

## St. Louis Artist Paints Picture of a Local Sawmill to Include in Potrait Book

A St. Louis artist is traveling throughout the state capturing its beauty. Artist Billyo O'Donnell is capturing a scene in each of the state's 115 counties.

O'Donnell was in Wayne County Monday, April 7. He spent the afternoon at Million Lumber Company, south of Piedmont, capturing an image of the sawmill.

Wayne County's economy depends upon the timber industry. Hundreds of people are employed in different aspects related to the industry—foresters, loggers, truck drivers, and sawmill workers.

He enrolled in college after graduating from high school. The experience was a fun-filled one. After his college experience, O'Donnell figured he would spend his life doing manual work.

He worked in a foundry, at a hog farm and then at a sawmill. While working at the sawmill, O'Donnell was involved in an accident; his thumb was nearly severed.

The accident changed his life. He decided to pursue his dream of becoming an artist. He re-enrolled in college. He earned a degree in art in 1980 from Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield.

The Painting Missouri project involves O'Donnell, and writer, Karen Glines. They are creatively painting and writing about their home state of Missouri.

Missouri is one of the top four states in the country with the largest number of counties — 115. Their goal is to visit the counties

and capture their presence on canvases and in words.

O'Donnell's journeys across the state have taken him to the town of Marceline, which is the location where Walt Disney modeled Disneyland's "Main Street USA," to Ralls County where the community is bonding together to restore its historical courthouse. He has visited a Scott County town where people from across the United States travel just to choose a "premier" watermelon that tastes like no others around.

Painting Missouri involves O'Donnell "catching just the right moment" when painting outdoors (en plein aire), often camping out so that he doesn't miss the next morning's sunrise.

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He has painted in the midst of a snowy, icy night, and a humid, steaming day so that each inspiring season is significantly represented within the state.

Much of Glines' time is spent in her office with piles of books surrounding her. Her goal is to give each county the respect and recognition it deserves. She also travels to the counties and visits with local residents hearing their stories that can never be found in a stiff library book.

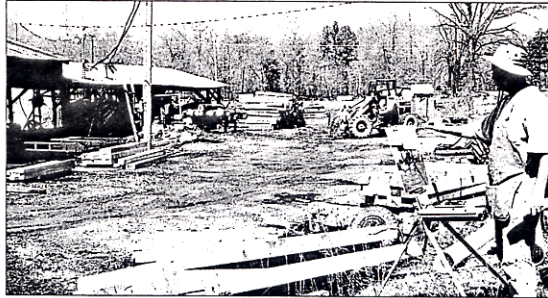
O'Donnell likens each of his images to a page in a diary. Each is a composite story about a specific moment in time. At Million Lumber Company, he captured a busy workday with employees

stacking lumber after it had been cut.

Dale and Glenda Million, owners of the Million Lumber, said they were shocked that he picked their company to paint. Million is a second-generation sawmill man.

"Wayne County has so much to offer," Dale Million said. "We have two lakes, Sam A. Baker State Park, and Markham Springs."

"The lumber industry has been a vital part of Wayne County's economy for many years," he continued. "It is nice that our industry will be recognized in a book about Missouri."



### Capturing a Moment in Time

ARTIST BILLYO O'DONNELL of St. Louis visited Million Lumber Company near Piedmont Monday afternoon to paint a picture of the sawmill. O'Donnell is visiting every county in Missouri and painting a portrait of some aspect of the county. The portraits will be compiled and published in a book.