

Nana Jean *An Artist's Inspiration*

Raised in Los Angeles, I rarely saw snow. When I glimpsed remote mountains covered by snow or we took a rare trip to a snowy area, I was fascinated by the reflections, the feel, and the vast landscapes.

When I grew up and moved to Oregon, snow came up close and personal. The seasons in Oregon provide snow on the surrounding mountains and sometimes on our property. In recent years I have traveled to deep snow in order to ski. Twice we have had to trudge our way through feet of snow to a cabin that offered warmth.

Over time I have collected prints of snowy landscapes and cabins with light-filled windows. The cabins suggest home and safety to be reached after a long trek, while the snow represents difficult times as well as cold weather. I find the paintings help me through dark moments, the light in the distance promising warmth and hope ahead.

Eventually, I yearned to paint these scenes myself. Painting did not come easily to me. I vividly remember hearing a teacher tell my mother that I had done a wonderful job on a pastel drawing. From that moment, I began to believe that I had some artistic talent. Praise given for an emerging talent may have long-lasting effects. I began college in science and math and tried many academic paths, sometimes I would draw for pleasure. Eventually, with hesitation, I majored in art, studying art history, and learning many art techniques. But I never received instruction in watercolor.

Making a living as an artist is difficult, so I continued in my education to receive a teaching degree. I remembered the influence teachers had on me as a child, and I wanted to pass on such encouragement and support. Immersed in my teaching career and raising three children, I seldom had time for painting, although I tapped into my creativity by making clothing and decorating our home.

Years later, retired from teaching students and teaching teachers, I found time for art. I love to draw landscapes and learned to watercolor from a local art-



“Cabin on the Trail” by Jean Moule

ist. I made cards for friends, and I found places to sell prints of my work. I found joy in creating.

Recently I decided to paint a series of rustic mountain cabins with light in the windows, surrounded by snow. Using prints I had hung in my house as models, I changed the colors and the details. As I painted I felt the peace and pleasure of the scenes.

As I finished my paintings, I decided to find out more about the artist whose work I had used as a model. Frederick Douglas Ogden was born in 1892. Associated with the arts from a young age, he worked as a musician, engraver, and stage scenery designer. Later he devoted himself to painting, usually landscapes with river views. In the first half of the twentieth century he became well-known and respected for his art. His images were reproduced by the thousands and appeared in calendars and popular magazines. While trying to discover his inspiration for creating landscapes, I found a sentence that surprised and empowered me. Frederick D. Ogden was one of the first African-American artists whose artwork was widely accepted. Ogden struggled through segregation and yet found a niche in creating art that graced many homes. Without knowing his background I had enhanced our home with his art, where it moves and inspires me. If you see an old print of a winter landscape, look for the flowing signature of Frederick D. Ogden in the corner and recognize a little-known Black pioneer.

—Jean Moule, artist and educator, www.jeanmoule.com