

California Art Research

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California art research project

Vol. IX.

MONOGRAPHS

RAY BOYNTON

ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

FRANCIS JOHN MCCOMAS

H. W. HANSEN

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Gene Hailey, Editor

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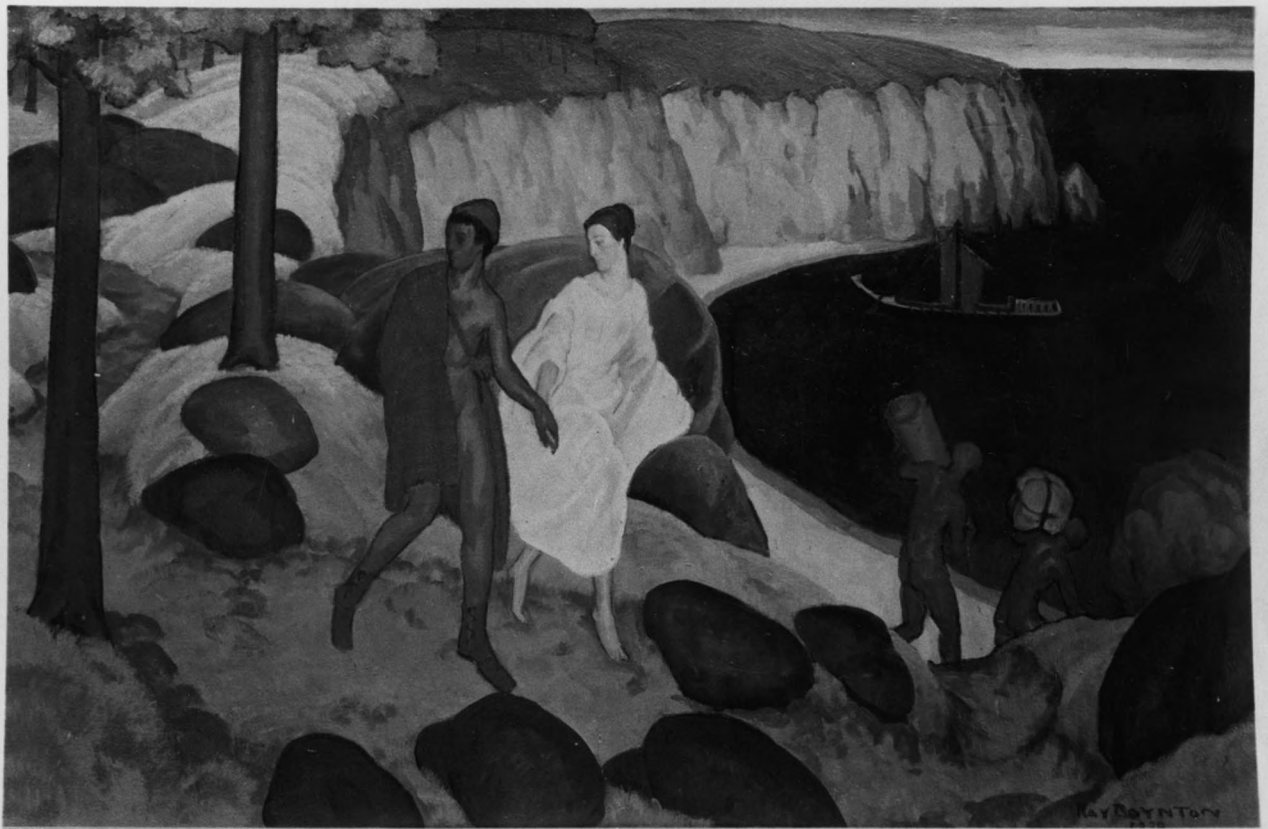
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RAY BOYNTON

1883,.....

Biography and Works

"FLIGHT OF HELEN"



EMANUEL WALTER COLLECTION--SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART

RAY BOYNTON

Ray Boynton, today one of California's outstanding fresco artists, a master in many mediums, an art teacher and writer, was born of Charles Henry Boynton, and Sarah Cole Boynton in 1883 upon an Iowa farm. Born a farm boy and taught as such, to guide the plow and make his furrows straight, his hands were those of a son of the soil, meant for gruelling labor, yet his nimble fingers were destined one day to bring fame to that boy, then so remote from all things artistic.

From the Boynton farm near Whitten, the family moved to the farm of his grandparents near Strawberry Point, a thriving town of some nine hundred souls. There he spent fifteen years, doing what all farm boys do--hard work from dawn to dark, with little to arouse his dormant talents.

While in High School in Strawberry Point, Ray often made capable drawings. As the Iowa school system in those days did not include drawing, he drew for the sheer love of art, the fun of recording his impressions.

Boynton also revealed a tendency toward writing and music. He even bought a violin and spent many hours attempting to master it. He confesses he never did take a lesson. His writing was confined to High School publications in which he showed much skill. However, there was no influence in Strawberry Point to guide his talents in any definite direc-

tion, so his ultimate choice of art as a career was partly accidental, as with many youths.

CHICAGO BOUND

At the age of twenty, little Strawberry Point could no longer hold a youth whose ambitions had outgrown the simple town. Boynton needed more room to spread out; he had new worlds to conquer. So in 1903, Ray went to Chicago, metropolis of the Middle West, where fame and fortune lay. There he would make his start; there life would really begin as he fed his hunger for knowledge and learned all the ways and means of art. His dreams though filled to the brim with ecstasy, met an abrupt ending, when the old story, the irksome problem of food and shelter came from nowhere to face the art student. As Chicago offered every opportunity for intensive study, he at once began to study art, and at the same time set out to find work. Wages, sufficient at least to keep body and soul together, were earned during his student years in the many different ways open to most self-educated artists.

He took odd jobs of all descriptions, or part-time work wherever he could find it. He was working as an usher in the Iroquois Theatre at the time it burned, and was fortunate enough to escape with his life, altho he received burns and lost part of his hair and eyebrows. He managed to get a small part in the original production of "The Merry Widow" when it first opened in Chicago, and at the same time he also

canvassed for the Chicago City Directory, painted a mural decoration, and attended "life " art classes.

Boynton attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, then in its infancy. Here he studied under William P. Henderson and John W. Norton, both excellent instructors. Boynton received his fundamental anatomy training from W. J. Reynolds who taught the "life" classes. This school departed radically from the conventional method of teaching as it gave no course in drawing from the antique. So as Boynton drew from classic casts himself, in later years when he taught an antique class, he had no preconceived ideas to overcome, and approached the cold plaster with a fresh, open mind. He thus converted what is usually a deadly bore both to student and teacher into a subject of interest.

Here in Chicago, in 1904, Boynton made his first exhibition with the Chicago Society of Artists. Being a young student of course, he received no memorable recognition, altho the showing definitely convinced him that his work measured up well and art was to be his lifelong expression of his inner self, rather than writing or music. However he does write occasionally, but always on the subject of art.

BOYNTON GOES FURTHER WEST

While the goal of most artists is New York or Paris, a studio, and ultimately fame, with Boynton it was not so. As yet he had little confidence in himself as an artist to

the extent of such a drastic move. His experience had been limited thus far, his work was unknown, and he felt his talent and training were not yet focused.

At this time he received an invitation to visit his brother, in Spokane, Washington. Here he came with the hope of broadening his scope with new surroundings, new scenes to give him the opportunity to learn a better appreciation of landscape, for naturally the slopes of the Rocky Mountain valleys were entirely different in color and range than anything with which he had been familiar. Here were timberlands never before seen by him, woodland glades that could strike the fancy of an artist in search of new inspiration, yet Boynton credits Spokane with small impetus for his art. Amid the beauty of his surroundings he found no artistic stimulus, and, except for a small group of musicians, no aesthetic life. During the seven years that Spokane was his legal residence he did not see a half dozen good paintings exhibited.

He kept on painting and drawing alone when he could make the time for it, altho he again had to earn a living in other ways. He spent one summer at extreme physical labor in the wheat fields of the Big Bend country. He juggled sacks on a threshing machine, real labor! As a rule no man, even the hardest, can keep at it very long. Seven men had quit the job in as many days when Boynton tried it. He stuck to it and won the foreman's respect to such a degree that that personage addressed him as "mister."

There were seven years of hard manual labor of all sorts, seven barren years in which he tried persistently to paint, in spite of the frightful handicaps of calloused hands, no encouragement, no congenial companionship, no one who spoke his language. But that drastic period of mental and aesthetic isolation, and continuous physical labor, did more to form him, to fix his direction, than any other one experience of his life.

Amid circumstances that were discouraging to the point of defeat, Boynton still clung to the art ideals now firmly developed in his mind, he managed somehow to teach a small group of art students, in a semi-private way, and painted many pictures himself. He also did a bit of writing now and again for local newspapers, and in art columns for publications in and around Spokane. There were some small sales and commissions here and there, sufficient at least to console his efforts.

While in Spokane Boynton received his first commission of any importance an order from the Spokane High School, to decorate a curtain for the auditorium. There was a stage about thirty feet across and sixteen feet deep, and the problem of painting a surface of such size was something entirely new to him. He gave it much thought and careful consideration and designed it as a mural decoration rather than as a curtain. Boynton used tempera as his medium, and here showed his flare for the unusual, for instead of using conventional

designs which would have been as acceptable, he employed figures done in daringly bold colors, a highly difficult theme for such work. The results, however, were most gratifying, despite the problem involved, for this curtain was used as a background for the stage where speakers or actors would be seen at a distance, and the figures on the curtain had to be in agreeable proportion to the persons on the stage.

BOYNTON COMES TO SAN FRANCISCO

Circumstances again took a hand in Boynton's affairs, and brought about his deliverance. He was asked to serve on a jury in Seattle, to pass on works of art which were being collected there, to be sent to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco. That in its turn led to an appointment to the Palace of Fine Arts, which brought him to San Francisco in 1915. To be thrown into sudden contact with thousands of paintings, after so long an isolation, was like surrounding a starving man with food. He responded readily to the broader field of activities that San Francisco offered and his artistic growth became rapid and steady.

At this time, Boynton experimented in pastels. He sketched in the grounds of the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition and made a number of studies that were quickly disposed of. Here his first important sale of five pictures was made. They were oils and pastels, exhibited at the Ex-

position, and brought him his first formal recognition by art critics.

HILL TOLERTON GALLERY

The Hill Tolerton Gallery of San Francisco asked Boynton to exhibit his pastels, and here he gave what was considered the most comprehensive study seen in this medium. His success with the local art colony was confirmed by the following press notice from the "Wasp", by Blanche d'Harcourt, art critic:

"The Hill Tolerton Galleries announce an exhibition of the pastels of Ray S. Boynton.... This is the most comprehensive exhibition we have seen of this form of art and much pleasure awaits the visitor to the gallery during this present exhibition. These delicate, colorful drawings are remarkably clever when one remembers the limitations of colored crayons. Mr. Boynton handles his medium with the skill and vigor of the painter in oils and obtains values rarely found in this art.

"Mr. Boynton, for a young artist, has arrived very quickly, since this is the first comprehensive exhibition of his work ever held. A few of his pastels were hung in the Palace of Fine Arts last year and received high praise from his fellow artists and the public at large. But this present exhibition should place him in a class by himself as an artist who has demonstrated his ability beyond any question of a doubt.

"Following the exhibition of Mr. Boynton's work will be that of Mr. Boynton's teacher, Mr. William P. Henderson. Mr. Henderson's exhibitions will consist of paintings, pastels, and etchings. We are not familiar with the work of Henderson here in San Francisco, and this exhibition of the master's following the pupil's is rather unique. Having judged Mr. Boynton's work we will now have the opportunity of finding out

just where he obtained his most telling effects by study with Mr. Henderson."

EXPERIMENT IN FRESCO

Early in 1917, Boynton was asked to decorate the fountain wall in the little courtyard of the Hill Tolerton Print Rooms. Here indeed was a new problem to be reckoned with, for the wall was of cement and exposed to wind and rain; therefore not only the method of decoration but the durability had to be considered. Weather affects usual pigment so that in a short time colors begin to fade, and in a matter of a few years a painting would almost completely disintegrate. Here Boynton departed from the usual method of indoor wall decoration. Instead of a mural, painted on canvas and then fitted to the wall space it is intended to decorate, he went back to the early Italian method of painting directly on the wall surface. He found after research that the early fresco work was done by incorporating the color with the fresh plaster, and the natural absorption of that material made the work very durable. To attempt to make tempera mixed with white of egg painting on a weatherbeaten, seasoned wall as durable as the old Italian fresco, was very much of a gamble. The subject for his lunette was taken from a classic myth "The Judgment of Paris".

The graceful composition of this work brought Boynton a commission to come to Los Altos, California, to do a wall decoration with a free hand to do as he saw fit. Here

he built a fountain and designed a panel for fresco, a duplicate of which was later exhibited at the Palace of Fine Arts. This being war time, permanent colors were very hard to buy. Poor bases were used and artists bought whatever they could find. Here his fresco experiments were vigorous; the blues were bad, the blacks were bad, the possibility of turning out a good piece of work seemed hopeless. Then he began making discoveries in paint. He found that for one thing pounded charcoal will stand weather much better than will the traditional ivory black. Some colors would fade in a short time and some stand out almost as bright as the day they were applied. The possibility of the finished work being in a few years time, a patchwork of uneven values of bright and dull tints was disturbing. But after great effort and with the knowledge gained through reading Cennini's "Treatise on Painting", written in 1437, which gave the methods employed by Giotto and his followers, Boynton succeeded in creating permanent colors and values so that the fresco is today, nineteen years later, in a very good state of preservation. Boynton's efforts were perhaps the first successful use of fresco work out-of-doors in California and western America.

1917 ARMY SERVICE

Aside from two exhibitions in San Francisco, one at the San Francisco Art Association where he contributed twenty paintings, and the second jury-free Exhibition where he hung

two more pictures, little of importance was accomplished. The great war was in progress, and Boynton was called to serve his country. He was stationed at Fort Scott, San Francisco, and for a time with the recruiting service at Angel Island, San Francisco.

In 1919 Boynton married in San Francisco, Miss Margaret Gough, a Canadian by birth, who unfortunately died of tuberculosis in 1930. Boynton, with his strongly built physique sacrificed many painting hours to give tender nursing service to his semi-invalid "Peggy".

The only work displayed by this artist during post-war years, was an exhibition at the De Young Museum of San Francisco of some nine paintings. A comment on the same follows, from The International Studio, March 1919:

"In all the pictures on view there is almost no vestige of the 'brown sauce' school of yesterday, and one can detect but little which is reminiscent of Keith, Whistler, and the Barbizon School, three influences which, but for a very short time ago, dominated the California annual exhibitions. In only a very few canvases, such as those of Bruce Nelson, Ray Boynton, and Matteo Sandona does one find the antiquated methods in use." (This term "antiquated" meaning, "opposed to ultra-modernism.")

CANON KIP MEMORIAL

Sometime in 1920 a dear friend of Boynton's, the Rev. J. H. Ohlhoff, asked him to decorate the Canon Kip Memorial Chapel. This work was of religious subjects in the form of a large mural panel above the altar, and two smaller panels

on either side. Boynton contracted this piece of work more for friendship than for profit, as the Chapel was only able to raise the sum of twenty-five dollars to compensate him. However, the decorations stand as truly representative efforts of Boynton's fine sense of color and space relation in decoration.

A CHANGE IN TECHNIQUE

Late in 1920 Boynton moved to Marin County, took a house in Mill Valley, and there set to work. For over a year he painted and wrote amid the fascinating surroundings of beautiful Mill Valley where so many California artists have sketched. Here he turned his efforts to landscape painting, and at the same time wrote a series of articles on art for the San Francisco Sunday Chronicle. It was this year that he attained his first mature form of landscape work, painting without sketches, directly from nature, and in his canvases the trained eye could detect his sensitive feeling for color, rich and true to nature, ^{not} ~~but~~ the modern prismatic color of broken sunlight, but the full gamut of the oil palette. The results of this year of study were exhibited the following year in San Francisco at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. His painting "The Boy", and "Mill Valley", received popular and just appreciation. The latter painting is now among the permanent collection of Mills College, Oakland, California.

Following his intensive outdoor study, Boynton returned to San Francisco where he became a teacher in the California School of Fine Arts. The 1921 Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association found him showing two paintings and in the fall show, six more pictures. Perhaps the most outstanding work done by Boynton through 1920 to 1923 was the mural decoration he was commissioned to paint in oil for the Bohemian Club. This was a panel five feet long and seventeen feet high, done in the form of a portrait of St. John of Nepomuk, who is the patron Saint of the Bohemian Club. This recognition stamped Boynton's ability with the approval of many seasoned San Francisco art patrons.

The Bohemian Club at their annual gathering in the grove, produced a play earlier in the year, called "St. John of Nepomuk", which dramatized the life of this personage, through enacting the scene which depicts the martyrdom of this Saint, in which he refuses to divulge the secret confessions, and thereby loses his life at the hands of his enemies. It was the portrayal of this historic incident that prompted the club to have this mural done in honor of their patron Saint.

Later Boynton took part in another Bohemian Club ceremonial, as he has done many times in recent years, when he designed costumes for Charles Norris's play "The Rout of the Philistines", enacted in the annual Bohemian Grove Jinx.

Lucien Labaudt and Frank Van Sloun, California artists of note, were in charge of arrangements.

TEACHER VS. ARTIST

During the following few years Boynton taught many classes at the California School of Fine Arts, giving a great deal of his time to students. These were crowded years in which he was scarcely able to devote time to his own painting, or to keep up his writing on art subjects.

Here he met the problem faced by many artists, although many allow it to pass unnoticed. But Boynton saw plainly the dangers that threaten a painter's career, once he becomes deeply engrossed in either teaching or writing, and Boynton enjoyed doing both. He feels that writing on art is very important for the artist. In this form of self-expression, he can freely put his thoughts in an orderly form, and discuss matters of artistic importance with himself. Also he may better understand and voice not only his own confirmed or growing beliefs concerning art, but he can greatly enhance his interpretation of work done by other artists and word his reactions to different mediums and manners.

Teaching, on the other hand, Boynton suggests may be at moments constructive to the artist himself, yet it also creates a tendency to destroy the artist. When it becomes necessary for a creative artist to instruct along strict academic lines it is very difficult not to allow such disciplined

teaching to occupy too great a place in the artistic mind and thus to obliterate his creative instincts, and destroy his productive energy. The entire handling of the fine arts in academic instruction is confusing to the artist, as it is often based on mathematical proportions, instead of through a sensed rhythm and movement. Boynton can obey traffic rules in composition and follow the scientific rules of proportion rather than the natural and visual approach in his teaching, but he is highly creative in his own work. He has never allowed any traditional teaching or writing habits to invade his canvases. Boynton's writings have always held an admirable place in art circles, and have been of a highly constructive and clarifying nature.

Such was the article written for "The Argus", in a journal of art criticism and news, on "The True Nature of Mural Painting", excerpts from which follow:

"Mural painting, as it has been carried on for a long time and as it is practiced **generally** today, has ceased to have any vital relation to the wall or to architecture in general, largely, I think, because so little of it is done on the wall. Being done always in the seclusion of the studio, it has lost the intuition of the wall and its discipline of scale and color. This discipline of the ~~wall~~---creating in place and within the proper limitations of materials and method--is perhaps the most vital single factor in great mural design. Without these real limitations it has become simply the large easel picture pasted on the wall, generally a bit stilted and mannered and self-conscious, or else with limitations imposed on it that are so arbitrary and foreign that they are meaningless.

"The shallow worship of sunlight in landscape, the doctrinaire ideas of 'true' color that deny the validity of the earth colors with their somber magnificence of reds and browns, the banal tricks of oil painting, have left us stammering before the wall, repeating shopworn theatrical commonplaces, making empty gestures for design, helpless with gold, not knowing the difference between enrichment and display, without even the language of a design that has monumental dignity of the authority of true decoration. If any true monumental style is ever evolved in this country it will have to be evolved on the wall, as it has been in every other instance.

".....One is still expected to apologize for realism, even in a generation that worships at the shrine of Giotto. The phrase 'You must forget most of this after you leave it', conveys a most damning accusation of futility.

"This confusion of means and end in art is our constant nemesis. Method accepted as a discipline leads to control of rhythm and substance which perhaps defines technique in art, but which is a vastly different thing from the academicians' worship of anatomy and perspective. Giotto and the Gothic barbarians survived somehow without benefit of clergy, but the morbid intensity of Botticelli, the baffling perfection of Leonardo, the turbulence of Michelangelo, are all reduced to--anatomy and perspective.

"Oil painting, the easel picture has been an art without discipline for a hundred and fifty years. The authority of the Renaissance was dead and the rubbish was swept away by the French Revolution. It was so dead that only its tail-enders were understood, its Caracci and its Thiepolos.

"The traditions of oil paintings since the beginning of the 19th century have been no rigid discipline of craft to stabilize them. You painted with medium or without, with a brush or with a palette knife, with lumps of paint or with thinnest film, covering the canvas or leaving bare patches, according to the fashion or

your mood. You composed this way or that way according to rules of composition.

"The century worshipped realism and produced impressionism; it made a fetish of anatomy and perspective and produced Cezanne; it exalted representation and produced the Blue Four; it worshipped order and produced chaos. True, it produced some important painting, splendid lyrical masterpieces and one first-rate mural painter, but no tradition worthy of the name and, contrary to popular legend, no schools--only individuals. In spite of all the ardor that launched impressionism, Monet long out-lived it. Its great contribution to painting was to sink the ship and let who could swim survive.

"It is not surprising that this anarchy produced no monumental style and only one mural painter who knew what a wall was and approached it with some degree of reverence. Whistler, in a delectante way, discovered it while he was dallying with the "peacock Room" in Leyland's house and might have given us something had he been in a different period, or anywhere but in England. Brangwyn has always regarded the wall as a large place where he could display his bald facility, often as an obstacle in which to make a window. Puvis de Chavannes restored to the mural painting something of the dignity of monumental design. The great tragedy was that he died before he could carry out experiments he planned to undertake in fresco.

"The easel picture achieved its independence in the 19th century and carved out its own destiny. It is an intimate revelation with no organic necessity in its size or shape and nothing which imposes a formal order on its design other than its mood and content. Its whole history is an escape from imposed restraints. Decorative quality is not fundamental to its aims and is even sometimes held in question. Too many complexities of mood enter into its makeup, and too great elasticity of method for it to generate any great formal design of large scale. The effect of this upon mural painting has been disastrous. The poster swaggers on the wall masquerading as decoration, flat and tasteless.

"The decorative problem is always real on the wall. All that speaks with final authority on it is sound design--spacing and movement--rhythm. The wall exists in its own right and is not to be ignored or violated. Its formal order is established and its size and shape are organic. Its problem is enrichment, the softening of rigidity, nobility of spacing, the heightened reality of its presence. Content must submit to established formal order. All this is not readily achieved at a distance. It has rarely been achieved anywhere but in immediate contact with the wall. The discipline of the wall is an experience not discovered in easel painting.

"And yet, that madness, "modern art", starting with the easel picture, which has turned such acid criticism on the barren fact-painting of the academic tradition, with omnivorous eclecticism has gone to school to all the art of the world and found more than a grain of wisdom. It has approached without condescension the art of savages and of civilization other than our own, and so has learned something from them. It may have contributed little that is new to design, but it has become thoroughly conscious of its importance. Full of fads and moves of the moment, it has yet begun to evolve some ideas of discipline. It is ripe for every experience and ready to experiment in all materials. When it has essayed the wall it has been willing to approach it as an experience.

"In art there is a fundamental discipline established in meeting one's materials on a plane of equality, in submitting with some degree of humility to their limits in order to discover their possibilities. It leads to power where an attitude of arrogance leads to frustration. One learns the profound truths of art from materials. It is the basis of all sound craftsmanship and all great design. It is the secret of the high perfection of medieval stained glass and carving and it also explains the degradation of these in the 18th and 19th centuries. I think it explains, more than any other thing, the decay of mural painting in our time.

"Intimate contact with the wall and its materials, the sobering influence of their limita-

tions, these are experiences that may not be arrived at vicariously, as studio decoration attempts to arrive at them. In fresco, the definite range of color, the limit of time in which an area must be completely finished; these are limitations that are real. They impose economies and austerities of design that are the essence of style. This is the discipline of the wall which we have lost, the thing that must be experienced again if we are to recover a true language of decoration on the wall."

MILLS COLLEGE MURALS

Bay Region art patronage, both private and institutional, began to cherish Ray Boynton's work. Artist and dealer friends promoted many lucrative commissions for Boynton--, while his popular reputation as a "real painter" and master of fresco brought him other orders.

Nineteen twenty-eight saw Boynton at his best, working on a commission which he feels is his most important work, that of the Mills College murals. Here we find six panels six feet high and fourteen feet long, forming a frieze from the rear of the College Auditorium to the stage. Over the stage there is an organ loft, built to house an organ, not yet installed. A large central mural panel sixteen feet high and thirty six feet long was designed to be painted in tempera, on a sliding screen, to be drawn back on each side, to expose the organ. There are also eight small panels on the side walls.

To praise this work adequately, Junius Craven's criticism gives vivid description and appreciation. In The Argonaut of May 26th, 1928, Junius Cravens says:

"One of the most important gestures that Mills College has made in relation to the arts, was when it gave its Hall of Music, now under construction, into the hands of a competent artist for the accomplishment of its wall decoration. So far as we know this has not been done previously by any local institution, at least not in the intelligent extent to which it was done by Mills College.

"Ray Boynton, who was commissioned to design and execute the interior of the Hall of Music, was retained at a sufficiently early date in the proceedings to permit of his being able to consult and cooperate with the architect, as the plans for the building were being evolved. This is the nearest approach to an ideal working condition to which a mural decorator may hope to aspire. It is the only intelligent way to handle such a problem. As a result of procedure Mr. Boynton's decorations, which are now near completion, are a corporate part of the room, and not the afterthought applique which results from the stupid and illogical tactics usually employed in such cases.

"Mr. Boynton has wisely chosen fresco as his medium. So far as we are able to ascertain his are the first fresco paintings to be installed in any institutional, or public building on this coast of the United States. As a result of the methods he has selected, Mr. Boynton's decorations have grown with the actual construction of the walls of the building, another factor which contributes materially to their being a corporate part of the interior of the room.

"Mr. Boynton is an incomparable colorist, and his sense of decorative values renders him equal to such an opportunity. His paintings on the walls of the Hall of Music are, as a whole, quite beautiful. He has evolved compositions of nude figures and landscapes from abstract themes. In them he has succeeded remarkable in keeping his nudes completely impersonal, almost sexless, in the classic sense. He has carefully avoided the use of literal suggestion and the banal, hackneyed subjects. If he has sought to interpret anything describable it is the two principal emotions expressed by music, which are joy and sorrow. These emotions are so remotely

suggested as to be negligible qualities in his calculations. The extraordinary thing about the panels is that, while they are neither literal, nor, in some cases, even symbolic, they are as expressive of music as two-dimensional color organisations may be."

CARMEL

In the spring of nineteen twenty-nine Boynton moved to Carmel and joined the famous artist and writer colony there. Carmel since 1900 has been known as a haven for painters, some seeking the beauty and isolation in which to paint undisturbed; others find the art life congenial amid a truly ideal location. Here Boynton made his cartoons and sketches for mural commissions from two San Francisco patrons; the Associated Charities Building and the beautiful decoration, done in encaustic, now gracing the dining room wall of the Mark Hopkins Hotel on Nob Hill. Here also he studied the landscape and ocean cliffs, so much admired by California artists, and the following fall displayed his interpretations in oil.

The results of his prolific work that year were shown at the Beaux Arts Gallery in San Francisco, and at the fifty-first Annual San Francisco Art Association Exhibit.

In The Argonaut of November 23, 1929, Junius Cravens writes:

"The Galerie Beaux Arts is housing an extensive and varied collection of works in many mediums, the principal feature of which is an exhibition of more than fifty oils, water colors, temperas, pastels, wood engravings, and block prints by Ray Boynton.

"Boynton seems to have entirely departed from the more stylized vein in which he was formerly wont to work, and has reverted to the more realistic form of landscape painting, in both oils and water-colors. But his inherent decorative sense still predominates, as it always will, his compositions; his color, though less warm in general than it once was, has become greatly enriched, and his use of the various mediums, in which he works is, of course, masterful.

"Of the small group of oils which Boynton is showing, 'Artichoke Fields' is probably the outstanding effort. The flat, receding patchwork of lush fields, together with the softly folded hills beyond, comprise with convincing solidity, and one which reflects to an extraordinary degree the character of the local countryside.

"In 'Hatton Ranch' he has also caught a great deal of local charm, a cluster of homely buildings forming the central foreground, with a range of darkly alluring hills beyond, steeped in luscious evening color.

"These two oils, together with the smaller canvas 'Carmel River Mouth in Spring', form a trilogy, as it were, which epitomizes California landscape.

"The only decorative painting in the collection is 'Virgin at Point Sur', a subject which Boynton has experimented with and made several versions of in wood engravings, pastel and other media, two of which are also included in the current exhibition. The work as a whole, has a decided mural quality, the treatment resembling to some extent, that of fresco painting. 'The Virgin at Point Sur' is not a large canvas, but it is, in our opinion, the finest work of this type which Boynton has yet produced. If we were collecting, it would be our choice of them all."

The following three years Boynton saw much the same activity in new work and large exhibitions. The San Francisco Art Association's yearly exhibit finds Boynton usually repre-

sented with several fresh canvases. He kept on with his art writing, this time for the Art Association Bulletin, and contributed to the Argus, a monthly art journal. His most important commission during this period was the decoration of the University of California Faculty Club, in Berkeley; this he did in his now famous medium, fresco. During this time (1930) he met and married his present wife, Kathleen Mains.

A STRANGE MEDIUM

Being an artist of many moods, and master of many mediums, Boynton is always ready to meet the artistic situation with whatever medium is necessary. He works deftly in oil, water-color, or tempera,--or sketches perhaps in pastel or pencil. Whether a mural decoration is to be fresco or encaustic, he is equally well equipped to handle the materials and fill the space interestingly. To add another medium to the unusual versatility of this artist, we find him commissioned to design and execute a decorative panel in mosaic for Mr. C. E. S. Wood, of Los Gatos, California. Again Junius Gravens describes a development in Boynton's work in *The Argonaut* of December 16, 1932:

"Ray Boynton has recently designed a decorative panel in mosaic for Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Sarah Bard Field, and installed it in the patio at 'The Cats', their Los Gatos home. The unveiling took place there a week ago Sunday. Though the employment of that medium was entirely new to him, Boynton has handled his problem most expertly, and to our mind, has proven conclusively that true mosaic (not painted), as a

medium for exterior decoration, may be far superior to either fresco or encaustic.

"Having used varying tones of marbles as far as possible, in developing his design, the earth colors harmonize with the architectural setting to a degree that would be impossible for any form of painting or for artificially colored tiles. In this instance, Boynton has employed only a minor proportion of glazed tiles, in blues and greens, for definition and contrast. The design is broad, simple and vigorous. Altogether, Boynton's first mosaic is a noble experiment--and an amendment which, we feel sure, will never be repealed."

NEVADA CITY, 1932

In the following summer Boynton sketched in and around Nevada City and the old mining towns. Here he had a friend, an air-conditioning expert, who was inspecting the mines in that country, and through this friend he was given permission to be lowered into the old Empire Mine, to paint in the dark labyrinth. These pictures were shown that fall at the Annual Art Association exhibition in San Francisco. It was not strange that Boynton was the first artist who attempted work under these conditions, for he has always been open to new experiences, to tests of stamina in art endeavor, and an exponent of any untried means.

"Downieville", one of the series of canvases resulting from this trip, was shown in several exhibitions in San Francisco and received high praise wherever it was shown.

Boynton's records are authentic representations of the ghost towns of the old west which will so soon pass from

view. The grand old Courthouse at Nevada City, when painted by Boynton on this trip, was a thing of artistic and romantic beauty. Today it has a "beautifying" coat of stucco; its glamour gone.

Boynton was among the first of recent California artists who captured the romantic landmarks of California's glorious youth on canvas, before modernization and so-called "progress" completely change the western scene. Boynton tells of a painting he made near Downieville. The scene is now almost unrecognizable, for a new concrete bridge has been erected directly at the point his picture was made. Of the work displayed by Boynton on his return from Nevada City, The San Francisco News of December 25, 1935 offers a press notice:

"The Art Center, 730 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, is presenting a one-man show of pastels and drawings by Ray Boynton. During the past summer Boynton mined the mining towns, so to speak, for subject matter for his new works. The result is a large number of what might be termed illustrations of the life, or perhaps, one should say, the absence of life in such places as Columbia, Jamestown, and Nevada City.

"At Grass Valley, Boynton went down into the shafts for three thousand feet, and found there a busy world. He is said to be the first artist who has ever been permitted to make sketches of the mine and its activity. Boynton has interpreted the mine and mining town scenes simply, perhaps literally, and without dramatization. Above all, he has avoided developing a thesis. His pastels are done with restrained, but, at times, exceptionally beautiful color."

COIT TOWER

In nineteen thirty-three Mr. Boynton received a commission to do some fresco murals for the new Coit Tower, on Telegraph Hill, in San Francisco. The one thing that brings this effort unusual note, is the fact that, when the Coit Tower murals were being done, twenty artists worked on the many inner-walls, all doing fresco.

A job of this size could not readily be done in the eastern United States, for fresco work is not so well known there, and seldom taught. But it happens that Boynton taught a special class here in 1926 in fresco technique and method and since that time many of his students developed great fresco skill, so when a call came for twenty fresco artists, many of his former students were found capable of handling the assignment. While the fresco enthusiasts had a glorious gambol on the Coit Tower walls, the local press ran endless columns of dubious comment on the real aesthetic value of their subjects and renderings. Students who had learned fresco from Diego Rivera, in Mexico City, produced themes of modern turmoil, speed and the machine age. Boynton's influence, too, towards an indigenous art began to be felt here.

The 1935 San Francisco Art Association Exhibition presented Boynton in excellent mood. Here he was well represented with a portrait in tempera called "Girl Eating Grapes",

which was posed for by his wife, Kathleen. For this he was given the Anne Bremer Memorial Prize, an award of three hundred dollars.

During 1936, Boynton is working on twelve lunettes, for the Post Office at Modesto, California. These depict in splendid choice, the representative industries of that community. Here again, he shows his never failing care in handling his subject matter. The cartoons themselves, from which the mural work is done, are works of art; some in water-color, and some in pastel. In those panels now completed of the group, Boynton has given careful study to every phase of the subject matter he is depicting. His keen insight into the natural forces and resources of Nature, the productivity of the soil, and the values of industry and agriculture are self-evident.

THE INTERVIEWER SPEAKS

In conclusion let me say that Boynton's work always bears out his personal philosophy, as he has expressed it to me in these words, "Art is either a business problem, or, it is a way of life. To me it is a way of life."

RAY BOYNTON

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

- Curtain in Tempera, Spokane, Washington, 1914
Vanity, Panama-Pacific International Exposition,
San Francisco, 1915
Young Diana, Panama-Pacific International
Exposition, San Francisco, 1915
Eve, Panama-Pacific International Exposition,
San Francisco, 1915
A Boy, Panama-Pacific International Exposition,
San Francisco, 1915
Spokane Valley, Panama-Pacific International
Exposition, San Francisco, 1915
Canon Kip Memorial Mural, San Francisco, 1920
Mount Tamalpais, Mill Valley, California, 1921
St. John of Nepomuk, Bohemian Club, San Francisco,
1922
Mosaic in home of Charles Erskine Scott Wood,
Los Gatos, California, 1932
Mills College Murals, Oakland, California, 1928
Encaustic, for Mark Hopkins Hotel, San Francisco,
1929
Virgin of Point Sur, Carmel, California, 1929
Artichoke Fields, Carmel, California, 1929
Downieville, Downieville, California, 1932
Girl Eating Grapes, Berkeley, California, 1935
-

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

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The Emanuel Walter Collection
Bohemian Club Art Gallery
De Young Museum Art Gallery

Oakland, California:
Mills College Art Gallery

EXHIBITIONS:

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1915 (pastel)
Hill Tolerton Gallery, 1916 (pastel)
Palace of Fine Arts, 1917 (panel-fresco)
De Young Museum, 1919 (oil)
Palace of the Legion of Honor,
1920 (landscape)
Beaux Arts Gallery, 1929 (oil)
The Art Center, (One-man Show), 1935
San Francisco Art Association, 1935
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AWARDS:

Anne Bremer Memorial Prize, 1935

CLUBS:

Member:
San Francisco Art Association
San Francisco Beaux Arts Association
California Society of Mural Artists (Head)
Bohemian Club

RAY BOYNTON

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ULS

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ARGONAUT
ULS

SCHOOL ARTS MAGAZINE
Karpel S225; ULS

NEWS
Gregory (California, San Francisco)

RAY SCEPTER BOYNTON

- b. January 14, 1883 Near Whitten, Iowa
 d. September 25, 1951 Albuquerque, New Mexico

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ARCHIVAL SOURCE

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ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

1869.....

Biography and Works

"THE LONG RANGE"--UPPER LAKE OF KILLARNEY



MURAL--CALIF. RESIDENCE OF MR. & MRS. WILLIAM B. BOURN

ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

In the late 1850's, in California, there came to San Francisco a young man and his wife, Raphael and Myrtila Peixotto. Raphael's father was a well known attorney in New York City, but evidently that profession did not appeal to the son, for he made his way West to become a merchant.

Raphael and Myrtila had reason to be proud of their family, for all of them were one day to become famous and bring glory to the name of Peixotto.

Sidney, the first son, became Major Peixotto, famed as the creator of the Columbia Park Boys Regiment and Band. The San Francisco boys, whom he trained and brought to a high state of perfection in their work, traveled the world over displaying their talents.

Jessica, the only daughter, was for many years active in social work in San Francisco. She was a member of the faculty of the University of California, from which she graduated in 1894, receiving her Ph.D. Degree in 1900. She later studied at the Sorbonne, in Paris, France. She was a member of the Charities Endorsement Committee, an associate of the San Francisco Settlement Council, and the Associated Charities. Jessica later became a lecturer and taught at the University of California. She is the authoress of several well known books, among which are "The French Revolution" and "Modern French Socialism."

Eustace, another son, is a Captain in the United States Army.

On October fifteenth, 1869, Ernest Clifford Peixotto, a third son, was born in San Francisco, destined to become the most famous member of this remarkable family.

HIS EARLY TRAINING

In 1872, due to the untiring efforts of William Alvord, the San Francisco Art Association saw its beginning, and two years later as a natural consequence the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art was organized. Twelve years after its inception the School of Fine Arts had already achieved an enviable reputation, numbering among its early students such names as Toby Rosenthal, Matilda Lotz, John Stanton, Alexander Hamilton and Evelyn McCormick. It was here that Ernest Peixotto in 1886 entered the classes that were to train the hand and mind of this talented youth, so that he not only made a name for himself, but reflected the greatest credit upon those teachers from whom he received his early training.

Ernest never tired of acknowledging the great good derived from his schooling under Emil Carlsen, not only one of the greatest still-life painters, but a peculiarly strong and effective teacher. The young Californian's artistic temperament received encouragement from everything, and his was

such a nature that a man of Carlsen's communicative force found him most congenial to work with.

During Ernest's first year of study at the Institute he made the acquaintance of Frank Norris, who was to become later a world renowned author. It is not generally known that Norris studied Art seriously before he turned to writing as a career. Peixotto and Norris often had gone to the Presidio Military Reservation in San Francisco, where in the Cavalry Barracks they sketched the restless horses, attempting to catch the movements of their heads, knee joints, and flexible fetlocks.

The friendship that developed between these two young students continued unbroken until the death of the famed author in San Francisco, due to an acute appendicitis attack, at the age of thirty-two.

THE LARK

Shortly before going to Paris to further his art training Ernest, for the first time, attracted the attention of the local art circles in San Francisco, by his artistic work in connection with "The Lark," an airy publication created by Gelett Burgess. Ernest did the illustrations and cover designs for this little magazine, which enjoyed a very profitable existence.

PARIS

In 1888, at the age of nineteen Ernest made his way to Paris, to further his art studies in this cradle of culture. Here he could work under the guidance of the greatest artists and instructors of the day. It was in the Academie Julien, which enjoyed a world wide reputation, that Ernest Peixotto received his most valuable training.

Here he studied for three years under Jules Lefebvre and Benjamin Constant, who were two of the most efficient and conscientious instructors in Paris. During these years Ernest also attended at times the Ateliers de Peinture, Sculpteur et Dessin, known to everyone through "Trilby."

At the same time Frank Norris decided to study art in Paris. He also attended the Academie Julien, and once again these two bosom friends attended classes together. Here they went on sketching tours to the Artillery Museum in the Hotel des Invalides, and made drawings of the lances and bucklers, and corselets, and the Italian suits-of-mail as well as the rich trappings of the horses. Norris became so deeply interested in these things that he decided to paint a large historic picture of the Battle of Crecy. Norris worked industriously on this canvas but one night became so discouraged with it that he decided to abandon the effort. Peixotto and another young art student, Guy Rose, were visiting Norris at the time and the huge canvas was offered to them.

A piece of equipment of that kind, to a pair of Latin quarter art students was as a gift from the gods, and they were thrilled with the prospect of working on the great canvas. Exactly what became of it is not known.

His years in Paris had a very definite influence on Peixotto's later work. In the quiet valleys in and around Geverney he spent one summer sketching nature in intimate form. Peixotto had the natural ability to absorb the scene about him and to reproduce it. His work then was done, with infinite care, so that the finished painting was complete in every respect, and no detail was left to the imagination.

PARIS SALON

In the spring of 1890, when the Paris Salon opened, Peixotto, although only twenty-one years old, grasped at this opportunity to exhibit. His extreme youth, and his comparatively limited experience, made this a "Coup de Main"; however his intensive study prior to the Salon showing had produced a greatly admired oil entitled "Le Vieux Garde de Chasse." This was a simple peasant scene, the figure of a man sitting before a fire, in a quiet farm house.

Again in 1891 he displayed a painting of a dimly lit church interior, sparsely dotted with figures, and full of devotional sentiment called "Dans L'Eglise." These works were both well received, the latter subsequently being exhibited at the Society of American Artists in New York City.

When Peixotto returned home late that fall he was heralded as one of the rising young artists of the country. In San Francisco he successfully exhibited at Vickery's Gallery. A press notice concerning this appeared in the Argonaut of September 18, 1893, Page 10:

"It will certainly be of interest to art lovers to know that Ernest C. Peixotto is to give an exhibition of paintings and sketches in oil, pastel, and pen and ink at Vickery's Gallery in 224 Post Street during the next three weeks. Mr. Peixotto is a young Californian who has won honor and fame abroad by his excellent work, and is soon to return to Europe to seek higher honors. His paintings have been exhibited in the Paris Salons of 1890 and 1891 and his masters were Benjamin Constant and Jules Lefebvre. His French landscapes that are exhibited were done in 1889 and 1890, chiefly from subjects in Normandy, and his California landscapes have been the work of the past summer. Visitors are welcome at the gallery and they will find much to admire in Mr. Peixotto's collection."

While in San Francisco Peixotto again renewed his friendship with Frank Norris, who had definitely given up art and was now making a name for himself as an author. Norris's first story "The Jongleur of Taillebois," was illustrated by Peixotto, this being one of his first assignments. It appeared in the Christmas number of the "Wave," a local weekly in San Francisco.

Before his return to France in 1895, Peixotto exhibited at the World's Fair in Chicago, 1893, and received high praise for his work from critics.

PARIS 1895

At the annual Paris Salon in 1895 Peixotto brought forth a remarkable oil entitled "Woman of Rijsoord." This was a study of a Dutch woman's head in dark subdued grays against a very settled background, a quiet color scheme, the head somewhat that of a Madonna. For this painting he received the Mention Honorable. The painting was later sent to the National Academy in New York City.

HOME AGAIN

Upon his return once more to San Francisco, shortly after this exhibition, Peixotto established a studio in the local artists quarter. He at once set to work on several portraits to be entered in the fall exhibition of the Mark Hopkins Art Institute show.

When the exhibit opened Peixotto hung a delightful portrait of a Miss Lewis of New Haven. A Blonde girl with a quaint puritan face, wearing a dark cloak on a dull background. The portrait was framed in ebony and attracted much admiration.

Peixotto had for several years been quite active in the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, and when the Club put on its annual Jinx, he was called upon to paint a cartoon for the ceremonial. The subject of the Jinx was to be "Trilby," and the picture was done as an apotheosis of Trilby in oils. In the play "Svengali" Peixotto took the role of Lit-

tle Billie, the Jinx being more or less of a travesty on the original Du Maurier's story of Trilby.

His recent successful exhibitions in Paris had filled Peixotto's thoughts with the notion of "art for art's sake," which he found very soon did not bring in a definite income, so he turned his efforts toward illustrating. His success in this was phenomenal. Professor Samuel Jacques Brun, of the Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, was among the first to acquire Peixotto's services as an illustrator. For Brun's "Tales of Languedoc," he drew forty or more illustrations, dealing with folk-lore stories in the south of France.

NEW YORK

In 1897 Peixotto again left San Francisco bound for New York, where he was engaged as an illustrator for some time.

He became a member of the art staff for Scribner's and Harper's Magazines, and in the spring that followed he settled himself for a full year of this congenial work for Henry Cabot Lodge, who at the time was writing "The Story of the Revolution." Before doing even a minor sketch for this great task, the illustrator made it his business to visit each scene to be reproduced personally, so that in his battlefield pictures, every detail would be historically correct.

Peixotto was thorough and strictly authentic to the core, once he took an assignment. Nothing was left to guess work, and this effect was always evident in his finished work. His ability as an illustrator became in such demand, that his commissions were abundant. Unlike many other noted artists, Peixotto not only gained fame but fortune as well for he always received adequate remuneration for his efforts.

About this time he did the sketches for Robert Louis Stevenson's "Letters," and illustrated four other books by several American authors of prominence.

Peixotto recognized that illustration differs from other forms of art expression. When a picture is reproduced, to be examined close at hand, there can be no hiding of careless or incompetent drawing. Peixotto therefore took extreme care in his illustrations and was especially noted for his architectural sketches.

PEIXOTTO MARRIES

On January twenty-eighth 1897, Ernest married Mary G. Hutchinson, in New Orleans. Mrs. Peixotto was also an artist of ability. Her art training had been under Emil Carlsen, Ernest's former instructor, at the Atelier Delecluse, in Paris, France. She exhibited many times in New York City, and in many other places. She was an active member in the

National Association for Women Painters and Sculptors, a member of the School Board of the Art League, and the School of Applied Design for Women. She had the great distinction of receiving the Cross of the Legion of Honor, from the Government of France. Mrs. Peixotto was also known for her writing, contributing at times to several eastern periodicals.

ANOTHER EUROPEAN VISIT

Two years following his marriage, Peixotto took his wife on a sketching trip through Touraine, France..

His fondness for architectural studies drew him to the beautiful Loire valley where he made sketches of the romantic Chateaux there, and of the magnificent Cathedrals. He had not traveled long through Southern France, before he was called to England to execute fifty illustrations for Roosevelt's "Life of Cromwell." Once again Peixotto made an intensive study of the historic backgrounds for his illustrations. So they spent some time in England as the logical place to acquaint himself with the English architecture and costumes of Cromwell's time.

LADY IN YELLOW

The following winter found Peixotto once more in a Paris studio, hard at work on "Lady in Yellow," one of his most notable paintings. It is a woman's figure with back turned, looking into a hand mirror, dressed in lemon yellow

satin, of brilliant texture, an orange corsage, and slippers of the same hue. This painting, after being exhibited in Paris, was sent to the San Francisco Art Association Show of 1903, to be shown there that spring. Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, the well known art patron, purchased it for her famous art collection. It was later sent by special request to exhibitions in Chicago and Philadelphia.

While traveling in the French Riviera, and along the shores of the Mediterranean, Peixotto drew illustrations for magazine articles written by Mrs. Edith Wharton, about quaint, out of the way places in the old world, which appeared in American periodicals in 1903. As he was on the permanent art staff for Scribner's Magazine, he received an assignment to cover the Paris Exposition and contributed an article with fifteen illustrations. Later he traveled through the picturesque villages of France writing articles and illustrating them. One of these subjects was a little fishing village near Marseilles. He then went to Italy, staying for a time in the Italian Riviera near Genoa, at a little town called Rapallo, about which he wrote another article for Scribner's.

The spring that followed found him among the Florentine Galleries and the summer he devoted to a driving trip from Turin to Verona, illustrating the scenes enroute. Later in the year he went to Venice, and then toured through Dal-

matia, later visiting Naples, Sicily, Malta, and Tunis, writing and sketching along the way. The outstanding works done on this trip were "Cliff Dwellers," "Marionettes," "Erasmus and the Cloister," "Impressions of Dalmatia," and "An Artist's Impressions of Malta."

PEIXOTTO'S FIRST BOOKS

Peixotto's first book "By Italian Seas," was written by him while touring through the old world, and deals with the country bordering on the Italian Riviera. It contains eighty illustrations which he executed while on his travels. His second book "Through the French Provinces," contains eighty-five illustrations. Upon his return to America again in 1906, two exhibitions were held in New York of his old world paintings, and by special request these pictures were sent for exhibition to the Art Institute, Chicago, the Detroit Museum of Art, and the Toledo Museum of Art. From 1907 to 1908 he was an instructor in the Art Institute of Chicago, and in 1909 was made an associate of the National Academy.

An interview given to Hanna Astrup Larsen, of the San Francisco Call on June 24th 1907, is quoted as follows:

"ERNEST PEIXOTTO TELLS OF HIS WORK IN THE OLD WORLD"

"If you ask me what I consider my real home I should say that my heart was in California. I admit it looks bad that I have not been here for three years and a half, but it is not be-

cause I have not planned to come again and again. Last year my plans were fully matured, when there were developments in my work that prevented me from leaving. I have had some good fortune lately; my exhibitions have sold well, and my book, "By Italian Seas," was something of a success, so naturally I am very happy about it. I wish I would stay in California always but I feel that I must get back to the East. I may exhibit here; however the Art Institute of Chicago has asked me to exhibit there in the autumn and will give me a room which I can fill as I wish. At the same time I am to give lectures to the students."

DUTCH BIRD CAGE

Following his San Francisco visit, and his return to the East, Peixotto went once more to Europe. He immediately set to work on an oil entitled "The Dutch Bird Cage." This he painted in the Paris studio of a Flemish artist, which largely accounts for the quaint interior, the softly modulated play of light and shadow, and the excellent treatment of the figure. After a successful exhibition in Paris this work of art was sent to the National Academy of Design in New York City to be displayed there.

While in Europe this time, Peixotto contributed to Scribner's the following illustrated articles, "Around Messina and Reggio," "Land of the Troubadors," and "Unfrequented Chateau near Fontainebleau." On his return later in 1909, he wrote "Notable Paintings in the Seattle Exposition" and "King's Highway in California," both for Scribner's Magazine.

PEIXOTTO AT CARMEL

In September, a year later Ernest journeyed to Monterey, California. Instead of opening a studio in Carmel as is usual among artists who work in that locality, Peixotto had in mind to camp near the ocean shore, and do his painting in the nearby Cypress Groves, made universally famous by numerous artists. He found, to his bitter disappointment, that in this section no camping is permitted and there were no residents with whom he might stay. The only house in the Grove was occupied by the State Forester in charge. Obtaining permission from this forester to stay near there, Peixotto pitched his tent at some distance from the house, and made arrangements to take his meals with the family.

From Peixotto's personal accounts of this interesting trip, the following is quoted:

"I spent the first evening stretching canvases, and then turned in. I was up very early in the morning, and with my sketching traps, was soon out on Pescadero Point. Weeks of work now ensued until I grew to know the form of every rock, the thrust of every tree, the changing aspects of sky and sea, the cool gray sunrises, and the warm ruddy sunsets. In these spots far down the road, near the breakers, not a soul came to intrude, not a voice but the great voice of Nature disturbed the eternal solitude. By the water's edge little forests of sea palms reared their flexible stems, yielding as the waves drove in, and as the rushing waters receded, straightened up, and shaking their hair like so many mermaids in the surf. Of all the features of the coast, unique of their kind are those fantastic cypresses that clothe its rocky

promontories with their strange growth, strong, durable as the rocks themselves, built to resist the stoutest gale. Away from the shore they grow more reasonable spreading their tops like giant umbrellas, full, thick, and resistant, and of a rich velvety green. But close to shore their lives are spent in constant battle with the wind, their young shoots lopped off, killed by the blast on the seaward side, forcing their growth constantly landward, and giving them a strange fleeting movement, that to my mind is their salient characteristic. If these trees are weird in the daytime, if their writhing forms stimulate the imagination in the fog, it is toward evening and at night, that they become positively unearthly. As I left the last Cypress behind, for the Grove ends at this point, and came upon the dunes, I perceived my friend the forester, fighting single-handed a vast forest fire. Coatless, and hatless I pitched in with him and we worked together for hours lighting counter fires, digging trenches, or beating the blazing grass with green pine boughs, until at length, relief came from town in the shape of a score of stalwart men. Then in September came the day when the South-west winds blew, next morning I awoke to hear rain pattering on the dry leaves. The long summer drought was broken, the rainy season was at hand."

Before being called East to an important mural decoration, Peixotto wrote one of his best known books, called "Romantic California," dealing, as the name implies, with the early days of the Golden West.

"MORTE D'ARTHUR"

Early in 1911, he received a commission from Mr. Henry A. Everett to do a mural for the spacious private library in his home in Cleveland, Ohio. This work, the "Morte d'Arthur" later became known as one of his most notable murals.

PEIXOTTO GOES TO SOUTH AMERICA

Traveling to out-of-the-way places in the world was always a hobby with Peixotto, and feeling the travel urge once again, he and his wife set out for South America. There in the land of the Gaucho and the Pampas, they traveled down the west coast to Lima, and then struck out into the interior, across Titicaca, and then to the south. During this trip he wrote and illustrated many articles dealing with his travels, some of which were, "Across Titicaca," and "To South Peru and the Arequipa."

Upon his return to San Francisco he received wide press notices, among which was the following:

The San Francisco Call, September 1, 1912.

"Ernest Peixotto has gone to San Ysidro ranch to finish the drawings for his next book. This book by the way, is to deal with certain phases of South America, in much the same way that "By Italian Seas" and 'Romantic California' dealt with their respective subjects. Peixotto gathered the material on a recent journey throughout the Southern Continent, and he has set himself to the formidable task, not only of completing the writing of the book, but of finishing the two hundred illustrations it is to contain. This means that, for the present at least he will be unable to do any painting, he expects however, to return to work at his easel when he goes back to New York."

Following his South American trip Peixotto returned to Italy and there made many sketches of Italian subjects which, in the following winter, were used in a large mural decoration, which was exhibited at the New York Architectural League. This mural was purchased by Charles Platt, the

well known New York architect, and was placed in a building being built by him for a client. Mr. Platt was known to exercise extreme care in selecting decorative work to grace the walls of his buildings, and his choice of Peixotto's mural for this purpose, was a well deserved compliment.

FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

For several years preceding the great war, Peixotto was kept busy writing and painting in his studio, and at home. During these years he had published an artistic criticism entitled, "The Fragonard Masterpieces in the Morgan Collection," and illustrated the book, "Cadenabbia," for Mary Waddington, the well known authoress.

Again he wrote articles on his European travels, mainly through Spain and Portugal, some of which were "Lisbon and Contra," "North Portugal and its Romarios," and "Portugal's Battle Abbeys."

ANOTHER NOTEWORTHY PAINTING

To the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, in 1915, he sent a painting entitled, "The Pool, La Granja," which was very well received. A year later he wrote an absorbing article the "Taos Society of Artists," which is highly descriptive of Indian life, and deals with the art center near Santa Fe, in the great Southwest. At this time he also wrote and illustrated "Our Hispanic Southwest," "Along the Mexican Border," "Charm of New Orleans," "City of Holy Faith," and "Old Texan Capitol."

THE AMERICAN ARTIST AT WAR

At the beginning of the great war, Peixotto was living in France, and in the fourth month of that tragic period he returned to the United States with his mind filled with thoughts which were soon expressed in his article that appeared in the May 1st issue of Scribner's Magazine. The following has been taken from this article, entitled:

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR ARTISTS IN WAR TIME."

"....The French Government awakened to the fact that the artists of its country should not be sacrificed, that there were very useful things that they could do. So it directed its efforts toward employing them in work for which they were especially fitted. It sent the more vigorous ones to the front with special permits from the War Department, to make sketches from life scenes in the trenches, in the avantpostes, in the hospitals, on the battle-fields, and in ruined villages. Many were employed in making topographical drawings, and those who remained behind the lines worked for the great propaganda."

It was on April 27, 1917, that the artists of America mobilized at the request of Mr. George Creel, Chairman of the Committee on Public Information. The Division of Pictorial Publicity was born of this appeal, and Charles D. Gibson was appointed Chairman, and at that instant some of the American artists entered the World War.

The prime idea of this propaganda organization was to create public sentiment favorable to the success of the allied cause and the prosecution of the war. The artist was urged to depict in his work the sacrifices of war and like propaganda, to instill into the people the courage to carry

on, and to whip the emotions of a naturally peaceful people into a frenzy of patriotic spirit, and at the same time picture the psychology behind the demands made to the public. All of this work however, was not to be done at home, and when the American Army went to France, Peixotto was also called to serve his country. Under an order from John J. Pershing, Mr. Gibson's Committee was offered eight Captains commissions. The ultimate selection of this group was left to the Division of Pictorial Publicity, and to three Army Officers.

The eight men to receive these commissions were: Ernest Peixotto, Wallace Morgan, W. J. Aylard, Harry Townsend, Harvey Dunn, Walter Jack Duncan, George Harding and Andre Smith.

Adeline Adams tells of the work done by these artist-soldiers, on the battlefields of France, in her article in the Magazine of Art, Vol. 12; Page 191;

"....In a few short years it will be too late for us to remember our country's part in the great War, so as to keep forever a definite record of the battles and personalities involved in that bitter conflict. The first steps were taken in the spring of 1918, when the War Department sent to the American Front eight 'official artists,' to make sketches of our soldiers at their tasks. The number eight may seem to match but meagerly with the number of artists sent by Britain, Canada, and other countries, but let that pass, for our eight made good. Their drawings are properly honored, by permanent places in our New National Museum. The historic painting of our eight artists should be supplemented by paintings

such as those made by Ernest Peixotto, one of the eight. Without such paintings, our war records are strongly incomplete. With a wide experience in the triple role of traveler, writer, and painter, together with a loving and intimate knowledge of France, her men and her cities, her land and her language, Captain Peixotto was ideally fitted for the work assigned him, and could attack it without lost motion. Aware of the inevitable incompleteness of even the most conscientious drawings in black and white (at least when considered as historic records), he constantly made color notes, and sketches of historic scenes, at times under fire. Thus his sketches for the painting of ruined Esnes, lying beneath hill No. 304 in the faint gold of September 26, 1918, the blue and rosy purple of coming day, were made early in the morning, at the beginning of the Argonne offensive, amidst incessant clamor of guns, our artillery being hidden all through the ruined houses, and tier upon tier on the hill slopes.

"In the landscapes of nearby Montzeville, we are again aware of our artillery obliterating itself among the ruins of the town, at dawn, while an observation balloon, a huge, busy sky worm aloft over a greenish horizon, watches the effect of the fire. These two, Montzeville and Esnes, once smiling villages, lie a few miles south of lofty Montfaucon, that eagle's nest and panoramic center, from which the Kaiser viewed Verdun, while north of Montfaucon is Brieulles, hotly contested for after the first rush of the offensive we halted. Here the painter has depicted in broad nervous strokes the venerable chateau literally cut in two by an air bomb under an agitated sky that breathes pity and terror, a handful of our men climb a foreground of wreckage. Another picture shows Varennes, taken by our troops on the second day of that first offensive; Varennes, that old French town we knew through our Dumas, if not through our Michelet, since it was there that Louis the Sixteenth, fleeing from France, was stopped and turned back toward the guillotine.

"Every artist has a thousand eyes, and here, as so often at the front, Mr. Peixotto's Spanish eye saw in the shattered bulk of that building, upreared above the troubled emerald waters of the Aire, and above the quay with our camions the semblance of a picador's horse disemboweled, but not yet down. Since Peixotto is an artist long trained in seizing the vital aspects of bewildering, unfamiliar things, every one of his war landscapes, vivid records of scenes justly observed in mass and details, will bring home to our soldiers, the life they knew on French soil.

"One of the most impressive of these landscapes is that of Charteves, near Chateau-Thierry, the shattered church tower at Charteves still aloft like a naked poniard. The sketches made for this picture were made in July 1918, while the Chateau-Thierry pocket was being wiped off the map.

"Who can doubt the value of such pictures in our National Gallery! No photograph can give a just idea of their color, any more than of the places themselves."

THE POST WAR FINE ARTS ACADEMY NEAR PARIS

Soon after the signing of the Armistice, the War Department set its approval upon a scheme to establish an educational system for American soldiers in France. The Department of Fine Arts was placed under the special direction of George S. Hallman, with Archibald Brown organizing the Department of Architecture, Leslie Cauldwell taking charge of the Department of Interior Decoration, and Ernest Peixotto was asked to organize the Department of Painting. The idea of an army establishing an art school for troops in the field was novel and unprecedented; yet more than any

other class could students, who had been drawn from their work in American Art Schools to do duty in the Army, profit by their sojourn in France. The Pavillion de Bellevue, a hotel-restaurant, situated on a hill above Suresnes, was selected because of its proximity to Paris, and the opportunity for students to visit famous studios of such painters as Bonnat, Besnard, Cormon, and others.

A group of distinguished lecturers were invited to address the classes, and they were struck by the eagerness of the men, their quickness to absorb new ideas, and their untiring capacity for work. One of Peixotto's pupils informed him, that the students felt that the three months they had spent at Bellevue had amply compensated them for the two years they had lost, while serving in the Army. From this School sprang the idea of having an art center in the Palace of Fontainebleau, where American students would be allowed to study, if only for a short period, to refresh their minds with new ideas, and see for themselves what was going on in the art world of France.

PEIXOTTO'S FAMOUS MURAL WORK

Since 1924 Peixotto devoted practically all of his efforts toward mural painting, for which he has an enviable reputation, the greater part of this work being done in New York and in California.

There is a large mural in the Seaman's Bank of New York, in Wall Street, another in the Bank of New York, and one also in the Century Club, and in many other rooms in New York City. He is also well represented in the Hispanic Museum, New York City, in the National Gallery of New York, and of Washington, D.C. His war paintings are preserved as historic documents in the Smithsonian Institute.

AN IRISH LANDSCAPE IN A CALIFORNIA ROOM

Mr. William B. Bourn, of San Mateo, California, called upon Ernest Peixotto in 1925, to paint a series of mural panels for his Peninsula home. From the American Magazine of Art, Vol. 17, page 195, of April 1926, is quoted the following press notice:

"Ernest Peixotto has recently completed and put into place, in California, a series of important landscape panels for a ballroom in a great Georgian country house designed by Willis Polk, near San Mateo. The spacious room measures seventy-two feet in length, thirty-eight feet in width, and twenty-five feet in height, and the problem of its decoration was no mean one.

"Divided as it is by pilasters and columns into large panels, the two most important of which measure fourteen by twenty-one feet, it was first proposed to fill in these panels with tapestries, but the owner Mr. Bourn, had a much more personal and original idea. Mr. and Mrs. Bourn also own the famous estate, called 'Muckross,' on the Lakes of Killarney, one of the show places of the Emerald Isle. Muckross Abbey is on the place, and at Muckross

house Queen Victoria stayed during her sojourn in Ireland. Mr. Bourn's idea was to have great formalized panels painted for the California room which would show the beauty of his Irish estate. Mr. Peizotto was commissioned to paint these panels and went last year to Ireland to make his studies, then to California to study the room itself, its lighting, its scale, etc., and during the last year has completed the panels. While in a sense realistic in design and sufficiently true to nature, as to be easily recognizable by anyone who knows Muckross, the compositions have been strengthened and formalized by the introduction of carefully studied tree forms, combined with a treatment of rocks and foregrounds and particularly of cloud forms in the sky, so as to form a decorative design. The room is toned a water green, with gold and crystal in the lighting fixtures, and gold in the furniture and curtains. The panels have been held down in color to practically three tones, ivory in the skies, grays in the distance, and a sort of ruddy purple in the foreground, thus maintaining the flatness of the walls, and giving a unity to the whole room, the general effect being one of quiet distinction."

A NEW YORK MURAL

In 1929 Peixotto executed a mural for Mr. Farris Russell of Long Island. The room decorated is an elongated octagon. To emphasize the garden Mr. Peixotto utilized classic garden scenes for the theme of his paintings which cover the entire wall surface. Soft blues and greens predominate, but the general tone is gay and colorful. The feeling of atmosphere, so characteristic of this artist's work, lends pleasing softness and beauty.

ANOTHER CALIFORNIA MURAL

A year later Peixotto was commissioned to paint a series of murals for Mr. and Mrs. John C. Cravens, of Pasadena, California. Regarding this work the American Magazine of Art, Vol. 21, page 237, had the following to say:

"Ernest Peixotto has lately completed a series of mural paintings for the residence of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Cravens in Pasadena, California, which were exhibited this season at the Grand Central Galleries, New York. The house in which these paintings are to be placed, was designed by Louis Hobart, in the style of the French Chateau of the seventeenth century, with high peaked roof, and brick walls trimmed with stone. The clever panels which Mr. Peixotto has executed are intended to act as a tie between the formal gardens, which overlook the Arroyo, and the interior of the house. They occupy all of the wall space of the gallery, a long room which serves as entrance to all the large rooms of the main floor. The visitor enters this gallery in the center of one of the long halls, with immediately opposite him, the large central panel, twenty-one feet long and ten feet high. This has been designed so as to give as much added width to the room as possible, a wide garden perspective laid out in the manner of Lenotre, with broad parterres, fountains, grottos, and pools, walled in by avenues of trees, and leading to the chateau seen in the distance. The color scheme is held down to a series of quiet tones, murals in quality which will lend dignity to the gallery, and be in accord with the warm Trianon gray of the woodwork. Mr. Peixotto is President of the Mural Painters Society, the First Vice-President of the Architectural League of New York City."

A MURAL OF GREAT BEAUTY NEAR FLORENCE, ITALY

One of Ernest Peixotto's most ornate mural decorations was executed in a splendid old Villa near Florence, Italy. The reception room walls of the quattrocento villa had previously been done in fresco by Gardner Hale, and when Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Spelman of New York City bought the house, they decided to have the walls of the music room painted as well. Peixotto was commissioned to do this work, and, accompanied by his wife, moved into a little villano across the road from the building. Here he established his living quarters, and a work-shop, in which the cartoons and sketches were made. This work was based on sketches and memories of Venice and of the Italian Riviera, painted freely on canvas, which was later marouflé to the wall. When the paneling was completed, the walls were painted a deep cream color, with the mouldings of a lighter tone, and between the double mould of each panel, a field of turquoise green. This color was repeated and intensified in the water that appears in the foreground of each panel, and the foregrounds themselves were all held together with a ruddy purplish tone.

In the fall of the same year, 1931, Peixotto was called back to New York once again, to paint a mural for the foyer of a Fifth Avenue apartment house. The theme used by him for this work was that of a panoramic view of New York's skyline, as seen from a downtown roof-garden.

MURAL FOR THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BICENTENARY

In 1932, under the auspices of the Mural Painters Society of New York City, fourteen murals, done by thirteen American Artists were installed in the National Gallery in Washington, D. C., in commemoration of the George Washington Bicentenary. Ernest Peixotto, and Arthur Covey, considered representative of the best in traditional mural painting in America, were selected in the group of thirteen to head the roster of artists contributing to this work. Peixotto, who was the President of the Society, displayed two works "Lafayette with French Allies," and "Washington with Generals Knox and Lincoln." The paintings were planned as a unit, despite the differing technique of the artists, and the murals when installed represented an inspiring review of American History through the Revolutionary Period.

CONCLUSION

At this writing, Mr. Peixotto is continuing his colorful career in New York City, where he is active in art work. His present address is 137 East 66th Street, New York City, N. Y., and the Credit Lyonnaise in Paris, France,

Peter Robertson has given us, in his highly expressive manner of writing, a fascinating description of Ernest Peixotto, the man, and his work; in the Out-West Magazine, of 1903, Vol. 19, page 133:

"If you met Ernest Peixotto on the street, as you looked at his spare, short figure, his gentle, magnetic and sympathetic eyes, you would turn and look again and say; 'Surely an artist of some kind,' not the wild, hair-brained order of Bohemians; not of the far off, gazing into the infinite kind, not the unkempt, long-haired fellow, not the bitter poverty-stricken, hate-everybody sort of a chap. A face wonderfully expressive, thoughtful far more than intelligent--a luminant, artistic face in fact.

"Eyes that are not dreaming, yet have the soft absorptive quality which light and become penetrating, quizzical, but altogether kindly, when he begins to speak. He is not a loud emphatic arguer on art. he is not a disputatious excitable enthusiast, yet an enthusiast he is, only his enthusiasm glows and burns, and seems always to come from the very inner consciousness.

"His censure of other artistic work is always gentle, his belief in himself is more a hope of talent, than a self-satisfied assurance of genius. He is an artist, indeed so singularly kindly, so quiet, so unusually sane that his personal qualities might well cast a doubt upon his genius, if his work were not there to prove its value.

"In his Venetian pictures one feels Italy, the blue sky of Italy is there, the architecture is almost in absolute detail yet the warm sun illuminates it, and Peixotto puts poetry into the whole scene. There is even the laziness of the land, and one can hear the splash of the gondola and fancy he listens to the Italian melody.

"Not only in Venice, not only in the French Villages, in every subject there is a familiarity with places, people, and scenery. There is a feeling as one stands and looks at the canvas that there is no guess work. That rarest of all efforts, atmosphere, that carries one, he does not know how, to the spot of the picture, is everywhere. There is something

intangible, but absolutely felt in these canvases, something subtle, the ideal that lies behind and saturates all scenes. The very hardness of some of the buildings strikes one as unmistakably true. One does not have to be told that Peixotto has traveled where he has painted, it is in evidence. People who have been where he has worked hardly need a plate on the picture, so faithfully does he seem to catch the atmosphere, the characteristics, the peculiarities, the color of his subjects.

"His conscientiousness, his skill, and his hard work, have taught him the solid foundation of things, and his temperament has found the ideal, the beautiful, the psychological, in the real of everyday life, and in the different phases of material nature."

ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

Le Vieux Garde de Chasse (1890)
 Dans L'Eglise (1891)
 Woman of Rijsoord (1895)
 Lady in Yellow (1900) Paris, France
 Dutch Bird Cage (1907) Paris, France
 The Pool, La Granja (1915)
 Mural for home of Mr. Henry A. Everett (1911)
 Cleveland, Ohio, entitled "Morte d'Arthur"
 Mural in Seaman's Bank (1924) New York City
 Mural in Bank of New York (1924) New York City
 Mural in Century Club (1924) New York City
 Mural for home of William B. Bourn (1925)
 San Mateo, California
 Mural for home of Mr. Farris Russell (1929)
 Long Island, New York
 Mural for home of Mr. John C. Cravens (1930)
 Pasadena, California
 Mural for home of Mr. Timothy Spelman (1931)
 Florence, Italy
 Mural for George Washington Bicentenary (1932)
 Washington, D.C.
 Mural for home of Mr. Henry A. Everett, (1911)
 Cleveland, Ohio, entitled "Morte d'Arthur."

EXHIBITIONS:

Paris, France:

Paris Salon, 1890-91-95

New York City:

National Academy of Design, 1908

Chicago, Illinois:

Chicago World's Fair, 1895

Special Request Exhibition, 1903, 1907

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

Special Request Exhibition, 1903

Toledo, Ohio:

Special Request Exhibition, 1907

Detroit, Michigan:
Special Request Exhibition, 1907

San Francisco, California:
Vickery's Gallery, 1892
Mark Hopkins Institute, 1896
San Francisco Art Association, 1900, 1903
Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915

AWARDS:

Honorable Mention, Paris Salon, 1895
Painting, "Woman of Rijsoord"
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, 1921
Paris, France
Officer of the Legion of Honor, 1925
Paris, France

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Professor Samuel Brun's, "Tales of Languedoc," 1896
Henry Cabot Lodge's, "Story of the Revolution," 1897
Robert Louis Stevenson's, "Letters," 1897
Roosevelt's, "Life of Cromwell," 1899

CLUBS:

Member:
Bohemian Club, San Francisco, California
Century Club, (vice-president) New York City
McDowell Club, (ex. President) New York City
Coffee House, New York City
The Players Club, New York City
The Salmagundi Club, New York City
National Society of Mural Painters, New York City
Society of Illustrators, New York City
Allied Artists of America, New York City
Architectural League (President) New York City
Interallied American Club, Paris, France
The American Club, Paris, France
Societe des Artistes Francais, Paris, France

OFFICIAL POSITIONS HELD:

Director Department of Mural Painting
Beaux Arts Institute, New York City
Director Atelier of Painting, A.E.F., France
Director Department of Mural Painting,
Bellevue, France
Instructor of Painting, Chicago School of
Fine Arts, Chicago, Illinois

LITERARY WORKS:

By Italian Seas, 1906
Through the French Provinces, 1910
Romantic California, 1911
Pacific Shores from Panama, 1913
Our Hispanic Southwest, 1916
The American Front, 1919
The Fa^rgonard masterpieces in the Morgan
collection--an artistic criticism.

ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

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- American Magazine of Art
Vol. 12, Page 191; 1920
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IDENTIFICATION OF ORIGINAL SOURCES

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Gregory (California, San Francisco)

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AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART See MAGAZINE OF ART
Arntzen and Rainwater Q229; Karpel S166; ULS

ERNEST CLIFFORD PEIXOTTO

- b. October 15, 1869 San Francisco, California
- d. December 6, 1940 New York, New York

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NEW YORK TIMES

December 7, 1940 p. 17

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

December 8, 1940, p. 19

December 10, 1940, p. 13

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ROMANTIC CALIFORNIA (1910)

PACIFIC SHORES FROM PANAMA (1913)

OUR HISPANIC SOUTHWEST (1916)

A REVOLUTIONARY PILGRIMAGE, BEING AN ACCOUNT OF A SERIES OF VISITS TO BATTLEFIELDS & OTHER PLACES MADE MEMORABLE BY THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION (1917)

THE AMERICAN FRONT (1919)

THROUGH SPAIN AND PORTUGAL (1922)

A BACCHIC PILGRIMAGE: FRENCH WINES (1932)

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Biography and Works

"NAVAJO GATEWAY"--ARIZONA, 1914.



PALACE OF THE LEGION OF HONOR

FRANCIS JOHN McCOMAS

One of the West's greatest painters, Francis J. McComas, seems to have been the exception to the rule that artists must struggle through poverty and discouraging periods to attain their rewards. Mr. McComas appears to have been one of the favored few who know what they want, go after it, and succeed from the start. His life as a painter has been a constant rise toward fame.

It was the appreciation and encouragement he received after coming to the United States which led him to throw himself more seriously into his work; and that success has rewarded his devotion to art is shown by the fact that his works are to be found in nearly every gallery of importance in America.

YOUTH AND EARLY TRAINING

From the South Seas to California--from the small island of Tasmania, south of the southern tip of Australia, to our lovely land of color and romance came Francis J. McComas.

Born in the village of Fingal, Tasmania, on October 1, 1874, the son of Richard Newton and Julia (Davies) McComas this Briton was sent to Australia for his education. At that time Tasmania was a sparsely settled, isolated land. Sheep raising, coal and gold mining were its principal

resources. The island had not yet become a part of the Commonwealth of Australia. The facilities for higher education or for artistic training were so limited as to be almost nil.

So the youth went to Australia where he enrolled at the Sydney Technical College. Beginning his art career as an illuminator with the firm of John Sands, of Sydney, but becoming dissatisfied with this somewhat restricted field, he took to sketching from nature, his "favorite sketching ground being Double Bay Gully and the now vanished Bondi Lagoons."

In his first attempts, his drawing was a somewhat neglected feature, but by degrees his art began to mature and his method ceased to have the sketchiness which marked his earlier work.

Tales of the opportunities in America reached his ears. California was enjoying prosperity and San Francisco was in the midst of the lavish era of the "gay nineties." Newly rich Americans were out-buying each other--even in matters of art! So this young man, now twenty-four years old, set sail for a great adventure. He sailed the South Seas and came North, arriving in the United States in 1898.

EARLY RECOGNITION

Although largely self-taught he studied for some years with Arthur Mathews, famous artist and teacher in San Francisco. The first mention of his work, in a leading San Francisco weekly, comes from the Argonaut of March 20, 1899 which says:

"Frank McComas, the young Australian water-colorist, will soon go to Chicago to exhibit his work, and then will try a new field in Mexico. After that London will be his home and place of study."

From London to Paris is a short distance and so we read, in the autumn of the following year, that he had returned from France. While in Paris he studied at the Julian Academy.

A VISIT TO HIS OLD HOME

Quoting again from the Argonaut of October 15, 1900:

"Frank McComas, but recently returned to San Francisco from Paris has gone for a short season to his Australian home. It is understood that he will return to California in the early spring. He takes with him many California sketches, and among them a very original Leona Heights landscape."

ONE MAN SHOW WINS GLOWING PRAISE

Returning from his visit, we hear nothing of his work until in 1902 when he held a show at Vickery's, in Post Street. Here he exhibited twenty-four pictures and received glowing praises from the critics. One expresses it in this manner:

"They are just so many little poems, quatrains and lyrics that will linger forever in the memory, with here and there, among them, one that rises to the dignity of a full fledged sonnet, and has majesty and symphonic breadth of form and subject that reminds one of the best works of Keats. One would not willingly miss having seen and studied this little volume of poems; they are in themselves an education in direc-

tion in which we all--for we are all Philistines in the main--have everything to learn, from men like Mr. McComas."

GOOD FORTUNE AND A TRIP TO NEW PLACES

During the late summer of 1904 Mr. McComas decided to go to London. He had many fine paintings and wished to exhibit them abroad. But on his way he stopped in Chicago and New York and disposed of all of his work in the United States. The next we hear of him he is painting in Tangier. While abroad he visited London, Paris, and several cities in Spain which occupied his time until his return to California in October. As a companion on this trip he had with him Dr. Arnold Genthe, who also was intent upon his art. Mr. McComas brought back some twenty-five scenes done in Spain. In commenting upon these pictures a writer on the San Francisco Call, October 23, 1904 reminds us that:

"...his landscapes do not differ essentially from his famous California studies, because, as a matter of fact, Old Spain is wonderfully akin to New Spain....when it comes to color."

After a stay of only a few weeks the artist departed for Santa Barbara to continue his work.

GREAT IMPROVEMENT OF STYLE NOTED

It was only a few months until he returned to San Francisco and again exhibited at Vickery's. There were twenty pictures in this showing. The critics of several newspapers and magazines published in San Francisco were warm in

their praise of this group, which were all impressionistic and which showed a great improvement of style. His glaring colors, weird shapes and flatness noted in previous work had been subdued, but enough of the fantastic quality so noticeable in his early work, had been retained to give his pictures distinction. Spanish and Californian landscapes comprised the lot and in all of them there glowed a mellowness of tone, a warmth of color and technical excellence that made them outstanding and desirable. His California scenes were noted for their great, green oaks which he loved to paint. In his pictures he was able to portray their grandeur and their immense size. Among his Spanish pictures outstanding numbers were his "Gibraltar," "The Bridge of Ronda," and "Spanish Afternoon," three distinct types. The splendid success these pictures met with in New York and Chicago was repeated in San Francisco, which had become the McComas home by adoption, the finest compliment a man may pay to a city he prefers to live in.

A SOCIETY WEDDING

The San Francisco papers gave detailed accounts of the marriage on June 28, 1905 of the daughter of Mrs. Louis Baldwin Parrott, the beautiful Marie Louise Parrott and Francis McComas. The wedding, which took place in Trinity Church, was one of the most interesting events of the month, coming as the culmination of the romance of the society belle and

the talented young artist. It is interesting to note that among the ushers was another artist well-known in the Bay region, Mr. Charles Rollo Peters, and the best man was Willis Polk, famous San Francisco architect.

PAINTINGS COMPARED TO MUSIC

The following Febraury 1906, Mr. McComas gave another exhibition at Vickery's. By this time the critics were at a loss to find enough adjectives to describe his work. One review from the Argonaut, February 10, 1906 stresses:

"....a restful atmosphere of refinement which produces an essential sort of pleasure, while the pictures themselves produce spiritual stimulation and wonder. McComas' manner, always distinguished, becomes more so with every new expression. His present exhibition is an amazing advance over the last. Some of his older pictures are absolutely complete, even mature, but his work today shows that that of yesterday was only experimental. In the delicate and difficult art of water-color painting, an artist can learn something from every picture he paints. This is what McComas seems to have done. He has advanced the technique of his chosen medium wonderfully, maintaining always a marked individuality that enters one's consciousness and becomes a new form of Beauty.

"As McComas has created a new phase of pictorial art, so has he created a new form of beauty, which one recognizes by the spell comparable only to that of beautiful music and not wholly interpretable in words.

"McComas has advanced in every department of his art, in composition, in color, in drawing, in modeling, and in appreciation of values. With his surer knowledge of drawing he has achieved the softness of edge that seemed once to baffle him. In certain pictures however, which he has carried rather far, there is careful and successful modeling in certain planes,

while others exhibit a flatness indicative of timidity and reminiscent of his earlier periods."

"No such fault can be found in his pictures, 'The Oak Woods,' 'Las Casitas,' 'The River,' 'Casitas Road,' 'The Farm Well,' and many others in this truly notable collection.

"The spiritual qualities of the artist's earlier endeavors are intensified and strengthened in his latest work. There is still in his paintings the poetry of all things wistful in Nature, blue skies tender with light, clouds of the hue of old ivory, the silver atmosphere enveloping golden, sunlit trees; shadows unsearchable, and now and then, a glimpse of a chrysoprase sea; but there is more of strength and less of dream.

"He has lost nothing of poetry; he has only altered its quality. There is poetry and mystery in such a picture as 'Las Casitas,' but there is also bigness and nobility, almost grandeur; it is sensational in its sheer loveliness, dramatic but not theatrical.

"But it becomes more and more impertinent and futile to attempt to describe or analyze McComas' pictures; each in its beauty, seems like a single phase in a symphony.

"They are a great art expression that has grown here in the West, virtually untouched by exterior influence, and which bids fair to be acclaimed some day in the world.

"They are the expression of a sensitive and strong artistic personality, which sees Nature with the eyes of genius and interprets it with the brain of a poet and the hand of a master."

A LONDON EXHIBITION

Later in the year, August, his work was being shown before enthusiastic art patrons of London. The leading artistic magazine of the world, "Studio," was giving him extensive notices and reproducing some of his pictures in its

pages. One of those shown was entitled "The Pines, Monterey" and owned by Dr. Harry Tevis, of San Francisco.

SOUTH TO SANTA BARBARA

Many of the artists departed to spend the winter in Santa Barbara. By September of 1906, McComas, Breuer, Wores, and Welch were settled in that delightful city and doing some of their best work.

PRESENTED AT COURT

The early months of 1907 found Mr. and Mrs. McComas in Athens, where they had the honor of being presented at Court. While enjoying their stay in that city they had rooms overlooking the Parthenon, and Mr. McComas found the conditions and atmosphere ideal for his painting.

THE ADOBE OF THE ROSEBUSH

While in California Mr. McComas had an equally delightful, although very different, studio. Here he painted in a picturesque adobe over which a rosebush of enormous size reached, and which was called "The Adobe of the Rosebush," made historic by a romance of the long ago. From this studio came the pictures which gave him a world-wide reputation as a water-colorist.

ANOTHER LONDON TRIUMPH

By April of 1908, he had gone to London where an exhibition of his work was to be seen at the Carfax Gallery.

This attracted large attendance and won for him high praise from the London Times. The critics there likened him to Cotman, and Cotman at his best. One remarks that "McComas simplifies everything, but he never simplifies to evade difficulties."

One of his paintings from Greece was especially liked. It was the "Athenian Temples," with the Parthenon standing strong, yet delicate, against the sky, and a grove of giant olives in the foreground. A London critic says that:

"McComas paints trees as other artists paint the nude. 'The New Forest,' is really a group of tree portraits. In another work, 'L'isle d'Ulysse' at Corfu one feels the need of some distraction from the order and severity of the forms. 'The Bridge of Ronda,' is a finely composed picture. Among the smaller works, 'The Island, Corfu' is simple and delicate, and 'Ronda Farms' is simple and severe."

THE ARTIST RETURNS HOME

July of the same year saw McComas again in California and his friends at the Bohemian Club were welcoming him back to San Francisco. By the middle of November he was holding a "one-man" show at Vickery's, with twenty-two water-colors, an oil, and eight charcoal studies. The papers remarked upon the fact that on the third day of the show seven water-colors and four charcoal sketches had been sold. McComas received large prices for his work, and by the end of the exhibition had sold every picture, which would have been surprising in view of the times but for the fact that there

was rarely a finished picture in his studio, each being contracted for in advance or sold almost at the instant of its completion.

A studio, on Post Street, was opened in April of 1909 and he was furnishing it and preparing to have "open house" for the artists and their friends of the city. It must have been a harmonious setting for his pictures, with its tapestries of low toned yellow and the ceiling of French gray. Restfulness and quiet beauty with a minimum of furnishings made it a charming and wholly satisfying apartment, but even while furnishing this delightful place to work, he was planning on a trip to the Arizona desert. He wished to develop along a new line and felt that he would like to live in the desert at least until the first of the year. Mrs. McComas did not feel equal to the task of "roughing it" among the canyons of the South and so remained at San Francisco, making her home at a hotel. During his absence he rented his studio to Mary Herrick Ross.

SEVERAL MONTHS IN NEW MEXICO

Returning from Arizona and New Mexico in the spring of 1910, his work was again displayed at Vickery's. This time there were thirty-eight pictures on view, nearly all of them desert pictures. Sunshine and shadow, the desert in mid-day sun or softened with the deeper blues and purples of on-coming night. Also he showed two scenes from near Monterey, one especially fine called "The Road." It was a sunny

stretch of road with deep shade where the live-oaks met above it. Of the desert pictures the most striking was "The Zum Pass," a large painting of the New Mexican desert at sunset. A pale and delicate study was "The Wide Open" and a contrasting dark one the "Mariaso." "Sunshine" in tones of yellow-brown was of a valley flooded with sunshine. "The Mesas of New Mexico" ran the whole gamut of colors from pale cream to red to somber shadows in the foreground. "A Navajo Village" on the side of a brown, red hill beneath a sky of pale yellow showed three huts of the Indians with several figures, the shadows making a bold contrast. This was one of the most popular of the pictures.

Again in December 1910, he had five paintings on view at Vickery's. One which attracted much attention was a group of three pictures in one frame, each a scene from near Carmel.

NEW YORK EXHIBITION

The Macbeth Galleries in New York were holding a show at the same time, with eighteen of his pictures, most of them his desert studies. These were for the most part of Indians and the bad lands of the desert. "Ruin Rock" and "Walpi" were two which received much comment. From New York he returned to Monterey and San Francisco to participate in the Artists' Show at the Bohemian Club, San Francisco, which was held soon after Easter. The Bohemian Club includes in

its roster some of the greatest men of the West and their exhibitions are always red letter days in the Art World.

A MEMBER OF MONTEREY SOCIETY

By 1912 the personality of the summer colony of Monterey had changed considerably. Instead of Bohemia it had become a real society center. Mr. and Mrs. McComas had moved into their beautiful new place which they had built near the Presidio and Mrs. McComas' sister, Mrs. Parker Whitney, had taken a house in town. Mrs. John D. Spreckels and her family had taken the Charles Rollo Peters' home on the Carmel Hill. There was much entertaining and activity in the quaint old town during the summer months. In December Gump's in San Francisco had secured some excellent examples of his work, which they exhibited in their gallery on Post Street. It was rather difficult to get pictures from Mr. McComas, as his work found a ready market without the aid of art dealers. The Wasp of May 31, 1913 remarks that Mrs. John Spreckels had decided to take up art seriously. In commenting upon this it says:

"Social distinction is unquestionably an asset to a painter. An example of that fact was furnished by Francis McComas when he married Miss Parrott, of San Francisco. There was a rush of the nouveau riche to the clever water-color painter's studio to give him commissions, and his bank account increased accordingly."

THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

The great Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 gave McComas an excellent opportunity to display his work before

the eyes of hundreds of thousands of visitors. He also was one of the jury, which planned the art exhibit and which decided upon the prizes and awards to be given. His own work was displayed in several galleries along with other famous California painters. He and his former teacher, Arthur Mathews, shared honors in Gallery No. 76, and it was said of him at the time that next to Mathews, he is the most original, powerful and prominent of the Western artists. To quote from "The Inscription from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915":

"A certain sense of quality, that subtle, inner attribute which is so hard to isolate and precisely define, but which is invariably present in all authentic Art, no matter what kind it may be, distinguishes this painter's very remarkable work. Christian Brinton termed him 'the Whistler of the West,' and the impression of giving only the quintessence of his subject, which McComas' pictures produce is, indeed, akin to the selective genius of the great master, although the spiritual atmosphere which is the lovely envelope of Whistler's work is not present in that of McComas, which on the contrary is definite and firm, at times even to hardness. His place among the most original younger men in America is unquestioned. Few painters in oil can use their pigments with more strength than McComas exerts in his water color medium."

The paintings which he displayed in this room were his Arizona desert scenes and studies of Monterey where he had his studio at this time. It was remarked at the time that he had, in a word, successfully expressed the diversity of Nature as it exists in different countries and climates.

"....cherry blossoms do not express Japan, gondolas do not express Venice, mantillas Spain, nor snow Switzerland. If California had more painters like McComas, we would not only have Art, but, we would also have an art at once Californian and Universal." (From "Art in California.")

His most important picture of this exhibit was his "City of the Desert."

Gallery No. 90 divided honors among Keith, Mathews, and McComas. While all of these men are of different caliber, they have something in common which binds them closely together. It seems peculiar that a country famous for its sunshine should produce men as Keith, McComas, and Mathews, for these men reflect a somber atmosphere in a type of work which must be called tonal and arbitrary rather than naturalistic.

According to an excerpt from "Galleries at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition" by Neuhaus, Mathews and McComas are:

"....closely related in the decorative quality of their work but they are not alike in any other way. Mathews' art is emotional; it tells something beyond mere color, form or composition, while McComas' art is mostly technical, in the clever manipulation of a difficult medium. His sense of construction and feeling for effect is very acute."

Mr. Eugene Neuhaus and Mr. McComas were criticized by the Overland Magazine of December 1915, because they arranged for the Exposition Galleries nothing but the low tones--paintings in gray-browns, dull gold and clay white.

Californians seemed to resent this, since it was an exhibit of California scenes and California is noted for its vivid coloring. Among Mr. McComas' own work were "Oaks of the Monte," "Pines at Monterey" and "A Los Olivos Oak Tree"--all done in these dull tints. This same critic objects to Mr. McComas' shadows because they are done in a "peculiar, vivid dull blue." But he goes on to state that he must confess that McComas "uses this color in a most effective, not to say startling way." The "Broken Oak" is a more "ordinary color vision," portraying magnificent old tree the "tragedy of its ruin."

McCOMAS GOES EAST

At the close of the Exposition the Directors wished to keep the Palace of Fine Arts open and Mr. Trask undertook to hold what paintings he could. The management sent him and Mr. McComas east to replace those that would have to be returned to owners or delivered to purchasers, and they were successful in obtaining a most creditable collection, mainly from artists. So the Palace was retained and placed under the control of the San Francisco Art Association.

CONSOLIDATION OF TWO ART SOCIETIES

After the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the San Francisco Art Association felt it advisable to strengthen the membership and financial resources of that institution. In this way a permanent museum and a school of

art could be established. And so they invited the San Francisco Society of Artists, an organization new in years, but strong in membership, to affiliate. This young Society of Artists' success had been largely due to the guiding genius of Arthur Mathews and McComas, considerably encouraged by the Sketch Club, which was an organization of women artists.

McCOMAS CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE TO AID WAR-STRICKEN ARTISTS

A national movement for the aid of artists was formed during the period of the World War. It was called the "American Artists' War Emergency Fund Committee" and the plan originated in New York, with branches throughout the country. The idea was to assist American Art Workers, or their families who, because of entry into the war might need help. It was not a public appeal to charity. The funds were raised by the sale of very attractive seal-stamps devised by the committee in New York. Mr. McComas was requested to serve as chairman of the Committee for California, with five other artists.

INTERESTING COMMISSIONS

A delightful order came to Mr. McComas in the autumn of 1917. He was commissioned to paint a large picture, to be used as a mantel-piece for one of the fine homes in Burlingame, California. The subject was to be of oak trees. The Wasp, dated September 8, 1917, says:

"The best known painter in Monterey for years has been Francis J. McComas, a talented artist, ranked by many as one of the five best water-color men in the United States today--the others being John S. Sargent, John Marin, Chas. Woodbury, and Dodge McKnight....This painter believes that the work should tell of the place, and that a picture of the oak should convey something of the message of the oak. This he does in the highest degree successfully....His oaks are great, beautifully grown trees with character, stamina and pride expressed in their stately bearing, while all the secrets of their past seem revealed....The place this man fills is one California is proud of, and it is a pleasure to note that the next commission is a large one for the Metropolitan Museum in New York. McComas would have been one of the big medal men of 1915, if he had not been called to serve on the jury."

RETURN TO THE DESERT

Mr. McComas had been living in San Francisco for the past year, but in September of 1917 he left for Arizona to execute a commission for some desert scenes. During the fall, Mr. and Mrs. McComas became divorced, and on October fifth, Mrs. Marie Louise McComas became the wife of B. O. Simpson, the author, who writes under the pen-name of Putnam Neil.

McCOMAS' SECOND MARRIAGE

From the Society columns of the San Francisco Chronicle of October 31, 1917 in an article signed "Lady Teazle" is the report of Mr. McComas' second marriage:

"A quiet wedding yesterday (October 30th) took place at the Palace Hotel, San Francisco, when Gene Frances Baker became the bride of the distinguished artist Francis J. McComas. The ceremony was held at the bride's apartment and only

a few close friends attended. The bride is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Baker, of Oakland. And the bride has made her home in Oakland for many years.

"Mr. McComas has just returned from the Arizona desert where he has been making sketches for panels to adorn the new home of George Moore in New York. Mr. Moore and the artist are close friends and Mr. Moore made a trip West during the summer to discuss the new home and to decide on the panels which are to be the important feature of the hall.

"Mr. and Mrs. McComas will make their home in Monterey, where he owns one of the most artistic places of that locality. While in California during the last few years, the artist has passed the greater part of his time in that picturesque place and many of his best known paintings depict scenes about Monterey."

ANOTHER NEW YORK SHOW

During November of 1920, Mr. McComas held another New York Exhibition, this time at Gimpel and Wildenstein's. "Arts and Decorations" dated November 20th, an excellent magazine of that city speaks of the exhibit, as follows:

"His first exhibition consisted of a number of water-colors of live-oaks and made a sensation. His last, eight years ago, depicted the Arizona desert, not literally, but with a great effort to attain a fundamental fidelity--to do justice to the theme. His exhibition should prove interesting."

A MONTEREY EXHIBITION

One of the greatest exhibitions of paintings in the history of California was given in 1922, at the Monterey Industrial Exhibition. Gouverneur Morris, short-story writer, acted as chairman of arrangements and the chairman of the

Art jury was Francis McComas, assisted by Armin Hansen and Fred Gray. Only the highest type of work was accepted and the hanging was beautifully done. One of the interesting features of the show was the work done by the wives of many of the artists. Not wishing to trade upon the reputation of their husbands, most of them paint under their own names, among these being Mrs. Armin Hansen who uses her maiden name, and Mrs. McComas, who had several pictures listed as Gene Francis.

MRS. McCOMAS HOLDS FIRST EXHIBITION

Ada Hanifin, Critic of the Wasp, seemed impressed with the work of Mrs. Francis McComas, when she gave her first "one-man show" at Gump's in October 1924. She says:

"A veritable garden, the radiant kind that blooms in the spring--such is the glowing and provocative atmosphere the colorful canvases evoke that are hanging on the walls of the Print Rooms this week.

"Her still life and portraits reflect a feeling for the relation of color values--but the landscapes suggest immaturity rather than growth. A portrait 'Angels' shows her at her best. 'Yellow Tulips' is the finest expression in the exhibit."

AN UNUSUAL ASSIGNMENT

Beatrice Judd Ryan, in writing for the Women's City Club Magazine, September 1927 issue, tells of a most unusual assignment given to Mr. McComas. It seems that Mrs. James Murray, of Monterey, desired a decorative panel for the living

room of her home. She wished something besides a landscape, seascape or figures. So Mr. McComas painted a "Symphony of Historic Monterey." This is a:

"....composition of old landmarks woven together in intriguing color and pattern, done in the best McComas manner, which is always a knowledge of craftsmanship, plus a genuine feeling for beauty."

The subject comprised the old firehouse, the courthouse, and the Robert Louis Stevenson home. At this time Mrs. Ryan pays tribute to Mrs. McComas, the artist. She mentions one particular painting of the "South Sea Woman" and also a mammoth screen done for a Spanish type dining room.

In January 1932, Mr. McComas received a commission for a great decorative map fresco for the Hotel Del Monte.

SOME CRITICISMS

Although this review of Mr. McComas' work has given extensive criticisms it may be well, in closing, to quote from "An Artist in America" by Maxwell Armfield, in the Chapter entitled, "Hints of Spain and Italy," Mr. Armfield says in part:

"This fine quality of landscape no doubt accounts to a large extent for the invariable color-sense of Californian painters. McComas, Piazzoni, any of them taken at random stand, first of all, for a power of color not necessarily intense, but always fine and strong, given always to those peoples living between the mountains and the sea in the warmer temperate climes."

The magazine, "Arts & Decorations" paid the following tribute:

"Of the men who have reproduced the West for itself with no subordinating motive, the most prominent are John Sloan, Mahouri Young, in drawings, and Frank McComas."

In "The History of American Art," Mr. Neuhaus gives Mr. McComas this flattering summary:

"In his works the West has one of its soundest claims for artistic distinction."

HOME NOW AT PEBBLE BEACH

The 1936 "Who's Who in America" states that Mr. and Mrs. McComas now make their home at Pebble Beach, California.

FRANCIS JOHN MCCOMAS

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

PAINTINGS:

Athenian Temples
Broken Oak, The
Casitas Road
City of the Desert
Farm Well, The
Gibraltar
Island, The, Corfu
Las Casitas
Leona Heights
L'isle d' Ulysse
Los Olivos Oak Tree, A
Mariaso
Mesas of New Mexico
Navajo Gateway
Navajo Village, A
New Forest, The
Oak Woods, The
Oaks of the Monte
River, The
Road, The
Ronda Farms
Ruin Rock
Spanish Afternoon
Sunshine
Walpi
Wide Open, The
Zum Pass, The

VARIOUS MURALS

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

Metropolitan Museum, New York City
Portland Art Society, Portland, Oregon
De Young Museum, San Francisco, California
Arizona Gateway
Indian Pueblo, Arizona
San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco
Indian Village (Sloss bequest)
Cliff Dwellers (Bender collection)
Bohemian Club, San Francisco
Bridge at Ronda, Spain
Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, California

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS:

Tevis, Dr. Harry, San Francisco, California
The Pines, Monterey
Murray, Mrs. James, Monterey, California
Symphony of Historic Monterey
(decorative panel)
Del Monte Lodge, Pebble Beach, California
Two Mural Decorations
Hotel Del Monte, Del Monte, California
Mural Decorations
Decorative Map Fresco

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California, 1902, 1911
Vickery's Gallery, 1902, 1906, 1908, 1910
Gump's, 1912
Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915
Monterey, California
Monterey Industrial Exposition, 1922
Chicago, Illinois, 1899, 1904
New York City, 1904
Macbeth Galleries, 1910
Gimpel and Wildenstein's, 1920

Boston, Massachusetts

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

London, England, 1906
Carfax Gallery, 1908

Paris, France

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Member of the jury, Panama-Pacific International
Exposition, 1915

Water Color Club, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Dana Gold Medal--1918
Prize--1921

American Water Color Society, New York City
Hudnut Prize--1921

CLUBS:

Member:

Water Color Club, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
American Water Color Society, New York City
Bohemian Club, San Francisco, California
San Francisco Art Association, San Francisco

FRANCIS JOHN McCOMAS

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June 15, 1912--December 28, 1912
May 31, 1913--September 18, 1917
September 8, 1918--September 9, 1922
October 25, 1924
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- Arts & Decorations, Vol. 14, November 20, 1920
- Who's Who in America, 1926-1927-1936
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- An Artist in America, Chapter on "Hints of Spain and Italy" by Maxwell Armfield
- The History of American Art by Eugene Neuhaus

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FRANCIS JOHN McCOMAS

ARGONAUT
ULSCALL-BULLETIN
Gregory (California, San Francisco)San Francisco CHRONICLE
GregorySTUDIO INTERNATIONAL
Arntzen and Rainwater Q331; ULSOVERLAND MONTHLY AND OUT WEST MAGAZINE
ULSNEWSLETTER AND WASP
ULSNEWS
Gregory (California, San Francisco)

Neuhaus, Eugen. THE GALLERIES OF THE EXPOSITION: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE PAINTINGS, STATUARY AND THE GRAPHIC ARTS IN THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS AT THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION. San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1915.
Rocq 10618

Garnett, Porter. THE INSCRIPTIONS AT THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION. San Francisco: Taylor, Nash and Taylor, printers, 1915.
Rocq 9489

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Rocq 16656

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Arntzen and Rainwater Q94; Karpel S85; ULSWHO'S WHO IN AMERICA
Sheehy AJ57

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Title varies: Vol. 1 - Vol. 15 (February, 1927 - January, 1942),
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Neuhaus, Eugen. THE HISTORY & IDEALS OF AMERICAN ART. Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1931.
Karpel H36a

FRANCIS JOHN McCOMAS

- b. October 1, [1874] Fingal, Tasmania
- d. December 27, 1938 Monterey, California

1874: CAR; SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE obituary and VS, age 64
 1875: CSL and FRANCIS JOHN McCOMAS (1875-1938), California
 Historical Society EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

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ART DIGEST

Vol. 13 (January 15, 1939), p. 26

NEW YORK TIMES

December 29, 1938, p. 19

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

December 28, 1938, p. 9

MONOGRAPHIC SOURCE

CALIFORNIA DESIGN 1910

Ill.: THE MOUNTAIN, 1908 (wc)

NEWSPAPER AND PERIODICAL SOURCES

CALIFORNIA ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Vol. 41 (January, 1932), p. 35, map fresco at Del Monte Hotel, photo.

CONNOISSEUR

Vol. 184 (October, 1973), p. 54, ill.: RED MESAS WITH PUEBLO

MONTEREY PENINSULA HERALD

October 29, 1960, p. A8, biographical information by his wife,
 Gene McComas, photo., ill.: BRIDGE IN TOLEDO, SPAIN (dwg.)

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

April 7, 1912, p. 28, wc exh. Vickery, Atkins & Torrey, ill.:
 THE BACKWATER; CYPRESS ISLAND

February 8, 1965, p. 47, CHS exh. rev.

SUNSET

Vol. 10, no. 2 (December, 1902), following p. 106, ill.: STREET
 OF OLD MONTEREY (wc); p. 167, Vickery's exh., photo.

WAVE

October 21, 1899, p. 15, Vickery's exh. rev.

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H. W. H A N S E N

1854.....1924

Biography and Works

"STAGE COACH"



HERMAN WENDELBORG HANSEN

California art owes much to its European artist colonists, who transplanted their art from the old world to the new, adapted it to primitive conditions in entirely new surroundings, and, in many cases, left their artistic sons and daughters to carry on, in the modern manner, the talent of their celebrated forebears. Among these artist families, the Nahls and the Hansens are the most celebrated. Herman Wendelborg Hansen, pioneer California painter, specialized in painting the herds of wild horses, the cattle and cowboys of the open range, mining and Indian types of early Western days. His paintings now have great historical value, and his illustrations, like those of the Nahls, have become stock types for illustrations of the gold rush days of '49.

YOUTH AND EARLY ENVIRONMENT

Herman Wendelborg Hansen was born in the small town of Tellingstadt, near Dittmarschen, Schleswig-Holstein, on the German Danish frontier, on June 22, 1854. His father, head of a school in Tellingstadt, was himself artistically inclined, and was known as a fine draughtsman. While attending public school in Tellingstadt young Hansen already showed talent for drawing, and was constantly making sketches of animals, particularly horses in action. In 1870, when only sixteen years old, his father sent him to Hamburg to study art under

Professor Simonsen, eminent painter of battle and historical pictures. Later he studied with Professor Heimerdinger, the painter of still-lives. The years 1876 and 1877, Hansen spent in London, visiting the Royal Academy and studying the famous European painters of the period in London's art galleries.

The adventurous young German, hearing of the herds of wild horses, the Indians and cowboys, the adventurous pioneers and gold-miners of the West, decided to cross the ocean and start his art life in the New World.

HE ARRIVES IN AMERICA

Hansen arrived in New York in 1877, studying and painting there for a year, then went on to Chicago where he studied at the Art Institute. While in Chicago came his opportunity to travel West the North Western Railway giving him a commission to go to the end of the steel rails in the Dakotas, to paint advertising scenes. At the end of the line was a locomotive, all decked out in silver, and this he was to paint as an advertisement of the progress of transportation. Besides this picture, he also painted a canal-boat towed by mules, and a stage-coach, the locomotive then supposed to be the ultimate in "modern" mechanical progress.

In the cattle country, with its animals and its cowboys, where transportation was by means of horse and stage-coach, mails were delivered by the pony express; while Indians, herds of buffaloes and wild horses roamed the prairies, Hansen at last realized his desire to see Western life in the raw,

and made good use of his time, painting the primitive environment.

Traveling, first, in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia, the Alleghenies of West Virginia, the Great Smokies of North Carolina, and in Tennessee, Hansen, on his western journeys, roamed the cattle country from Canada to the Mexican border, taking in Wyoming, Montana, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona; finally arrived in California in 1882. This was a business journey, as he came west to settle the estate of an elder brother who had died in the High Sierras. So fascinated was the artist with the California scene, that he decided to live there.

San Francisco became Hansen's permanent home, and here he met his wife, Olga Josue of St. Louis, whom he married on December 6, 1883. The young couple had two children, a daughter, Frieda Beatrice and his talented painter son, Armin.

EARLY CRITICISM

Of his canvases, the eminent art critic, Eugene Neuhaus, said:

"His concern was more with realistic photographic records of frontier life, than with the beauties of design and color. His medium was watercolor, which he used rather thinly. The artistic value of his work is limited, and it will be remembered largely for its historical significance, in that it presents a phase of American life rapidly passing."

PAINTER'S FIRST EXHIBITION

In common with other pioneer painters of the Western scene, Hansen had the experience of being able to sell his Western pictures in the East and also in Europe, but he was almost unknown in California and found difficulty in disposing of the products of his brush. His first exhibition was held in the Morris Galleries, San Francisco, on which the "San Francisco Call" of October 27, 1901, commented:

"In the Morris Gallery the Calcium is just now upon a painting by Hansen, that German who is teaching us things about our own American frontier. It is rather a bitter pill to swallow--the fact that he knows more about interpreting the frontier than we do ourselves, but we might as well gulp it down and be graceful about it.

"The picture is called 'An Incident of the Frontier,' and a very thrilling incident it is, as well as true to life. A stage is dashing down the dusty road pursued hot and close by a band of Indians. The furious speed of the horses, the excited lashing of them by the driver, the swift pursuit all give action that thrills at a glance. Hansen knows the country too. In this as well as his other-work there is the glittering sunlight of the desert--the sunlight that sketches shadows black and sharp. The 'atmosphere feels hot.'

"The horses in this work are studies in themselves. Hansen makes a specialty of the Western horses, and all of them show the hard life that they lead. The strength and stubborn endurance, that often lie hidden under a weary aspect, but they are ever ready for the emergencies of their life--such as 'The Indian Pursuit.' One small study is of a pinto--a staid-looking old fellow, but a fellow that Mr. Hansen says 'only wants a little provocation to show what real bucking is.'"

This is illustrated by a picture of a stage-coach in action.

CRITICISM OF FRONTIER LIFE

The "Call" critic wrote about Hansen's, "An Incident of the Frontier," on December 1, 1901, as follows:

"There are a couple of canvases in the same Gallery by H.W. Hansen, the celebrated portrayer of frontier life. They are water-colors, but are strong enough for oil. One, noticeably fine, is a canvas with a single figure well to the foreground, that of a mounted cowboy just in the act of hurling a lasso. The action is splendid. The horse comes tearing down the slope almost out of the canvas, nostrils dilated, every muscle quivering with excitement and exercise; the foreshortening here is noticeably good. The rider has his sombrero pulled well over his face, which is ruddy from sunburn but set with an expression of determination. The dust rises in a cloud; the atmosphere is that of a hot day on the Arizona desert. Hansen's work in frontier life has made him a big name in New York."

HANSEN IN SAN FRANCISCO'S ARTIST COLONY

The artist colony settled on Telegraph Hill, Montgomery Street, Kearny and Clay Streets, at this time included such artists as Keith, Cadenasso, Maynard Dixon, Gottardo Piazzoni and H.W. Hansen, who had his studio at 605 Clay Street. Of the picture, "Geronimo on a Raid," exhibited in his Clay Street Studio, the "Call" wrote on April 23, 1905:

"H.W. Hansen is one of the busy men in the art colony, he seems to revel in work as does our well beloved Keith.

"At the Hansen studio, 605 Clay Street, are some pictures that prove him the compeer of Remington, and this without provincialism. If you doubt my judgment, go for yourself and see.

"See the picture produced to-day, 'Geronimo on a Raid,' depicting the old renegade on one of his periodical 'tours' over Arizona, when he felt

the need of a few new horses. As a portrait of the tough old Apache, it's a 'perfect likeness' but Geronimo won't care---not being a woman.

"I know this looks like him, because I met the wily old chap at Buffalo at the Indian Congress, and had the unspeakable honor of hearing him grunt.

"This picture bears anew interest at this time, as the old fellow, who is a Government prisoner at Fort Sill, is now beseeching the president for his liberty.

"There are those, who accuse Hansen of being so careful as to drawing, as to be photographic. I would to heaven, more of our men were similarly accused. Here's where the worker distances mere genius."

PICTURES EXHIBITED IN THE EAST

The article is illustrated by Hansen's picture, "Chief Geronimo on a Raid."

In the autumn of 1905, Mr. Frederick Junion, (curator of the Potter Art Gallery in Santa Barbara), traveled up and down the Coast to gather together a representative collection of California paintings and to exhibit them in New York, Chicago, and Boston. The "Call" commented on the exhibition at the Occidental Hotel, in San Francisco on September 10, 1905:

"Have you seen the exhibition of paintings at the Occidental?

"Then take half of your noon hour tomorrow--you busy man of the shop, office, and counting house--and seek out the rooms on the second floor of the old hotel, where Frederic Junion is showing twenty-five of H.W. Hansen's pictures of the great gray West, besides canvases of Sidney Yard, James Griffin, Henry Raschen, C. Chapel Judson, Thad Welch, and John H. Gamble. And you, madam, of easy hours, let not a week go by with-

out acquaintance with these pictures. They are gathered here primarily for the nucleus of an Eastern Exhibition--in Chicago and in New York, where Mr. Junior will pioneer the first dealers display of California work.

"Not all of the pictures are of equal quality, even as all days are not Junes; but the preponderance of high-class work is worthy of a thoughtful visit.

"The Hansen exhibit is, to be sure, the center around which the display is hung, since twenty-five paintings are shown of this California rival of Remington.

"Yesterday a bunch of Army Officers drifted in--men who know the great plains of the West, the buckaroos and the bronchos that tear over them. They were joined by a couple of cattlemen who know the horse and the steer as the mother knows her babe--and I listened. What these men said, these men who know the plains, as they stood before 'The Cowboy Race' would, in print, be a series of exclamation points. The life of it, the hurrah in it, the mad gallop, the smell of the dust and the ringing of the cheers, brought a glister to the eyes of the army men. And they lived over again the scenes about the desert and plains posts, where the cowboy, with his daredevil tricks stirred things up for the prairie-bound folk at the post.

"Beyond the story it tells, and the blood it stirs, there's a landscape that's a good picture in itself. As to the drawing and coloring--but why go into details, when the whole is so splendid in effect? Then there's the stage coach picture, 'Early Days,' and the two that hang by it, 'A Steep Trail' and 'A Short-cut.' The 'Scratching for a Living,' reached the heart of a big, burly cattleman, who looked a long while at the bunch of starving horses, with ribs scarce hid beneath the hide, nibbling at the dry grease-weed of the desert. Methinks I saw a tear in his eye, as he walked away from the picture. Was he carried back to a hot year, when Nature dried her breasts and refused to nourish his cattle--and they starved like this?----"

So well received were Hansen's pictures in the East, where his Wild West types, cattle, cowboys, and herds of wild horses and buffaloes were a novelty, that no less than five of his canvases were sold there. "The Stage Coach" was sold to a Pittsburg millionaire, and the picture so took his fancy, that he ordered a companion picture to hang with it in his collection.

HANSEN WINS ACCLAIM IN EUROPE

Abroad, no less than in the East, the novelty of Hansen's frontier type pictures attracted purchasers when they were exhibited. In London, three out of five canvases exhibited, found purchasers. Lord Waring admired and bought "Caught at Last," a picture of a timber-wolf caught in a trap; another large Western picture was bought by Baron Karsloff of St. Petersburg, and a third took the fancy of Count Oshkoff of Moscow. The "London Times" of 1905 states that two paintings of Hansen's were exhibited at the Travelers' Club in London, which were purchased by Lord Durand during his travels in America.

He exhibited in the Heinemann Galleries in Munich and in the Paris Salon, where his picture of a stampede of wild horses attracted favorable attention.

HE LOSES ALL IN FIRE

After the San Francisco fire and earthquake of 1906, when he lost everything in his studio at 600 Montgomery

Street, including a valuable Indian collection of curios, Hansen moved across the Bay to Alameda, where he took a studio. Of an exhibition held in San Francisco during this period, "The San Francisco Call" of February 4, 1907 commented:

"Comparisons are often impertinent, but sometimes they seem to be inevitable. It is impossible to see the exhibition of paintings by H.W. Hansen, now at the local dealers, without thinking of Frederick Remington, whose work, with the prerogative of the illustrator over the painter of pictures is known to everybody. Hansen's subjects are almost identical, and if his work lacks some of the crispness of outline and the vividness of coloring seen in Remington's, he makes up for it in the greater softness and finish. There is action and spirit in every line of his cowboys and Indians, and in the tense muscles of his horses. As a painter of the West, he interprets its true spirit. Among the paintings exhibited, are some Winter scenes from Wyoming, done in watercolors. One of them contains a group of horses huddled together, and is perhaps the best of the pictures of horses. There is an almost human expression in the faces of the suffering animals.

"Hansen is one of the San Francisco painters, who have been fortunate after the fire in disposing of much of their work."

Fortunately, many valuable paintings in the Potter Art Gallery in Santa Barbara were saved, and the millionaire, Adolphus Busch of St. Louis bought six of his paintings for \$10,000.

On November 1, 1908 the "Call" said:

"A most successful exhibition of paintings by two California artists, Thad Welch and H.W. Hansen, has just been brought to a close in Chicago, with the result that most of the work has been sold. Thad Welch, whose collection consisted of five very large canvases of Marin County scenes, never had better pictures on exhibition.

"Hansen, known as desert and animal painter, of wonderful strength and virility, had a powerful canvas 36 x 50 of western life that sold the first day. Since then, five other canvases have been disposed of at top prices. Hansen's work has been purchased by notable foreign visitors to this country; among whom are Lord Durand of London and Count Oshkoff of Moscow. The work of both Welch and Hansen is exhibited in California, almost exclusively, at the Hotel Potter in Santa Barbara, where it is viewed by many tourists and many canvases taken east before Californians have a chance to see them. That Hansen is especially a painter of extraordinary merit is well recognized."

The same paper commented on Hansen's Chicago exhibition on November 29, 1908:

"Signal honors have been accorded Hansen, the California animal painter on his recent exhibition in Chicago. His large painting, 'A Stampede of Horses by Horse Thieves,' has been sold and will occupy a place of honor in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, between a Rosa Bonheur and a Schreyer, as noted before. Every one of Hansen's big pictures has been snapped up in the east, and Frederick Junior of the Potter Art Gallery of Santa Barbara, where most of Hansen's work is exhibited, is to be warmly congratulated on the manner in which the exhibitions have been conducted."

ARTIST VISITS EUROPE

In the autumn of 1909, Hansen took his family to Europe, where they visited his talented son Armin, then painting and studying abroad. For eight months the Hansens toured the art galleries of England, Germany, France, Italy, Holland and Belgium. The elder Hansen won many admirers for his pictures, and in 1911 won the Grand Prize at the St. Petersburg Exposition.

Upon his return to America in 1911, Hansen again took up his residence in San Francisco, then the art center of the Pacific Coast, and occupied a studio in the Lick Building.

HIS DEATH

Only three months before his death, on April 22, 1924, the versatile artist turned to etching, one of his finest ventures with the etcher's needle being "Winter in the Northwest."

HANSEN'S PLACE IN ART

Harry Noyes Pratt writes of "Etching in California" in the "Overland" of May 1924, in which he gives an obituary of Hansen:

"It is, perhaps, an unusual procedure to place among the foremost etchers of California, one who is unknown, save to a few, as a follower of the craft.....

"Hansen has produced few plates--he took up the needle only a few months ago--whereas his fame as a painter extends over many years, and is international in extent.

"Yet there is reason, at this time, for giving space to his story, for he has started out on his last pilgrimage, has undertaken the greatest adventure of all. And there is important reason in the last plate he made, for giving him prominent place among California etchers. His 'Winter in the Northwest' in its conception and execution, holds the element of greatness. Seeing it, I am convinced that he had potential ability as an etcher, which had he lived, would in a short period have given him greater fame than his painting.

".....There was in him, latent then, (in his student days in Hamburg), a spirit of adventure, which, perhaps, received its awakening when he was associated as a pupil with Professor Simonsen, the famous painter of battle scenes. But it was Fennimore Cooper, with his stirring tales of America's untracked prairies, which definitely set his feet in the wanderer's path. He left the home country for England in 1876. and a year later arrived in the land of his dreams.....

"His pilgrimage was always westward.....With his first glimpse of the boundless prairies and the colorful life they held, Hansen knew he had found his own.....Few painters of our time have had such wide reproduction of their pictures as Hansen. His 'Pony Express' riders, his stage coaches, with their plunging teams and following Indians, his cowboys, have found many a strange haven; have known appreciation in many an unexpected place.

"He knew the West of the old days more intimately than any painter of his time, with the possible exception of Remington.....He roughed it, months at a time, in the Indian country of the southwest and the northwest. He knew the range, with its wild residents, its riders and horses, thoroughly and well. He added to his knowledge an enthusiastic love of his subject, together with a draughtsmanship seldom surpassed.

"Artists of a younger day, a generation less carefully trained in the fundamentals of art, have somewhat slightly referred to work such as his, as illustrative. True--but why not? In that lies one quality, though not the only quality, which makes the work of H.W. Hansen an invaluable contribution to pictorial art. His paintings and drawings are historical documents. When Hansen painted a Crow Indian, it was a Crow, correctly dressed, in the environment and with the manner of the Crow. His Sioux, his Apache, was that and nothing else. His Pony Express riders were men of the Old West, accoutred exactly as were the riders of that day.

"This painstaking attention to detail was one of the features which placed his work ahead of any contemporary in his line; and yet, after all, it

was but a minor thing. Correct as were his details, carefully executed as were the anatomical features of his animals and men, these were never allowed to burden or to interfere with the spirit of his painting. He knew his men and his animals, inside and out, and used their outward seeming, merely that it might express that which was transpiring within.

"He loved horses. It was the horse which formed the prime motif of his work. It may be that he, some time, painted a canvas which did not hold a horse; if he did, I have not seen the picture. It was the horse which afforded him the real means for telling his story---what a shortcoming that is, in the mind of today's generation of painters, to tell a story!---and it was usually his pleasure to tell a tale of some sort, dramatic, tragic or of the everyday. And how he could tell it!

"He was an indefatigable worker, almost to the end. His work retained to the last, the delightfully imaginative quality which gave his pictures general appeal. His hand was as sure, his lines as free and virile, his colors as fresh and pure, as a quarter of a century before. Of the almost countless pictures which felt the impress of his touch, only a few remained unsold at his death. They were pictures which always found a ready sale, even at the prices which his work commanded. They were of the sort which found loved and honored place, both with the connoisseur and with the layman.

"This has not been intended as a critical discussion of the art of H.W. Hansen. It has been merely a tribute to the splendid gentleman, whose faith in his fellow men persisted, in spite of disappointment. It is a farewell to the artist, who so quietly, so unassumingly and so sincerely sent forth from San Francisco his message of beauty."

CONCLUSION

"Hansen told the story of the Old West in Paintings," said Harry Noyes Pratt on another occasion, and it is in this

almost photographic quality of his pictures, that Hansen's value to the art of California lies, in that it depicts for future generations the history of the pioneer settlers, the drama and tragedy of their lives; the wild horse and buffalo which roamed the prairies, now almost extinct, and the life of the cowboys, miners and Indians who lived in a more picturesque age than ours. Hansen was, unfortunately, one of many of the pioneer painters who struggled and starved; and was unable to make a living by his art in the west, until he had obtained recognition in Europe and in the east. But, from the first, Hansen's paintings had popular appeal, and they, as well as his numerous illustrations for newspapers and magazines, soon assured him a comfortable living. He was actively at work in his studio, almost until the end, pursuing the even tenor of his way, his art untouched by any modern influence. His son, Armin Hansen, one of California's most celebrated artists among the younger, modern group, is actively carrying on the artistic traditions of the family in his portrayals of the California scene.

H. W. HANSEN
REPRESENTATIVE
WORKS

Caught at Last (bought by Lord Waring of London)

Cowboy Race, The

Early Days

Geronimo on a Raid

Incident of the Frontier, An

Pony Express, The (owned by William C. Henshaw;
loaned to the Wells Fargo Nevada National
Bank for their celebration in 1923.)

Scratching for a Living

Stage-Coach, The

Stampede of Horses by Horse Thieves

Winter in the Northwest (an etching)

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California
Morris Galleries, 1901
An Incident of the Frontier
The Indian Pursuit
Occidental Hotel, September 1905
The Cowboy Race
Scratching for a Living
Santa Barbara, California
Potter Art Gallery
London, England
Travelers Club, 1905
Munich, Germany
Heinemann Galleries

Paris, France
 Salon
 Chicago, Illinois, 1908
 A Stampede of Horses by Horse Thieves

AWARDS:

St. Petersburg, Russia, 1911
 Grand Prix, International Exhibition

CLUBS:

No Associations Recorded

H. W. HANSEN

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History and Ideals of American Art
 by Eugene Neuhaus

IDENTIFICATION OF ORIGINAL SOURCES

HERMANN WENDELBOG HANSEN

CALL-BULLETIN

Gregory (California, San Francisco)

OVERLAND MONTHLY AND OUT WEST MAGAZINE

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Karpel H36a

HERMANN WENDELBOG HANSEN

b. June 22, [1854] Tellingstedt, Dithmarschen, West Germany

d. April 2, 1924 San Francisco, California

1854: CAR; Obituary and VS, age 69

1856: CSL

OBITUARY

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April 4, 1924, p. 6

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1886.....

Biography and Works

"BEFORE THE WIND"



SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART

ARMIN C. HANSEN

Inheriting the artistic tradition from his father, Armin Hansen is an outstanding representative of the modern group of California-born artists on the Pacific Coast. From his German ancestors comes his love of the sea, away from which he is never happy. He lives beside it on the picturesque, rock-bound coast of Monterey, its fantastic rocks crowned with gnarled and twisted pine trees, veiled mysteriously in early morning fogs, or resplendent in the flaming sunsets of the West. Some Viking blood must run in Hansen's veins, so akin is he to the men who sail the sea, and so attuned to the moods of the mighty ocean, which he has depicted raging in violent storm, and smiling in peaceful, sunlit calm. Hansen has made a distinguished place for himself, both as a painter and as an etcher, and by his radical methods has struck the modern note among the second generation of California artists, as distinct from the formalism and photographic accuracy of painting, and the grandiose canvases indulged in by the pioneer painters, who came to the West with the traditional European technique, and who followed faithfully the European schools.

YOUTH AND EARLY ENVIRONMENT

Son of Herman Wendelburg Hansen, German artist, and Olga Josue of St. Louis, Missouri, Armin was born in San Francisco on October 23rd, 1886. He was married at San Jose on

June 16, 1922 to Frances Rives of Danville, Virginia, and has a son Wendelburg, thirteen years old. His wife is also a painter, and exhibits in Monterey under her own name of Frances Rives.

Young Hansen received his education in San Francisco and in Alameda, across the Bay. Growing up in artistic surroundings and constantly hearing talk of art and artists, with the example of the elder Hansen always before his eyes, Armin early developed a love of painting. He received his earliest art lessons from his father, a strict disciplinarian, who made the boy complete an allotted task in drawing or painting each day. In 1903, when the family moved to San Francisco, young Armin at seventeen, attended the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, studying, among others, under Arthur Mathews, the celebrated teacher and mural painter.

After two years study in San Francisco, where Armin's artistic talent was already recognized by his teachers, his father sent him abroad for advanced studies in Europe. In 1906, the twenty-year-old youth set forth on his travels, crossed the continent to New York and, after a short stay embarked for Hamburg. He studied in the ateliers and art galleries of Munich, and at the Royal Academy at Stuttgart under Carlos Grethe, thence proceeding to Holland, Paris, and Antwerp.

LIFE AMID THE FISHERMEN AT NIEUPOORT

After two years study in Stuttgart, young Hansen decided to go to Belgium, taking a studio at Nieuport, near the

gay, cosmopolitan resort of Ostende, with its palatial hotels, glittering gambling Casino and famous board-walk on the "Plage." In the simple artist colony at Nieuport, living and working with the humble fisher-folk, sailing the North Sea with its sudden, violent storms, its icy gales of snow and sleet, for a meagre catch of fish destined for the city markets and the tables of the rich, Hansen knew hunger and privation at first hand. It was these experiences that gave him his intimate knowledge of fishermen types, of life on the sailing boats and trawlers, and the drama in the anxious vigil of the women, waiting on the flat, dreary sand dunes of the coast, when the North Sea was lashed to fury by a gale and none knew if all the boats in the fishing fleet, with their precious human cargo, would return. It was the moods of the North Sea, and the fisher-folk in their moments of dramatic struggle with the elements, which Hansen immortalized on canvas, and it was with his marines of the Belgian coast that the young painter first won recognition in the art exhibitions of Europe.

BEGINS ETCHING AND WINS PRIZE IN BRUSSELS

Hansen's first attempt at etching was made in his little fisherman's house at Nieuport, the plate bitten on a sheet of zinc, torn from the stove in his room. On his return to San Francisco, he was thankful if he could sell these first impressions for five dollars, little realizing how eagerly they would be sought after by collectors in later years.

The young artist began showing his paintings at exhibitions in Brussels, the Art Academy in Munich and the Salon de Printemps in Paris. He had the distinction of winning a prize with his canvas, "Low Tide," in the Brussels Art Exhibition of 1910. The critical acclaim young Hansen won in his first exhibitions abroad, was reflected in the local critics' attitude towards his work. The San Francisco Call of September 4, 1910 commented:

"Word has come from Europe of the flattering success of young Armin C. Hansen of this city, son of the famous painter of that name. Among the 5000 paintings recently submitted from all parts of Europe for the famous annual Brussels art exhibition, his marine study entitled 'Low Tide' was one of the 500 accepted, and was hung in a very prominent place. It has received most favorable comments from the highest art critics of Belgium, as showing great promise for the future, along a line of his own as unique as that of his illustrious father.

"'Low Tide' is a canvas nearly five feet square showing a number of weatherbeaten fishing boats drawn up on the shore, with water receding from the warm, moist sand. The whole is worked up in a minor key, soft and rich in color and low in tone, blended to a harmonious whole, beneath a sky golden in tint from the beauty of the late afternoon light.

"Hansen has had paintings accepted by the Munich Academy, where his energy of style and fineness of color have won him special mention from the critical art jury--and later on, before returning home, he will submit a painting to the Paris Salon. Eventually, however, he will return to California and open a studio of his own in this city."

RETURNS TO CALIFORNIA

After exhibiting in Europe and gaining critical appreciation, Armin Hansen decided to return to California in 1912, taking up his headquarters in a studio in the Lick Building in San Francisco. In the San Francisco Call of December 22, 1912, Porter Garnett wrote:

"Armin C. Hansen, who recently returned from abroad, and has established himself in a temporary studio in the Lick Building, has more than 100 canvases stacked against the walls there. It has been quite impossible to see all of these pictures, but the 20 or so the artist dragged out for me and placed on the easel for inspection, are of such interest, that I promise myself the pleasure of going back again, in order that I may tell myself more about Hansen's remarkable work. If anyone's patience is to be tried, it will be the artist's and not the writer's, for I look forward with nothing but pleasure in spending several hours with his work. That is the kind of work it is. It is bold and fresh and interesting. It is work that holds your interest so completely, that you cannot be satisfied with a casual inspection of it. At a date as yet undetermined, Hansen will hold an exhibition, and those who read what I say here will then understand, why I feel that an opinion, however favorable, based upon an examination of only a moiety of his work, must fail to do him justice.

"The hundred and more canvases, that Hansen has just brought through the Custom House, represent his labors of the last four years in Belgium. They are noteworthy for a vigorous individuality expressed in a fine color sense and an unusual faculty for expressing atmosphere. In his grayer pictures, of which I saw several, notably 'The Old Farmhouse,' he takes you out under cloudy skies into a landscape in which you feel that you can walk and breathe. A picture which he

calls 'The Blue Hour,' is a remarkable rendering of an effect observed on the Flemish coast, when, just after sunset, sky, sea and land take on blue and violet tones, of which he is very fond, with admirable discretion, avoiding the undignified quality associated with purple in the work of many painters.

"Two snow-pieces, showing the canals at Nieuport, are particularly fine, and highly interesting as compositions. A small picture of the waterfront at Ostende is among the artist's least considered but most charming productions.

"Of his etchings and drawings, and particularly of certain large canvases, that the condition of his studio would not permit him to show, I shall have more to say after another visit."

FIRST SAN FRANCISCO EXHIBITION PRAISED BY CRITICS

Hansen's first San Francisco exhibition after his return from abroad was given at the Helgesen Gallery. Porter Garnett wrote his impressions in the San Francisco Call of March 2, 1913:

"The exhibitions of paintings of West Flanders by Armin C. Hansen, which opened yesterday at Helgesen's Gallery, will surprise everyone who has not already seen this young artist's work, with its freshness and vigor.

"Armin Hansen, who is the son of H.W. Hansen, the well-known painter of Western scenes, was only a student when he left San Francisco in 1906. He returns an artist, with a style that is solidly established, and his work so reflects the newer impulse in art, that his present exhibition should command the attention of everyone interested in painting. It must be owned that the gallery, with the 24 canvases, makes an instantaneously favorable impression of fine color, strength and an unusual pictorial perception.

"The quality of the individual items of the collection becomes more apparent when they are studied. There is not an indifferent piece of work in the exhibition, so far as painting goes, although some persons will be more sympathetic with certain subjects than with others. Among the smaller canvases, which may in the nature of things be overpowered by the larger pictures, are several that represent the artist at his best. Among these, two should be mentioned in particular. These are 'On The Waterfront, Ostende,' and 'The Life Saver's Watch.' Other small canvases of distinct interest are 'Fishing Boats at the Quay' and 'The Lock-Keeper's House.'

"The collection contains three striking still-lives, in which the artist has given his feeling for luxuriant color full play. They display the vigor of modernity, and are such work as only an artist of unusual power could accomplish.

"It is not possible to speak of all the pictures in the exhibition, but 'The Blue Hour,' 'Canal Boats at The Lock' and 'In the Rainy Season,' are among the important canvases that call for special mention. It will be interesting to observe Mr. Hansen's work in interpreting California scenery, into the rendering of which he may be expected to impart a fresh and vigorous note."

In the San Francisco Call of April 20, 1913, Porter Garnett again commented Hansen's exhibition at the San Francisco Institute of Art, as follows:

"Those who have not seen the paintings, drawings and etchings of Armin C. Hansen, have missed seeing the work of the most vigorous personal influence in painting that we have in San Francisco at the present time.

The same critic wrote further in the San Francisco Call of May 8, 1913:

"Pictures by Hansen are at Helgesen's Gallery and also at the Gallery of Rabjohn and Morcom.

He has been exhibiting, in conjunction with Miss Isabel Percy, at the Ebell Club at Oakland, and he has shown at the Institute, as well as having a special exhibition of his work at Helgesen's.

"There can be no doubt, therefore, that he has made his art known to the public, and it seems an inevitable consequence, that he is making his influence felt among students of art who are in need of just that fresh and vitalizing impulse, which he is so well fitted to impart. Younger and less experienced painters can derive much benefit from what Hansen has learned in Europe, where he was exposed to the sturdier influence of modern art. Now that he is about to apply himself to the painting of California scenery, it will be interesting to see, how, with his modernity, his freshness and his individuality, he will interpret California in art."

TAKES STUDIO IN THE LATIN QUARTER

The young artist had apparently settled down in San Francisco, taking a studio and conducting classes at 728 Montgomery Street, in the Latin Quarter, where artists and writers had their studios near the picturesque restaurants, gambling houses and dives, amid the colorful Bohemian life of the mad, bad Barbary Coast, and the opium dens, restaurants and silk and curio shops of Chinatown, yet Hansen's restless, untamed spirit still hankered for the turbulent, restless sea, the salt tang of the wind blowing from the ocean, and the simple, kindly fisher-folk, amid whom he had dwelt so long.

OPENS ART CLASSES IN MONTEREY

When summer came to San Francisco, the young painter found the confines of the busy city unbearable, and suddenly

decided to move down to the seashore on the beautiful Monterey coast.

Here for several years, Hansen conducted private classes in his studio, on a large estate, with twenty-seven acres of wooded gardens, on the edge of town, overlooking the blue waters of Monterey Bay. Here he developed his idea of posing the model in the open air, and studying the figure with outdoor effects and lighting, with a background of sea and sky, instead of the conventional studio walls.

Colorful Monterey, with its rugged, picturesque coastline, where the turbulent Pacific breakers dash against the gnarled old pine trees, stunted and bent by the wind, its historic old missions and remains of Spanish days of the Dons and the Conquistadores, is an artist's paradise, with its beautiful seascapes and landscapes. Farther south, lie the fantastic rock formations of Point Lobos, and the hardly explored wilderness of Big Sur.

ARTISTS SETTLE IN MONTEREY PENINSULA

The ancient Spanish town of Monterey, with its old adobe houses, Spanish Governor's Palace, Custom House, Mission church and Presidio, is rich in legend and history; it was the second mission and military presidio to be founded by Father Junipero Serra and his adventurous band of exploring priests and soldiers, on his journey northward from Mexico City and San Diego. Monterey today, still retains the atmos-

phere of the old Spanish days, with its crooked, cobbled streets. Many people, famous in literature and art, have stamped their impress on the town, and still standing, is the ancient adobe house where Robert Louis Stevenson lived. Many Italians, Portuguese and Mexican fishermen live in the small shacks and gather together, singing and chatting in the crooked alleys of the little town, headquarters for the sardine fishery of the Coast. In the season, migrant workers flock there from every state on the coast, to work under high pressure amid the oil, blood and entrails of the sardine canneries--strange contrast to the "manana" attitude of Spanish days. Near Monterey where the placid Carmel River flows through the rich meadows and lush pasture lands of the valley lies Father Serra's old Mission, San Carlos de Borromeo, to which he removed after the rough and roistering Spanish soldiers of the Commandante at the Presidio had debauched and corrupted his Indian converts. In stark contrast between the severe simplicity of the ancient adobe mission, is the modern luxury resort of Del Monte, with its palatial hotel, golf courses, and the Seventeen Mile Drive at Pebble Beach; here, wealth and fashion followed in the footsteps of the padres, and in those of the artists, who, years ago founded the artists' colony of Carmel-by-the-Sea.

A coterie of painters of the Monterey Peninsula have banded together to form the Carmel Art Association, of which

Armin Hansen is president. They have their own exhibition galleries, whose shows attract not only California residents but connoisseurs from the East--such is their distinction in the art world.

One of the earliest artist dwellers in Monterey, and prominent in the art and literary circles in Carmel, taking a part in the direction of the colorful Beaux Arts Ball, Hansen has seen Carmel's development, from a few studios built haphazard on shore or pine-clad rocks on some attractive site, where a beautiful view was more to be desired than accessibility--or in the small village, with its unpaved streets, where the innovation of electric lighting was fiercely fought by the die-hards--to its present position as an expensive, pseudo-Bohemian resort, where the real intellectuals and artists have to barricade themselves against the curious stares of summer tourists, and high rents have forced its artists to seek beauty and seclusion in some more inaccessible spot. Carmel has shared the fate of other artist colonies--first came the artists and writers, lured by beauty, congenial spirits and low prices; then some rich art patron or seeker after "Bohemian" life follows; spreads the word--the real-estate speculators and hotel-men come on the scene--and the art colony becomes a pleasure resort for the wealthy. It has happened in Greenwich Village, clustering around the old houses of Washington Square in New York; in the fishing

village of Provincetown, Massachusetts; and to the adobe-house dwellers in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who fled to Taos pueblo, and have been overtaken even there. From beauty, art and peace to industrial exploitation, the cycle has been ever the same.

A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

An appreciation of Hansen's work is given in the Wasp of November 11, 1916, by Blanche M. d'Harcourt, who commented on his exhibition at the Helgesen Gallery in San Francisco as follows:

"Mr. Hansen is one of San Francisco's most promising young artists, whose work shows constant improvement. In this present exhibition are to be found several new notes in composition and color, and while this new work shows very clever handling, we prefer Mr. Hansen's marine canvases, especially of the fisher folk. It is in such a work as 'Off for the Night Catch' that the artist reaches his greatest height, for here we have not only clever brush work, but we have also that subtle something called 'atmosphere,' which is as elusive as the 'charm' of certain personalities. There is a certain dramatic element in the life of a fisherman or sailor, and it is this note that Mr. Hansen has emphasized. At the present time, we have too few folk pictures, or pictures representing types, and we hope Mr. Hansen will continue to bring to mind the lives of these simple people, who daily face death, and who reflect in their bearing something of the grandeur with which they are ever in close communion. The very breath or salt air clings about these fisher folk canvases of Hansen's. Such types are worthy of the greatest artist's attention.

"The 'Golden Hillside' is truly a golden picture, full of feeling with a singing quality

of Autumn glow about it. 'Fisherman's Landing, Monterey' is a blue picture. The lovely Bay of Monterey from the wharf stretches off into the distance, in a blue haze that is mystical and enchanting. There is so much depth to certain shades of blue, that one loses oneself in its shadows, when gazing into a blue-toned canvas such as this. The green tones may be more restful, but there is a magic greatness about the blue of the sky or the ocean that carries one away, and unless one does respond to the color note of a picture, half the charm and enjoyment is lost. In fact it is when one does respond to the color harmonies of the painted canvas that one's enjoyment is greatest, for when a picture can carry you away beyond any critical point, to sheer enjoyment of its color scheme, then it has achieved more than mere perfection in technique.

"Mr. Hansen is fearless in his method of presenting his subject. If in few broad strokes of his brush, he can express the figure of a woman seated at a table with a red parasol over her, then he rests content. This canvas, 'The Red Parasol,' tells as much as if he had carefully drawn and outlined the figure and presented it with all the smoothness of a portrait.

"This simple, direct manner of painting, is winning favor every day, and much praise is due these younger men, who have had the courage of their convictions and have dared to depart from the old academic traditions. We have learned at last that to reproduce a scene or object with photographic faithfulness is no art, but to tell the most with as little outlay of material as possible, has been the aim of all the great artists of the past generation."

Hansen's place in art is defined by Professor Eugene Neuhaus, the celebrated critic and writer on art in his book, "The History and Ideals of American Art," as follows:

"Among the younger men, Armin Hansen is contributing a new and strong note to this subject, by his broadly painted interpretation of the Italian fishermen who follow their trade on the Bay of Monterey.

"Hansen is first of all a painter, and his work has unusual breadth combined with marked expressive quality, not often found in broad brushwork. His color harmonies are rich, whether he paints the grey symphonies of a foggy day or the more typical blues and greens and purples of the California sea."

At Del Monte a series of exhibitions of small paintings, "thumb-nail" sketches, had been arranged, on which Josephine Blanch commented in the Wasp of January 5, 1918, as follows:

"A very interesting exhibition is now in progress at Del Monte Gallery. On two of the smaller walls have been arranged temporarily about fifty little pictures by well-known artists, who are regular contributors to its exhibitions. The collection includes large sketches, thumb-box sketches, and small paintings carried further than the usual sketch.

"The thumb-box exhibition, so-called, has been featured in the eastern art centers for some years past and has been favorably received by the art-loving public. The good work in the present exhibition, is too abundant for individual mention except for the few, but it is a most interesting one of little pictures, some lively and spontaneous but a number of very serious bits of Art.

"Armin Hansen's 'Twilight, Monterey Bay,' is one of his latest and best little pictures. The whole canvas is subdued, to the mystery of twilight, a quiet sea, and a lonely beach, against which the surf gently breaks--two figures are dimly seen in the gathering foam. It is free from edges, atmospheric, and big in feeling."

The Wasp critic of March 6, 1920 also commented on the Del Monte Exhibition:

"The Del Monte Salon is one of the most attractive Art Galleries on the Pacific Coast, and is visited by connoisseurs and art lovers from all parts of the country. The splendid sketches and paintings that are exhibited, are the work of California artists, and excite a great deal of admiration and comment.

"Among some of the well-known men and women who are exhibiting their art are Gottardo Piazzoni, Armin Hansen,....men and women who paint sincerely, and who are now making the art history of California."

The same critic wrote in the Wasp of September 9, 1922, as follows:

"The Monterey Peninsula which has been heralded the World over for the artists and works of art which they have produced, is to be given one of the greatest exhibitions of paintings at the Monterey Industrial Exposition now going on, ever in the history of California....

"Gouverneur Morris, the famous short story writer, acted as chairman of arrangements and introduced many interesting and entertaining features. The Chairman of the Art Committee was Cornelius Botke. and the Chairman of the Art Jury was Francis McComas, assisted by Armin Hansen and Fred Gray. This Committee made up of men who are all known to the World of Art, have done their work remarkably well. Only the highest type of canvases have been accepted and the hanging and arrangement are beautifully done. The outstanding feature of the exhibition is the appearance of several wives of painters, who are represented with canvases without calling upon the reputation of their widely known husbands. Among these are Mrs. Armin Hansen, who is exhibiting under her maiden name of Frances Rives; Mrs. Francis McComas has several canvases listed as Gene Francis."

PAINTINGS AND ETCHINGS WIN ACCLAIM

San Francisco's place in Art, as determined by her Artists, was commented on by Ada Hanafin in the Wasp of December 20, 1924:

"Today, art in California has reached a pinnacle of achievement never before approached in the West, as regards growth, development, expansion, individuality and vitality. The same indomitable creative spirit that is winning for our artists coveted laurels of national and, in some instances, international significance, is manifesting itself in our young art students.

"In reviewing the nature of the work of our leading sculptors, painters, and etchers, there has been no attempt, in listing them, to rank them according to their relative merits. Nor is the resume complete in its entirety. The work of each artist seemingly stands in relief against an open background, a creative expression obviously revealing its own special appeal. Armin Hansen has achieved equal distinction as painter and etcher. His work is characterized by its vigor and powerful realism. He especially delights in depicting the Monterey fisherfolk in scenes from their daily lives. His landscapes have all the lure of color and design."

Hansen's etchings, no less than his paintings, won strong praise from art critics.

Of Armin Hansen's etchings, one of his best, "The Sardine Barge," was awarded a gold medal by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1923.

A representative collection of Hansen's etchings at the Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Gallery in San Francisco, was commented upon by the Wasp of November 1, 1930:

"The first comprehensive collection and showing of Armin Hansen's etchings, comprising both old favorites and a group of newer ones, is now in progress at the Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Gallery. The eminent California etcher and painter, who is nationally known for the delicate perfection of his style, is represented by a number of studies of fishermen, and scenes in fishing villages and among shipping, done in his newer trend of massed shadow and dramatic contrasts, as well as by the more delicate and impressionistic examples, possibly more familiar to the public.

"'Fish Market'; 'Fish Basket'; 'Storm Driver'; 'Adrift'; 'Fisher Families'; 'Fishers and Sons'; all accent the atmosphere of 'ol' debil sea,' and many of them are terse with sharply suggested action. 'Montereyans,' fisher types in berets, and 'At Moorings,' 'In Drydock,' and 'Sardine Barge,'--misty studies of old hulks, are among the imaginative and effective creations, which have gained the artist his standing as one of America's foremost etchers."

"The Fish Market," one of Hansen's best etchings, received honorable mention when it was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This picture is reproduced in the American Magazine of Art issue of July 1929.

Of the show given by Hansen, Arnold Mountford and Carl Oscar Borg at the Ilsey Galleries, Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, Grace Hubbard wrote in the Wasp of September 3, 1932:

"Armin Hansen, well-known to art lovers of this city for his many exhibitions here, is famed for his dramatic interpretations of the sea and its moods, the panoply of ships of fishermen and sailors salt as a stiff sea breeze--his uncompromising masculine canvases and vigorous etchings capture the keen tang of the ocean. Dramatist and poet, he builds an

absorbing composition from a wave, a hull, a tangle of rigging and the tough-muscled men who melt into the marine background. He paints the sea as it can be painted only by those who know it and love it--with a touch at once powerful and delicate."

The same author compared the two marine artists, Hansen and Kent, in the *Wasp* of February 13, 1932:

"The contrasting methods of two distinguished artists, in representations of the sea and the men of the sea, form an interesting comparison, which may be made at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum at the present time. A group of sixty-six etchings by Armin Hansen, painter and print-maker of Monterey, display, for the most part, marine scenes and characters. At the same time, there is also on view a collection of the original drawings by Rockwell Kent, noted eastern artist, for block-print illustrations of Herman Melville's intriguing story 'Moby Dick.'"

With characteristic versatility, Hansen, who drew, painted and etched marines and landscapes with equal facility, forsook his themes of the sea and seafaring men, and turned his attention with great enthusiasm to an entirely different scene--the desert of Arizona and New Mexico, the wild horses of the range and the life of the cowboys and Indians who lived there.

His picture of cowboy life, "Rodeo," was illustrated in the "Art Digest" of April 15, 1930, which commented on his exhibition at the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles:

"Armin Hansen, native California painter, who won fame through his pictures of ships and the sea, has become a landlubber. Worse than that he has 'bitten alkali.' He has been to the plains, and has painted swirling canvases of swerving cowboys and bucking bronchos...."

The dramatic quality in Hansen's works is well brought out by Arthur Miller of the Los Angeles Times in 1936:

"Aesthetically, technically and emotionally, Hansen is equally absorbing. He is as dramatic in a single brush-stroke, as he is in theme; and his conception of beauty is as vivid, as virile, as one of his seamen.

"Occasionally, he takes excursions from his dominant theme, and his desertion of the coast and the fisher-folk types, for the wide-open spaces and its inhabitants, is a sweeping metamorphosis. In his paintings of cowboys and bucking bronchos, he proves to be to the cowboy, what Zuluaga is to the Spanish bull-ring. Remington and Russel were historians of our frontier days. Hansen goes a step further, he not only dramatizes, but aestheticizes. An apparently chaotic fury of color resolves itself into all the picturesque paraphernalia of the Rodeo.

"The very sweep of his brush-strokes is as vividly full of motion, as the plunging movement of his bronchos. His color is luscious, juicy in texture, dramatically placed, and with sensuous, swinging tones."

The Grafton Galleries, San Francisco, in 1933, instituted a series of exhibitions by "The Group of Eight," consisting of the following distinguished California artists: Frank T. Johnson, Edgar F. Payne, Gustav Liljenstrom, Harold Wagner, Armin Hansen, William Ritschell, Arthur Hill Gilbert, and William Wendt, according to Howard Talbot, of the Wasp, December 23, 1933. He said:

"Sixteen characteristic canvases, two by each artist, are now on the walls...."

"Besides the permanent exhibition, each of the distinguished artists named will have a one-man

show from the tenth to the twentieth of the successive months....

"These exhibitions will afford an opportunity for San Franciscans and visitors to the City, to study the works of California's own painters of the first rank...."

Etchings by Hansen were exhibited at Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, in December 1930 and January 1931, in conjunction with a group of etchers comprising Roy Partridge, Ernest Haskell and Cornelius Boettke, all of whose etchings have received not only American, but international recognition and critical acclaim. The prints shown are part of the permanent collection at Mills College.

Prominent among the artists exhibiting at the show of the California Society of Etchers at the De Young Museum, San Francisco, in November 1934, was Armin Hansen. Arline Kistler commented in "Prints" for November 1934:

"Armin Hansen is unmistakably American. He is robust, virile and unquestioning. He seems to live at life's highest pitch, with all the healthy vigor of a youth, that is not so much a matter of years, as it is a consequence of an untiring spirit. The freshness of his work, is at once the result of his emotional capacity, and his hearty interest in all that pertains to the sea, and the elemental struggle it presents, in the face of Man's modern attempt to coerce Nature.

"Seeing Armin Hansen in his spacious studio, seated in a very large substantial chair, near a table of baronial-hall proportions, his easel backed by a huge, ten-foot screen, it is easier to think of him as the painter of large canvases, than as the author of such exquisite little prints.

"In 'The Large Pier,' and other earlier prints, there is a definitely Whistlerian feeling in his use of both large areas of white, and suggestive detail. His most recent plates, are a development of the two tendencies, for they combine the vigor of deeply felt subjects with delicate line."

AWARDS

While painting and teaching in San Francisco, and at his home in Monterey, Armin Hansen was exhibiting canvases and etchings in Eastern art galleries, as well as at local shows and winning critical acclaim with the strong realism of his painting, which he combined with an unusual color sense. A member of the San Francisco Art Association, Hansen was the leader of the modern, so-called radical group of painters, as opposed to the conservatism of such members as Evelyn Almond Withrow and Theodore Wores, who resigned from his teaching at the Art Association's school, when the radical modern group gained control.

Numerous awards and medals, both for etching and painting were awarded Hansen, since he won his first prize at the International Exposition in Brussels in 1910. His canvas, "The Belated Boat," was hung at the show of the Pennsylvania Academy in 1914. This same canvas was exhibited at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, as well as another picture, "At the Breakfast Table." For these, Hansen was awarded a silver medal. He also won silver medals for drawing and painting in 1915 from

the San Francisco Art Association; the purchase prize of the Association in 1918; and gold medals for drawing and painting in 1919. The next year, 1920, Hansen was awarded the Hallgarten Prize of the National Academy of Design, New York, for "A Boy with a Cod." He won the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Prize for his exhibit in the Los Angeles Museum in 1923; at the show of the International Print Makers in Los Angeles in 1924, he was awarded the William Preston Harrison Prize of \$100 for etching; in 1925 he won the gold medal of the Painters of the West; in 1927, the Lea Prize of the Print Club of Philadelphia; the award of the Santa Cruz Artists League in 1930; honorable mention in prints, Olympic Exchange, Los Angeles in 1932; the Ranger Fund Purchase Prize at the National Academy of Design, New York, 1925.

FURTHER CRITICISM

A critical estimate of Armin Hansen was given by Geraldine Gale, in the Wasp for December 20, 1936:

"Armin Hansen's fame rests on his powerful and original interpretations of the sea. Whether he paints in oil, water-color, or limns with the diamond point, Hansen's thoroughly masculine point of view, his ability to weave a tremendous drama and a fine composition, out of the slim content of a few waves, is always arresting."

Arthur Miller, art critic of the Los Angeles Times, said of him:

"Armin Hansen is a great American painter. The threatening power, and transparent beauty of

old ocean is in all of his pictures. Absorbed, these many years, in the sea and the life of the fisher-folk, Hansen has grown the power to recognize a fine theme at a glance, and to set it down with the maximum of judgment and the minimum of fuss.

"Winslow Homer comes inevitably to mind, both in the subjects, and in the directness of recording with water-color, and for his saying that 'The rare thing is to find a painter who knows a good thing in nature when he sees it.' Hansen displays that faculty to a marked degree.

"What are his subjects? They are often so slight, so entirely unliterary, that they will scarcely bear description. When an artist has taken root in a community like Monterey, where life is a matter of the fishing-fleet sailing before dawn of fishermen, their wives and sons, walking barefoot down the wet sands to the boats; of net-mending and ship-caulking, of storm or calm seas, rain, sunshine and fog, these elements of a life, become elements of composition, which he uses as naturally as a musician uses notes.

"But, back of all his works, is his love and knowledge of the sea as the controlling force of this community life. Often he looks down upon the swirling waters in some rock cove, and sets down their movement and color in such simple strokes, that one can only marvel at the completeness of the results.

"Armin Hansen is a painter of whom California may be proud. His major development has taken place here, and he has so completely identified himself with the lives of the Monterey fishermen, that another can scarcely attempt these subjects without being accused of imitation."

CONCLUSION

With his vitality, and the strength and realism displayed in his paintings and etchings, Armin Hansen, with his radical modern technique, is an outstanding example of the California-born artist, whose art developed and was influenced by his colorful environment. He depicted the California scene, from the rugged, pine-clad coastline of Monterey, and the way of life of its fisher-folk in their dramatic conflict against Nature--to that of the cowboys of the ranches, and the Indians and Mexicans of the burnigh, arid desert, with its fantastic cacti and ghost-like Joshua-trees with their writhing limbs. Armin Hansen's canvases and etchings have won the highest critical acclaim, when exhibited in the art galleries of the East, as representative of the best and most truly native in California art.

ARMIN C. HANSEN

REPRESENTATIVE

WORKS

Across the Harbor
At Morning
Before the Wind
Belated Boat, The
Cowboy Sport
Crossing the Banks
Drydock
Farm House, The
Fisher Harbor
Fish Houses
Fish Market, The
Fisherman's Quay, Belgium
Flemish Landscape
Harry Vinck
Impressions
Large Pier, The
Lee Scuppers Under
Little Pier, The
Low Tide
Nieuport Ville
On the Rocks
Requiem
Returning Fisherman
Rodeo
San Francisco Waterfront
Sardine Barge, The
Shower, The
Snug Harbor
Still-Life
Storm
Study
Town in Flanders, A
Winter Quarters
White Rock Light

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco,
California

Bender Collection

Returning Fishermen (etching)

The Large Pier (dry-point)

The Little Pier (dry-point)

Sardine Barge (etching)

E. Walter Collection

The Farm House (oil)

Winter Quarters (charcoal)

De Young Museum, San Francisco, California

Before the Wind (etching)

Fisher Houses (etching)

Impression

Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California

National Academy of Design, New York City

EXHIBITIONS:

San Francisco, California

Helgesen Gallery, 1913

San Francisco Art Institute, 1913

Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915

Belated Boat, The

At the Breakfast Table

San Francisco Art Association, 1915, 1918, 1919

De Young Museum, 1916, 1931, 1932

Palace of Fine Arts, 1917

Painters of the West Exhibition, 1925

Vickery, Atkins and Torrey Gallery, 1930

Grafton Galleries, 1933

Oakland, California

Ebell Club, 1913

Mills College, December 1930, January 1931

Del Monte, California

Del Monte Gallery, 1918

Monterey, California

Monterey Industrial Exposition, 1922

Los Angeles, California

Print Rooms, 1923

Los Angeles Museum, 1923

International Print Makers, 1924

Stendahl Gallery, 1930

Ilsey Galleries, Ambassador Hotel, 1932

Olympic Exchange Exhibition, 1932

Santa Cruz, California
 Art League, 1930
 New York City, New York
 National Academy of Design, 1920, 1925
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Pennsylvania Academy, 1914
 Belated Boat, The
 Print Club, 1927
 London, England
 Victoria and Albert Museum, 1929
 Fish Market, The
 Paris, France
 Salon de Printemps, 1910
 Munich, Germany
 Munich Art Academy, 1910
 Brussels, Belgium
 Brussels Art Exhibition, 1910
 Low Tide

AWARDS:

Brussels, Belgium
 International Exposition, 1910, Prize

 San Francisco, California
 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition, 1915
 Silver Medal
 San Francisco Art Association
 Purchase Prize, 1915
 Gold Medals for drawing and painting, 1919
 Silver Medals
 Painters of the West, Gold Medal, 1925

 New York City, New York
 National Academy of Design
 First Hallgarten Prize, 1920
 Ranger Fund Purchase Prize, 1925

 Los Angeles, California
 Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Prize, 1923
 International Print Makers, W.P. Harrison Prize
 for etching (\$100), 1924
 Olympic Exchange, Honorable Mention in Prints,
 1932

 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Print Club, Lea Prize, 1927

 Santa Cruz, California
 Santa Cruz Art League, 1930

CLUBS:

Member:

Associete, National Academy of Design, 1926
New York City, New York

San Francisco Art Association

Wisconsin Print Society

Societe des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium

Art Association, Carmel, California

ARMIN C. HANSEN

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ARMIN CARL HANSEN

CALL-BULLETIN

Gregory (California, San Francisco)

ART IN CALIFORNIA: A SURVEY OF AMERICAN ART WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CALIFORNIAN PAINTING, SCULPTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE, PAST AND PRESENT, PARTICULARLY AS THOSE ARTS WERE REPRESENTED AT THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION ... San Francisco: R. L. Bernier, 1916.

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ARMIN CARL HANSEN

b. October [23], 1886 San Francisco, California

d. April 23, 1957 Monterey, California

October 23: CAR, CSL, Laguna Beach, California, SOUTHERN
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p. 4, marine ptgs., ill.: SEAWARD

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by Harry Noyes Pratt, ill.: SILENT WATCHERS; THE HELMSMAN; photo.Vol. 20 (July, 1929), p. 407, ill.: FISH MARKET (etching), exh.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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 October 29, 1916, p. 26, recent work in Monterey area
 August 5, 1917, p. S6, to paint decoration over door of Tolerton Galleries
 February 23, 1919, p. E3, LAUNCHING THE BOAT purchased by royal Japanese collector
 February 29, 1920, p. E3, Print Rooms exh. rev.
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 May 10, 1925, p. D3, STORM BIRDS wins prize at National Academy of Design exh.
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 August 12, 1928, p. D7, Gump's exh., ill.: ASHORE (etching)
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