

## Youthful Dreams Gone, He Paints Grocery Signs

Dauber Brushes Away Hope For Fine Art Success, Goes About Daily Job of Serving 36 Stores.

By JOHN MARTIN

Robert Atkins, who used to study Michelangelo and Rembrandt and dream of a Greenwich Village studio, today is painting food prices on Indianapolis grocery windows.

He's been doing it four years; and it's been nearly that long since he dreamed of the fine arts and the great names of painting.

Four years ago, he succumbed to commercial sign painting—the siren, he says, that lures so many young fine arts aspirants away from the company of oils and Leonardo Da Vinci.

He was in Shortridge High School four years ago. He paid his way through school by painting posters. But all the while, Mr. Atkins dreamed of real art.

He wanted to go to art schools—to study, and learn portrait painting, and the rest of the artist's trade. And he won scholarships to John Herron Art Institute nearly every year, he says.

## But He Got Job

Came graduation. He wanted to take an examination leading to a four-year scholarship at John Herron.

But he got the job painting "Iced Tea—8c," coffee, butter, pork chops. It paid good money. And he took the job.

Since then, his business has expanded. Mr. Atkins says, "What began as something of a stop-gap job has grown into contract work—a full-time occupation. He now paints signs on 36 stores twice a week and does cards between times.

But every once in a while, he says, he remembers the high school dreams.

## Has No Delusions

Of course, he says, maybe he wouldn't have been any good at portrait work. He has no delusions of grandeur. But even if you are good, today, "you have to be a second Michelangelo to make any money at fine art," he says.

Still, "I could kick myself sometimes for not taking the examination.



Times Photo.

tion," he says. "I might have clicked."

A lot of high school students are good at fine arts, Mr. Atkins says. But they need training—five, six, 10 years of it. It costs up to \$10,000 to get a good art training.

"If it weren't for that," he believes, "an awful lot of really good artists would be developed every year."

Commercial Art Attractive

"You'll find," he says, "that every commercial artist sticks to commercial art and that nearly every man engaged in fine arts is drawn to it sooner or later." Financial reasons, usually, he says.

Even the sign business acquires a certain dignity and interest if you

average butcher boy, or the scrolls of the worker in oils.

## Speed Required

But the most unique thing about his job is the speed it requires. He must cover his 36 stores in a single day, working usually from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. That means about five stores an hour; and when you remember they're scattered all over town, you can see Mr. Atkins has to hurry.

Each store usually needs about six signs painted, he says, and some want more.

But that very speed just about kills off any possibility of injecting a little art into his work, Mr. Atkins says. He realizes speed is necessary. But he would like to sort of revolutionize grocery store window advertising.

That is, instead of just painting "Tea 8c" for instance, he might paint a picture of two good-looking girls sipping cooling iced tea, with an electric fan and maybe some ferns as background.

## Speed Spoils Effect

But how can you do that when you have to cover 36 stores in seven hours?

Now and then, he gets a chance. Mr. Atkins says he has painted pictures of a leg of mutton a few times. Fixed it up to look very nice.

"It's the speed they demand that spoils it," he says.

Michaelangelo took nine years to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

## LOCKEFIELD LEASE APPLICATIONS DUE

Apartments to Rent From \$20.80, Agent Says.

Applications were received today for apartments in the new Federal Lockefield Gardens low-cost housing project.

The development, located at 862 Indiana Ave., was built at a cost of \$3,200,000, and is nearly completed.

Families earning from \$12.50 to \$35 a week are eligible. Three-room apartments are to rent for as low as \$25.80, and four-room flats for \$25.30.

Twelve storerooms in the new project are to be leased for merchandise and other services, according to Lionel F. Artis, housing manager.

The leases are to be offered at public bids for one-year periods with two-year renewal privilege.

Bids are to be received until noon Monday, July 19. Mr. Artis, pointing out 748 families are to be housed in the project.

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ACTUAL SIZE

## OPTIMISTS TO HOLD BOYS' DAY AT CAMP

Indianapolis Optimist Club members were to observe Boys' Day today at the Julia Jameson nutrition camp for undernourished children north of Bridgeport.

An annual event, the affair was to open with a baseball game between Optimists and camp boys. A chicken dinner is scheduled for 6 p.m.

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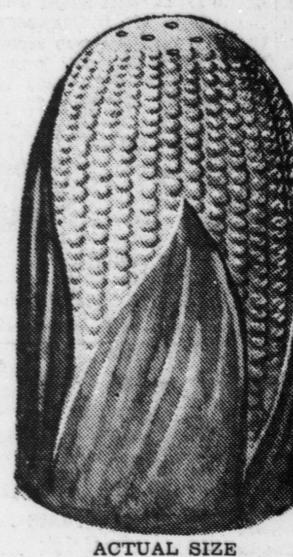
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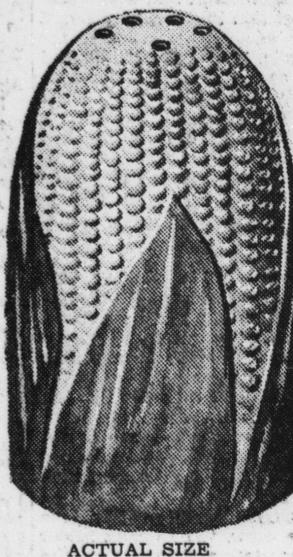
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