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Paul to Sam Jan 20. 1941

Paul Sargent
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Dear Sam,

I got your letter today and will answer it while it is hot.

Our winter weather is not very nerve wracking. Up to date we have had three cold spells that put the mercury down to about five above zero; one in November and in December and the last, day before yesterday. But they lasted a short time. Tonight the temperature is about 20-25 degrees. We had lately quite a bit of rainy foggy weather, and our roads got pretty bad, the first time this winter. The roads have been first rate. Are frozen and rough now. Two snows that barely covered the ground so far, about as snowless as I remember. Getting about time for some shirt sleeve days. Today was nearly that.

Ercel has been wondering if you got her letter acknowledging the “Blue Boy” statuette. She sent you a letter than should have arrived by Christmas. Not being quite sure where you were, I told her to send it to Coral’s for you. She likes the statuette.

Why not paint the picture on plywood and let the canvas be used for other things? I painted my screens directly on the board. You can give the board a coat of thinned shellac to keep paint from drying in or paint on board without shellac. First coat will dry dead and acts as a primer for later coats. Some of the oldest oil pictures in world are painted on wood.

If you use canvas the best glue I know is a casein glue called “Casco”, but I see it under other trade names. It is a dry powder that is mixed with an equal amount of water. For canvas you can use a little more water than for wood and it will brush on better. Coat the canvas and the board, then press together and hold down with a board and weight on it for several hours. I think the casein less liable to crack loose than ordinary carpenter’s glue.

You can use a casein primer for the board. I use “Texolite”, a white casein paint that you get in paste form and mix with water. One or two coats of that, and a coat or two of Sears Roebuck & Co.’s Wall Primer and Sealer” a white paint, and you have the best painting ground I ever used. With the P. and S. paint some blue and yellow can be added to make a light bluish
gray, just right for landscapes. Three coats dry over night, and one does not have to wait so long as with the usual oily house paint. The test coat (Primer and Sealer) is to prevent the canvas from being too absorbent. Mock has used this paint several years and I got it from him. So far I see nothing wrong with it.

I didn’t know you had been working for two different pottery barns.

The bridge view I have, I guess, begun on the bridge south of the Dave Cox place as a “road closed” sign is to be seen at the Level corner. The pavement cuts the time to town. Lately on account of the muddy road, I have not been through Salisbury.

Well, I guess Roosevelt told them what’s what today in his address. I did not listen to much of it. I think we will be in war within two months. England has to have warships to help convoy the merchant ships: we will supply them and will be in the war without further ado. But I see little difference between ships, planes and other things we are supplying. Our out and out declaration of war might help the morale in many countries, and discourage totalitarianism. Hitler is very careful not to offend us just now, later when he is ready, it will be different.

You speak as if the war would be over soon. If it is over five years from now, I will be surprised. There will be other complications. Our weak point is Germany getting supplies through Russian with Japan helping. Today’s paper said metals, oils, from Mexico that Japan has been sending to Germany through Russia would be stopped. Big business is such a low grade moral leper that a country can’t depend on them to do the right thing, it there is more money for them the other way.

The fact that one of our planes can fly to England also means that Hitler and Mussolini could send a bomber over here. They could bomb Boston or N.Y. but probably couldn’t get back. Their most likely way to do it is a plane from a warship out in the Atlantic. Not that it would go far to bomb a few times, but H. and M. need something to make their people think they are doing something. I think a few bombs might help our side; wake us up to realize what war is and how near we are already to it. We are afflicted with the same lethargy that prevented England from getting off from scratch.
Sales of pictures have been very discouraging. I sold only eight last year, half small, half large. Maybe the slump does not mean anything. I have looked forward a good many years with misgivings to these times when no pictures whatever can be sold. I hope we are not there yet. I think the war scare has something to do with it. I will sell in a few days a small one ($15) and that will help. I have two other prospects that I feel hopeful about.

I am going in for some of the popular kind for calendars, not that I want to do that kind but would rather paint that kind than dig ditches, or something.

Several years ago I made a sketch for a large picture I hoped to sell to a fellow in Casey. I showed him the sketch but the price of the big one scared him off. He wanted a big mounted picture for about $25. Today I ran across the sketch. It is partly from memory of a valley over west of river, a road, a house, and some trees in color, very commonplace view. That, made large with some children in road, will satisfy the Calendar people, I think.

I believe I told you about getting acquainted with several Germans who work in the printing plant (Colson) at Paris. They are printers but three of them also paint in spare time. One of them had a stack of drawings (large) made in art school in Berlin. They were of high quality. He could do something better than working as a printer no doubt. One of them had about fifty reproductions of paintings, landscapes by the best German painters. They were very good. These pictures were from Calendars made in Germany. Pictures of high quality as those won't sell here. Appreciation by common people of Germany must be on much a higher plane than it is here.

Guess I better close,

Paul

p.s. I suppose you got about $.70 worth of stamps I sent you awhile back.