

9-28-2001

## Field Report for visit to Jeanette Mayo

Peg Tazewell

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### Recommended Citation

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## Field Report for visit to Jeannette Mayo

Accession number: MAC-JP-F092801.A

Researcher's name: Jessica Phillips

Event: Meeting with Jeannette Mayo

Place: Jeanette Mayo 2887 Clermont Road Columbus, OH 43209 (614) 237-2732

Co-workers present: Peg Tazewell, Ric Sheffield, Dan Younger

Our meeting with Jeannette Mayo took place at her house in Columbus on September 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:00. Jeannette met us at the door with a smile, immediately putting everyone at ease. She seemed extremely excited to have us there, and was incredibly accommodating and very nice. Also present was an employee of the Columbus museum, who we assume Jeannette asked to come to perhaps make things less awkward and also to possibly help her watch out for our interests. She lives in a modestly nice home in a nice neighborhood. Her living room was full of pictures of her family, and her home was comfortable and welcoming. The meeting began with all of us sitting in Gannett's living room, explaining the basic concepts of the project. We explained that we wanted to pick up where the museum left off, and really delve into the lives of the Mayo's. We explained that we wanted to understand their art in the context of their lives and community, and that we were going to attempt to include the local Knox county community in the scope of the project. Jeannette seemed happy with all this; and after a couple minutes of explaining the project she asked us if we wanted to see the carvings and paintings. She first took us into the garage, where there were a good number of carvings by Walter O. There was an owl and moon, two squirrels boxing, another wagon, and horses. They seemed to be in good shape and the garage was not in the bad condition that I expected after what we were told at the museum. They seem to be in fine condition and are not being exposed to awful conditions in the garage. After that, she took us to a back bedroom where there was another horse carving, which had been taken into the room when her husband was dying and as such is of great personal importance to her. There were also two bookend carvings in the room, of horse's heads. We were then taken into the basement, (having pointed out to us on the way a portrait of Jeannette's daughter done by Walter L.) into a room that Walter L. referred to as his "Doghouse". Apparently this was his domain in the house, sort of his personal space to paint and relax. The room was filled to the brim with paintings. There were paintings all over the walls, mostly framed, and piles of sketchbooks. On the floor rolled up were the Homecoming banners. The subjects of the paintings included horses, portraits of Jeannette especially during their trip to the Holy Land, landscapes and flower paintings. While these did display some skill, they were typical amateur paintings. The homecoming banners were another story; They were obviously executed with great care and tie the work of Walter L. Mayo to a local community, that of Bethany Baptist Church. There were also two of Walter L.'s exercises from his correspondence art school. They were advertisements. The sketchbooks contained many studies done before the painting of the Homecoming banners, and Jeannette also showed us 12 portraits that Walter L. had done of the 12 apostles.

Jeannette seemed to be really excited about this project. From looking around her house and seeing the great number of family photos, and the excitement with which Ric and her discussed people they both knew, it is easy to ascertain that this is a woman who takes her family and her community very seriously. When talking about Walter L. she would often tear up, and this is evidence that she loved him dearly and really wants to see his work be appreciated and valued. This is her primary interest in the project.

We learned some valuable things while we were at Jeannette's. She told us that Walter L. began to paint when he was five, which could mean that he learned from his father or was inspired by his father. This could perhaps be evidence of a transmission of folk art from one generation to another, even if the art switched mediums. We also learned that there was a guestbook set out during the opening at the museum, and Jeannette believes that some Mt. Vernon people who were at the opening and who remembered Walter O. may have signed the guestbook and left their address in it. She had not been through the guestbook yet as she had just gotten it from the museum people that day, but she said we would be welcome to look through it at a later date. She also mentioned that Walter O. used to take his carvings down to the Ohio State Fair, and we speculated that he may perhaps have shown at the Knox County Fair.

Before we left Ric told Jeannette that we wouldn't rush her, but would like to have a chance to come again and really go through the images and carvings. She said that we were welcome anytime as long as we planned in advance. Basically she seems utterly accommodating and willing to work with us in any way she can. I felt that the meeting was a really good start; Jeannette seems to like us, she will be a pleasure to work with, and there is a great deal of information in that house that will allow us to flesh out this project. I do think we need to be careful to make her not feel as if we are more interested in Walter O.'s carvings, as she seemed upset that only one of Walter L.'s paintings was still hanging in the museum. We all also are really interested in the theme of religion that we have seen in both the carvings and the paintings.