

(Photo courtesy of the News & Advance)

Frank Wright

Advertising Art for the 20th Century

James W. Wright
March 2018

Chests, Shoes & Chapstick

(Frank B. Wright, Jr.: Advertising Art for the 20th Century)

A presentation to the SpheX Club of Lynchburg, February 1, 2018
and at the Jones Memorial Library, March 21, 2018

James W. Wright

I did not choose the topic of tonight's talk. I was asked last summer by our colleague, Cham Light, to speak about the history of my father's advertising art business. Only months later did I learn that the idea was given to him by my wife, Marty. And so once again, as has often been the case over the 36 years of our marriage, Marty gently nudged the direction of my life, always keeping me on the rails.

Before I begin, I offer two caveats. First, I am not an expert on advertising in general or on my father's business in particular. Second, I will be speaking about my father. One should therefore expect neither accuracy nor objectivity.

My premise is that the mid-20th century provided favorable conditions for the growth of a large advertising agency in a small Southern city. That need was happily met by an innate talent, refined and extended by professional training. As the century waned, conditions changed and became less favorable to the operation of such an agency. First, a very brief history of the modern advertising profession.

The 1870's saw the founding of the first two advertising agencies in the United States: the J. Walter Thompson Agency in New York and the N.W. Ayer Company in Philadelphia. These were media placement services, transporting advertising copy from the client to the newspaper office and perhaps selecting the placement of the message within the newspaper. It wasn't long, though, before these agencies began to help clients with advertising content—writing copy and providing artwork. By the turn of the 20th century, most major U.S. cities had at least one advertising agency.

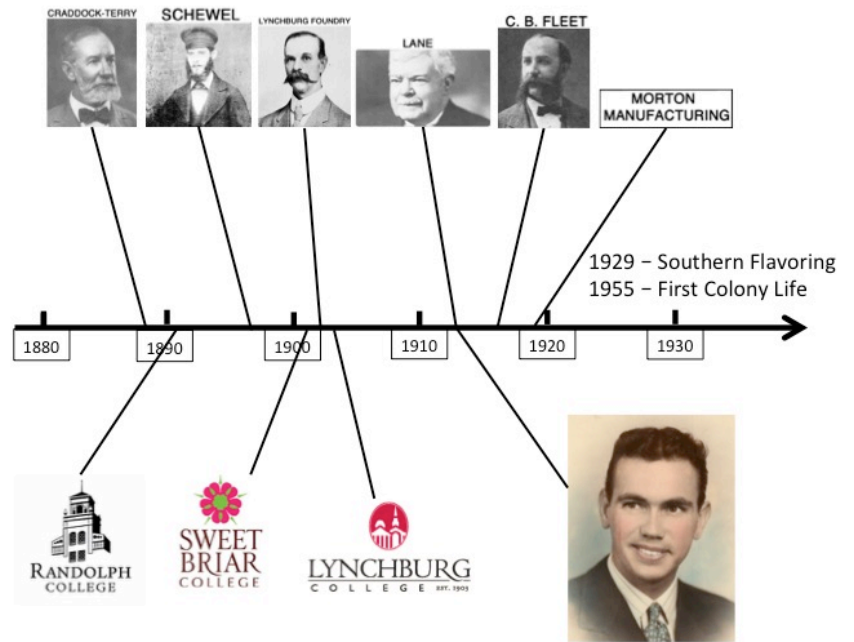
Several factors abetted the growth of these agencies. Newspapers had been around for centuries, but they enjoyed a marked increase in number and circulation during the last half of the 19th century. Magazines, too, exploded. Most of the magazines familiar to this audience, including Life, The Saturday Evening Post, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, the New Yorker, Newsweek and others, were launched between 1883 and 1935. Newspapers and magazines provided the means for mass marketing. Another major development in the last third of the 19th century was the trend toward pre-packaged goods. Housewives found soap, vinegar, cooking oil and many other products already boxed or bottled, relieving them of the need to carry their own containers to market. This trend gave birth to branded products, and with them sales slogans, attractive labels and logos. This was the time that Ivory soap, Uneeda Biscuits, Campbell Soups, Lipton Tea and other brands were born. The rapid growth of brands and the advertising to sell them gave rise to outlandish claims for products and ultimately a consumer backlash. By the early 20th century, consumers were demanding truth in advertising, a movement that gave rise to the Federal Trade Commission in 1914, the founding of the Consumers Union, and the writings of Vance Packard, Ralph Nader and others, and continues to this day. But advertising as a

profession grew rapidly during the first three decades of the 20th century. It hit a major slump with the Depression: consumer spending plummeted and with it, advertising budgets. With the post-World War II economic boom, the advertising profession bounced back and has continued to prosper as products proliferated and the means to advertise them—radio, television and more recently, the internet—increased as well.

At the same time that these national developments were taking place, Lynchburg was busy birthing and growing a number of businesses that would ultimately have regional or national reach and would need advertising services. In 1888 John and A.P. Craddock, along with T.M. Terry and Max Guggenheimer,

founded Craddock-Terry and Company as a boot and shoe wholesaler. In 1898 they built their headquarters at Ninth and Jefferson Streets. Three years later they opened their first factory, the Southland Factory, on Jefferson Street and began manufacturing shoes. Within several decades they had other factories in Lynchburg and seven or eight other Virginia cities. In 1883 Henry McWane moved to Lynchburg to be a superintendent at Glamorgan Foundry. Three years later he was president of the company. In 1902 he left the company, bought the Lynchburg Plow

Works and renamed it Lynchburg Foundry. In 1893 the small Lynchburg Jewish congregation brought Elias Schewel to town to serve as rabbi. Elias made his living peddling furniture from a cart but by 1897 was able to open a store on Main Street. In 1905 John Lane and two brothers founded the town of Altavista. Seven years later he bought a box factory there and set up his son, Ed, in the cedar chest manufacturing business. In the 1880's C. B. Fleet had a pharmacy on Main Street. He developed a formula for lip balm and made it for his customers but didn't advertise it. Two decades later he developed a terrific laxative, Phospho-Soda, which led to the founding of the C.B. Fleet Company in 1916. In the meantime, in 1912, Fleet sold the lip balm recipe to John Morgan for five dollars. Morgan advertised it. After making it in his kitchen for six or seven years, he founded Morton Manufacturing Company in 1919, bought the rights to other products and was on his way. During the short period of 12 years, three colleges were founded. Somewhat later, but still within the time frame of this story, other businesses that would need advertising services were founded, such as Southern Flavoring in Bedford (1929) and First Colony Life Insurance (1955). Into the midst of this growth was born Frank Wright Jr. in 1912.



Growing Up (1912 – 1931)

Frank was the son of Frank B. Wright, a Norfolk & Western Railroad conductor and Amanda Smith Wright, a homemaker. He was the youngest of four children. He demonstrated an interest

and talent for art at an early age. For years his father carried with him a drawing of the new Williams Viaduct that young Frank did at age 5 or 6. Frank's fourth grade teacher kept him after school to draw maps for the next day's classes on the chalkboard. At age 13, he enrolled in the Washington School of Cartooning's correspondence course.



Frank and Amanda Wright and family, circa 1926. Frank Jr. is at left. Next to him are sisters Nell and Myrtle (holding her son Earl), both of whom later worked in the business.

Frank attended Madison Heights High School, where he served on the yearbook (*The Monelison*) staff and probably received his first experience in layout.



Monelison Staff

LYNWOOD IRVIN.....*Editor-in-Chief*

MACON ANDREWS	HOGE SMITH, JR.
JOE BLANKS	MARTHA TURMAN
ROSA CASEY	KENNETH WATERS
CLYDE CLEMENTS	FRANK WRIGHT
MARGARET HOLT	MILDRED WRIGHT

Faculty Advisers

MISS WARREN	MISS WOOD
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Art Training (1931 – 1942)

After graduation in 1931, Frank attended Lynchburg College for two years, primarily to study art with Miss Georgia Morgan. While there, he served on the staff of the yearbook, the *Argonaut*. Final design work was done by the Lynchburg Engraving Company, so it is likely that Frank had his first interaction with Leonard Glover of the Engraving Company at that point. Although he was listed as a student only for the 1931-32 and 1932-33 school years, he was pictured with the staff of the *Argonaut* in the 1934 edition.



Georgia Morgan



ARGONAUT STAFF

EDITORIAL STAFF

WANDA LILLY.....*Editor-in-Chief*

EUGENE SCOTT.....*Associate Editor*

FRANK WRIGHT.....*Art Editor*

Sometime in 1933 or 1934 Frank went to work for S.O. Fisher Sporting Goods on Main Street. During his time there, probably in 1935, he sketched out a logo for Fisher's business on the back of a pad. It was lying on the counter when Eddie Deady came into the store. Deady spied the logo and asked who did it. When Frank said that he did, Deady offered him a job. Deady was a commercial artist and had a studio in a house on Bedford Avenue. His accounts included the Lynchburg Gas Company, Morton Manufacturing and a number of college annuals. It is hard to overestimate the profound effect that Eddie Deady had on the direction of Frank's life. It was probably when Frank first saw the Bedford Avenue studio that he realized that advertising art would be his life's work.



Deady

Later in 1935 Frank was approached by Morton Manufacturing to design a logo for their lip balm, Chapstick. Frank later said that he was paid \$15 for the design, which remained unchanged for almost 80 years. In 2014, Pfizer Consumer Healthcare hired Toronto artist Ian Brignell, to revise the logo. You can see the changes in this side-by-side comparison. The original is on the left.

ChapStick[®]

ChapStick

In 1936, Frank left for New York City to attend the Phoenix Art Institute for one year. (Phoenix was formed in 1925 by Lauros Phoenix and Franklin Booth. It merged in 1944 with the New York School of Applied Design for Women to form the New York Phoenix School of Design. In 1974 it merged with the Pratt Institute to form the Pratt-Phoenix School of Design.) While there, he studied under three well-known illustrators of the day, Lauros Phoenix, Walter Beach Humphrey and Franklin Booth. Booth is regarded by many as America's greatest pen-and-ink artist. His style closely resembled steel engravings. Norman Rockwell was an occasional guest lecturer.

At the end of his year in New York, Frank received offers from several New York agencies and an invitation to interview with the Disney company. The most attractive offer, however, came from Leonard Glover at the Lynchburg Engraving Company. At the Engraving Company Frank was responsible for numerous college yearbooks, as well as other Engraving Company clients. I have only a few examples of his work at this time. He designed a series of ads for a Lane Company campaign featuring the actress Deanna Durbin. Durbin, still a teenager in the late 1930's, had made several hit movies, including "Three Smart Girls" (1936) and "One Hundred Men and a Girl" (1937) that were credited with rescuing Universal Pictures from bankruptcy. By 1941, she was the highest paid actress in the world. Durbin came to Lynchburg at the height of her fame, probably in 1938, to pose for photos for the campaign.



Glover

See LANE'S *Deanna Durbin* AD IN LIFE On NEWS STANDS MAY 10th



THE LANE *Deanna Durbin* TIE-UP MEANS
Extra profit
AND
ADDITIONAL OUTFIT SALES
FOR YOU!

Keyed to smash all selling records on LANE chests and complete OUTFIT SALES!

It's backed BY DYNAMIC 4-COLOR NATIONAL ADVERTISING REACHING OVER 20,000,000.
 DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY! CAPITALIZE ON LANE'S *Deanna Durbin* NATIONAL ADVERTISING PROMOTION!!

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR FEATURED CHESTS AS NATIONALLY ADVERTISED

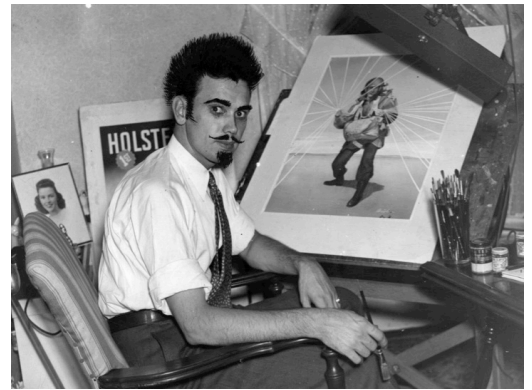
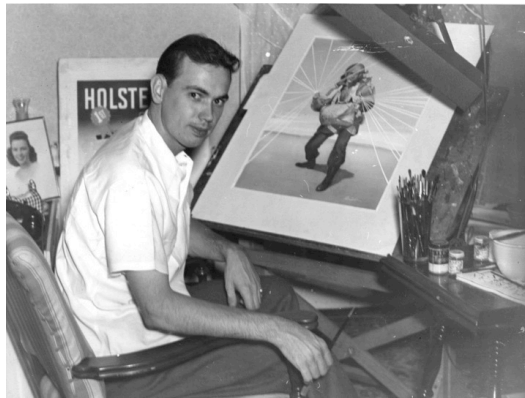
In 1939 Frank did the artwork for the cover of the program for the first football game played in Lynchburg's new City Stadium.



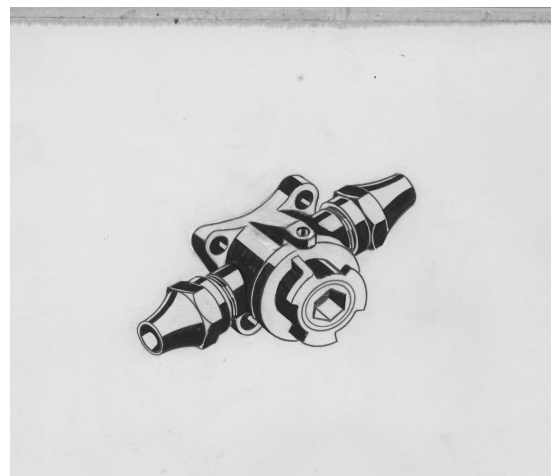
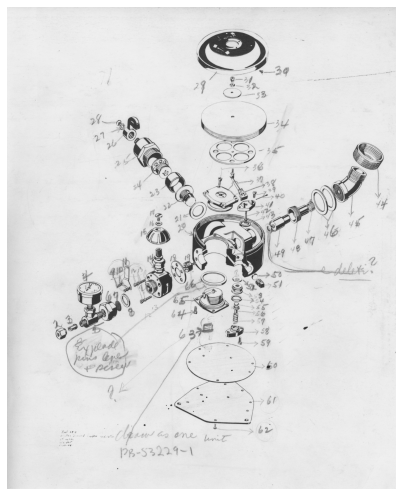
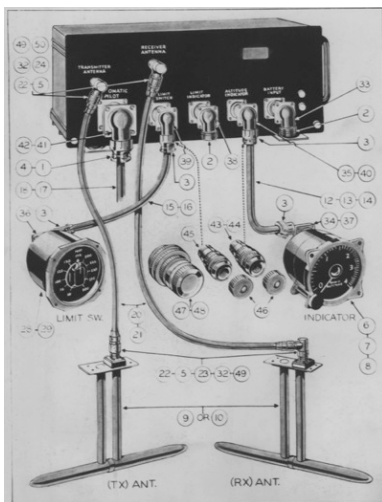
During his time at the Engraving Company, Frank met Julia Hughes at a YWCA dance. They courted for several years, finally marrying in January 1941. Julia became pregnant a month later and delivered the first of four sons, Frank III, in October 1941. Two months later the U.S. entered World War II. It became clear to Frank that he would need more income to support his family.



In early 1942 he was hired as assistant advertising manager by John Wilson at Craddock-Terry Shoe Corporation. I don't have an example of the work that he did for Craddock-Terry at that time, but during that year he entered a national poster design contest sponsored by the Holstein-Fresian Association of Brattleboro, Vermont and won first prize. The unretouched photo below was probably made to submit to various publications that publicized the contest. Frank's retouch of the photo is a typical example of his lively sense of humor.



During 1942, Frank was contacted by Cal Drummond, head of the Amherst County draft board, who told him that the Navy needed artists. In November of that year he took a train to Philadelphia, where he reported to Mr. Ben Minnen at the Naval Aviation Supply Depot. For most of the next year he drew exploded views of aviation equipment. He became so ill that he



was unable to work and was sent back to Lynchburg, probably in late 1943. In retrospect, his illness was probably severe depression, for which there was no medical treatment at the time. He remained on the Navy payroll until August 1944.

Business Growth 1944 – 1960

By mid-1944, Frank was on the mend and began taking in work, sent to him by Mr. Glover at the Engraving Company and by Mr. Deady, his friend and mentor. By this time, Deady had moved to Roanoke and was art director for the advertising firm, Houck and Company. By late 1944 Frank could not accommodate the volume of work in his house, so he rented space in the Law Building on Main Street. (The Law Building, built in 1891, was arguably Lynchburg’s first skyscraper. It stood between Eighth and Ninth Streets at the present location of the Parlor Lofts.) In addition to Glover and Deady, early customers included the Lynchburg National Bank & Trust Company, the Lynchburg Gas Company and the Lane Company. Work from this period included a War Bond ad for which he posed his son, Frank III,

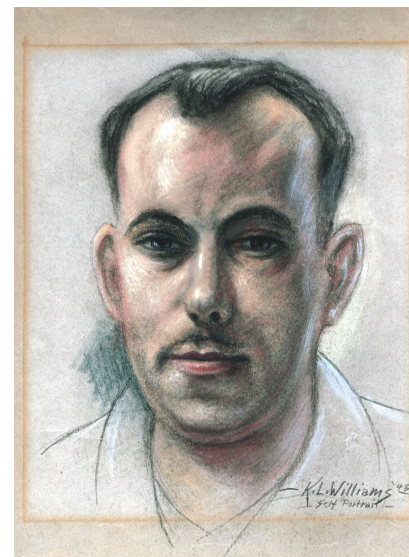


and a large display in the middle of Ninth Street to promote the 7th War Loan subscription that was launched in May 1945, just after V-E Day.

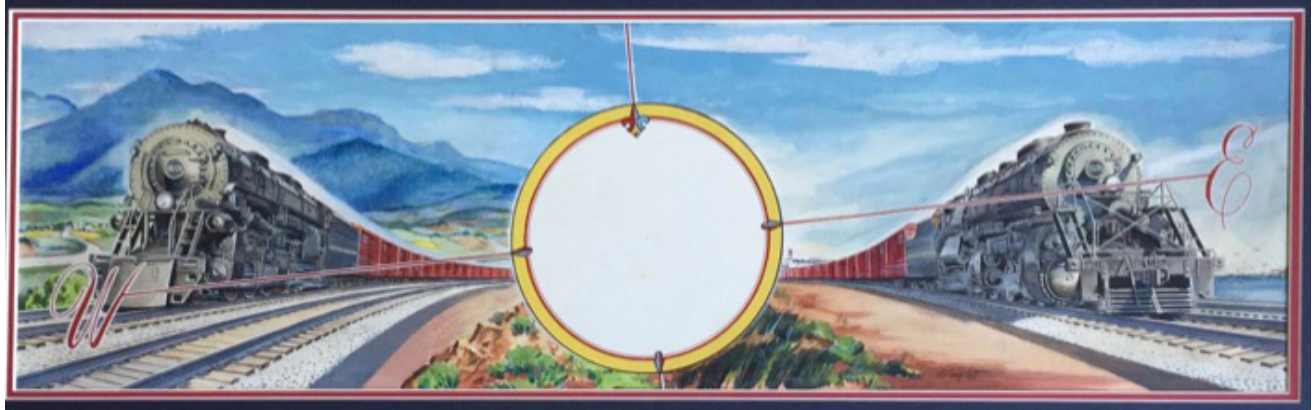


Sometime in 1945, Mr. Kenneth Williams, a 17-year veteran of the Engraving Company, walked into Frank's office and announced that he had quit. Frank asked him what he planned to do and Williams responded, "I'm coming to work with you." Thus was born a partnership, Wright & Williams Studio. Health issues eventually forced Williams to work from home, probably in 1954, but the company remained Wright & Williams Studio until the early 1960's, when it

became Frank Wright Studio. (Kenneth Williams died in June 1965.)



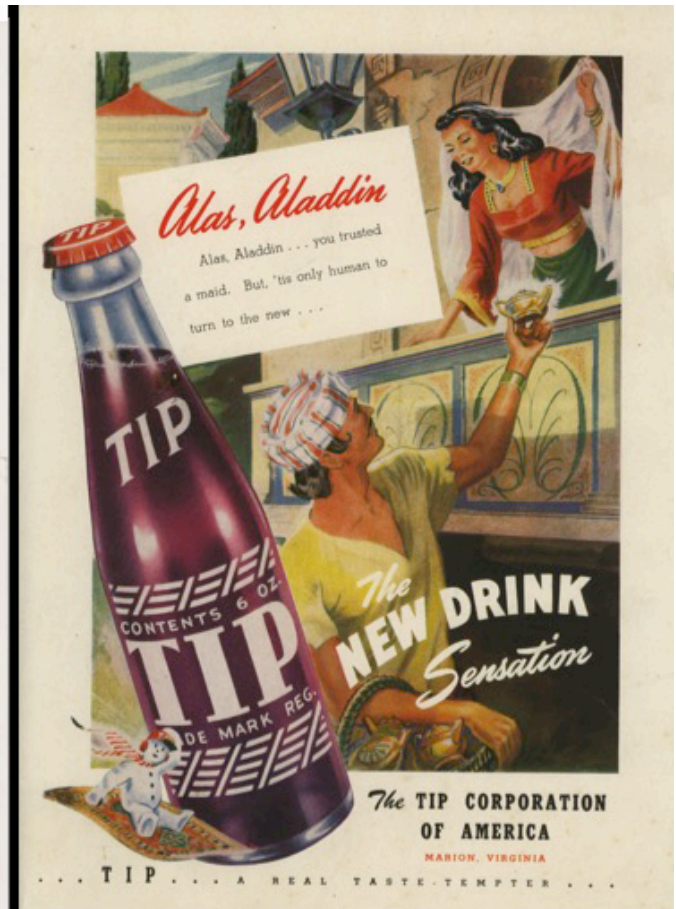
For the first two years in business, Frank, like most Americans, did not have a car. He serviced clients by walking to their places of business or using the city buses. In 1946 he was able to buy a used Chevrolet. Business was good. He and Julia were able to build a modest house on Plymouth Place in 1947 and bought a new Oldsmobile in 1948. He was still supplementing local work with work from Eddie Deady at Houck and Company. This watercolor for the Norfolk & Western Railroad, a Houck client, was done for a brochure.



In 1946 his work for Houck took him to the Massengill Company in Bristol, Virginia. While there, he saw children playing with a product that allowed them to blow bubbles. He brought some home and showed it Nat Gorchoff, chief chemist at Morton Manufacturing, hoping to get in on the ground floor with a new product. The next day he was met at his office by Gorchoff and Marvin Bryant. They asked him to design a label for a new product to be called Bubble-O. According to Frank, they eventually sold boxcar loads of the stuff, mainly through the Kresge stores. At some point, Bryant formed another company, the Virginia Chemical Corporation, to make it. I was unable to find a Bubble-O label, but I found a 1954 variation from the same company.



The Tip Bottling Company was founded in 1939 by a consortium of Virginia and North Carolina bottlers, primarily to market a grape soda to compete with Grapette. Frank produced this ad for Tip and may have produced others. The photos were posed in his parents' house in Madison Heights and show his nephew, Dick Wright, his sister Nell on the stairs, and neighbor Lucille Hensley, later Frank's sister-in-law.



By early 1948, the business had outgrown the space available in the Law Building, so Wright & Williams moved up the street to the third floor of the Patterson Drug Building at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets. By 1952 the business employed three artists in addition to Wright and Williams: Berkley Carwile, Tyler Burdick and Bill Marshall. These photos (next page) show the studio at about that time.

The Patterson Drug building stood at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets. The site is now occupied by a small parking lot adjacent to the Holiday Inn Select Hotel. The building shared an alley with the YWCA.





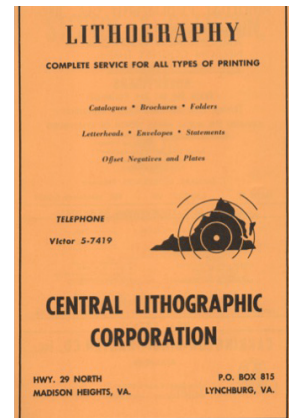
Left: Tyler Burdick and model with a Lane cedar chest. Right: Carwile, Marshall and Burdick at work in the Seventh & Main Street studio, 1953

Despite leasing additional space in the Patterson Drug Building, it became clear that if the business were to meet the demand for its services, it would have to move. Frank engaged the services of architect Garland Gay to design a building in Madison Heights that would meet the specific needs of an advertising art studio: large, north-facing windows to provide artists with ample natural light, and a lower level to accommodate expansion or related businesses. Wright & Williams moved into its new building in January 1956.





The business continued to grow. By 1958 it employed eight artists, a number that would remain stable for the next 20 years. In 1958 Frank became a partner in Central Lithographic Corporation, which had been founded in 1955 by Ed Coleman and brothers Robert and Charles Stevens. The company acquired a new press and moved operations to the lower level of the Madison Heights building. (Central Litho has changed hands several times since then and is currently Clarke, Inc. on Fort Avenue.) This move allowed Frank to offer clients a turnkey service, everything from the ideas and original sketches to the final printed product.



Frank’s business model was simple and effective. It was to provide local clients with the same quality they could get at a big city agency, but faster and cheaper. Still, customers always pushed for lower prices. A 1961 letter from Everett Bond, then president of the Chapstick Company, and Frank’s response, illustrates this tension:

BOND: “...we must keep the costs of these sheets as low as possible; otherwise...it will be better for us to leave the matter of finishing these in the hands of the agency in New York.”
 FRANK: “I am making every attempt to keep the costs down and at the same time give you comparable quality with New York...In order to give you very fast delivery sometimes it becomes necessary to work overtime and of course this reflects in our charges as I have to pay the artists an overtime rate.”

Most customers were happy, attested to by many letters in Frank’s correspondence file. Some, like John Boyd at Fidelity Bank, actually told him that he charged too little and suggested that he submit invoices with higher and more realistic charges. But not all customers were happy. The following exchange of four letters is the best example I found. Frank submitted a rough sketch (below) at the request of an agent, John Bunch, acting for a client, Anthony Golf. Golf misunderstood the rough sketch for final artwork.



The Armorers Guild of Toledo, Spain
INCORPORATED

July 18, 1960

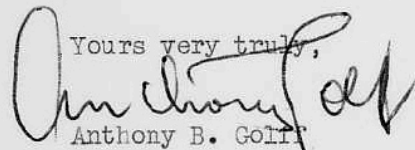
Mr. Frank B. Wright Jr.
Box 832, Lynchburg, Va.

Dear Mr. Wright:

I have just returned from the New York and The Chicago International Fairs after an absence of almost four months. I find your sketch and your correspondence awaiting me.

I thank you for your interest in my behalf and for helping John out in his dilemma. Unfortunately, the sketch you prepared was indeed a bit premature because we began by attempting to put together some rough pencil sketches of the escutcheon and it was my intention to take these to the client for approval before we entered any final renderings. You see, the crest you have prepared is heraldicry wrong, that is why we needed the pencil roughs first. The error is that an Imperial Eagle is supposed to hold an escutcheon to its breast with the double heads showing above the escutcheon and the wings to the right and left, and the tail feathers below the escutcheon. The type of eagle you have drawn just doesn't exist in heraldry.

I am returning the drawing inasmuch as it is of absolutely no value to our program, nevertheless, I reiterate my thanks and appreciation.

Yours very truly,

Anthony B. Golff

July 21, 1960

Mr. Anthony Golff
P.O. Box 434
McLean, Virginia

Dear Mr. Golff:

In answer to your letter, the sketch we submitted to you was done in accordance with explicit instructions from John Bunch, the Double-Headed Eagle was copied from a photostat made (by us) from an authentic book on Heraldry loaned from the local library.

As we do not submit sketches on speculation we shall expect payment of our invoice as rendered.

Very truly yours,

Frank B. Wright, Jr.

July 23, 1960

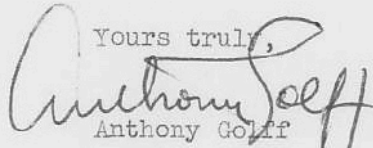
Mr. Frank Wright,
Lynchburg, Va.

Dear Mr. Wright:

I don't doubt that you obtained a photostat from the public library of an Imperial Double Headed Eagle but the eagle does not sit on top of a crest in Heraldry and it never has. Enclosed is a print of an authentic Imperial Eagle for your edification. Mr. Bunch could not have instructed you to do a finished rendering without first having obtained approval of a rough; this is standard practice in the trade and you know it. Mr. Bunch is not an idiot.

Your sketch is unacceptable to me inasmuch as it is not what I asked of Mr. Bunch nor did I order it from you. If you are willing to do the job from the beginning and do it properly I shall then further discuss it with you, otherwise you can forget it.

Yours truly,


Anthony Golff

July 26, 1960

Mr. Anthony Golf
P. O. Box 434
McLean, Virginia

Dear Mr. Golf:

I am not a liar. Mr. Bunch did instruct me, with several rough sketches, on the type of eagle we were to look for, the type of eagle we found was almost exactly the type Mr. Bunch gave me in a rough pencil sketch. Granted, it is not what you had in mind.

I admit my ignorance of Heraldry, however, I do know something of art work. For your edification, the finished rendering you refer to in your letter, is a rough sketch and was submitted to you for suggested changes, etc. It is not a finished rendering.

I agree, Mr. Bunch is not an idiot - you are.

Very truly yours,

Frank B. Wright, Jr.

Peak Years 1960 – 1985

The peak years for Frank Wright Studio were between 1960 and 1980. During this time major regional businesses such as Craddock-Terry and Lane Furniture had not yet been impacted by foreign competition and remained based here. Other clients were added: First Colony Life Insurance, the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges, Southern Flavoring and its subsidiary, The Holiday Company, and new subsidiaries of Morton Manufacturing, such as Frances Denney cosmetics.

A major bump in the road occurred in 1964, when three of his best artists, Ryland Meade, Bill Marshall and Tyler Burdick, left to form their own agency, Advertising Art Services. Despite some initial rancor, Frank remained on good terms with these men.

In its peak years, the studio turned out an immense amount of work. Overtime work was frequent and Frank worked most Saturdays and Sundays. Some artists worked for a few years and moved on, but there were a stalwart few who remained with the company for more than 20 years and I would like to mention them. As you will see, Frank Wright Studio was very much a family business.



Barbara Harding had been Frank's neighbor on Plymouth Place. She occupied the rear desk for decades. The newspaper caption misstated her name.

Mrs. Kathryn Amason was particularly adept at fashion figures and was also an exceptionally good pen-and-ink artist. Her daughter, Lynn Cunningham, is Hal Craddock's partner in the architectural firm Craddock-Cunningham. Among their projects was the Craddock-Terry Hotel, which may explain why some of Ms. Amason's Craddock-Terry work graces the hotel.



Frank III developed excellent manual skills building Soapbox Derby cars and model airplanes. After a short career in teaching, our father hired him in the mid-1960's to cut mats and do paste-ups, so as to free up his artists to create art. In this pre-computer world, getting clean type in the right font, at the right size and artfully laid out was difficult and expensive. Frank had several sources but working with typographers meant many trips back and forth to deliver and pick up work. In the mid-1970s, Frank and Frank III set up AlphaGraphics on the lower level of the building. Frank III became an expert typographer. The name of the company was later changed to WrightType when a Texas company named AlphaGraphics opened franchises in Virginia.



Kenneth, Frank and Julia's third son, was awarded a degree in Fine Arts by the University of South Carolina in 1972 and then went to work at Frank Wright Studio. He was there for 20 years before moving, with Frank's blessing, to the newly resurrected Craddock-Terry to produce their Massey's Shoe catalogue. Kenny continues to work as a commercial artist.

Frank's older sister, Nell, was the company's part-time bookkeeper for two decades before 1977, when she left the G. Stalling Tobacco Company to be Frank Wright Studio's full time receptionist, secretary and bookkeeper. Their sister Myrtle was on the Studio payroll for many years, though as far as I can tell, her contributions consisted of frequently feeding Frank lunch at her Madison Heights home and catering the annual company Christmas luncheon.



Left: Frank and sister, Nell, circa 1984. Right: Nell Wright and sister, Myrtle Wright White

Gene Burnett did much of the photography used in the Studio's work. After being on the payroll for about 15 years, he and Frank set up a separate company, Foto, Inc. in 1975. I don't think there was any change in the physical arrangement. Gene continued to do his work in a studio on the lower level of the building. Gene's wife, Faye, was a commercial artist and worked for the Studio for a number of years.



Gene and Faye Burnett



Frank Wright Studio turned out a full range of advertising art services. They designed billboards and constructed trade show displays, for which I have no examples. They did hundreds of newspaper and magazine ads that ran in national publications.

Cute Tricks
FOR SLICK CHICKS . . .
You'll love these cute tricks for slick chicks. Patterned carefree and neat for gals who use their heads about their feet.

K-YAKS
"DESIGNED WITH AN ACCENT ON TOWN!"

Sorry, we can't tell you where, but we'll tell you where.

METROPOLITAN SHOE COMPANY, Division of Crockett-Terry Shoe Co., Lynchburg, Va.

This Christmas
IF YOU COULD ONLY READ MY HEART...
You'd Give me the Gift that symbolizes our love!

LANE CEDAR CHEST
Shouldn't modern art be dedicated to people for whom art is a gift? **\$59.95**

AS ADVERTISED IN LIFE
\$49.95

If there is someone "extra special" handling your gift list this Christmas—a Lane Cedar Chest will carry your message to her heart as no other gift can! And it's practical, too, because a Lane almost magically accumulates a host of other lovely gifts—fine linens, blankets, towels and many other things that someday will mean more to you than anything else!

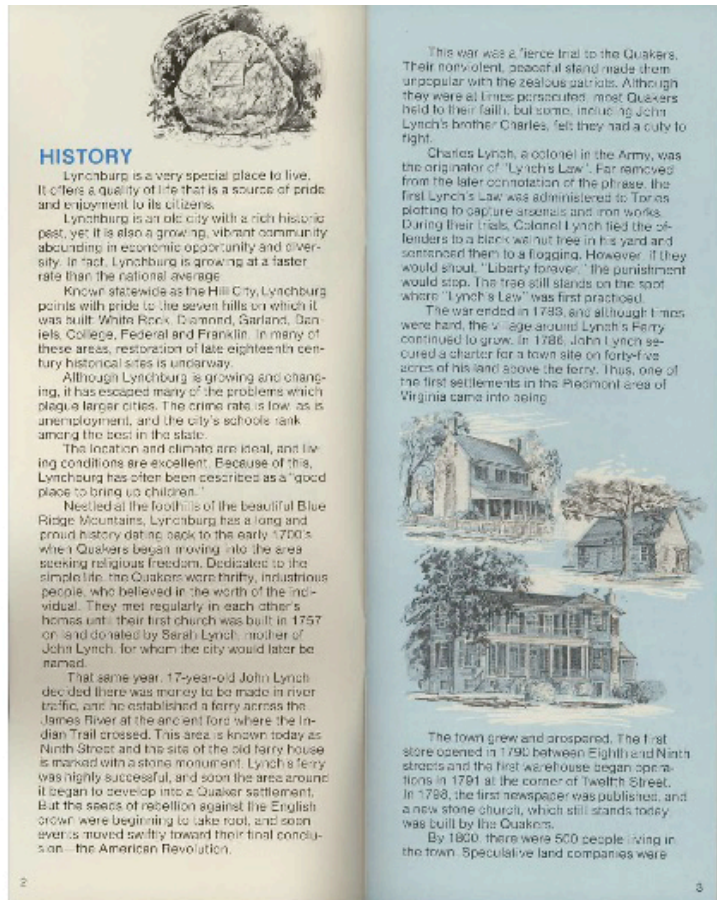
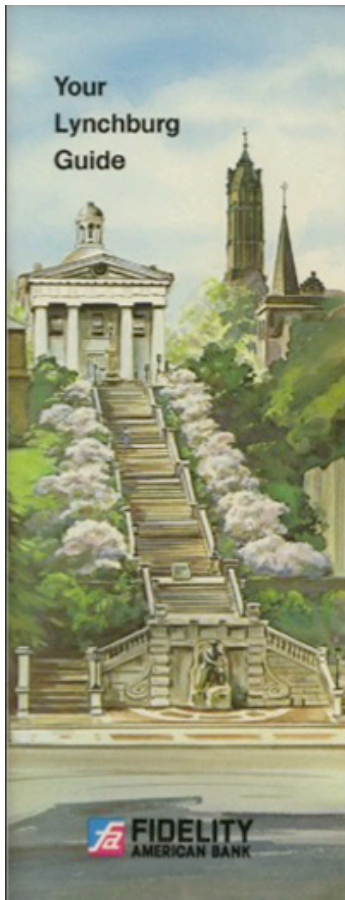
The Perfect Gift for:
BROTHER SAUVAGES WIFE
MOTHER SISTER

ONE GARMENT SAVED PAYS FOR A LANE!

Complete 144. Complete outfit in white-ivory **\$79.95**
Broom closet, white, complete outfit in white-ivory **\$69.95**
Popular Lane model in white-ivory **\$79.95**

LANE NEWSPAPER MAT No. 2-205
4 col. x 12 1/2"

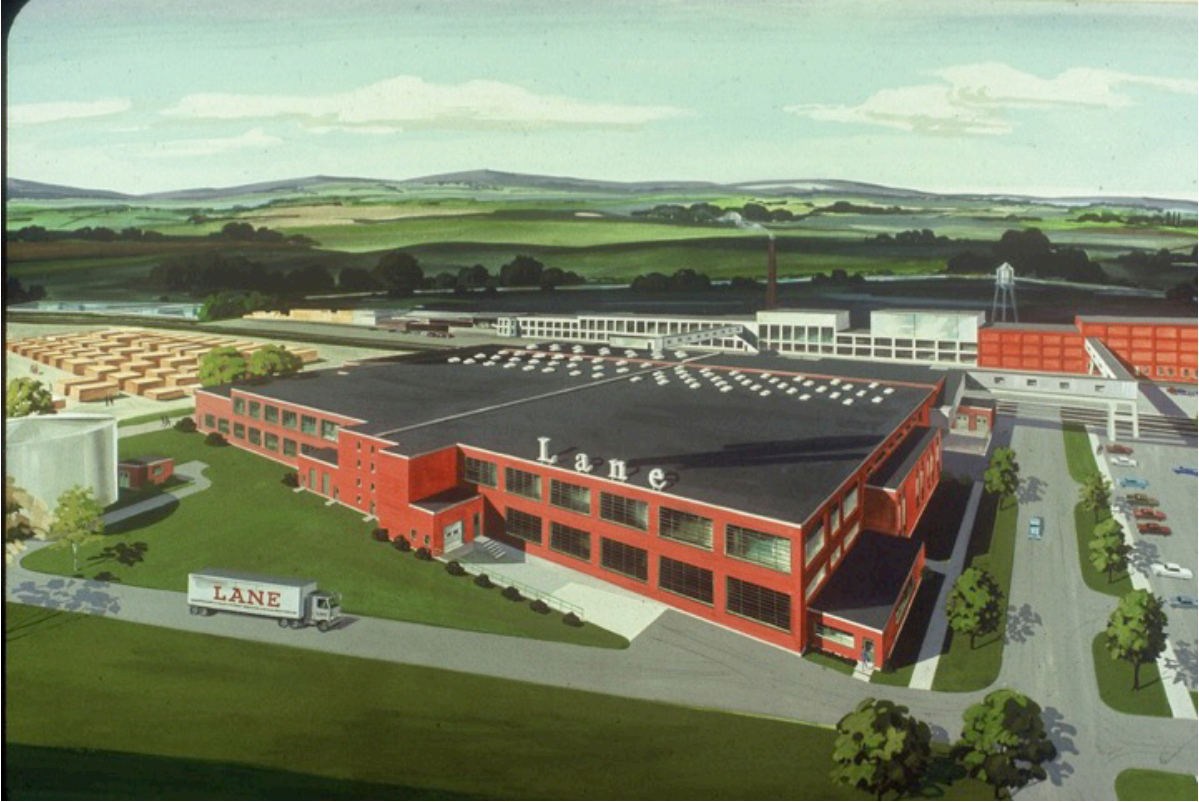
Brochures and booklets, such as this Guide to Lynchburg produced for Fidelity Bank, often featured original art. The cover watercolor may have been Frank's; the drawings of Lynchburg buildings inside certainly were his.



The studio produced hundreds of furniture drawings for Lane Furniture. Like 99% of commercial art, none of it was signed, so I don't know who in the studio did this piece.



Frank did a large number of architectural renderings. Before the age of computer-assisted design, architects provided the artist with elevation drawings and the color scheme and it was up to the artist to render the building in three dimensions in the landscape.



One of the most unusual renderings he did was this one for the Appomattox River Water Authority, probably in 1965, to show the Brasfield Dam and Chesdin Reservoir, and the proposed water treatment plant. (Construction was completed in late 1967 and currently provides water to Chesterfield, Dinwiddie and Prince George Counties and the cities of Petersburg and Colonial Heights.)

Special Invitation



Craddock-Terry & Co.

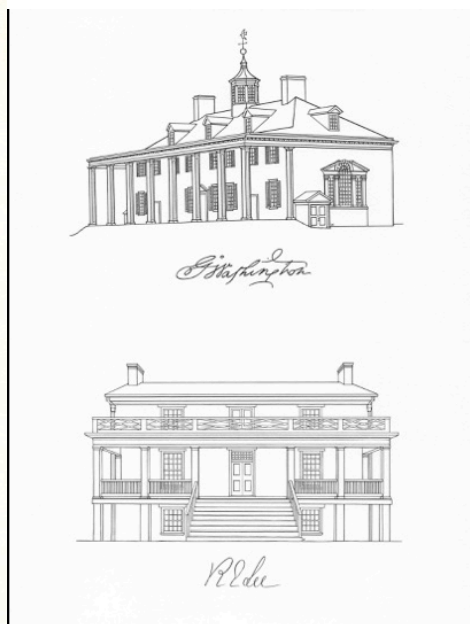
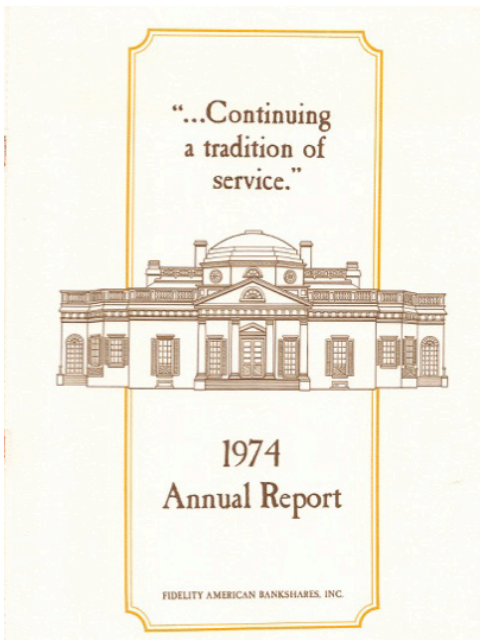
ANNOUNCES THE GRAND OPENING OF ITS NEW

 **Masseys Super SHOES**

601 Twelfth Street • Lynchburg, Virginia

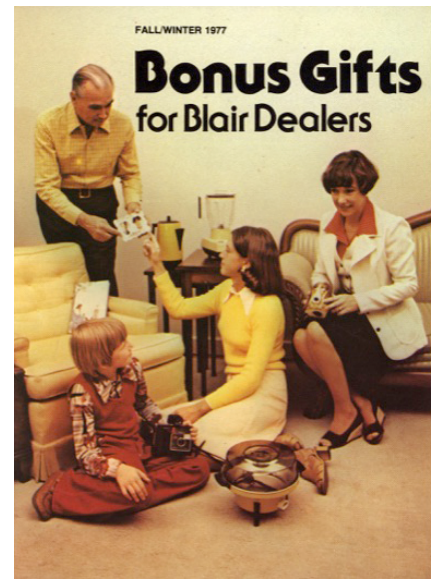
This brochure announcing the opening of the Masseys Shoe store included Frank's drawing of the store.

The studio produced annual reports for the Gas Company, First Colony Life and Fidelity Bank, and probably other businesses. This 1974 report for Fidelity Bank was designed to distract shareholders from the bank's poor financial showing that year. It had a removable outer cover, featuring on the inside Frank's line drawings of four historic Virginia buildings, suitable for framing. The report also included a several full-page drawings by Mrs. Amason.



The studio produced hundreds of small catalogues over the years for Blair Products and the Holiday Company. The products would have been photographed by Gene Burnett. Frank often used family members as models. In this catalogue there was a photo of my son, Adam, playing

with a remote control car. Frank even used himself several times, as in this Blair catalogue cover.



In the 1980s and early '90s, Frank conceived the ideas and produced the art for scores of two-year planner covers. These were sold in the millions by The Holiday Company in Bedford through their fund-raising catalogues. This catalogue included four covers by Frank.

I also include here a sampling of other covers. You can see that for the “Playtime at the Firehouse” cover he used the Grace Street firehouse as a model. The only piece of this art in the family’s possession is “Hope”, which was done shortly before the birth of my daughter, Hope, in 1995. At my request, Frank secured the artwork, though he had to buy it back.



Frank designed the Community Market sign (next page) when the City Market was renovated in the mid-1980s. The original sign was painted by one of his employees as was a second one when the first one wore out. When it came time for a third replacement, in 1998, Frank, who by then had closed his studio, agreed to paint it. He had painted window murals for Phillips Brothers in his youth, but as far as I know this was his only other sign-painting experience.



If any work could be considered the Studio's bread-and-butter, it was drawing shoes for Craddock-Terry. Shoe drawings could show the details of construction better than photographs, and were used in dealer catalogues, newspaper ads and in other ways. Artists could also elongate and narrow the shoe, rendering it more appealing.

Over his career Frank turned out dozens of logos. Included here are three for his own business.



The Retail Merchants logo (next page) was done late in his career.



He designed the three most recent logos for the City of Lynchburg. The current one began as our Bicentennial logo in 1986 and was afterward adopted as the city logo. Logo design is an iterative process that begins with a conversation between the artist and client. Based on the message the client wishes to convey, the artist generates multiple ideas. One is chosen and then refined through multiple stages. Here are just two of the stages on the way to the logo that eventually graced my coffee mug.

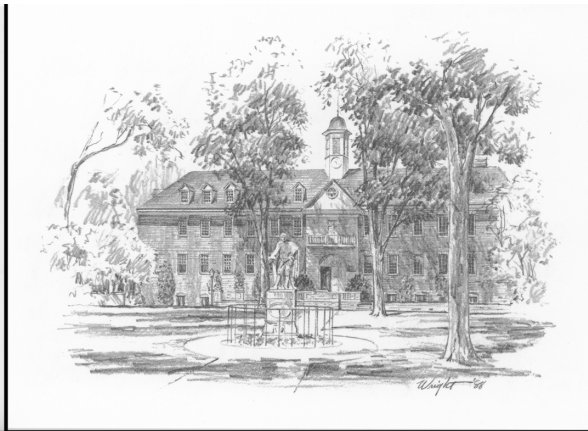


In 1962 Frank did this drawing of the new house he and Julia had built at the end of Manton Drive. He used it on their Christmas card that year and unwittingly, I think, launched a second career doing building drawings. Many Lynchburgers wanted drawings of their houses. He drew historic buildings for various publications, including the Fidelity Bank booklet I showed earlier.





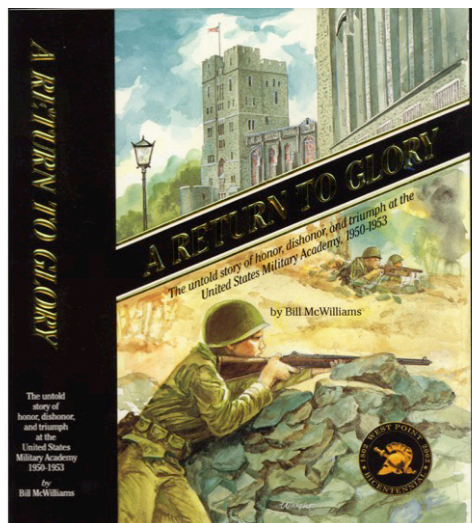
117 Oakwood Place, Lynchburg, Va. 24503



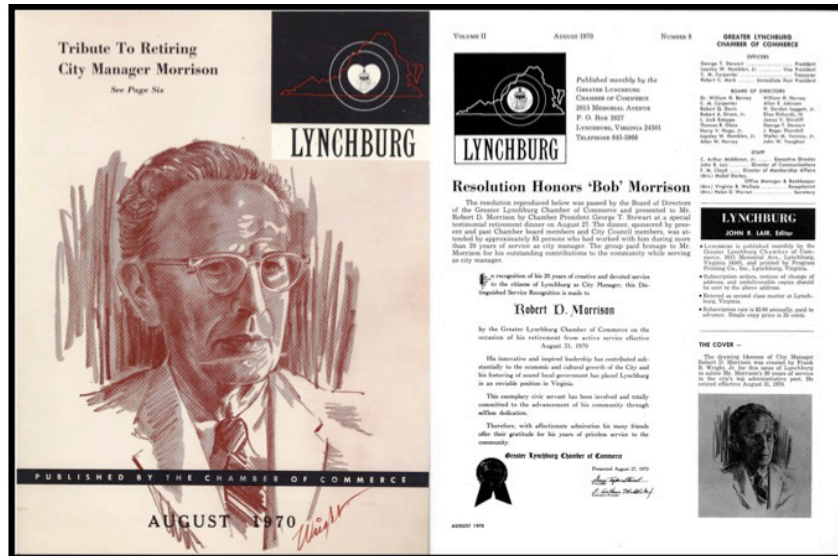
In 1983 he was commissioned to produce a piece of art to hang behind the reception desk of the new Radisson Hotel, then under construction on Main Street. He designed a triptych. The large center panel featured his drawings of the main buildings at all five local institutions of higher learning; the two square end panels featured his drawings of Poplar Forest and Point of Honor. The drawings were silkscreened onto the back of Plexiglas panels. He then applied gold leaf to the panels. This triptych was removed when the lobby was redecorated by the Holiday Inn in 1993. It now hangs on the wall outside of the city manager's office in City Hall.



Frank did this book cover for Warwick House.



He did the layout for several magazines, including some issues of the Iron Worker, the magazine of the National Naval Aviation Museum and the Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce magazine, *Lynchburg*, for which he did this pencil portrait of city manager Robert Morrison.



It should be pointed out that all of this work was done in a time before desktop computing. Artwork was produced on a board, layout and pre-press work was a mechanical process requiring X-acto knives and rubber cement. Sketches and layouts were carried back and forth to the client in a car to get approval at each stage of the process.

Business Decline 1985 – 1996

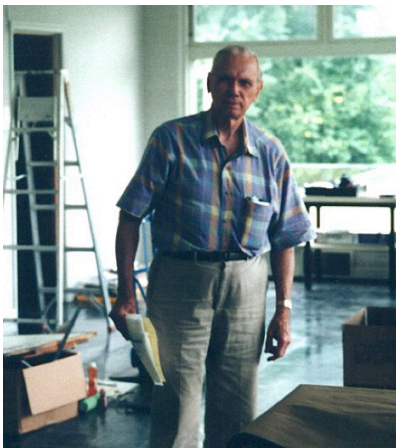
Eventually, in the 1980's, the studio began to lose work and artists. This was a gradual process over a 15-year period, brought on by two major developments. The first was a decline in the customer base. The loss of major clients, Craddock-Terry and Lane furniture, both in 1987, was a major blow. Fidelity Bank had been acquired by Wells Fargo. Morton Manufacturing had merged with A. H. Robins. First Colony got so large that it established its own in-house advertising department under Frank Land. Lynchburg Gas had been acquired by Columbia Gas in Ohio.

There were other businesses in town, of course, and probably enough of them, in aggregate, to sustain a large commercial art studio, but the second development was probably of more far-reaching consequence. That was the arrival in 1984 of the Macintosh computer, with its graphical user interface, and the subsequent rapid maturation of desktop publishing technology over the next ten years. This development allowed persons with limited skills and budgets to produce reasonably sophisticated posters, brochures and other publications that previously required the services of a commercial artist. It also democratized the process, allowing artists anywhere in the world to serve clients anywhere in the world, with rapid turnaround that did not include multiple trips up and down the Lynchburg Expressway. Artists no longer had to only price themselves under New York agencies, they had to price themselves under each other.

While the introduction of desktop computing made life more difficult for small and medium-sized agencies such as Frank Wright Studio, it also provided artists with advantages. Most of the mechanical pre-print processes were replaced by computerized, digital ones, shrinking the cost

and production time. The entire world of fonts, and in an infinite array of sizes, became available; any one could be had for a few dollars and the seconds it took to download it. Often overlooked is the artist's need for images from which to create a specific piece of art. Over about 70 years Frank assembled a morgue of hundreds of thousands of illustrations and photographs, clipped from magazines, books and other sources, and carefully filed by subject heading. At the end of his career his morgue filled four five-drawer legal file cabinets. On top of one cabinet was a ring binder containing the index so, for example, if he needed to illustrate an antique fire truck racing to a fire, he could find an illustration in his file to work from. Several pages from his index illustrate the extent of his subject headings. Now, Google images offers instant access to virtually limitless images of any subject.

98. HEADS-WOMENS, GIRLS	151. TEEN-AGERS (see also 610)	210. FAMOUS PEOPLE & EVENTS-PAST	264. STENOGRAPHERS, SECRETARIES, OFFICE WORKERS
99. HEADS-GROUPS & BACK VIEW, SIDE VIEW	152. YOUNG MEN & WOMEN (Couples)	211. FAMOUS PEOPLE & EVENTS-PRESENT	265. PREACHERS, PRIESTS, NUNS, RELIGIOUS SCENES, CHURCH SCENES (see also 513)
100. EYES, EARS, NOSES, MOUTHS	153. GENERAL MIDDLE AGE	212. FITTITIOUS, CAVALIERS	266. ARTISTS, SCULPTORS, DRAFTSMEN
101. ODD FIGURE POSITIONS (Running, Stooping, etc.)	154. OLD AGE (see also 107)	213.	267. SURVEYORS, ENGINEERS
102. SKULL, SKELETON	155. HUSBAND & WIFE	214.	268. MECHANICS, MACHINISTS
103. MEN & WOMEN- BACK VIEW	156. CHILD CARE	SPORTS	
104. BEARDS, HAIR STYLES	157. BOY & DOG	220. FOOTBALL	270. TRAINMEN, ENGINEERS, CONDUCTORS PORTERS
105. PREHISTORIC FIGURES	158. BOYS FISHING	221. BASEBALL	271. STOREKEEPERS, CLERKS, MERCHANTS
106. MISC. FIGURES-MALE & FEMALE	159. MISC. ACTIVITY	222. BASKETBALL	272. WAITERS, WAITRESSES, BUTLERS BARTENDERS
107. HEADS-OLD PEOPLE	160. FATHER & SON	223. VOLLEYBALL	273. GROCERS, BUTCHERS
108.	161.	224. HAND-BALL	274. TRUCK DRIVERS
109.	162.	225. BOXING	275. FARMERS, DAIRYMEN, AGRICULTURAL SCENES (Farm eqpt., Bldgs, etc.)
110.	163.	226. WRESTLING	276. MAIL CARRIERS, POSTAL WORKERS
111.	164.	227. BOWLING	277. FIREMEN AND EQUIPMENT (Also early equipment)
112.	ACTIVITY		
113.	170. LOVE SCENES (see also 120)	228. GOLF	278. POLICEMEN, LAW ENFORCEMENT
114.	171. SMALL GROUPS	229. TENNIS, PING PONG	279. NEWSBOYS
115.	172. CROWDS	230. HOCKEY, (Ice & Field)	280. CARPENTERS & CONSTRUCTION
EXPRESSION			
120. ROMANTIC SCENES, KISSING	173. FIGHTS & BRAWLS	231. FENCING	281. HOUSE PAINTERS
121. GRIEF, PAIN, DEJECTION	174. OUTINGS, PICNICS, BEACH SCENES COOK-OUTS	232. TRACK	282. LUMBERING, WOODSMEN
122. ANGER, HATRED, DISAPPROVAL	175. PARTIES, NIGHT CLUB SCENES DINNER PARTIES	233. SWIMMING, DIVING	283. CHEFS, BAKERS
123. HAUGHTY, SNOBBISH	176. DANCING, BALLET, FOLK DANCING	234. BOATING (Sailing, Rowing, etc.)	284. BARBERS, HAIRDRESSERS
124. FEAR, COWARDICE	177. WEDDINGS, BRIDES (see also 629)	235. WATER SKIING	285. BUSINESS MEN, BUSINESS MEETINGS
125. DOUBT, WORRY	178. HOME ENTERTAINMENT (Playing cards, Home movies, etc.), T.V.	236. ARCHERY	286. SCIENTISTS, CHEMISTS, LAB SCENES
126. AWE, SURPRISE, EXCITEMENT	179. EATING, DRINKING	237. HIKING, MOUNTAIN CLIMBING	287. PHOTOGRAPHERS
127. ARGUMENTS	180. SLEEPING, RECLINING	238. CAMPING	288. TELEPHONE WORKERS, LINESMEN, EQUIPMENT
128. HAPPINESS, PLEASURE	181. GARDENING, YARD CARE	239. RIDING & RACING (Horse)	289. TELEPHONE OPERATORS, SWITCH-BOARD
129. AMUSEMENT, LAUGHTER	182. DRESSING, MAKE-UP, BATHING (Women)	240. POLO, JOCKEYS	290. BELL BOYS, MAIDS, DOORMEN
130. CONCENTRATION, DEEP THOUGHT	183. DRESSING, BATHING, SHAVING (Men)	241. BILLIARDS, POOL	291. DEEP SEA DIVERS
131. MISC. EXPRESSION	184. Sewing, KNITTING	242. SKATING (Ice, Roller), SLEDDING	292. SERVICE STATION SCENES & WORKERS
132.	185. CONCERNING HEALTH	243. SKIING	293. BLACKSMITHS & WELDERS
133.	186. EXERCISING, WALKING	244. HUNTING (Also Big Game Hunting)	294. COMMON LABORERS
134.	187. FOOD PREPARATION	245. FISHING	295. MINERS & PROSPECTORS
135.	188. FOOD SERVING (Meals, etc.)	246. TRAPPING	296. FACTORY WORKERS (Steel Mill, Foundry Scenes, Heavy Construction)
136.	189. HOUSE CLEANING, DISH WASHING, ETC	247. SKEET & TRAPSHOOTING	297. PRINTERS
137.	190. LAUNDERING, IRONING	248. BICYCLE & MOTORCYCLE RIDING	298. ROAD CONSTRUCTION & EQUIPMENT
138.	191. MARKETING, SHOPPING	249. COCK FIGHTING	299. ACTORS, ACTRESSES, MOVIE-TV EQUIPMENT, STAGE SHOWS, MINSTREL SCENES, SIDE SHOW, MERRY-GO-ROUND
139.	192. PHONING, SINGING	250. SCUBA DIVING, SKIN DIVING	300. CIRCUS PEOPLE, CLOWNS, CARNIVAL SCENES, SIDE SHOW, MERRY-GO-ROUND
FAMILY			
145. FAMILY GROUPS	193. PARADES	251. BULL FIGHTING	301. RADIO ANNOUNCERS, M. C's.
146. DOMESTIC SCENES	194. BARS, RESTAURANTS, SODA FOUNTAIN	252. AUTO RACING	302. MUSICIANS, ENTERTAINERS, CONCERTS
147. BABIES, CHILDREN TO TEN YEARS	195. VOTING	253. MISC. SPORTS (Croquet, Soccer, etc.- Also Arenas)	
148. CHILDREN INDOORS	196. WALKING	254. SURF RIDING	
149. CHILDREN OUTDOORS-AT PLAY	197.	255. RUNNING & JOGGING	
150. CHILDREN AT SCHOOL	198.	TRADES & PROFESSIONS	
	199.	260. DOCTORS, HOSPITAL SCENES	
	200.	261. NURSES	
	201.	262. DENTISTS	
		263. LAWYERS, JUDGES, COURTROOM SCENES	



After Kenny's departure from the company in 1992, Frank worked mostly alone, occasionally contracting with a former employee for help on a particular project. He moved out of the Madison Heights studio in 1996, discarding what he would not need and moving the rest to the spacious basement of his house on Manton Drive, where he continued to serve a few clients for several more years.

*Left: Last day in the Madison Heights studio
Next page: At work in his basement studio.*

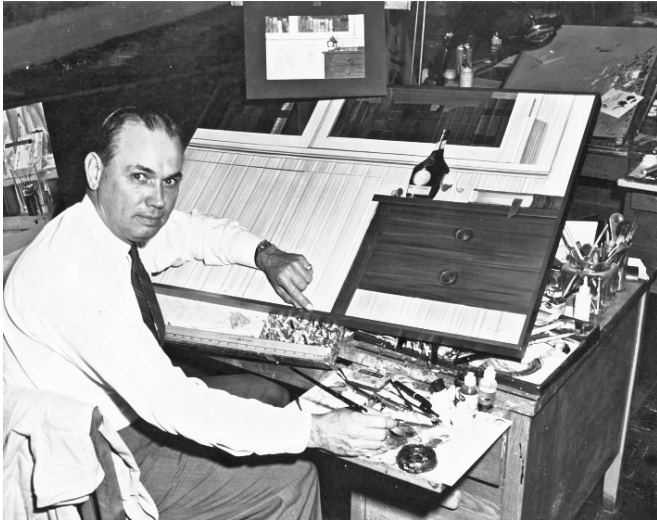


One such client was Randy Parr, owner of Lynchburg Restoration, Inc., who asked him in 1998 to draw the commercial building at Ninth and Jefferson Streets, soon to be the Amazement Square Children’s Museum. Randy was so taken with the result that over the next seven years he commissioned another 49 drawings of buildings he had worked on. These building drawings kept Frank in business until he was 92.



Nine of the 50 drawings commissioned by Randy Parr.

Frank found ways to contribute to the community through his art. I found letters in his files from the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, CVCC, Sheltered Workshop and other organizations thanking him for his donation of advertising services. He served on the boards of the Lynchburg Symphony, the Fine Arts Center and the Salvation Army, and was on advisory committees at CVCC and later the Academy of Music.



was a source of pride and validation. Frank later submitted several entries to the National Park Service's annual fine art contest.

Ninety-nine percent of the work that commercial artists do is unsigned and unrecognized, except by the client who pays for it. I suspect that commercial artists, being human, desire to be recognized for their talent and their efforts. In addition to the aforementioned Holstein-Fresian Association contest in 1942, Frank entered several other fine art contests. In 1969, he was one of 35 finalists in the annual Benedictine Art Awards. The contest's signature requirement was that the work include an image of the distinctive Benedictine Liqueur bottle. Having his painting chosen from over 2000 submissions



He was honored with the Silver Medal Award by the Lynchburg Advertising Club in 1987. This award, given in conjunction with the American Advertising Federation "to recognize men and women who have made outstanding contributions to advertising, and who have been active in furthering industry standards, creative excellence and responsibility in areas of social concern" was certainly a highlight of his career. Local recognition has also included the publication of two articles about his work in *Lynch's Ferry: A Journal of Local History*, and recognition in James Elson's beautiful book, *Lynchburg, Virginia: The First Two Hundred Years*.

In his waning years, Frank finally found the time to indulge his long-delayed desire to paint for pleasure. He delighted in experimentation, creating strikingly different canvases ranging from magic realism to the completely abstract.

He never had a recognizable style. Some of his later work was very good and some served only for his own amusement. At 92, he was overtaken by short-term memory impairment that was progressive and put an end to a long and productive career. He died in February 2008 at the age of 95.

Looking back, and being able to see the sweep of history over the past century, it seems obvious that the growth of major business and educational enterprises in Lynchburg in the early 20th century created a voracious demand for advertising services. Frank Wright had an innate artistic talent, already evident in the 1920s, that was refined and matured in the 1930s through his associations with Georgia Morgan, Eddie Deady, his teachers in New York, Leonard Glover and others. With that preparation, and with a strong work ethic, he was positioned to meet the demands of local advertisers riding the wave of economic growth following World War II. That wave was long and carried Frank through the full arc of a successful career.