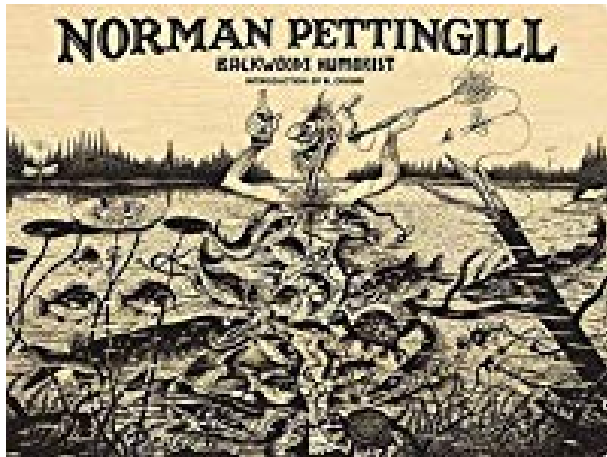


Norman Pettingill: Backwoods Humorist



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Norman Pettingill is a true underground cartoonist, known and admired by a small coterie of cartooning connoisseurs, but completely unknown in the wider world. Norman Pettingill was an avid trapper and fisherman from Northern Wisconsin, and a self-taught artist. In 1947, at the age of 51, he created hundreds of pen-and-ink drawings and marketed many of them as postcards, printing and distributing them himself. His cartoon drawings were relatively huge and his postcards, therefore, had to be uniquely over-sized at 7 x 10 . He combined a gift for the fine detail and verisimilitude of illustration with the visual exaggeration and outrageous wit of cartooning. By merging his fascination with nature and backwoods culture with his wild sense of humor, he depicted an out-of-control hillbilly wonderland of talking grizzlies, dancing morons, nightclubs, giant mosquitoes, tumble-down shacks, pipe smoking grannies, flying skunk fur, google-eyed drunks, hilarious hunting mishaps and moonshine soaked fishermen. Pettingill's world is reminiscent of Al Capp's Li'l Abner comic strip, but Pettingill's hillbilly heaven is made grittier and more tangible by his obsessive penwork and the attention he gives to each teetering outhouse, every overflowing spittoon and each wiry hair growing out of a mountain man's warty face. He revels in exposing the commercialization of outdoor activities, debunking the romance of a woodsman's life, and de-mythologizing the expertise of the outdoors-man. His landscapes and drawings of wild animals could be breathtakingly wondrous, and even his most grotesque depictions of hillbillies were fused with a love and respect for the rituals of a primitive life in the boondocks.

This book is the first published retrospective of Pettingill's work, containing over a hundred of the artist's best and rarely seen drawings, printed in an oversized format.