

# Spanning the Gap

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

## Artist's Perspective

By Penny Ross

I have been painting the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area for nearly 30 years. The Delaware Water Gap is a place that defines my home on earth, in the same way others find inspiration by the sea or desert. I feel power from the Water Gap's landscape that I'm certain was also felt by the Native Americans in the area, the Lenape. I have painted the Gap many times and felt strengthened by its natural wonder and beauty.

In the presence of this landmark I have always wondered what it must have been like before our highway cut through this natural passageway and altered the quiet and silence and dispersed the peace. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the highway went **under** the Delaware Water Gap!

I began painting the landscape in the park with the notion that my viewpoint would be of a landscape that had not been altered by people. I painted waterfalls, gorges, mountains and hills, valley and forests, the river and its banks, and the Gap. I painted the Gap without the highway.

(Right, middle) The Delaware Water Gap and Interstate 80 from Mt. Minsi. (Right, bottom) **Manipulated** version of the same image without Interstate 80.



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(Above) Forest scene by Penny Ross, in a private collection in Stroudsburg PA.



Last year for the first time I painted the architecture in the park. I painted a brick home with a front porch facing the river and a massive mountain as a backdrop. In the painting the house is very small against the landscape. People are living here, but they are not dominant. They are integrated proportionately to the land.

I painted a little church with a cemetery in the country. I was there on a beautiful spring day in April shortly after the leaves had just appeared. I sat on top of the hill and imagined an active community. I painted the cemetery because the people were gone.

By now, I was on a roll. I wanted to paint more history. I did a little spring house, another old farmhouse and an old inn. I was responding to another time when people lived in and farmed this valley.

The places are boarded-up on every window and door to protect the buildings from vandalism. The boarded-up windows are painted to look like windows, perhaps to convince the public to respect them and appreciate the intention to return the building to use. I felt a ghost-like quality with the stage-set appearance of times gone by. My efforts were to eliminate signs of deserted buildings in these paintings, but the one where there are geraniums on a picnic table was a relief to the lonesomeness at the other sites.

Looking for a painting, I carry maps and old books with photographs and ask park rangers for directions when lost. Laden with backpacks, I sometimes walk more than a mile to the site. I have a great time!

*Editor's Note: Penny Ross was born in Cincinnati and received degrees from the University of Cincinnati and New York University. She has had numerous shows in eastern Pennsylvania as well as Cincinnati, New York, and Texas. She resides in Stroudsburg PA. Her painting of Slateford Farmhouse appeared on the cover (right) of "Exploring Delaware Water Gap History", the park's historical field guide, published in 2000 by Eastern National.*



Apple tree and frame house by Penny Ross, in a private collection in Stroudsburg PA.



Spring House at Slateford Farmhouse PA.



Slateford Farmhouse off Route 611 & National Park Drive PA.

