

Book Reviews

The House of the Singing Winds: The Life and Work of T. C. Steele.
By Selma N. Steele, Theodore L. Steele, and Wilbur D. Peat. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1966. Pp. x, 209. Illustrations, notes, index. \$12.50.)

The life of Theodore C. Steele, one of Indiana's foremost painters, is recounted in this three-part volume. Part one—"The Life"—a biographical sketch by the artist's grandson, Theodore L. Steele, is based largely on the painter's journals, notebooks, and correspondence. Born on a farm in Owen County in 1847, Steele spent most of his youth in Waveland, Indiana, becoming interested in drawing and painting at an early age. After his graduation from the Waveland Collegiate Institute and his marriage to Libby Lakin, the Steeles lived for several years in Battle Creek, Michigan, where the artist painted portraits and conducted drawing classes. By 1873 Steele had moved to Indianapolis where his work soon won recognition. In 1880, with the help of friends there, he left the city for five years to study painting at the Royal Academy in Munich. On his return to Indianapolis he busied himself with teaching and portrait painting. His Munich years had increased his interest in painting landscapes directly from nature and he was soon spending much of his time in this field in the Muscatatuck, Mississinewa, and Whitewater valleys. In 1897 Steele and Otis J. Adams bought the "Hermitage" in Brookville for their studio-homes. There Steele painted for many years while maintaining his Indianapolis home for wintertime. In 1899, after failing health for several years, Libby Steele died.

Sometime before 1907 Steele had explored Brown County in search of a new "painting ground." In the spring of that year he bought land there and began construction of the studio-home which is now preserved by the state of Indiana as the T. C. Steele Memorial. In August he married Selma Neubacher, and they began their married life together in their new hill country home.

The second part of the book is a reminiscence of the Brown County period of Steele's life from 1907 until his death in 1926, written by Selma Steele several years before her death in 1945. Adjusting to their new life in Brown County, at that time a very remote and backward area, was both trying and at times amusing. However, the painter found the rural scenery there was to supply him with inspiration and motifs for his paintings for years to come. Other artists shortly followed Steele to the county, and an art colony soon formed around Nashville, the county seat. Steele's paintings, widely exhibited in Indiana and nationally, did much to start the influx of both artists and tourists to Brown County which continues today.

Until their home was adapted for year-round living, the Steeles spent their winters in Indianapolis. It was then that he arranged exhibits and fulfilled many of his portrait commissions. He continued doing portraits throughout his life, but in these later years landscape

painting, which Steele considered "the most distinctive form of American art" (p. 142), was of prime interest to him. With his Brown County studio so close to Bloomington the painter had long enjoyed a close relationship with Indiana University, where he had earlier been presented with an honorary degree, the Doctor of Laws. He had also painted portraits of many of its presidents and faculty members. In 1922 he accepted an invitation to become an honorary professor of art, and much of the last four years of his life was spent on campus as a resident artist.

The final section of the book—"The Work"—is a critique by the late Wilbur D. Peat, for many years director of the John Herron Art Museum of Indianapolis. Peat also assisted in selecting the many paintings that are well-reproduced in this volume.

Brown County, Indiana

Kenneth J. Reeve

Guide to the Manuscripts of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
Supplement Number Two. By Josephine L. Harper. (Madison:
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1966. Pp. x, 275. Index.
\$9.00.)

This guide supplements previous ones published by Alice E. Smith in 1944 and by Josephine L. Harper and Sharon C. Smith in 1957. It covers some four million pieces acquired, arranged, and catalogued by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin between mid-1956 and the beginning of 1965.

The collections, ranging from the papers of jurist Charles L. Aarons to journalist Helen Zotos, are alphabetically arranged and described in terms of subject matter content. The manuscripts, some as early as the seventeenth century, may be organized chronologically, topically, or alphabetically. The over eight hundred entries vary in size from a few lines to several pages. The size, types of documents, whether photocopies (with the location of the original manuscripts designated), any restrictions on use, *see also* references to other entries including those the present ones may be supplementing in the previous guides, and other pertinent data are included. Since quarterly accession reports appearing in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* as soon as the manuscript acquisitions are available for use include the provenance of each collection, that information is not repeated here. Also not listed are manuscripts on deposit only, small groups which contain fewer than ten items, and certain genealogical and local history sketches. An ample subject and name index facilitates the use of the guide.

In Wisconsin, since 1962, a decentralization program has established area research centers at seven of the state universities' libraries. Miss Harper describes all manuscripts which have been organized and catalogued for placement at these centers and notes their locations. This arrangement does not necessarily hinder visiting scholars, however, because the dispersed collections can be brought back to Madison for use if sufficient notice is given.