Winter 1941

Paul to Sam Winter, 1941 Tuesday

Paul Sargent
Dear Sam,

Got your letter today and will answer before I lay it aside and forget a week or so.

You can believe it or not but we are not bothered with frozen roads this winter, it is an exceptional night when it is cold enough to freeze ice. Last night the fire went out and this morning was not cold enough to need one. What do you know about that near the middle of January. Had big rain last night, much colder predicted for today with snow, but today has been sunny and warm.

You asked about painting. You did not mention size of canvas you priced in store. The cheapest way for you is to work on Masonite board. It is substantial and good, and has a canvas grain already on one side. If you can find a planning mill out there, you can probably find the board there also. Have it sawed by them in size you want. 12X16 is a good size to commence on. Look at these Masonite panels before you have them sawed—one side is smooth, other side has a grain impressed on it—the rough side is the side you are interested in. Look at it carefully with light from side to see that the grain is there and no waves. I have had some with waves and they are lots of trouble—had to fill the waves with paint as they show after picture is finished otherwise. The board I use is 3/16 inch thick. Masonite is used in making---and other things of that kind, for backs.

When sawed, paint both sides and edges with one coat of light gray paint—almost white but not quite—I use DeVoes # 579 but that is a light paint. It is a house paint. If you want less tooth to the surface, give two coats but I like them rough. The paint should be light in color because the painting in time will show its underground and if dark underneath will change light colors on topo. So choose a color not quite white—white will do but is raw to work on—a gray is best. When dry are ready to work on. If you want to make canvas, get a cotton drill or canvas, paint it with white shellac diluted with ale, let dry then paint with a white or light gray paint. When dry it is ready for work. Art stores that stretch canvases have scraps of canvas you might get.
For a white paint to make pictures you might try zinc white in one lb. cans, it will be cheaper than regular color in tubes. I can get in dozen each 1 lb. cans of zinc white for about $.54. but during these hard times I haven’t ordered any lately—the paint in the cans sometimes is gummy, so try different kinds. We used them in school at Art Inst. It was French Green and zinc white if it is still made. Use dryer or Valspar Varnish (1 part varnish to about 10 of turpentine) if you want more speed in drying, but should not dry for a few (about two) days, as it is liable to crack.

You need these colors, besides white: Permanent Blue, Prussian, Indian Red, Alizarin Crimson, Chrome Yellow light, Chrome Yellow medium, Scarlet Vermillion, Yellow Ocre, Light Red.

You probably won’t need Indian Red and Alizarin Crimson at the same time, but for some sunsets you need the Alizarin, but for ordinary painting Indian Red will do. The main thing about a set of colors is to have pure primary colors of two kinds, so that pure secondary colors can be made from them in each direction. For example Prussian Blue mixed with Alizarin makes a pure transparent purple while Prussian Blue mixed with light chrome is a bright green, because each of these two combinations lean towards the secondary. Prussian Blue is a purple blue and Aliz. a purple red—mixed make a pure purple. Prussian Blue with the light yellow is pure green because Prussian Blue is a green blue and light Chrome yellow is a greenish yellow. In other words to get pure secondaries, which are green, purple, and orange, mix primaries that lean toward the color you want. To get secondaries that are grayer, mix primaries that lean away from the color your want. For example Prussian Blue mixed with Aliz. C. makes a gray purple because yellow—the opposite of purple and grays it—is already in the Prussian Blue. Make a color wheel and study it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow → blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange → red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red → purple</td>
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By this diagram you can see to gray any primary mix with the secondary on the opposite side, and vice versa.
In that list of colors I gave, only one is a higher priced color—scarlet vermillion—the others are of the cheapest kind. A tube of that will last you a long time, if you don’t use it when another red will do the job as well. You can get also except for some brilliant subjects.

I could make you a box and not charge for my work, but I probably won’t have time now as I am thinking of going to Florida soon. Pearl went before Christmas—I made myself another box last summer—actual cost about $3 that is a great improvement on commercial boxes. For example, the ordinary box always split the palette because the weight of the point pressing against it. I got rid of that by setting the palette under the lid half way so the weight came against the lid instead of against the clips. I also made some room for boards ($7) to paint on in the bottom under the paint, and one in lid. It works very well.

I have three boxes left over from last summer—the kind I made for students. They are not fancy, just a skeleton, reduced to the lowest terms, but are o.k. except for looks, plain pine. I will send you one of them right away and some colors I have. I can get the common colors of Weber company in Saint Louis at $.36 each in studio size tubes. I don’t know if it would pay to ship them out for the difference there. Studio size tubes are 1X4 inches. I think you can make this box do until I have time to make you a better one when I get back from Fla. I can order any colors and brushes if you think it worth while. I get 25% off of regular price.

You need a whole handful of brushes but can get along with about 8. Largest should be no. 10 (two of them) and some smaller ones down to no. 1 (bristle). You need about two Red Sable bigger brushes, no. 2 and 4. A palette knife with 4 inch blade is needed, rowel shaped is best but costs a little more. Ordinary raw (or boiled) linseed oil, and ordinary turpentine mixed half and half is best for painting, unless you want faster drying in wet weather—then use Valspar and turpentine 10 to one—turpentine 10 but don’t use it with the oil.

Before you commence to paint take large brush and wet board with oil—turpentine mixture. This will help bind the colors
to the board and if working second time on picture use it also to bring up dead spots and bind colors. When working on picture second time put mixture on and then wipe off all you can with rag—if dry—if not dry or partly dry spray on with atomizer, but best to let dry before reworking.

I would not bother with academy board—it is poor stuff to work on. Make your own out of Masonite. You can use this board as large as you like.

Now, when you start to paint, paint something from life—don’t waste time making things up, or copying other pictures. Paint something from life if it isn’t more than an ink bottle, or something in the house. If it is flowers (close up) use pue color out of tube, put it on heavy then work into it lights—and darks, but remember to get the life you have to use your colors at their greatest efficiency. In landscapes (except sunsets) things that are far away are grayer than those closer, pick out a spot that interests—you paint that spot clearly and then over the rest of the canvas let it be less sharp. Let lines and masses lead the eye on and on into the picture and if a line runs out at edge bring the eye in again by a line further on.

You perhaps heard of the two women killed in Peru a few days ago, a Mrs. Stewart, one of them. New Years Eve here was very foggy. This woman flyer on her way east landed over in Earl Cox’s stubble field, got lost. She was there with the plane two days then had it pulled over into his pasture and got away with help from flying field at Terre Haute and were killed in Peru in some fog. She surely didn’t have much judgment about flying not to know how dangerous it is in a fog. It was hard enough to drive a car that night. Planes come over here often—it seems to be the short cut from Saint Louis to Indianapolis. Three army planes abreast went over here once, and Jimmy Doolittle went at high speed over the house when he was trying to break a record from coast to coast.

I don’t get excited about being descended from royalty—most of them are bad enough, and they can’t claim much because of accident of birth. What are the details of the Chenoweth connection?
A lot of cars have come out since the Plymouth with free wheeling gadgets of different kinds, but I don't know of any as simple as the Plymouth. No doubt automatic control of gears is coming. The automatic spark control is great thing in the Plymouth. Have driven it near 9000 miles and today was the first miss in the motor—maybe too much oil in the timer—Have had no punctures yet. It is my kind of car, and I would not consider another make in its class. It is fast and speedy and has good looks and is economical so what more does anyone want. Have got 27 miles to gal.

Sincerely,
Paul