

A perfect fit: Lionel Kabel at the Old State Capitol

By Carol Stuart May 31, 2007



Battle of Baton Rouge depicts a battle in Magnolia Cemetery in 1862. Kabel subtracted granite monuments from today's cemetery and imagined the rest based on a soldier's account, including a commander carrying the flag and one who told them to Follow my hat.

'Painting Louisiana Life - Past & Present,' an exhibition of the works of Denham Springs artist Lionel Kabel, is perfectly suited to its setting, the

Old State Capitol gallery. Painted with skill and love and handsomely framed, Kabel's traditional oils depict life, past and present, along the rivers, lakes, bayous and bays that have given birth to a waterborne culture that is uniquely Louisiana's.

Not all of Kabel's work involves bodies of water. The centerpiece of the show, "The Battle of New Orleans," is one of several land-locked subjects. Prints of that work will be available for sale along with other prints, including "Old City Hall," proceeds from which Kabel continues to dedicate to restoration of that Denham Springs landmark.

Kabel's interest in preservation of historical buildings and their stories led him to author a book, "Benton's Ferry," which documents the early history of Denham Springs and Livingston and Feliciana parishes. The book has become a valuable resource for genealogical studies. His painting by the same name became the cover.

Self-taught as both artist and historian, Kabel employs his skillful touch as a painter to recreate his subjects with accurate detail gleaned from intensive research of his

subjects. Many of his paintings are drawn by combining old lithographs and his own photographs. As is typical of this generous, modest man, Kabel offers those photographs, taken over a lifetime and filed by subject, as a reference for other artists.

Kabel's fellow artists return his esteem. After nomination by fellow members of the

Williams, conspired to arrange Kabel's Old State Capitol show. Mellon, who has exhibited there, and Williams, who was offered an exhibit, agreed that Kabel's work, more than either of theirs, belonged in that setting and proceeded to convince marketing and events coordinator Nancy Chesson that they were right.

A reception in Kabel's honor will be held at the Old State Capitol, Sunday, June 3, from 2 to 5 p.m. The public is invited to enjoy this window on Louisiana life through June 17.