

Artist capturing state's beauty on canvas

By BUZZ BALL
Daily News Editor

A Eureka, Mo., artist wants to capture Missouri — all of Missouri — on canvas.

To accomplish this unique feat, Billyo O'Donnell is visiting all 115 counties in Missouri to capture the state's uniqueness and beauty in oils. He then will transfer those paintings to book form which he says has never before been accomplished.

He was in Neosho today in Big Spring Park painting the spring and Big Spring Hill as a possible selection for his book. Earlier, he was in the Seneca to capture that area on canvas.

"What a beautiful, beautiful spot," said O'Donnell about the Big Spring Park area. "I imagine you refer to this area as one of your visual landmarks."

O'Donnell has logged about 60,000 miles in his

project which he started about a year and a half ago. He hopes to finish the paintings this fall and have the book come out in 2005.

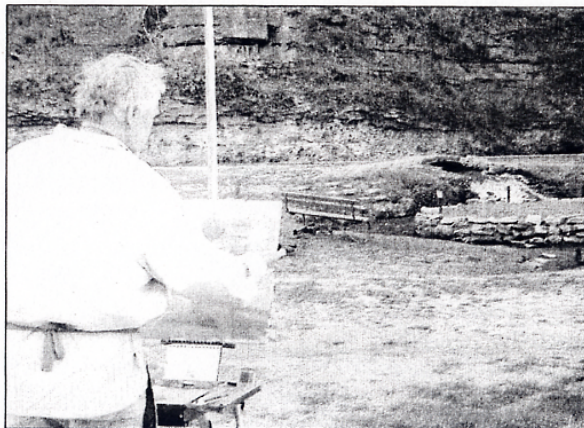
"I already have a publisher who is interested, so that part is already taken care of," he said. "Each county will have one painting in the book. But I'm doing more to help the flow."

In addition to the paintings will be history written by journalist Karen Glines. She will write descriptive essays on the counties complementing O'Donnell's paintings.

O'Donnell chooses the setting for his paintings based on history and geography.

His journeys across the state have taken him so far to Marceline, the home of Walt Disney, and to Ralls County, where the community is bonding together to restore

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Billyo O'Donnell paints the spring at Big Spring Park Thursday morning. The artist is forming a book of paintings depicting the beauty of Missouri's counties.

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its historical courthouse.

"Painting Missouri involves catching just the right moment when painting outdoors which is en plein aire," said O'Donnell. "That

is French for painting outdoors. I often camp out so that I don't miss the next morning's sunrise."

After the book is publish, O'Donnell plans to travel to each of the counties again to show off not only his book, but his original paintings.