

THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN ART

During the first decades of the 18th century the English colonies in America began to display a unique and vigorous life of their own. In this atmosphere of new life we find the beginnings of what we today recognize as American art.

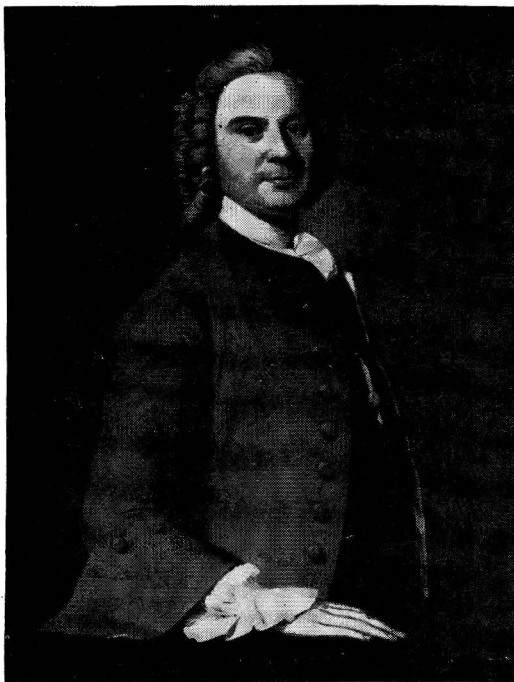
The first colonizers were pioneers in every sense of the word. Most of their efforts were toward establishing themselves in a new and many times inhospitable land. They were, through necessity, concerned with solving their immediate physical and spiritual problems, and art did not fall into this category. This is not to imply a complete lack of interest. Hundreds of portraits exist of people who lived in America before 1700, but these portraits were either done during visits to England or by European artists who made short trips to the colonies. With the exception of the work of a few untrained limners, the art of the first one hundred years was imported.

By the early 1700's this picture was changing. A strip of land 30 to 100 miles from the coast had been settled; most of the areas had been established long enough for the societies to have a definite feeling of permanence and continuity. Since they were no longer exclusively concerned with conquering a wilderness, the society could afford the



HANNAH GREENLEAF (C. 1765)

BY JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY



JOHN ROWE

BY ROBERT FEKE

luxury of specialists: merchants, professional men, craftsmen, and even scholars. Less tangible, but possibly more important, the heterogeneous groups that had settled the colonies recognized their common problems and aspirations. Over a period of years they began thinking of themselves as Americans. They were loyal Englishmen—but Englishmen of a special variety. The colonies became a social entity with commercial, social, and intellectual activities distinctly their own—the proper climate for the development of a national art.

Although the intellectual atmosphere must be correct, and the patrons must exist, the story of art is basically a story of artists. The Gilcrease collections contain the works of three artists, who, although they certainly do not tell the whole story, are ideally representative of the period of the beginnings of an American art.

The first of these, John Smibert, was typical of the men who took the initial steps in this development. He was an Englishman who moved to America—Boston to be specific—at what was for the times the fairly advanced age of forty-one. He had studied painting in England and Italy, and had been a successful portrait painter in London for several years. In London he was probably classed as a competent second-rater—a practitioner of the Baroque

style that was seeing its dying days in Europe. Smibert was on his way to Bermuda and a teaching job there when he first landed in Rhode Island in 1729. When he found the job had not materialized, he blithely moved to Boston where within one year he had held an exhibition of his paintings, married a local woman, and built himself a studio where he was to act as portrait painter to the bustling community that was his new home.

Boston was impressed. Smibert represented a Continental elegance that was greatly treasured in this provincial area. Bostonians felt this carrier of the intellectual and artistic styles of Europe added lustre to their city. His first exhibition was hailed as a great step forward in achieving a truly civilized status in the colonies. However, Smibert shortly found there was a difference between the Bostonian's enthusiasm over his presence and their willingness or ability to pay for his services. To supplement his income as an artist he ran a shop that sold engravings, frames, and artist's supplies. Nevertheless, over the period of 21 years that Smibert lived in Boston he painted many portraits that are important in our chronology. Working in the style he had known in Europe, Smibert's portraits were intended to convey a feeling of aristocratic dignity, an intention that well suited many of the merchants of Boston. However, as his work progressed in America he apparently absorbed some of the philosophy of this incipient democracy, for his work moves away from the aristocratic ideal toward a blunter and perhaps more honest realism. He becomes less interested in background, atmosphere, and details of dress, and more interested in conveying an honest interpretation of the personality involved. Smibert influenced the people of New England by arousing an interest in art and by making patrons of them. But at the same time New England influenced Smibert: he became an American during his twenty-one years here and his work reflects this.

Smibert's position in the story of early art in America goes beyond the actual paintings he did, and actually serves to lead into the second phase. It has been mentioned that Smibert came to America with the intention of becoming a professor in a university. He brought with him prints, copies of paintings, and casts of sculpture that were to be used in the school. They were instead displayed in Boston during his life and for some time afterwards. In this age of mass communication it is difficult to fully appreciate the impact Smibert's copies of the old masters' works must have had on the untraveled Bostonian. Art was known only as it could be seen in engravings or the works of local, untrained artists, and Smibert's copies opened a new world. The opportunity to see Smibert work and to observe his European copies of paintings done in the prevailing style certainly had a tremendous influence on the artists who came after him—the generation of American born artists.

Smibert and his contemporaries had developed an interest in art and proven that there were patrons in New England; it is natural that native-born artists would appear. Possibly the most interesting of these was Robert Feke. Little is known of Feke's life; he simply appears as the artist of a portrait done in 1741, and is known as an active artist until he drops from sight in 1750. The important known facts are that he was native-born, and apparently had no formal education as a painter. A man of tremendous native talents, he presumably just announced he was available as a portrait artist and was able to carry it off successfully. However, no artist works in a vacuum regardless of how little training he has had, and a good deal of Feke's style seems to have been derived from Smibert. He certainly mastered the technique of making his subjects appear to be the serene and sophisticated aristocrats of the Baroque ideal; in fact, in this respect he probably outdid the man he imitated. Furthermore, Feke must have seen Smibert's collection of

European works, which under the circumstances might have had some influence on Feke's decision to become an artist.

Probably because of his lack of background and the short length of his career, Feke was not an innovator. He carried on the tradition he had apparently learned from Smibert and the other European imports of the day, but his native talents allowed him to develop these ideas to an amazing degree of refinement very early in his short life as an artist. This in itself is important, for Feke's accomplishments are representative of a number of other artists; these were the native-born Americans who absorbed and further spread the European concepts of art throughout the colonies. They were the pioneers.

The painter of this period who reached the heights of accomplishment to become the first great American artist was John Singleton Copley. Copley's background was as nearly ideal as was possible at this time. The home of his step-father, Peter Pelham, an English born engraver, was a gathering place for New Englanders interested in the arts, and lively discussions of the philosophy and techniques of art were a part of young Copley's environment. This background helped Copley decide on a career in art and acquire a good technical foundation at an early age. By 1756, when he was 18 years old, Copley was producing some well-painted portraits, presumably commissioned by the subjects.

Because of his situation, Copley was able to draw on practically all of the local resources for inspiration and information. He learned his art from many sources. As the art historian Virgil Barker says "... his heights of achievement rise with historic and stylistic naturalness from the foothills of his predecessors and contemporaries."

The outward forms of his paintings were derived from other art-

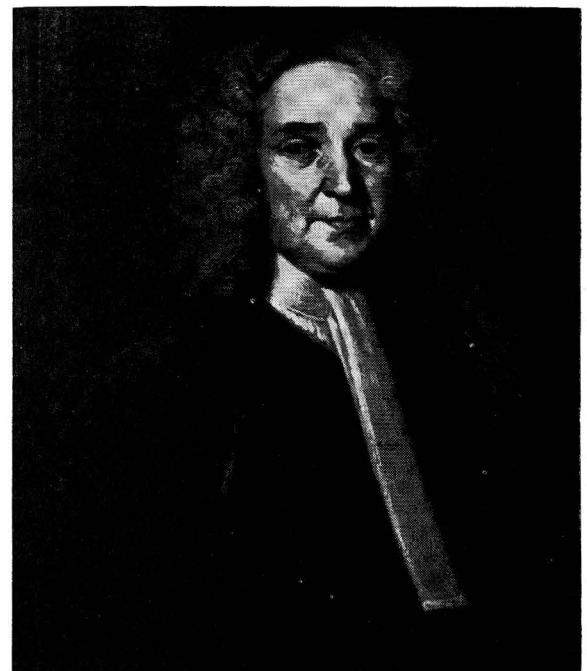
ists and were further limited to what his patrons wanted, but within the confines of these forms Copley's genius flourished. Copley's talent was such that he was able to master very quickly what he considered important in technique and he was able to devote himself to making a portrait something more than a simple representation of the features of a person. In his hands the portrait becomes an intense and revealing character study. In his letters Copley complains that his patrons desired a likeness and were not capable of appreciating anything more than this. Although it disturbs Copley, this is probably one of the keys to his success. His patrons wanted a likeness but did not demand flattery as did most of the English patrons of the time. Because he did not need to concern himself with improving the appearance of the sitter, Copley's portraits are uncommonly honest. He could ignore the veneer of gentility the English artist had to give to his subjects and could concentrate on the features and gestures of the subject which he felt honestly conveyed the personality of the individual with whom he was dealing. This characteristic of direct and forceful character analysis, combined with a superb skill in

handling colors and textures, makes the Copley portraits the high spot of Colonial American art; his portraits were not surpassed for many years.

At the end of 18 years as an active artist, Copley was in a position to feel satisfied with his achievements. He was a financial success, a respected figure in his community, and certainly the best artist in America. He, in fact, lived with a constant sense of frustration and isolation. He felt that in order to fully utilize his talents he had to go to Europe where he could see the works of the old masters and confer with the great contemporaries. Consequently, in 1774, Copley moved to England. Here he was strongly influenced by the important personalities of the art world, particularly Benjamin West, and in a sense stops being part of the story of American art. But this action of the man who reached the pinnacle of American art during the colonial period is again representative of the larger picture. For years to come, many of the important artists were to experience this feeling of isolation and need to know the great art centers of Europe that drove Copley to England, and the story of American art was to revolve around men who began their careers as students in Europe. C.C.P.

JOHN
SMIBERT'S
PORTRAIT OF
JOHN COTTON
(1693-1757)

*From Gilcrease
Collections*



NEO-CLASSIC ART IN

In the evolution of American art Benjamin West exerted a tremendous influence. He left America in 1760 and settled in England where he became painter to the King. The young art students of America who went to England for study were received warmly and helped liberally by him. West represented the school of neoclassicism which rose to dominate the continent in the last part of the eighteenth century. This school emphasized form and drawing rather than color and looked upon the classic works of ancient Rome and Greece as the ideal. It followed naturally that the artists sought to paint subjects of ancient history or to imitate the style of the ancients in painting historical scenes of more recent times. The influence of this neoclassicism is evident in a study of the American painters of the period who received their training in Europe.

Two paintings are featured in the Early American Room of the Gilcrease Institute which illustrate this influence, *Charles Carroll of Carrollton*, a portrait by Thomas Sully, and *Washington and Lafayette at Brandywine*, a history painting by

John Vanderlyn. A comparison of the lives and works of Sully and Vanderlyn reveals the interesting impact which American society had upon the work of artists trained in neoclassic ideals.

Thomas Sully began painting professionally at the age of seventeen and studied under Gilbert Stuart and John Wesley Jarvis in America before going to Europe. He was already a successful portraitist when he went to England for study under Benjamin West. While there he became attracted by the work of Sir Thomas Lawrence and received instruction from this great portrait master. Returning to America Sully eventually settled in Philadelphia and continued his successful career for more than fifty years. In this long period he painted over 2,000 portraits and some 800 history paintings, miniatures and "fancy paintings." In his history paintings, such as *Washington at the Passage of the Delaware*, Sully's art shows the neoclassic influence derived from West. But Thomas Sully's great work is in portraits and here his mentors were Lawrence and Stuart. Sully is an example of the American painter whose technique clearly shows the European influence on American art in the Federal Era of our country's history.

John Vanderlyn presents an interesting but tragic contrast to Sully. The latter was very popular and successful during his lifetime and has maintained the same high rank since his death nearly a hundred years ago. Sully has long been recognized by critics, art historians and the American public as being one of our foremost portrait painters. Vanderlyn started with high promise, adopted the neoclassic concept, rose rapidly to fame and popularity and then slowly faded as an artist both in the quality of his work and in his popularity. He died in poverty, embittered and almost forgotten. Only today is his true stature being recognized.

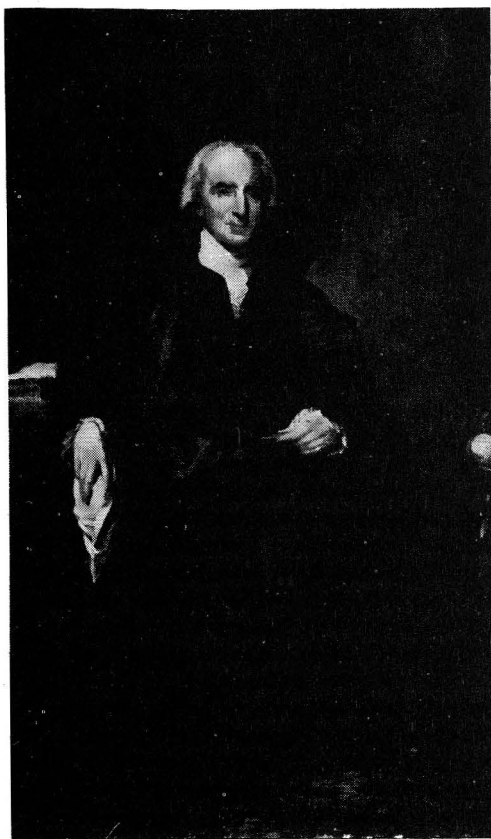
There are perhaps two reasons for the success of the one artist and the apparent failure of the other. American interest in classical antiquity and its rigid rules of art diminished rapidly and native paint-

ers reflecting the native experience and technique came to attract and thrill Americans. Under such circumstances Vanderlyn and his neoclassicism suffered, but Sully, whose work possessed an elegance tempered by a certain delicacy and sentimentality so characteristic of Sir Thomas Lawrence, pleased the American. The second reason for the contrasting fates of the two artists probably lies in the nature of the personality, character, and working techniques of the two men. Sully had a pleasing personality and a kind, considerate manner. Vanderlyn's personality was more inclined to be irascible and he worked slowly and laboriously. Also Vanderlyn had tendency toward resentment and an inability to adapt his art and technique to the requirements of the time. He seemed to lack the vigorous optimism and force of spirit that enables the individual to overcome adversity.

Vanderlyn was born in 1776 and showed such early promise that he became the protege of Aaron Burr who sent him to Stuart. When the American master advised Vanderlyn to go to Europe for advanced study Burr financed his training in France. Although Vanderlyn did not go to England he also was exposed to the neoclassic school since David, one of his teachers, was an exponent and in fact Vanderlyn became much more the neoclassicist than did Sully who studied under West.

Vanderlyn skyrocketed to fame when Napoleon awarded him a medal for his *Marius on the Ruins of Carthage*, a typical neoclassic depiction of a scene of ancient history, painted in Rome in 1807, and exhibited at the Salon in Paris in 1808 where it attracted the eye of the Emperor. In 1815 Vanderlyn returned to America and three years later opened his panorama show in New York at the Rotunda, a building erected for that purpose. These panoramas were extended views of famous cities, landscapes, and European battle scenes. But it was an expensive operation and did not realize the profit for Vanderlyn that he had expected.

Vanderlyn's true talent lay in portraits but even here he did not meet



CHARLES CARROLL THOMAS SULLY
From Gilcrease Collections

AMERICA

anything like the success won by Sully. Yet, even so, the images we know today of many famous Americans come from the portraits done by him. But he often required some sixty sittings and worked so slowly that he received fewer and fewer commissions. The later years of his life were sad ones; his talents waned, some of his commissions were intrusted to inferior assistants, and he passed from the forefront of American art to die a lonely death in 1852.

On the other hand Sully allowed his talent for portrait work to consume most of his time and he painted the great socialites and notables of the time. Among them were Lafayette, Queen Victoria and Thomas Jefferson. His work had a result pleasing to the patron and to the public; it reflected his English training but in a manner which the American could understand and enjoy. Sully's greatness and permanence as an American artist lies in his veering away from West and neoclassicism while at the same time retaining from his European training the lessons that permitted him to perfect his talents. He represents a transitional phase in the evolution of American art, whereas Vanderlyn remained traditional and European.

Charles Carroll, the subject of the Sully painting illustrated here, deserves more attention by Americans than he has received. He came from an able family which left its imprint on the history of Maryland in many ways. His cousin, John Carroll, was the first Catholic bishop in the United States. His grandfather came to America in 1689 as a Catholic who felt it wise to leave England upon the accession of William and Mary to the throne. He settled in Maryland, a colony founded by Lord Baltimore as a haven for Catholics, and before long the family owned large tracts of land in their new homeland.

Charles Carroll, III, or, as he preferred to call himself, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, was born at Annapolis in 1737 and received his education in France under the instruction of the Jesuits. After further study in England in the field of law, Carroll returned to Maryland in



WASHINGTON AND LAFAYETTE AT BRANDYWINE

JOHN VANDERLYN

From Gilcrease Collections

1765 to practice law and manage his estate. In 1773 Carroll rose to prominence when he attacked the right of the government to tax all its citizens, whatever their religious tenets, for the support of a state church. He expressed his opinions in a series of letters or articles in the Maryland Gazette under the pen name of First Citizen. His cause was the popular one and he seemed to become in reality Maryland's first citizen.

Being a Catholic, Carroll was disenfranchised and barred from political office. Nevertheless he maintained his prominence and his influence grew. He was an advocate of independence and became a member of the Committee of Correspondence for Maryland in 1774. In July, 1776, shortly after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, he was elected to the Continental Congress and was present at the signing of the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776.

Although he turned down a position as delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he campaigned for the adoption of the Constitution. He became Maryland's first United States Senator and later served in the state senate for many years. Carroll was a Federalist and opposed the war of 1812. He was a director of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and participated in the ceremonies marking the beginning of the construction of that railroad in

1828. He became the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence and died in Baltimore in 1832.

Carroll belongs to that small group of men who established the splendid political structure by which American civilization has been able to develop along essentially liberal principals devoted to the promotion of human rights.

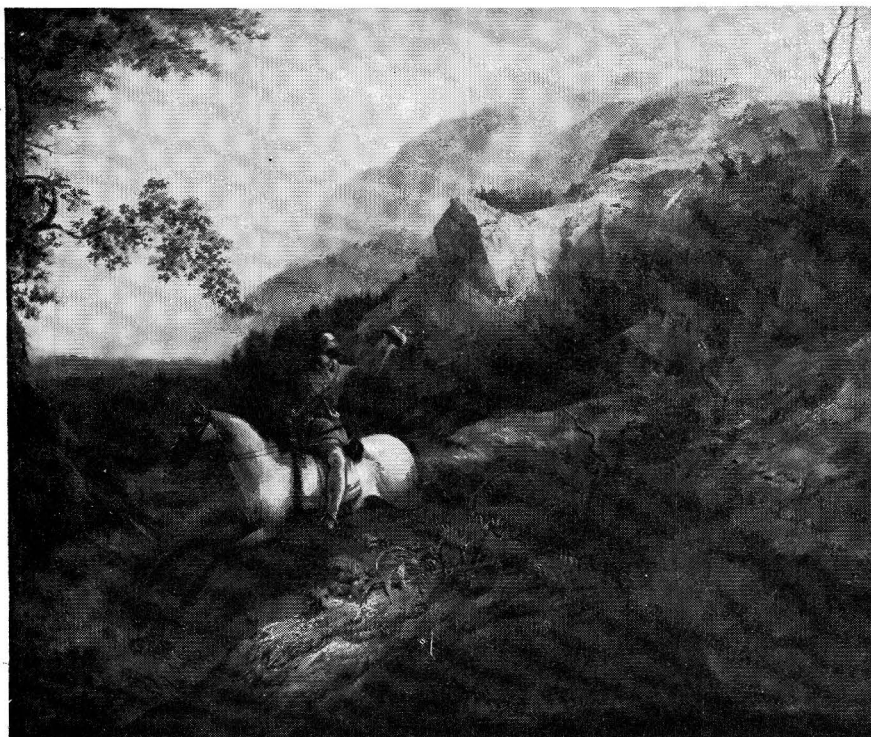
The John Vanderlyn painting is an excellent example of the neoclassic rendition of an incident from the pages of American history. *Washington and Lafayette at Brandywine* concerns itself with the Battle of Brandywine fought between the British under General Howe and the colonists under Washington at Brandywine Creek, near Philadelphia, in September, 1777. In this engagement Lafayette, who had arrived in America in April as a young man of twenty, distinguished himself for his bravery and won the admiration and life long friendship of George Washington.

The Gilcrease paintings by Thomas Sully and John Vanderlyn are excellent examples of the typical styles of the two artists. The Vanderlyn shows the neoclassic approach to historical painting, a mode which underwent considerable modifications when employed by American artists, and the Sully shows a romantic strain and an elegance that has permanent appeal. M.W.

The Revolution had been won and its heroes had been dutifully celebrated; the colonists were now men of a growing nation and they were proud of their land. The Articles of Confederation had been supplanted by a stronger centralized government in the Constitution; and the men of the new nation had gained a Bill of Rights and an increased awareness of the bounty of their rich country. More and more they lost their desire to be like the lords and ladies of the "mother" country; portrait artists no longer found it necessary to paint their sitters against a background contrived to resemble an English country manor. The native population was growing and as it did, America became less the extension of the culture of Europe and more the inimitable product of a great mixing of peoples on a broad land filled with the ripe hoardings of an ancient Nature. It was no wonder then that the artists of this America soon found their voices and began to express themselves re-

garding the beauties of this lush and sometimes wild and secret land.

Very few landscapes were done in America prior to 1800, and these usually by untrained artists. The first signs of a growing interest in the out-of-doors came in the portraits—when artists posed their subjects so that a part of country home's lands might also be seen. As the wealth and the pride of ownership grew, some owners paid painters to portray their house, barns and fields—on occasions idealizing the scene or even painting in their plans for the future. Perhaps the first men to make a living of sorts from landscape work were latecomers, such as William Winstanley, George Beck, Francis Guy or William Groombridge, all of whom came in the 1790's after having developed their artistic talents abroad. But the American counterpart of the romantic landscape interest, already well-established in Europe in the 18th century, did not gain full strength for another quarter of a century.



From Gilcrease Collections

ALVAN FISHER

The Nation Becomes Aware of Its Land

Many forces were at work during the period of the birth of the American republic creating the atmosphere which was to bring about the nation's first cultural awakening: books were becoming more available and more of them were illustrated with engravings and aquatints; Edmund Burke's *Sublime and Beautiful* (1756) recognized the sublime as an element of beauty and praised the wonderful, the vast expanse, infinity, darkness and the unknowable. The revival of the Gothic stimulated interest in the romantic and imaginative conception of the past; this interest was not confined to prose and poetry alone, but influenced both the artist and the architect. In Europe Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa were the artistic leaders in the school of romantic painting; landscapes were grand, with Italian and French medieval structures and ruins set amid frothy natural growth.

The Romantic school was late in coming to America, but shortly after 1800 our poets and our writers returned from trips abroad inspired by what they had seen and read and eager to create a tradition and a past for their own youthful state. Washington Irving, retelling colorful old Dutch tales of the Hudson Valley, found immediate success. James Fenimore Cooper captured the life of the rugged frontier—a subject to be of continued popularity. William Cullen Bryant, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed the American interest in the beauties of nature, developing a philosophic thinking having some kindredship to the ideas of those of Jean Jacques Rousseau and the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling of the mid-18th century. The artists were quick to catch the mood of their fellow poets.

A whole school of paintings developed around the romantic interest in landscape in America and is often given a term of convenience, The Hudson River School. This is understandable since the beauty of the Hudson valley would attract any artist's attention, just as it caught the fancy of the romantic writers. However, one of the first of the better landscape artists of the early period was not of the New York area, nor is he credited with being one of the founders of the Hudson River school. He is Alvan Fisher (1792-1863), one of the great number of lesser artists who are all but

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Some..... Without Training

In the early years of the nineteenth century more Americans found leisure time for the fine arts and by so doing they developed a taste for good paintings done by well-trained artists. During this period American portraitists, and later the landscapists, resorted to the educational institutions of Europe. Some had been born abroad and had acquired an art background prior to coming to America, while native Americans went abroad to study under the European "masters." Due to this increased interest in the arts, by 1810 art academies were being established in the larger cities of this country (American Academy of Arts was founded in 1808). It was during this period that such well-known portrait artists as Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully were producing their best works, and landscape artists such as Thomas Cole, Washington Allston and Thomas Doughty were making their appearance on the American scene.

Many untrained or poorly trained artists had worked in America from as early as the middle of the seventeenth century. These artists, whom some would now label "primitives," were not, however, peculiar to the American colonial scene, since primitive art is as old as man himself. In spite of their continued production the work of these untrained artists had little vogue in the world of art; for instance, the work of primitive artist Joseph Pickett, of New Haven, Pennsylvania, who worked in the 1770's, was not accepted by the American art public until Dauanier Rousseau (1844-1910) was discovered and praised by modern critics shortly before World War I.

The world-wide lack of appreciation for unsophisticated art has its exception in the primitive paintings of the Middle Ages and the Orient. Only a very few primitive art works were preserved in Europe prior to the recognition of Rousseau. Because of unlimited opportunities to study art in Europe it was very improbable that any aspiring artist would stay for any length of time at the so-called "primitive" level. The competition was so great among artists that it was necessary to get advanced training or simply drop out of the field of art. In Rousseau's case it was only because of personal



PENN'S TREATY

EDWARD HICKS

From Gilcrease Collections

temperament and social conditions that he remained a primitive artist. In America during the latter part of the 18th century and early part of the 19th century the reverse of this was true. Only the select few were able to obtain artistic training, while many talented people, scattered about the country, had no available source for further training. Without the concepts instilled by art instructors, few of these amateur artists tried to copy what they saw in nature, but most of them only tried to create something "beautiful" or in the case of portrait work, a passable likeness. This leads to the conclusion that they painted from a concept formed in their minds and not from a momentary visual impression. This is, of course, the case with the genuine primitive artists of today or any era.

Most of the primitive artists in early America had one characteristic in common: they were not artists by trade. They were sometimes itinerant painters who traveled about the countryside doing portraits and landscapes, supplementing their meager incomes as coach and wagon decorators or house and barn painters. Many would even accept a night's lodging in payment for their work. These "primitive" or "folk" artists painted because they wanted to paint; their training was limited, if they had any at all.

Some of the primitives advanced to more skilled techniques with training, but for various reasons some were contented to continue in their original manner of selecting from the complication of nature the details most pleasing and which they felt most significant, placing them on canvas as flat shapes, with the addition of color as an afterthought. Edward Hicks (1780-1849) is typical of the latter and one of the most prominent primitives of his time. Hicks, the son of a Pennsylvania farmer, was apprenticed to a coach maker when only 13 years of age and later became a sign painter. He is said to have picked up some disreputable friends which he abandoned after a serious illness at about 20. It was then that he decided to join the Society of Friends and within a decade he became one of the outstanding Quaker preachers of his area. He would accept no pay for his services, but instead made his living as a painter, not only of pictures but even signs and furniture. His artistic ability was very degrading to him since he believed that painting "was not in the true spirit of Christ." He considered himself "a poor old worthless insignificant painter" and never studied art because he felt that education was "a tool the devil forged to destroy innocence."

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Hicks is probably most famous for his numerous paintings of *The Peacable Kingdom*. This painting illustrates the prophecy in the book Isaiah, Chapter 11, of the lion lying down with the lamb. More than 100 of these paintings exist; the reluctant artist distributed them among his friends with scriptural texts carefully lettered across the bottom or around all four sides. The background of the paintings pictures a crude representation of Benjamin West's *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* and natural bridge of Virginia, from another popular print of the time. In the foreground Hicks has pictured the lion, lamb, leopard, and various other animals who stand peacably by the cherub-like children, whom it is said Hicks patterned after those done by Raphael. The successful combination of these subjects has puzzled many art critics since then.

The Gilcrease Institute has in its collection *Penn's Treaty* by Hicks, which is one of several of this subject. In it the fanatical painter has extracted an element of the more popular "Peacable Kingdom" and made it the main theme.

The primitive artist cannot be conveniently placed in one period of art history. There is no indication that the primitive artists of earlier periods felt themselves in competition or opposition to their trained colleagues. If they considered the matter at all, they readily admitted their artistic inferiority. It has been only in the last century that a change in the fashion of art has brought some appreciation of the works of the primitive artists. The recognized authorities on art history, as late as 50 years ago, made no mention of them in their writings. James Thomas Flexner, in one of his articles on the "primitive cult," says of primitive paintings: "More quaint than strong, they do not astound, they amuse; they do not dominate a wall, they decorate a room; they are not moving but charming." S.M.

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lost in the shadow of the masters of the school, men like Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), or Frederick Church (1862-1900). But because Fisher has been forgotten and because he was one of the first to sense the importance of the landscape school, something will be given of his career, using his experiences as typical of all the lesser men who—combined—were so influential in changing America's taste in art.

Fisher was born in Needham, Massachusetts but later moved to Dedham. When he was eighteen he worked as a clerk in a country store and, so he relates, began his art expression by drawing small pictures and portraits in the store's ledgers. The family finally consented to his study of art and he was placed with John Penniman, who was described by his student as being "an excellent ornamental painter." Fisher has written of these years: "I remained (with Penniman) upwards of two years. From him I acquired a style which required years to shake off—I mean a mechanical ornamental touch, and manner of coloring. In 1814 I commenced being artist, by painting portraits at a cheap rate. This I pursued until 1815. I then began painting a species of pictures which had not been practiced much, if any, in this country, viz: barnyard scenes and scenes belonging to rural life, winter pieces, portraits of animals. etc."

In 1821 Fisher traveled to Philadelphia, the cultural center of America during that period, and entered an exhibition which displayed the works of his friend Thomas Doughty as well as those of Cole and Thomas Birch. Four years later, Fisher followed the prevailing course of the day and made the

tour of Europe, part of it on foot. While in Europe he copied originals by the great European masters, again the practice of the day, and made improvements on his landscape work, always keeping his hand in at portraiture—since, as he said, between the two he might find buyers. He did; he prospered and before his death he had amassed a small fortune.

Alvan Fisher's works, like those of many of the landscape artists of the immediate post-Revolutionary period, were pleasant, charming comments on the American scene; Fisher was not interested in the classical motive nor in the use of allegory as were Washington Allston, Thomas Cole and others. He was a painter of the simple country scene and of the wide rivers and the wooded hill land; a few years later men like Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt and Alfred Jacob Miller were depicting the grandeur of the Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains in the same fashion. Their aim was to communicate to the viewer the visual marvels of this virgin land—some called it a land of continuous natural parks. This then was the beginning of the awareness of a national heritage. J.T.F.

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