

I thought you would like to know some of the
particulars regarding my painting The Wedding Ring
Quilt of 1966, a work which was done sometime during
my last months as a student at the Pennsylvania
Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. It was also
one of my first essays of a still-life in drybrush
water color, a medium in which a work is built up upon
an underpainting of washes with many layers of a
kind of cross-hatching technique in which the brush, once
filled with paint is squeezed into a paper towel or rag
to remove excess water and then with various kinds
of light touches and in a series of layerings used to create
a density and depth and a nuancing of color not

possible with regular water color.

At that time I lived across the Delaware River in West Collingswood, New Jersey where it was not only cheaper but more suburban-like than life in the city.

My landlady, in her eighties at the time, was a wonderful old soul, who treated me more like a member of her family than a renter and, in turn, I was happy to help her out with odd jobs and errands. We became good friends. She gave me piano lessons and I painted her portrait twice and used the rest of her house for subject matter as well. Its decoration was a kind of time capsule, unchanged she told me, since her husband died of Typhoid fever in 1924. She never remarried and raised her two children, a boy and a girl

entirely on her own. I became good friends with her daughter, Fenore, who lived in Reading, Pennsylvania and visited on weekends to care for her mother. She was also a concert grade pianist who had chosen a domestic life rather than a professional one and many a night around midnight I would hear her playing Beethoven downstairs, from my third floor room, his Pathétique or Moonlight sonatas, and as beautifully as I have ever heard them, before or since. She was that good. I played violin and she would often accompany me in sonatas by Mozart and Händel, I, awkward, and she, patient, tolerant and encouraging.

It was also that third floor room where the Wedding Ring Quilt was pieced. This quilt had been

made by my landlady's mother sometime around the end of World War I, The Great War, and at the time of the cataclysmic Spanish Flu epidemic which decimated that part of the country, particularly Philadelphia.

Every once in a while I will choose a subject that is an autobiographical glimpse of my life at some particular time and this was one of those. The nights could be cold in that third floor room and one afternoon when I came in from school I found she had climbed all those stairs and placed this quilt, neatly folded, at the foot of my bed. I used it at night, but during the day I kept it in my small, narrow closet. People had less stuff in those days when the closet was built