

Mr. Pross:

I have learned of the art show featuring some of Carlos C. Coyle's paintings that he sent to ~~you for~~ ~~you for~~ ~~you for~~ from his home at that time in California.

I lived with Mr. Coyle in Sebring Florida in 1952 & 1953. At the time I left he was 87 years old. I thought you might like to know he is still living in Fla. He is almost blind and in failing health. He thought he was dying at the time he sent the paintings to Sebring. But to his surprise and all others he did not. We would sit for hours and look at photos of his paintings and he would tell me of them. He was very proud of his paintings. I am sure that if you could find time to write him and send him the paper clipping when it is printed it would thrill his old heart to no end. I will write him in the near future also. Love

NAME

NUMBER

DATE

I have just recently bought a store
in Casey County, Kentucky and am
leaving out 15. If you would like
to know any thing about Mr Coyle
I will be in Beua again soon
or you might write me

Sincerely
J. Carl Belden

J. CARL BELDEN

RTE 3

Liberty, Kentucky.

Mr Coyle's ADDRESS is

Mr. CARLOS C. COYLE
210 E MAIN ST.
LEESBURG, FLORIDA

COYLE

110 W. MAIN ST

Sept. 22, 1961

Dear Mrs. Peter,

I received your wonderful letter today. I was happy to know you hadn't forgotten me. It is wonderful to know you have not been forgotten by someone you can't forget.

Give my regards to Mrs. Knowles.

I will go into the details more when I get back home. It certainly made me happy to receive your letter here.

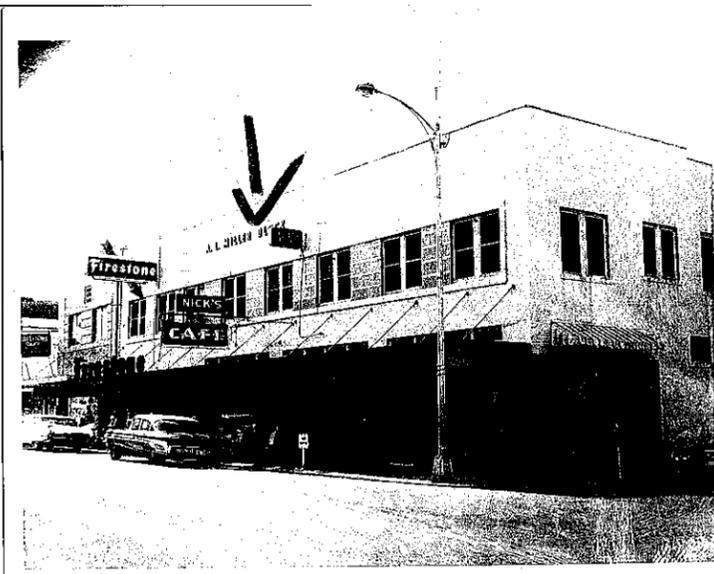
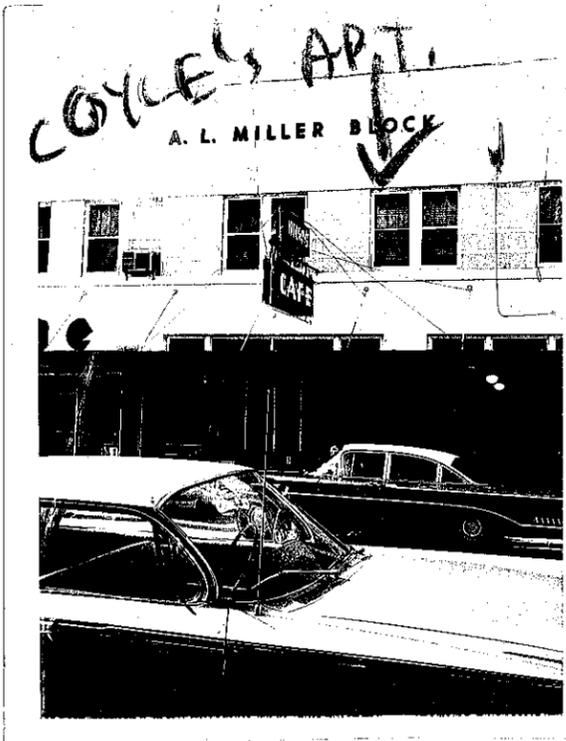
I'll probably be here another week or ten days. I will expect to see you when I get home. I can't say much about the progress of my operation yet, but hope it will turn out as expected.

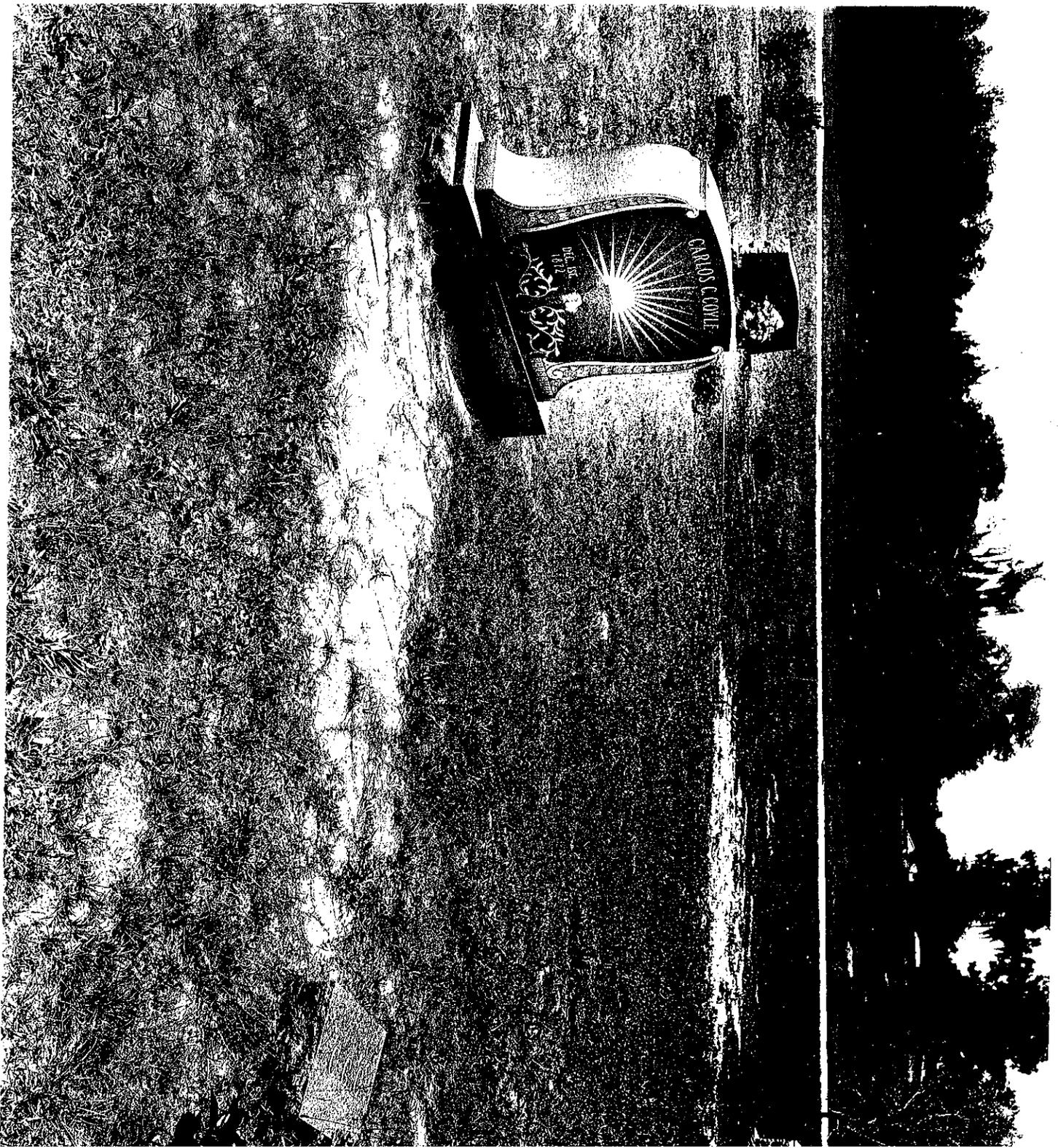
Sincerely yours,

Carl

Coyle

Dictated to Red Cross
Gray Lady





CARLOS C. COVILLE

DEPT. OF THE
NAVY

EDITORIAL PAGE

The Daily Commercial

John H. Perry Jr., President
W. Paul Brooks, Publisher
Allan J. Keplinger, Editor
Emmett Peter Jr., Editorial Page Director

Leesburg, Lake County, Florida

PAGE 2

SUN., AUG. 27, 1961

Late Recognition

A distinguished American artist, now in retirement, has been making his home in Leesburg without fanfare or even recognition.

The Daily Commercial learned (by following up a tip in another paper) that Carlos Cortez Coyle, now 88, resides at 210 West Main St., one of the little apartments over the Nick Babouris Restaurant.

According to William Mootz, art editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Mr. Coyle is a painter who is achieving more and more recognition throughout the U.S. as a great and talented artist.

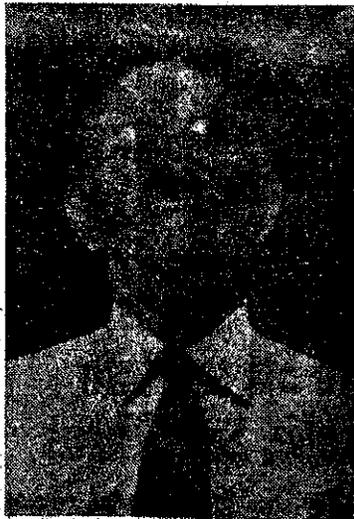
In fact, Mootz predicted that Carlos Coyle may rank as an important American "primitive" whose genius was self-taught.

Mr. Coyle made a gift of some paintings to Berea College in 1942. They remained crated until last summer. Thomas Fern, of the art department, became curious and examined the paintings, which were accompanied by a massive ledger-like diary that explained the emotional background.

Although now virtually blind, Mr. Coyle takes care of himself and cooks his own meals in the small apartment.

His paintings are largely impressionist, with a great deal of emphasis on detail and a magnificent perception of color. This newspaper hopes to arrange for a frame of Mr. Coyle's paintings to be displayed in a central uptown location.

It is sad that this man spent most of his later years in obscurity, his brilliant work unrecognized. The Commercial, and the people of Leesburg, extend a warm, if belated, welcome to this distinguished artist.



Carlos Coyle

Leesburg American

June Aug. 27/61

COYLE FAME SPREADING

Noted Artist, 88, Lives in Obscurity In Apartment Here

(See Editorial, Page 2)

An American artist who may take his place among the greatest of the "primitives" lives in obscurity in a Leesburg apartment.

The Daily Commercial has learned that Carlos Cortez Coyle, 88, is a resident in an apartment at 210 West Main Street.

Now almost completely blind, the artist has been unrecognized since he came to live in retirement here.

The strange story of Coyle's late recognition began last summer in Berea College, Kentucky. Nearly 20 years ago, Berea had received from Coyle a shipment of 170 canvases. The paintings remained crated and only a year ago, Thomas Fern, of the Berea art staff, became curious, opened the crates and looked over the work.

The art professor was astounded to find breathtaking primitive originals by the self-taught artist. Since his discovery, Coyle's fame has been spreading through the world of art.

Two-Page Spread

Last week the Louisville Courier-Journal printed a two-page spread, in color, featuring the Coyle paintings.

The big shipment of paintings was sent to Berea as a gift from Coyle (who lived then in San Francisco). It was accompanied by a diary that seemed to be a "blow by blow" account of the creation of Coyle's paintings.

It was Fern, the art professor, who tracked Coyle down and found that he was living in Leesburg.

The artist was born in Bear Wallow, Ky., in 1871, but he isn't communicative about the facts of his personal life.

According to Art Editor William Mootz, of the Courier-Journal, several themes run through Coyle's writing—both his letters and diary entries.

Nostalgia For Past

These are a nostalgic attachment to the past, a Victorian idealization of womanhood, a com-

(Continued on Page 6)

Noted Artist

(Continued from Page 3)

... devotion to the institution of motherhood, an interest in American history, a respect for famous men that amounts to hero-worship, and a consuming love of nature.

The Courier-Journal art editor adds:

"Woman is the most beautiful thing in the world," he wrote me recently. "Next to her beauty, comes flowers. I saw the exhibition of flowers at the world's fair in San Francisco some years ago. It looks impossible that nature can produce such wonderful (sic) beautiful things."

All of Coyle's paintings at Berea stem from a period when he was between 59 and 75 years old. Some of his canvases are staggering in their ambition, with the primitive's typical interest in detail and his individual solving of problems of perspective and depth.

Expresses A Theme

In all of them, Coyle expresses one of the themes that run through his diary.

Idealization of womanhood? A large work called "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" develops Coyle's belief that all achievements of man can be traced to the loving ministrations of a mother.

He painted a homespun scene in the left of his canvas, with a log cabin and a mother sending her small boy off to school. Swirling off to the right in masses of clouds are precise renderings of things like the Golden Gate Bridge and the dome of the Capitol at Washington, D. C. Coyle even included the Harkness Memorial Tower at Yale, in order, as he says in his diary, "to step the picture to the top faster."

Wallis Simpson's romance with King Edward VIII caught Coyle's fancy, and she became his ideal of the perfect woman.

In a glowing tribute, he wrote, "She will yet conquer her enemies and bring them to her side."

... Her courage is without bounds. She does not weaken but fights on with a wealth of good nature. . . .

This was my story.
— EDP

From The Courier Journal Magazine

August 31, 1961

pg. 21, 22, 24

KENTUCKY PRIMITIVE *Continued*

CARLOS COYLE

A 'Rediscovered' Painter

By WILLIAM MOOTZ, Courier-Journal Art Editor

THE world of art turns up many strange stories, of masterpieces lost and masterpieces found, of museum pieces identified as clever forgeries and of chance discoveries that plummet unknown artists to fame.

One of the weirdest of all such tales came to light at Berea College last year, where an art professor discovered paintings of a self-taught amateur artist, who may some day rank as an important American primitive.

The story began back in 1942, when Berea's art department received a mysterious shipment of boxes and crates from a San Francisco resident by the name of Carlos Cortez Coyle.

After a cursory investigation, Berea learned that the crates contained oil paintings, that they were a gift to the school and that Coyle once lived in the Berea area. But the art department staff was busy and overworked, and the entire gift was soon placed in storage and the matter forgotten.

The paintings might still be hidden away had it not been for the curiosity of Thomas Fern, who joined the Berea art department several years ago.

Decided To Look At Them

Fern, now on leave from Berea with a fellowship that will enable him to live and

work in New York for a year, came across Coyle's crates last summer. He decided to have a look.

Some of Coyle's paintings are reproduced on Pages 18 and 19.

As Fern tells the story, he was lucky enough to find a large, ledger-like diary in the first box he opened.

The diary interested Fern. It seemed to be a blow-by-blow account of the creation of some 170 paintings. Sprinkled through the writer's accounts of his artistic struggles were observations about life and current events of the 1930's.

Was Born Near Berea

Fern also pieced together facts that indicated the writer had been born around Berea, where he spent his early life before moving to many other places, including Canada, Seattle and San Francisco. He worked in the lumber business and as a ship-builder.

Fern promptly opened all of the boxes Coyle had shipped to Berea. There were 47 works in all, primitive in style but fascinating in subject matter. Fern considered them of sufficient worth to make up an exhibit. It attracted much attention in Berea early last fall.

The diary revealed very little of Coyle's personal life, but it did

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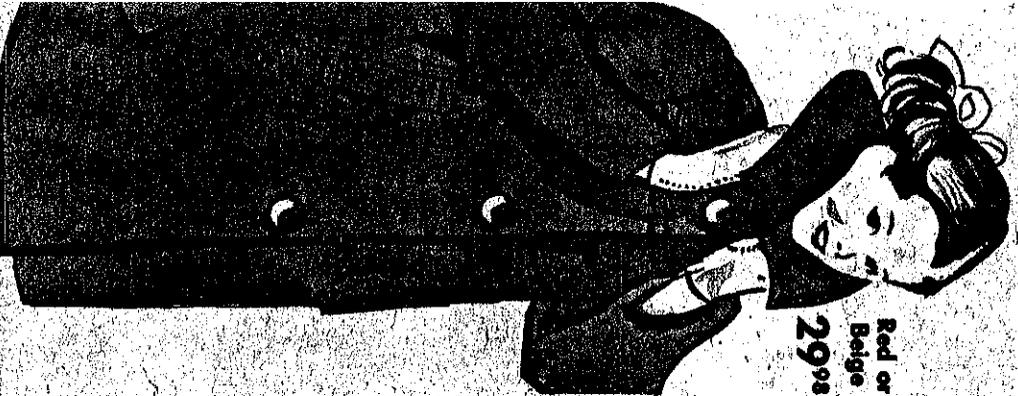
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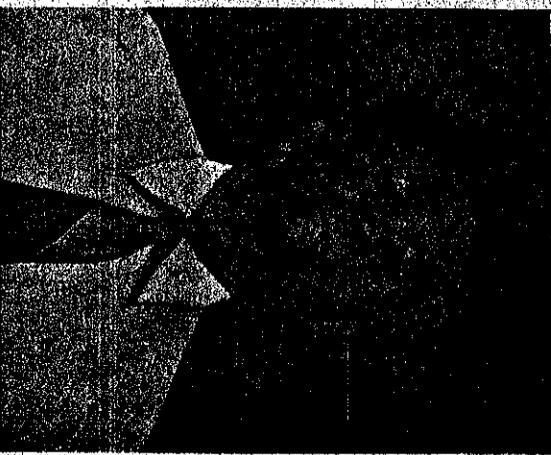
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ZINE



Mrs. Thomas James Coyle, his mother,
died in 1929, was buried in Berea.



Coyle at 88. He now lives in Florida,
has completely lost his eyesight.

He had two feelings about womankind

in Bear Wallow, later called Dreyfus, near Berea, in 1871. Fern thought the chances of finding Coyle alive were remote, but he set to work. Through many coincidences, he finally traced Coyle to Florida, where he is now living in retirement at Leesburg.

In letters to Berea and this writer, Coyle ignores requests for personal history, but writes engagingly about his painting in the same style that makes his diary so fascinating. Several themes run through his writing—a nostalgic attachment to the past, a Victorian idealization of womanhood, a complete devotion to the institution of motherhood, an interest in American history, a respect for famous men that amounts to hero-worship and a consuming love of nature.

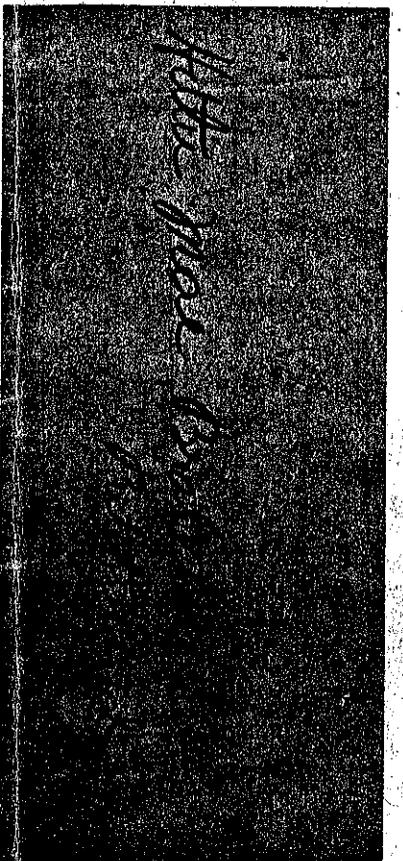
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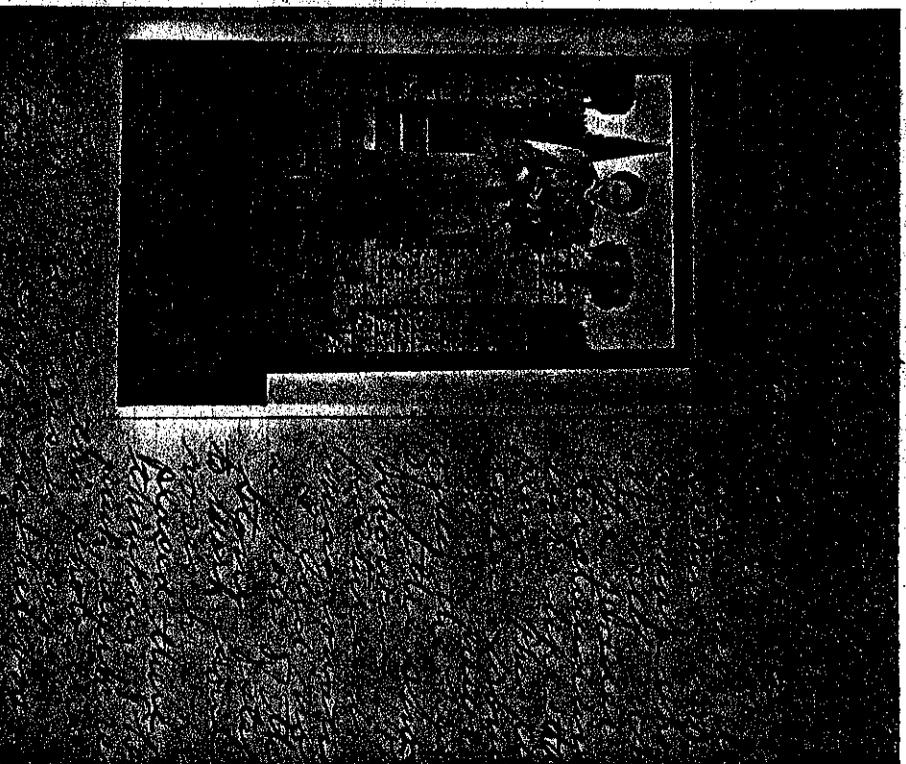
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Continued On Page 24



Coyle tells little about his private life, but one page of his diary includes the name "Hattie Mae Bratcher, Richmond (sic), Ky." Under it he has written: ". . . the name of the girl I married, and was the mother of three children for me." The children were a girl and two boys.



Coyle adored Wallis Simpson, for whom King Edward gave up his throne. This page from his diary includes a photograph of a painting he made of her. He painted it after a photo.

Coyle was crude—and individualistic

KENTUCKY PRIMITIVE *Continued*

Coyle not only painted a portrait of the Duchess, but created an allegorical picture called "Calling All Gods." It shows Wally and Edward in a grove of towering Sequoia trees. Edward is kneeling at Wally's feet, while cupids fly above their heads. A snarling lion, obviously representing England, is pulling a royal chariot away from them. Piled on the chariot are a crown, a sword, a treasure chest and other trappings of royalty.

Didn't Trust Them

But if Coyle worshipped woman as an ideal, he evidently didn't trust women as individuals. A canvas called "Transformation" explodes with his bitterness. Woman is represented as a serpent coiled about man. She is holding a card marked "Divorce and Alimony." In the distance, a leering Eve seductively holds out an apple to a simple and trusting Adam.

Coyle's hero-worship comes out in "Our Phantom Chiefs," a huge canvas containing a portrait of every U. S. President through F. D. R. In his diary, he tells how he did five months of research before starting the work, and meticulously copied the figure of each President before he painted him into the picture. He carefully notes that he spent 25 days drawing the work, 55 days painting it, and that he used six-and-a-half pounds of white lead and eight pounds of paints in its execution. He concludes that the job cost him about \$45 before it was finished.

Coyle's feeling for nature turns up in a landscape like "In Old California." Distant hills look much like Berea territory, and the picture conveys a touching pleasure in simple details of country life.

Continued

"Forty Years Ago," which pictures an elderly gentleman returning to the scene of his childhood, brims over with nostalgia. It was inspired by a sentimental poem Coyle copied into his diary. The old man sits in a wooded grove, with a little red school house prominently featured in the scene.

Comments throughout Coyle's diary indicate he took his art seriously. There are frequent notations like "Not a very good picture," "Good subject but not a first quality workmanship," "This ranks with the rest of my good work," or "I consider this my greatest piece of work."

Other passages prove he coped hard with special problems in perspective, composition and color by copying picture postcards and photographs.

Coyle can be dismissed as excessively naive and crude. But Fern defends him and finds his best work full of charm and individuality.

Has Lost His Sight

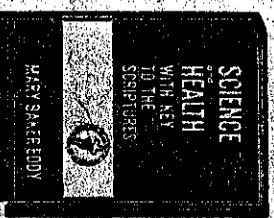
Coyle is now blind from cataracts on both eyes. Undaunted, he types his correspondence laboriously and still hopes for an operation to restore his sight. If his operation is successful, he plans to paint a six-foot by eight-foot picture on a Biblical theme.

"If I can live to do this picture, it will be the world's latest masterpiece."

Coyle wrote this as he approached 90 years of age. One can only admire his courage and self-confidence, and hope he lives to create many more "masterpieces."

In the meanwhile, Berea intends that the art he sent there will never again be lost in storage. Periodically, the Coyle legacy will come out and go on exhibit.

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From: The Courier Journal Magazine
 August 31, 1961
 pg. 21, 22, 24

KENTUCKY PRIMITIVE Continued

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The diary revealed very little of Coyle's personal life, beside the fact that he was born

Continued On Page 22



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Carlos Coyle's Last Canvas

Editor's Note: Carlos Cortez Coyle, a Kentucky artist whose work is causing a lot of excitement in national art circles, died here in late April in obscurity. Along with several other members of the Leesburg artists group, Marjorie Peter called on Mr. Coyle, talked art with him, and helped make his last days easier. The Miami Herald Sunday Magazine, and the Louisville Courier-Journal, asked Mrs. Peter to do a feature story. It is reprinted here with permission from those newspapers.

When I feel myself get some years before), and a big ting blue and shipping into canvas, maybe six feet square, self-pity, there's always Mr. Coyle to think about. Mr. Coyle and his last canvas.

His neighbors knew Mr. Coyle only as the nice old gent who lived over Nick's Cafe. Hardly anybody got to know him well, though, because he didn't get around much. Mr. Coyle was almost totally blind and had to stay in close so he could cook and do his own chores.

"Fine old gent," said his landlord, Nick Babouris, who runs the cafe downstairs. "Mr. Coyle never complains. Doesn't bother anybody. Just lives on his state check and pays the rent on the flat."

Even Mr. Babouris didn't know his tenant was an artist until my husband, a newspaperman, found out and phoned me at home.

"Ever hear of anyone named Carlos Cortez Coyle?" he asked. I told him I hadn't. "Well," he said, "I've got a clipping from the Louisville Courier-Journal that says Coyle is a talented artist, one who seems to be getting recognition. Why don't you drop in and see him?"

A FEW DAYS later I called on Mr. Coyle with another member of our art association, Virginia Knowles. Mr. Coyle, we found out, was 89 years old. We learned, too, that he'd had enough bad breaks to last another 89 years. Even so we didn't hear him whine or complain. Not once. He was, in fact, starved for communion with anybody who was willing to talk about art.

About Mr. Coyle's losing game with luck, we had to get it out of him a little at a time. Here, briefly, is what happened to him:

1. Back in the early days of World War II, Mr. Coyle decided to give his paintings, 170 of them, to Berea College in Kentucky. He was working in San Francisco at the time as a house painter. He ridged them, and somehow at Berea the crates got stuffed into dead storage and weren't even opened. When they were opened, nearly 20 years later, the breath takingly vivid canvases inside brought belated recognition of Mr. Coyle as an important "American primitive" artist.

2. While the paintings were in dead storage in Kentucky, Mr. Coyle's eyes began to fail him. He needed a cataract operation and didn't have the money for doctor's fees or hospital costs. He spent his \$11,000 inheritance and savings, and ended up a pauper. To add to his trouble, a tremor developed in his hands.

IT DIDN'T TAKE us long to find out that Mr. Coyle, in spite of his rough breaks, was indeed a devoted and sensitive artist. In his little apartment was his paint-boxes of the family stove (done

entirely blank. We asked him about it.

"That's my last canvas," Mr. Coyle said. "I've got it worked out in my mind. It's going to be a Bible scene." But he didn't say which one.

After he returned to Leesburg to retire in 1949, Mr. Coyle had a lot of help from his closest friend, Odessa Jennings of Howey-in-the-Hills. Mrs. Jennings took Mr. Coyle grocery shopping and went with him to the Welfare office. He had lived here in his youth; Thomas Coyle, his father, owned a pioneer hotel, the Lake View.

The artist kept a detailed diary-type list of his paintings. The list went with his gift to Berea College, but Mrs. Jennings points out there are 179 Coyle paintings. Since 170 of them are cataloged at Berea, that leaves nine in private hands.

ONLY ONE OF these 179 paintings did Mr. Coyle sell. It is a humble, "frow in the home of a Kentucky farmer" painting cataloged here for the first time, has as its central theme a cracked chamber-pot.

"I remember as a boy my father bringing home 12 chamber pots, one for each person in the house," he told Mrs. Jennings. "I managed to chip mine right away with my slide-shot." The painting shows a big wooden house in a drenching rain storm with menacing clouds overhead.

"It is frighteningly vivid," Mrs. Jennings said, "with such eerie props as cobwebs, an old broom, and a rusty tomato can. In the foreground is the chipped chamber pot of childhood memory. The pot is turned upside down. Peeping through the cracked place in it is a big green frog."

Mrs. Jennings said Mr. Coyle took up painting in middle age and continued it into his eighties. He told her he made a living as an interior decorator, "with hands so steady, I didn't even use a drop-cloth." He supported his two sons, Chester M. Coyle and Theodore J. Coyle, with work in Canada and later in California. Both sons now live in Oakland.

These were things we learned in the fall of 1961. Meanwhile, the full story began to piece itself together. Thomas Fern, of the Berea Art Department, had tracked Coyle down in Leesburg, and corresponded with him. So did William Mootz, art editor of the Courier-Journal. Both men are convinced Mr. Coyle is an authentic find in primitive American art.

by motherhood, a deep interest in American history, a hero-worship of famous men, and a consuming love of nature.

Mr. Coyle wrote Mootz in the last few months of his life: "Woman is the most beautiful thing in the world. Next to her beauty comes flowers. . . . It looks impossible that nature can produce such wondrous beautiful things."

All of us in the local art association were happy to learn that at last Mr. Coyle was to have his cataract operation. A specialist in nearby Ocala had agreed to perform the surgery. We rejoiced when he wrote me, through a hospital Gray Lady, that his strength was coming back. A few weeks afterward, Mildred Raible of our art group and I drove Mr. Coyle to Ocala for his first checkup.

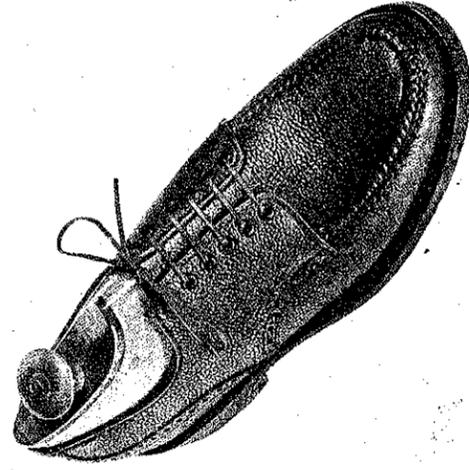
"No, I can't see but I can feel the beauty around me," he told us on the return trip. "That which I cannot see, I can remember, and all of it I can feel! I know my age is against me, but I am getting enough sight back so that I shall start my last canvas."

CARLOS CORTEZ COYLE died on April 28, 1962, after reaching the age of 90. The funeral director, following Mr. Coyle's wishes, read selections from Walt Whitman and the appropriate lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson.

And one clear call for me! And may there be no meaning at the bar.

When I put out to sea. Mr. Coyle's room, the canvas was still without a brush mark.

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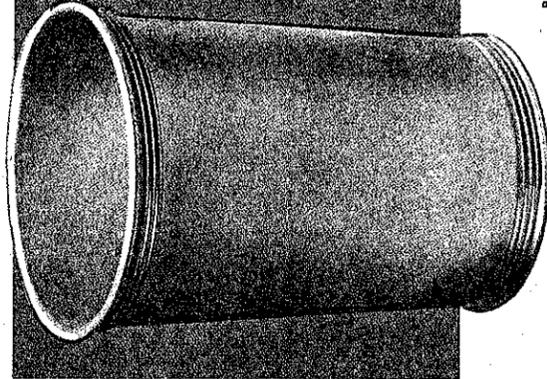
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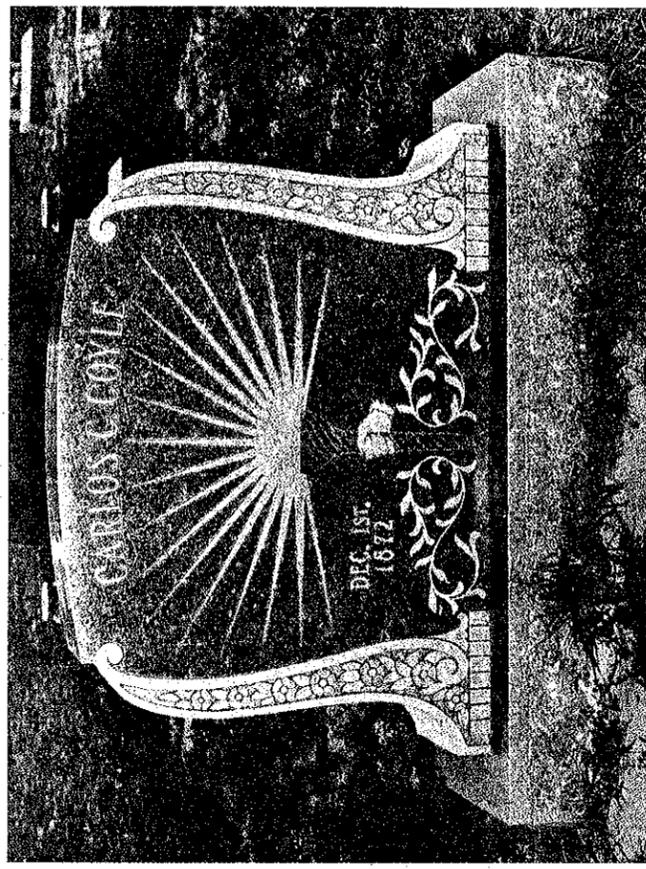
Our thanks to all of you who visited Kendrick's during our August sale.

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SHOP TALK



Carlos C. Coyle's gravestone in Leesburg, Fla., is his own design.

'Recognition' came almost too late

BACK in August, 1961, we ran a story about Carlos C. Coyle, an American primitive (self-taught) painter who had donated 170 of his paintings to Berea College, but which the college had forgotten it owned until Thomas Fern of the school's art department ran across them in storage.

William Mootz of our staff wrote the story we ran in this Magazine.

Coyle has since died, on April 28, 1962, at age 90, shortly after undergoing an operation for cataracts to restore his sight. He is buried in Lone Oak Cemetery, in Leesburg, Fla., where he lived out his last years, almost unknown. His gravestone, reproduced in the photograph above, is his own design. Unfortunately, he made a mistake—he was born in

1871 according to his diary at Berea, not 1872 as shown on the stone.

His Leesburg neighbors knew Coyle only as a nice old man who lived in a rented room over a cafe. He was almost totally blind and didn't get around much. He lived on \$76 a month he got from Social Security and the Florida welfare office.

After our story appeared about Coyle, his neighbors "discovered" him. He was disappointed but not bitter because no recognition had come to him. He was very proud of the story we ran, and carried a copy of it, possibly as a proof that recognition of a sort had come at last.

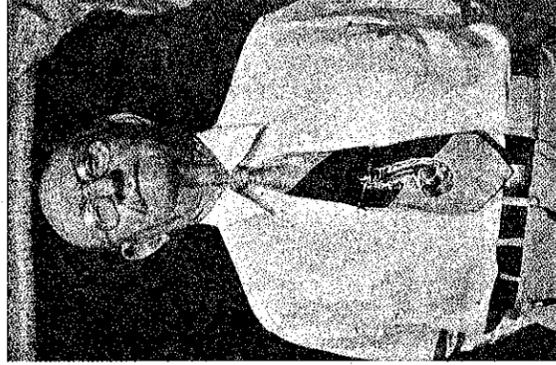
When he died shortly after his operation in a nursing home, his new-found friends learned he had made all arrangements for his funeral, paying for his cemetery lot and headstone with money he had saved out of his meager allowance. There were 13 people at his funeral.

Coyle was born December 1, 1871, near Dreyfus, Ky. He lived there much of his early life, then moved to Canada and later to the West Coast.

Coyle had hoped, before he went blind, to paint a 6 foot by 8 foot picture with a biblical theme. After his death, a large canvas was found in his room. There wasn't a brush stroke on it.

It's State Fair Time

The 1962 Kentucky State Fair starts Friday, and H. Harold Davis, our chief color photographer, got together four pages of color photos of last year's fair, to give people an idea of what to expect. They're on pages 14-17. Our cover shows an exhibitor (unidentified) getting his animals together for a showing.



Coyle as he looked at 88, almost totally blind, and poor.