



# **Down Bohicket Road: An Artist's Journey: Painting and Sketches by Mary Whyte**

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Artist Mary Whyte's *Down Bohicket Road* includes two decades worth of watercolors—depicting a select group of Gullah women of Johns Island, South Carolina, and their stories. In 1991, following Whyte's recovery from a year of treatment for cancer, she and her husband moved to a small sea island near Charleston, seeking a new home where they could reinvent themselves far removed from the hectic pace of Philadelphia. In this remote corner of the South, Whyte first met Alfreda LaBoard and her devoted group of seniors who gathered weekly to make quilts, study the Bible, and socialize in a small rural church on Bohicket Road. Descendants of lowcountry slaves, these longtime residents of the island influenced Whyte's life and art in astonishing and unexpected ways.

Whyte soon began a series of watercolors depicting these women, honoring their lives and their dedication to family and faith. As her friendships with these women grew, their matriarch Alfreda LaBoard claimed Whyte as her “vanilla sister.” *Alfreda's World*, a collection of Whyte's detailed watercolors and poignant recollections of the women at the senior center, was published a decade later, drawing attention and support from the community to the small church on Bohicket Road.

*Down Bohicket Road* continues the story of Whyte's relationship with these extraordinary women, following the passing of Alfreda, against the backdrop of the ongoing commercial development of Johns Island. For Whyte, the heart of this community remains in the simple homes clustered along Bohicket Road, in the island's winding tidal creeks, and in a small church where eighteen hardscrabble women gather in fellowship each week. In her book Whyte illustrates that both watercolors and friendships can be the unpredictable results of an abundance of blessings. As shared through touching words and vibrant paintings, *Down Bohicket Road* celebrates a unique way of coastal life and a remarkable friendship that transcends all barriers—even death itself—in praise of the unifying power of art.

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