

**The Boston Globe**

## Lynn artist recreates Civil War battlefields

**By John Laidler, Globe Correspondent, 10/5/2003**

Jeff Fioravanti has two passions: creating pastel paintings and delving into the rich history of the Civil War.

Now the Lynn resident has found a way to combine the two.

For the last two years, Fioravanti, 45, has been painting landscapes of Civil War battlefields.

While not the first artist to take up the subject of the Civil War, Fioravanti has taken a different tack than most. His works do not feature battle scenes, but depict how the battle sites look today - minus monuments and telephone poles.

Recently, Fioravanti has been gaining recognition within the community of Civil War history enthusiasts.

During November and December, 30 of Fioravanti's paintings, together with print and note card reproductions of those works, will be shown at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Md.

Some of Fioravanti's paintings portray makeshift hospitals used during the war, and he is scheduled to appear at a Civil War medicine symposium in West Virginia sponsored by the museum Oct. 25-26.

He also will be the featured attraction at the Gettysburg National Military Park's bookstore in Pennsylvania on Oct. 11-12.

Closer to home, Fioravanti last fall donated a framed print to the Civil War Roundtable of the North Shore, a group of Civil War buffs that meets each month at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall in Lynn.

Fioravanti, who works part time as a graphic and Web designer, is thrilled by the attention his art has received. He said it is helping him move toward his goal of becoming a full-time artist, and also to contribute to keeping alive the memory of an important American episode. "It's what defines our country today," he said of the Civil War.

But his paintings are designed to allow viewers -- both those steeped in history and those who are not -- to reflect on those times in their own terms.

"I'm not trying to depict the way the battle was," he said, but instead to show "what we see when we walk the fields.

"I'm trying to let people attach their own emotions. I'm giving them the scene. The painting is not completed until they attach what is meaningful to them."

"His work is very evocative," said Nadine Mironchuk of Chelsea, secretary and a board member of the Civil War Roundtable. "It's a simple pastoral scene. But he will pick a site and . . . a time of day and a mood that will just bring you right back to the battlefield. It's almost as if you are peering through the mist into the past."

"Among Civil War battlefield painters, he has made a difference in that genre," said George Wunderlich, executive director of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

Most of those artists, he said, focus on "what they think a battle may have looked like during the course of the conflict. What Jeff has done is give these places a life of their own. He's saying the battlefield is a beautiful place both because of the history and because it's a physically beautiful place.

"He's . . . given us these very realistic views in art of these places that to a lot of Americans hold a very near and dear place in their hearts. But he's done it in a way that allows not only the memory of what's happened there in the past affect the viewer, but allows the viewer to put their own memories into it," Wunderlich said. Fioravanti, who grew up in Saugus, came back to art recently. While working as a production materials planner in 1987, he was inspired to think about art after an aunt posed as a model for a Gloucester artist. For about two years, he took pastel painting lessons and even sold some paintings. But busy with family duties, he stopped doing artwork.

It was not until 1996, after being laid off, that he "picked up my pastels again."

Since then, his career has grown steadily.

He has donated a painting of the Gettysburg battlefield to the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association and was featured this past April in the annual art show, "History Meets the Arts," held in Gettysburg. Fioravanti was sponsored by a local gallery, Gallery 30, to take part in the invitation-only show.

In addition to Gallery 30, his works, which also include seascapes and other New England scenes, are exhibited at A.R.A. Gallery and Art3 Gallery in Manchester, N.H. He has also exhibited in national and international juried and invitation-only shows, winning some honors.

Fioravanti, who with his wife, Cathy, has an 8-year-old daughter, Nicole, said he has always had an interest in the Civil War. But it deepened about 10 years ago after his wife gave him a history book on the war, and later when they visited Gettysburg and other battle sites.

That led him to more reading on the subject, and to become active with reenactment and preservation groups.

Combining his artistic and historic interests has been exciting, he said.

"I'm trying to give people an attachment to our nation's soul, to our heritage," he said. "And I'm trying to put it together in such a manner that you don't have to be a history fan to appreciate it."

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