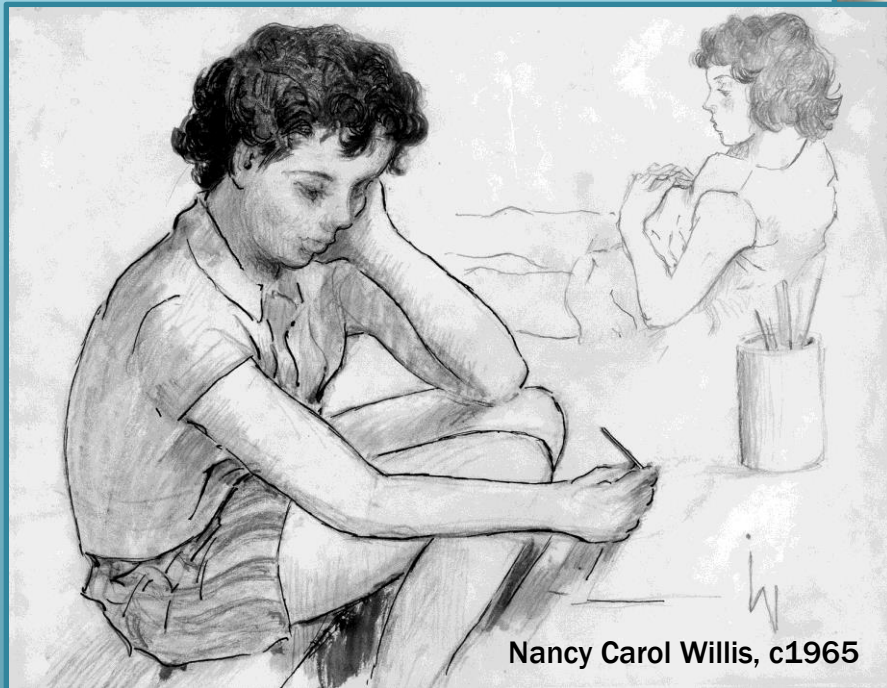


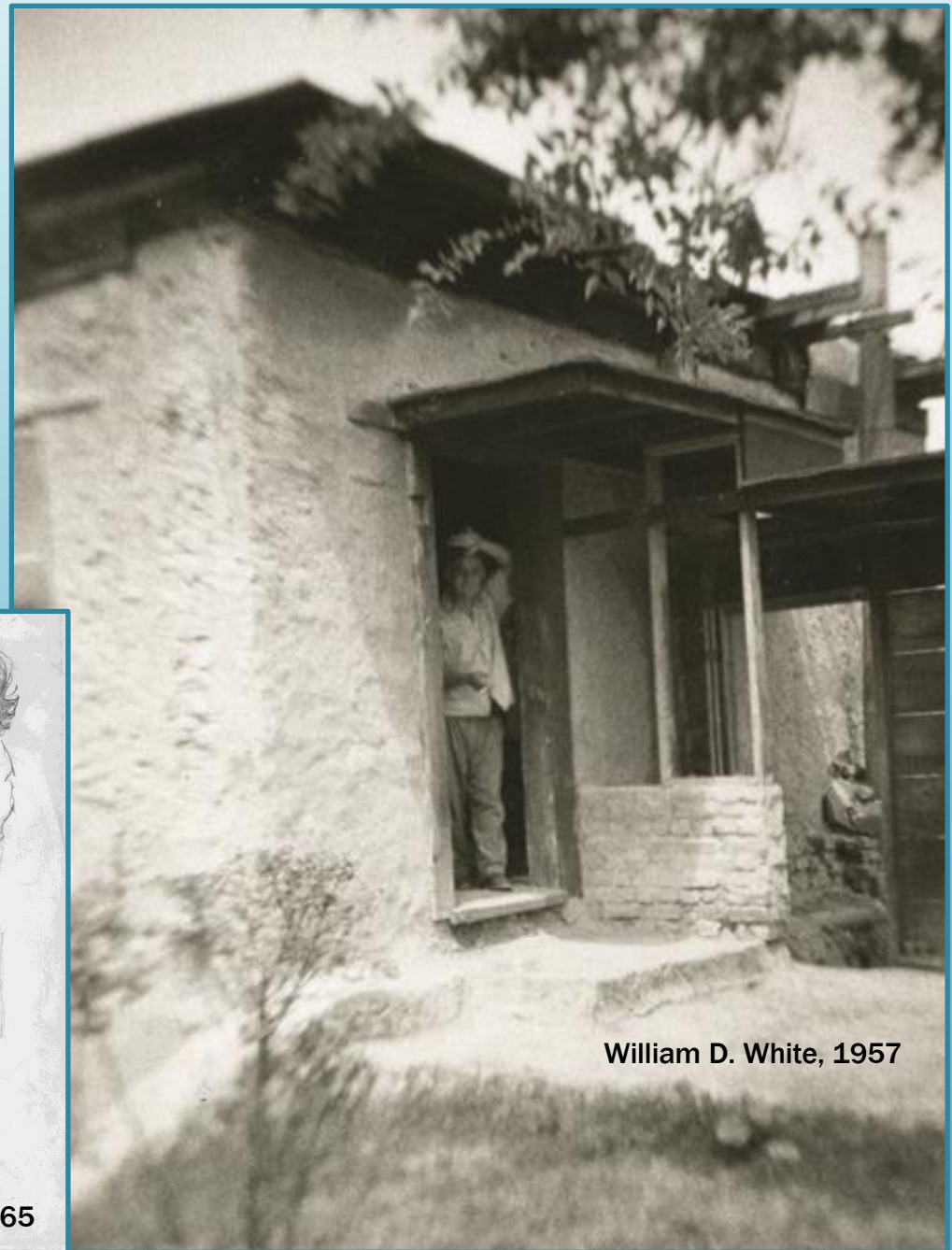
Who Was William D. White ?

1896 - 1971

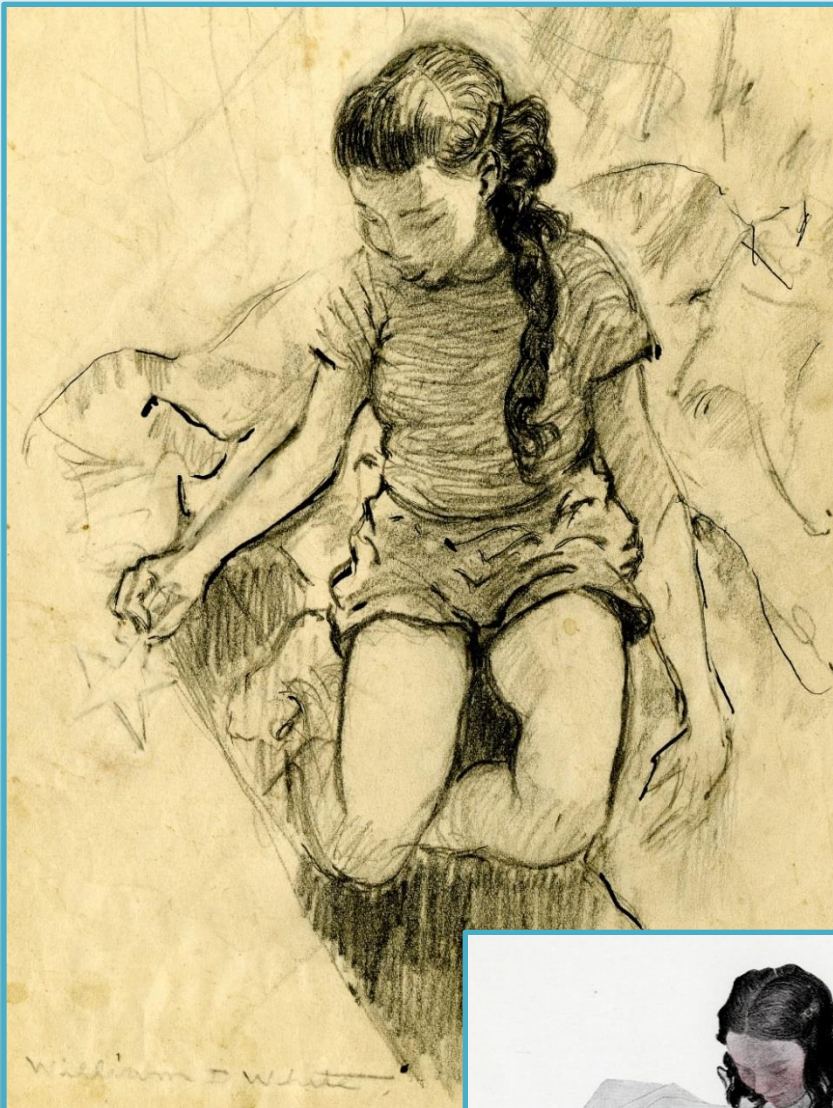
His life spanned the invention of the automobile to the landing of a man on the moon. I met Mr. White in 1961, when I was age 11. His one-room home, constructed from wood and clay stucco, was without electricity or running water. His furnishings included an easel, chair, low bed, small bookcase, and table. He encouraged my love of art and nature, and it was decades later that I understood his unique artistic vision and voice.



Nancy Carol Willis, c1965



William D. White, 1957



White's home was a hang out where neighborhood kids would draw pictures or play in his tiny yard. He depended upon neighbors for meals or fuel oil to supplement a monthly veterans pension check of \$85.

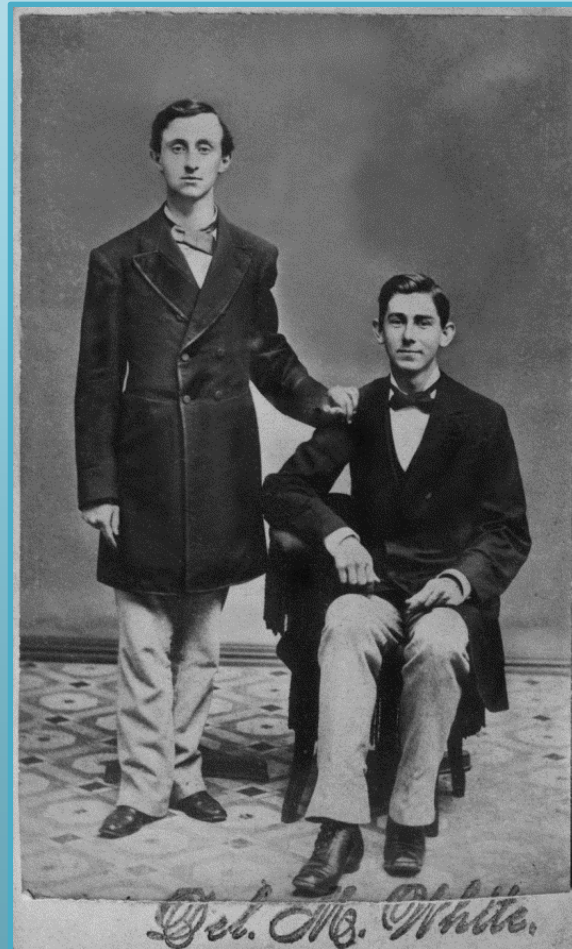
Early in his career, White appeared headed for success. However, he never married and ultimately preferred a life of voluntary poverty lived on the fringes of society.



William D. White was descended from prominent Wilmington families



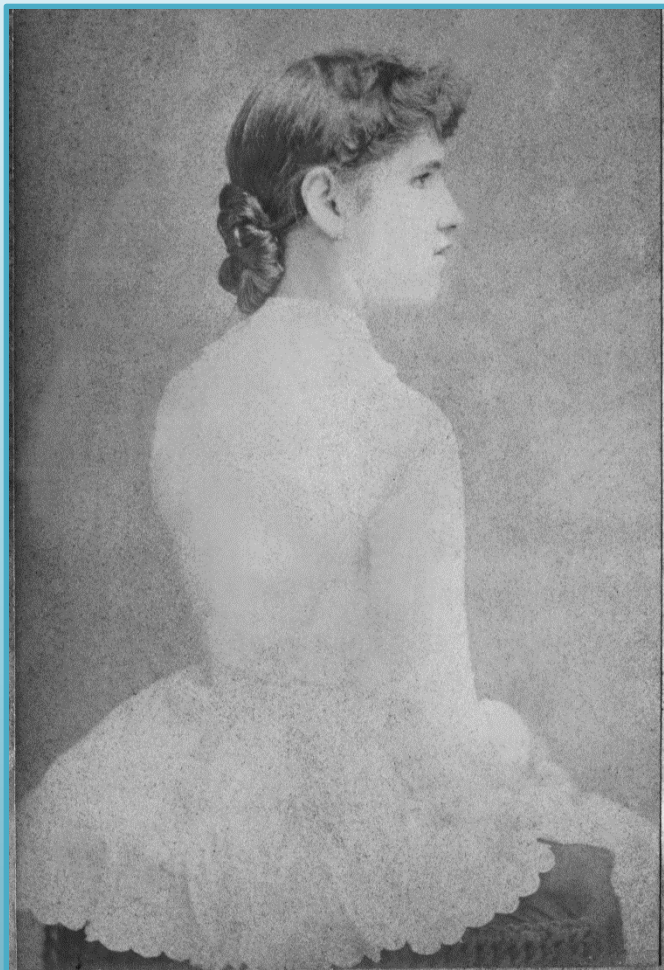
William Henry White (1824-1867)



Delaware Meigs White (1857-1914) standing

Paternal grandfather, William Henry White, practiced surgery at 6th & King Streets in Wilmington. He served as Brigade Surgeon in the 2nd Delaware Infantry, Army of the Potomac. White was captured and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond. He never recovered from poor health suffered in prison and died in 1867, age 41.

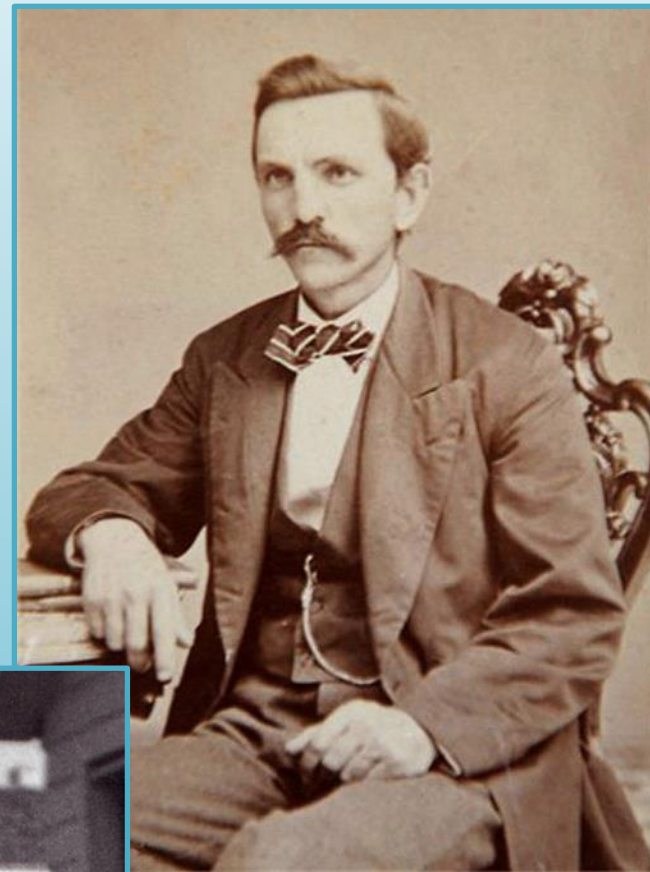
White's father, Delaware Meigs White, owned a drugstore at 7th & Washington Streets, where William D. White was born on July 22, 1896.



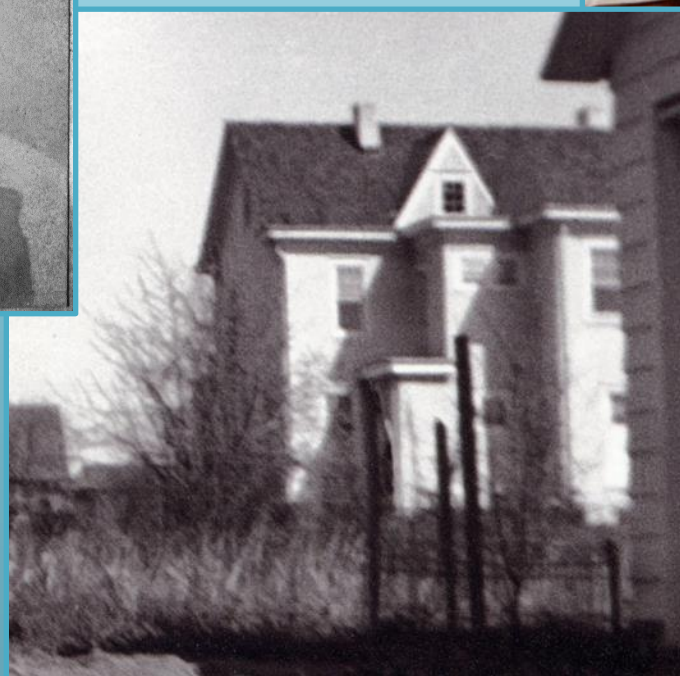
**Florence Davidson White
(1866-1940)**

Maternal grandfather, William Davidson, owned a granite works with his brother at 5th & King Streets in Wilmington plus six residential properties. Both grandfathers and White's father died before he had graduated from High School.

White and his mother moved into the large home at Penny Hill she inherited from her father, which burned to the ground in 1942, two years after her death.



**William Davidson
(1837-1913)**



**Family home at
414 Marsh Road**

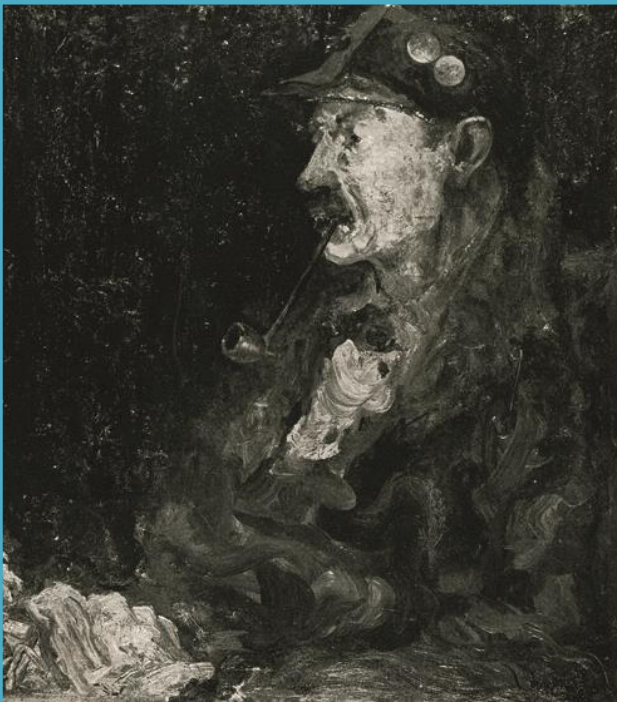
William D. White

These rare photos of White as a boy provide glimpses into his personality. By age four (below), he already hides from the camera; At age 10, his mischievous grin betrays the stone in his hand – ready for launching.





Frank E. Schoonover
The Pirate, 1911



W.D. White, *Explosives Engineer*,
March 1923

Education & Training

Brandywine School of Art Influence

Howard Pyle died in 1911, three years before White began training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Although White was a generation younger than the Pyle students, he knew Frank Schoonover & Stanley Arthurs. White studied with Gayle Porter Hoskins, who probably introduced him to the illustration market.

White chose a different career path from these popular fiction illustrators, who dressed models in costumes & staged scenes for illustrations. Seeking authenticity, White went out to paint “real life” in the mines, quarries, and construction sites across America.



Gayle P. Hoskins, ad for *Hercules Mixer*, March 1922

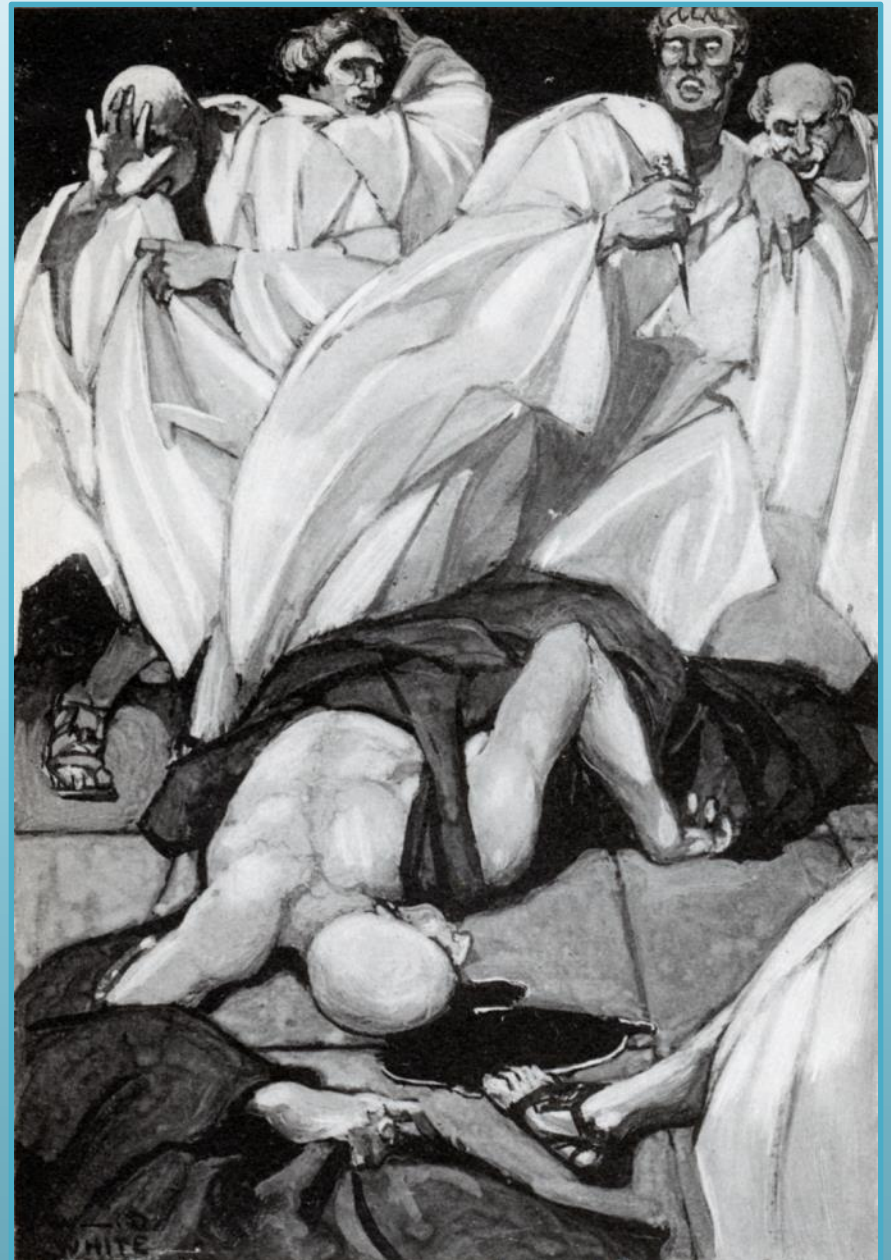
Education & Training

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts 1914-1917

In 1914 William D. White enrolled at PAFA in Philadelphia, where he received classical instruction in courses such as Antique Class, Drawing from Cast, Still Life Drawing & Painting, Composition, Lectures on Perspective, and Life Drawing. Based on his enrollment card, White also took Illustration with Henry McCarter, a Modernist; Still Life Painting and Head Class, with Hugh Breckenridge; Criticism for Drawing & Painting from the Head, with portraitist, Cecilia Beaux; Design and Decoration, with Pyle student and muralist, Violet Oakley.

White was also exposed to roughly 800 paintings and sculptures every year at the PAFA Annual Exhibitions, featuring leading American realist artists of the day: Portraitists - Cecilia Beaux & John Singer Sargent; Impressionists - William Merritt Chase, Mary Cassatt, & Childe Hassam; Realist - Thomas Eakins; Landscapes - Edward Redfield & George Bellows; Ashcan artists - John Sloan, William Glackens, & George Luks.

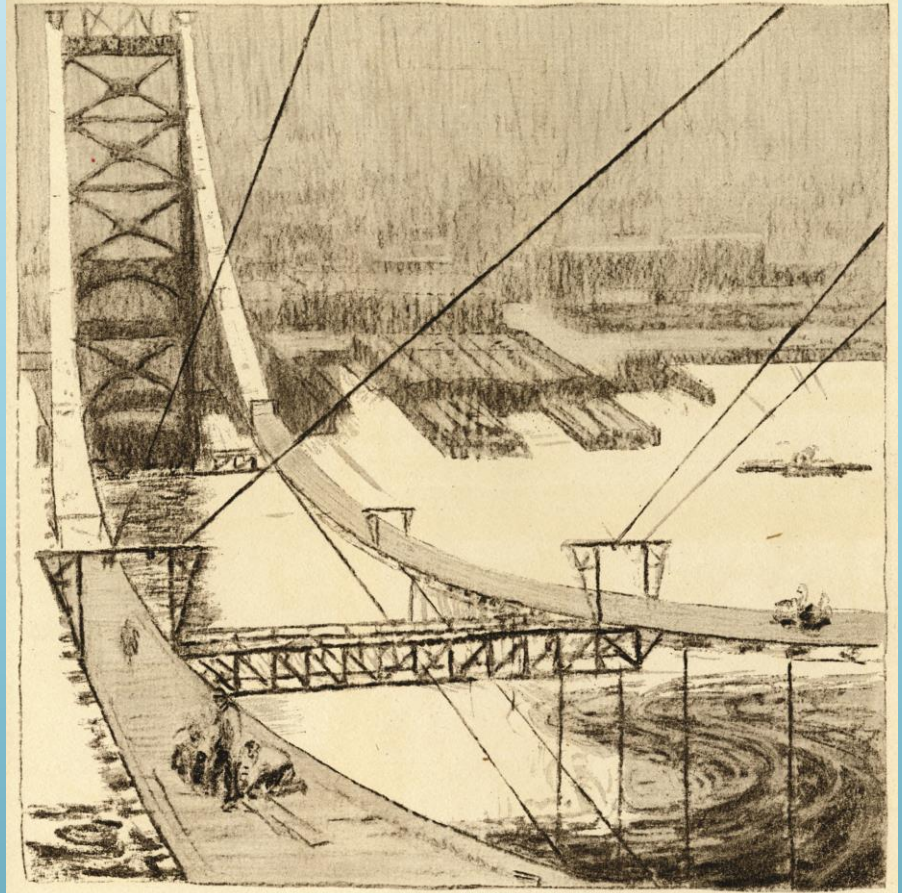
Evidence of White's classical training and drawing from plaster casts shows in the sculptural treatment of the robes.



Julius Caesar and the Grandeur that was Rome,
by Victor Thaddeus, 1927

Education and Training

The Great War 1918, Engineer Corps



Construction of the Delaware River Bridge, *The Explosives Engineer*, March, 1925

William D. White served for six months during the latter stages of World War I in the Engineer Corps at the Washington DC Barracks. Soldiers were drilled in building pontoon bridges, trenches, & field fortifications quickly and with limited supplies. White's understanding of engineering and construction would serve his entire freelance career.

Early Career

1920-1921

*The Saturday
Evening Post*

November 13, 1920

“Phoenix Stuff on the Sales End”

October 2, 1920 “Fellow Travelers”

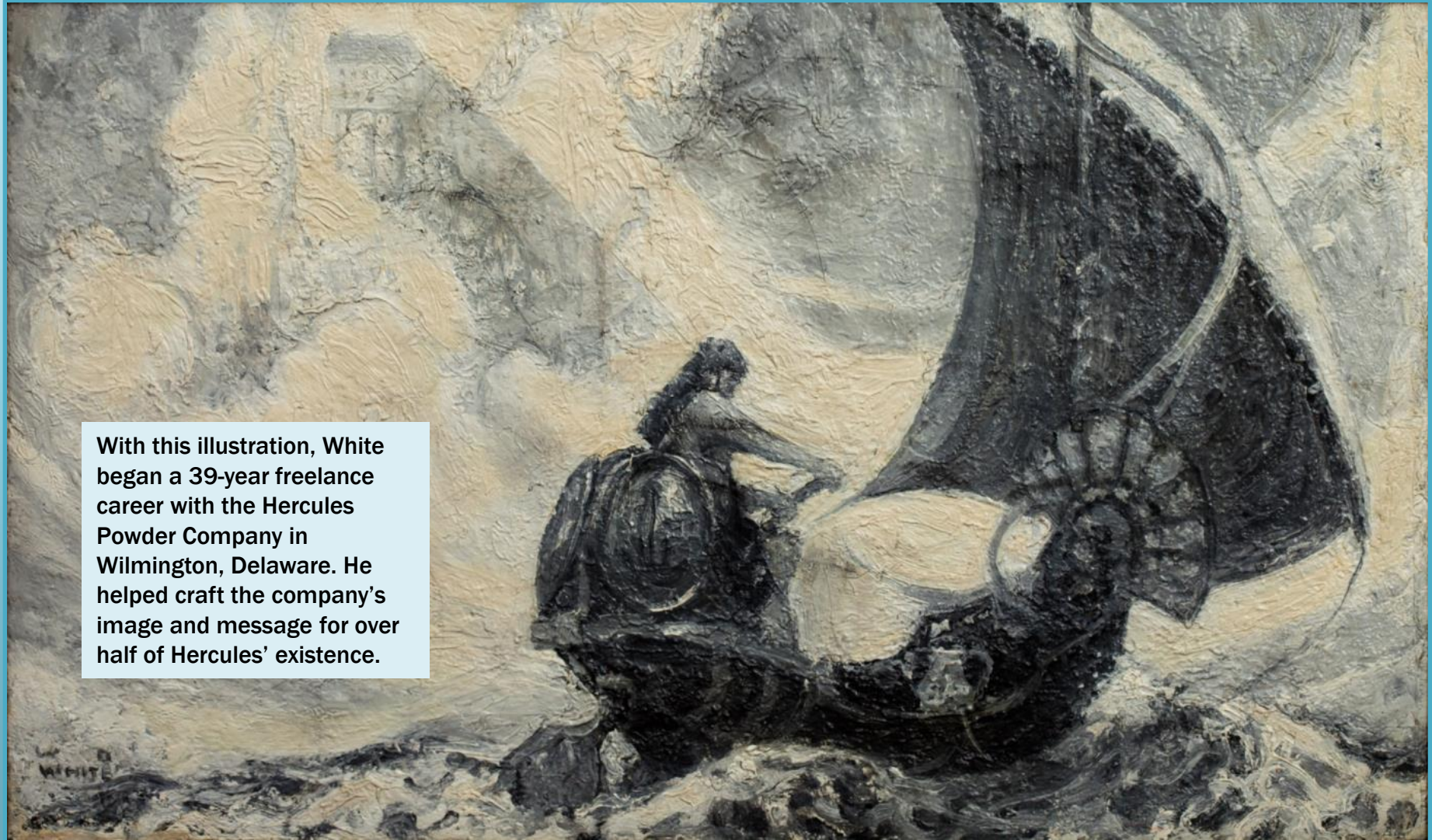


William D. White created seven illustrations for *The Saturday Evening Post* articles in 1920, 1921, & 1930.

At the earliest stage of his career, White focused attention on industrial scenes and the men who worked in industry. He ignored the primary storyline of the articles – tips for salesmen, or riders on a night train - preferring to depict activity in the train yards.

Hercules Powder Company

1922-1961, Three Trade Magazines, 495 Illustrations

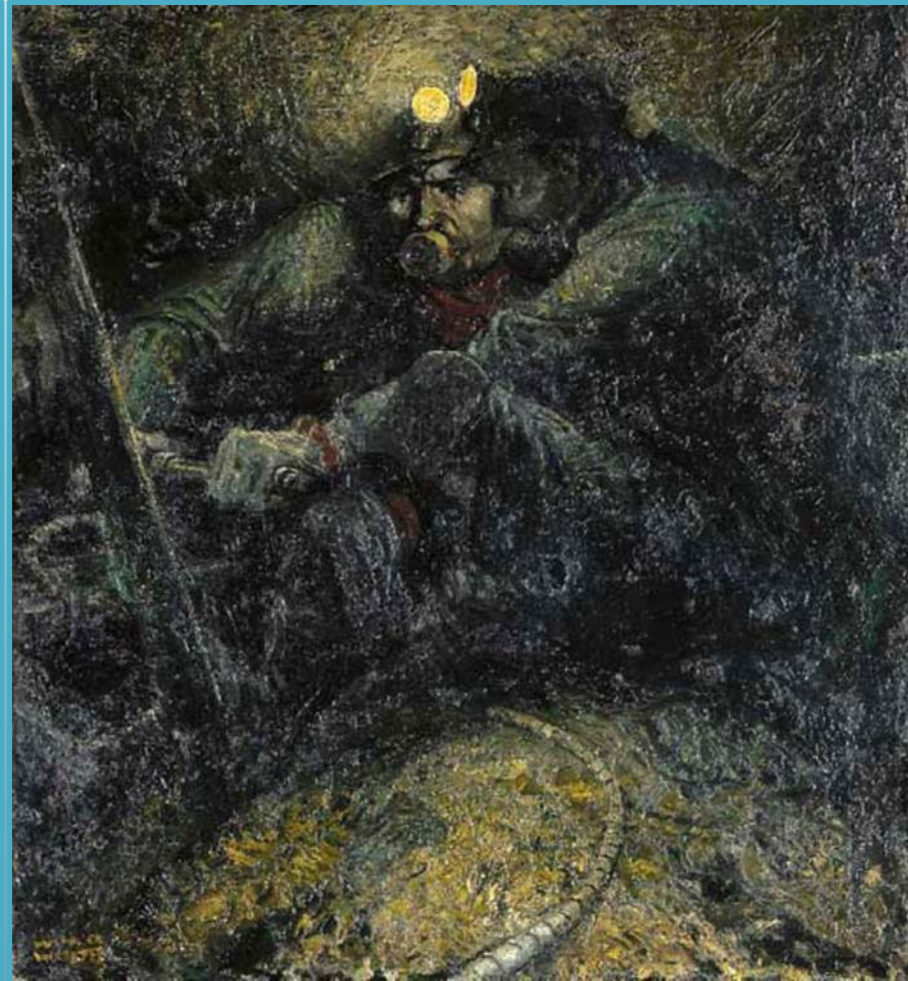
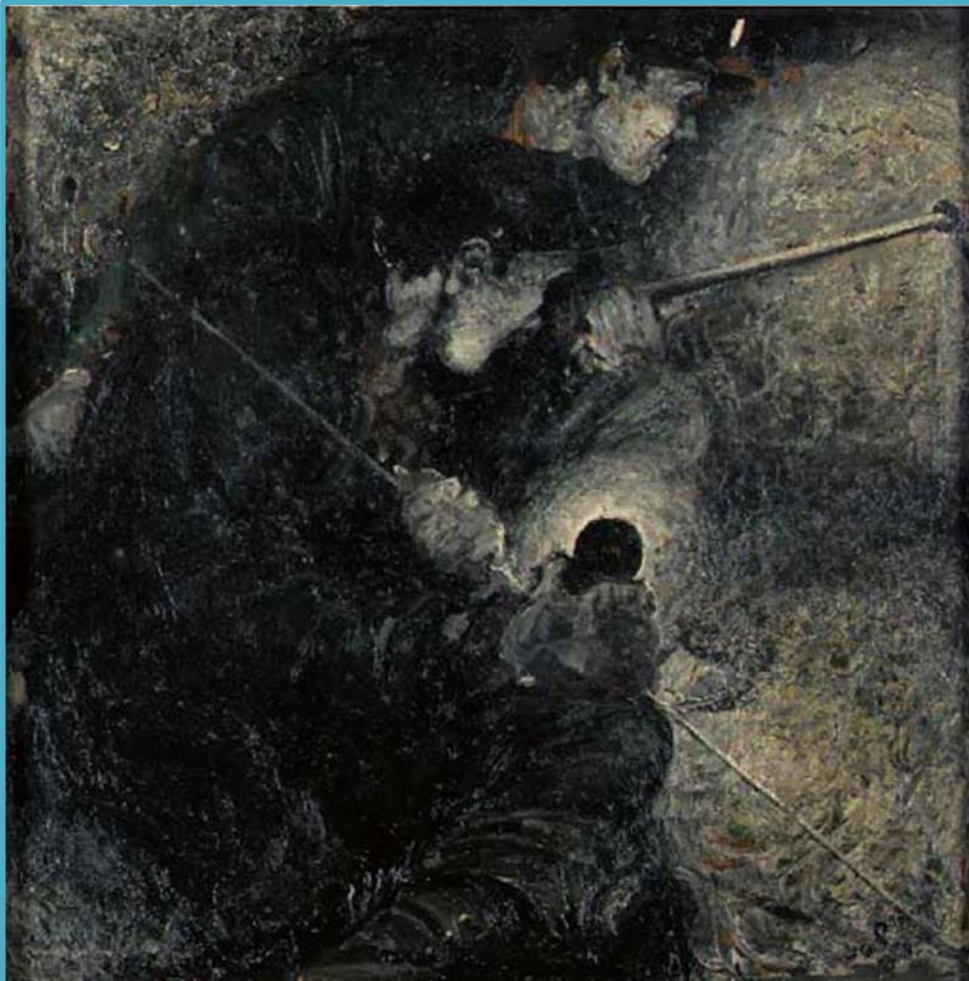


With this illustration, White began a 39-year freelance career with the Hercules Powder Company in Wilmington, Delaware. He helped craft the company's image and message for over half of Hercules' existence.

Barque Sets Sail, March 1922, Hercules Mixer; reprinted January 1925, Explosives Engineer

Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Miners

75% of the 369 illustrations created for *The Explosives Engineer* magazine featured coal miners. White employed thick, impasto brushstrokes to depict the rough-hewn tunnel walls. He accurately captured the shallow light cast by carbide headlamps. These images were seen by tens of thousands of consumers of explosives products in mining, construction, & quarrying industries.

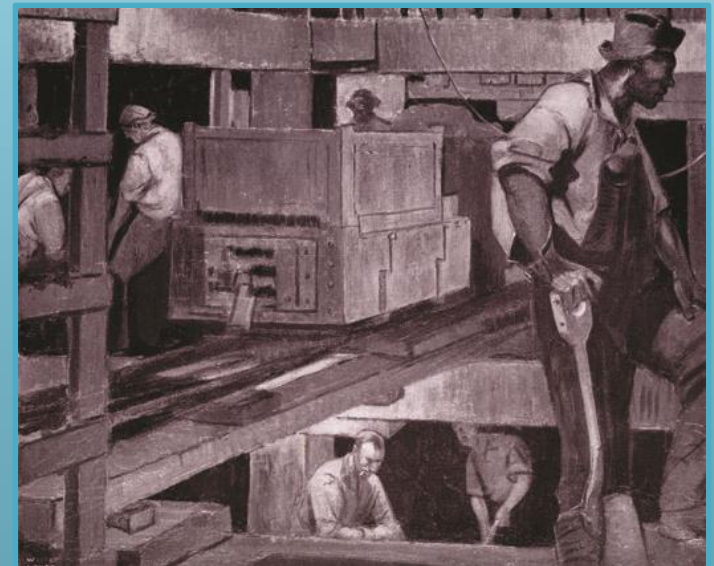


March 1923 Inaugural issue of *Explosives Engineer*, Loading a Hole (left), Operating the Jackhammer (right)

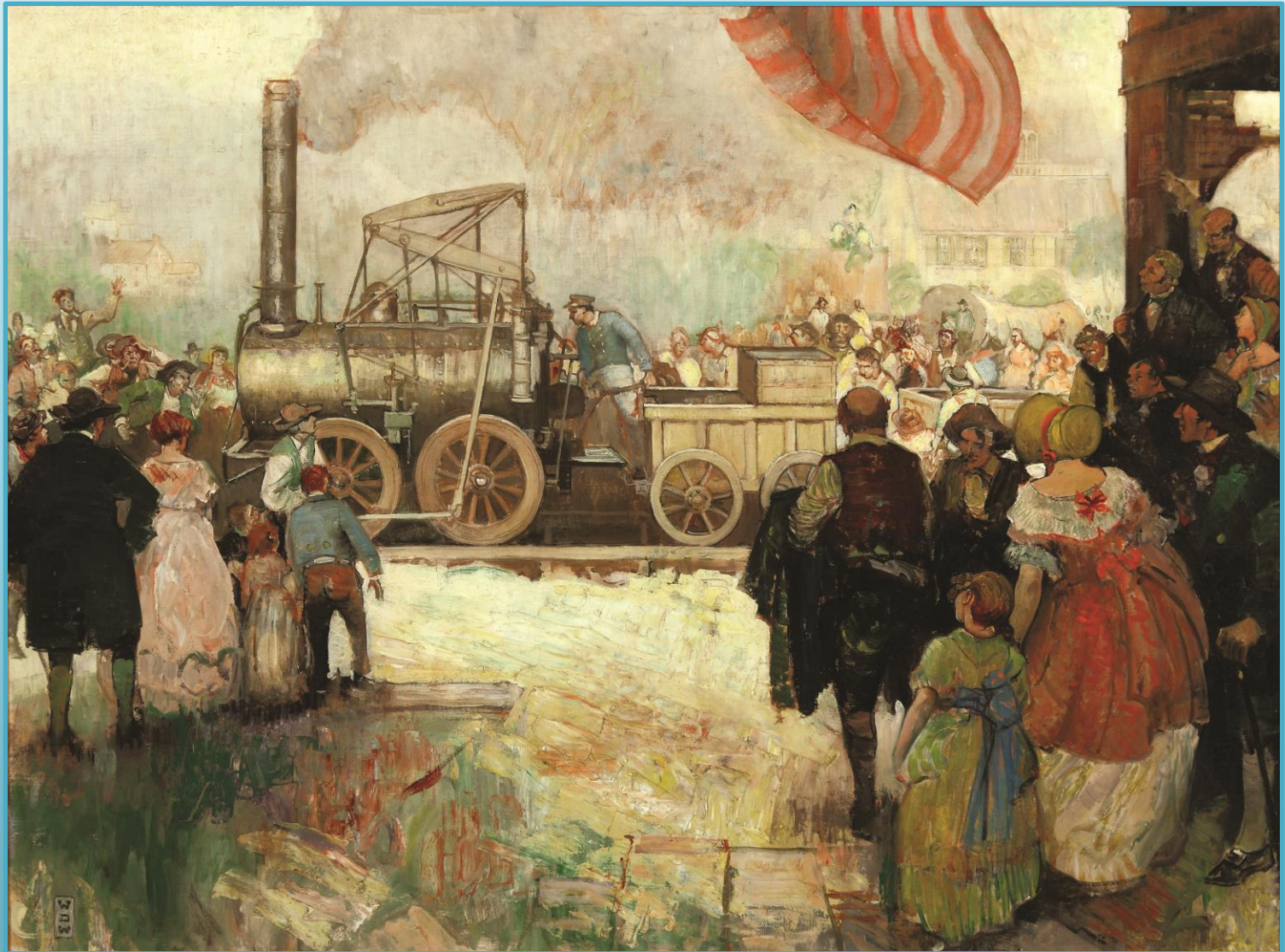
1926 *Explosives Engineer* Driving a Great Subway

White illustrated an 8-page article documenting the construction of Philadelphia's subway system. "Night Shift on Broad Street," (left) represents White's core message. He placed the main figure on the centerline pressed close to the picture plane. This strong, muscular worker appears majestic, like a Michelangelo sculpture.

White was among the earliest American artists to champion the marginalized laborers of African, Mexican, & Eastern European ancestry as heroic figures responsible for America's industrial might in the first half of the 20th century.



White was equally at home depicting historical scenes, such as this painting commemorating the 100th anniversary of the inaugural running of the Stourbridge Lion steam train in Honesdale, PA.

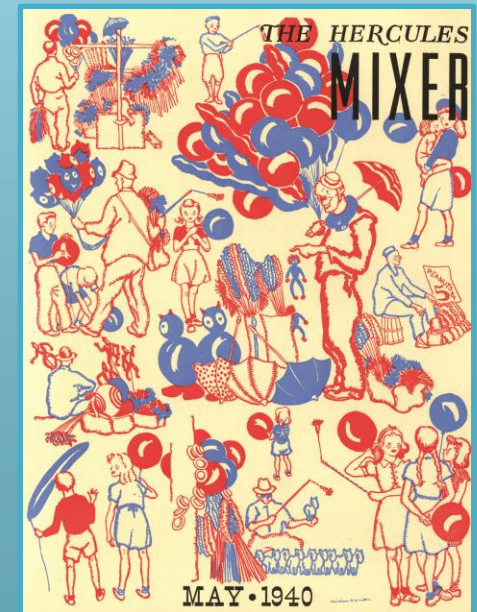
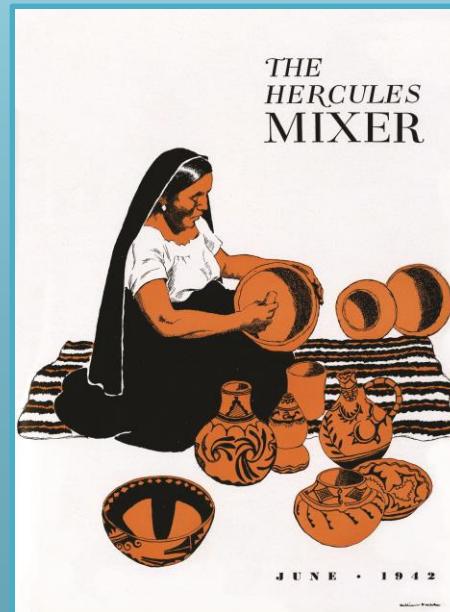
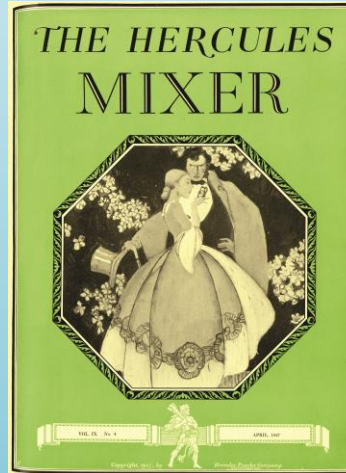


1925 *The Explosives Engineer, Waiting for Arrivals (The Stourbridge Lion)*

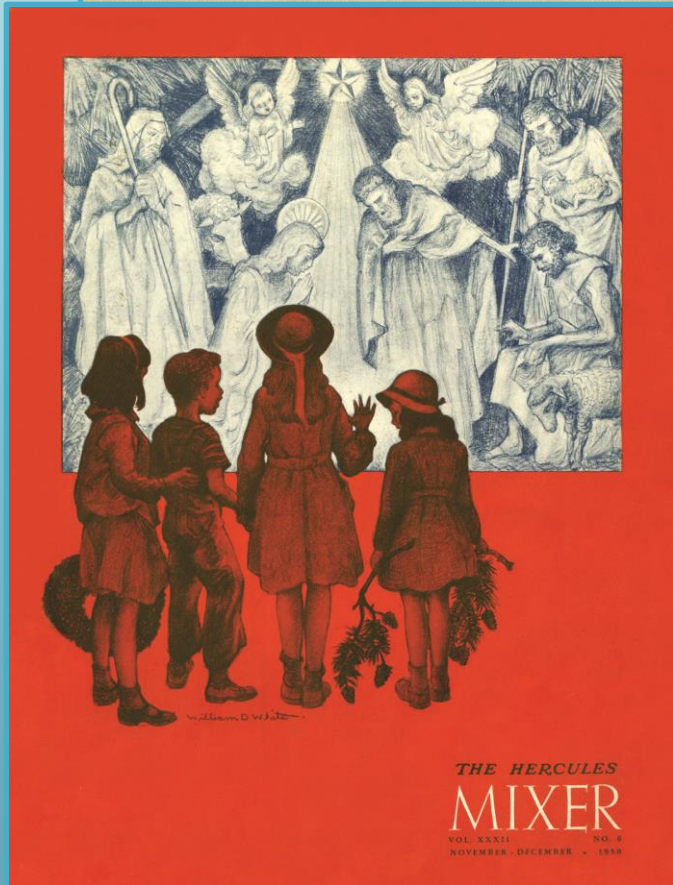
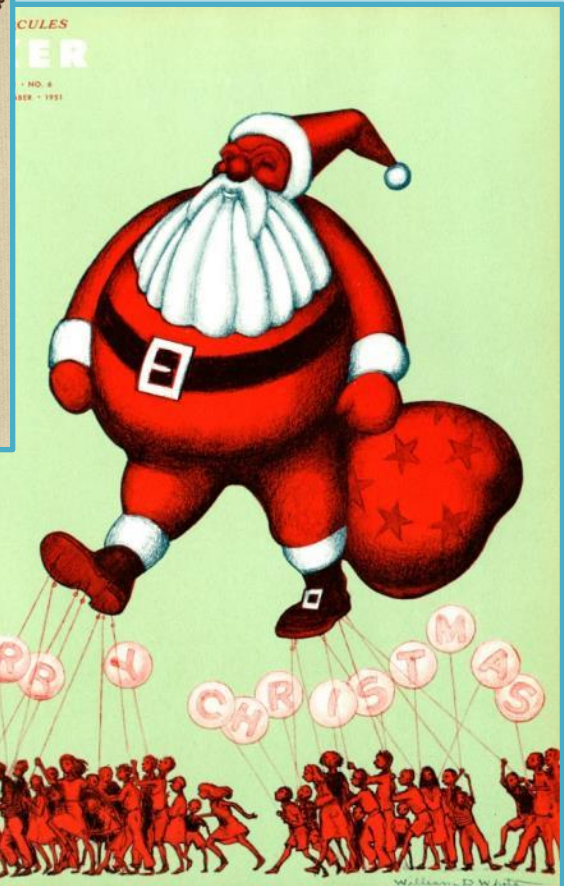
Hercules Mixer

121 illustrations, 24 covers

The *Hercules Mixer* employee magazine afforded White the opportunity to create a diverse range of subjects in various media.



Hercules Mixer Christmas Covers



William D. White created
17 Christmas illustrations,
including 8 covers.

William D. White's 1923 illustrations of coal miners captured attention of Phelps Dodge Corporation manager, P.G. Beckett. In 1923 Beckett commissioned White, age 27, to document three mines in Bisbee, Arizona and northern Mexico.

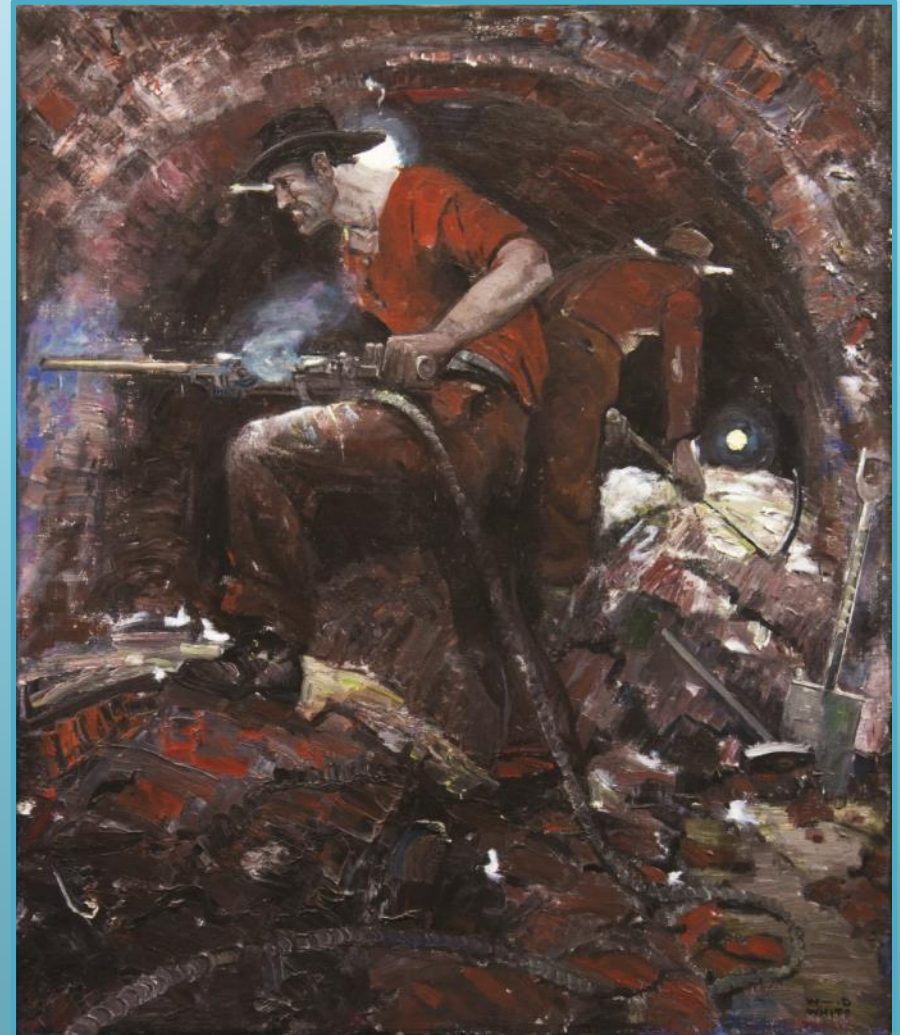
Mining practices employed a caste system of labor. Skilled Welsh & Cornish drillers set the explosives. Unskilled Eastern Europeans muckers broke rock with pick axes and loaded it into tram cars. Trammers then pushed one-ton cars to the hoists.

In these paintings of the Copper Queen mine, White used thick brush strokes and a palette of browns, reds, & purples.

Phelps Dodge Commission 1923-1924



Tramming Ore Underground



Driving a Drift

Mexican miners Sacramento Pit mine



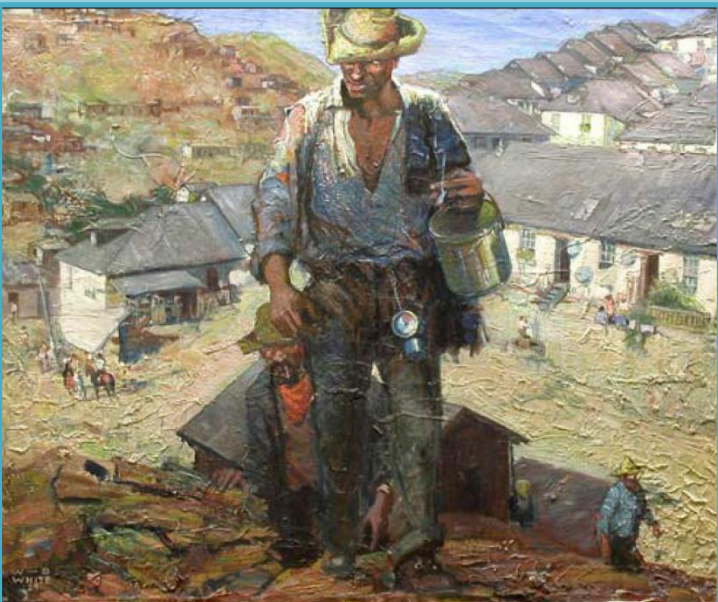
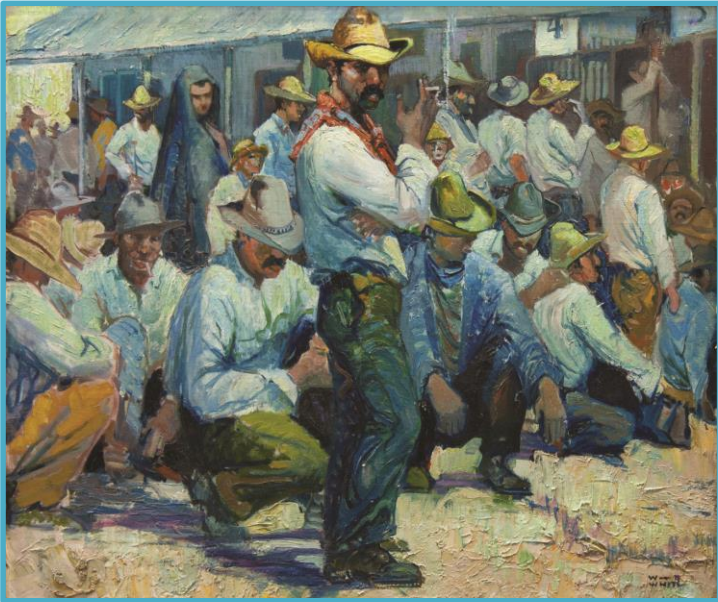
In Sacramento Pit, 1923 (left)

Blaster Men, 1923

Mexican workers were not permitted underground. They worked in the boiling heat, often performing menial tasks. In this series of paintings, White captured the heat with a palette of bright pinks and lavenders. The workers, dressed in tattered clothing, are centrally positioned on the canvases. The painting, *In Sacramento Pit*, evokes an almost religious iconography with the halo behind the miner's head.

Pilares de Nacozari mine, Mexico

White chose to depict scenes of everyday life, instead of activities in the mine. He created a third palette of cool blues & greens with creamy whites.



Pay Day (top)

Miners' Village



Vending Sugar Cane, 1923

2nd Phelps Dodge Commission c1930

Lew Davis, *Thirty Minutes for Lunch*, 1936

William D. White, *Shift Change*, c1930 (below)



These paintings represent different approaches to similar subject matter.

White's images were realistic, but idealized, in order to please his client. Nonetheless, White's humanist mindset presented the miners as the true heroes of American industrial might. These canvases differed from his previous Phelps Dodge commission: larger size and thinner paint. They included more background context and depicted updated safety equipment.

By contrast, Jerome native, Lew Davis, was a Social Realist who portrayed figures as emotionally isolated, working in a stark reality of hardship.

PWAP

Children in the Tree, 1934

With the Great Depression came an end to high-end illustration. 25% of the workforce was unemployed, with many more workers underemployed.

F.D. Roosevelt, elected in 1932, launched his New Deal plan to put people to work building roads, schools, post offices, bridges, & hospitals. People in FDR's staff pushed for a program to employ artists to decorate the new federal buildings.

William D. White one of five artists hired in Delaware under the Public Works of Art Project. *Children in the Tree* represents the American Scene style of painting – realistic, apolitical, optimistic. Artists depicted the people, events, and places in their home towns. This type of art was the closest America came to an official art style.



"In approving the Public Works of Art Program, Mr. Hopkins has recognized that the artist, like the laborer, capitalist, and office worker, eats, drinks, has a family, and pays rent, thus contradicting the old superstition that the painter and the sculptor live in attics and exist on inspiration."

1936 Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) Commission

Dover Post Office: *Harvest, Spring and Summer*



PWAP was followed by the Federal Arts Project, employing artists, writers, actors, & musicians. White created murals & easel paintings. He was the only Delaware artist to receive a commission from TRAP to decorate the Dover Post Office, completed in 1935. *Harvest, Spring & Summer* depicted agriculture in central Delaware. The panel, *Spring*, was removed in 1967 with no color record surviving. The designs for *Spring* and *Summer* mirrored each other on either side of the entrance doorway.

Harvest (13' by 9')



American Scene painting evolved from the Regionalism style begun in the 1920s by Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, & Grant Wood. In *Harvest*, White created a balanced design unified by an arching gray cloud across the center panel. His sense of humor is evidenced if the viewer pictures the postmaster standing in his doorway as a basket of potatoes pours onto his head.



News of the Day, c1940

In the late 1930s , White began creating a series of biting satirical caricatures: his commentary on inability of society to meet the basic needs of its people. In 1940 he exhibited 11 of these drawings in the Wilmington Society of Fine Arts annual show. White created apocalyptic scenes in which the structures and symbols of society laid in ruins.

In *News of the Day*, White captured the fears of a nation facing involvement in a second World War. The headlines announce: war, greed, murder, lies, dead.



1776, c1940

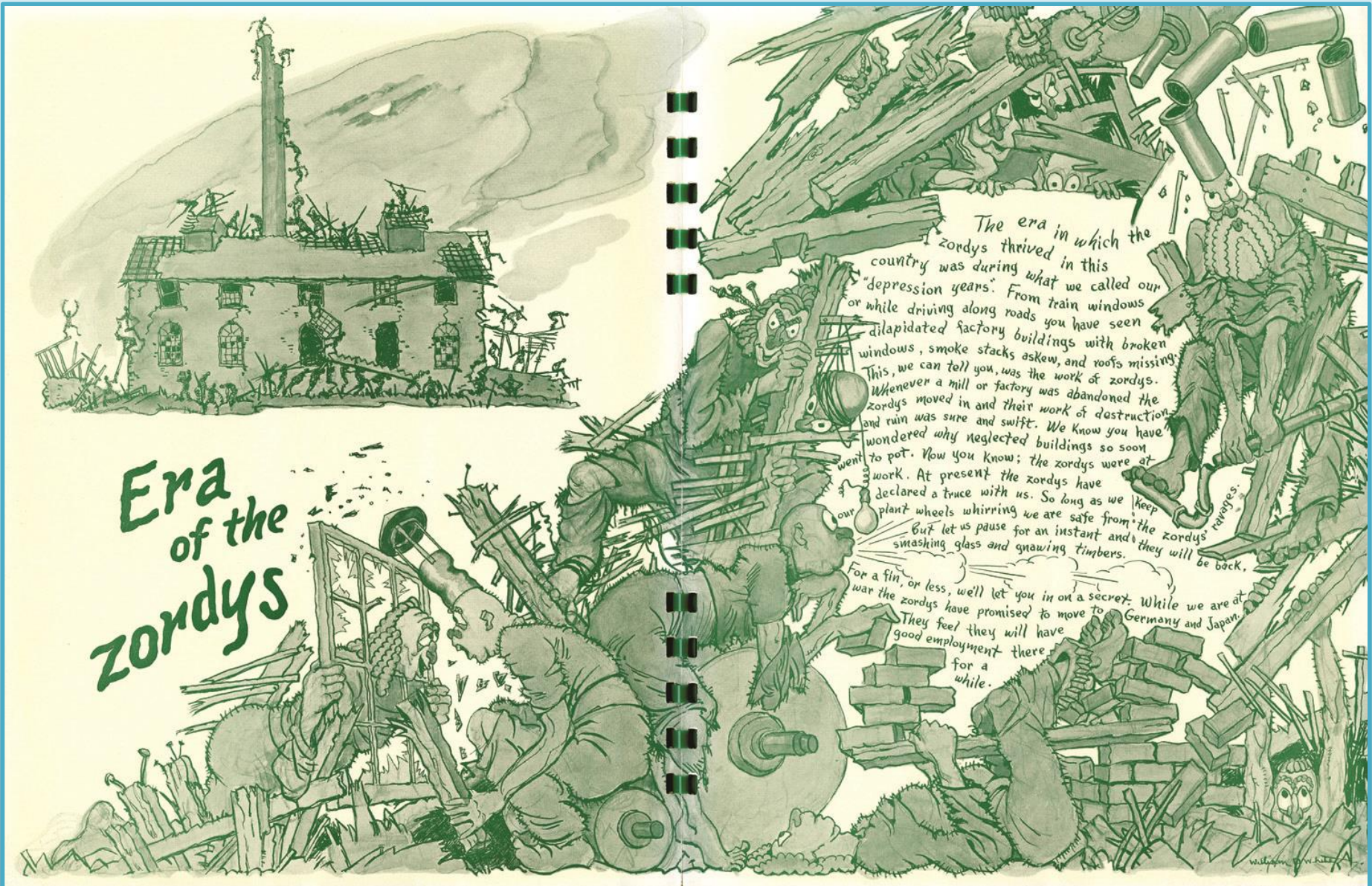
F.D. Roosevelt proclaimed in a 1934 Fireside Chat that “In a land of vast resources no one should be permitted to starve.” William D. White seemed to say that the opposite was true. His use of ropes implied an inability not only to improve one’s situation, but to move forward at all.



Obtrusion, (above)

You Bit Me, c1940





Era of the zordys

The era in which the zordys thrived in this country was during what we called our "depression years". From train windows or while driving along roads you have seen dilapidated factory buildings with broken windows, smoke stacks askew, and roofs missing. This, we can tell you, was the work of zordys. Whenever a mill or factory was abandoned the zordys moved in and their work of destruction and ruin was sure and swift. We know you have wondered why neglected buildings so soon went to pot. Now you know; the zordys were at work. At present the zordys have declared a truce with us. So long as we keep our plant wheels whirring we are safe from the zordys' smashing glass and gnawing timbers. But let us pause for an instant and they will be back.

For a fin, or less, we'll let you in on a secret. While we are at war the zordys have promised to move to Germany and Japan. They feel they will have good employment there for a while.

Hercules Paper Maker, 1943, vol12 no1

White sold several of these caricatures to Hercules, including this depiction of "zordys" vandalizing vacant factories.

Vision and Voice

Throughout his lifetime, William D. White created artworks as an expression of the people and places of his hometown.

He portrayed himself as he envisioned others saw him: a Rogue; and how he saw himself: a Clown.



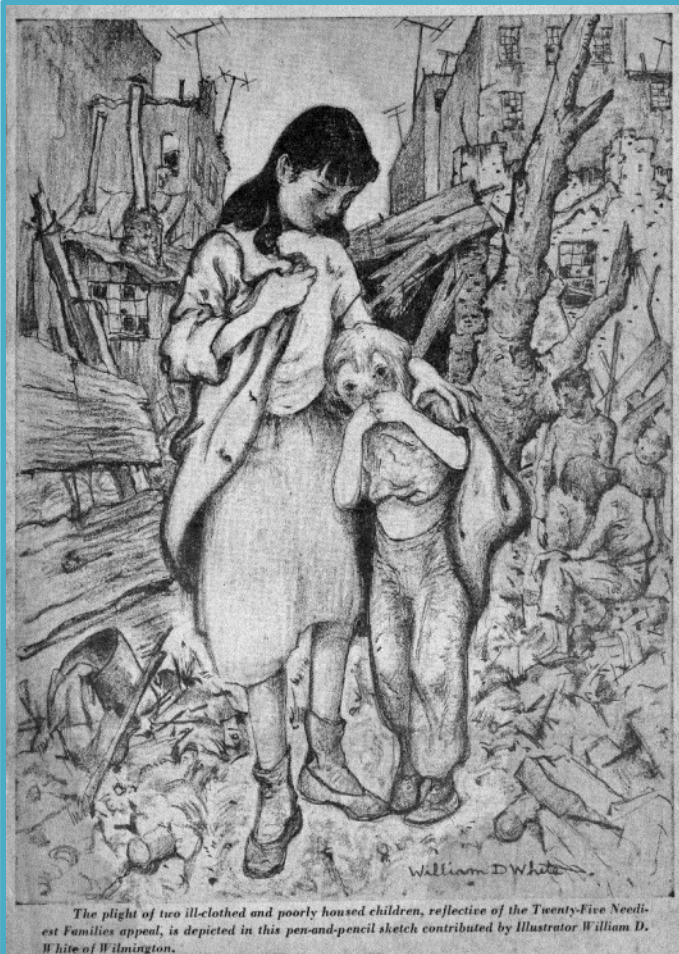
May I Come In? White as The Rogue

William D. White as the Clown



Response to Children

He viewed children as unspoiled, but marginalized members of society, particularly susceptible to the ravages of poverty.



The plight of two ill-clothed and poorly housed children, reflective of the Twenty-Five Neediest Families appeal, is depicted in this pen-and-pencil sketch contributed by Illustrator William D. White of Wilmington.

25 Neediest Families, News Journal, 1953
Portrait of Judy Straudt c1960 (right)



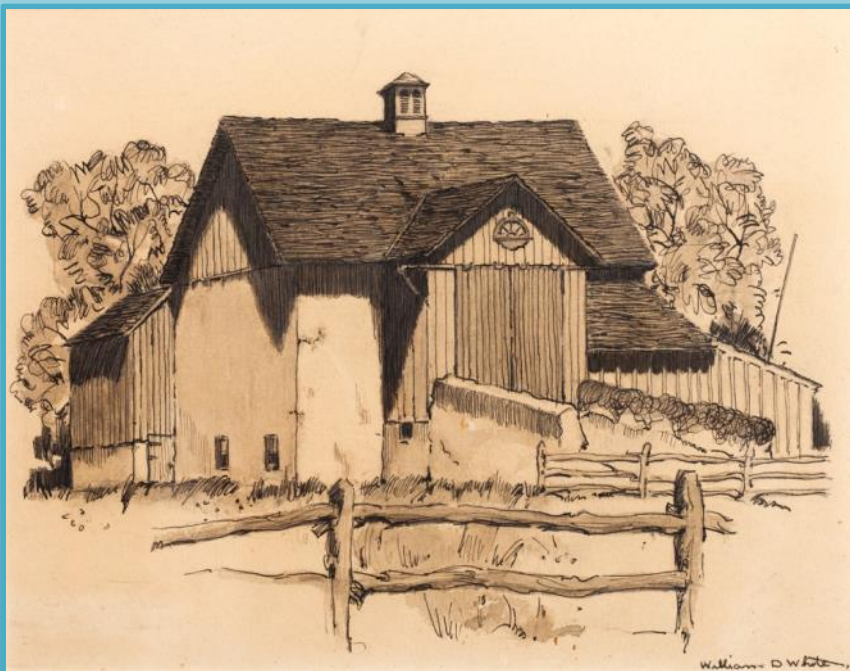


A Moment in Childhood, 1932, illustration prize, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts exhibition
William D. White delighted in the joy of children enjoying simple pleasures.

Response to “Place”

A 1936 Wilmington Sunday Star article noted that White’s “principal enjoyment is hiking about the countryside, recording his impressions of some character he meets, or an old house or barn.”

William D. White lived entire life in northern Delaware. He never owned driver’s license, preferring to walk, and he always carried a pencil & sketchbook. He captured scenes depicting a post-war population shift to the suburbs, and of the vanishing rural landscape.



Many of William D. White's landscapes included a single tree stump, suggesting cycles of life, death, and decay. Perhaps there is also a self-referential element to them.



Memory

One does not forget the sound of places
Misty cities, windswept spaces.

The Pacific against the rocks at Carmel,
San Xavier of Tucson, the desert, the bell
Flood waters rising along the levee,
Drills underground in the mines at Bisbee
Train whistles, snow-muffled in the High Valley
Dancing barefooted girls in a New Orleans alley.

So too, in distant time and perhaps place,
I will hear the sounds you made - though faded the face