

Artist in Residence

A painter finds her heart and life's work in Snow Hill on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

By **Patricia Wilens**

Nancy Carver-Thompson's heart may be torn, but it's anything but broken. She's lucky to have two Maryland homes that she loves and where she blooms as an artist.

As the crow flies, it's about 45 miles between her loft/studio in Snow Hill and her other home on Solomons Island. It takes 3½ hours, though, to make the drive up to and across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and then down the western length of the bay again, but she does it as often as possible to satisfy two loves.

A Loft in Snow Hill Painting, teaching, and the community's warm embrace tie Nancy to this small



Nancy Carver-Thompson came to Snow Hill a stranger but now is one of their own. She paints and teaches in the downtown arts district, which boasts numerous galleries and artists' studios.

PHOTOGRAPHS: VINCE LUPO

Nancy's 19th-century building on Bank Street provides studio and classroom space downstairs and a comfortable loft above.



Eastern Shore town. When a class is in session, her Bank Street studio hums with the chatter of people discovering their inner artists.

“Anyone can learn to paint,” says Nancy. “I love to help people realize their talent or fine-tune their skills.” Like her own work, Nancy’s students use mostly watercolors. “It’s a very forgiving medium,” she explains.

Classes occupy the ground floor of the 1894 building Nancy bought in 2002. She came here looking for a place to relocate after living many years in her native South Carolina.

“I was free to go anywhere and do anything,” she says. “I spent part of my childhood in this area, and I love the peace and calm of the Eastern Shore, so I decided to take a chance and see if I could make a living here as an artist.”

For her potential home, Nancy looked for a pretty town with a sense of community close to water. Snow Hill hit the mark, especially when she found the affordable, if slightly rundown building she would fix up as a studio with a loft apartment upstairs. “It’s an artist’s dream,” she explains. “I always thought it would be neat to live near my work.” She moved in and hung out her shingle in 2003.

A Second Love If Nancy was ready for Snow Hill, the town was ready for her too. “The people here are very supportive and caring,” she says. So much so that they took a keen interest when Dick Thompson entered her life.

“We met online, talking for more than three months before we met in person,” says Nancy. This unconventional courtship required her suitor to pass inspection in Snow Hill. “Once they met him, they approved,” she says. The couple married on New Year’s Eve 2005. “Everyone came to the wedding.”

The Thompsons moved into a marina community in Calvert County, near Dick’s work in nuclear power. Now Nancy splits her time between Solomons Island and Snow Hill.

Wherever she is, Nancy paints. Her work is mostly commissions now, with an expertise in pet portraits. She never tires of painting the landscapes around her beloved Snow Hill. Once a stranger in search of a home, she’s now an artist in residence on the Eastern Shore, and a woman in love with her home, her work, and her life. ●

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