

JESSE HOWARD

- 1885 Born June 4th in Shamrock, Missouri.
- 1903-1905 Howard traveled the railroads working in Illinois, Arkansas, Montana and California. He returned to Fulton, Missouri in 1905.
- 1930's (late) Howard painted advertisements and broadsheets for Ed Peacock's weekend Steam Threshing Shows.
- 1940's (early) Howard constructed the first sculpture with a biblical theme: a scaled down version of Haman's gallows.
- 1944 Howard moved to his present location of 20 acres on the Old Jeff City Hill, Fulton, which he renamed Sorehead Hill.
- 1950's (early) Construction of the signs began in earnest. The site was renamed 'Hell's Twenty Acres' after a fire (which was hell to put out) nearly destroyed the property.
- 1952 Fulton citizens circulated a petition to have Howard assigned to a lunatic asylum.
- 1954 Howard went to Washington D.C. to visit his congressman and inform him of Fulton's problems. He was 'kidnapped' by detectives and put on a bus back to Fulton.
- 1966 Howard was one of the folk artists featured in the Walker Art Center's exhibition 'Naives and Visionaries'.

The idea of talking to the world through signs came to Jesse Howard after working for Ed Peacock's steam threshing shows and reading Henry Bellamann's 1940 novel Kings Row, set in Fulton, Mo. Howard wanted people to learn more about the bible and decided to create a showplace of biblical objects which would be self explanatory with the aid of signs. Since 1944 he has built wind-mills with bible verses painted on the vanes, tombstones with scriptures for epitaphs, five airplanes with American quotations, numerous roadside signs as well as structures to support others. These signs warn the world, and Fulton in particular, that man is headed toward doom. Howard regards the problems of the modern world as being the inevitable consequence of the decline of old time religion. In recent years he has stopped posting roadside signs because they were continually being vandalized or stolen. The sources for his signs, which are made from planks from razed houses, are his sixth grade education, an old Webster's Dictionary, two daily newspapers and a King James Bible.