

Ross Moffett Recalls First Day In Provincetown At Golden Anniversary Exhibition Of Art Association

A record crowd attended the gala preview opening of the Golden Anniversary Exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association Saturday evening, August 1. Invited guests, members and friends of the Association thronged to see the paintings, sculpture and graphic arts produced by artists members of the past fifty years. During the course of the evening short talks were given by Hans Hofmann, Karl Knaths and Ross Moffett. Mr. Moffett is quoted:

"I believe my assignment tonight is to recall some of my early impressions of Provincetown, and I have written a few of these down. My first recollection of this town goes back to a day in July of 1913. I came here with Henry Sutter, the two of us being art students freshly out of the Chicago Art Institute. We arrived about noon, and the first thing we did was to engage a room with kitchenette in the house that stands near the north end of what is now Brewster Street. The present area of Brewster Street with its houses was then an open field. For our quarters we, together, paid three dollars a week.

To get our trunks from the station, Mrs. Drisco, our landlady, directed us to Si Young who lived nearby on Pearl Street. With Si Young we made our first acquaintance with a real unvarnished Provincetown character. We made our first acquaintance also with a curious, underslung, one-horse wagon which Si called a jigger. And we stood on the bed of the jigger as Si drove us down Pearl Street and around to the station for our belongings. On the way Si entertained us by telling of the great day in his life when dressed, as he said, "in high hat and everything", he had driven the carriage bearing Teddy Roosevelt from the laying of the cornerstone of the Pilgrim Monument.

After we got settled we, of course, started out to see the town. And we soon found we had come to a place such as we had never imagined, so different was Provincetown, at that time, from the middle-west towns we had known. We found the language somewhat unfamiliar.

In that day a plank sidewalk extended the full length of Commercial Street. Coming from the old Railroad Wharf and spreading over the street we saw a scattered crowd, which we learned was from an excursion steamer

called the Dorothy Bradford. Some of the younger of the Boston excursionists seemed concerned lest they be mistaken for country people, and they went out of their way to make disparaging remarks about what they saw. One of these sophisticates inspected the sidewalk, and, feigning astonishment, he exclaimed, "Look, it's made of wood." And another sophisticate, in a loud voice, said, "That's so they can take it in at night."

We followed the wooden sidewalk to its west end, near the breakwater. Commercial Street at that time was lined with many large trees. We marveled at the girth of some of the willows, and we thought these the largest specimens of this specie we had ever seen. When we met a pedestrian, which was not too often as we got away from the center of town, as likely as not he was a fisherman carrying home a codfish or a string of mackerel.

Coming back from the West End, we went up to Town Hill. From the hill we saw someone walking down the middle of Bradford Street wearing a black shirt and carrying a large palette. And we realized we had seen our first Provincetown artist. From the hill we also saw what we judged to be the Hawthorne house. It looked expensive and imposing, and we thought that, despite the misgivings of our relatives, perhaps we had chosen a profitable trade.

We then explored the east half of the town, as far as Kendall Lane, which was then completely flanked with fine willows. Returning, we saw on a building which formed what would later be a part of the Flagship Restaurant a sign saying, "Exhibition Within." We found this exhibition beyond the comprehension we could then muster, for it was not much like the art that had been held up before us at the Art Institute. Soon an energetic little man burst into the room to ask what we thought of his pictures. We found his name was Ambrose Webster.

When we got back to the street we heard an alarm of fire. The fire was not heralded by a synthetic squawk, as are our modern fires, but by the full-throated sound of steam whistles at the cold-storage plants. At the same time we saw men hastening towards the church door, even pushing one another aside in their eagerness to enter. Later we found that these were not

persons driven by a suddenly discovered piety. Each was merely trying to collect the dollar that the town would pay him if he were the first to pull the bell rope to add to the clamor of the alarm.

Earlier we had observed a fire house bearing on its door this admonition: "Persons not belonging to the fire department will please not trouble the fire engine." We now saw Si Young with his equipage, slapping his horse with the reins, hurrying towards this same fire house. And soon down Commercial Street, trundled behind the jigger, came the old steam fire engine, its kindling already ignited, its smoke stack already shooting sparks.

On getting back to our quarters, Mrs. Dirsko recommended Jerry Rich's store as a reliable place in which to buy our groceries and the kerosene for our lamp. At the store we encountered other features that seemed foreign. What looked like asparagus as, we were told, "Truro grass." And the words "jar" and "quart" without their "R" sounds were especially strange to our middle-west ears.

The next morning we appeared at the Hawthorne art class, where we were welcomed by the monitor, a big fellow named Gerrit Beneker. It turned out that Beneker, too, had gone to the Chicago Art Institute, and that with him we had, in a sense, found a compatriot. The artist we had seen from Town Hill the day before was also there. He told us his name was Edwin Dickinson. But Hawthorne we would not see that day. We set up our new sketching easels and began to paint, in all innocence, in the manner in which we had been instructed at the Art Institute.

So, in brief, were the afternoon and the morning of our first day in Provincetown and the world of Provincetown art."

Art Association's Golden Anniversary Exhibit A Half Century Of Provincetown Painting

This summer the Provincetown Art Association celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. To mark the occasion the Art Association has assembled an exhibition of artists who have been closely associated with the association from its founding in 1914 to the present day. The Golden Anniversary Exhibition offers a rare opportunity to see the works of Provincetown's artists of the past and present. It takes the onlooker back through a half century of this art colony's history.

The Anniversary Show, covering as it does five decades of art and artists, represents many styles of painting ranging from realism to impressionism to the abstract. Various mediums of painting are on view. There are oils, watercolors, caseins, collages, etc. There are also some fine prints, drawings and sculpture.

Attendance at the Golden Anniversary Exhibition is surpassing all records with well over 100 paid admissions each day. The first sale was made the opening week. Jim Forsberg's "By the Sea" was purchased by Augustus Silva of New Bedford, Mass.

The artists represented have been closely associated with the Art Association over the years, many from its inception. Among the exhibitors are artists who have been presidents, vice-presidents, directors and other officers of the institution. Their dedication helped guide the Art Association over many rough times. Among them are the following.

Thomas Blakeman

Thomas Blakeman was president of the Art Association from 1938 to 1943. He took office at a low ebb in the Association's history when dissension between the conservative and modern ranks was threatening the continued growth of the institution. On assuming office Mr. Blakeman stated: "I feel that since Provincetown is one of the largest Summer art colonies, with a long established Art Association of national repute, there is a splendid opportunity here to have the finest exhibition of paintings in the United States. There are artists of talent and reputation representing all the various schools. However we need and hope to get the cooperation of all the artists." It was Thomas Blakeman's ability to deal with people in a quiet and reasonable way that helped bring back a spirit of cooperation among the opposing groups.

The Art Association also received a boost at this time with the plans for the addition of the Charles W. Haw-

thorne Memorial Gallery. The idea had been proposed in 1930 by George Elmer Brown, but not much was done about it until 1938 when Thomas Blakeman revived the idea and took chairmanship of the Hawthorne Memorial Committee. Construction of the Memorial Gallery began in November of 1941 just before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Dedication of the Gallery took place July 18, 1942 in a ceremony presided over by President Blakeman.

Charles W. Hawthorne

Charles W. Hawthorne is credited with the beginnings of Provincetown's summer art colony. His Cape Cod School of Art was the first school of painting in Provincetown. He was one of the founding vice-presidents of the Art Association and helped guide its early years. Ted Robinson well expressed the feelings about him when in 1932 a bronze bust of Mr. Hawthorne by Albin Polasek was presented to the Art Association.

"It is fitting that the memory of this great painter and teacher should in this place be honored by those who owe so much to him in skill and inspiration. It is fitting that acknowledgement be made here in his home of his enduring influence, his sound and unerring mastership . . . Charles Hawthorne belongs to the world, now, rather than to our community; to the ages, rather than to our time. This tribute of those whose privilege it was to come into personal contact with him is a tribute of pride. Hawthorne made Provincetown known to the world; to the world we give him proudly, even while we treasure our special possession of him in our hearts."

Early Association Artists

There are many other names out of Art Association history in the current exhibition. Many of them were an integral part of the Association's development. Among them are four members of the Art Association's first art committee: Edwin W. Dickinson, Oscar N. Geibrich, Gerrit A. Beneker and Oliver N. Chaffee.