

Travels with Alden

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY
OF ALDEN BRYAN, FOUNDER OF
JEFFERSONVILLE'S BRYAN MEMORIAL
GALLERY, WITH AN EXHIBITION OF
100 PAINTINGS FROM HIS TRAVELS
TO 26 COUNTRIES.

by MICKEY MYERS

Painters had been coming to Lamoille County in Vermont for the sake of its sweeping vistas decades before Alden Bryan arrived in Jeffersonville for a painting workshop in 1939. His friend Charles Curtis Allen was the instructor, specializing in painting “en plein air,” in natural light, which means that most of the workshop days were spent painting outside.

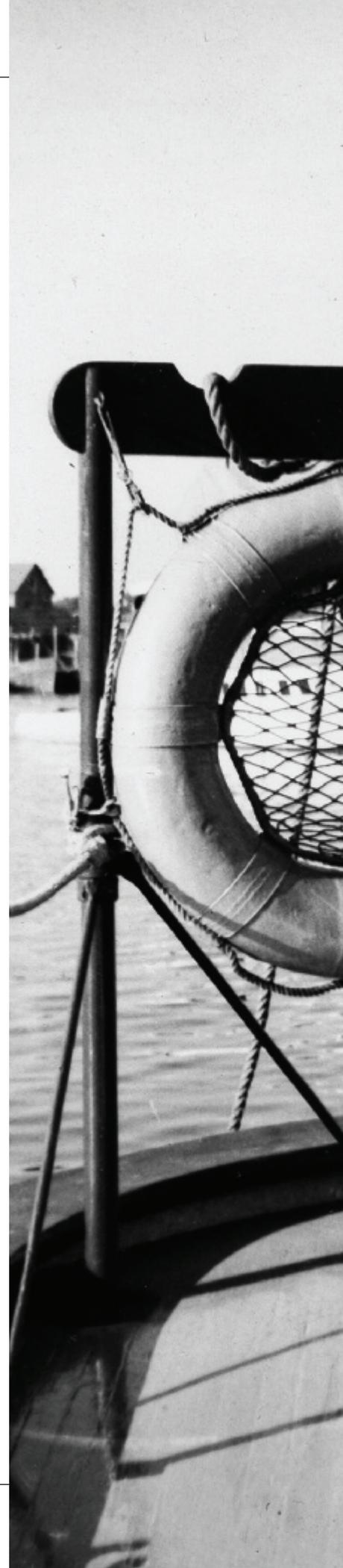
As with many before him, Bryan stayed at the convivial Smugglers’ Notch Inn, enjoying its hearty fare with other artists. Bryan was fairly new to painting, and there was nothing extraordinary about his visit, except that within the year he and his family would settle in Jeffersonville, and his effect on the area would resonate to this day.

Born and raised in Carthage, Missouri, Alden Bryan became familiar with New England as a child from camping trips to Vermont. At Harvard, he studied economics and was on the tennis team, and upon graduation, worked as a tennis pro at the Eastern Yacht Club in Marblehead, Massachusetts. There he met Mary Taylor Lewis, a determined artist, whom he married in 1936.

For adventure, the Bryans sailed a schooner, leading to their discovery of Gloucester Harbor and a world that was new to Alden, full of artistic activity with artists at their easels along the docks and the roadsides of Cape Ann. Mary already knew the art world, but Alden would become involved in an artistic momentum that was to last his lifetime, attending workshops that eventually led him to Jeffersonville.

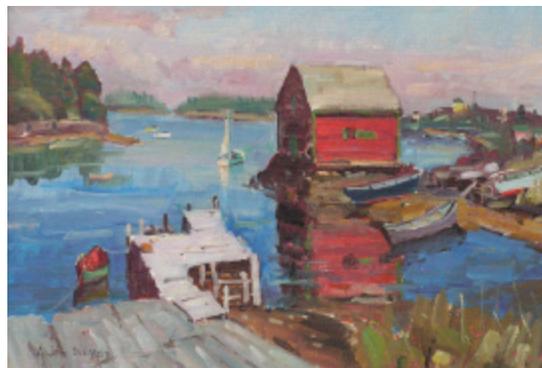
Alden and Mary settled with their young son on a dairy farm in Jeffersonville, where Alden introduced pasteurized milk to local communities in the county, maintaining the dairy into the 1970s. His agricultural efforts went hand in hand with his historic preservation of local buildings and enterprises, such as the Windridge Farms Inn, The Bakery and restaurants then on Main Street (now The Village Sampler, The Ornament Studio, Solace, and 158 Main). He built a tennis facility with clay courts indoors and 22 additional clay courts outside, and established a summer tennis camp for youth. He also designed the base lodge for Smugglers’ Notch Ski Resort. His success was drawing people from afar and providing incomes for the local people.

Bryan worked all the time, noting that, “My education never began until I got to Jeffersonville.” At the same time, he commenced to paint paintings of the local farms and village scenes en plein air in all seasons, particularly winter. Learning the idiosyncrasies of painting in below zero temperatures, he noted, “Standing out there in the cold, you’ve got to make the first strike count.”





**ALDEN & MARY
ABOARD THEIR
SCHOONER,
THE MILLICET**



Bryan became known for painting his environment, wherever he was, from family vacations to California and the Southwest in the 1940s to trips up the New England coast. By the late 1940's Bryan was teaching summer workshops at the Hibbard School of Painting in Rockport, Massachusetts, while he and Mary were members of numerous arts organizations from Vermont to New York City.

In 1956, Alden and Mary took a trip to Cornwall, England, revealing that for Bryan, his life in painting provided the reflective side of his extraordinary activities. They traveled at a vigorous pace, often going abroad when his other interests encroached on his painting at home, with visits to Alaska; the French region of Brittany; New Zealand and Australia; and the Cote d'Azur in France. His annual trips to Quebec City fueled his conviction that Quebec City had not been adequately painted by other artists from the United States, especially when the spring break-up of ice took place.

In 1978, the death of his wife and fellow painter Mary Bryan left Alden without his confidante. Mary's preference for working indoors gave Alden the opportunity to build studios for her over the years, and their mutual support had been evident to their circle of friends and fellow painters. If anything, after Mary's death, Alden picked up his pace. Travel

continued to Haiti; Casablanca, Morocco; Senegal; Gambia; and Sri Lanka.

Back in Jeffersonville, he had been amazed and delighted that a locally curated memorial exhibition of Thomas Curtin's paintings produced a tremendous response from a wide community. Its success planted the seed for building a permanent exhibition space.

Bryan proposed that a gallery be built in Mary's memory. He organized, designed, and financed a community art center that would make Jeffersonville much more than a well-preserved New England town. Opening in 1984, this non-profit gallery became Alden Bryan's project for the rest of his life, hosting exhibits, visiting artists and workshops. As a show place for Vermont landscape artists, Mary Bryan Memorial Gallery became a cultural destination in Alden's lifetime, and continues as such today.

In his lifetime, Alden Bryan chose not to sell most of his paintings, giving instructions to his gallery director, Jane George Shaw, to wait at least ten years before mounting an exhibition. A few years after the ten year mark, Bryan Memorial Gallery observes Alden Bryan's 100th birthday with a memorial exhibition, "Travels with Alden," featuring 100 works from his travels.

Now under the skylight of his wife's memorial, "Travels with Alden,"

To the left: Katmandu; Above top: Sri Lanka; Above bottom: Nova Scotia

through the work of this own hand, gives shape and form to the adventure that was Alden Bryan's life.

The Bryan Gallery is located at 180 Main Street in Jeffersonville. The gallery invites visitors to stop by 11:00 am to 5:00 pm daily during the summer, or to call for an appointment to visit at any time. "Travels with Alden" will be on exhibit through September 2, 2013. A preview of the exhibit can be found at www.bryangallery.org. (802) 644-5100.

Mickey Myers has been Executive Director of Bryan Memorial Gallery in Jeffersonville, Vermont since 2006. An exhibiting artist in pastel and printmaking, Myers is originally from Los Angeles, where she studied with Corita Kent. Under Myers' direction, Bryan Memorial Gallery presents a biennial Vermont art historical series called Masters of Vermont (2007: The Women; 2009: The Men; 2011: The Watercolorists,) of which Travels with Alden is the latest. She is assisted in this endeavor by the gallery's Assistant Director Jim Gallugi. For "Travels with Alden", Alden T. Bryan, son of Mary and Alden Bryan, and Fiona Cooper Fenwick, the gallery's Exhibitions Chair, collaborated on curating the exhibit. Myers lives in Johnson, Vermont, in a home originally built for the Vermont artist Georgia Balch (1888 – 1981).