Nevada

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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

The *Quarterly* solicits contributions of scholarly or popular interest dealing with the following subjects: the general (e.g., the political, social, economic, constitutional) or the natural history of Nevada and the Great Basin; the literature, languages, anthropology, and archaeology of these areas; reprints of historic documents (concerning people, flora, fauna, historical or archaeological sites); reviews and essays concerning the historical literature of Nevada, the Great Basin, and the West.

Prospective authors should send their work to The Editor, *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada 89503. Papers should be typed double-spaced and sent in duplicate. All manuscripts, whether articles, edited documents, or essays, should conform with the most recent edition of the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style*. Footnotes should be typed double-spaced on separate pages and numbered consecutively. Correspondence concerning articles and essays is welcomed, and should be addressed to The Editor.

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FRONT COVER: Plate 1. Maynard Dixon, *Signal Station at Gravel Pits*, 1934.

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This special art issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* is the result of untold hours of work by many individuals, institutions, and organizations.

First and foremost, James McCormick and his tireless enthusiasm are what have made possible this celebration of a century of Nevada art. As guest editor, he spent countless hours reviewing manuscripts, giving advice, and, most of all, bringing the issue together in his thoughtful introduction. He has spent thirty years developing, guiding, and contributing to the visual arts in Nevada, and his insight into that evolutionary process is evident in his essay. James McCormick was also responsible for assembling the talented array of authors who gave of their time and knowledge to write the essays for this issue about Nevada artists.

The Nevada Historical Society would like to thank the boards of the Sierra Arts Foundation and the Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation for their generous support of this project. Their contributions allowed this issue to be printed using a four-color format, the first time in the *Quarterly*'s thirty-three-year history. We would also like to thank Si Sellers and DonRey Outdoor Advertising, whose membership is the first in our Departmental Fellow category; their important contribution provided for a half-page photograph.

As editor, I would like to thank the staff at the Nevada Historical Society for their abundant gifts of time and patience during the hectic hours of compiling this issue. Director Peter Bandurraga must be commended not only for supporting this project and reading the manuscripts, but for writing one of the essays himself. Curator of History Phillip Earl also contributed an essay, while Head Librarian Lee Mortensen attended to the needs of researchers, gathered data, and, as usual, met us with arms full of material. Lee was especially helpful to Exhibit Technician Margaret Riley, who compiled important information on women painters as well as contributing her own essay on a woman artist. Special thanks goes to Curator of Photography Erik Lauritzen, who traveled many miles with me, from Reno to Boulder City, to make the superb photographs of each piece of artwork for this issue. Without his expertise, we would not have the quality of images that you see here.

I would also like to thank the following individuals and institutions who allowed the society to make photographs from their collections:

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And last, but not least, a very special thanks to my assistant editor, Juliet Pierson, a docent with the historical society, who skillfully reviewed and edited each manuscript and who managed to make us all sound sane and literate.

Cheryl A. Fox

EDITOR'S STATEMENT

Cheryl A. Fox

Two years ago I sat down with James McCormick and discussed the possibility of devoting a special issue of the *Quarterly* to the history of artists in Nevada. We agreed that there was virtually nothing on the subject in print, and that such a publication would be an invaluable tool for researchers. Adopting the appropriately historical framework of the period 1860-1960, our choice of artists was narrowed to those individuals who had produced a significant body of work prior to 1960 and whose art was in some way influential in the region or the state. Because of space and historical considerations we decided to include only painters in this issue and hope to devote future numbers to artists whose work is in other media. While we have tried to include as many artists as possible here, we acknowledge that we have covered only a sample.

It was my pleasure to work with a talented group of authors who agreed to write essays about the artists selected for inclusion. They went about their assignments in a variety of ways: Some authors had the benefit of a substantial literature on their particular artists; others had to start from scratch. A few were fortunate enough to be able to interview a living artist. (Three were living at the beginning of the project; Zoray Andrus died before the essay about her was completed.) Some of the writers succeeded in locating family or friends of the artists and uncovered new information from those sources. One author wrote about her father.

During the work on this special issue, it became evident that the Nevada Historical Society had very little information concerning Nevada artists in its files. Because of this void, it was decided that the society would become a repository for all of the data gathered during the work on this issue. The Nevada Art Research Project is a direct outgrowth of that decision. It has developed, with the help of James McCormick and Margaret Riley, into an undertaking whose goals are to organize biographical files and other materials on Nevada artists from 1860 to the present. Please help with this process by letting us know about Nevada artists that you are aware of; fill out the Nevada Art Research Project survey form included at the end of this issue, and return it to the printed address. We thank you for helping the Nevada Historical Society to continue in its collection of information on these important contributors to the artistic heritage of Nevada.

INTRODUCTION

James C. McCormick

ECCENTRIC IN MANNER AND DRESS. Poverty-stricken. Living in dilapidated lodgings. Prone to dreams beyond bounds of reason. These are characteristics that may come to mind when the word *artist* presents itself. The stereotype of the artist as nonconformist was magnified in the Bohemian quarter of Paris before the turn of the twentieth century. Artists such as Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec strengthened this perception, and it is perpetuated today by cartoons in popular magazines, in films, and sometimes by the behavior of contemporary artists who fancy the conduct that goes with marketing their work more important than the depth of the images they create.

The decision to devote an entire issue to this subject was followed almost immediately by an array of questions to which there are no easy answers. It was determined that a collection of essays devoted to individual artists rather than to movements or styles would be the most appropriate form. The visual arts of Nevada during the century under consideration did not follow the stylistic tendencies that could be traced more coherently in the large cultural centers of the United States, and abroad, for that matter. It is difficult to find an impressionist or cubist painter in Nevada during the decades immediately following the inception of these widely imitated art movements.

This issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* focuses on the history of the visual arts in Nevada from 1860 to 1960. A foremost problem was arriving at a set of characteristics that could be used to define a *Nevada* artist. Eccentricities aside, it was obvious that parameters had to be drawn. Gilbert Natches and Kate Lewers are the only artists featured in this issue who were born in Nevada. The state seldom attracted artists in a collective manner. For a brief period in the 1940s, Virginia City became a minor mecca for artists, but no town in Nevada ever earned the renown of Taos or Sante Fe, the remote desert communities in New Mexico that have retained their worldwide reputations as artists' colonies to this day. Although mining was Neva-

James C. McCormick is chair of the department of art at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he offers instruction in printmaking and drawing. Since his arrival in Nevada in 1960, he has served several terms on the Nevada State Council on the Arts and has exhibited his work in one-person and group shows across the United States. He was a recent recipient of the Governor's Art Award and was named UNR Distinguished Teacher for 1989.

da's principal industry during the nineteenth century, it does not appear to have prompted a geat deal of artistic activity. Homes and commercial establishments on the Comstock were decorated with paintings, but by and large they were brought from elsewhere, often California; works of art arrived after lengthy journeys across the two oceans, imported from distant European or eastern collections. Gus Bundy, Maynard Dixon, and James Swinnerton were attracted to the desert by its pictorial possibilities. Zoray Andrus was intrigued with Virginia City and its small gathering of artists and writers. Robert Caples and Ben Cunningham spent their formative years in northern Nevada but eventually pulled up stakes and settled elsewhere. Craig Sheppard and Lorenzo Latimer came to teach.

The selection of artists was accomplished with considerable latitude as far as place of birth, length of time spent in Nevada, and subject matter are concerned. On the other hand, because the primary medium of Nevada artists during the period was paint, an artist's inclusion in the issue was based on being a painter. While a few of the artists discussed here did try their hands at other media, all are noted principally for their work in paint. A future number of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* will be devoted to the history of photography in Nevada. Thus, with the exception of Gus Bundy and Cliff Segerblom, who work in both media, this issue does not deal with photographers.

Some readers may find fault with the selection of certain artists for this issue. It can be argued that merely driving across the border from another state to paint Nevada scenery does not justify inclusion among the ranks of Nevada artists. The editors admit that this is a debatable judgment, but they also believe that transiency has been a primary element in the development of the visual arts in this state. It would be difficult to specify a correct length of time on Nevada turf for qualifying as a Nevada artist—possibly the well-known six-week-residency requirement that guides our divorce industry could be applied. More interesting than time, however, is how each of these artists, local or outsider, used the state for their artistic purposes. George Otis's association with Nevada was limited; he is known here solely for the execution of three diorama murals for the Nevada State Museum in the mid-1940s. While this may seem to be a flimsy connection, his reputation as one of America's important landscape painters enhanced the stature of the museum, and his work provided it with a distinguished artist's interpretation of a Nevada landscape. Surely Frederick Dellenbaugh's one painting, the only known view of Las Vegas Ranch, is a landmark work, if only from a historical standpoint.

It may also be noted that only two women are included among the eighteen featured artists. The deficiency in our knowledge of artists who were women will soon be lessened by the Nevada Art Research Project, a program initiated at the Nevada Historical Society that will bring together biographical

data on individual artists from the time of John C. Frémont's explorations to the present. The staff of the research project has already discovered a number of artists previously unrecognized, and it is relying on the readership of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* to provide additional names and information, especially on artists from communities other than Reno and Las Vegas. Eventually the Nevada Art Research Project will publish a directory of Nevada artists and will maintain an extensive artists' registry at the society for examination by scholars and students from other research institutions.

Another imbalance in the present issue is the disproportionate number of artists from northern Nevada; Las Vegas and adjacent counties are clearly under-represented. Had the editors extended the period covered by this issue to 1980, the additional twenty years would have included the enormous population growth in Clark County and the attendant expansion of the southern Nevada cultural community. Still, it is the hope of the Nevada Art Research Project that the scope of its program will extend to every county in the state and will include the entire range of creative individuals.

A substantial body of material has been published about native American crafts: in the writings of Margaret Wheat, and in countless articles prepared for professional journals. The decision of the editors not to investigate this subject was predicated on the understanding, right or wrong, that these crafts represent a separate field of investigation more accurately aligned with anthropology. Further investigation by the Nevada Art Research Project will undoubtedly lead to the names of additional native American artists who worked in paint or other materials not usually associated with the arts of survival. For example, Gilbert Natches, featured in this issue, is a native American artist who painted during the early twentieth century.

Why was it that the primary medium of expression for artists in Nevada between 1860 and 1960 was painting? For itinerants, working on paper or stretched canvas was simply an easier process to manage. Paint tubes and brushes could be carried in a box, and an easel could be transported with little trouble. Sculpture and printmaking, on the other hand, required heavier, more bulky equipment, presses, and furnaces. Materials such as metal, wood, clay, and plaster had to be imported, and sturdy facilities built to store them. An average-sized room could be converted into a studio for painting, or an old outbuilding might serve the same purpose, especially if it had a window on the north side for light. Finally, most of the artists who lived in Nevada were trained as painters. The curriculum at the University of Nevada in Reno, the only university in the state until the 1950s, was devoted almost entirely to two-dimensional instruction until the late 1940s.

From the days of the earliest settlements, artists in Nevada faced a number of problems that did not confront their counterparts in more populous regions. Unstable economic conditions, inherent in the boom-or-bust nature of the mining industry, did not encourage the establishment of galleries or

museums. The Nevada Art Gallery in Reno, founded in the 1930s, was the first public art facility in the state and until a few years ago served as Nevada's only nonprofit museum of art.

The philanthropic support for the arts that normally flows from major industries in a region has been provided by Nevada's gaming and tourist industries only in recent times. Private art galleries were few and far between, and the lifespan of these businesses was often numbered in months rather than years. Sometimes it was the artists themselves who established these galleries, and it was not uncommon to find exhibits in bars, markets, or department stores. At best, prospects for the sale of original works of art were bleak. It is curious that, to this day, Nevada businesses and individuals who collect art often enlarge their holdings by patronizing galleries in San Francisco or Los Angeles. And Nevada artists, even those enjoying substantial recognition and frequent sales, respond to this predilection by seeking galleries on both coasts to represent them.

The survey of the eighteen artists yields several interesting tendencies, or inconsistencies, as the case may be.

Few of the artists were self-taught. Maxwell and Natches engaged in no formal studies. Maynard Dixon drifted into painting, using his native abilities in drawing to lead him closer to art as a profession. Later, having received encouragement from Frederick Remington, he combined illustrating and writing to forge a career for himself.

Gus Bundy, Lorenzo Latimer, and Zoray Andrus, to name a few, attended professional schools in major urban areas, students in highly specialized art curricula. Craig Sheppard, on the other hand, earned both an undergraduate and a master's degree in art from the University of Oklahoma in Norman. It was a program that prepared him for a twenty-seven-year career on the faculty of the University of Nevada in Reno. It wasn't until after World War II that students began enrolling in state universities and colleges to pursue liberal arts programs with heavy concentrations in the visual arts.

While there is not a single subject that ties all of the painters in this issue together, it is abundantly clear that Nevada artists have responded most frequently to the dramatic geological contrasts and atmospheric perspective of the Great Basin landscape. Robert Caples treated the desert as a series of stylized ranges, the illusion of deep space heightened by progressively cooler colors. The watercolors of Cliff Segerblom and Lorenzo Latimer, rendered in deftly applied washes of color, documented specific locations in the state. Sheppard could not resist the introduction of a lone cowboy into his landscapes, and Meyer-Kassel sometimes placed figures from classical sources, nymphs and satyrs, in the Nevada terrain.

C. B. McClellan and Meyer-Kassel are the only artists in this collection who earned a significant part of their income from portrait painting. It appears that portrait commissions were lively for McClellan during his days

on the Comstock, but he eventually took up historical subjects to sustain himself. And although Meyer-Kassel was engaged to paint numerous portraits of northern Nevada dignitaries, he also turned to landscape painting after 1945.

Richard Guy Walton was a maverick who paid attention to international art happenings and created a body of work that was more adventuresome, both thematically and in terms of materials, than most of the other Nevadans. Zoray Andrus described herself as a pioneer, countering with abstract compositions the representational approach that dominated Nevada painting. Ben Cunningham, also an abstractionist, gained widespread recognition for his geometric color studies, paintings that were well received in New York galleries.

The writers assembled for this issue come from a variety of venues. James Hulse, Dennis McBride, and Phillip Earl are names familiar to readers of Nevada history. Several contributors are involved with contemporary art issues: Ingrid Evans writes art reviews for the *Reno-Gazette Journal* and *Artweek*, and Peter Stremmel owns a gallery in Reno that bears his name. Sophie Sheppard, daughter of Craig Sheppard, and Jeff Nicholson are appearing in print for the first time. Ana Gordon, a Bay Area writer, conducted her interview with Zoray Andrus just weeks before the artist's death. Some contributors have institutional affiliations: Jerry A. Schefcik is an art historian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Bob Nylan is a curator at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City and David Millman is a curator at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas. The other essayists—Margaret Riley, Richard Datin, Katharine Hale, Marcia Cohn Growdon, Ahmed Essa, Cheryl A. Fox, and Peter L. Bandurraga—bring their expertise from various other aspects of history or the arts. To all of them the guest editor is deeply indebted. Their generous contribution of time and talents have made possible this initial venture in documenting the history of the visual arts in Nevada. It is hoped their effort will be followed by that of others who exhibit the same rigorous commitment to solid scholarship.

CYRINUS B. McCLELLAN

(1827-1883)

Richard C. Datin

CYRINUS B. MCCLELLAN, AN ARTIST NOT LIKELY to elicit much enthusiasm from art historians and critics these days, was Nevada's most prolific artist beginning in the 1860s. "Counting portraits and all there must be hundreds, if not thousands of his pictures in this State and California," recalled Virginia City's *Territorial Enterprise* years later.[1] "A most ardent lover of art," "a soul of honor," and "a true artist" were among the many accolades bestowed on this popular craftsman whose venue encompassed Virginia City, Reno, and Carson City.[2] It became a different story during McClellan's twilight years. The Comstock declined, and times grew tougher for the acclaimed artist as people waived the luxury of costly portraiture. He moved to Reno, where his health failed in 1883, at about the age of fifty-six.

While a few of his works remain to document his artistic endeavors, most of McClellan's canvases have vanished, been destroyed, or simply gone unnoticed, partly because of the absence of a signature. Mac, as he was referred to by one contemporary newspaper, didn't limit himself to portraits. He was also known to have created many stylish pictures, pen-and-ink sketches, and landscapes, as well as figure pieces. A quiet and modest man of many talents, he was lauded by Carson City's *Daily Appeal*: "We know of no portrait painter on this coast who is his equal."[3] Today, Cyrinus B. McClellan is virtually unknown.

Before joining the 1860s rush to the Comstock, McClellan was widely respected in California, having lived many years at Marysville, Sacramento, and San Francisco, as well as in Forest City and Downieville. Considered a "pioneer in his profession," McClellan's initial sojourn in Nevada began at Virginia City.[4] During his residency at 9 North C Street, McClellan portrayed a goodly number of Comstock citizens and "never failed in any instance to produce excellent and striking likenesses, whether his subject may have been of mature age or a mere infant."[5] His paintings were so lifelike that George Gibson's portrait prompted the *Reno Crescent* to declare, "You

Richard C. Datin recently retired as the curator of the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City. He now devotes his time to research and writing about Nevada railroads and other state topics.

would swear, to look at it, that the old fellow held four aces in a game of draw [poker]."[6]

Desiring a change of scenery, McClellan packed his palette and brushes and moved to Carson City in July 1870, where he established a studio in Sweeney's Building on King Street. No sooner had he settled but Messrs. Moore and Parker called upon him to paint the drop curtain and other scenery for their newly remodelled Carson Theatre. Other commmissions included "a surprisingly correct and lifelike portrait of the late [Ormsby County sheriff] T. G. Smith"[7] derived from another medium—a daguerreotype. His life-size portrait of Senator James W. Nye, completed late in 1870, apparently caused a curious difficulty or two. Originally presented to Nye's daughter, Mrs. Mary W. Waller of New York, it ended up adorning the office of the Nevada secretary of state some six months later. Surrounded by a magnificent gilt frame, the old Grey Eagle was such a "splendid likeness . . . that the tears he is wont to shed on some occasions appear to be trembling in the corners of his eyes."[8] McClellan offered the work for sale, but it was evident that Nye's reputation as a "political carpet-bagger"[9] did little to attract buyers. Aaron Treadway[10] saved the day by purchasing the portrait of the former territorial governor. "Long may he hang there, a memento [*sic*] of fallen greatness," concluded one Reno paper.[11]

The booming town of Reno drew McClellan to set up shop some time later that year. While the *Reno Crescent* gave space to a dispute over the merits of soaps manufactured in Reno versus those from Carson City, McClellan was painting portraits, including one of his recent Carson City benefactor Treadway, which characteristically lacked only "the hand behind the ear and that new straw hat on the head."[12] Proving his versatility as an artist, McClellan finished a store sign for Charley Friend and his business partner W. W. Haskell. One side displayed Haskell's books, toys, paper, cigars, etcetera, while Charley's side pictured his stock, including chronometers, watches, steam engines, jewelry, guns, pistols, and so forth.[13]

In 1872 McClellan moved back to Virginia City. A *Territorial Enterprise* reporter, possibly Dan DeQuille, enlightened his readers with this wonderful detailed glimpse of McClellan:

> His studio is picturesquely situated on North Howard street. From his door he has a fine view of the wild stretch of mountains and deserts reaching away over a hundred miles to the eastward from the foot of Mount Davidson. We found the artist at home and surrounded by a score or more of portraits of all sizes and kinds.[14] Some of these were finished and others lacked but a few finished touches. In two or three days all will be completed, when another lot of a dozen or more will be started and driven through in a flock. This, Mr. McClellan says, is his method of working. He has a number of pictures on hand at the same time and goes from one to another during the day, keeping them all about so far advanced.[15]

McClellan luxuriated in his success, according to one newspaper account.

"Open-handed and generous, he cast his earnings about among all who chose to partake of his hospitality, which never knew any limit so long as he had money in his pocket. He had an elegant suite of rooms on B Street, and no sideboard was more lavishly stocked with costly liquors and cigars. His studio was a sort of club room for Mac's friends and was generally filled."[16]

Virginia City's disastrous fire of 1875 abruptly ended the good times. Most of McClellan's pictures, sketches, and all the "traps and calamities" accumulated during his lifetime as an artist lay in the ashes. The *Carson Daily Appeal* said it was "pretty hard on the old man, but he looks cheerful under his afflictions."[17] Picking up the pieces of his profession, McClellan headed for Carson City in December and opened a studio above the offices of the *Daily Appeal* on East Second Street.

During the next few years McClellan moved between Carson City and Virginia City, all the while producing a prodigious quantity of canvases. Among those mentioned in the newspapers were portraits of Dr. A. S. Means of the Virginia City Chapter of the Pacific Coast Pioneers; Charles E. DeLong, Virginia City lawyer and later minister to Japan; and future Governor John H. Kinkead. Also noted are an historic scene of the discovery of silver in Nevada with O'Riley, McLaughlin, and Comstock, and a faithfully executed set of four 36-by-56-inch panoramic views of the Comstock from Virginia City to Gold Hill, painted for Virginia City's fraternal Washoe Club.[18]

As the 1880s dawned, the exciting days of the Big Bonanza were history. The Comstock's declining economy seriously affected McClellan as clients became less plentiful. "Still Mac clung to the old ledge," reported the *Carson Daily Appeal*, "and in the midst of hard luck and poverty kept the warm side of his heart toward everybody and maintained a cheerfulness that no circumstances could blight."[19] To sustain himself, McClellan at times resorted to auctioning a large variety of battle and hunting scenes, landscapes, portraits of Civil War generals, a spectacular view of Gold Hill, and so forth.[20] Even the popularity of Generals Grant and Sheridan failed to bring prices high enough to cover the cost of their frames. But McClellan "went on painting, and when he could not sell pictures, he gave them away."[21]

McClellan decided that prospects were far better in Reno and settled there during the summer of 1881. Among the illustrations completed in his studio on Commercial Row[22] during this period were one of the famed Lightning Express train in the moonlit Truckee River canyon, a group of Nevada Indians, and a portrait of the recently assassinated President James Garfield.[23]

The one painting for which McClellan will be long remembered is *Reno Twenty Years Ago*, with pioneer Myron C. Lake posing alongside Chief Winnemucca and several other native Americans near Lake's house and bridge next to the Truckee River. It began late in 1881 as a simple sketch of Reno as it had looked twenty years earlier. The *Reno Evening Gazette* suggested that "M. C. Lake ought to have a painting from the sketch. It would make a fine

companion piece for Reno as it appears today."[24] With his health failing, the fifty-five-year-old pioneer heeded those words and completed *Reno Twenty Years Ago* before 1882 ended. To benefit the ailing artist, H. L. W. Knox of the Lake House organized a raffle for the artwork in February of 1883. James Loughlin, foreman of the *Reno Evening Gazette* press room, held the winning ticket, but before he could enjoy the prize his employer recommended publicly that "M.C. Lake ought to purchase it and donate it to some society, in order that it may be preserved."[25]

The historic illustration of Lake's crossing may have been the artist's last effort. After suffering for months, C. B. McClellan quietly succumbed in his second-floor Commercial Row studio lodgings on the morning of October 1, 1883. His most famous work, *Reno Twenty Years Ago*, subsequently passed through a number of hands. For some time the three-by-four-foot scene had been exhibited by then owner Richard Salter in Herman Thyes's saloon on Commercial Row. It was priced at $50, but no one seemed to want what was considered one of McClellan's best works until Salter ordered the elegantly framed oil to be packed and shipped to his home in Pasadena, California. Upon hearing of this, Myron Lake's son-in-law William Thompson stepped in to purchase the important work in July of 1887.[26] Since then *Reno Twenty Years Ago* has remained in Reno's pioneer Thompson family,[27] as a fine example of Nevada's most prolific artist.

NOTES

[1] *Territorial Enterprise*, 3 October 1883.
[2] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 30 July 1870; 3 October 1883.
[3] *Ibid.*, 2 August 1870.
[4] *Territorial Enterprise*, 3 October 1883.
[5] *Ibid.*, 30 July 1870.
[6] *Reno Crescent*, 13 May 1871.
[7] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 6 October 1870.
[8] The (Carson City) *Daily State Register*, 2 July 1871.
[9] *Reno Crescent*, 25 November 1871.
[10] The likable "Farmer" Treadway operated Carson City's popular picnic park.
[11] *Reno Crescent*, 30 December 1871.
[12] *Ibid.*, 26 August 1871.
[13] *Ibid.*, 11 November 1871.
[14] Among the people portrayed were John James, brother of Virginia & Truckee surveyor I. E. James; Mrs. F. A. Tritle; and the father of George D. Fryer, owner of Carson City's Ormsby House. It seems that most of McClellan's works were executed by commission, while others, including many portraits of well-known personalities, were completed on speculation and offered for sale to state and county governments. A number of notable citizens of Washoe, Ormsby, and Storey counties were subjects of McClellan's brush, to say nothing of their relatives and offspring. A good example was McClellan's 1876 portrait of Captain Edward Storey, from whom Storey County received its name. More than eighteen months elapsed before the Storey County Commissioners moved to purchase it for the courthouse (Carson *Daily Appeal*, 16 March 1876; *Territorial Enterprise*, 7 November 1877). The portraits of John James and Edward Storey are now located at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno.
[15] *Territorial Enterprise*, 11 April 1875.
[16] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 3 October 1883.

[17] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 2 November 1875.

[18] *Territorial Enterprise*, 19 October 1877. Originally announced in late 1876 as the fourth painting of a series, McClellan's highly detailed work of Gold Hill became the fifth commissioned by the Washoe Club. This large, ornately framed scene is presently located in the Mines Library of the University of Nevada, Reno, campus. The portraits of A. S. Means and Charles DeLong are at the Nevada Historical Society.

[19] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 3 October 1883.

[20] *Territorial Enterprise*, 13 December 1879; *Virginia Evening Chronicle*, 15 December 1879.

[21] *Carson Daily Appeal*, 3 October 1883.

[22] Above Steel's Meat Market, current site of Fitzgerald's Hotel and Casino.

[23] *Nevada State Journal*, 9 June 1882.

[24] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 25 July 1881.

[25] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 22 February 1883.

[26] *Ibid.*, 29 March 1887; 27 July 1887.

[27] Lake's granddaughter, the late Amy Thompson Gulling, was its presiding matriarch for many years. The painting now hangs in the restored Lake Mansion in Reno.

FREDERICK S. DELLENBAUGH

(1846-1935)

David Millman

IN THE SPRING OF 1871, SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Frederick Dellenbaugh began the great adventure of his life. He joined Major John Wesley Powell and a crew of scientists on Powell's second exploration trip down the Colorado River and into the Grand Canyon. These were the last great stretches of land and river still unknown in the continental United States. Powell and his men spent many years mapping the Grand Canyon country, noting its geologic features, and observing its Indian inhabitants; their work paved the way for twentieth-century America to expand into the Southwest.

Dellenbaugh's youth was not his only source of inexperience. The son of an Ohio doctor, he had never been in undeveloped country and possessed no survival skills. Though he lacked formal training, he signed on as artist and boatman, and also assisted with the topographic mapping. Dellenbaugh did bring something to the expedition; he had a natural artistic talent, and he was hardy and eager to work. He was also able to climb and sketch from places where a photographer's bulky equipment was impractical.[1] Dellenbaugh's sketches formed an important part of the mission's record.

The expedition was beset by troubles. Danger from the rapids, lack of funds for proper equipment, boredom, and homesickness plagued the men. But problems with the expedition did not upset Dellenbaugh; his mind was on his sketches:

> The Major is anxious that we should learn all we can. I have now sketched about four hundred miles of river-walls from ten or less to three-hundred feet in height. Sometimes I had to make quick work between rapids for suddenly I would hear the Major shout "oars" and I would have to snatch up my oars and pull through a rapid, then drop them and go to work again. You see it requires some steadiness of nerve to have steadiness of hand, to make any kind of an outline.[2]

After his return from the Colorado River expedition, Dellenbaugh began to concentrate on his art. His formal art training commenced in New York in

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1873, and he later studied at the Royal Academy of Art in Munich and the Académie Julian in Paris. Today, Dellenbaugh is known more for his writing and exploring than as a great artist, but contemporary art critics occasionally characterized him as gifted.[3]

In 1875 Dellenbaugh and a friend returned to the Southwest to retrace the route of the previous expedition. During this trip, he sketched and painted the geologic features of the Grand Canyon and surrounding areas. Based in Kanab, Utah, Dellenbaugh also indulged his passion for exploration, and an 1876 wagon trip to Ivanpah, a mining camp in southern California, brought him to the Las Vegas Ranch. While resting there, Dellenbaugh created the first known painting of the Las Vegas Valley.

The Las Vegas Valley held very little interest for the United States or even for Nevadans until the arrival of the railroad in 1905. In the nineteenth century only a handful of settlers occupied the valley; it was simply a place to cross over, usually as quickly as possible. Las Vegas was of interest to explorers like John C. Frémont, traders on the Old Spanish Trail, and Mormons primarily because its springs provided much needed water.

The Las Vegas Ranch occupied the site of the former Las Vegas Mission, which Mormon settlers had founded in 1855 in order to complete an all-weather corridor from Utah to the Pacific. The ranch, established in the mid-1860s by Octavius Decatur Gass and later owned by Helen J. Stewart, was the very heart of Las Vegas for fifty years. Its fields and orchards fed the miners of El Dorado Canyon and Ivanpah. Its kitchens fed hungry and weary travellers and provided the only supplies on the Mormon Road for hundreds of miles. The ranch was the site of the first post office in Las Vegas and was the social and holiday center for the entire valley. On the land that Mrs. Stewart sold to railroad interests grew the modern city of Las Vegas. Today, the ranch site is occupied by convention facilities and the Cashman Field baseball complex. A portion of the structure used during both the Mission and Las Vegas Ranch periods may still be seen at the complex.

After his two Colorado River trips, Dellenbaugh pursued the life of explorer and writer. He travelled in and wrote about Iceland, Norway, Siberia, the West Indies, Alaska, and the American West. *A Canyon Voyage* (1908) told of the Powell expedition from Dellenbaugh's point of view. Among his many other books, *The Romance of the Colorado River* (1902) was foremost in creating the association of Dellenbaugh with the Grand Canyon country.

Dellenbaugh made his home in New York City, from which he continued his travels. There, he served as librarian of the American Geographical Society (1909–11) and helped found the Explorers' Club. In the winter of 1935, at the age of eighty-one, Frederick Dellenbaugh died of pneumonia after walking through the snow to a meeting of the Explorers.

The Dellenbaugh painting of the Las Vegas Ranch is not a great work of art. It is, however, a very important work of art. The painting is one of the very

few existing items from nineteenth-century life in southern Nevada. Las Vegas today is one of the fastest-growing cities in America, and the values and lessons of its history are often ignored amid the crush of new arrivals and new buildings. Frederick Dellenbaugh was not a Nevadan; he has no roots or connections in Nevada other than this painting. Yet he left to southern Nevada an unexpected gift—a rare glimpse into its past—a view that is increasingly difficult to find.

NOTES

[1] Martin J. Anderson, "Artist in the Wilderness: Frederick Dellenbaugh's Grand Canyon Adventure," *Journal of Arizona History* 28 (Spring 1987): 47.

[2] Frederick S. Dellenbaugh Papers, Special Collections, University of Arizona Library, Tucson. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh to his parents, 29 August 1871, cited in Anderson, *Ibid.*, 52.

[3] Robert C. Euler, "Frederick Dellenbaugh: Grand Canyon Artist," *Journal of Arizona History* 28 (Spring 1987): 32.

LORENZO P. LATIMER

(1857-1941)

Katharine G. Hale

LORENZO PALMER LATIMER WAS A SON OF PIONEERING SETTLERS Lorenzo Dow Latimer and his wife Harriet Neeham. Although he was born in California, at Gold Hill in Placer County, Latimer lived in Nevada for so many years, painting and teaching, that some consider him a Nevada artist.[1]

Latimer's early schooling included the McClure Military Institute in Oakland in the mid-1870s, but his interest lay in painting and he chose art as a career. He studied under Virgil Williams in San Francisco at the California School of Design, later teaching there himself while also conducting art classes at the Mechanics Institute. In 1899 Latimer was appointed chair of the School Committee of the School of Design, by then renamed the Mark Hopkins Art Institute. He held this position for twenty years, during which the name changed again, this time to the San Francisco Art Institute. He was also on the Board of Directors for the San Francisco Art Association from 1899 to 1917.[2]

A member of numerous organizations in the Bay Area (Sequoia Club, San Francisco Art Association, Mechanics Institute, and Athenian Nile Club of Oakland), Latimer found one of his most rewarding affiliations in the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, an organization still in existence. During Latimer's lifetime, its members were all artists, musicians, poets, writers, and singers, and membership required that they make significant contributions of their talents on behalf of the group. The club owned a retreat called The Grove in northern California; it comprised an ancient stand of redwoods by the Russian River with which Latimer became familiar and which greatly influenced his painting. He wrote a piece for the *Overland Monthly* that set forth some of his perceptions as an artist. It was accompanied by his depictions of the redwoods and epitomized the lofty goals of the idealistic young men of the early Bohemian Club:

In the midst of such grandeur, such sublimity of nature, how insignificant one feels himself to be. With awe and utter helplessness the rash artist begins the drawing

Katharine Hale, a twenty-eight-year resident of Reno, has been involved in both the artistic and political communities of Nevada.

even of the first line and as he goes on he becomes dissatisfied and discouraged—then he stops and stares, completely at a loss to know how to proceed. Nowhere does one find such depth of feeling as in a forest of giant redwood trees. I think the Creator never intended that any one should represent on canvas these noble trees, as they really are, or He certainly would have made them simpler.[3]

Latimer is known for his oils and watercolors, particularly Nevada and California landscapes. His landscapes and redwood trees won gold medals at fairs and expositions in Chicago and San Francisco. Some of his finest canvases were of Tahoe and Yosemite, and he painted numerous landscapes featuring Nevada's mountains, streams, and valleys, preferring scenes presented by summer and autumn days.

It is not certain when Latimer arrived in Reno, but the Reno Commercial Club, a forerunner of the local chamber of commerce, did hold an exhibition of his paintings in November of 1917, by arrangement of his friend Walter Nagle, secretary of the club.

Latimer's presence in Reno was like a seed. He fostered the growth of the community's artistic and cultural life as few had done before. In 1921, he founded the Latimer Art Club, the first and for many years the only art organization within the state. Latimer also taught private painting classes and in 1931 was instrumental in forming the Nevada Art Gallery, now the Nevada Museum of Art.[4]

Between 1950 and 1967 the Latimer Art Club sponsored many programs, presenting a carefully selected array of art exhibits, musical evenings, and programs and lectures, all offered to the public free of charge. The club also sponsored many demonstrations in which artists from different parts of the country showed their techniques and working methods. Other programs covered a wide variety of topics—oil and watercolor painting, drawing, oriental rugs, news and science, literature, gardening, music, photography and films, wood-block prints, ceramics, weaving, serigraph, collage, mosaic, and batik—no artistic endeavor, persuasion, or cultural influence was excluded. The records of the Latimer Art Club provide a capsule history of Reno's cultural community during the early twentieth century.[5]

Latimer was more than a witness to Reno's cultural growth in the first half of the twentieth century. The club that was organized in his name reflected his concern for the entire range of human activity. Curiously, Ren Latimer's brush mustache might have twitched with amusement at club programs with titles such as "Climate as it Affects Our Philosophy," "The Making of Puppets," and "Lumbering around Lake Tahoe."[6]

The people of northern Nevada owe a debt to Lorenzo Latimer. The metaphor of the seed is appropriate; his vision for this region and especially for its artistic community grew in the years to come—enlarged by artists and others who had been inspired by his leadership.

James E. Church, one of the founders of the Nevada Art Gallery, wrote:

Much of what has been accomplished at the Nevada Art Gallery is due to the Latimer Club as a unit and individual members. They have all served on committees, catalogued collections, worked at the maintenance of the collection and building, arranged exhibits, conducted workshop classes, arranged all but a few programs on art, history, travel, music and many other topics.[7]

Lorenzo Latimer's contribution to Nevada's artistic heritage began with his paintings and extended into the community as he organized the art club. His legacy and this club survive today, persisting through periods of radical change in the arts and the community itself. Next year the Latimer Art Club will be seventy years old and, although now a small group, it attests to the devotion and the influence of an important Nevada painter.

NOTES

[1] Doris Ostrander Dawdy, *Artists of the American West: A Biographical Dictionary* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1974), 140.

[2] Justice B. Detwiler, ed., *Who's Who in California: A Biographical Directory, 1928-29* (San Francisco: Who's Who Publishing Co., 1929), 21.

[3] Lorenzo Palmer Latimer, "The Redwood and the Artist," *Overland Monthly* (July-December, 1898): 354.

[4] Marguerite Erwin, Hildegard Herz and Millicent Thompson, *History of the Nevada Art Gallery*, n.p., n.d., [between 1970 and 1974].

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 3-4 in chapter entitled "Programs and Illustrated Lectures."

[7] *Ibid.*, 14-15.

FRED MAXWELL

(1861-1933)

Phillip I. Earl

FRED MAXWELL WAS BORN IN COPENHAGEN, DENMARK, on September 29, 1861, the son of an Englishman descended from the baronial Maxwells of Scotland and a well born Danish woman who died of complications of the birth. The senior Maxwell had become a Danish national after his marriage and had taken a prominent part in the political affairs of his adopted country. Following the death of his wife, he placed his son at an orphanage and joined the Danish army. In 1864, he died of wounds sustained in an engagement with the forces of imperial Germany in the province of Schleswig. When his wife's relatives learned of his death, they took the boy out of the institution and gained control of the money his father had left for his care. Shuttled from home to home for the next four years, he ran away at the age of seven and was picked up on the waterfront by an English sea captain and his wife who took him as their own. His youth was spent sailing to ports of call all over the world, and he later served in the British Navy and became a merchant seaman.[1]

"Those were days of sailing vessels," his daughter, Anne E. Maxwell, was later to write of him, "and he learned to sew like a woman repairing and making sails. I can never remember him undertaking a chore with a needle that he did not wear his sailor's palm to ward off pricks of the needle. Naturally he acquired a picturesque vocabulary which, in later years, was quite a trial to our mother, especially in the presence of children. However, it was just vocabulary, never profane or blasphemous."[2]

She also remembers her father carving model sailing ships and picture frames, embroidering seascapes in silk stitchery, and working in leather. "He painted a dainty miniature scene for me which he framed in hand-turned white birch bark to take as a valentine to the banker's daughter's party," she recalled. "Like any child, I was ashamed of it as it was home made, not

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comparable in any way to a purchased trifle. I still wonder if it was appreciated by the family of the recipient."[3]

In 1890, Maxwell left his ship in San Francisco and headed inland. He was arrested on a vagrancy charge a few weeks later and put to work on a road crew. Following his release, he migrated over the Sierra Nevada to Mason Valley. He secured work in a mine near Yerington, but moved on to Montana in 1891 where he found work as a miner at Neihart. He also spent some time with the Indians of Montana, and the Dakotas, and both daughters recalled that he taught them Indian chants and dances when they were small girls.[4]

On January 4, 1893, he married Anna Greta Paatalo, a Finnish girl, in Great Falls. He was working in the mines at that time and doing some prospecting on the side. He had also taken up painting—seascapes, ships, and ports he had visited—and had made the acquaintance of Charles M. Russell, the famed cowboy artist. Russell helped him with his landscapes, lake, and mining scenes, but he continued to do seascapes, "one in particular," Anne recalled, "in the Winslow Homer tradition of a furious storm at sea, the waves heaving, winds and water tossing a tiny sailing vessel in the billows—the sky as dark and ominous as the sea as if to offer it hope."[5]

Two children, Fred, Jr., and Anne, were born in Great Falls, and five more followed after the family moved to Neihart, Montana, in 1896. Because he was one of the few miners who could read and write, Maxwell became involved in the organization of a local chapter of the Western Federation of Miners. In 1897, he was one of several union lobbyists who appeared before the Montana State Legislature to speak in favor of legislation requiring mine owners to provide better ventilation and improved timbering in the underground workings. Both measures passed that session.[6]

Montana's harsh winters bothered Maxwell and he came down with pneumonia in 1912. A physician told him that he must find a dryer climate. He wrote to some friends in Yerington, Nevada, and was able to secure work at the Bluestone Mine near Mason. The family moved in the summer of 1912 and Anne and another daughter who had remained in Great Falls to attend school joined them in July 1913. He was working for the Mason Valley Mining Company by that time and the family was living in Yerington. He had resumed his painting and had begun to concentrate on mountains and deserts in the primitive style he had developed in Montana. Neighbors purchased occasional paintings and others were raffled off, the children going door-to-door selling chances at twenty-five cents each. They tried to get him to try portraiture to bring in some ready cash, but he refused. As Anne put it in a letter to the writer, "Father never attempted portraiture, not even of his own children. He never used a model, even for still-life. After Grandma Moses became recognized, I had the feeling that Father's work would compare favorably, but never thought that we could assemble enough for a show."[7]

Maxwell also continued prospecting, developing some claims in the

Marietta District, Huntoon Valley, and elsewhere in Mineral County. His children know only that several of his properties were later taken over by others who put them into production. "Father was a many faceted man," Anne wrote, "and under intelligent management could have capitalized on many of his talents. His knowledge of geology exceeded that of most geologists. At college, my professor was astonished at my knowledge of the subject and amazed that I could often recognize elements he himself was in doubt about—learned at Father's heels cracking rocks as he did in the palm of his hand and being told all about the pieces."[8]

In 1918, the last of the Maxwell children graduated from high school in Yerington. Anne and Esther joined an older sister in Oakland, California, and Fred, their mother, and a son, Harry, moved to a mining claim in Huntoon Valley. "He would never consent to live in California," Anne recalled, "because he hated the state for its treatment of the working class—the Native Son policy—probably a carry over from the Royal Spanish Grant days."[9]

Mrs. Maxwell and their son lasted two years at Huntoon before following the rest of the family to Oakland. Fred stayed, certain that his claim would one day pay off, but also pleased to be shed of his family obligations. "He was a wonderful small-child parent," Anne remembered, "but abdicated when he thought we had grown beyond him." The family visited him from time to time, bringing up canvas, paints, and brushes, but he would never consent to go back with them. "Father was always glad to see us," Anne wrote, "but also glad to have us go so that he could pursue his regular routine, living in hope that the next stroke of the pick would make us all wealthy. He had many opportunities to obtain capital, but refused all corporate offers with offers of stock issues. Mining stock had an unsavory reputation, at best, and he would have no part of it. He knew he would do right and expected others to do likewise without any legal entanglements."[10]

During his years in Huntoon Valley, Maxwell built a cabin in Belleville, where he would stay when he occasionally worked as a track laborer on the Nevada-California Railroad. Thomas Paulidis, a retired section foreman, told this writer that Maxwell always had three or four paintings under his arm when he came in from his mine. He occasionally gave a painting to a fellow trackman, Paulidis recalled, but could not remember if he had ever had one himself. Thomas Williamson, a retired Southern Pacific Railroad superintendent living in Oakland at the time of this writer's 1974 interview, also remembered Maxwell and his paintings. He had had one at one time. He remembered it as having been a desert scene with peaked volcanic mountains in the background. The sagebrush was depicted as growing in rows, orchard-style, he said, not as a sage-strewn landscape would look at all. He said that he gave the painting to a Japanese restaurant owner in Mina when he retired and had not thought of Maxwell for years.[11]

Nick Marakas, interviewed in November 1973, remembered Maxwell

coming into his market in Mina for supplies every month or so. He was told that Maxwell gave paintings to his friends around town, he said, and remembered that he himself had taken two of them in payment for a grocery bill. He said that he no longer had them and thought that they had been thrown away by his sister-in-law following the death of his brother, a partner in the store. Richard Baker of Hawthorne, grandson of the owner of the Baker Hotel in Mina, remembered seeing Maxwell around town and said that several of his paintings hung in the hotel at one time. He also said that he recalled seeing paintings in several Hawthorne homes and thought that at least one depicted Walker Lake and Mount Grant.[12]

By the late 1920s, Maxwell was seeking wider recognition for his work. In a letter to Jeanne Elizabeth Wier of the Nevada Historical Society on June 14, 1927, he said that he was forwarding two paintings and would send some seascapes if they met with her approval. Of his artistic endeavors, he wrote, "Please understand I work hard in my mine all along and that it gives me some excuse for not having the work up to date. The hide on my hands is like horse hide, but I have tried to do the best I was able to do under my difficulties." He also described himself as "an old seafaring man and have had great many years of experience as a sailor in foreign ocean scenes."[13]

In a reply on June 27, Miss Wier accepted the paintings, telling him that they would be registered as a loan since the last legislature had not made an appropriation for the society and that she might be forced to close the doors. Should the museum's collections be confiscated, she wrote, she wanted to be sure that the paintings would not be taken. Replying on July 3, Maxwell told her that she should consider the paintings her personal property. "I am sorry to hear that things are looking black for the Society at present," he wrote. "I believe that it is a good thing for the future to show the coming generation what we have been doing here for sometime past." As to other examples of his work, he informed her that "there is [*sic*] lots of my paintings in Nevada homes today given by myself which you would not be able to buy for either love or money. I have lots of friends and I have raised a large family."[14]

In another letter, written on July 18, Miss Wier thanked Maxwell for the paintings. "I shall be very glad indeed to be the owner of them in case this institution is abandoned," she wrote. "It is certainly fine of you to give them in this way." She also invited him to stop by the Reno museum if he were ever in town.[15]

Miss Wier and Fred Maxwell probably never met, but another four paintings were donated to the society and are still a part of the collection today. The University of Nevada also has two Maxwells, donated either by the artist or someone else years ago. For several years, the paintings hung in the research room of the Special Collections Department of the Getchell Library on the Reno campus. Department personnel knew nothing of their provenience until this writer discovered them in 1975. A subsequent search of

the university's archives failed to reveal the donor.

In February of 1932, Maxwell was caught out on Teel's Marsh when a blizzard struck. He survived the ordeal, wandering into Marietta three days later in a delirious state, half frozen and muttering about having talked to angels and visiting a white city with streets of gold. Just a year later, on March 12, 1933, Deputy Sheriff Bert Walsh was informed that Maxwell had not been seen for some time and had not been into Mina for his monthly supplies. Fearing that he had again been trapped in a storm, Walsh drove out to his mine to investigate two days later. The old prospector was nowhere to be found, the date February 22 being the last day crossed off his calendar. There had been a bad storm that day and Walsh feared the worst. Returning to Marietta, he organized a search party which included several old-timers familiar with the area, Joe Rutty, "Burro" Smith, Ike Gaillic, and Bill Gash. Maxwell's son, Harry, was notified, and he and Esther's husband, Arnold Ballwanz, came up, but a three-week search of Huntoon and Teel's Marsh turned up neither a body nor any evidence that Maxwell had perished in the storm.[16]

Over the next four years, friends and family members continued to search the area. On March 24, 1937, "Burro" Smith came upon Maxwell's remains on the edge of Teel's Marsh. He first thought that he had come upon an old overcoat, but found that it covered the body of his friend. The skeletal remains were propped up in a sitting position against a large rock as though Maxwell had gotten as far as the marsh and decided to sit down and rest, never to rise again. Leaning on the rock was a large package addressed to his son in Oakland. Smith opened it, finding a painting. After the body was brought into Mina, a formal inquest was held. Mineral County authorities were unable to locate Maxwell's family at that time, and his remains were turned over to his friends, who laid him to rest in Mina's small cemetery on March 27.[17]

The six paintings Maxwell had donated to the Nevada Historical Society were later put on exhibit in the small museum established in Reno's State Building in Powning Park. They were mentioned in the tourist guide to the state published by the Nevada Writers' Project in 1940, but Maxwell himself remained an obscure figure. In 1968, the paintings were again exhibited in the society's new museum on North Virginia Street. Russell R. Elliott took note of them in his history of the state in 1973, but it was not until this writer researched Maxwell's life and published an article in *Nevada Highways & Parks Magazine* in 1975 that the veil was lifted. The article interested Tony Radich, director of Reno's Nevada Art Gallery, who contacted Esther about a show and drove to her home in El Cerrito, California, in September 1976 to pick up fifteen canvases, including the painting found with Fred Maxwell's body in 1937. The Nevada Historical Society and the University of Nevada

loaned their Maxwells for the show which was held at the Nevada Art Gallery in October and November, 1976.[18]

The Maxwells belonging to the Nevada Historical Society had meanwhile been taken down and placed in storage in the course of a renovation of the museum in 1978. In 1985, Peter and Turkey Stremmel contacted Esther and her husband about an exhibit. Turkey did some restoration work on the collection and selected nine for a show which opened at Stremmel Galleries on October 30, 1985, Nevada Day. Harry died in 1988, and Esther is the last of the Maxwell children.[19]

Over the years, this writer has been told of other Maxwells in private collections. In an interview in 1976, Esther said that a niece in Ohio had four of them. Anne gave others to friends in Fresno, California, and Harry apparently left several behind in a house in San Leandro when he moved several years before his death. Because of their visual inexactitude, Maxwell's seascapes, mountain scenes, and desert panoramas are considered to be American primitives. It is unlikely that he thought of himself as a primitive painter, however. His daughters do not recall seeing art books around the house, and those interviewed by the writer know nothing of this school of art and never heard the artist use the term. They simply recognized that Maxwell could do something that they could not. Those of us who appreciate the works he left behind take them for what they are, personal views of times and places that had some meaning to the artist in the course of his long life.

NOTES

[1] Letter to author from Anne E. Maxwell, 29 April 1975. (Hereafter referred to as Anne Maxwell Letter.)

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Esther Maxwell Ballwanz, interview with author, Reno, Nevada, 28 October 1976; Anne Maxwell Letter.

[5] Anne Maxwell Letter.

[6] *Ibid.*; Esther Maxwell Ballwanz to author, 2 July 1988; Esther Maxwell Ballwanz, interview with author, 28 October 1976.

[7] Anne Maxwell Letter.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Roy Ladd, interview with author, Marietta, Nevada, 17 August 1974, 4 August 1980; Thomas Paulidis, interview with author, Hawthorne, Nevada, 17 November 1973; Thomas Williamson, interview with author, Oakland, California, 17 March 1974.

[12] Nick Marakas, interview with author, Mina, Nevada, 17 November 1973; Telephone interview with Richard Baker, Hawthorne, Nevada, 19 October 1973.

[13] Fred Maxwell to Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, June 14, 1927, Jeanne Elizabeth Wier Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, Nevada (hereafter referred to as Wier Papers.); cf. James T. Stensvaag, "The Life of My Child": Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, The Nevada Historical Society, and the Great Quarters Struggle of the 1920s,"*Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* XXIII (Spring 1980): 3-20.

[14] Jeanne Elizabeth Wier to Fred Maxwell, 27 June 1927, Wier Papers; Fred Maxwell to Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, 3 July 1927, Wier Papers.

[15] Jeanne Elizabeth Wier to Fred Maxwell, 18 July 1927, Wier Papers.

[16] Roy Ladd, interview with author, Marietta, Nevada, 16 August 1974; *Mineral County Independent*, 22 March 1933; 29 March 1933; 5 April 1933.

[17] Arnold Ballwanz, interview with author, Reno, Nevada, 28 October 1976; *Mineral County Independent*, 31 March 1937; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 25 March 1937.

[18] *Nevada: A Guide to the Silver State* (Reno: Nevada State Historical Society, Inc., 1940), 104-05; Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 380; Phillip I. Earl, "He Painted His Paradise, Fred Maxwell: Nevada Primitive Artist," *Nevada Highways & Parks Magazine* 35 (Summer 1975): 20-23; Esther Maxwell Ballwanz to author, 17 January 1990.

[19] Phillip I. Earl, "3 Top Nevada Artists Honored," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 27 October 1985; Esther Maxwell Ballwanz to author, 2 July 1988.

KATHERINE LEWERS

(1868-1945)

Margaret Ann Riley

KATE LEWERS IS FONDLY REMEMBERED AS AN ECCENTRIC old maid who taught art at the University of Nevada early in this century. To dismiss Kate Lewers so lightly is to disregard an active artistic intellect at work. Lewers thoughtfully explored the tenets of the Scottish painter-etchers' movement; she discovered new methods for using artists' materials; and her teaching encouraged students to develop their own unique talents.

Kate Lewers was born in 1868 to a family noted for intelligence and independence. Her mother, Catherine Taggert Lewers, was well educated and knew the botanical names for all the plants, trees, and shrubs on their Washoe County ranch. She raised flowers for commercial sale, daily sending bunches of blossoms to market in Virginia City. Mrs. Lewers was one of the first in the Washoe area to collect weather information on a regular basis, sending it to Washington, D. C. Ross Lewers, her husband, raised cattle and farmed. He took particular pride in his apple orchards and cultivated a variety of special species.[1]

Kate Lewers attended the University of Nevada in Reno and then taught school. Her first teaching post was at the Mill Station District in Washoe Valley during 1891-92; she later taught grade school in Reno, in 1895-96, for which she received a monthly salary of $50.[2]

At the turn of the century Kate Lewers embarked on an extensive five-year program of formal art training: She was thirty-two years old. The encouragement and financial backing of her parents and older brothers made this undertaking possible, as her teaching salary alone could never have sustained such a course of action. The decade spanning the ages of thirty and forty is the time when never-married women and their families realize that these women have become anomalies. In her study of women who have never married, Barbara Levy Simon of Columbia University finds that a majority of these women remember that it was at this stage that their families offered extensive emotional support for their individualistic behavior and material aid for addi-

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tional education or vocational training as well. With such family support Lewers began her training as an artist.[3]

An early opportunity came when Lewers won a scholarship from the New York School of Applied Design for Women in New York City. The school offered a two-year degree program that focussed on drawing, design, and illustration for industry or manufacturing.[4] Study followed in Washington, D.C., at the Corcoran, a non-degree school specializing in drawing instruction. Lewers's brother, Albert, lived in Washington, and may well have opened his home to her at this time or supplied financial support, as he did later.[5]

While in Washington Kate studied with Howard Helmick, a professor at Georgetown University. Helmick was a painter, etcher, and illustrator and was a member of the British Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers.[6] As a member of the society, Helmick maintained a close and lively interest in the organization's yearly exhibits in London. At this time the society's major awards for etching were being swept up by Scottish artists David Young Cameron, Muirhead Bone, James McBey, and William Strang. British and American art publications reviewed these Royal Society exhibits, debating the merits of works and focussing on the award winners. David Young Cameron and Muirhead Bone were receiving particular attention, and the 1902 withdrawal from the society by Cameron and Strang was the subject of international publicity as well.[7]

E. S. Lumsden, writing in the 1920s, names Cameron, Bone, and Strang as the great men of the Scottish painter-etcher movement and defines the tenets of that movement: First, these painter-etchers revolted against the vision and principles of the French Impressionists and of James McNeill Whistler's later atmospheric paintings. Second, they emphasized a return to individual study of nature and to its realistic interpretation. Third, they revived the study of the Dutch masters, in particular Rembrandt. Although French Impressionism is today one of the most familiar and generally popular schools of art, this popularity has not always been universal: Turn-of-the-century Scottish artists were adamant and vocal in their rejection.[8]

As Kate Lewers was studying with Helmick during this period, it was inevitable that she became aware of the work of these Scottish artists. Glasgow was their major center, and both Cameron and Bone were residing, working, and exhibiting there. Kate Lewers enrolled in St. George's Art School in Glasgow.[9] To choose to attend art school in Glasgow at this time, rather than a school in Paris or London, shows a dedicated interest in the particular principles and methods developed by these men.

In 1905 Lewers was hired by the University of Nevada to teach freehand drawing for $100 a month. By September she had been granted a letter of appointment to teach drawing and biology, at a yearly salary of $1,500.[10]

She lived at the family ranch in Washoe Valley, and commuted on the

Virginia and Truckee Railroad each week, perhaps staying with her brother, Robert, who lived in Reno and taught at the university. She later drove her automobile into town from the ranch and often ended up stuck in the winter's snow or mud. She would wait, knowing someone would be sent to find her when she didn't show up to teach class.

In 1907 Lewers received an assistant professorship. She added elementary painting to the university's curriculum, and extended her drawing classes to include the regimented instruction in mechanical drawing necessary for engineers, teachers, and home-economics students.[12] In 1912 she took a sabbatical leave with half pay to go to Paris, although nothing is known of this visit.[13]

Kate Lewers was made a full professor of art in 1914, with a salary raise to $1,800 a year. Lewers believed that students develop their talents naturally, and she gave them wide latitude to do their own work and form their own individual styles. She accepted both great and limited talents in her classes, never praising the one over the other, or lavishing attention on a favored few.[14]

Her students were supplied with basic technical information, but the emphasis was on the individual student expanding and developing these techniques. She showed only how to mix colors from the primary palette of yellow, blue, and red. One student recalls asking how to mix a particular shade of blue and having Lewers respond, "That's for you to figure out." Lewers stressed looking closely at the subject being painted. She would give pointers on sun and shadow, shape and line, but directed the students to look—"If you don't look at something you will never see what to paint"—and then to paint as they saw. Her training in Scotland had emphasized the importance of looking and painting what was seen rather than what was felt or gathered from the scene.[15]

Lewers became an ardent photographer and used photographs in developing her paintings as well as to record events. One of her photographs records a formal composition of daisies and greenery, a study for a future painting. Another, published in the 1920s, shows two of her students painting an outdoor scene on the university campus. There is also a photograph of the mechanical drawing class that may well be Lewers's work.[16]

Lewers was always a quiet and even-tempered teacher, but when her father died in 1918 she became withdrawn and was said to have become a hermit. Yet, art-student visitors were always welcome at the Washoe Valley ranch, and there were still summer lessons for those who wanted them. She was well liked although not a warm or humorous woman. Numerous stories are remembered and told of her—"a total character." She was petite, wiry, always in a hat with veil and old-fashioned dress, walking briskly. Later students remember that her legs and feet became badly swollen, so she always wore rubbers for shoes. The ducks and chickens at the ranch were her

friends, each with its proper name. She hired local children to help maintain the extensive flower garden her mother had developed, to mow lawns, and to pick apples, refusing to use any kind of mechanical picking devices. She made and sold hard cider to the university students in her classes.[17]

A March 1921 item in the *Reno Journal* reports on an article in *Scientific American* in which Lewers is credited with perfecting a method for blending crayons: kerosene applied to the back of heavy paper allowed crayons to be blended and shaded much in the manner of today's oil pastels. Lewers also advocated the preparatory use of kerosene on paper in order to cut the gloss of oil paints: There was no gloss in nature, and therefore paintings from nature should have none.[18]

Lewers retired in 1939 after serving on the University of Nevada faculty for thirty-four years. She refused to accept her university pension, living on the lease payments for portions of the Washoe Valley ranch and additional sums sent by her brother Albert. She actively managed the ranch, gave private art lessons and carried out "certain experiments in art" until her death in 1945.[19]

By 1970 Kate Lewers's art was judged passé by biographers Myra Sauer Ratay and Doris Cerveri. In the era of abstract and emotion-filled action painting, direct representation of nature would most certainly have seemed out of style. Reassessment of her work has now become conjectural because a portion of her *oeuvre* disappeared during the 1980s. There had been drawings, photographs, and paintings of the University of Nevada campus, scenes along the Truckee River, and the area around the family ranch in Washoe Valley. But today only eight authenticated paintings are available for study.[20]

Kate Lewers painted in the formal tradition of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century. Her still lifes of flowers from her mother's garden seem to conform to most of the conventions of this genre. *Floral Arrangement with Hollyhocks* is a mixed bouquet of flowers. A configuration of blossoms and greens, designed to all but hide the vase, is placed against a deep-plum-colored background. *Roses in a Round Vase* shows pink and cream roses in a glass or shiny metal container. Following the Dutch painters, Lewers painted the reflection of the room shown in the bulging side of the vase. *Pink Roses* focusses on four pink roses. Lewers favors the full blown—to our eyes, past their prime—roses that appear in Dutch painting. *Red Tulips* is another study that concentrates on the stages of blossom maturity.[21]

Working in the manner of Dutch still-life painters of the seventeenth century was in accord with Lewers's training with the Scottish artists: realistic rather than impressionistic painting, personal interpretation of nature, and study of the Dutch masters. Lewers worked within these bounds, but not without thought and consideration of alternative methods. An unfinished piece shows use of white or cream ground rather than the "brown gravy" ground favored by Rembrandt and other Dutch painters.[22]

Lewers's other paintings, *Orchard*, *Duck Pond*, and *Poppies under the*

Walnut Tree, are intimate views of specific places on the ranch. Here again, her care for accurate detail in the rendering of flowers, plants, and trees shows the influence of her Scottish mentors.

Much has been made of Kate Lewers's eccentricities: her never-married state, her quiet manner, her pet ducks and chickens, her out-of-date manner of dress, her old-fashioned painting. Lewers chose to explore the principles of the Scottish painter-etchers' movement, once vital, but today obscure and forgotten. To characterize her as simply odd ignores the independence, intelligence, and talent of this artist.

Notes

The author would like to thank Henry Heidenreich, Jr., long-time family friend, who answered questions, shared memories and family photographs, and granted considerable time for studying and photographing Lewers's paintings. Others who shared memories were Eslie Cann, Margaret Erwin, Robert Geyer, and Mara Wilson. Research assistance came from Lee Mortenson and Caroline Morel, Nevada Historical Society Library; Eslie Cann, Nevada Historical Society Photograph Collection; Cheryl Fox, Assistant Director, Nevada Historical Society; Karen Gash, University of Nevada, Reno Archives; and Barbara Buff, Museum of the City of New York.

[1] Myra Sauer Ratay, *Pioneers of the Ponderosa* (Sparks: Western Printing & Publishing Co., 1973); Henry Heidenreich, Jr. interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 27 November 1989; "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree,* 16 January 1977.

[2] "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree,* 16 January 1977; Nevada Historical Society Nevada Teachers File 1864-1926, Reno, Nevada; State of Nevada, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 1895-96,* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1897).

[3] "Arts and Artists," *Reno Evening Gazette,* 22 March 1941. Barbara Levy Simon, *Never Married Women.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

[4] *Nevada State Journal,* October, 1945; Florence N. Levy, *American Art Annual 1898* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1899).

[5] *Nevada State Journal,* October, 1945; Myra Sauer Ratay, *Pioneers of the Ponderosa* (Sparks: Western Printing & Publishing Co., 1973).

[6] Lillian Borghi "Arts and Artists," *Reno Evening Gazette,* 22 March 1941; Peter H. Falk, *Who Was Who in American Art* (Madison, Conn.: Sound View Press, 1985).

[7] Joan Ludman and Lauris Mason, eds., *Print Collector's Quarterly: An Anthology of Essays on Eminent Printmakers of the World* (New York: KTO Press, 1977); Frank Rinder, *D.V. Cameron: An Illustrated Catalogue of His Etchings and Dry-points, 1887-1932* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Company, 1932).

[8] E.S. Lumsden, *The Art of Etching* (London: Seeley Service and Company Ltd., 1924).

[9] Joan Ludman and Lauris Mason, eds., *Print Collector's Quarterly: An Anthology of Essays on Eminent Printmakers of the World* (New York: KTO Press, 1977); Frank Rinder, *D.Y. Cameron: An Illustrated Catalogue of His Etchings and Dry-points, 1887-1932* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Company, 1932); *Nevada State Journal,* October, 1945.

[10] "Minutes of the University of Nevada Board of Regents" (Reno: University Archives, handwritten copied on microfilm).

[11] Henry Heidenreich, Jr., interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 27 November 1989; "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree,* 16 January 1977.

[12] "Minutes of the University of Nevada Board of Regents" (Reno: University Archives, handwritten copied on microfilm); James Warren Hulse, *The University of Nevada, A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974).

[13] "Minutes of the University of Nevada Board of Regents" (Reno: University Archives, handwritten copied on microfilm).

[14] "Minutes of the University of Nevada Board of Regents" (Reno: University Archives, handwritten copied on microfilm); "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree,* 16 January

1977; Margaret Erwin, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989.

[15] Margaret Erwin, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989; Robert Geyer, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989; "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree*, 16 January 1977.

[16] Henry Heidenreich, Jr., interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 25 January 1990; Samuel Bradford Doten, *An Illustrated History of the University of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada, 1924); Nevada Historical Society Photography Collection, Reno, Nevada.

[17] Margaret Erwin, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989; "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree*, 16 January 1977; Mara Wilson, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989; Eslie Cann, interview with author, Reno, Nevada, November 1989; Robert Geyer, telephone interview with author, Reno, Nevada, December 1989; Henry Heidenreich, Jr., interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 27 November 1989.

[18] *Reno Journal*, 23 March 1921, 8; "Kate Lewers did 'her thing' before it became fashionable," *Apple Tree*, 16 January 1977.

[19] "Minutes of the University of Nevada Board of Regents" (Reno: University Archives, handwritten copied on microfilm); Henry Heidenreich, Jr., interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 27 November 1989; Lillian Borghi "Arts and Artists," *Reno Evening Gazette*, 22 March 1941.

[20] Myra Sauer Ratay, *Pioneers of the Ponderosa* (Sparks: Western Printing & Publishing Co., 1973); Henry Heidenreich, Jr., interview with author, Heidenreich Ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 27 November 1989; *Nevada Historical Society Papers 1913-1916.* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1917).

[21] Lewers did not title her paintings. I have provided these titles to ease discussion of her works. Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists 1550-1950* New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1979).

[22] Waldemar Januszczak, *Techniques of the World's Great Painters.* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books Inc., 1980); Bernard Chaet, *An Artist's Notebook.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979). The ground of a painting is its initial coat of paint. Dark grounds darken colors applied later, light grounds brighten them.

HANS MEYER-KASSEL

(1872-1952)

Jeff Nicholson

PRIOR TO COMING TO NEVADA IN 1936, Hans Meyer-Kassel had enjoyed success and honors both in his native Germany and in the eastern United States. He produced an admirable body of Nevada work in his final fifteen years, and a full appreciation of that work requires a thorough understanding of his pre-Nevada years. Indeed, when this man, known to us as a Nevada artist, arrived here at the age of sixty-five, he was a mature artist, classically trained in Europe, confident in style and technique, and at ease with the many triumphs and tributes paid him, as well as the hardships endured. When he opened his first Nevada studio on North Virginia Street in Reno, it might be said that his many influences were brought to bear on Nevada more than Nevada was to influence him. He was probably the last one to admit any sense of retirement at this point in his life, and his work certainly was still full of vigor; but Reno, Carson City, and Genoa were clearly worlds away from the German society that he had known, where he had been a distinguished professor and the honors and accolades had been accorded him.

It is important to note that, while many Nevadans may remember him for his landscapes of this area, he was primarily and most notably a portrait painter. At the height of his career he painted a daughter of the Kaiser Wilhelm II, and was much in demand to portray other prominent European dignitaries and their families. Born Hans Meyer, the son of a banker in Kassel in 1872, he resisted early fatherly pressures to enter the law, and enrolled as an art student at the University of Munich, choosing portraiture as his field. At the age of nineteen he was already welcoming clients to his first professional studio, and later, as a professor of Germany's Royal Academy of Art and a founding member of the International Art Society of Munich, he exhibited throughout Europe. In recognition of his early achievements, his native city,

Jeff Nicholson is co-owner of Great Basin Gallery in Carson City and has been a Nevada painter for many years. In 1977, as a curatorial assistant at the old Nevada Art Gallery, he first encountered the legacy of Hans Meyer-Kassel in Nevada.

following longstanding tradition, bestowed upon him the high honor of adding its name, Kassel, to his.

Meyer-Kassel painted mostly in oils, but his pastels were also highly regarded, and he often worked in tempera as well. He was captivated by a wide variety of subjects: Landscapes, florals, nautical scenes, and still lifes flowed from his brush wherever he lived or travelled, but he seems to have understood early on that it was the portraiture that would pave the way for these other pursuits. That was the business for which he was academically trained, and to his credit he was very good at it. With a quick eye and the confident strokes of academic assurance he was able to capture the strong characteristics of a sitter in a matter of a few hours. His masculine style in no way hindered a deft delicacy in dealing with the female form, and he seemed equally at home with light, airy palettes as with those of deep somber hues. How much he enjoyed these commissions in relation to his other work is hard to ascertain, but he seems to have been as challenged by the complexities of a sitter as by those of a scene or still life.[1]

During World War I Meyer-Kassel was commissioned as an artist/officer to do pictorial reporting at the front. A freak accident involving a truck, however, resulted in an early discharge with a hip injury that would plague him the rest of his life. He tried to pick up the pieces of his career, but Germany was soon devastated and the ravages of war seemed to have taken their toll on him as well. In 1921, while visiting a prominent family regarding a portrait commission, he fell in love with the young house nurse who was in charge of the children. They were married soon after, and, at the urging of his brother, they then sailed for New York and a new life.

Maria Meyer-Kassel deserves more than casual mention here, for she was to prove the perfect match for her husband. She devoted herself to his art and the perceived genius in him, and it became her lifelong duty not only to handle his business affairs efficiently, but to provide a comfortable, dignified atmosphere in which he could always paint. Her outgoing nature and gracious manner attracted friends easily, and she championed her husband's talents wherever she went. Although Meyer-Kassel was a gentle and sincere man, he bore a stoic veneer not easily penetrated, and was for the most part uneasy in social situations. Typical of many artists, he was apolitical, but in all other ways highly conservative. A bastion of the old school, if his viewpoints were solicited, his reticence often gave way to the expression of strong opinions about the purpose of art and one's duty to uphold classical ideals and strong academic foundations in any pursuit. To this end he was the quiet, retiring, thoughtful, and devoted artist, and Maria was the perfect counterbalance, keeping the Meyer-Kassel home full of light, gaiety, and comings and goings. It is said that people flocked around her, and in this way she opened many doors for them and became an integral part of his painting career.

For all his stature as a practicing artist and professor in Germany, Meyer-Kassel arrived in New York with little to show for it. If there was any period that he would have deemed the hardest, it would undoubtedly be those first few years in New York, before he reforged his reputation. As a member of the Central Studio House in Manhattan, he set up shop in company with many other artists; and for a brief time, with uncharacteristic abandon, he painted some very interesting views of New York City—the bustle of harbor activity, caricatures of speakeasy patrons lining alleyways, and street scenes, cold and desolate in winter. An earlier commentary notes that "as a struggling newcomer the artist created works which, had his reputation preceded him in full, might never have left his easel."[2] His reputation soon caught up with him, however, and it appears that after a few introductions he was soon busy painting portraits of prominent easterners. A large commission from the old North German Lloyd Steamship Line to paint thirty German scenes further secured his immediate future, while affording him the opportunity to return to Germany several times. Actually, that one commission was to influence the course of his life for many years. He took advantage of free passage on the steamship line to travel from Germany to the arctic, to Reykjavik and the islands of Spitzbergen, on three separate occasions, beginning in 1926. His exquisite paintings of this ice-bound region, not previously artistically explored, were to form the nucleus of a Brooklyn museum exhibition in his honor in 1932. He later described these trips as "the most interesting experiences in my life as an artist."[3] On his return from Europe he had the good fortune to meet President Baker of Amherst College. A commission to paint portraits of the president and his wife soon followed, and Maria became good friends with Mrs. Baker. Largely through Maria's efforts, Meyer-Kassel became a guest artist and lecturer at the college, a position he occupied for three years.

In 1935 he was invited to exhibit in Pasadena, California, and while visiting there he became, like many artists before him, enamored with the American West. Without returning home, he instructed a rather reluctant Maria to pack their belongings and come to meet him. Within a year they settled in Reno, drawn by what is unknown. Beyond the obvious attraction of the arid climate and natural beauty, however, it appears there was also the prospect of several portrait commissions. His painting of the late Clarence Mackay, which hangs in Mackay Science Hall at the University of Nevada, Reno, is dated 1938, two years after his arrival. Evidence suggests, however, that this painting was actually commissioned by the Mackay family while Meyer-Kassel was still in New York.[4] This work led to commissions from the university to paint five of its past presidents.[5] Another possibility, but one for which no hard evidence can be found, is that of an early relationship and correspondence with James E. Church, the Nevada snow-survey pioneer and long-time professor at the university. Though Church's tenure began in 1892, he was in

Germany at the turn of the century, and received a degree from the University of Munich in 1901. Meyer-Kassel was also a Munich graduate and was regularly exhibiting in that city as early as 1896. Because of their mutual interest in classical literature and philosophy, art, and antiquity, it is not unlikely that they could have travelled in the same Munich circles. In any event, their friendship in Reno is well remembered, and the Meyer-Kassel portrait of James Church was presented to the university at a 1942 convocation in honor of Church's fifty years of service.[6]

Reno was a welcome change for this dedicated artist who had survived the war in Europe and spent the Depression years in the eastern United States. He and Maria found friends among Reno's established German-American families, and they were enthusiastically welcomed into the small but active cultural community. They still had no money to speak of, but it probably mattered less than at any time in their lives. Meyer-Kassel had known fame, but little fortune, and at his age, he doubtless held no illusions of finding it in Nevada. They were happy even so: The pace of life was slower, and he found great excitement in painting the natural beauty of his adopted state. He had the security of the university portrait commissions ahead of him, and a few other sales soon followed, including the purchase by Fred Herz of three large Spitzbergen paintings. Herz, whose family were prominent jewelry merchants in Reno, was well acquainted with the far reaches of the north, having accompanied Church on a 1927 scientific expedition to Greenland, and for this reason he was taken with these frozen scenes.[7] Another early acquaintance in Reno was Carl Watson, who remembers that the Meyer-Kassels' first studio/apartment was located directly above the Nevada Club in downtown Reno. Watson had recently opened his first chiropractic office nearby, and he incurred Meyer-Kassel's eternal gratitude for relief at long last from the pain and limp associated with the wartime hip injury.[8]

In 1942 the Meyer-Kassels moved to Carson City to complete portraits of four of Nevada's past governors.[9] Three years later they settled permanently in the little town of Genoa, Nevada's oldest community, nestled against the eastern slope of the Sierra, just south of Carson City. The Old Gray house, abandoned for more than thirty years, was considered the area's haunted house by local children. It was owned by the mother of a friend of Maria's, and it became the Meyer-Kassels' first home for the sum of $500 and a painting.[10] Maria is said to have single-handedly turned this derelict into a home, and made the out-building in back into a comfortable studio for her husband. By Meyer-Kassel standards, they were prospering, a measure of which was the purchase of their first automobile in 1948.

Official portrait work ceased after 1945, but in his last years Meyer-Kassel continued to produce numerous landscapes of Genoa and the Carson Valley and many florals; occasionally he followed flights of fancy in which he painted allegorical scenes, complete with nymphs and other figures from ancient

mythologies. In his conservative approach, he never envisioned himself as a mover or shaker in the art world. He decried the onslaught of "modernists" who seemed to lack respect for fundamentals of classical art.[11] Art was supposed to be beautiful and founded upon strong academic principles.

All his life he remained the dignified continental artist—a necktie was customary at breakfast, and each day's painting began with a clean white smock. Maria kept the fires stoked, a fresh bouquet on the table, and a Meyer-Kassel painting in as many homes around the valley as possible. Baked goods were always on hand for those who might come to call, and the artist is remembered by friends as kind and gracious, often volunteering a portrait or sitting a visitor's child down for a quick rendition. It was all the Meyer-Kassels had ever wanted—a place just like this. Unfortunately, only seven more years remained before his death, in 1952, at the age of eighty. He maintained his vigorous painting schedule until the last day, when he simply laid down his brushes for an afternoon nap and never awoke.

Maria lived another thirty-two years and remained steadfast in her devotion, giving talks in her husband's memory and exhibiting his paintings wherever possible. Through her efforts in the Bay Area, he was honored with a retrospective exhibition at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in July of 1961. Maria was left with hundreds of paintings and, having no direct descendants, she worried constantly over their final disposition. Unsuccessful in her efforts to establish a permanent Meyer-Kassel collection in Nevada, she was forced to sell many paintings.[12] Today many Meyer-Kassel portraits of Nevada dignitaries are on public display, but most of his Nevada work, while still in the state, is in private collections.

NOTES

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance, insights, and remembrances of H. William Brooks, nephew of Maria Meyer-Kassel; Sonia Dehart of Genoa; Carl Watson of Reno; Nancy Bowers of Carson City and Velda Morby of Reno, former students of Meyer-Kassel portrait workshops; Phillip Earl, Nevada Historical Society; and Karen Gash, University of Nevada, Reno, Archives.

[1] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, New York, 20 January 1932.

[2] Nancy Miluck, "Hans Meyer Kassel," *Nevada Magazine* 32 (Summer 1972): 32-37.

[3] Interview in Amherst College Newspaper "*The Collegian*" from 1932. Collection of Mr. H. William Brooks.

[4] Newspaper article, date and city [Eastern United States] unknown. Collection of Mr. H. William Brooks.

[5] These portraits are in the alumni museum in Morrill Hall at the University of Nevada, Reno.

[6] File on James E. Church, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

[7] Interview with Maria Jones, January 1990, R. Herz & Bros., Reno, Nevada.

[8] Interview with Carl Watson, January 1990, Reno, Nevada.

[9] These portraits hang in the State Capitol Building, Carson City.

[10] Telephone interview with Mrs. Sonia Dehart, Genoa.

[11] Letter from Hans Meyer-Kassel to "Arts & Artists" by Lillian Borghi, *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 15 October 1938.

[12] *Nevada State Journal*, 14 February 1954; Personal recollections from brief acquaintance with Maria Meyer-Kassel, 1981-82.

JAMES G. SWINNERTON

(1875-1974)

Jerry A. Schefcik

DURING THE LAST HALF OF THE 1800s, the United States was experiencing growth and prosperity as never before. Pioneers in all fields were drawn to the American West to try their luck at mining, commerce, ranching, agriculture, publishing, and even art. Artists such as Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran romanticized the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming. New Mexico captured the hearts of a group that became known as the Taos Society of Artists, with painters like Ernest L. Blumenschein, Herbert Dunton, and Joseph Sharp. Others, such as Frederic Remington and Charles Russell, roamed the plains states and immortalized the cowboy. California was home to another artist population, one that was particularly interested in landscape painting and which included Maynard Dixon. Nevada had yet to attract the interest of skilled artists. Those associated with the state in the early years were here only on a temporary basis.

James "Jimmy" Guilford Swinnerton was one such artist—not native to Nevada but nonetheless influential on the state's cultural heritage. Swinnerton was born in Eureka, California, on November 13, 1875. His mother died only a few months after giving birth, which prompted his father to seek help from the boy's grandparents, who lived in the Santa Clara Valley. They reared the boy, and he enjoyed an adventurous childhood full of stories from his grandfather about the West and the gold rush. Swinnerton's father, who was founder and editor of the *Humboldt Star*, remarried, but it was not until the boy's grandmother died that he returned to live with his father and stepmother. When this arrangement did not work out, Swinnerton, at age fourteen, ran away to San Francisco. There he apprenticed to become a harness-racing jockey, a short-lived endeavor. Swinnerton's father searched him out, and together they discussed a more suitable career for the youth. He had shown talent for drawing and, with his father's approval, he elected to seek a career as an artist. His father enrolled him at the San Francisco Art School,

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where he studied with William Keith, one of California's best-known landscape painters, and Emil Carlsen.

Swinnerton's career in the fine arts did not begin immediately after his formal training. He was not particularly skilled as a painter in school,[1] but showed great aptitude for caricature. His drawings were brought to the attention of newspaper owner William Randolph Hearst, who offered him a job in 1893 drawing cartoons for the *San Francisco Examiner*. Swinnerton accepted the offer and began drawing his comic strip "Little Jimmy." When Hearst expanded his newspaper empire with the *New York Morning Journal*, Swinnerton was asked to go east with the paper. He continued "Little Jimmy" as well as another strip, "Little Tigers," for the Sunday supplement.[2] The turn of the century was also the golden era of the periodic journal, and Swinnerton drew for publications such as the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. He had an extremely successful career and an appropriately lush lifestyle.

As a free-spirited young man in his twenties, Swinnerton enjoyed perhaps too much of the extravagant life. A combination of alcoholism, exhaustion, and tuberculosis caused him to collapse on the job. Doctors told him he had only months to live. He was also advised that his only hope was to leave New York and move to a dry climate. He left for California at age twenty-eight. Swinnerton arrived in Colton, a popular location for people with tuberculosis, and took a room in the Alexandria Hotel, where he fully expected to die. It was not long before he and a newly acquired barmate, Charlie Trevathian, who also suffered from the disease, discovered that the climate was indeed restoring their health and that they were not going to die any time soon. Swinnerton's health improved, his spirits returned, and he determined to continue living in the West. From Colton, he moved to Palm Springs, where he resumed drawing cartoon strips for the Hearst publications. He also seriously began to paint desert landscapes.

Swinnerton was on the road a great deal exploring the country and experiencing life in several western states. While in Arizona, he became acquainted with businessman Harold Stocker, and the two became friends.[3] In 1910, Stocker and his family left Arizona and moved to Las Vegas. With friends now living in Nevada, Swinnerton travelled there to visit and to sketch the desert landscape. The Stockers boarded Swinnerton in their properties whenever he came to Las Vegas. In 1933, he took up residence in a bungalow near the downtown area, and the *Las Vegas Age* reported an upcoming exhibit of his paintings of southern Nevada.[4] Richard Guy Walton, friend and associate of Swinnerton, recounts that the artist became a local celebrity of sorts who would frequent the casinos and bars on Fremont Street. He was a colorful personality, not too tall and with "a face like a frog."[5] Swinnerton's reputation as a cartoonist and artist preceded him, and other artists sought him out for instruction and tips on their drawing. His

popularity and willingness to share his knowledge attracted a following of hopefuls such as Thomas A. Dorgan and Pruitt Carter, who were appropriately dubbed Swinnerton boys. As it turned out, Swinnerton lived a very long and productive life. He died in Palm Springs in 1974 at the age of ninety-eight.

As a painter, James Swinnerton is known for desert landscapes of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The healing qualities of the desert undoubtedly served to endear the topography to him. He would ride a burro or drive his Studebaker sedan into the desert to observe and sketch it in its endless variety, and frequently took friends and other artists with him on his excursions. The time he spent observing the desert lands was very important in the development of his art. The desert requires time of the artist to observe, learn, and absorb the subtle beauty, changes in color, atmosphere, and qualities of light in such an environment. Appreciation and understanding followed observation, and the bright, arid, sun-filled skies; the barren, rocky mountains; the sparsely vegetated ground; the small, spiny plants; and the vast open expanse of land became good friends to Swinnerton.

Swinnerton's paintings are straight-forward, direct observations of the desert in which he lived. Though there undoubtedly existed a strong emotional attachment to the land, his paintings read more as documentation rather than emotionally expressive interpretations. Unlike landscapes of the previous generation, Swinnerton's paintings were not overly romantic, with exaggerated mountains, dramatic skies, or verdant foliage; he looked directly at his subject, with his feet planted firmly on the ground. Very little underpainting is evident, demonstrating a technique unlike more traditional painters who slowly built up areas of sepia-toned values before adding color. Swinnerton's palette was limited but very useful. It included "two blues, one green, blue black [and] several reds,"[6] and he used it to define form, volume, and space rather than relying on extensive underpainting. The color is applied directly to the surface to portray the barren mountains, canyon walls, sandy dunes, expansive sky, and thin vegetation as accurately as possible. Swinnerton would keep an array of desert stones in his studio for comparison to check the painting as he progressed for trueness of color and tone.[7] More traditional painters applied layers of transparent glaze to build a surface that glowed with light seemingly produced within the painting. The light in Swinnerton's pieces comes from an external source, resulting in an accurate description of the subject without emotional overtone.

One of the Swinnerton paintings owned by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas,[8] is a depiction of an area near Mesquite, Nevada. It is an unadorned representation typical of Swinnerton's desert landscapes, its vertical format contrasting with the horizontal, low-lying desert. The scene is dominated by the broad expanse of sky that occupies almost half of the picture plane. The air is very dry and very warm, with a few wispy clouds blowing high above

the earth. The rocky soil is sparsely covered with short brush and trees, that are evidence of the lack of rainfall in this environment. In fact, no living thing penetrates the sky above the horizon, which re-emphasizes the severity of the climate. Even the distant hills lie close to the ground as if their growth also suffered from lack of moisture. A shallow ravine in the foreground shows layers of rock and sediment that are the result of rare flash floods, and the whole terrain looks worn and etched by the weather. There is no evidence of man in this work, as is the case with most of Swinnerton's paintings. (Even when evidence of man does appear, the desert remains the dominant element.) The coarse, sandy ground subtly changes its texture and color from one area to another, evidence of the response of one who has experienced and observed the desert firsthand. The light falling on the desert floor outlines dark shadows under the mesquite bushes and against the hills. No color or reflection from the sky overhead is evident in the shadow. Foreground, middle ground, background, and sky exist in distinct divisions, as the rhythm of the desert is meticulously observed and plotted for the painting.

James Swinnerton's paintings reveal his observations and intimate understanding of the environment that was his home for so many years. He joins a generation of artists who turned from journalism and illustration to record the exploration and development of the American West. One cannot discount the fact that his newspaper experience had an effect on the directness of his work. Critics of Swinnerton objected that his paintings "were not true because they did not conform to the old stereotype of the desert: a wasteland of sand and thorns."[9] Those who make the desert their home know the complexity belied by the sand and thorns. Swinnerton labored for a major portion of his career to communicate the beauty and variety of the desert that he understood so well; he established a timeless record of the desert environment.

NOTES

[1] Raymond Carlson, ed., *Gallery of Western Painting* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951) 75.

[2] In 1951 "Little Jimmy" was cited as one of the first and oldest continuous-running comic strips still drawn by its originator. Carlson, *Gallery of Western Painting*, 66.

[3] Chuck Renfroe, University of Nevada News Release, Las Vegas, UNLV News Bureau, 31 December 1977, 1.

[4] *Las Vegas Age*, 21 December 1933, vol. 8, no. 5.

[5] Richard Guy Walton, telephone interview with author, 22 November 1989.

[6] Edward Ainsworth, *Painters of the Desert* (Palm Springs: Desert Printers, Inc., 1961), 37.

[7] Ibid., 37.

[8] This painting, the gift of Harold Stocker, is in the James R. Dickinson Library Special Collection.

[9] Carlson, *Gallery*, 75.

MAYNARD DIXON

(1875-1946)

Peter Stremmel

MAYNARD DIXON, WHO WAS PERHAPS CALIFORNIA'S MOST notable contribution to western art and illustration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, owed much of his artistic heritage to the surrounding western states. During his lifetime, he travelled extensively throughout the West and, in most instances, his explorations that were not specifically into Nevada involved some type of crossing. Ultimately, the time he spent in Nevada during the 1920s and 1930s served as an important spiritual period in his life, and the land became a source of artistic regeneration.

Born in Fresno in 1875, Dixon spent his boyhood on the great interior plain of California. He began sketching at the age of ten, but frail health restricted this childhood amusement to infrequent sketching trips into the high Sierra or to the wilderness areas of the western slope. In 1891, for health reasons, he moved to Coronado in San Diego. There he started to make illustrations of the Old West, and developed sufficient confidence in his work that he sent his sketchbook to his artistic idol, illustrator Frederic Remington, who responded with such encouragement that Dixon began a career as an illustrator.

The next year he moved to San Francisco, where he continued to develop his drawing and his writing. Gradually achieving recognition, he started writing articles and providing illustrations on western life, including illustrations for Jack London's Alaskan stories in *Overland Monthly*. He made numerous sketching trips in and around California's central valley, the mother lode country, and Big Sur, and also started writing poetry as a verbal counterpart of his visual imagery.

In 1900, Dixon made his first visit to the Southwest, travelling extensively throughout Arizona. That trip firmly established the artistic direction in which he would develop throughout the rest of his life, one that concentrated on the native American and the western landscape. Later that year he re-

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turned to San Francisco, to work as a western illustrator for the San Francisco *Sunday Examiner.*

The period 1901-05 was spent travelling, illustrating, and writing. Dixon made a lengthy trip to northern California, southeast Oregon, and Idaho with fellow California artist and illustrator Ed Borein, and later went to Guadalajara with California landscape artist Xavier Martinez.

In 1906, the earthquake destroyed Dixon's San Francisco studio, and he moved to New York with his wife, Lillian West Tobey. During the five years they lived there, he worked as an illustrator of western novels. Artists Charles M. Russell and Will James were frequent visitors to his studio, and they spent their time together discussing western art and literature. Dixon, however, was not happy in New York, and in 1912 he and his wife returned to San Francisco.

The year 1912 was a turning point in Dixon's life. In that year Anita Baldwin McClaughy, daughter of Nevada silver millionaire E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin, commissioned Dixon to paint a series of murals in her Sierra Madre home near Pasadena. It was Anita Baldwin who gave Dixon the opportunity to prove himself in major mural work. The murals—*Victory Song, Envoys of Peace, The Post,* and *Ghost Eagle*—depicted Indian subjects and won critical acclaim from the *Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle,* and such magazines as *International Studio.* Dixon emphasized the idea that the murals were intended to suggest rather than depict the life of the Plains Indians.[1] Of that notion, he wrote:

> There is, after all, an American rhythm, and we are undoubtedly becoming more aware of it. And I believe that Daniel Boone, Andrew Jackson, Kit Carson, Abe Lincoln, P. T. Barnum and Henry Ford are manifestations of it no less than Walt Whitman, Edgar Lee Masters, Winslow Homer, Geo. Bellows and Rockwell Kent are expressions of it, that the transcontinental migration of 1841-68 was part of it in the same sense that our railway development is part of it; and that the suggestion of decorative art and a touch of mysticism that we have absorbed from the Amerindians is also a part.
>
> I believe, further, that one of the most important ways in which system may be expressed for the people is through the decoration of public buildings, that through interpreting subjects of American history and American conditions in our own temper we may develop an American expression.[2]

The years 1915-19 were trying times for Dixon. His marriage was strained, and he was becoming disconsolate about the myths and the disappearance of the Old West. He was, however, commissioned to do a group of paintings featuring Glacier National Park and the Blackfoot Indians in Montana. In this connection he made frequent visits to his friend Charles Russell, and this series of paintings became his finest works to date.

In 1920, his first marriage failed, and Dixon married Dorthea Lange, then

a portrait photographer. That marriage lasted fifteen years and produced two sons.

Throughout the 1920s, Dixon made lengthy trips to Nevada and Arizona. He would travel for months across the northern part of Nevada, through sheep country, over wild-horse ranges, and into the Black Rock Desert. It was not simply a matter of Dixon going to the desert for artistic stimulation, he was compelled to go for personal and philosophic reasons. "You can't argue with the mountains," he would say,"the West is spiritually important to Americans."[3]

By 1927 Dixon was a well-established artist, producing many easel paintings and murals. But he grew restless, longing again for a more primitive area that would allow freedom for a fresh look at things. In the late months of 1927 he wandered and sketched the ranges and deserts of Nevada, which were punctuated with antelope and wild horses. He visited old mining camps, among them Tonopah and Beatty, and then descended into Death Valley. By the end of his four months of freedom, he had completed fifty-six paintings, and almost all of them were sold.[4] And after returning to San Francisco, he prepared an exhibition for the Riverside Hotel in Reno.[5]

The 1930s, marked by the Depression, saw Dixon turn briefly in a new direction, toward social themes; he produced powerful paintings depicting hobos, migrant farm workers, and drifters—somber works in resonance with the Ash Can School or The Eight then developing in New York. This marked the first and perhaps only departure from a traditional western viewpoint to a broader American outlook reflective of the times. His style also changed subtly, as he began experimenting with Cubist elements, influenced by the paintings of Picasso and Braque. He applied Cubist realism by creating geometric shadow patterns in the backgrounds of his compositions, an approach he used in varying degrees for the rest of his life.

In 1935, Dixon became aware that his marriage to Dorthea Lange would not last, and, although it was difficult for him to give up his family, he was divorced in Carson City that October.

Dixon spent several months in Nevada during the fall of 1935, wandering through the deserts and visiting places such as Carson City; there he painted *Empty House*, a deserted hovel fronted by Lombardy poplars of autumn, made more bleak by the surrounding empty desert. He was still somewhat saddened about his recent divorce. At this time he also visited Las Vegas and various deserted mining towns, among them, Rhyolite and again Beatty near Death Valley.[6] These travels resulted in numerous other works, including *Four in October, Lonesome Hills of Nevada, Cabin among Cottonwoods, Kingdom of Desert,* and *Shorelines of Lahontan,* the latter a somewhat geometric concept of a mountain emerging sharply from the flat desert floor.[7]

Returning to San Francisco in 1937, Dixon married artist Edith Hamlin. He continued to paint and write, but by 1939 his emphysema became so

severe that they had to move permanently to Tucson, spending summers in southern Utah. Edith Hamlin wrote of Dixon's work:

> Dixon's fluency with drawing in every medium, pencil, pen and ink, crayon and charcoal, formed a secure basis for all of his later creations. His work is readily recognizable for its expressive and rhythmic line and the masterful drawing quality. After 1913, with his return from New York to the West, he was able to concentrate on both easel painting and murals, which allowed his facile illustrative draftsmanship to develop in more expressive and creative directions. From spontaneous, rather impressionistic oil paintings of the 1900s to the early 1920s, he evolved a flatter surface treatment with a bolder composition that was more simplified and geometric. By the 1930s, he included what he called "space division" in order to bring into line the most dominant diagonals, horizontals or verticals of his work. In both field drawings as well as studio compositions and landscapes, Dixon was very selective as to the simplification of the subject material—rearranging, discarding, and accentuating the theme to suit his own aesthetic purposes. His style developed as a tool for his messages, not as an end in itself.[8]

The last six years of Dixon's life brought wide public recognition, and his paintings produced from 1920 were highly acclaimed as masterworks belonging to the modern period of western art.

Expressing one of his strongest convictions as an artist, Dixon said: "If doubtful of your work, return to nature and renew your vision." It was advice that he followed diligently all his life. When not working on a commission in his San Francisco studio, or later at his Tucson studio, he devoted his time to painting-and-sketching trips, which eventually encompassed every state in the West. From these extensive field trips and the insights they produced, he evolved a mastery of his material and a highly distinctive style—the architectural structuring of bold masses combined with dynamic composition and vibrant coloring.[9]

Dixon died in Tucson on November 14, 1946. His paintings of Nevada remain some of his most alluring and haunting images. Major Nevada works are in the permanent collections of Brigham Young University, the Oakland Museum, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art (Fort Worth), San Diego Fine Art Museum, Norton Simon Art Museum (Pasadena), De Young Museum (San Francisco), Brooklyn Museum, and the Nevada Museum of Art (Reno).

NOTES

[1] Donald J. Hagerty, *Visions and Images: Maynard Dixon and the American West* (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 1981), 21.

[2] *Ibid.*, 21.

[3] *Ibid.*, 29.

[4] Grant Wallace, *Maynard Dixon: Painter and Poet of the Far West* (San Francisco: California Art Research Project, WPA Project 2874), 62.

[5] "Version A," unpublished manuscript in possession of Edith Hamlin, 22.

[6] "Version A," 34.

[7] Wesley M. Burnside, *Maynard Dixon, Artist of the West* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), 129.

[8] Donald J. Hagerty, editor and interviewer, "Edith Hamlin: A California Artist" (Davis: University of California, 1981.)

[9] Dorothy Harmsen, *Harmsen's Western America* (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1971), 64.

GEORGE D. OTIS

(1879-1962)

Robert A. Nylen

THE COMPLETION OF THE FLEISCHMANN DIORAMAS for Nevada Day in October 1946 marked an important event for the Nevada State Museum in Carson City. The dioramas were the first exhibits to be financed by philanthropist Max C. Fleischmann, and they represent the museum's first professionally designed exhibits.[1] Fleischmann had taken a personal interest in the museum since its founding in 1939, and in 1944 he decided upon a $7,500 gift to fund a series of dioramas depicting Nevada's most significant mammals. Two of the dioramas installed in 1946 were notable because their backgrounds were the work of one of America's foremost landscape painters, George Demont Otis.

Otis has been called the landscape painter of America because he travelled and painted in thirty-eight states during a colorful career that spanned sixty-five years.[2] Otis's association with Nevada was brief. He spent several summers in the early 1930s painting landscapes that he sold out of a simple wooden stand in Reno. His contribution to the Fleischmann dioramas marked his final association with the state.

Otis was a prolific painter.[3] He was also considered an excellent teacher with a strong personal philosophy of life, which he applied to his art. That philosophy was in fact the guiding basis of his art. He said:

> Five guiding factors have been my aim in life—using them for the great potentialities that they are—humility, reverence, inspiration, deep purpose and joy. Knowing that all noble art is the expression of man's delight in God's work and not his own and knowing that added to this for utter fulfillment of needs one must possess self-respect and faith.[4]

For thirty years, Otis was a part-time instructor of both beginners and advanced art students, some five hundred of whom went on to become professional artists. Since he derived a steady income from the sale of his art work, Otis was never required to teach full time. He did, however, have

Robert A. Nylen is curator of history at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City. He coauthored the publications *Brewed in Nevada: A History of the Silver State's Beers and Breweries* and *The History of the Nevada State Capitol and Governor's Mansion.*

deep convictions about art education: "From the start one must teach the student self-respect and faith in himself." He also believed that he, as instructor, should consider himself as just "another student, a little more able to guide, and as a friend to the aspiring artist, rather than a critic or a pedantic teacher."[5] He gave up teaching in 1939 but was always available to advise and assist other artists.[6]

George Demont Otis was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on September 21, 1879, the youngest of three children of George and Etta Otis. His father, a railroad engineer, was killed in a train wreck two weeks after his birth, and his mother died when he was six years old. He was sent to live with an aunt in Sedalia, Missouri, but at age twelve, was placed by his relatives in the home of a Chicago family. His artistic talent was discovered early, and at fourteen he entered the Chicago Fine Art Academy.[7] His art education was continued at the Chicago Art Institute, the Philadelphia Academy of Arts, the National Academy of Arts, the National Academy of Design in New York, the Brooklyn Academy of Fine Arts, the Pennsylvania Academy, and Woodstock School of Painting of White Plains, New York, the Cooper Institute in New York, and the Art Students League of New York.[8]

Early in his life Otis had a promising career in baseball, spending two years as a pitcher with the Nashville and Memphis clubs of the Southern Association. He used his earnings to finance additional art education, and he also produced hundreds of grease-pencil drawings. When his commissions for paintings increased, he decided to give up baseball and concentrate on art.[9]

Otis returned to Chicago in 1900 and spent the next fourteen years as instructor, stage scenery designer, art restorer, and art appraiser. He worked on curtains, drapes, and side wings at the Opera House in Chicago, and was also associated with other opera houses and theatres in the Midwest and East.[10]

When he became ill in 1916, he was advised by a prominent Chicago physician to leave the city. Upon arriving in Colorado, he set up a studio in an old barn at Estes Park, "gateway to the Rockies." He painted scenes of Bryce and Zion Canyons in Utah and the scenery of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. His work during the years in Colorado won many awards.

Otis became interested in the Indian tribes of the southwest—Hopi, Navajo, Yuma, Isleta, Acoma, Taos, and Pima. He gained their trust and a limited knowledge of their languages. Some two hundred watercolors resulted from his study of the daily life of these peoples.[11]

Wanderings in 1919 took Otis to Southern California, where he fell in love with the climate and the scenery. He appreciated the fact that outdoor painting there could be done all year round. In 1924, he moved to a mission-style house in Burbank, set up a studio, and became active in the art community in Los Angeles. Employed as a scene designer by the movie industry, Otis worked for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and film mogul Louis B. Mayer. He be-

came very much a part of the Hollywood social scene and developed a friendship with silent-screen comedian Buster Keaton.[12]

The strain of the social life and pressures of work in Hollywood caused Otis to re-evaluate what he wanted in life. He abruptly left, deserting an art collection, personal effects, and problems in order to get back to nature. His adventurous spirit led him back to the Southwest—to New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado.[13]

After a year and a half of wandering, Otis settled at the San Francisco studio of the former sculptor Arthur Putnam, just across from Golden Gate Park. Otis was through with travelling, and met at this time his future wife, Clara Van Tine, a businesswoman from San Francisco. They were married in Reno on November 25, 1931, by Judge Thomas F. "Barney" Moran,[14] who was a cousin of the painter Thomas Moran, one of Otis's closest friends.[15]

During the summers of 1932 and 1933, Otis and his wife returned to northern Nevada to avoid the cold and fog of the Bay Area. In those two stays, Otis executed many paintings and etchings of the Carson Valley, Pyramid Lake, Lake Tahoe, Mogul, Carson City, and Virginia City. He had a small studio in Virginia City but came to Reno to market his works. They set up a simple wooden stand, and many pieces were sold to divorcees.[16]

The Nevada landscapes follow in the mold of Otis's previous works, demonstrating richness of color and a great love of trees. His interest in native Americans and Pyramid Lake reappeared, specifically in three beautiful landscapes that focus on the lake. Their titles speak of life on the reservation: *An Indian Home*, *Boats to Let*, and *Fisher Folks*.[17]

Cottonwood and poplar trees figure prominently in many of the Nevada paintings. Otis loved trees, and they appear again and again in his landscapes. He believed that they represented "God's greatest work."[18] A former student, George Roberts, recalled that his mentor loved trees and was known for the way he painted them. Otis had described them thus: "Trees express the wind. They keep the earth from being a desolate place. They graciously furnish a cooling spot in their shade. They feed the hungry with their fruits and act untiringly as sentinels and landmarks. They are living things. Paint them that way."[19]

Otis's interest in Nevada seems to have waned after 1933; he and Clara had become engrossed in the construction of their house and studio in Kentfield in Marin County, where he spent the rest of his life.[20] He painted in the San Francisco Bay Area, but was particularly attracted to the Muir Woods, Lagunitas Creek, and Mount Tamalpais during this period.

Otis's last association with Nevada occurred in 1946 in connection with the final three Fleischmann dioramas. In 1944 Fleischmann had engaged Frank Tose, director of exhibits at the California Academy of Science, to design and install dioramas of the principal Nevada mammals for the Nevada State Museum. Tose was taken ill in October of 1944, and died in November.[21] His

son Cecil,[22] who worked with him, completed the contract and delivered five dioramas—mule deer, elk, mountain lion, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep—in time for Nevada Day in 1945.

Upon his father's death, Cecil Tose had convinced Major Fleischmann to allow him to finish the project. He did the technical work on the dioramas, while the art work was done by Gilbert Tange and Walter Rivers.[23] Tose spent many weeks in the field collecting information, specimens, and photographs to be used by the artists in painting the backgrounds, which depicted actual Nevada scenes.[24]

The first five dioramas were so well received that Major Fleischmann and the Board of Trustees decided to add three more. Otis was hired by Tose to paint background murals for the beaver and the black bear.[25] The scenery for the beaver was taken from a view of Little Valley just beyond the ridge of the Washoe Valley. The black bear scene was put together from the Tahoe region. These were areas that Otis had been familiar with while he was a summer resident of the area in the early 1930s.[26]

The Fleischmann dioramas were an important part of the natural history exhibits at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City until 1982, when a new state museum was opened in Las Vegas. The Nevada State Museum's Exhibits Department designed these unique displays into the Natural History gallery at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas. These two dioramas are Otis's only pieces of public art remaining in the state.

Notes

[1] In the late 1940s Major Max C. Fleischmann funded the construction of a replica of a silver mine at the museum at a cost of $50,000. The mine replica opened on October 31, 1950, and remains one of the museum's most popular exhibits. Sessions S. Wheeler, *Gentleman in The Outdoors: A Portrait of Max C. Fleischmann* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985), 56-58.

[2] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist* (November 1979): 74-79, 108-111.

[3] Otis specialized in landscapes, but he also was skilled in portraits, still lifes, marine and city scenes. He worked in all the major media, including oil, watercolor, gouache, opaque, etching, dry point, pastel, wood block, and wood carving. George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist* (November 1979): 74.

[4] The San Rafael, California *Daily Independent–Journal*, 12 August 1950. (Hereafter cited *Daily Independent–Journal.*)

[5] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist* (November 1979).

[6] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist* (November 1979): 74-79.; "George Demont Otis 1879-1962, American Impressionist, Painter of America," in *Golden Gate Collection Exhibit Catalogue.* (Fort Mason, Ca.: George Demont Otis Foundation): n.p. (Hereafter cited "Otis: American Impressionist."); *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[7] His talent was discovered in 1893 by the wife of Illinois's United States Senator James Atkins. Mrs. Atkins was a teacher at the Chicago Beale School. Shortly thereafter, Senator Atkins arranged for a full scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute; *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[8] Otis studied under many prominent artists of his day, including Robert Henri, William Merritt Chase, John F. Carlson, Bruce Crane, Waldo Pierce, Birge Harrison, Don Garber, Wellington Reynolds,

John Vanderpoel, Winslow Homer, George Inness, and Thomas Moran; *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960; George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artists* (November 1979): 74; George Roberts, "George Demont Otis Was My Teacher," in *Golden Gate Collection Exhibit Catalogue* (Fort Mason, Ca.: George Otis Foundation, 1977.)

[9] Otis's baseball wage was $250 to $300 a season plus $3 for each exhibition game; *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960, M4. George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist*, (November 1979): 79.

[10] *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[11] Otis painted many scenes focusing on basket weavers, sheep herders, turquoise workers, and potters; *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[12] During the 1920s Otis often returned to the Southwest between motion-picture jobs to paint the desert landscapes; *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[13] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artist* (November 1979): 109.

[14] *Nevada State Journal*, 20 August 1938.

[15] *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[16] Grace Hartley, telephone interview with author, Carson City, 14 July 1986.

[17] George Demont Otis File Folder, Nevada State Museum Archives, Carson City.

[18] *Daily Independent–Journal*, 13 February 1960.

[19] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis Was My Teacher," in *Golden Gate Collection Exhibit Catalogue* (Fort Mason, Ca.: George Otis Foundation, 1977).

[20] George Roberts, "George Demont Otis: Western Impressionist," *American Artists* (November 1979). George Otis died in 1962 at the age of eighty-two.

[21] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 November 1944. Frank Tose was born in England in 1884. He was director of exhibits at the California Academy of Science for twenty-five years.

[22] Cecil Tose also worked for the California Academy of Science. He studied under the famous Janas brothers who made most of the large habitat sets in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and the American Museum of Natural History in New York; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 4 November 1945.

[23] Both Tange and Rivers were familiar with the requirements of diorama construction. Tange had been a pupil of the elder Tose at the California Academy of Science during the construction of the Stimson African Hall. Walter Rivers was a former student of Otis.

[24] The content of the Fleischmann dioramas is as follows: The antelope diorama was designed to show pronghorn antelope in northern Washoe County at the Sheldon Reserve. The mountain sheep scene presents the animals crossing from the summer range in the Monte Cristo Mountains grazing south to a point near Indian Springs. The elk diorama depicts a site at Success Summit looking toward Duck Creek in White Pine County. The mule deer diorama was designed around a scene on Mount Rose. The mountain lion diorama came from a scene near Sacramento Pass near Ely. The beaver diorama design came from Little Valley near Washoe Valley. The black bear diorama was from Tahoe. The coyote diorama shows Jack's Valley looking toward Job's Peak in Douglas County.

[25] Cecil Tose knew that Otis was familiar with diorama techniques because Otis had worked for Tose's father on the Stimson African Hall in 1932.

[26] See Nevada State Museum Accessions Records, October 1941-June 1956; Accession number 190-G, November 1946.

PLATES

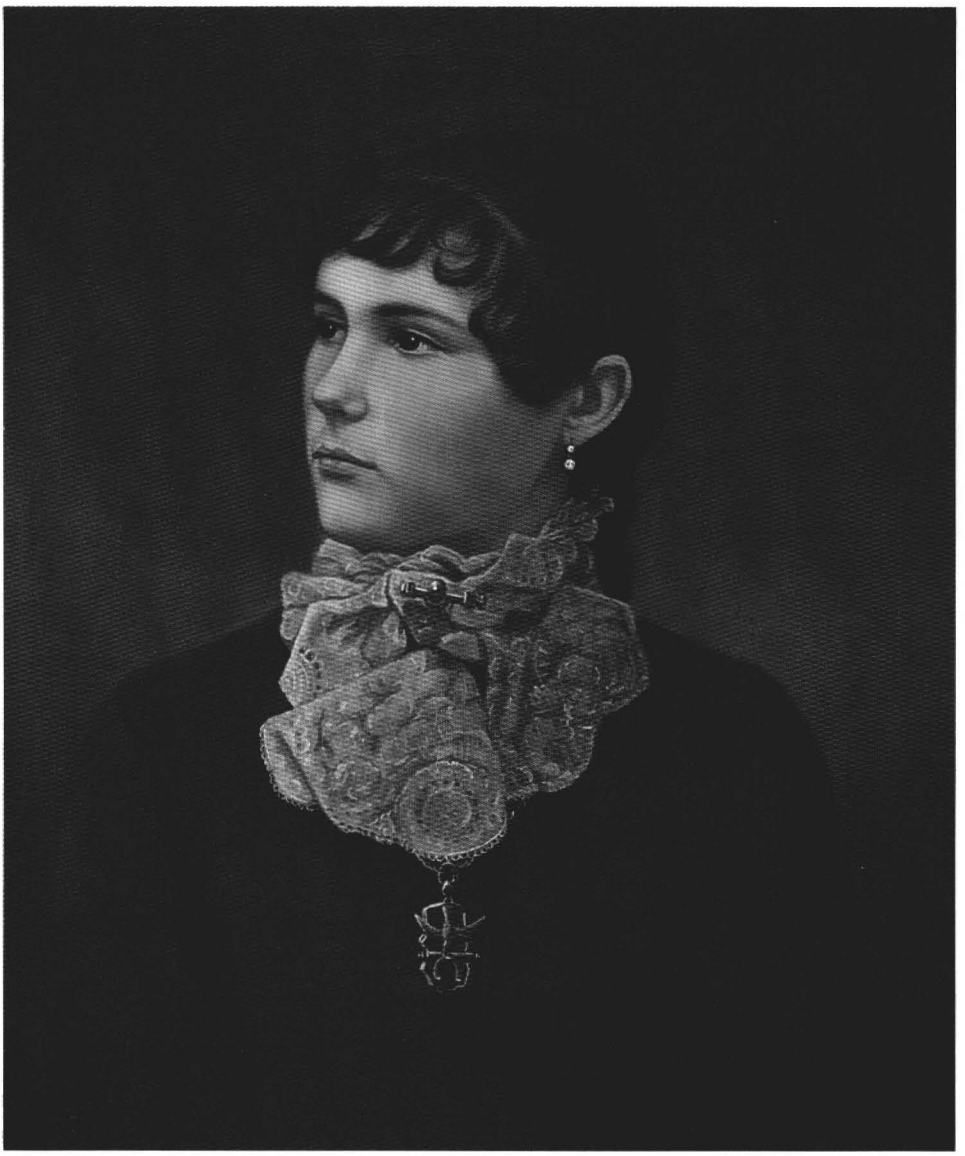

Plate 2. Cyrinus B. McClellan, *Flora Brown Syms*, 1882.

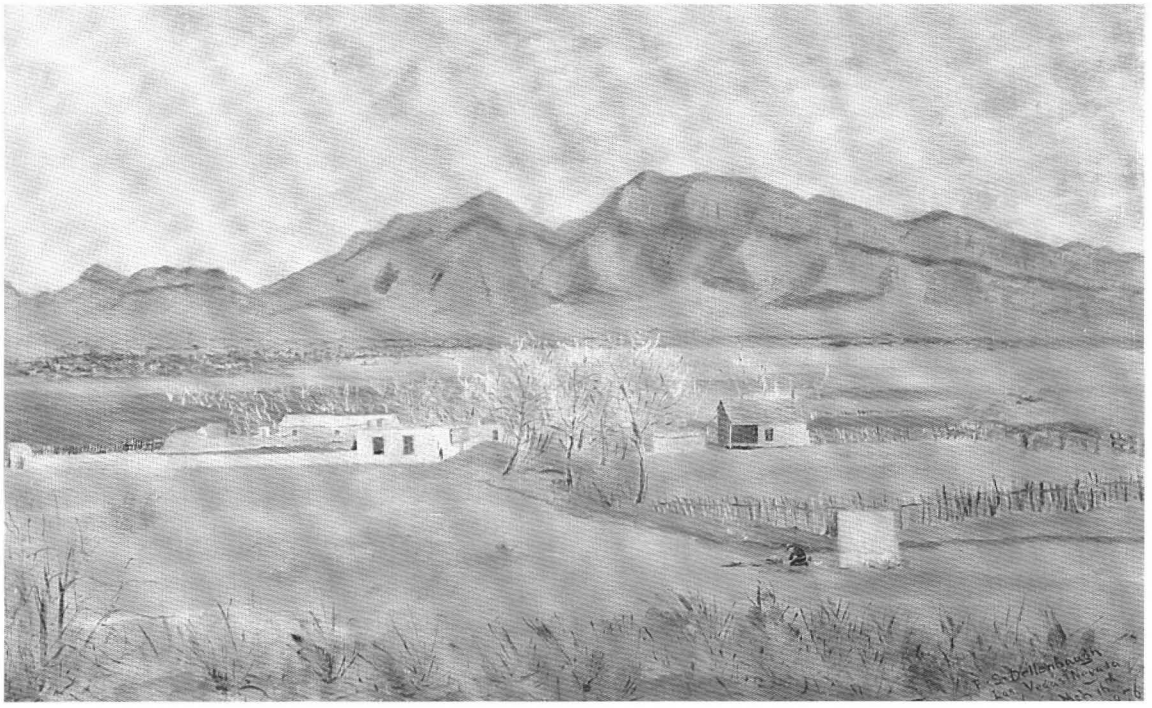

Plate 3. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, *Las Vegas Fort and Ranch*, 1876.

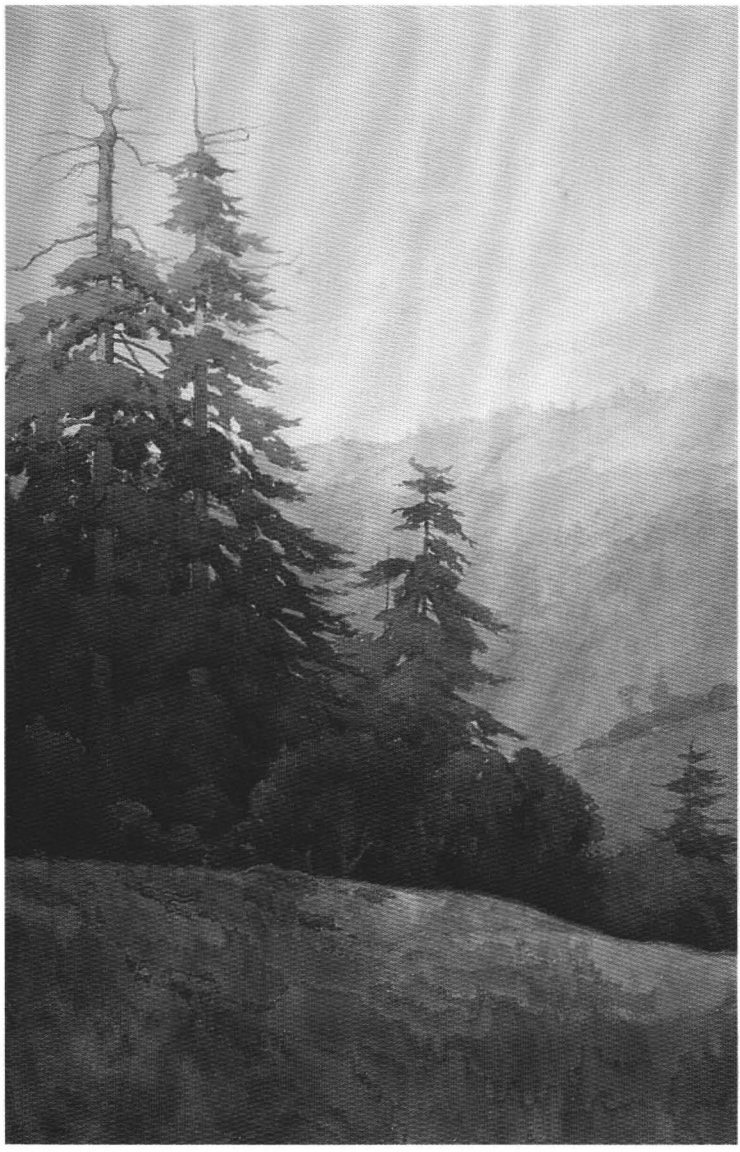

Plate 4. Lorenzo P. Latimer, *The Last Glow Looking Across Blackburn Gulch*, n.d.

Plate 5. Hans Meyer-Kassel, *Carson Valley*, c. 1945.

Plate 6. Robert Caples, *Red Mountain*, 1941.

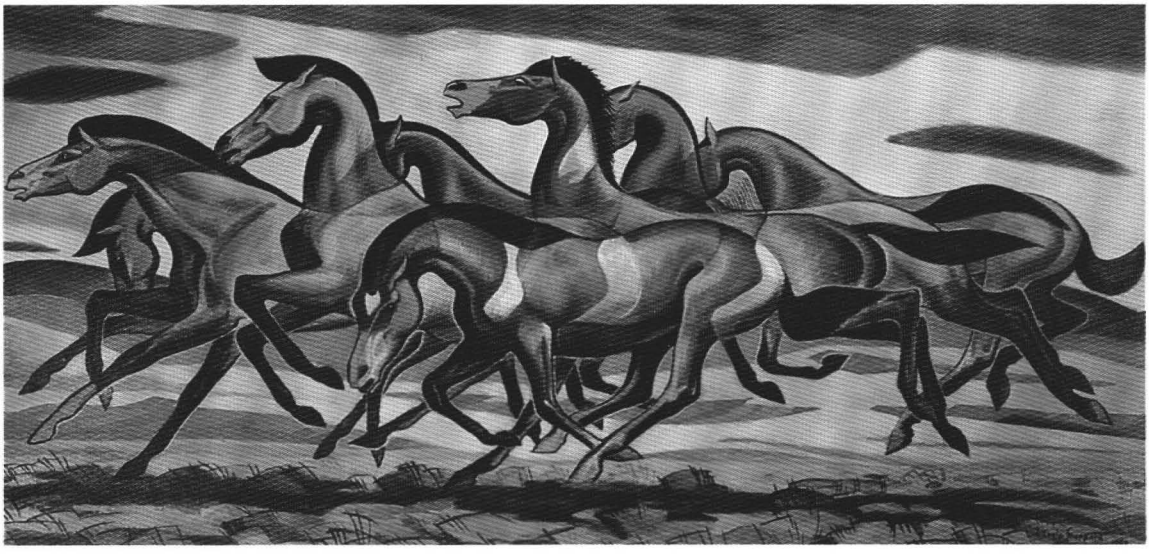

Plate 7. Craig Sheppard, *Fandango,* 1947.

Plate 8. Richard Guy Walton, *Piper's Opera House*, 1953.

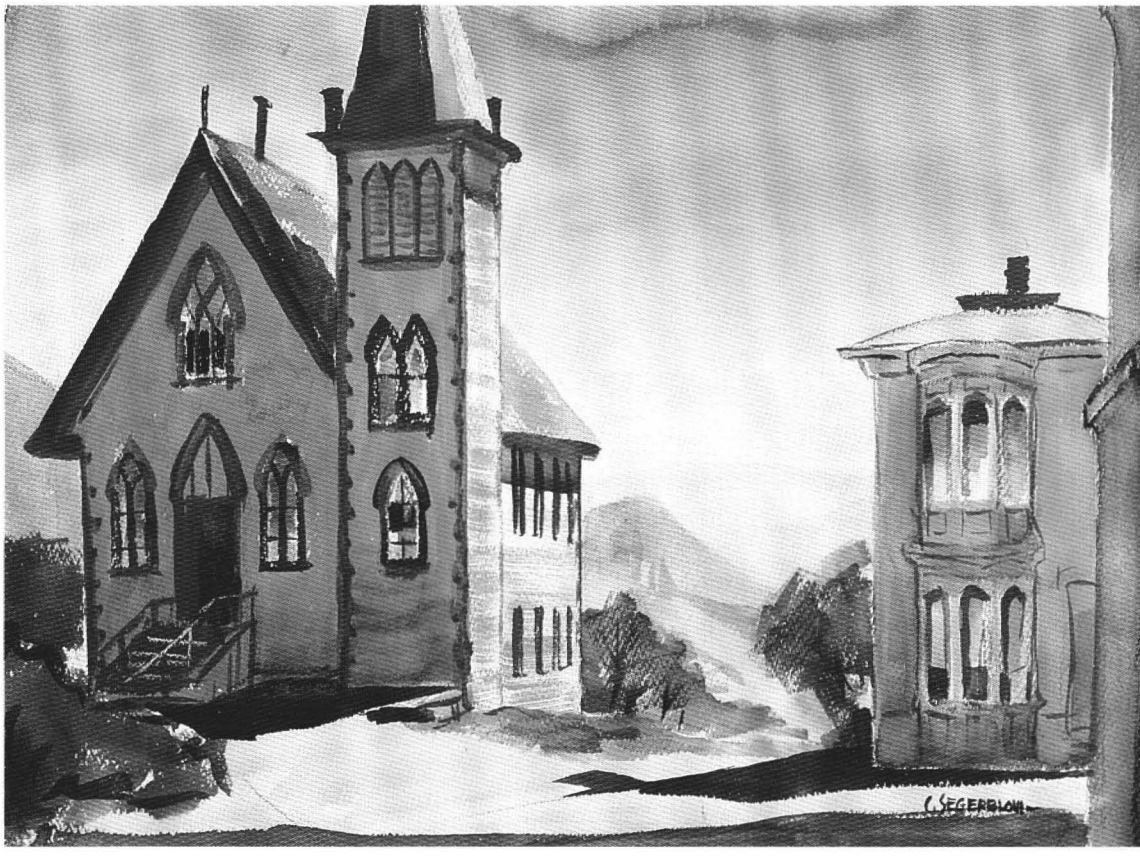

Plate 9. Cliff Segerblom, *Episcopal Church in Virginia City*, 1953.

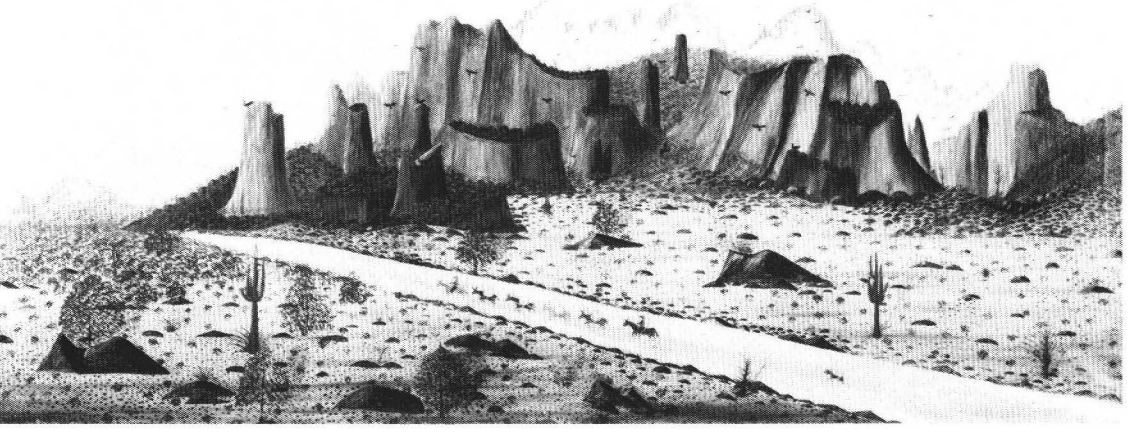

Plate 10. Fred Maxwell, *Superstition Mt. Arizona*, 1927.

Plate 11. Kate Lewers, *Floral Arrangement with Hollyhocks*, n.d.

Plate 12. James Swinnerton, *Cactus at Mountain Pass,* n.d.

Plate 13. George Otis, *The Old Otis Studio, Virginia City, Nevada,* 1932.

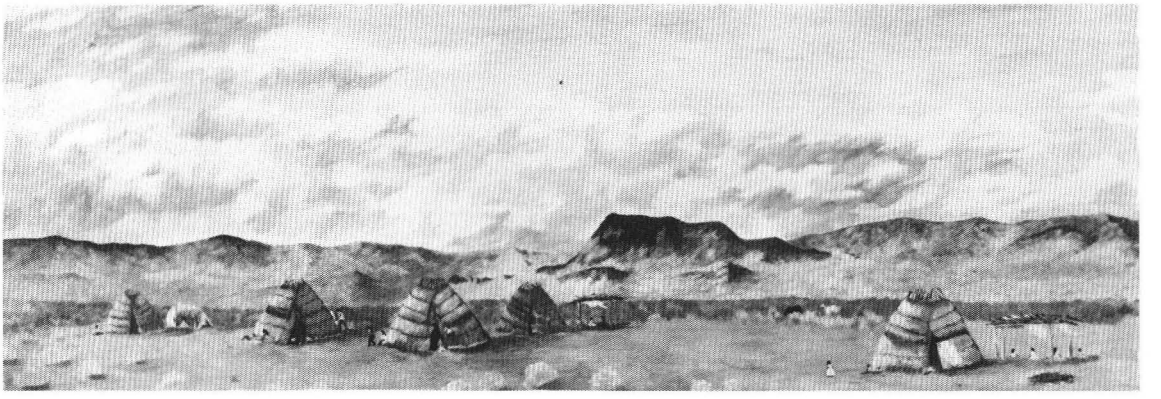

Plate 14. Gilbert Natches, *Untitled*, 1925.

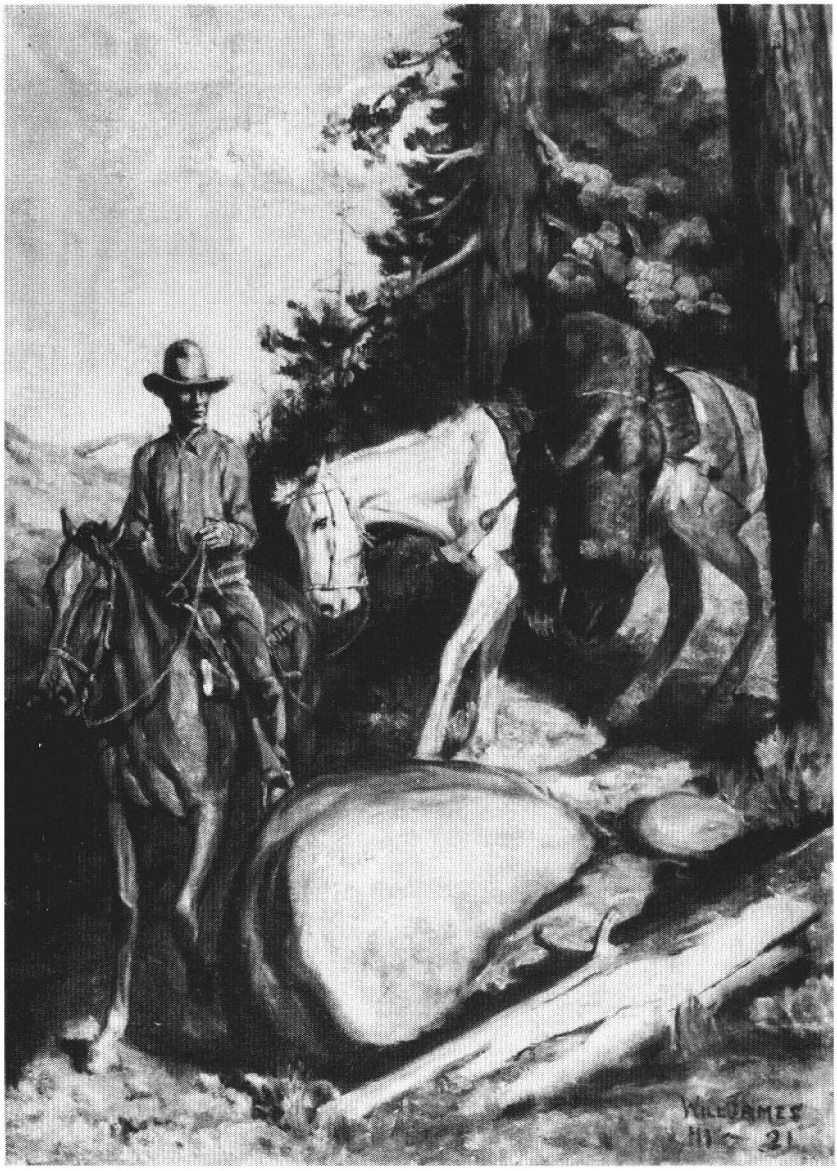

Plate 15. Will James, *The Bearhunt*, 1921.

Plate 16. Ben Cunningham, *Pyramid Lake*, 1941.

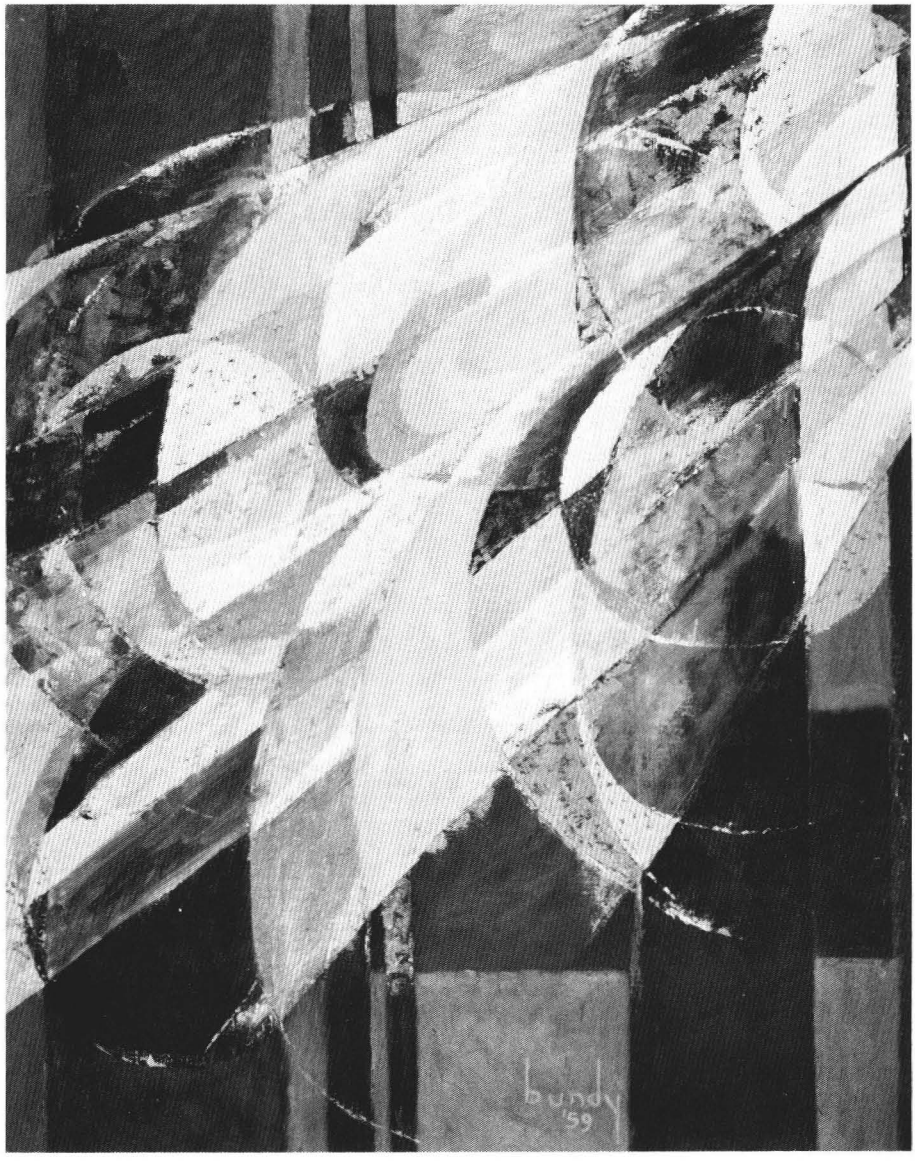

Plate 17. Gus Bundy, *Trees and Sunshine*, 1959.

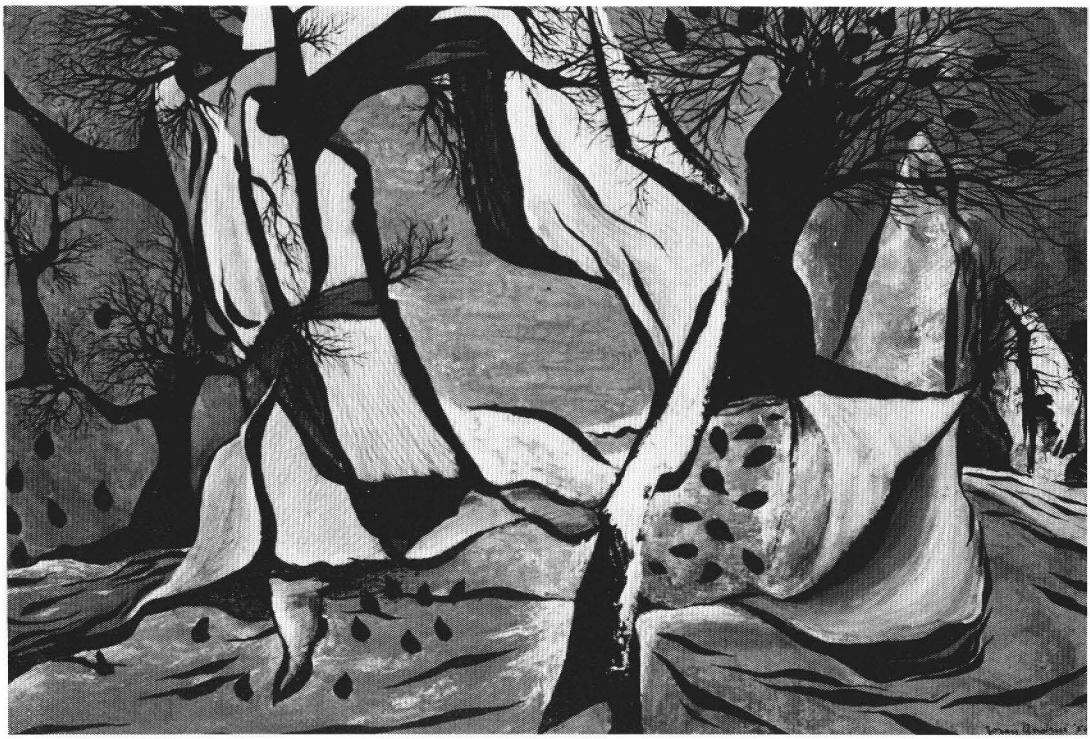

Plate 18. Zoray Andrus, *Eventyr*, 1956.

COLOPHON

Plate 1. Maynard Dixon, *Signal Station at Gravel Pits,* 1934. Oil on canvas. 21⅝″ × 17⅝″. University of Nevada, Reno, Getchell Library, Special Collections.

Plate 2. Cyrinus B. McClellan, *Flora Brown Syms,* 1882. Oil on canvas. 24″ × 20″. Nevada Historical Society Collection.

Plate 3. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, *Las Vegas Fort and Ranch,* 1876. Oil on canvas. 17″ × 27″. Courtesy of Clifford Jones.

Plate 4. Lorenzo P. Latimer, *The Last Glow Looking Across Blackburn Gulch,* n.d. Watercolor on paper. 30″ × 20″. Nevada Museum of Art Collection.

Plate 5. Hans Meyer-Kassel, *Carson Valley,* c. 1945. Oil on canvas. 16¼″ × 20″. Nevada Museum of Art Collection.

Plate 6. Robert Caples, *Red Mountain,* 1941. Pastel on paper. 19″ × 25″. Nevada Museum of Art Collection.

Plate 7. Craig Sheppard, *Fandango,* 1947. Oil on canvas. 21⅜″ × 44¼″. Courtesy of Yolande Sheppard.

Plate 8. Richard Guy Walton, *Piper's Opera House,* 1953. Oil on canvas. 48″ × 33″. Courtesy of Richard Guy Walton.

Plate 9. Cliff Segerblom, *Episcopal Church in Virginia City,* 1953. Oil on canvas. 20″ × 16″. Courtesy of Louise Brothers Sanders.

Plate 10. Fred Maxwell, *Superstition Mt. Arizona,* 1927. Oil on canvas. 20″ × 39½″. Nevada Historical Society Collection.

Plate 11. Kate Lewers, *Floral Arrangement with Hollyhocks,* n.d. Oil on canvas. 26″ × 20″. Courtesy of Henry Heidenreich, Jr.

Plate 12. James Swinnerton, *Cactus at Mountain Pass,* n.d. Oil on canvas. 26″ × 20″. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, James Dickinson Library, Special Collections.

Plate 13. George Otis, *The Old Otis Studio, Virginia City, Nevada,* 1932. Oil on board. 9″ × 12″. Courtesy of Grace Hartley.

Plate 14. Gilbert Natches, *Untitled,* 1925. Oil on canvas. 17½″ × 48″. Nevada Historical Society Collection.

Plate 15. Will James, *The Bearhunt,* 1921. Oil on canvas. 26″ × 19″. University of Nevada, Reno, Getchell Library, Special Collections.

Plate 16. Ben Cunningham, *Pyramid Lake,* 1941. Oil on canvas. 29″ × 57″. University of Nevada, Reno, Getchell Library, Special Collections.

Plate 17. Gus Bundy, *Trees and Sunshine,* 1959. Oil on canvas. 35½″ × 29½″. Courtesy of Jeanne Bundy.

Plate 18. Zoray Andrus, *Eventyr,* 1956. Gouache and tempera. 26″ × 18″. Courtesy of Peter Kraemer.

GILBERT NATCHES

(c. 1887-1942)

Peter L. Bandurraga

GILBERT NATCHES[1] WAS A PAINTER OF NEVADA LANDSCAPES, especially scenes of Pyramid Lake, in the years between 1910 and 1940. Many of his paintings show the dwellings and lifeways of his Paiute relatives and neighbors on the Nixon Reservation. A grandson of Chief Winnemucca and a nephew of Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Natches grew up in a world irredeemably changed by the white man. Throughout his life, he explained and illustrated the ways of his people, for the curious whites and especially for the Paiute children, so that they might know how life had been before.

As is often the case with native Americans born in the nineteenth century, precise data on Natches are sketchy at best. The 1910 census indicates he was then twenty-seven years old, born in 1883 in Nevada of parents also born in Nevada. On the other hand, both the obituary that appeared in the *Lovelock Review Miner* on June 4, 1942, and Omer C. Stewart writing in 1941 give Natches's age as fifty-four, which places his year of birth around 1887. Stewart, who used him as an informant in his research, states that Natches was born at Brown's Station, southwest of Lovelock, but lived for thirty-six years at Nixon, returning to Lovelock in 1936.[2]

Stewart and several other writers mention that Natches suffered a crippling accident as a child, falling off either a train or a horse. As a result he spent a good deal of time at home listening to his mother and grandmother talk about the old days, before the white intrusion. Although Natches did not have firsthand knowledge of Paiute ways, Stewart was impressed "by his breadth of knowledge and by his ability to express himself. His lack of personal experience with aboriginal culture limited his knowledge; notwithstanding, he surpassed anyone else I found at Lovelock."[3]

In 1914 A. L. Kroeber, the anthropologist from the University of California who was excavating the archaeological finds at Lovelock Cave, invited Natches to visit the university museum in San Francisco and assist him in editing Northern Paiute texts earlier collected by W. L. Marsden. Although differ-

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ences in dialect made the original project unfeasible, Natches stayed in California for several months, learning to write the Paiute language phonetically and leaving behind a Paiute verb list, a series of phrases, and some stories and songs that Kroeber later edited and had published in a volume of *American Archaeology and Ethnology.*[4] It is interesting that these stories and songs relate by and large to the Ghost Dance religious revival that had been so influential among the Paiutes of northern Nevada during the 1890s.

While a resident at the Affiliated Colleges of the University of California in San Francisco, which is where the university museum was then located, Natches apparently gave an interview to a reporter. A long article about him appeared in the Sunday supplement of the *San Francisco Chronicle* for October 25, 1914, and contains the most detailed description of the artist's life and work to be found. The unnamed journalist made much of Natches's distinguished Paiute lineage and, in the paternalistic fashion of the day, paid effusive tribute to his various accomplishments: learning to speak English although his school attendance spanned only six months; drawing and painting in watercolors, oils, and sepia; and playing the violin. Indeed, Natches apparently made a living playing for dances in Reno. The author provides a vivid description of Natches's introduction to painting:

> He has always associated with the whites and early in life adopted their dress and manner of life. At his father's death he was left with a farm of many acres, which he conducted successfully until the big idea—the idea to paint and become an artist—came to him. Then he rented his farm and turned to art for a living. He kept a couple of horses and a wagon and day after day used to drive over the Nevada desert with his painting outfit, which was given him by a Mr. Severance, a minister at Reno. Gilbert's favorite spots seem to have been Blue lake and Pyramid lake, in Washoe county. Here he was in a sort of basin surrounded by mountains, bare and dun colored, whose serrated edges seemed to touch the sky. Almost at the foot of the mountains nestled a turquoise-blue lake, aptly named Blue lake; the sky, too, was blue with a few fleecy clouds on the horizon; the pungent odor of sagebrush was in the air. The soul of the Indian was thrilled with the beauty, the witchery of it all. He dismounted from the wagon, set up his easel and began to paint. When the picture was finished he took it back to Reno where it commanded instant attention. He received orders to paint more and spent more and more time on the desert alone with nature. His pictures sold from $5 to $10 apiece.[5]

However romanticized this Sunday supplement account may be, the bare bones at least are likely true. In fact, Kroeber arranged an exhibition of Natches's paintings at the Affiliated Colleges while he was in residence. The *Carson City News* of October 13, 1914, reported on the show and included the following comment: "The paintings are all of picturesque scenes in the vicinity of the artist's home near Wadsworth, and show the buttes and mesas, the salt lake with its steep islands and the distant ranges of the desert in varying lights and seasons."[6] The author of the *Chronicle* article pointed out that Natches occasionally put on the headdress of his illustrious grandfather

Winnemucca, which was a part of the university museum's collection. The piece is illustrated with a photograph of Natches wearing the feathered bonnet while seated at an easel, with Ishi looking on. Ishi, of course, was the last of the Yahi of California; he had been rescued from annihilation a few years earlier and was also a resident at the university museum.

Natches continued to paint his desert world for more than two decades. A short article in the *Nevada State Journal* in March of 1925 announced that one of his paintings would be included in the upcoming Transcontinental Highway Exposition.[7] As late as 1941, in the "Arts and Artists" column of the *Reno Evening Gazette*, Lillian Borghi noted that a number of Natches's landscapes were included in an exhibition arranged by the Parent-Teacher's Association of Lovelock.[8]

By 1941, however, Natches had long been in failing health and circumstance. A series of letters from 1929 to 1937 in the John T. Reid Collection at the Nevada Historical Society documents the rather desperate straits the artist found himself in, as his eyesight failed and the Bureau of Indian Affairs from time to time cut off his government allowance. The latter consisted of $10 per month in groceries doled out at the reservation store, with which Natches supported his mother, his sister, and himself. Reid, the geologist and amateur archaeologist who was closely involved in the excavations at Lovelock, acted as a good friend to Natches and wrote several letters to officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also called on the influence of Senators Tasker Oddie, Key Pittman, and Patrick McCarran to bring relief to the artist. Natches wrote to Reid many times, asking him to secure a copy of *Life among the Paiutes*, an account written by his aunt Sarah Winnemucca, and for help in having a copy made of a medal that had been presented to his father, Chief Natches, by Humboldt County in recognition of his aid in the Bannock-Paiute War in 1878. In addition, Reid in 1929 tried to track down a photograph of Natches's father that the artist had sent to Seattle for copying. Apparently, either the company or its sales representative was fraudulent, and the photograph does not seem to have been returned. Reid also helped the artist have other photographs of family members copied, and he twice secured new prosthetic devices to help Natches get around on his crippled leg.[9]

In what little documentation there is of Natches's life, there are few references to the nature and quality of his art. He painted landscapes of the terrain where he was born and lived his life. They had mountains, lakes, and sky and occasionally aboriginal Paiute dwellings. Natches lived in a "civilized" house on the reservation, according to the 1910 census, so it is likely he was documenting the old ways in his paintings, just as he had helped Kroeber document the Paiute language in 1914.

Four of Natches's paintings came into the possession of the Nevada Historical Society with the purchase of John T. Reid's papers and other materials in

1948. They are all labeled in the handwriting of the society's then director, Jeanne Elizabeth Wier: "Pyramid Lake, painted by Gilbert Natchez." Two are on canvas, and two on poster board. One has the figure *$10* penciled on the back, and another is signed "Gilbert Natches" and has *$26* and *1925* written on the back. Two are simply landscapes, one of Pyramid Lake with Anaho Island and the other of the Sierra. The other two have wickiups and brush sun shades, with a few people moving around, unposed. The people are too distant to have distinct features and appear to be mainly women and children engaged in daily activities.[10]

In none of the paintings has Natches used a particularly strong palette. The colors are all muted, tending to greys, browns, and pale greens. Even when he portrays a sunset and the clouds are brushed with rose and peach, the color is still somewhat dim. The sky, which the *Chronicle* writer noted so vividly, is usually rather grey and pale, as if the desert is covered by high clouds and the air is a bit thick. One more point strikes the viewer when seeing the four paintings together: The dwellings and the mountains are always in a horizontal line across the middle. There is, with one exception, a long, rather empty foreground and a lot of sky, either with prominent clouds or simply empty. The mountains, true to all of Nevada, are always present and are the predominant character in the compositions. The human presence is anonymous and almost negligible. Although the wickiups are rendered in sharp detail, there is little precise drawing elsewhere. Natches's brush strokes are boldly evident, and he applied liberal amounts of paint. But most details are only suggested. The large forms of mountains, clouds, and lake are what stand out. The over-all effect is pleasant and peaceful, putting the viewer into the land, but not too close to the major features.

Natches painted what he knew, the land around him. He lived a hard life, apparently with little complaint. He obviously loved his heritage and tried to do something to preserve knowledge of it.

NOTES

[1] Two spellings of the artist's name, *Natches* and *Natchez*, appear in various references. He signed his Paiute name in his correspondence *Natches*.

[2] *United States Decennial Census, 1910, Nevada*, Washoe County, 270; "Gilbert Natchez Dies at Stewart Indian Hospital," *Lovelock Review Miner*, 4 June 1942, 1:3; Omer C. Stewart, *Culture Element Distributions: XIV, Northern Paiute*, Anthropological Records, Vol. 4, no. 3 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941), 363.

[3] Stewart, *loc cit.*; *Lovelock Review Miner*, 4 June 1942, *loc cit.*

[4] Gilbert Natches, "Northern Paiute Verbs," *American Archaeology and Ethnology*, University of California Publications, Vol. XX, A.L. Kroeber, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1923), 245-59. Some of Natches's stories and songs also appear in *Notes on Northern Paiute Ethnography: Kroeber and Marsden Records*, Robert F. Heizer and Thomas R. Hester, with the assistance of Michael P. Nichols, eds. (Berkeley: Archaeological Research Facility, Department of Anthropology, University of California, 1972).

[5] "Scion of Indian Aristocracy Paints for University Professors," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 October 1914. It is likely that "Blue lake" is the now dry lake in Kumiva Valley, between Pyramid Lake and Lovelock.

[6] "Indian Artist Winning Fame on the Coast," *Carson City News*, 4 October 1814, 3: 3.

[7] "Painting of Pyramid Lake, Done by Paiute Indian, To Be Shown," *Nevada State Journal*, 29 March 1925.

[8] Lillian Borghi, "Arts and Artists," *Reno Evening Gazette*, 29 November 1941.

[9] Gilbert Natches File, John T. Reid Papers, Nevada Historical Society.

[10] The four paintings have temporary accession numbers 1988.1-4. There are no other accession records beyond the correspondence concerning the transfer of Reid's estate to the Historical Society. That correspondence notes only "four Indian pastels." The *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society* (Carson City: Nevada State Printing Office, 1948) 16, 19, records the purchase. These paintings were displayed for a number of years at the legislative building in Carson City.

WILL JAMES

(1892-1942)

Cheryl A. Fox

THE AMERICAN WEST OF THE LATE NINETEENTH AND early twentieth centuries was popularly characterized as the new frontier, a place where rugged individualism prevailed and where miners, railroaders, prostitutes, ranchers, and cowboys confronted the elements and won. Historians of the last several decades have concluded that most of these early images are myths, prevalent in the public consciousness but lacking in reality. Central to these mythic ideas is the cowboy. Hollywood sensationalized him, poets wrote about him, and painters placed him on the range among his cows and horses.

Will James, an artist who painted in the tradition of Charles Russell, was a cowboy. His familiarity with the open range, herding cattle, and breaking horses, allowed him to capture in his illustrations, short stories, and paintings an image of the gritty individual accustomed to life on the range. James always tried to capture the real cowboy, not the heroic one who lived in the minds of most Americans. It is interesting that James did not sketch his subjects live on the range, but from memory in the comfort of his bunkhouse, studio, or wherever he might find a convenient place. Some of his earliest sketches were actually drawn in the quiet of a prison cell. James lived the life not only of the cowboy he sketched, but also of the cattle rustler who is absent from his canvas.

James arrived in Nevada in 1914 from Montana, a state he claimed as his birthplace, although he was actually born in Canada—another part of the myth at work. Although James was a skilled horseman and employed at the time, a friend talked him into rustling cattle from the ranch on which they both worked. When the cattle turned up missing after the two had quit their jobs, lawmen were quick to assume their guilt. James was sentenced to twelve to eighteen months in prison, the first of which was in Ely, Nevada, with the remainder served at the Nevada State Penitentiary at Carson City.[1]

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James used the solitude to pursue what he loved as much as he did horses: drawing. The *Ely Record* in April 1915 revealed the talent of the cowboy artist: "His work is especially good on ranch scenes, and with proper training he would soon be able to do first class work." In August, after being transferred to Carson City, he took advantage of his talent in an attempt to influence the Nevada Board of Pardons to release him. In a sketch titled "A Turning Point," James depicts in three vignettes the past, the present, and the future. The past is represented by a forlorn cowboy, the present by a dejected individual in a prison cell, and the future by an aspiring artist. At the bottom he added, "Have had ample time for serious thought and it is my ambition to follow up on my art."[2]

Upon his release, only a month short of his full term, James began to drift again. It was several years down the road, after a stint in the army during World War I, before Will James finally began to draw seriously. Following the war, James returned to Nevada and arrived in Reno in July 1919, in time for the First Annual Nevada Round-up, for which he illustrated the cover of the program. He was paid $50 for this work, most likely his first actual sale.[3]

While in Reno, James became reacquainted with Fred Conradt and Elmer Freel, men he had known before the war. The three became inseparable, dubbed themselves the "one-elevens," and began staging broncobusting exhibitions. This enterprise did not last long as James was thrown from a horse onto a railroad track, sustaining a severe concussion. While he convalesced at the Conradt home, James once more found himself in solitude. Again he turned to drawing and sketching the ranch scenes and cowboys for which he would become famous. He also entered into a relationship with Alice Conradt, the sister of his good friend. At age fifteen, Alice was infatuated with the twenty-seven-year-old cowboy artist and encouraged him to develop his talent as a career. It was at this point that Will James decided to make art his life's work, and he moved to San Francisco.[4]

In September 1919, James enrolled at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and began taking evening classes, drawing during the morning and working in a theatre taking tickets in the afternoon. One of the most important benefits of his enrollment was the opportunity to meet the art establishment in the Bay Area. It was here that he met another cowboy artist, Lee Rice, who introduced him to Maynard Dixon and Harold Von Schmidt, an employee of the advertising firm of Foster and Kleiser. Rice, Dixon, and James spent time together, riding horses in the hills and talking about art. It was Dixon's encouragement coupled with his own dissatisfaction that prompted James to quit art school, believing that formal instruction was smothering his style.[5]

James's entrée to Joseph Henry Jackson, associate editor of the popular West Coast magazine, *Sunset*, came via a letter of introduction provided by an acquaintance who had been a fellow patient during the hospitalization in

Reno. Jackson proceeded to purchase a couple of sketches and, prodded by Von Schmidt, published a series of James's sketches in the magazine. The first series ran in January 1920 and was titled "A One Man Horse"; it was followed by "Keno the Cow-Horse: A Life Story in Pictures" that ran in November. What was to become an important expression of James, the Keno sketches told a story in both illustration and an accompanying text. It is believed that this series was the beginning of Will James's career in writing as well as drawing.[6]

With confidence and hope, James returned to Reno in July 1920 and married Alice Conradt. She was by then sixteen years old and had no idea of what lay ahead for her and the cowboy artist she had married. James's artistic career had ups and downs, and when *Sunset*'s editors believed that they had a sufficient backlog of his sketches, he and Alice decided to hit the trails again. He held a job in Kingman, Arizona, and then moved to Santa Fe to visit the art colony. It was surprising good luck that a couple of ranchers had the insight to invest in James's potential as an artist. Wallace and Ed Springer owned a ranch on the Cimarron River near Santa Fe, and they introduced him to Burton Twitchell, dean of students at Yale University, who was visiting the Springers on a hunting trip. With underwriting from the Springers, James entered the academic life in New Haven, away from friends, the desert, and Alice. Again James could not adhere to the regimen of art school. Alice joined him, and they set off for New York, where he tried to sell his work to *Life Magazine*. They were hopeful because of Twitchell's introduction, but the magazine refused to buy his work. Discouraged, he and Alice returned to Reno to decide their future.[7]

Once in Reno, Alice and Will James decided to move into a cabin in Washoe Valley that had been built by Alice's father. The two felt that this seclusion and environment would give James the motivation to continue with his artwork. It was during this time that Alice began to encourage her husband to write. In the fall of 1922, James began working on a piece titled "Bucking Horses and Bucking-Horse Riders," an illustrated story that included a dozen drawings. He submitted it to *Scribner's Magazine* in New York. The piece was accepted and James was paid $300 for his first illustrated story. This was a significant achievement, for he had finally broken into the eastern market.[8]

Working primarily in ink, James went on to produce six additional short stories that were published in 1923 and 1924, along with some forty-six drawings. Charles Scribner's Sons, publisher of books as well as of *Scribner's Magazine*, combined eight of James's stories into book form: *Cowboys North and South* was published in 1924 and brought rave reviews from critics and the reading public. *The Saturday Evening Post* and once again *Sunset* asked for James's work, and during 1924 and 1925 James supplied them with illustrated short stories.[9]

James had been used to working in ink, but many of the illustrations for the short stories during this period were done in pencil, a medium that produced a stronger and more powerful image, generally drawn on paper board. Author A.P. Hayes describes James's work:

> In the 1920s the Will James technique of drawing in pencil had become less linear, for the emphasis was on the mass rather than the line. He had learned how to suggest detail and capture the viewer's attention without burdening him . . . his work was permeated with a freshness and excitement. . . . He was invariably original and never derivative.[10]

James's second book of illustrated short stories, published in December 1925, was titled *The Drifting Cowboy*, and included forty-one pencil drawings and sixteen in ink. Also during this year, James began work on his first novel, a children's book called *Smoky*. Within a year, *Smoky* was reprinted eleven times and won the American Library Association's Newbery Award for outstanding literature for children. In 1929, Scribner's decided to include *Smoky* as one of its Illustrated Classic Editions. For this they needed color plates, and James created nine oil paintings for the project. A similar project was organized in 1932 around *Lone Cowboy*, a fictional biography that received the same welcome as *Smoky* and entered Scribner's Classics. *Lone Cowboy* required eight oil paintings, three of which are considered the finest of James's oils.[11]

Although James was encouraged early in his career to paint, he did not often work in oil. He produced only a couple of dozen works, and ceased work in this medium after 1932. They are considered excellent in draftsmanship, design, and imagination, all qualities that James exhibited in his drawings. A.P. Hayes claims that James's oils "can stand firmly with the best work in the Western action genre and of their era." James was extremely busy working on novels and sketching and probably did not have the time to devote to the more intensive work in oils. In addition, it is certain that James's alcoholism was affecting his work by this time.[12]

James moved with Alice to a ranch in Montana, where he became almost a hermit to his family and friends, spending long periods of time in his studio. He was very popular during the 1930s, was asked to speak at rodeos and give lectures, and was constantly on the road. This time was a difficult one for Alice as she watched her husband being consumed by drink, the primary reason that their marriage ended, in 1935.

In 1933, James had moved to Hollywood during the filming of *Smoky*. He was usually too intoxicated to be of much use on the set, drifting in and out of consciousness, which some people believed was a sign of brain damage. He died in Hollywood on September 3, 1942, of cirrhosis of the liver. He was fifty years old.[13]

In 1985 the Nicolaysen Art Museum in Casper, Wyoming, initiated its

publications program with an exhibition and catalog titled *Will James: The Spirit of the Cowboy*. This was the first major exhibition of James's work since his death, opening in Casper during April 1985 and travelling to the then Sierra Nevada Museum of Art in Reno in December. The catalog was considered the first substantial group of essays published about Will James as an artist and a writer. In the preface, the director of the Nicolaysen Art Museum said that, "James dramatically influenced twentieth-century American conceptions of the cowboy and the West," a judgment that describes exactly what James wanted to accomplish: to paint an accurate picture of the cowboy in the American West.

NOTES

[1] Anthony Amaral, *Will James: The Last Cowboy Legend* (University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1980), 1-5.
[2] Ely *Record*, 24 November 1914; A. P. Hays, "The Art of Will James," in *Will James: The Spirit of the Cowboy* (Casper, Wyoming: Nicolaysen Art Museum, 1985): 52.
[3] Hays, "The Art of Will James," 55.
[4] *Ibid.*, 56-57.
[5] *Ibid.*, 58.
[6] *Ibid.*, 56-57.
[7] *Ibid.*, 61-62.
[8] *Ibid.*, 64.
[9] *Ibid.*, 66-67.
[10] *Ibid.*, 68.
[11] *Ibid.*, 69-72.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*, 76.

BEN CUNNINGHAM

(1904-1975)

Ingrid Evans

WRITING ABOUT AN ARTIST IS MUCH LIKE PAINTING a series of portraits at various stages of his life. Not only the face changes, but the work—even the reasons for making art in the first place.

By all accounts, Ben Cunningham did not plan on a career in art until he was about twenty. He was more interested in music and is reported to have played the trumpet with proficiency. In fact, music appeared as a theme in several of his paintings.

Cunningham was born in Cripple Creek, Colorado, in 1904; his family moved to Reno in 1907, and one of his lifelong friends, Oliver Kistler, remembers being shown the house the Cunninghams were building on Cheney Street in 1910. (When the Kistler family later moved to Reno in 1922, Ben lived with them for a year and a half and apparently considered them his extended family, remarking that he felt more like a Kistler than a Cunningham.)[1] He was graduated from Reno High School and briefly attended the University of Nevada in Reno during the fall of 1922. In sum, Nevada was the place of his formative years, and he often returned after moving away.

But Nevada was not the place of his artistic development, even though this special terrain undoubtedly influenced his visual vocabulary, and it also later became the subject of several pieces. It is unlikely that he encountered much pertinent guidance in Nevada that would have led him to the visual arts. "While its setting may have been inspirational, the newly settled and isolated town of Cunningham's youth, with its transient population of miners, ranch hands and railroad men, was hardly a sympathetic environment for a professional career in the arts. Nor was there any tradition in the visual arts in the family."[2]

Cunningham's father was a medical doctor who joined the army during World War I. On a tour of duty he met, and later married, another physician.

Ingrid Evans is an artist and writer. She has exhibited here and abroad, and her articles have appeared in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, *Artweek*, *Artspace*, *Fine Print* and *Hand Papermaking*. A native of Berlin, Germany, she now resides in Reno.

He never returned home. Cunningham's mother worked in the Washoe County Courthouse for many years, and in 1924 she decided to run for state office on the heels of a scandal that involved three state officials (including the treasurer) who were convicted of playing the stock market with public funds. While campaigning, she was killed in an auto accident.

In 1925 Ben moved to San Francisco where he studied intermittently at the Mark Hopkins Art Institute (now the San Francisco Art Institute) until 1929. He then briefly returned to Reno to work for a mining company before moving back to the Bay Area in 1930.

The following decade is arguably the most critical of his art career. In 1930 he participated in his first professional group show at the Beaux Arts Gallery in San Francisco and started to be recognized among his peers. The 1930s are also the period of his major mural work and of actual employment as artist and arts administrator, beginning with the work at the Coit Tower in San Francisco in 1934.

"Funded by the Public Works of Art Projects (PWAP) this artwork constitutes one of the most innovative pilot federal programs of the New Deal."[3] Twenty-six artists and nineteen assistants worked on 3,691 square feet of murals for wages ranging from $25 to $45 a week. A look at this work today is to glimpse another era through the eyes of artists who responded to the sociopolitical climate of the 1930s. They identified with the worker and the man in the street, and capital and management were overtly and tacitly depicted as the oppressor. This theme prevailed throughout much of the work on the first floor, where Diego Rivera was one of the painters. A sense of unity connects the work of many disparate artists, attributable both to the master plan for the entire project and to the communal spirit among the artists themselves. Even though all were accomplished artists, some had little experience with fresco work (the old Italian tradition interpreted by Mexican artists), and these paintings became a learning experience.

Cunningham's fresco *Outdoor Life* is located on an upper level and covers an area of nine by twenty-two feet with easily read outdoor recreational scenes. With its mixture of modelled and flat painted surfaces together with repeated areas of patterns, it contains the typical elements of his representational work. "Such intricate patterns as the tree designs are reminders that Cunningham was a weaver and tapestry designer"[4]—a rare allusion to his interest in textiles.

After the work on the Coit Tower was completed, Cunningham became assistant art director for the Northern California Federal Art Project. He executed several other murals himself, including the ceiling for the Reno post office in 1937, painted in oil. To his dismay, it was obliterated shortly afterward. According to several accounts, the old retiring postmaster simply had it painted over, and there was no outcry by civic groups or any other move to save it. "He had stripped Nevada of a great piece of art, the most beautiful

ceiling I ever saw," lamented Richard Guy Walton, a local painter who actually saw the mural.[5] In effect, a lone postal official in the hinterland was able to implement the destruction of a work of art that happened to displease him. Could it have contained a shade of red? Could it have appeared un-American to a provincial bureaucrat? Such was the reception of Cunningham's work in Nevada in 1937. When an exhibition of his paintings was at last mounted here, it was the year 1973—by which time he had safely become a footnote.

Finally in 1939 Cunningham met Hilaire Hiler, who was to become a major influence on his thought and work. During the 1920s Hiler had painted abstractions based on extensive explorations in colorimetry, an area of inquiry that was put on a "universally accepted precise quantitative basis" during the 1930s.[6] Hiler sought a bridge between science and art with his visual and theoretical work on structuralism. "Structuralism is asymmetrical in design and employs sequential relationships which resemble those found in nature, and geometrical progression replaces contrast. . . . While it does not attempt to substitute science for art, it absorbs such studies. . . . It is made for contemplation."[7] By implication, such work has no intentional political or ideological content. Rather, color is used to transmit forms and sensations in space with the aim to create extra optical perceptions.

Hiler introduced Cunningham to Wilhelm Oswald's color theory, which ultimately played a significant role in Cunningham's analysis of the relationship between pigments and color perception.

> In the Oswald color system the color solid is a double cone—that is, two identical cones that have a common base with the central axis oriented vertically. [Oswald] considered that all colors of surfaces viewed under non-isolated conditions—that is, related colors—are mixtures of hypothetical "full colors" (surface colors of maximum possible freedom from perceived blackness and whiteness) with black and white.[8]

This concept was the touchstone for Cunningham's work, which is based on complex investigations of color to create illusions of flat surfaces or volumes, and on intricate interplay of light and shadow established with film colors and metamers, causing viewers to "see" or flesh out imaginary colors or spaces. "Cunningham's interpretation of art history was that Renaissance painting had dematerialized space and that Cubism had dematerialized form. His goal, he believed, was to dematerialize color, that is, to transform inert pigment into shifting patterns of light and shadow."[9] These ideas, first encountered in the 1930s, remained central to Cunningham's work and culminated in incredibly vibrant compositions.

"Cunningham moved from San Francisco to New York in 1944 and discovered that he was alone."[10] At a time when the personal expressive gesture was quickly becoming the raison d'être for an artist, Cunningham continued his increasingly complex work in hard-edge geometric, emotionally low-key

compositions. During the 1940s in New York he also began a long career as lecturer in several prestigious institutions where he passed on his color theories to students.

He had worked his way through existing modernist precepts before arriving at his mature style, of which *Corner Painting* (1948-50) is emblematic. Veils of geometric shapes on two canvases, placed in a corner, create the illusion that space extends beyond the walls. This effect was achieved again in a larger work, *Six Dimensions of Orange* (1965). In 1968 he took this concept a step further by painting the three panels of *Jewels of the Medici*, to be installed on a projecting corner.

With the advent of op art in the sixties he was invited to major shows, where it now became apparent that there was a similarity between his style and Victor Vasarely's. But according to his biographer, Cindy Nemser, Cunningham was unaware of Vasarely's work when he developed his own color compositions. "It was coincidental that he and Vasarely developed interest in similar problems in painting at the same time. Their paths crossed during this particular period but took quite different directions before and after this short interlude."[11]

This view was also expressed by Lawrence Campbell in *Art News*:

> In 1960, Cunningham saw a painting by Vasarely for the first time. In 1965, he was invited to exhibit a work—"Equivocation," now in the Modern Museum's collection—in "The Responsive Eye" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and for the first time he began to attract some attention. He realized that he was part of a world trend. Artists kept popping up from nowhere. People asked him how he managed to be so stubborn and hang on to his own objectives so long.[12]

Much of what Cunningham thought and said about art comes to us from the notes kept by his wife of thirty years, Patsy—she was his third, and last, wife. Some excerpts from these chronicles follow:

> To make a painting luminous is to create the illusion that the color gives off more light than falls on it. . . . The verbal language is inadequate to a discussion of painting because it forces a choice which leaves out the others. . . . It is often said that an artist must reflect his time. But if he simply comments on it, he adds nothing—a case of deja vu. His function is to enrich his culture by providing a definition of it.[13]

After Patsy Cunningham's death in 1988 two paintings were donated to the University of Nevada, Reno, both dealing with Nevada in totally different ways. *Pyramid Lake* (oil on canvas, 29 by 56 inches) was painted in 1941. It has been suggested that its realism was a gesture toward his brother, for whom it was originally painted. This stylized landscape, with its mauve and reddish brown modelled mountain shapes and patterned sagebrush foreground, is typical of Cunningham's attention to design and detail. *Nevada 2* (oil on panel, 22 by 28 inches, one of a series of three) was painted in 1971 and is basically an abstraction in orange and green with vibrating squares and

ovals. "The Nevada series would be Cunningham's last tribute to the desert country of his youth."[14]

NOTES

[1] Excerpt from taped interview by Richard Guy Walton with Oliver Kistler and Harold Downley, 25 September 1980.

[2] Cindy Nemser, *Ben Cunningham—A Life with Color* (Texas, JPL Art Publishers, 1989), 5.

[3] Masha Zakheim Jewett, *Coit Tower, San Francisco, Its History And Art* (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1983), 12. (Other statistics cited regarding the Coit Tower are from this source.)

[4] *Ibid.*, 4.

[5] Richard Guy Walton, interview with author, Virginia City, Nevada, December 1989.

[6] George Agoston, *Color Theory and Its Application in Art And Design* (Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1979), 43.

[7] Vincent Schmidt, "The Structuralism of Hilaire Hiler and Its Relation to Other Tendencies in Art," in *Hilaire Hiler and Structuralism: New Conception of Form-Color*, Waldemar George, ed., trans. by Edward Rodit and Anna Elisabeth Leroy (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc.) n.d., n.p.

[8] Agoston, *Color Theory*, 93.

[9] Nemser, *Ben Cunningham*, 17.

[10] Lawrence Campbell, "The Well-Tempered Color-Wheel," *Art News* (April 1969): 71.

[11] Nemser, *Ben Cunningham*, 54.

[12] Campbell, *Well-Tempered*, 72.

[13] *Art Students League News* 22 (March 1969).

[14] Nemser, *Ben Cunningham*, 84.

GUS BUNDY

(1907-1984)

Ahmed Essa

GUS BUNDY WAS A HIGHLY COMPLEX PERSON AND HENCE DIFFICULT to understand. His tendency to brood, for instance, gave the impression that he was a loner. He had the habit of contemplating, certainly, but isn't it characteristic of an artist to be constantly deep in thought? In any case, Bundy had lots to think about, especially his past. He was fortunate to have had a rich life, an asset for an artist.

Everyone who met him found him intriguing. Part of his complexity consisted of a series of contradictions. He talked and lived like a native Nevadan, and yet he was a native New Yorker, born and reared and educated in Manhattan and Long Island. He looked serene and settled, and yet he was a wanderer, an adventurer; and his idea of making a home with his new bride was to live in China during World War II. He roamed the deserts and mountains of Nevada as though a thorough westerner at heart, and yet one of his major influences was the Orient and his most treasured possession a collection of Oriental art, mainly Japanese.

August Bundy was born in New York City in 1907, a member of a large family. His father had a violent temper and made Gus suffer. This, too, is an asset for an artist, for it is now axiomatic that an unhappy childhood makes for greater creativity in later life. In Gus Bundy's case, it also made him more aware of human relationships, and he responded, both as an artist and as a teacher and a caring person. He demonstrated this awareness as early as high school. A fellow student, now a practicing physician in New York, recalls an incident of forty years ago when a bully threatened their mutual friend. Gus, the physician said, "very quietly but effectively called his bluff and put the bully in his place."

A teacher at the high school, impressed by Bundy's art work, recom-

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mended him for an opening at the Brooklyn Museum Art Students League. That was the beginning of Bundy's career as an artist. Another break occurred when he had the opportunity to attend the Grand Central School of Art. It was at this school that Bundy met the person who most influenced him: Arshile Gorky, described by an art historian "as the direct link between the European surrealist painters and the painters of the U.S. Abstract Expressionist movement." The classes Bundy attended were filled with violin music because Gorky wanted his students to express their feelings in their drawings. Bundy also had the added advantage of being singled out to accompany Gorky to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Bundy became a teacher early in his career. He taught at the Lincoln School of Art and, remarkable for so young an artist, at the New School of Social Research. The New School, in its Bulletin No. 5 of 1931, described his course as a design workshop, where the work "will be freely creative in any possible medium." The tuition was $6.00 a month.

Despite these promises of a successful artistic career and a growing reputation as a photographer in New York City, where he shared a studio with a friend, Bundy decided to give in to a wanderlust. In 1927 he worked as a seaman on the SS *Aryan*. He returned to Manhattan and during the Depression decided on a whim to wander around Mississippi. A severe bout of malaria put an end (temporarily, as it later turned out) to his travels.

The ensuing period was productive. His paintings were exhibited at the New York No-Jury Exhibition Salons at The Forum in Rockefeller Center in 1934, and a year later he guided youthful artists at the Boys' Club of the Navy Yard District in Brooklyn in painting "nautical murals" on the walls of the club's auditorium. Toward the end of the same year, according to a report in the New York *World-Telegram*, the Kamin Bookshop was "featuring the linoleum cuts of Bundy" in that season's original and "unusual Christmas cards."

Financially, it must have been a difficult period. In 1937 Bundy did a stint as a reporter for the Brooklyn *Eagle*. Two years later he was off to Japan, buying curios and shipping them back to the United States.

It was in Kobe in 1940 that he met and married Jeanne Amberg, a young Swiss woman who had been born in Japan and was still living there. The marriage changed his life in more ways than one. It made him seriously consider where he would permanently live. When Jeanne was expecting a baby, he decided New York City was no place to raise a child. He preferred the remote area where he had visited a friend in 1939 on his way to Japan—Washoe Valley, Nevada.

He settled there in 1941, even though it was only a small house and garage, without electricity or adequate water. The setting was both scenic and historical. The Sierra was the backyard, and the place had once been the town of Ophir, the ore mill of the Comstock.

He was one of the very few artists then living in northern Nevada. "Artists were regarded as very strange," he recalled in a 1980 interview. What made it more difficult for him to fit into his new surroundings was his additional interest in theater. Nevertheless, it was home, although during this period he spent some time serving the military in Maine, photographing a series of tests of winter gear that the army carried out.

By the time he moved to Nevada, he had developed skill in a variety of artistic endeavors. For him, painting was first, then photography. As his wife Jeanne put it, "He was in a sense a Renaissance Man—not content with just one form of creative expression. He painted, sculpted, made jewelry, did photography and worked with wood. He built things—he was fascinated with the process of creation."

Early on, he set himself a challenge: to thrust the work of art from its two-dimensional limit of paper or canvas and give it a heightened reality. The solution he came up with is evident in his drawing exercises. They consist of pages and pages of curves. For him, the curve made the line dynamic, giving it energy and movement. Its finest rendition is in the depiction of a flock of seagulls converging upon food on a dock, rendered primarily in the sweeping curves of their wings.

He also found the curves useful in painting abstractions. The most prominent features of his two outstanding abstractions—*Sunlight and Tree Trunks* and *Dark Movement toward Light*—are curves.

Although he found nature most attractive—another reason for settling in Nevada—his primary interest was in people. They dominate most of his art work—the sculpture and carvings, but especially the drawings, paintings, and photographs. What emerges in those three media is Bundy's ability to go beyond simple portraiture and delineate the personality of the subject, whether it is a laborer or fisherman in Mexico or a friend in Carson City. He continued to paint portraits into his later years, but whatever the technique—impressionistic brushstrokes or meticulous realism—the individuality of the subject comes through.

The only technique Bundy tried but did not pursue is Chinese brush painting. This is all the more surprising because in the few examples that he did, his strokes demonstrate that he had exceptional skill in wielding the brush. In the traditional practice exercises, for example, depicting a bamboo stalk or a curved leaf, Gus does apply the right pressure at the appropriate places.

Bundy's presence made an enormous difference to the art world of northern Nevada. He was always part of the nucleus of some group or another. He had an affinity for and was drawn to all creative people, not just artists. The group that met in the old brewery in Virginia City included such writers as Walter Van Tilburg Clark and Roger Butterfield. (Bundy wrote poetry, too.) Bundy, in fact, remembered fondly an art gallery on the main street of Virginia City. Later, he organized a portrait workshop which continued to func-

tion for more than two decades until he and Marge Means were the only remaining members of the original group.

His presence also made a difference in the attitudes toward wild horses. The photographs he took of horsemeat hunters rounding up the horses made the world aware of how cruelly they were treated. Not only did his pictures help convince lawmakers in Washington, D.C., to strengthen measures to protect the horses, but they were published in many parts of the world for more than thirty years.

Bundy's private self has remained undisturbed, which is as it should be, with one exception. To complete this biographical sketch, mention must be made of his sense of humor, which often saved the day. When he bought sixteen boxes of Tide detergent at a bargain price, and Jeanne said that there was no room in their house to store them, he quipped, "The ship hasn't come in, but the Tide has."

"Misfortune is opportunity," he said when things were going badly. And they often did. Which is why his summing up of his life in Nevada should be taken as a compliment. He said that he "has been successful here."

ROBERT COLE CAPLES

(1908-1979)

Marcia Cohn Growdon

ROBERT CAPLES WAS GONE FROM RENO BY THE TIME I encountered his elegant mixed-media desertscapes in 1978. Following Caples's death in 1979, I had the opportunity to come to know him, through the memories of his wife Rosemary and his many friends and through his own correspondence, notes, and writing. His art tells all who will look that he was a quiet, reflective man. He was also personable and had many friends with whom he maintained lifelong connections over time and distance, and with whom he shared his distinctive sense of humor.[1]

Walter Van Tilburg Clark, in an essay written for a 1964 retrospective of Caples's work at the University of Nevada, Reno, chronicled Caples's life and development as an artist.[2] Reared in New York City, Caples studied briefly at the National Academy of Design, and then at the Art Students League. He joined his father, a doctor, in Reno in 1924, later attending the Community Arts School in Santa Barbara. Returning to Reno in 1929, he set up a studio in the Clay-Peters Building on North Virginia Street. In addition to being a landscape artist, he became a successful portrait artist; but the portraiture began to bother him. He discovered that he was not interested in any particular landscape view, but in a landscape that was an essence of landscape, that captured, as Caples told Clark, "chunks of shadow, pieces of mountain, clouds and stuff." He began to draw Indians for similar, "impersonal reasons." The "sketches became less and less portraits. They sought Indian, not single Indians." The portrait business came to an abrupt end.

As an employee of the first Federal Arts Project during the Great Depres-

Marcia Cohn Growdon, a fifth generation Californian, adopted Nevada as home in 1977. She has an M.A. in art history from the University of Michigan and a B.A. and Ph.D. in art history from Stanford University. She served as Curator, and then Director of the Nevada Museum of Art from 1978 to 1987. Presently, in addition to operating the family's equipment leasing business, Growdon pursues occasional projects in not-for-profit management and art, teaches art history at the University of Nevada, Reno, and serves as Chair of the Nevada State Advisory Board on Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

Adapted from *Robert Cole Caples, The Artist and the Man, An Exhibition Organized by the Nevada Museum of Art* [formerly Sierra Nevada Museum of Art]. Essay by Marcia Cohn Growdon. Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV, 1982.

sion of the 1930s, Caples continued to draw Indians. In the second Federal Arts Project, he was an administrator, a position which put him in contact with many artists, continued his education, and helped him resolve the directions of his own art. An interlude at Indian Springs, near Las Vegas, was cut off by World War II.[3] After service in the navy, further time at the Art Students League in New York, and recuperation from a long illness, Caples returned to Reno. In the decade of the 1950s, Caples's painting came of age.

Caples's paintings from the 1930s are a fresh, pleasing assimilation of some of the major styles evolving among such artists as Edward Hopper, Stuart Davis, or John Marin, and even the regionalists like Thomas Hart Benton or Grant Wood. Views of Virginia City in all the subtle greys and roses of worn wood and faded paint show Caples playing with some of the spatial concepts first tested by the cubists, or creating an airless, timeless view of the village reduced to the very geometric essence of structures. He continued for some time to draw Indians, and the University of Nevada Press published two portfolios.[4] In the 1950s and 1960s he created elegant, haunting landscapes that portrayed no place in particular, but were precise distillations of the desert, mountains, and dramatic atmospheric effects experienced in the desert. Space is at once telescoped and expanded infinitely. The substance of the mountains and the volume of air are sucked out in favor of the essence of mountains and glowing atmospheric effects. Later, he painted a series of mixed-media works on board that dealt with the cosmos; they look like images of stars and galaxies seen through a powerful telescope, or like tracks of subatomic particles exploding across the surface of a powerful microscope.

As Van Tilburg Clark stated, "the attractions of line, form, light, shadow . . . not for themselves . . . but as ways of gathering in reality, took hold of Robert Caples very early." Caples dealt with those issues over and over in his art. He was a very private person, and few—not even close friends—ever saw him at work in his studio. We get glimpses of Caples at work from his letters. Always it is light and pattern that occupy him. Discussing his drawings for a mural of pictographs made from iron and designed for the school at McDermitt, Nevada, Caples says that it was to have been

> a series of iron shapes . . . affixed to a cement block wall . . . comprising one sunlit facet of a school being built. . . . The sun was an important factor in the planning behind the project. All the forms . . . were to have been attached by metal pins driven into the wall . . . all held the same distance away from the wall. [They] would have cast shadows immediately behind them, adding (I hoped) an element of "flat depth" to the dozen or more shapes arrayed along the fifteen foot high wall.[5]

Later, turning down a mural commission, Caples wrote friends, commenting on having recently seen a large mural (mid-1960s) he did not like. "It depressed me. I thought at the time, how pleasant if a pattern of shadows and white light could be projected on a wall, a thing that would emerge or de-

volve depending upon the amount of light in the room." He mused as to whether a lighting expert could control such a happening:

> I can see it in my mind's eye rather better than I can describe it—a pattern of cool gray shadows in a long pool of light—and then, with cool lights, warm shadows superimposed. . . . The last time we were looking about in the Metropolitan Museum I found the shadows cast by the exhibits far more timelessly compelling than the exhibits themselves. It's another world behind the glass cases—forms mingle and reinforce themselves in the most stately and untroubled way on the flat wall. . . . It made the guards nervous so I stopped staring. But there it was—the same magic; complexities projected weightlessly through empty space and coming to life again in regions of flat depth—in terms that met the demands of the wall as perfectly as a branch of bamboo painted by old Su Shih himself.

In Caples's studio there were hundreds of small note cards with quotations he found intriguing or comments of his own. Clark quotes some found on the studio wall: "The line has an infinite expression but limited duration—it has life-force but not life-spirit. The line is exclusive. The circle has finite extension but infinite duration—a living continuity—it too has life-force, but of a fluid kind. The circle is inclusive. The line is logical, direct, uncompromising. The head. The circle is adaptive, non-direct, emotional. The heart." On another card we find: "The Image is actual; the object is 'factual.' "[6]

Always, Caples is interested in pattern—in the pattern of our living, in the patterns of our world and of the cosmos. His art deals with pattern; he comes to it over and over again in his writing, in letters to friends, in his recreational pleasures (like chess), and in his book on the Potter.[7]

The Potter and His Children, an allegory of creation, is a work that engaged, even obsessed, Caples for many years. He began it at least twice in the 1950s, and there are a couple of finished chapters among his papers. After moving to Connecticut in 1958, Caples put aside all other interests to write and illustrate the book, which was published in 1971 by Carlton Press, New York. There are hundreds of preliminary drawings in Caples's estate, delightful ink drawings of animals, children, and the Potter, all in a freer style than the elegant finished drawings of the published text.[8] Many readers have been baffled by the book, which has a complex story, seemingly beyond the reach of a child. Caples thought otherwise. In a letter to an anonymous reader he wrote that he thought of the Potter's story as "an amiable Creation myth." He admits the story is simple and the pace deliberately slow. "Too simple for most." But the author/artist is working on many levels—delving in word and illustration toward that same core he sought in his landscapes.

Except for *The Potter,* Caples did not paint after moving to Connecticut in 1958. He did continue to reflect and write on the process of making art. In a letter to a Reno friend, Caples wrote:

> Something I heard (or read) many years ago: "a successful painting will share in

equal measure those elements of response that are both intellectual and emotional—the statement must be balanced between these two." One could hardly ask for a more agreeable arrangement of words, and they meant next to nothing to me for a long time. Later, much too late . . . it came to me that there was something lurking in there after all. . . . I'd been saying it but not seeing it truly. . . . I incline to think that the heart's image is the truer image, that those things "heard with the blood" are nearer the center of things than those things more carefully handsomed-up by the "educated" eye. . . . I've come to distrust the objective eye: it's not sufficiently involved in the deeper substratum of things. I think, if I were to paint again—which is highly unlikely—that I would rearrange the . . . equation referred to above and bend it in favor of the ancient inward eye—the one that was fixed on that inward Dragon-engendered light long before painters began to concern themselves with a tricky third dimension. . . . It's not that I would dismiss surface appearances. . . . It's just that one begins to sense the flowering orchard at the core—the galaxies of petals, the weight of summer, the dark branches supporting snow. . . . There is a great dance going on behind the mask of things. My obedient mind tells me that we all share a heavenly saucer, brimming with wonders and held aloft in empty space by the space of God. My head tells me that Nevada does not swing free of our globe, like a mountainous rat floating on blue air—but my heart speaks differently. I'm reasonably sure that sage does not squint on windy days or that thunder will [not] dislodge stone—I can only say that things feel this way.

Notes

[1] Caples's love of whimsy is perhaps a surprising discovery to those who know him only by his formal artwork. He used humorous drawings of animals to mock human foibles. His own signature sometimes turned the *R* into a fish wielding a paintbrush and the *C* into a palette wrapped around another little figure with a raised brush. He sent cards with funny doodles and quotes to friends. Caples and a friend designed a business card for the fictitious partnership of Mike & Nardo: "Exterior and Interior Painting; Stonework a Specialty. You Catch the Ceiling, I'll Catch the Wall. M. Buonarroti and L. da Vinci, Piazza di Medici—Evenings." The printer wanted to know if they didn't want to add their phone number. Caples declined without explanation. For illustration, Growdon, *Robert Cole Caples*, 6.

[2] *Robert Cole Caples, A Retrospective Exhibition 1927-1963*. Foreword by Walter Van Tilburg Clark. University of Nevada, Reno, 1964. No pagination.

[3] Caples's house at Indian Springs reflected his whimsy, being an improbable structure he constructed himself from leftovers, the roof anchored by driftwood. It was topped with a carving of a long reptilian creature of ambiguous origin, from which came the name of this magnificent abode, The Lizard.

[4] *People of the Silent Land, A Portfolio of Nevada Indians* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1972).

[5] Quotations from correspondence are clearly indicated. Letters are either held by their recipients, who wish to remain anonymous, or by the estate. Caples rarely dated correspondence. This particular letter is from the 1970s in reference to a study for the McDermitt mural now held in the Great Basin Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno.

[6] Growdon, *Robert Cole Caples*, 5.

[7] With the game of chess, Caples's art and recreation merge. He designed and patented two chess sets, economical and ingenious in their design. One, machined from steel, has conical-shaped pieces that fit inside each other. The other has wooden shapes that interlock to create a block, a three-dimensional wooden puzzle. See Growdon, *Robert Cole Caples*, 5, for illustrations.

[8] For illustrations, see Growdon, *Robert Cole Caples*, 12 and 15.

ZORAY ANDRUS

(1908-1990)

P. Ana Gordon

ZORAY ANDRUS, WHO LIVED AND PAINTED IN VIRGINIA CITY and Carson City during the twenty years beginning in 1937, was among the first professional artists in Nevada to concentrate on contemporary abstract painting. Like many other Nevada artists, however, Andrus was not a native. She was born in Alameda, California, on April 27, 1908, to a mother who designed hats and a father who was a contractor and brick mason. An only child, she grew up in the days when little girls wore elaborate white-lawn dresses and white stockings, but her amusements included playing with mud, which shocked the tidy children of her neighborhood. When her artistic talent became apparent during childhood, her father brought home clay from local potteries, and she designed and sculpted clay animals, which her grandmother fired, using her oven as a kiln.

Following graduation from Alameda High School, Andrus attended the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) in Oakland. She studied with some of CCAC's founding instructors, including Isabel West and Frederick Myers, and with contemporary painter Xavier Martinez during summer sessions. Sculptor Alexander Archipenko at Mills College and painter Hans Hofmann at the University of California in Berkeley were also her mentors. She was graduated from CCAC with a B.A. degree in 1930.

During the early 1930s Andrus lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she met and painted with a group in Berkeley. Through a job with the Public Works Administration, Andrus assisted Bay Area artist Joe Sheridan with the execution of the Father Junípero Serra mural at Piedmont High School. She also worked with the San Francisco Community Theatre, and later served as designer and costume supervisor for the Federal Theater in San Francisco, a Works Progress Administration project. Andrus's own paintings were semi-abstract, which she presented in group shows, including the San Francisco

Ana Gordon received a master's degree in history from Florida State University. Previously employed as an architectural historian, she is currently living in Alameda, California, where she is writing her first novel.

Museum of Art Annual Show and those at the Ansel Adams Gallery. She always signed her works "Zoray" or "Zoray Andrus."

Andrus was introduced to the visual possibilities of Nevada in the mid-1930s, when she attended a watercolor exhibit in San Francisco that featured paintings of Virginia City by the Britton sisters of Alameda. She first visited Virginia City in late 1935 at the invitation of her friend Muriel Goodman Corbett, a Reno High School art teacher. During this stay Andrus met her future husband, Eric Kraemer, a mining engineer. They were married in January 1937, and Andrus moved to Virginia City. Andrus and Kraemer purchased the Nevada Brewery, located in Six Mile Canyon, and the building became their home and Andrus's studio. Their only child, Peter, was born in Virginia City in 1943.

At the time Andrus came to Virginia City, Nevada painting was dominated by the Latimer Art Club, a group primarily engaged in traditional, realistic portrayals of landscapes. Although Andrus produced some conventional paintings for display, her more contemporary pieces and abstract representations were in stark contrast to the Latimer tradition. In 1940 Andrus was included in *Who's Who in American Art*, where she continued to be listed until 1966.

Near the end of World War II, Andrus was one of many artists who were painting on commission for Gump's in San Francisco, and when she opened her art gallery in Virginia City, she invited many of the Gump's artists to exhibit. The gallery was named Welcome Grant, inspired by some placards that had been left on the premises after President Grant's 1879 visit to Virginia City. In this brick building, located on C Street, Andrus showed carefully selected professional artists, and exhibited collage, weaving, pottery, jewelry, and contemporary painting. She rarely exhibited her own work. In addition to featuring work of local artists, the gallery sold art books provided by Spann's Bookstore in Reno, and thus contributed to the nascent artistic community in Virginia City. Because of the needs of her growing son, Andrus closed the gallery after two years, but by that time, other artists, including Robert Caples, had opened their own galleries in Virginia City.

Andrus coordinated one of the first life-model classes in Nevada, using a friend who had modeled for Salvador Dalí. Open only to artists who had studied professionally, the original classes included Nancy Bowers and Joanne deLongchamps. Eventually painter Craig Sheppard and ceramicist Edward Yates, both professors at the University of Nevada in Reno, attended these sessions, and brought some of their students. The Virginia City life-model classes ran from 1945 into the mid 1950s.

Andrus worked alone and with other artists on various murals in Nevada, including the Village Market in Reno, the Virginia City Movie House, and the Reno Veterans' Hospital. In the late 1950s Andrus contracted with the *Ford Times*, a periodical published by the Ford Motor Company featuring

travel itineraries, to produce a series of thirteen original realistic watercolors of Nevada locations. The watercolors were planned for publication, and included scenes of Ichthyosaur Park, the Sharon House Restaurant in Virginia City, and Monitor Pass. A watercolor of Piper's Opera House in Virginia City was accompanied by an article by Lucius Beebe. Also during this time, Andrus was exhibiting paintings in the Washoe County Library, the Nevada State Library, and the Reno Little Theatre.

After leaving Virginia City in 1957 Andrus lived in Carson City for a short period while she worked for the legislature. She later moved with her son to Mexico, where they stayed for seven years. Returning to the Bay Area in the late 1970s, Andrus settled in her hometown of Alameda in 1980. She worked with the Fort Mason printmakers in San Francisco, and participated in their 1987 group exhibition in Reno. She also exhibited and sold her work through the Oakland Museum Collector's Gallery.

* * *

Zoray Andrus was interviewed for this article in Alameda, California, in January of 1990. She had been ill during most of 1989, but enthusiastically agreed to discuss her years in Nevada. We met only twice, making tentative plans for the future. She talked about everything from watercolor styles, writing, and World War II to hopes, memories, and men. After both meetings, she telephoned with more thoughts about her life and art in Nevada. Vibrant, colorful, strong-willed, and honest, she stated that she preferred this article to project her professional rather than personal life. Zoray Andrus died in Alameda on February 21, 1990, two months before her eighty-second birthday.

CRAIG SHEPPARD

(1913-1978)

Sophie Sheppard

WHEN MY FATHER JOINED THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA faculty at Reno in 1947, he must have felt at home with the post-World War II students and former GIs, many from remote Nevada ranches and communities. And they must have felt comfortable with their professor's slow Oklahoma drawl and familiarity with rural ways.

Sheppard was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1913, only six years after that territory had become a state. His father, Sim, was a big man, extremely strong and fast on his feet. From him, my father must have inherited his consummate skills as a storyteller, and thus was able to leave his friends and family a legacy of Oklahoma frontier tales. From my grandmother, Mae, he received both his talent and early encouragement as an artist. She painted china as a hobby, and my father, as an only child, spent much time at her side, well supplied with art materials.

My grandfather and his cronies balanced these gentle pursuits by teaching my father to rope and to ride. As a young man, he was a cowboy and rodeo rider, even riding bulls in Madison Square Garden, and the cowboy mystique was to stick to him for the rest of his life.

Thus it was with some misgivings that my father entered college as an art major, fearing his choice would be considered less than manly. This was before the art world had shifted to New York, for Paris was still the cultural capital of the world. Universities in the United States trained young artists rigorously, formally, and academically. Entire courses—no longer found in university catalogues—were required on such subjects as anatomy and perspective.

There was, however, an added difference at the University of Oklahoma at Norman. Oscar B. Jacobson, chairman of the Art Department, had started a program there for young American Indian artists in the 1920s. So successful

Sophie Sheppard, the daughter of Craig Sheppard, is a painter living in Surprise Valley, California. With degrees in art from the University of Nevada, Reno, and Central Washington State University, Sheppard has taught at Sacramento State and the University of Montana at Missoula. She exhibits her work at Stremmel Galleries in Reno.

was that program, and so strong were its first artists, known as the Kiowa Five, that Native American art had become a major force on the Norman campus. My father became friends with the young Indian artists there, and they each influenced the other.

Oscar Jacobson provided my father with another major component of his future life—the professor's daughter, a beautiful young sculptor starting her own career, was to become my father's wife. Early on, they agreed that she would continue to sculpt and he would concentrate on painting, thus avoiding competition between them. They formed a strong working relationship, and their shared studio was always the core of our house. Smelling of turpentine and clay, it was the place where they worked quietly near each other. Always spare with words regarding his own painting, my father spoke more of his private thoughts about his work to my mother than to anyone else.

Starting married life at the beginning of World War II, Dad was pressed into service at Douglas Aircraft in Tulsa. The huge influx of unskilled workers brought with it the need for three-dimensional drawings to explicate the complicated blueprints for aircraft assembly. While challenging, the work at Douglas did not have the appeal of his prewar teaching posts at the University of Oklahoma and at Montana State University at Bozeman. Consequently, after the war years, he accepted a teaching assignment at the fledgling art department in Reno at the University of Nevada.

As a teacher, he excelled. His teaching reflected his belief that the language of art was not verbal but visual. He had horse sense. A horse could be led, not shoved, and that attitude pervaded his teaching methodology. With his superb drawing skills, he would "show" a student the way out of whatever visual dilemma in which he was enmeshed. This warm, kind man did not give negative criticism. As Jim McCormick has said: "It was almost impossible for Craig to say anything negative about another person." Instead, he was able to discern the personal visual path that a student was attempting to follow, and when the student lost his way, Dad would gently help him find the path again.

It must have been an immense challenge to build an art department in Skunk Hollow, on the eastern edge of the university campus, which was the location of the Quonset huts in which the Art Department of the 1940s and 50s sweltered in the summer and froze in the winter.

The Nevada desert was a challenge as well to this painter familiar with the brighter colors of the landscape of the Southwest. Free time away from the university found him exploring the Nevada desert landscape, learning to appreciate and paint its subtle colors, strong contrasts of light and dark, and, most of all, its immensity of space. Working mostly in oils, he reflected in his early work the strong classical training of the University of Oklahoma. Traces remain of a flat, decorative use of color derived from the Kiowa Five tradition and Work Projects Administration muralists of the 1930s, with the new forms

and colors of the Nevada landscape becoming ever more evident.

In 1955, a Fulbright award to lecture at the University of Oslo on Native American art provided both a change of scene and some comparatively free time to paint. Two themes in my father's work emerged from that year in Norway. His painting became more abstract, often using Norwegian fishing boats for imagery. Again, forms tended to be fairly flat, but the new colors he used were more vivid and were encompassed by stronger linear contours.

Hampered by the short days of the northern Norwegian winter, he developed a second theme. Still full of energy for work, when the light had faded too much for color work, he took up brush and sumi-ink drawing. Producing on a long winter evening fifty or more drawings, mostly of horses, he would discard all but a few. This extensive series is well known in Nevada, and he returned to it periodically throughout his life, seemingly never tiring of its development.

Following that year we spent an idyllic summer, roaming Europe and camping with our Volkswagon microbus, visiting art museums and collections, chateaux, castles, and cathedrals. I remember my father's excitement at seeing what had to him existed before only as art history reproductions.

On his return to Reno, his work became increasingly abstract, but this experimentation with abstraction was short-lived. Subsequently, he produced a powerful but little-known series of very large oil paintings. He called them his Dead Horse series; typically taciturn, he would say no more about them, although disillusionment with university politics at the time may have provided the impetus for these works. Stylistically akin to the Norwegian paintings developed in 1955, they were strongly allegoric in content. In each painting, a dead horse, belly distended, was figured prominently amid a variety of diverse settings. In retrospect, they seem more related to the apocalyptic paintings of the 1980s than to the abstract expressionist work prevalent at the time they were painted.

An eighteen-month sabbatical to France in 1960-61, provided another pivotal time for my father. Living first in a small village in Touraine, he followed that provincial experience by a lengthy stay in Paris, where, for the first time in his life, he was able to devote his full energies to painting. Retaining some of the structural elements of his prior work, he started a series of watercolors of French bridges and other French subject matter. Coming from the dryness of Nevada, he reflected the atmospheric contrast of a wet French winter in these semiabstract paintings.

Further experimentation with watercolor led to a series, in both watercolors and oils, that he was to continue for some time after his return to Nevada. Dreamlike figures predominate, almost engulfed in loose, glowing washes of color. Now occupied once again with teaching as well as additional responsibilities as chairman of the Nevada State Council on the Arts, he con-

tinued to paint, gradually moving from the lush watercolors and oils that he had developed in France to watercolors of the Nevada desert.

Commissions for illustrations from various presses—notably the University of Nevada Press portfolio, *Landmarks of the Emigrant Trail*—intensified his interest in the Nevada desert theme. He and my mother spent more than a year exploring traces of the old Applegate-Lassen emigrant trail across northern Nevada, and out of these works eight paintings were reproduced for the portfolio. Another sabbatical to Mexico allowed him to continue with watercolors similar to those produced for the emigrant trail series.

Watercolor is the medium for which he is most noted and in which he worked exclusively toward the end of his life. A transparent medium, difficult if not impossible to rework or correct, it seemed to suit his temperament. I have an image of my father in a pose that I saw him repeat many times. He is sitting on a sagebrush-covered hill somewhere in northern Nevada, not speaking, looking intently at the scene before him, and painting it in his mind's eye. He would look just as intently at a blank sheet of paper when starting a painting. I have often wondered if he saw a painting in its completeness before he ever picked up a brush. He would look and look, and then in one decisive movement, he would lay on a wash. Thus he would proceed until gradually, and most economically, a painting would emerge.

As a child, of course, I was more impressed with other things. Dad would gather a bunch of kids around him, hand one of us a piece of paper and a pencil with the instructions to make twelve dots on it, anywhere. Then he'd ask us what we wanted him to draw. And whatever we requested, he would draw for us, connecting all the dots. He never missed one. We thought that was pure magic.

I have never been able to see a professional person as an entity separate from that individual's qualities as a human being. This is especially true of my thoughts of my father: painter, teacher, and a warm, loving human being.

I know he was loved by many. One of his former students, Fred Reid, says it beautifully:

> Craig Sheppard was my master of art. It is probably trite to say he taught me almost all I know about art, but it is true. He cut me out of the herd, put me into the barn, and gave me my roots in art. For this gift, I will forever be in debt to Craig Sheppard. I know repayment will be made by teaching my own students the beauty and strength Craig taught me. Just one more goodbye, ol' boss, I love you so. . . .

I feel the same way.

RICHARD GUY WALTON

(1914-)

James W. Hulse

"THEY HAVE ABANDONED IMPRESSIONISM WITHOUT HAVING understood it," Walton says, working furiously to correct the error in the Virginia City studio-home where he has spent about thirty of his sixty years in Nevada.

Richard Guy Walton is not a typical Nevada painter, in spite of his longevity on the local scene. Having arrived in Reno in 1929 at fifteen years of age with his mother, who was seeking a divorce, he became fascinated with the place immediately. He continues to be enchanted by it, despite a growing resentment over the commercialism that drove him into semi-isolation on the Comstock. He began his experiments in painting in the tradition of the American Scene School of the 1930s and formed his aesthetic theories on the varied landscapes of the desert, and these set the conditions for his life's work—and his iconoclasm.

In 1934, when he was twenty, Walton went for a walk with the painter James Swinnerton on the outskirts of Las Vegas—in the region later known as the Strip—taking perceptual and intellectual notice of light and shadow beneath the scrub brush. A San Franciscan by birth, he had already been perplexed by the possibilities of light/shadow and landscape, and the desert offered new puzzles to his senses and intellect. But he was not content with yuccas, pinions, or the traditional cowboys, horses, and ghost towns as his subjects.

Walton's professional life has been a series of reachings-out and comings-home. At Swinnerton's urging, he studied at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, where his native talents found encouragement from several leading artists of the era. Back in Reno in 1936 under the sponsorship of the Federal Arts Project, he embraced the tradition of American scene painting in a manner that was more iconographic than representational. Enchanted by the Mark Twain stories, he painted four large studies, including *Tom, Huck,*

James Hulse is professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he specializes in European and Soviet history. His secondary field is Nevada history, in which he has published numerous articles and books including *Forty Years in the Wilderness* and the *Nevada Adventure.*

and the Dead Cat and *Aunt Polly's Sid.* They were intended for the Washoe County Library, but like so much of the painting of that era, they were shuffled aside and placed in storage during the war years. Neglected and damaged while in the custody of the federal government, two of them eventually were partially recovered and the segments transferred to the National Museum of American Art in Washington, where they have occasionally been shown.

During his youthful years, Walton had shows at the University of Chicago, at San Francisco's DeYoung Museum and Museum of Art, and in New York galleries. Despite invitations and temptations to establish residence near such institutions, he repeatedly returned to Nevada, where his aesthetic demon seemed to serve his talent best.

Nevada provided much scope for his restless spirit. He has explored the world of the Basque sheepherder and the Las Vegas Strip and distilled visual matter from them for his paintings. (Works of this genre, among others, were exhibited at the Reed Whipple Cultural Center in Las Vegas in 1982.) He produced murals for one of the Fremont Street casinos in Las Vegas in 1956, and one for the vestibule of the Federal Court House in Reno in 1968.

Cultivating a fondness for the camera over the years, Walton has made an extensive collection of his own photographic studies of Virginia City, where he built a house in the 1950s and where he and his wife, Vivian, continue to reside.

But he needed more scope for his work than Nevada provided. An aggressive curiosity about world and national events has persistently challenged him. During World War II he executed a chilling *Self-portrait of Hitler*, with a tyrannical eye and mustache, peering through a swastika. Frustration with the American political scene evoked cynical representations of *Senator Humph* (Hubert Humphrey) and *Arizona Patriot* (an impression of Senator Barry Goldwater as a candidate for president in 1964).

The explorations of his recent years have taken him far from the Nevada base at times. He has sought various locales for experiencing the interaction of light, water, and space—the Caribbean, Holland, Tahiti, and Hawaii. In his Greek Series he rendered *Odysseus Rex* and *Heracles in His Lion's Hood.* He has wrestled with the non-Euclidian geometry of the German mathematician George Riemann and with the reasonings of modern physicists (the Lorenz Transformation) and rendered them in paint.

The restlessness of his nature, the yearning to account in a two-dimensional format for the fourth dimension as well as the third, provide a basic clue to his work. In several paintings that flow from darkness into light (or is it in the opposite direction?) we are invited to contemplate the space behind us that we can never see, unless we turn, whereupon we create another void at our backs.

Walton has a skill with words as well as with paint. He writes often, long,

and intensely, sometimes following the stream-of-consciousness technique. "I am part scribe, part illustrator," he says. "We artists, in the past, were the current television. Now we have been displaced by celebrities. . . . I am essentially a documenter . . . I am part shaman."

As he spoke these lines (at the end of 1989), Walton was preparing for his second show in the Bay Area in recent years, and contemplating the role and responsibility of art in the twenty-first century:

> Faced with the impossibility of reproducing nature in paint, artists of the new century will respond to the call of science in ways we cannot imagine, the era's media not yet invented. New masters in the arts will confront possibilities that will boggle the human mind.
>
> In a twenty-first century of re-born thinking, the artist-type might not be the freaked-out oddball of recent days. Artists responding to the scientist level may experience a new spectrum of creative work. Will the artist of the twenty-first century be limited to eye-scope? How will that artist respond to inner-space and to the projections of outer-space? At either extreme lies a gamut of inspiration outpacing the bravest dreams. From an experience of disappointment as well as joy spanning three-quarters of a century, I face gridlock in the arts as well as an explosion of wonderment."

CLIFF SEGERBLOM

(1915-)

Dennis McBride

IF THERE WERE SUCH A THING AS AN ARTIST LAUREATE, Cliff Segerblom is one who could claim that title in Nevada. For more than fifty years, with his photography and painting, Segerblom has quietly chronicled the American Southwest, and particularly Nevada's vanished frontier, its mining and farm towns, its rivers, canyons, deserts, and mountains. As much as any other Nevada artist, Segerblom will be noted for preserving much of Nevada's visual history, for in many cases Cliff's paintings are all we have to remind us of what Nevada used to be like in off-the-track places like Jungo, Jarbidge, Cherry Creek, Goldfield, or Belmont.

Originally from California, Segerblom attended the University of Nevada in 1934 on a football scholarship, but majored in art. He married Nevada native Gene Wines, and when they came to Boulder City in 1938 to visit Gene's relatives, the Bureau of Reclamation offered Cliff a job as photographer for the recently completed Hoover Dam Project. Segerblom was the bureau's first official public-relations photographer, and many of his shots of the Boulder Canyon Project have appeared in such national publications as *Life*, *Time*, and *National Geographic*. His photograph of Hoover Dam's needle valves in operation is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

When he wasn't photographing Hoover Dam, Segerblom was loaned by the Bureau of Reclamation for other government projects. While on assignment in 1939 for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Segerblom documented the Havasupai Indian tribe in their Grand Canyon home. After he and Gene were married in 1941, they moved to Panama, where he photographed the Third Locks Project on the Panama Canal. Occasionally, they took trips to Guatamala where Segerblom painted street scenes.

But the glory of his government assignments came in 1969 with an invita-

Dennis McBride is a historian who is interested in the history of southern Nevada. A native of Boulder City, he has written two books on the history of his hometown and is currently working on an oral history surrounding the construction of Hoover Dam.

tion from the secretary of the navy to record the splashdown of *Apollo 12*. Segerblom's acrylic painting of that historic event is now part of the navy's official art collection.

Segerblom made his reputation in a variety of media, although his watercolors are the most characteristic. He paints in acrylics as well, and he's developed a couple of unique styles. Sometimes Segerblom will paint over a watercolor with acrylic, then hose it down. The tempera underneath dissolves and peels, and produces a striking effect of weathered wood and peeling paint which is perfect for his architectural paintings.

And about ten years ago Cliff began painting landscapes in what he calls his venetian-blind technique. These acrylics are painted one strip at a time across the canvas, which produces a highly stylized, refracted effect.

Cliff has not only an artist's eye for composition, balance, and color, but a storyteller's intuition for the revealing detail, which he uses in making unobtrusive comment about his subjects.

Political Circus, for instance, an acrylic painted in 1986, depicts the weathered wall of a building papered over with tattered campaign posters. We recognize the names: Bryan, Sawyer, Del Papa, Laxalt, Santini. What's revealing of Segerblom's sense of humor in this work is that the building is an abandoned gas station, and pasted to the trunk of a nearby tree is a poster advertising a circus clown.

The same kind of detail adds narrative depth to *Last Picture Show, Caliente.* The last film screened at Caliente's Rex Theatre, closed in 1976, was *When Legends Die*; the letters hang askew on the ruined marquee, and two cowboys stand together in the box-office shadows.

There is irony in *Big Mac,* which pictures the stripped-down wreck of a truck in an overgrown barnyard, and *Downtown*, where the sleek, contemporary skyline of Las Vegas rises behind a bleak line of Union Pacific boxcars.

Segerblom enjoys a little mystery, too. In *Blue Monday, Carson City,* he's painted one of his favorite subjects: Victorian architecture, in this case an elaborate window frame reflecting the blue light of early morning. Peering between the curtains inside, nearly invisible, is a face of androgynous character.

What the public does not often see of Segerblom's work, unfortunately, are his unusual portraits, to which he brings the same transcending quality that softens his inhospitable deserts and canyons. Seen in public only briefly before it was sold, *Patriarch* is an Eastern European orthodox Jew who looms in one side of the painting, supported by a cane. The same technique Segerblom has used to create the look of weathered wood in his buildings here produces in the patriarch's face a weathered and desperate character. And since the patriarch is the only figure on the canvas, his troubled expression is inescapable.

Cliff Segerblom has brought prestige to the Nevada art scene with his national and international awards, citations, and commissions, including the Governor's Arts Award which he received in 1984. It was a fifty-year retrospective of his work in 1987, sponsored by the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, which proved not only its great artistic merit but its social and historic value as well.

The following is an artists' survey conducted by NHS staff to obtain information about Nevada artists for our files. Please fill out and return to the address below.

Nevada Historical Society,
1650 North Virginia Street,
Reno, Nevada 89503

Nevada Art Research Project Questionnaire

Artist _____
Last First Middle Name Maiden Name

Birth _____/_____/_____ **Place of Birth** _____
Month Day Year City State Country

Death _____/_____/_____ **Place of Death** _____
Month Day Year City State Country

Education: _____

School	Location	Course of Study	Degree	Year	Notable Teacher(s)
School	Location	Course of Study	Degree	Year	Notable Teacher(s)

Private Instruction

Media (check all applicable media):

( ) Drawing ( ) Painting ( ) Printmaking ( ) Sculpture ( ) Ceramics
( ) Mixed Media ( ) Film/Video ( ) Photography ( ) Folk Arts
( ) Performance ( ) Site/Environmental ( ) Crafts ( ) Art Education
( ) Literature-Criticism/Essays/Books
( ) Other (specify) _____

Selected Exhibitions:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Recognition—Awards and Honors:

_____
_____
_____ continue on back of page

Public Art Collections—Museums and Galleries (include name & address of institution where possible):

_____

_____

_____

Private Collections (include name & address of person(s) collecting artist's work):

_____

_____

_____

Literature (originals or copies of articles or books about artist would be appreciated):

_____

_____

_____

Name of person providing information Date

_____

Address

May Nevada Historical Society publish portions of this information? (Circle one) Yes No

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