

Abstract landscapes at library

■ Local scenes by Amy Pearce Hamlet on display through Feb.

By Sally Applegate
Correspondent

When artist Amy Pearce Hamlet first moved to North Andover 17 years ago, she found herself enchanted by the beauty of the countryside. The town's Old Center, the Stevens Gardens and local farms appealed to her, as did the historic mill buildings.

"I've been fascinated by local history, and by the mills," says Hamlet.

She started driving to various North Andover locations, painting and drawing them onsite. She says she enjoys being outdoors and the occasional interactions

with passersby.

"You're out there in the natural world," says Hamlet. "People are always interested by seeing artists out painting."

Hamlet describes her style as "kind of an abstract impressionism."

"I paint scenes by observation and manipulate the abstract elements," says Hamlet.

A collection of her paintings and drawings is now on display at the Stevens Memorial Library on Main Street, where it will continue through the end of February. The exhibit includes scenes of Smolack Farm, Stevens Pond, Osgood Street,

Kittredge Farm, Stevens-Coolidge Place, High Street, Stevens Street and Pleasant Street.

Hamlet started drawing as a child, encouraged by her artist mother, and by her teachers. She grew up in Cherry Hill, N.J. and came to New England to study art.

"When I first saw Boston I fell in love," says Hamlet. "It was right on the water, and it was so cool."

She received her BFA cum laude in painting at Boston University. After this formal art training she continued explor-

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ing more abstract and mixed media compositions, using pastel and paint on paper.

She first met her husband Ron in an art supply store. The couple moved to North Andover, where they raised a family. Daughter Naomi is now 11 and a student at the North Andover Middle School. Son Cameron is 15 and a student at North Andover High School. Ron is a fleet mechanic and works on a fleet of trucks for Aramark in Lawrence.

After 12 years of concentrating on bringing up her children, Hamlet returned to art three years ago. Lacking a studio to paint in, she worked mostly outdoors, painting landscapes, cityscapes and suburban views.

Last September she realized the dream of having her own studio, moving her workspace into Studio 30 on the fifth floor of a historic mill building in Lowell. She has one of the 60 artists' studios located at Western Avenue Studios at 122 Western Ave., Lowell.

"This is a big thing for me, because I've never had a studio," says Hamlet.

On the first Saturday of every month the artists at Western Avenue Studios open their spaces to the public between noon and 5 p.m. The monthly event offers a chance to view the artworks of Hamlet and the other studio artists.

Hamlet says working as an artist adds meaning to her life.

"For me, painting and drawing is a way to be in touch with the



Local artist Amy Pearce Hamlet has her work on display at the Stevens Memorial Library through the end of February. Here she's pictured at Cox Reservation in Essex.

world in a deeply personal way," says Hamlet. "I think what is most satisfying is when I develop a relationship with what I am painting and am able to understand some part of it and convey that through the painting. It's one of those things I do that makes me feel I'm doing something important, aside from raising kids."

Hamlet's next exhibit will be April 13-19 for the Newburyport Art Association. Recent exhibits include the 12 x 12 Holiday Show at Bromfield Gallery in Boston, Art in the Barn 2005 at the Studio Barn, Cox Reservation, and Forty by Forty at the

Stuart Street Playhouse in Boston.

Hamlet says she's currently concentrating on exhibiting her work as much as she can.

"It is a little scary when you first get your work out there," says Hamlet. "I'm getting exposure and letting people know what I'm doing."

She also works as a freelance graphic designer to help support her artwork.

"It's tough to find a way to do your work," says Hamlet.

She is concerned with recent cutbacks in public school art programs and considers the arts important for many students.

"I know that the high school level is where kids are really starting to find themselves," says Hamlet. "Right now if you're not into sports, math or science there's not much there for you."

She said she'd like to see North Andover develop something like an artist's league and offer a place where people can take inexpensive art classes.

For more information on Western Avenue Studios, visit www.westernavenuestudios.com. You can also see some of Hamlet's artwork and commercial art at her Web site, www.aph-design.com.