*DESTINATION LODI*

*A HISTORICAL JOURNEY*

*Lodi has had many talented people, two come to mind. Both with different talents, both with different life styles, both well known in Lodi.*

*Franklin A. Bates, artist, lecturer, demonstrator, instructor, television personality, known has Mr. Watercolor was an established artist when he returned from serving in WW II. During the war he serviced as a camouflage specialist and did sketches of marines in the Pacific. He lived in Medina then moved to Lodi setting up this studio on the third floor of the Ainsworth Building above what was then the Kroger grocery store. Franklin painted with oils, water colors, sketched and air guns. He also did signs, store fronts, and art work in neon lights.*

*IN 1952 a studio fire almost took the whole Ainsworth building. After the fire, Franklin moved to the corner of Broadway and Railroad Street. He added a studio and workshop to his home. As an art teacher for over 40 years, Franklin had conducted classes for as many 50 students at one time. Most of the more noted artists in the area had studied under him. Some traveled from Cincinnati and Toledo for their weekly lessons. One man jetted in once a month from California for a week end session.*

*He pointed out that one learns to be “fast ad free’ in his art work, the rest comes easier. He had two unique methods of painting. He demonstrated his talents in 49 of the 50 states his 12 minute watercolors.*

*The realm of Franklin’s success was not limited to Medina County. His paintings grace the walls of homes in every state. In 1970 he had a one man show in New York City.*

*Franklin became a guest on the Mike Douglas show and Paige palmer (remember exercising with Paige Palmer?)Later he had his own show called “Paint Along with Franklin Bates”. His secret watercolor process was very unusual. Some say he salted the canvas, some say it was the water he used, others say it was the drying process.*

*“I’ve never worked at any other profession” stated Bates. “I’ve always been an artist”*

*“It hasn’t always been easy. There have been hard times and some large adversities along with the good part of my life as a professional artist. But with each experience, good and bad, I learned…..and I like to think my art was further enhanced for it. “*

*Franklin was a good friend of my dad’s, he would visit often and bring me paints and crayons. He was always so kind to me. We are very fortunate to have a few pieces of this work.*

*Franklin Bates passed away at the age of 59 in 1974.*

*Johnnie Meszczak was born in Poland and emigrated here in 1914. He was a resident of Lodi since 1927. He worked for the Nickel Plate railroad until 1947. Due to medical issues he was unable to follow his work.*

*Johnny Muskrat was what he was known as, lived on Maple Grove Street behind the Benson and Son Shell station. His picnic and clothes baskets were a work of art and in great demand. The baskets were hand woven from willow branches which he gathered along nearby rivulets. The baskets were painted and then coated with shellac or lacquer. His only tool was a knife.*

*I understand that he was quiet and never bothered anyone. He stated in an interview by C.B. Caldwell, “In the old country, you see, they have schools to teach the various trades. Some schools teach painting, some cobbling, some carpentering, masonry, some baskets. I learned baskets.”*

*If he could only see what those baskets are worth now. I have been to auctions where his baskets have sold for over 300 dollars!!*

*Thank you Charlie and Peggie Brown for your information on Franklin.*

*Remember on August 10th located on the Lodi Square we have the Litchfield Town Band at 2:30p and free homemade ice cream. The Lodi Fire Department will be serving food. The Lodi Police Advisory is sponsoring a Poker Run. Questions on the Poker Run please call Advisory Board at 330-288-7048.*