



# Revised History

## The “Jack Mormon”

By Al Benson June 4th, 2022

While we were living in Oklahoma, a man camped up the road from us. His name was Ed and he told us he was from Oregon and that he was a “Jack Mormon” which meant, he told us, that he was not a very good one.

In talking to him we found that he had an opinion on just about every subject imaginable, to the point where my dad didn't cotton to him at all. If you brought up any subject at all he'd give you his two cent's worth, almost like it was manna from on high. Or, as we sometimes say “Your (or my) opinion and a buck will get you a cup of coffee.” Maybe with Biden's planned inflation now it would take \$3 for the coffee.

Anyway, Ed walked over one time when I had a batch of my paintings out in front of our trailer, and he walked up and down looking them all over. After he did that he came back to where I was and said, “Your pictures aren't bad, but your skies stink!” All the pictures I had out had clear blue skies in them.

I must admit, I was a little put out with his comment at first and I had to stew over it a little. As the day wore on, though, and with a little bit of cogitating over his comment, I realized he had a point. The skies in the pictures were all kind of bland. After all, all the days were not totally clear, even in the West. In fact, we used to see some interesting cloud formations out there at times. Dark thunderheads over the mountains a little way off, and sometimes you could see the rain coming down on those mountains while it was totally dry where you were.

But Ed's comment about the skies in my pictures got me to start watching the skies much more closely—something I still do even today. And I started looking for photos with interesting cloud formations in them that I could get pointers from. I started putting cloud formations in many of my pictures and found it did add something to them.

I recall, once we got back to the East, I painted a big canvas of the country in the Oklahoma Panhandle which contained a couple swirling cloud formations in it. Someone who happened to see that picture while I was still working on it said, “That sky is alive.” I guess that was the kind of thing Ed had been talking about back in Oklahoma. Whatever other opinions he may have had, and they were numerous, he had been right about the skies in my pictures. I like to feel that I learned something from him that I have used in my pictures ever since.