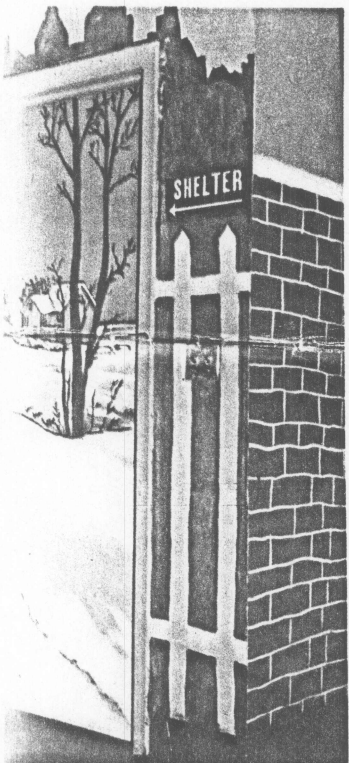




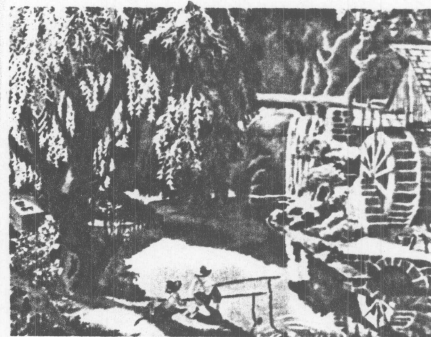
St. Joseph. The finished painting hangs in the schoolhouse on Staten Island. The boy never studied art.



The boy painted on a door at Willowbrook during the holiday season.



Every nuance of the sky, the town in the distance and the autumn trees has been faithfully captured.



The Waterwheel, an idyllic painting, is remarkable for its wealth of careful and exact detail.

The amateur artist

By DICK OWEN

NEWS COLORFOTOS BY WILLIAM KLEIN

You may have more talent than you realize

MANY persons believe that it is extremely difficult to become a painter. They feel that it requires a lot of talent as well as years of study. They are wrong.

While it is true that great artists have a skill far beyond being able to draw or mix colors, thousands of persons have made themselves and others happy with their amateur paintings. Winston Churchill and President Eisenhower are both amateur painters.

We might bear in mind, if we feel unsure of our ability, that painters, like musicians, often surround their art with a lot of high-sounding nonsense. But it means nothing to the ordinary person who just wants to paint and it won't add or detract a stroke from your skill.

How do you get started?

You go to an artists' supply store, buy paints—oils or water colors—some brushes and paper and begin. It may aid you at first to sketch lightly with pencil the outline of the scene you have decided to reproduce. Once you have the outlines down, go to work with brushes and paint.

And don't be discouraged if your first efforts look hammy. You'll gradually learn how to mix colors and how to gain proper perspectives. And remember, your work has to improve, because it can't possibly get worse.

Do you still have doubts? Then study the paintings reproduced here. They were all done by an amateur, a mentally retarded boy. He has never had a painting lesson in his life. He hasn't read a single book on art (he can't read or write).

These pictures were chosen for a dual purpose: to show how an amateur can develop a talent, and to encourage readers who would like to take up painting, by this boy's example.

This boy was retarded when born. He has no relatives. He lives at Willowbrook State School on

Staten Island. There is no point telling you his name, and it would mean nothing to him as he couldn't read it.

For years he would sit alone in a corner refusing to talk or play. He dressed, sat, rocked, ate and slept. His existence was more like that of a vegetable than of a human being.

Dr. Harold H. Berman, M.D., noted psychiatrist and director of Willowbrook, in his program to help withdrawn children, suggested that the boy be given some paints to play with. The bright colors attracted the youngster and he began to make clumsy efforts at painting.

TODAY he is tremendously improved. He is no longer withdrawn. He plays a trumpet in the boys' band at the school and, most remarkable of all, has had his paintings displayed at two outdoor exhibitions. He refuses money for his paintings but accepts gifts of oil colors instead.

So, if this youngster could overcome his handicaps and produce such fine paintings, you should feel encouraged to give your own talents a chance.

The paintings themselves are rather static. That's because the boy copied them from posters. But despite that drawback, he has managed to inject a certain mood of reality into them. This year, having overcome his shyness at meeting people, he is going to begin painting from nature, outdoors.

In your own case, if you're a little embarrassed by the prospect of setting up an easel in public, you might begin as he did by copying other paintings while indoors.

Apart from the kick you'll get from your efforts, you will also discover that painting is very relaxing and will give your morale a terrific boost.

Let this youngster's work serve as an encouragement and within a few months you may have your own gallery of art right in your living room.