

The Artist's Almanac
May 2009

*When the Present has latched its gate behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbors say,
'He was a man who used to notice such things'?*

Thomas Hardy

May - Mary's month: a time when the mother of us all warms the earth with her fragrant breath.

She has been generous with her warm rains this year, bidding lush growth and abundant bloom. Following each downpour, the trees sway to and fro, tossing their newly verdant heads like young women shaking water from their hair after a shower. The smallest streams sing in chorus in their headlong rush to the river.

Before the Irises fade and the pendulous Peonies sag to the rain, we bring the best into the house to pose for portraits. The roses are in full cry now, and will cheer us through a long summer season. Soon enough the rains will end, the heat will crack the clay earth, and we will beg the towering summer clouds for even a passing shower.



Now we may revel in spring, profligate beauty though she be. We ourselves are the wasteful ones, if we miss her show.

The machines have stolen my May. The task of editing a book has tied me to my computer this month, and I have missed watching the sticky little leaves unfurl, not noticing until too late the tiny caterpillars that ate the first crop of leaves from my Japanese cherry trees or the deer that cropped my wife's tulips. I missed watching my grandson mow the back pasture for the first time by himself and did not pick any of the Indian Squamish that blooms on the south-facing bluff along the river.

We once thought fantastic those science fiction tales of how we might become slaves to the brain of the computer, which would rule over us with an authority dramatized in *Brave New World* and *1984*. 1984 came and went and we were still ourselves, but the machine was evolving. Today, a quarter century later homes and offices are filled with people staring all day at video screens and digital displays for their instructions and thoughts, and texting and ipods threaten personal interaction. Our medical diagnoses are largely by computer, to our benefit, to be sure. We quail at the thought of our Comcast connection going down, not to mention the catastrophe a loss of electrical power would entail.

We can travel to Italy or to Jupiter without going there, and we strive to conform our voices to the intonation of OnStar so we can make ourselves understood. Our Blackberrys allot our days to us, as the immediacy of Google replaces the wisdom stored in the literature of three millennia. Our beautiful English language trends to staccato computerese which old ears cannot catch.

Yet we pause and notice that, just as peonies wither and die, technology ages and fades as well. Nothing is as dead as yesterday's technology, and, unlike Nature, it does not renew itself. May will come again, year after year, so long as God allows it, and each new spring, like a wave of the great ocean, will be the same, yet totally distinct, and filled with teeming life – life a computer can only simulate, but cannot create.

Venues

Fall Into Art – Third Annual Art Show benefiting Hendersonville High School's Academic and Arts Program, October 2-4, 2009

View the prospectus for our forthcoming book, now available for preorder at <http://www.cumberlandpioneers.com/volume1a.html>

Upcoming personal appearances to present it to those interested in history and historic art include

Thursday May 28 at 4pm	Dickerson Road Merchants Association - Nashville, TN
Tuesday June 2 at Noon	Gallatin Lions Club - Gallatin, TN
Sunday June 14	Flag Day - Nashville Old City Cemetery
Monday June 15 at 7pm	Historical Society of Rutherford County - Murfreesboro, TN
Saturday June 20 at 9am-4pm	Rose Mont Renaissance Day- Gallatin, TN
Monday July 13 at 6pm	Jackson County Historical Society - Gainesboro, TN