



In Review

By Robert W. Plyler

Prendergast Exhibits Merrill Coffin's Art

Visitors to the smaller art gallery at James Prendergast Library during this week will find there an exhibition of marine and Americana Paintings by Jamestown resident Merrill E. Coffin.

The exhibition, which continues through Nov. 2, includes more than 30 acrylic paintings, dominated largely in earth tones. The subjects are portrayed extremely realistically, with great precision and accuracy.

Indeed, although it is never wise to give too much concern to comparing works of art, the immediate mental connection that one makes when entering the room is with the works of Andrew Wyeth.

Some of the subjects could have been painted within a few miles of Jamestown, while others portray scenes more typical to other parts of the country, such as fishing boats along the New England Coast, or buffalo wondering on the frozen stretches of the American Plains States.

In fact, I think the buffalo canvas was my favorite of the show. It shows 10 of the giant beasts, with snow and frost dusting their shaggy coats, set in a treeless scene which stirs the soul with its coldness and barrenness.

Another I particularly enjoyed showed Amish brothers pulling fish onto a stringer beside a rocky creek. The point of view is from quite far away, so the brothers are seen very small, emphasizing their roles as part of a great, beautiful, natural universe.

There is a lovely painting of a blue jay, the vividness of his plumage leaping out of a wall lined with brown leaves, dry grass, corn shocks and pumpkins and dozens of other subjects garbed in the colors of fall. Another, of pheasants, portrays lovingly delineations of the browns, grays and tans of their markings.

There are a painting of a dingy boat called the Peter T., tied near a

picturesque old New England boat-house and a still life of two antique Chinese figurines, wooden spoons, a fading decoy and other objects.

Perhaps the most unusual shows a Civic War battlefield, the Battle of Gettysburg, I believe. It is the only one with human figures, and with such vivid colors and actions.

The other works all show their subjects elegantly posed and still, rather than captured in the middle of activity.

The paintings are relatively large, and while they are not designed to make the viewer re-consider his role in the universe, they are lovely and quite technically impressive representations of the glory of nature. I found my visit to the gallery inspiring and refreshing.

The artist has paintings hanging in many private collections and among the collections of several corporations. He has shown works in galleries throughout New England, New York and Pennsylvania.

His work has been on the cover and in the centerspread of *Palette Talk*, and his paintings has been chosen by McCourt Label Co. of Bradford, Pa., for a limited edition of lithograph prints which it has distributed for the past seven years.

Gallery hours at the library are 9 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. on weekdays, and Saturdays from 9-5. The address is 509 Cherry St., between Fifth and Sixth streets in Jamestown. To reach the gallery, walk down the main reading room until you reach the reference desk, then turn sharply left and climb one flight of stairs.