

Nostalgic Historian—in¹⁹⁶³ Paint

A gray-haired little lady in Menlo Park has become the paintbrush historian of a fast-fading phase of Americana — the one-room country schoolhouse.

Just a dozen years ago, Mrs. Rachel Bentley put brush to canvas for the first time. Yet today her reputation has spread not only to scores of mid-Peninsula art galleries, but into the exhibit halls of Stanford University.

The bucolic schoolhouse is not her only forte. Her portraits of farmhouses, seaside cottages and Mother Lode landmarks also depict a warm affection for the back-country California scene.

All show her uniqueness in watercolor artistry—almost photographic perfection done in brisk, springlike hues.

Why has the vanishing schoolhouse become



MRS. BENTLEY
Schoolhouse artist

her particular target?

She attempts to explain it best by attributing it to her favorite art theme: Nostalgia.

"Like many people in this fast-moving and complex world, I feel a fond nostalgia for the things we're leaving behind forever."

She painted her first schoolhouse — the Alpine School, built in

1874 in San Mateo County, just off Skyline Boulevard near Memorial Park—in February, 1954.

Since more than 100 others throughout the northern half of California — and several in Nevada — have been preserved on her easels.

Where does she find her models?

Mrs. Bentley searches out the back-country with the zeal of a fisherman looking for fruitful waters.

"They're becoming — oh — so scarce! Like gold, those little old schoolhouses are where you find them. I get tips and leads from people I meet in the little townships; from a farmer or rancher, perhaps—anyone I may meet on my frequent auto tours."

Recently, 45 of her traits comprised a "one-man" show in Tresidder Memorial Union at



THE SCHOOLHOUSE AT SALMON CREEK
"Like gold, those little old schoolhouses"

Stanford University, on the occasion of the annual Cubberly Education Conference.

Officials felt her works were "uniquely appropriate," and emphasized how "very de-

sirable they are from a historical standpoint." Many of her paintings represent the only reproductions of schoolhouses long razed to make way for homesites or superhighways.