

ATTENTION:

PAUL BOURGEOIS

The Sesquicentennial Painting, "From Time to Time"

Fort Worth has been truly blessed with more than its share of fine artists over the years as well as its world famous art and science museums. Bill Bomar, Bror Utter, Dickson and Flora Reeder, Emily Guthrie Smith and many others created nationally recognized art here and guided many of our citizens who now sit on our museum boards to their first experience of the fine arts. When it was suggested that a print be created to commemorate our 150th anniversary, festival organizers were faced with a bewildering choice of excellent Fort Worth artists to choose from - a sure sign of how well art has prospered in our city.

When the time for deciding finally came, twins Scott and Stuart Gentling seemed to be a natural choice. After they moved to Fort Worth with their parents in 1948 one of their earliest memories was of the Centennial celebrations held here the following year. They are not only artists but students of history as well, including area history. They have lectured and exhibited work at all the city's major museums and are a genuine product of Fort Worth's public schools and cultural institutions. They have recently won national praise and recognition for their elegant and thoughtful decorations for the new Bass Performance Hall. Their elephant folio Of Birds and Texas published in 1986 has also been universally praised by critics as the most magnificent book in the history of Texas arts and letters.

In a recent interview Stuart Gentling explained the Gentlings' choice of subject for the Sesquicentennial painting and print.

"When Scott and I were asked to do a painting to commemorate Fort Worth's 150th birthday we were at first reluctant to accept the commission. Although we collaborated on the bird paintings for our folio Of Birds and Texas our landscapes, portraits and still lifes are not joint efforts. Fort Worth's Sesquicentennial is special, however, and both of us truly wanted to do something to express our gratitude to our home town. We also wanted to pay homage to our love of Texas history by painting a thoughtful study of a subject associated in some way with the first pioneers to North Central Texas when Fort Worth was founded - but also a subject, if possible, that remains part of our lives today, a survivor from that time to our time.

After much discussion Scott and I decided to create a picture of the Isaac Parker cabin now situated in Fort Worth's Log Cabin Village at Forest Park. That cabin was built at the settlement of Birdville around 1843 so it was in existence when Major Ripley Arnold and his soldiers established the nearby outpost on a bluff overlooking the Trinity River that he named Fort Worth. Isaac Parker was a very prominent Texas pioneer who came to Texas in 1833 when it was still a part of Mexico. A friend of Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston he participated in our struggle for independence and became a member of the Congress of the Republic of Texas and the Constitutional Convention of 1845. Nearby Parker County is named for him.

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Parker has another special legacy. In May of 1836 the Parker settlement near the present day town of Groesbeck was attacked by a Commanche and Kiowa war party, and several family members were killed. Parker's young nephew and niece were kidnapped and later adopted into the Commanche tribe. The niece, Cynthia Ann Parker, lived among the Comanches for almost fifteen years, becoming the wife of a famous chief. Of the children she bore him, a boy named Quanah would become the most famous Commanche war chief of them all. He fought in the last significant battle between native americans and whites on the southern plains, the battle of Adobe Walls, in the early summer of 1874. Quanah's own example symbolized the transition from prairie life to the peaceful, settled life of a respected rancher. Chief Quanah became Quanah Parker. Having roots in both worlds he became the champion of native american causes and became friends of national and local leaders like Teddy Roosevelt and, I believe, Amon Carter.

When Quanah's mother Cynthia Ann was recaptured by Texas Rangers in 1860 she was brought back to this cabin in a sad attempt to reunite her with her white family. She could not make the transition back to white life and died a few years later. Years afterward Quanah visited this log house to pay respects to his mother's memory. I wonder if he knew that Sam Houston had also spent time here. Amon Carter later purchased the Parker House and kept it at his Shady Oaks Farm. After his death the Carter Foundation donated it to the Log Cabin Village in 1958. I got all this information from the Log Cabin Village's excellent guide book.

This simple log building with its unique connections between our past and our present is a fitting subject, I think, for a painting honoring Fort Worth's Sesquicentennial. Having lived here now for more than fifty years, Scott and I have had the wonderful opportunity to have met and known people like Amon Carter and Watt Mathews and Watt's sister Lucille Brittingham who died at age 104 - people who actually knew some of the great figures of Texas's past like Quanah Parker, Major Van Zandt and Charles Goodnight. Scott even had the chance many years ago to paint Ben Littlefield, one of the last surviving slaves still living in Fort Worth!

We have decided to depict the Parker cabin as it exists today in a quiet section of Forest Park strangely removed from the traffic noise of nearby University Drive. It was quite moving to visit the place on a late autumn afternoon when few people or none were there and wander from cabin to cabin talking in the sights and smells of another time there. The autumn trees in our painting always convey for Scott and me a thoughtful, almost elegaic feeling. I sat for hours sketching the Parker cabin and watched the afternoon shadows move across the ancient carved timbers as they had done for more than a hundred and fifty years.

Such light and the movement of shadows symbolize the passage of time for us. The cabin that stands before us is a tangible part of Isaac and Quanah Parker's time and Sam Houston's and Major Arnold's time as well, but it is also a very real part

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of our own time. And like the living, it has a future too. Scott and I do hope that as we celebrate the vibrant, thriving city of Fort Worth as it is today, that some will pause for a moment and look at this painting and think about those whose hard work and sacrifices and pain prepared the way for us. And pay honor too, to the civic spirit that has been so special a part of Fort Worth and which made the Log Cabin Village possible. We thank Mr. and Mrs. John Roach for commissioning this painting for Fort Worth and for graciously sharing it with the people of Fort Worth as a print. And we thank Bill Motheral for donating his printing services to the project. They are perfect examples of the civic spirit of the past that is alive and well here in Fort Worth in 1999. Our painting is dedicated to the Roaches and to all the people of Fort Worth who have made contributions to our town from time to time."