

Creative Living

CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE



Bob Sklar editor (501-2300)

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Lensman casts peaceful images in infrared

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

REDFORD TOWNSHIP photographer William P. Thayer creates black and white, hand-colored images of landscapes and architecture that instill a sense of tranquility in the viewer.

From the quiet ruins of an English abbey to the simple architectural space of a doorway in a serene Shaker community, Thayer uses lines, forms, balance, and contrasting lights, shadows and geometric shapes to draw an individual into the striking compositions.

"In a frustrated painter," said William Thayer at his Plymouth business, Salone International, "I used to work in oils, and pen and ink. Pen and ink, I think that's where I got started working in black and white."

Thayer jokingly refers to "a mid-life crisis" as being the catalyst that projected him into the world of photography.

"About six or seven years to create his serene, calming photographs, Thayer shoots black and white, infrared film, prints the images on matte paper, then hand-colors the work using "transparent oils that they used to use for portraits."

INFRARED FILM is sensitive to visible light and to red beyond the visible spectrum into the invisible infrared.

Being heat sensitive as well, with infrared film it is possible to photograph seemingly invisible objects by the "light" of the heat they give off.

A silhouetted, rocky mountain at sunset becomes an ethereal, almost impressionistic painting with mountain top aglow, when Thayer used infrared film for a southwest photograph.

"It's fun to work with infrared," Thayer said, "because it's unpredictable."

Thayer said he uses "the whole month of October just for shooting." October 1990 brought Thayer to the ancient landscapes of Greece.

"I shot probably 60 rolls of film in Greece," Thayer said. "I'll find maybe four or five images that I'll use."

Thayer's "Water Pot" was shot in a Grecian town built on the rim of a volcano. The water pots catch rain water for household use.

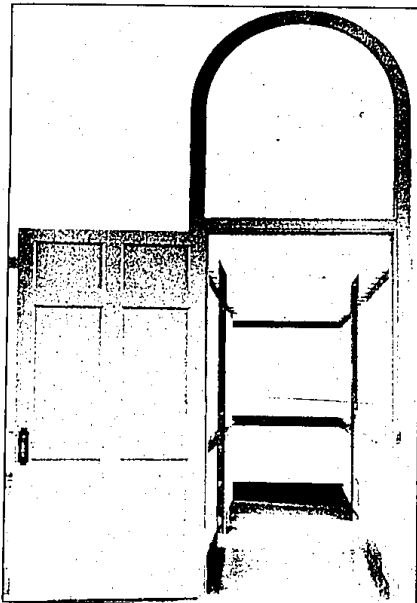
ANCIENT STONE stairs lead the eye upward to the lone, hand-colored object: a clay pot in natural shades of brown. A play of shadows and lights, in grays and whites, create triangular shapes that please the eye. Geometric lines predominating the scene provide contrast to the curved lines of the water pot, while

complementing each other.

"What I look for in a negative," Thayer said, "if I can get the same feeling (I had) when I was there, the same feeling that came over me."

The mystery of another land, in another time coupled with the quietness of the Grecian architecture, dominates, "Water Pot."

"The Stop Sign and The Cactus."



William Thayer photographed this doorway in a Kentucky Shaker community in 1986. "It has a mystery, or quietness, about it. I always shoot open doors. Even if the door is closed, I have to open it."

an unplanned Thayer image of a southwest landscape and a stop sign, creates an environmental statement, a warning to stop destroying the earth.

An unplanned image, it was Thayer's son who urged him to print the photo, which took first place in photography at the Coconut Grove Art Fair in Florida, one of the largest art fairs in the country.

The photo, shot in the southwest at sunset, shuts an eerie warning. "The cactus is back lit and it sort of glows," Thayer said.

A burst of light surrounds the stop sign, drawing the eye to the barely visible lettering, STOP.

THAYER'S SUBJECT matter comes from landscapes to architecture, but Thayer said "It's mainly architecture. I'm after the Shaker community," Thayer said. "It has a mystery or quietness about it."

Thayer's black and white photo of a Shaker spiral staircase captures your eye at the bottom of the image. The curves are so strong that they pull the viewer's eye up the snaking staircase. The straight lines of the balustrades contrast the curves of the winding stairs, creating interest and a strong sense of design.

Thayer exhibits his photographs at art fairs throughout the United

States at a hectic pace of 25 fairs during spring, summer, and fall.

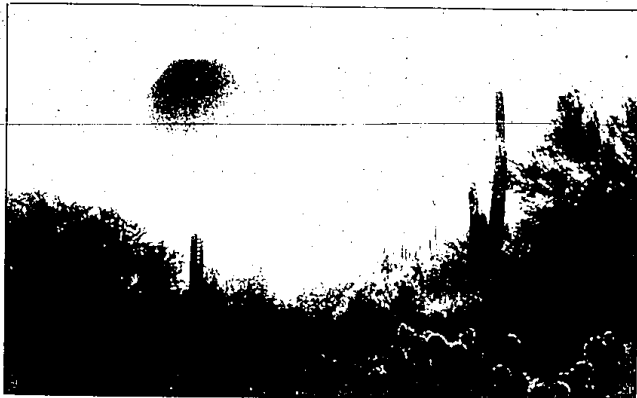
"I really enjoy the art fair, the feedback you get from people coming into the booth," Thayer said. "People will say it's kind of tranquil, or it's peaceful. Sometimes they'll say, it's moody."

Viewing Thayer's images, you are overcome with peacefulness, a sense of calm that invites you into the world, his photographs create.

"I always shoot open doors," Thayer said. "If the door is closed, I have to open it."



At work in his studio at home, photographer William Thayer hand colors a print of Indian Cliff dwellings. He uses transparent oils to give the black and white, infrared photographs a hint of color.



William Thayer considers this photograph, "The stop sign and the cactus," his environmental statement. The stop sign shot of sunset "is backlit and it sort of glows," he said.

Staff photos
by
Bill Bresler

'It's fun to work with infrared because it's unpredictable.'

— William Thayer
photographer

Landmarks shed perspective on community heritage

AN INFORMAL drive around Observerland turned up these historical tidbits:

• In 1907, as a Meridian sesquicentennial project, Cooper teachers and students researched the school's history and discovered its pioneer namesakes.

So says a state historic marker outside Cooper School on Ann Arbor Trail, near Inkster Road, in Westland.

The original Cooper School was built between 1836 and 1841 on a farm owned by Gilbert Cooper near today's Ann Arbor Trail and Middlebelt. The Coopers were Nankin Township pioneers who ran a sawmill on the logs.

Cooper School became Fractional No. 1 of Nankin and Livonia in 1849.

In 1965, the district built a one-room schoolhouse on land leased from the Cooper's son, Loren. It was replaced in 1936 with a three-room brick building.

Over the years, the school expanded to 17 rooms. Livonia schools annexed it in 1957.

A new school was built in 1966. By this time, Cooper School's origins and the Cooper family had been forgotten, according to the historic marker.

The ambitious 1987 research project, of course, helped resurrect and preserve the role both the school and the family played in local history.

• Dr. Ezekiel Webb was Farmington's first postmaster in 1826. His log house, since remodeled, still



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stands on Farmington Road (Division Street) just north of Grand River or Detroit Roads.

This house served as a post office, physician's office and as a residence for the doctor, reads a city historic marker on the front lawn.

Under the eaves at the back of the home, logs still can be seen. Webb had a friend of Farmington founder Arthur Power in Ontario County, N.Y.

Webb's log house was part of the Farmington Historic Commission's "Historic Tour" last month. It tells us not a word about... If Webb Could Talk, "Heritage: Homes of Farmington."

Webb's compensation as postmaster? Free mailing privileges. Letters cost about six cents to send at the time.

Dr. Webb would deliver the mail as he made his rounds caring for the sick. It was an honorary job and not too demanding, Mewhman writes.

The coming of the post office eventually changed the community's name from Quaker Town to Farmington.

• Under a canopy of shade trees, it anchors a city park, providing a historic backdrop for the popular

Michigan for the State concerts in summer.

But it was a little better known as a major dairy operation in Livonia.

The Wilson Barn was built in 1929 on the burned-out foundation of an earlier structure built in 1888.

It is a fine example of an increasingly rare "open style" relates a state historic marker at West Chazy and Middlebelt.

On the farm owned and operated by the family since 1947, Ira Wilson built a million-dollar enterprise that grew from dairy farming to delivery to full creamery operations.

Wilson, who died in 1944, held several local elective offices.

• Amid a farming backdrop at Cherry Hill and Ridge Road in Genoa Township stands Cherry Hill

United Methodist Church.

The congregation, founded in 1841, was organized to serve by the first Methodist Episcopal church in the area. Marcus Swift was the first white settler.

Completely raised from the ground, the first house of worship in 1846. The present red brick building, which church went up in 1912. Various families donated the stained glass windows.

The well preserved church has been the setting for many community dinners and social gatherings as well as a religious focus for the community. The state historic marker and front steps.

• Bob Sklar is assistant editor and a contributor to special reports.