



"At Twilight Time," by Loren Blackburn, depicts a small town in winter. Published by Adirondack Collection. Enter 343 on reader service card.

**Majestic snow scenes evoke memories of the past and provide a sense of peace in a hectic world.**

# Winter In

**E**ven if most of us today live in suburbs and cities, there's a part of our collective consciousness that is entranced by mountains, rivers, woods, provincial villages, and other country scenes associated with our nation's rural past. It's one of the reasons landscapes are bestsellers in any gallery.

Another reason may be the diversity of subject matter. The varied geography of the U.S. provides a myriad of opportunities for the artist to capture these vistas of our American heritage. Add seasonal changes to the diverse topography, and "the combinations of possibilities are endless," as Hudson

River painter Paul Gould puts it.

While each season has its advocates, for a number of reasons, many contemporary artists find that one of the best times to render America's scenic locales is winter.

"There's a simplicity that winter can bring to a scene that might otherwise be busy compared to other seasons," says Gould. "It's the quiet moment when everything is dormant." "Nature is asleep—the idea of serenity and sleep—those two thoughts go together," says Minnesota artist Gerald Hjelm. "That's one reason why I think winter scenes are popular—you just have to look at the print market to know that."



*"Frosty Morning on the Yellowstone," by Al Feldstein, is a landscape with an other-worldly flavor. Published by Golden Spirit Publishing. Enter 344 on reader service card*

# America

By  
**Marguerite Smolen**

North Carolina artist John Furches says, "I love the wintertime. I think the landscape is bared more to the viewer than in the summer, when, with all the leaves, it's really difficult to see the lay of the land. In winter, the land opens up, and it's more inviting."

"I do a lot of winter scenes, and I like them because the composition is very clean," says Jon Crane, a South Dakota watercolorist. Crane was recently honored by a U.S. Forest Service Commission to paint a portrait of the nation's 1997 holiday tree, which will be cut from the Black Hills of South Dakota and installed in the Capitol for the 1997 festivities. "In

winter, the subject is very noticeable because there's nothing competing with it. It's more difficult to see the subject in the other seasons because of all of the foliage."

Crane's "America's Holiday Tree" depicts the giant spruce growing in South Dakota's famous Black Hills. Branches from neighboring trees frame the foreground, while a meandering stream directs the eye towards the chosen evergreen, rising in solitary splendor from the snow-covered ground. In the background are limestone cliffs, the rocky outcropping of higher black granite peaks that give this corner of the state its name. More in keeping with traditional handling



"America's Holiday Tree," by Jon Crane, depicts the giant spruce from South Dakota that will stand in the U.S. Capitol this Christmas. Published by Jon Crane Watercolors. Enter 345 on reader service card.



"Winter on the Eastern Shore," by John M. Barber, depicts Chesapeake Bay in winter. Published by the Barber Gallery. Enter 346 on reader service card.

of a winterscape is Gould's "Winter Glow," a view of the Hudson River from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Here the ice-choked river sluggishly winds between the barren, snow-dusted bluffs on a tranquil winter afternoon. Part of the artist's four seasons on the Hudson series of prints, "Winter Glow," like Crane's "America's Holiday Tree," was inspired by an actual experience painting en plein air (outdoors), following in the steps of the famous Hudson River School artists of the nineteenth century.

Gould believes that the artist's experience painting outdoors "transcends into the painting in some way." In his winter canvases, there are typically a lot of blues, he notes. "Many times clients will see a serenity about the way I've handled the subjects. It might be the emotional quality typically associated with that color."

Proclaimed "nature's greatest panorama" by a nineteenth-century writer, the Hudson River Valley has attracted artists even before it inspired

America's first school of painters. But it is by no means the only part of the country to attract an artistic following.

Bradley Shoemaker's paintings of old farmsteads adrift with snow and other pastoral subjects of Pennsylvania have garnered him a popular following. Shoemaker appreciates the aesthetics of snow. "You have the white snow to work with as a compositional element, but even in that you have endless subtle colors and tones—gradations you can use to model," he says. "It makes other objects stand out by contrast."

There's a quietness to Shoemaker's painting "A Walk Down College Avenue," a scene that depicts the main street bordering the Penn State campus, where the artist spent his student days.

"That's exactly how I remember Penn State hit by a big snow," he says. "Restful, blanketed, serene. The town closes down. Everyone goes out for a week. A snow scene is a moment when stop stops—a peaceful moment."

Robert Buchanan, who studied at the University of the Arts in

Philadelphia and teaches aesthetics at Pennsylvania State University, also has painted many scenes of Pennsylvania, whose granite hills and farmlands played a key part in our country's founding.

Buchanan's painting "American Mill," for example, depicts the eighteenth-century Glen Allen Mill along the Yellow Breeches, a stream near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This subject matter has all of the quintessential elements for a picture, says the artist. "It has history—the mill produced grain for the revolutionary war. Inside, you can see the original worker's calligraphy. It speaks of a time long past, when things were done by hand and craftsmen took pride in their work. And the stream is so picturesque you can't help but find it an interesting, beautiful setting."

Buchanan says he likes to paint winter because, "artistically, winter creates a tremendous pattern of light and dark—a study in contrasts."

Buchanan isn't alone in his appreciation of the aesthetic challenge in ren-



"Spruce and Splendor," by Gerald Hjelm, is a haunting snowscape created with vivid colors. Published by Prints & Perspectives. Enter 347 on reader service card.

dering snow, which, despite being 'white,' is often painted with a lot of color. "Except for the blue sky, winter is almost a season of black and white," says Hjelm, who has been snowbound through many a Midwest winter. "The color is there, but you have to look for it. There's a challenge in painting snow, because so much of what you have to do has to be done with light and shadow and reflected light, because snow is white and using color to make it look the way you see it is very tricky. Everything has to be suggested, rather than being explicit."

Intricate light and shadow patterns are what fascinated the artist about a majestic spruce that stood at the top of his father-in-law's driveway, on what was once the farm of railroad baron James J. Hill, the "Empire Builder." Hjelm's portrait of the tree in winter, called "Spruce

and Splendor," is a snowscape created with vividly colored oil pastel sticks. The "white" snow is charged with color.

There are a lot of cool and warm blues and a lot of ultramarine. What I was after was the complete contrast between

the blues and the orange sherbet sky. I wanted the maximum contrast for dramatic effect between the warm and the cool," explains Hjelm.

In Hjelm's portrait, the grandeur of the spruce is implied, rather than manifested outright; the spruce is purposefully truncated. "When you paint the

portrait of a person, you often show just the head, not necessarily the whole body," says Hjelm. In the same way, he says, you don't have to show the whole tree to show its character. "I was really interested in the light and shadow, the lacy effect of the branches."

The picturesque American West is the favorite subject of Claire L. Goldrick, who boasts "We've got the prettiest scenery this side of Jackson Hole." Winter in her corner of southwestern Colorado is a special experience, she says. "We have a beautiful, sun-kissed landscape, even though it's cold with an average two feet of snow. The air is real warm, so we have a unique winter wonderland."

"Land of Promise" captures the charm of winter on a local ranch. "It's a typical southwest Colorado scene—a composite based on a ranch not far from where I live. The ranch has been in that family for most of this century," explains the artist. In the painting, horses are coming down to a creek that winds through a field covered with a



"American MS," by self-published artist Robert Buchanan, depicts an 18th-century Pennsylvania landmark. Enter 348 on reader service card.



"Lake Tahoe Winter Night," by Klaus Strubel, was taken from historic black and white photos and rendered as a winter scene. Published by Richardson Gallery. Enter 349 on reader service card.

## Winter landscapes allow viewers to indulge in the fantastical side of nature.

freshly fallen snow. The shadows on the snow create a patchiness that is mirrored by snowy peaks raised against a cloudy sky in the background.

"Land of Promise" elicits emotion from the viewer because of the nostalgia factor. "It's a vanishing way of life—something very different than

when people come from cities like Denver or Albuquerque," says Goldrick.

Many artists enjoy painting winter scenes for this very reason. To those who romanticize the past, winter was a time of cozy suppers, warm fires, and cheerful times spent with friends. Among them is Klaus Strubel, who likes to put a positive spin on the subjects of his paintings, including winters from the past: "I never do social themes, politics, personal problems. I always want people to feel good." A native of Germany who moved to the U.S. a year ago, the artist professes that



"St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church," is a collaborative effort by the husband and wife team of Wendy Schaefer-Miles and Kevin D. Miles. Published by SchaeferMiles Publishing. Enter 350 on reader service card.





