to do in this work.*

# *Cities and Towns*

For subject matter nothing can beat painting in towns and cities. There is so much going on. I enjoy the challenge of depicting a street scene with figures, buildings, sidewalks and storefronts. Although one may not want to live there, New York City provides an inexhaustible supply of subject matter, enough for a lifetime of work. As a change of pace, I will take on a watercolor project in the Soho section of New York, a district rich in nineteenth-century architecture.

Closer to home, I enjoy the small towns nearby where one can work in relative peace. Compositions are not hard to find. A front porch, a storefront with merchandise displayed in the windows, a quiet neighborhood street showing houses receding into the distance, are all inspiring subjects.

***Commercial Block, Ossining, New York (c. 1876), 14" × 20½"***

*Color streetscapes such as this are in trouble all over the United States, victims of shopping malls, commercial strips and suburban sprawl. "Main Street," Ossining-style, represents an effort to reverse the trend. The town's residents have fought to retain the colorful facades and the businesses that keep them patched and painted.*

*These Renaissance Revival cornices and window cappings were an almost universal choice for commercial buildings in the third quarter (1850-1889) of the nineteenth century.*

***Jackson Square, New Orleans, Louisiana, 19″ × 26″***

*New Orleans is a city with a very distinctive character. It came under Spanish rule in 1762 but was later returned to France in 1800. As a result of this European occupation, the Old French Quarter has a very evident Spanish and French flavor in the architecture. Jackson Square is in the center of the Vieux Carre; people come to relax in the early morning sunshine. I set up my easel and made a half-sheet sketch of the scene in an hour. I was very anxious to capture the striking dark and light pattern in the center, and I had to work fast before the effect changed. Later, in the studio, I was able to enlarge the watercolor and add figures and building details with more fidelity.*

***Manayunk, Pennsylvania, 14½″ × 21″***

*Manayunk used to be an old mill town in the northwestern section of Philadelphia. Settled along the Schuylkill River in a rather deep valley, the town is noted for its steep streets and turn-of-the-century homes. The fact that no area is level and houses are built in a step-like fashion makes it very unusual and attractive to artists.*

*In this view I am looking downhill with a railroad bridge in the middle distance. A dark hill rises in back, giving the whole scene an umbrella of unity. The light coming from the left creates sharp shadows in the foreground, and figures walking by add life and scale to the scene.*

*Broome Street, Soho, New York, 27" × 40". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Calvitti. Certificate of Merit, American Watercolor Society, 1985.*

*Broome Street runs through the center of Soho in lower Manhattan. Nearly all of the buildings are late nineteenth century, and much of the cast-iron architecture was initiated by James Bogardus in 1848. Both Renaissance and Romanesque Revival were popular styles of the period, giving the facades an elegant appearance.*

*In Broome Street I encountered the buildings predominantly cast in shadow, with the light appearing only on the next block. I tried to capture as faithfully as possible the intricacy of the windows, columns, cornices and fire escapes of every building. The image of Mona Lisa appears on a side wall in the distance. Cars, people and pigeons add life to the scene.*

*Street Talk, Soho, 19" × 28"*

*This is another one of my Soho series and a complete studio work. The panoply of doors, windows, cornices and fire escapes bespeaks chaotic confusion. But if you look closely, there is a certain order and an interrelationship of shapes. The street is quiet with a single tone to offset the busyness elsewhere. Here is a good example of isolating one section of a building to find a composition, rather than doing the whole thing.*

*Broome and Greene Streets, New York City, 19" × 28"*

*This is similar to* Street Talk *except that I have taken in a street corner giving a more three-dimensional look to the scene. The square shape of the corner building becomes a conventional device to repeat the rectangular format of the picture plane.*

*Lansdale Crossing, Lansdale, Pennsylvania, 21" × 28"*

*This busy intersection provided an opportunity to employ a variety of vertical and diagonal lines throughout the composition. A somber, drizzly day enhances the muted colors and reflections. The placement of figures near the center becomes the obvious center of interest, and the directional street and curb lines point to this spot.*

# *Historic Landmarks*

The region in which I live is one of the earliest settled places in our country: Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Quakers (Society of Friends) came from England first and settled in the lower half of the county, followed by Scotch-Irish and German immigrants who occupied farmland farther north. Many homes were built in the latter half of the seventeenth century, such as Pennsbury Manor, built for William Penn in 1683 along the banks of the Delaware near Bristol.

Washington Crossing, named after our first president, is now a state historic park. Every year on Christmas day, dedicated history fans dressed in period costumes perform a reenactment of Washington's famous Delaware crossing.

Many of our towns nearby were founded before 1700 and have become well known historical landmarks noted for fine colonial architecture. I have painted many homes of this period on commission for owners proud of their properties.

Landmarks can be found in every state and are often promoted as tourist attractions by local chambers of commerce and historical societies.

***Goodspeed Opera House, East Haddam, Connecticut, 22″ × 30″. Collection of American Artists Group, Inc., New York.***

*William H. Goodspeed was a banker, shipper and ferry operator, and the opera house he created is probably the tallest frame building along the Connecticut River. After falling into decline for many years, the opera house was restored and now maintains a year-round offering of cultural programs.*

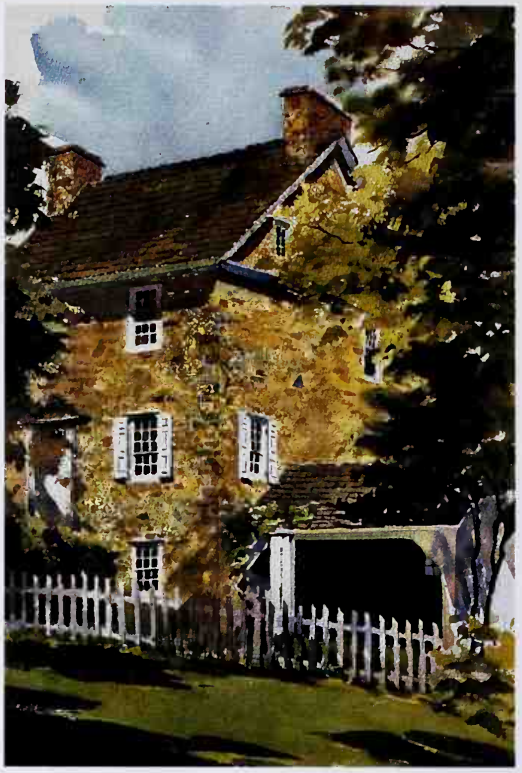
*In this composition I was struck by the way the opera house sits majestically on the river bank and by the reflections it makes on the water's surface. The opera house itself is Second Empire; the house to the right is Italianate and is now a restaurant.*

***Harmony Mills, Cohoes, New York, 25" × 21½"***

*Great textile mills were built in New York and New England during the middle of the nineteenth century. This is one of them in Cohoes, New York, a few miles north of Albany. It is one of the most spectacular to be found anywhere. The four mansard towers in the middle of the structure set it off in a grander style than is seen in most other mills.*

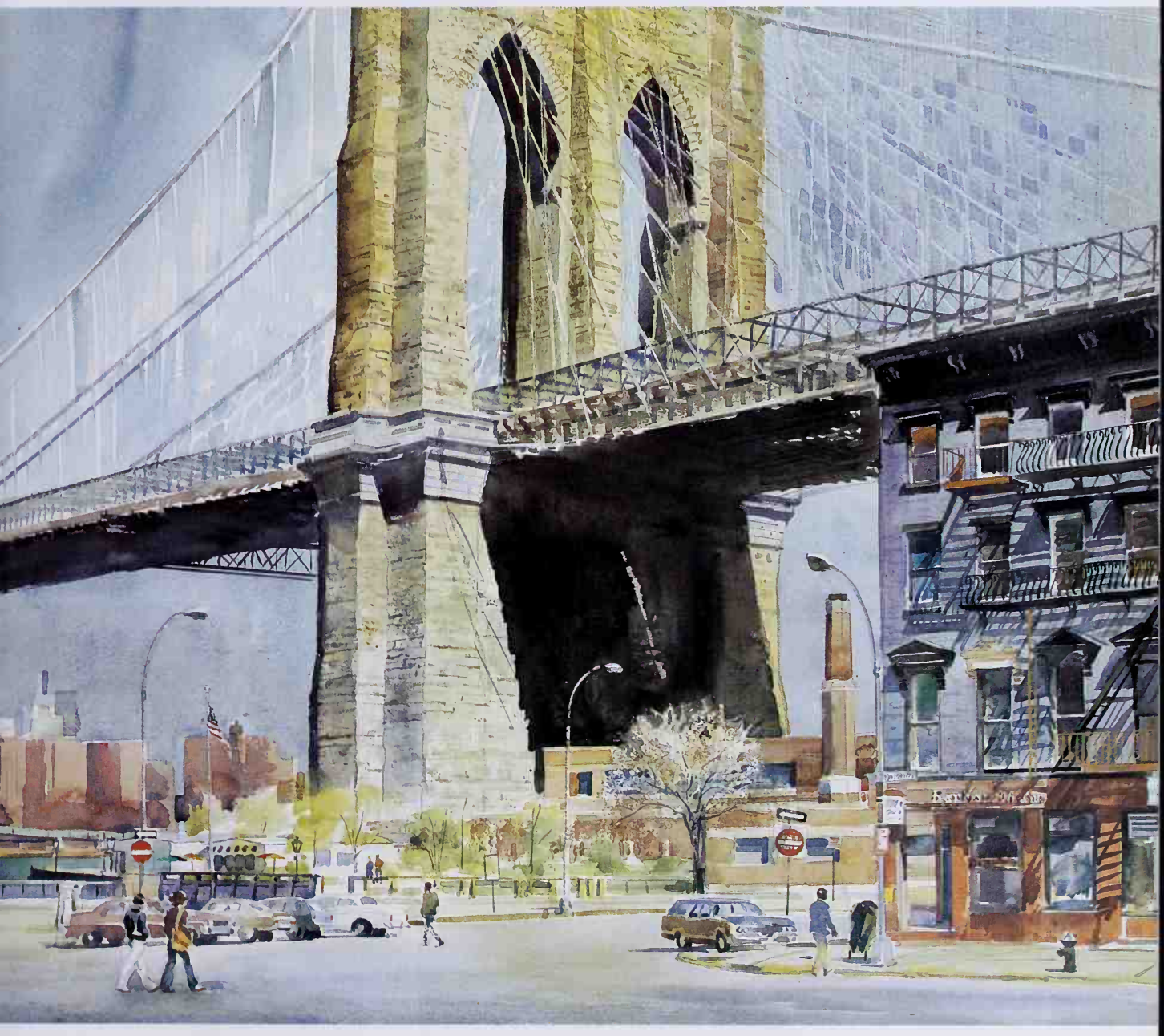
*After drawing in the many floors and windows, I masked out all the window openings, the sky and tower rooftops. The remaining area left open received a brownish-pink patina. The foreground street area was sprinkled with a gray color. After drying, the entire facade was painted in with pure watercolor, and all the window panes were rendered in with my small square-tipped sable.*

*Thompson-Neely House, 20½" × 15". Private collection.*



***Thompson-Neely House, Washington Crossing Historic Park, New Hope, Pennsylvania, 21" × 29"***

*This famous house was one of the headquarters of the American Army where important decisions were made during the winter of 1776 before the Battle of Trenton. The success of the American forces represented a turning point in the American Revolution. The house is named after two families who lived there for about 150 years, operating a grist mill nearby. The house and surrounding farm buildings are typical of an eighteenth-century farm estate. Each succeeding generation adding on to the building produced a narrow elongated structure. Each room downstairs and upstairs had its own fireplace. The quaint outbuildings, storage sheds, barn and horse stables, etc., were used for the farm services of this self-contained property. Many of the trees here are two hundred years old or more.*



***Brooklyn Bridge, 29″ × 21″. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. A. Thomas Richie.***

*The completion of the Crystal Palace in London (1851), the Eiffel Tower in Paris (1889), and the Brooklyn Bridge in New York (1883) were among the great structural feats of that century. John A. Roebling and his son Washington Roebling were the designers and engineers of this great work. A prototype of this bridge, on a smaller scale, was built by Roebling to span the Ohio River between Covington, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio.*

*I selected this springtime view of the bridge from Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn. Because of the immensity of the towers I decided I could achieve a sense of grandeur and magnificence by being up close. You can see how small the people, cars and buildings are in relation to it. I made a sketch on the spot and took numerous photographs so that I would have enough material to do the finished painting.*

***Pemaquid Lighthouse, Maine, 20" × 24"***

*Pemaquid Lighthouse, located on Pemaquid Point at the end of a long peninsula, is a very popular tourist attraction. The rocky ledges jut out into the ocean, piercing the waves that come rolling in from the Atlantic. The lighthouse itself sits on a high shelf, a safe distance from the water.*

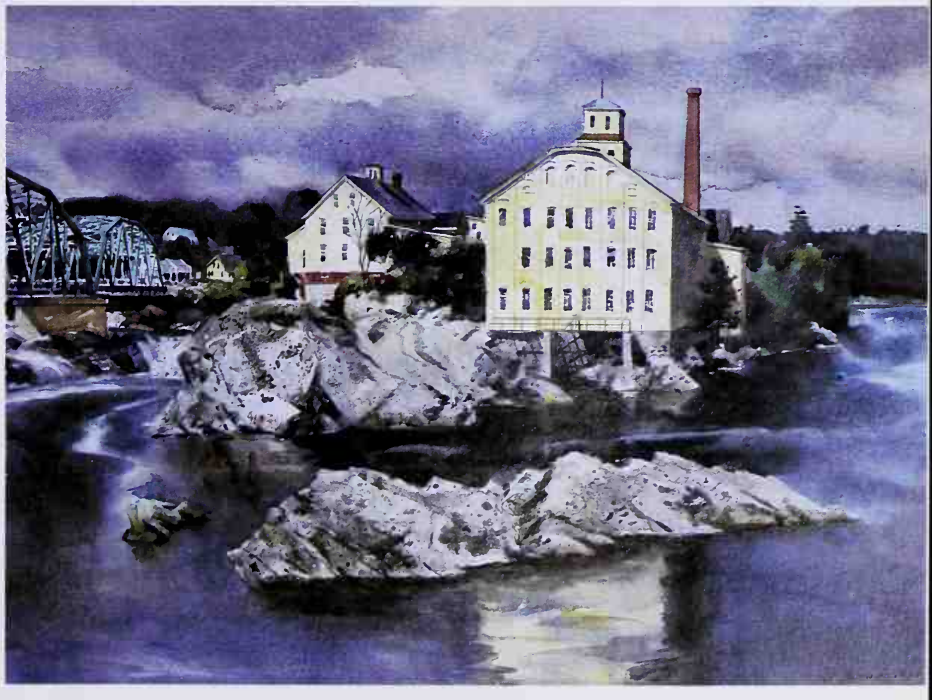
*In this view I was looking up to the lighthouse with rocks in the foreground. The fissures in the rocks led the eye toward the center of interest, a rather tricky problem in perspective. The rocks here have a pinkish color so I used some mixtures of alizarin crimson, light red and cerulean blue.*

***Behind Clymers Mill, 16" × 21". Private collection.***

*I have painted this mill many times from several viewpoints. This particular view struck me because of the strong light and shadow effect. The dark shadow of the mill accented the whiteness of the snow along the creek, and the trees were well silhouetted in this composition.*

***Pejepscot Mill, Topsham, Maine, 20" × 28½"***

*Although this mill is located in Topsham, Maine, I painted it from across the Androscoggin River in Brunswick. Built in 1868, it is the oldest remaining wood-pulp mill in Maine. It sits dramatically on a pile of rocky outcroppings with the river swirling around it. I made a quick sketch of it on location and later developed the finished watercolor in my studio from photographs.*



# *Railway Stations*

The railroad station is a unique architectural phenomenon; those built before 1900 adopted the style of the period, either Queen Anne with the conical tower or Second Empire characterized by a mansard roof. The most distinguishing feature of the depot was the copious overhanging roof that usually skirted the entire building to give protection for passengers on the platforms and entranceways. Smaller depots on back country spurs were simply buildings containing only a waiting room and ticket office, and perhaps a separate room for baggage. Each railroad line in the country seemed to adopt a special design that distinguished it from the other lines.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, I made a project of painting railroad stations in watercolor. I should have started sooner because many depots had already gone out of service or had been sadly neglected. I continued to paint stations until I reached a point that few good examples were left standing. Later I relied on photographs I had taken when trains were still running. In retrospect, I feel gratified that I was able to record many depots that no longer exist and do my part to keep a dying species alive.

***New Hope Station, New Hope, Pennsylvania, 21″×28″. Collection of New Hope and Ivyland Railroad.***

*Victorian flair is the key word here. The station's features include its small, irregularly shaped frame structure, colored windowpanes and Norman tower. Quaint New Hope Station has been moved twice in recent years and is presently at its original site. It was built in 1889, and was formerly served by the New Hope Branch of the Reading Railroad Company. Now restored, it is home base for the steam train that delights young and old as it makes its 7-mile trip across historic Solebury and Buckingham Townships.*

*The station has been a favorite subject of mine for many years, and it looks pretty much today as it did during the Reading Railroad years. New owners have developed the station area and freight house into a delightful park-like setting.*

*New Hope Station, 13¾" × 21½".* Private collection.

*New Hope Station, 14½" × 21"*

*Reading (Outer Station) (1871), Reading, Pennsylvania, 17½" × 26"*

*Sometimes a station gets torn down before I get a chance to paint it. This was the case here. Fortunately, I had taken a number of slides a few years back that I could work from, and I was lucky in having a sunny day to take this shot to bring out the color and shadow pattern to advantage. When a railroad goes out of business and they cannot find a suitable buyer, these wonderful stations are razed to eliminate having to pay taxes on them.*

*Pennington, New Jersey, Station, 14½" × 20"*

*Built in 1882, this station was originally served by the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad and later leased to the Reading Railroad. I have painted Pennington Station several times, each from a different viewpoint. This time I elected to chop off the top portion and concentrate on the station platform that skirts the entire building. This decision makes for a fairly strong composition, and I was close enough to make a serious study of the fine stonework.*

*The station ceased active service about fifteen years ago and is now used as a private residence.*


***Collegeville Depot, Pennsylvania, 16" × 22"***

*Formerly on the Reading Lines, now razed. This was a lovely station made of brick with some fine detailing. The finials on the gables were unusual with ornate scroll work below it. I painted this watercolor over a period of two days on site. Why the community could not save it is a tragic question.*

# *Some Final Thoughts*

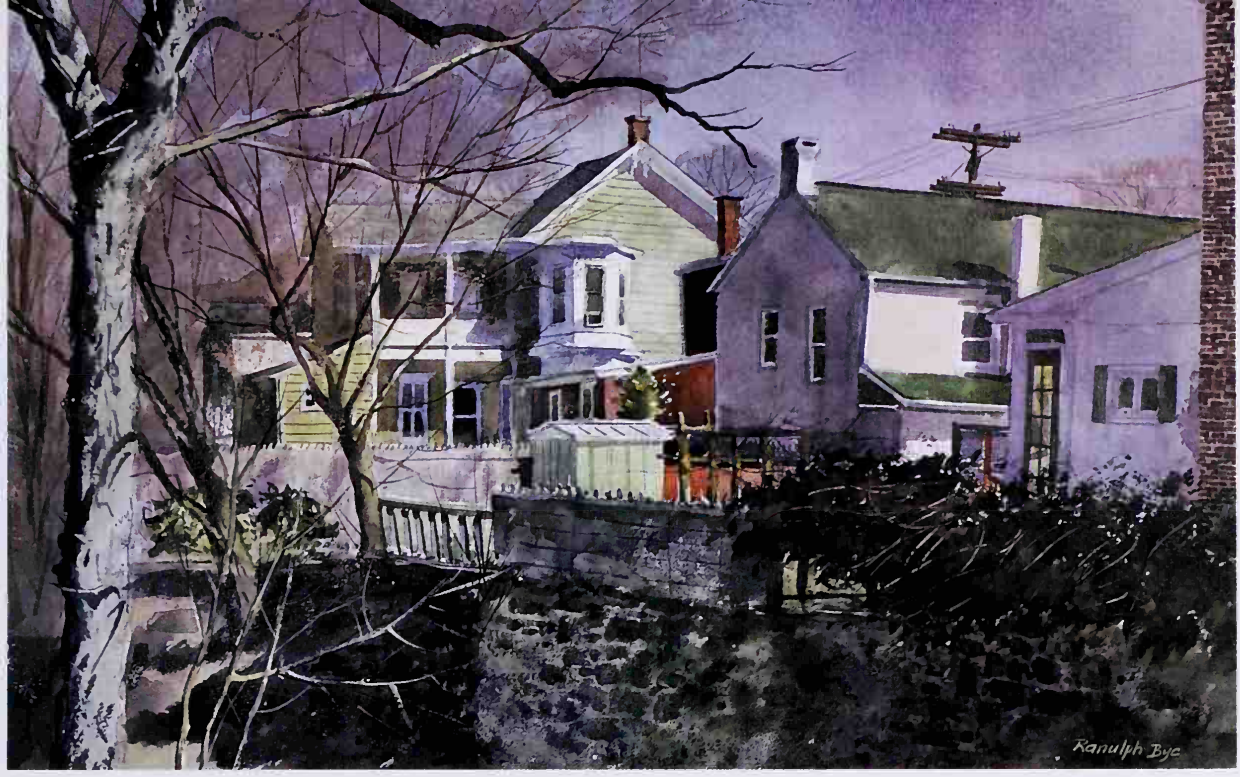
Watercolor is an ever-learning art experience, but the process of development can be enjoyable at any stage. In the early years, sales of paintings may be few and being accepted in juried exhibitions is not always a sure thing. But eventually circumstances will improve, and this gives one the incentive to plug along.

Find an established artist that you admire a great deal and use him as a mentor for your own improvement. That is one thing that has helped me over the years. Later on other painters will come along to replace the first one, and they will have different ideas to offer. I also encourage visiting art galleries and museums wherever you happen to be and trying to appreciate all schools of painting. This will reward you by giving you inspiration, which we all need. As time goes by, you may select only the painting style you respond to and dismiss the rest. Also, creating your own art library can be very enjoyable, and subscribing to art publications will keep you abreast of new techniques.

In my own work, I find it necessary to diversify my subject matter by taking short trips away from home. If I don't get away periodically my work may become stale and uninspired. Many artists I know take working vacations to other parts of the country or go abroad to paint. Fortunately, my wife and I have been able to do this from time to time, and it has been very rewarding.

In your travels, either at home or abroad, respect private property and observe local regulations. You will almost always receive a warm reception.

*Summer in Nova Scotia*




*Back Yards on Swan Creek*


*The Back Lane*

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# About the Author

Ranulph Bye was born in Princeton, New Jersey, but grew up in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. He graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art (now known as the University of the Arts) and also attended the Art Students League in New York under Frank Dumond and William Palmer. In his early years, Bye worked in his father's art restoration business and, during his stint in the Air Force, was in great demand as a portrait painter.

Bye taught painting and drawing at the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia for thirty years. He was elected to the American Watercolor Society in 1953 and in 1975 became an Associate of the National Academy of Design.

He is most closely associated with the area of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which is the home of some of the nation's most beautiful Colonial architecture. His paintings of the "vanishing railway depot," both in Bucks County and beyond, are treasured for their artistic as well as historic value. Fifteen of the "vanishing depot" paintings are in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of History & Technology. Eleven are in the collection of the William Penn Museum in Harrisburg.

This painting series led to a book, *The Vanishing Depot*, in 1973. A second book, *Victorian Sketchbook*, was published in 1980. Bye currently lives with his wife in Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania, where he continues to seek out and paint interesting architectural subjects.

# PAINTING BUILDINGS IN WATERCOLOR

Have you always wanted to include buildings in your watercolor paintings, but have been afraid to — maybe because of the perspective or simply because you thought you couldn't paint them well enough? Here you'll learn how to paint structures of all types realistically, yet expressively. Master watercolorist Ranulph Bye teaches you his tricks of the trade and offers numerous practical techniques, including eight comprehensive step-by-step demonstrations. Here's a sample of what's inside:

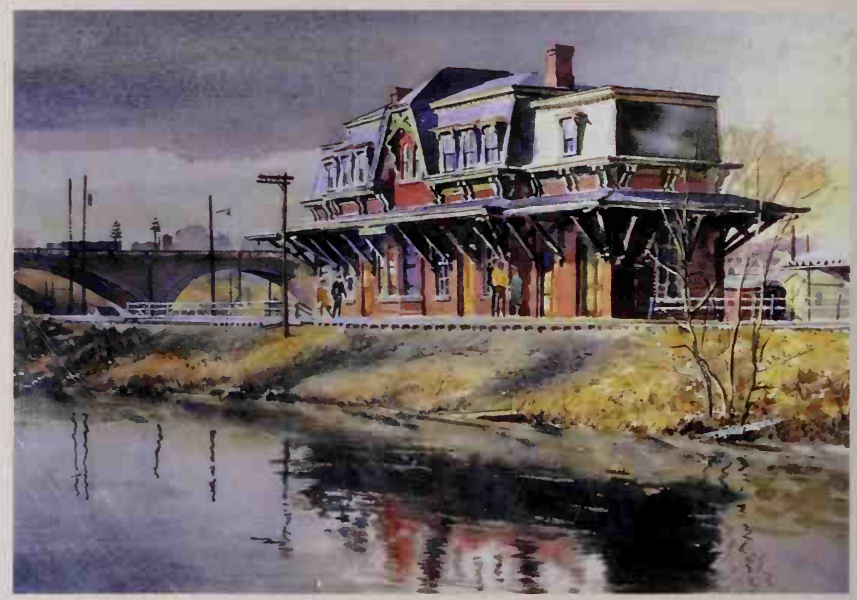
## *Bethlehem Railroad Station*

The painting of railroad stations as a subject has become a rare motif. The demise of passenger railroad transportation has caused thousands of small- and medium-sized depots to be torn down. Only a few are left standing around suburban sections of large cities; many of these are out of service.

Built in 1873, this station is a fine example of the Second Empire style. The distinguishing feature is the mansard roof with its hexagonal slate roofing and heavy, bracketed cornices.

▲ *After the initial washes for the sky and water had been laid down and dried, I gave the sky a cloudy overcast using sepia, Davy's gray and blue. I began to lay in the railroad embankment and the bridge in the background. The embankment will be further developed as the painting progresses.*

▲ *After the bridge in the background was completed, I began work on the station itself by painting in the dormer windows of the second floor, working from left to right. There was a fair amount of detail in the bracketed cornices along the roof, and I followed the photograph closely. The key here was to capture the dark shadow patterns convincingly.*



▲ ***Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Railroad Station, 16" x 22"***
*I finished the end portion of the station and a suggestion of the town behind it. Some small trees were added growing out of the embankment. Additional ripples in the water were needed and I strengthened the red areas along the front of the station. I decided to stop at this point to avoid making the watercolor look overworked.*

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