



Griffith's paintings include 'The Post Office,' above, 'Tivoli Tracks,' right, and 'Four Post Bridge,' below.

Artist Joel Griffith stands by his painting "Bayly's," which hangs in the Tivoli Village Hall.

Freeman photos by Bill Madden

ART FOR TIVOLI'S SAKE

Paintings record village scenes for history

■ Joel Griffith, a Tivoli native commissioned by the village to do the work last year, calls it a 'labor of love.'

By PATRICIA DOXSEY
Freeman staff

TIVOLI — Much has changed in this small riverfront community over the years, and chances are, much will change in the future.

But a slice of village life in 2004, as seen through the eyes of a local artist and Tivoli native, has been preserved for posterity through four paintings depicting the community as looks today.

The oil-on-canvas paintings, which hang in

the corridor of the historic Watts dePeyster Hall and take viewers on a westward journey through the village, are the work of Joel Griffith, a Red Hook resident born and reared in Tivoli.

The village commissioned Griffith to create the pictorial trek through the village in 2003. The paintings were recently unveiled during a ceremony in which Griffith was also named the village's "artist laureate."

The four landscape works are so rich with detail, have such a depth and sense of realism that to view the paintings is to in a sense become a part of them.

Standing in front of the painting of the four-

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Art depicts scenes from Tivoli

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post bridge that leads into the village, one can almost feel the bumps in the uneven pavement and reach out and touch the blades of grass that push up through the cracks in the concrete.

And, although there are no people in the paintings, looking at the work depicting the four corners of Broadway, or that of the village post office, one can imagine villagers sitting inside The Lost Sock Launderette or stopping to chat on the way to pick up the morning's mail.

The last painting, depicting the railroad crossing that separates the village from the river's edge, makes viewers, for just a moment, want to glance both ways to make sure a train isn't actually coming through.

"The thought was we have plenty of photos of the village now and historically, of course, we have plenty of paintings of our village, but there are no landscape paintings of our village in recent history," said Mayor Marc Molinaro. "We thought it would be a really interesting effort to contract with this artist to create a unique snapshot of what the village looks

like today."

Molinaro said the village chose Griffith, because, as a native son, the 1992 Red Hook High School graduate who holds a bachelor's degree from Grinnell University and a master's degree from Bard College, would be able to bring to the effort a uniquely Tivolian perspective.

"In looking for someone who could emotionally and artistically capture where the village is today, Joel fit the bill," the mayor said.

Griffith said that accepting the commission gave him an opportunity to relive his life in the village, while also getting to look anew at the community his hometown has become.

"The village has changed so much," he said. "Standing on the four corners, I was almost experiencing myself at 7, bicycling by, and at 15, skateboarding by."

"It was a rich, powerful and rewarding experience," he said of the year-long effort to create the four pieces. "I got to know my community better and they got to know me better. My Tivoli community grew a great deal through this project."

"It was definitely a labor of love," he said.