



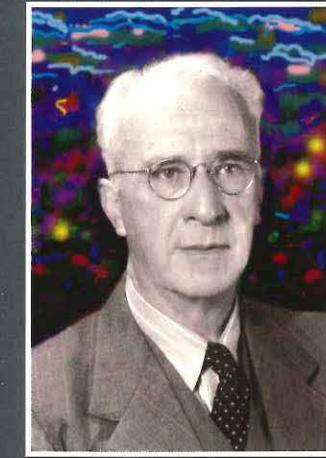
Born January 21, 1878 in Delphi, Roy was the first of two sons born to William Trobaugh and his second wife, Elizabeth McCord Trobaugh. Although no details exist from Roy Trobaugh's formative years, he undoubtedly displayed a serious interest in art. On October 1, 1901 he traveled to New York City and enrolled in the Art Students League.

When Trobaugh arrived to pursue his career, the art world was on the brink of exploring social realism and urban imagery. The Art Students League, in 1900, had just celebrated its twenty-five year anniversary as a student-established school. The original split in 1875 between the Art Students League and New York's traditional National Academy of Design had become an established aesthetical difference.

Acknowledgments

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Photos of Leroy Trobaugh courtesy of Carroll County Historical Museum



LEROY TROBAUGH

*The Paintings
of a Railroad
Worker*



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Leroy (Roy) Burton Trobaugh (1878 - 1955) spent his entire adult life as an employee of the Monon Railroad. A dedicated and dependable agent, he reported to his hometown station in Delphi, Indiana, through two World Wars and the Great Depression.

In his free time, Trobaugh's passion for landscape painting took him to the Grand Canyon, the east coast and to the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. He painted Brown County's hills and hollows as well as the towns and fields near his home. By the time of his death, more than 450 oil paintings and sketches had accumulated in his studio.

Despite his life-long passion for drawing and painting, Roy Trobaugh never considered himself a professional artist. By most accounts a diffident and modest man, he frequently gave away his paintings to individuals and institutions, including the Delphi Public Library and the town's elementary and high schools. The Delphi Journal reported in Trobaugh's September 8, 1955 obituary that "To him, pictures were for appreciation and creative art rather than for profit."

From the time of his enrollment in October, 1901 until April 1, 1902, Trobaugh took classes in sketching, illustrating and painting from live models. His instructors included Kenyon Cox, Charles C. Curan, H. Siddons Mowbray, Benjamin West Clinedinst and Frederick Dielman. Although Indiana lore maintains that Trobaugh studied with famed impressionist John H. Twachtman, there is no evidence that he formally enrolled in Twachtman's class or studied with him in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Since Roy Trobaugh left no written account of his thoughts or reflections, it is impossible to know what reasons led to his departure from the Art Students League in the spring of 1902. What is known is that Trobaugh returned to Delphi where, except for several holiday excursions, he remained for the rest of his life.

Trobaugh may have discovered that the north central Indiana town could not support a professional fine artist or he may have concluded, after instruction with many other dedicated art students, that he did not possess the talent or commitment necessary to pursue an artist's life. Whatever his reasons, upon his return to Delphi, Roy Trobaugh eventually took a job as a telegrapher and station agent with Monon.

A hub of activity, the Delphi Monon Railroad station was located across the tracks from the Wabash Railroad station on Market Street, and it served passengers and freight going between Chicago and Indianapolis. As was the case with agents in most small stations, Roy Trobaugh had many duties. Although facilitating the coordination of the trains was the principle function of the telegrapher, he also copied train orders and gave official messages to trains, worked the interlocking mechanisms to allow one train at a time on the track, sold tickets to passengers and processed paperwork for the transfer of freight.

Despite his job responsibilities, Roy Trobaugh set aside time to paint. In fact, he painted with the same diligence with which he maintained his railroad position. After his return from New York City in 1902, Trobaugh created small watercolor sketches that soon were followed by larger oils on canvas. He did not use photographs as guides, preferring to paint landscapes outdoors on site and still life compositions arranged in the studio.

According to a Delphi Art Club "Old Settlers Exhibit" brochure, Trobaugh also made all of his own frames. A building on the corner of Washington and Water Streets served as his woodworking shop.

One fringe benefit of working for the railroad was the travel pass which allowed employees to ride company trains free of charge. Special "trip passes" could also be obtained for free transportation on any railroad not owned by the employer.

The trip passes allowed Roy Trobaugh to travel throughout the United States. He took three trips west, in 1926, 1941 and 1950, several excursions to the Smoky

Untitled
Collection of
George W. Obear



Untitled
Collection of
William J. and Florence Anne Briggs



Untitled
Collection of
William J. and Florence Anne Briggs



Untitled
Private Collection



Untitled
Collection of
Denis and Bonnie Horn



Mountains in early 1930s and tried his hand at marine paintings on the East Coast in 1938, 1947 and 1952.

In 1921 Roy Trobaugh and his artist/sculptor friend, Harry Milroy, established an art club in Milroy's studio. Trobaugh continued to paint with the club for more than a decade. "If asked for suggestions, he (Trobaugh) was always rather vague," according to the club's commemorative catalog. "He stressed using your own ideas and never to copy."

Roy Trobaugh's confidence grew along with his painting experience and, when regional exhibit opportunities increased with the establishment of the Chicago Hoosier Salon in 1925, his art work was included. Two of his paintings, "October Day," and "Midwinter on Deer Creek" were part of the first Hoosier Salon held in the galleries of Marshall Field and Company. In May his landscape titled "Valley Field" joined others from Brown County in the Exhibition of Paintings by the Brown County Group of Indiana Artists at the Art Department of Columbus Public High School.

Trobaugh continued to gain stature with the acceptance of his paintings in seventeen juried Hoosier Salon annual exhibitions between 1926 and 1954. His landscape titled "The Foot Bridge" won an honorable mention in the 1937 Hoosier Salon. "Indian Craft" won the Still Life Merit Award at the 1944 Salon which took place at the William H. Block Company building in Indianapolis. Also in 1944, two of Trobaugh's paintings were exhibited in the Indiana Artists' Club exhibit at L.S. Ayers & Co. In 1949, Trobaugh won the Hoosier Salon's Still Life Merit Award a second time with "Wedgwood Ware and Cluny Lace."

Roy Trobaugh rendered many landscapes close to home in Carroll and Brown Counties and spent summer vacations from 1931 through 1934 in Tennessee. He purchased a Dodge coup in 1948 and used its ample trunk to haul all of his painting equipment. In between his Indiana treks, he organized a solo exhibition in Indianapolis. An article in the March 21, 1948 Indianapolis Star reported, "In his group of seven large oils (paintings) he made a well-balanced selection that includes landscapes in far-distant parts of the United States - mountains, coast scenes and woodland and creek scenes nearer home."

Trobaugh's public job at the Monon station made him a well known figure in the community. But all accounts describe him as a shy and retiring individual. He lived most of his adult life at 424 North Summit, where he had converted the barn/garage behind the house into a second floor studio. Neighborhood children often stopped by to satisfy their curiosity.

On his excursions west Trobaugh took an interest in Native American crafts and, in 1944, he began to arrange pottery and rug designs as still life subjects. Ten years later, his painting, "Indian Craft Design," was the last of his works to be accepted in Hoosier Salon's annual exhibition. An art critic quoted in The Delphi Journal wrote, "In my early days as an art critic, Roy Trobaugh of Delphi exhibited landscapes that resembled incendiary work with prairie fires. The early series has been succeeded by various subjects - always with marked development . . ."

An examination of Leroy Trobaugh's art work reveals a variety of styles and subjects. Using techniques ranging from the Brown County American Impressionist school to the Regionalist style of the 1930s, Trobaugh continued to experiment and to change throughout his life. His explosive brush work, vibrant colors and occasionally skewed perspective reveal an approach uninhibited by extensive academic training or the desire to produce saleable work.

Unlike those who go through life regretting missed opportunities to fully develop a creative talent, Roy Trobaugh managed to fulfill his duties as a train station agent while pursuing his passion in the free time that remained. Unfettered by the triumphs and resulting deference to success, Trobaugh painted where ever and whatever he chose to paint, adhering solely to his own ethics about painting from life and using his own ideas.