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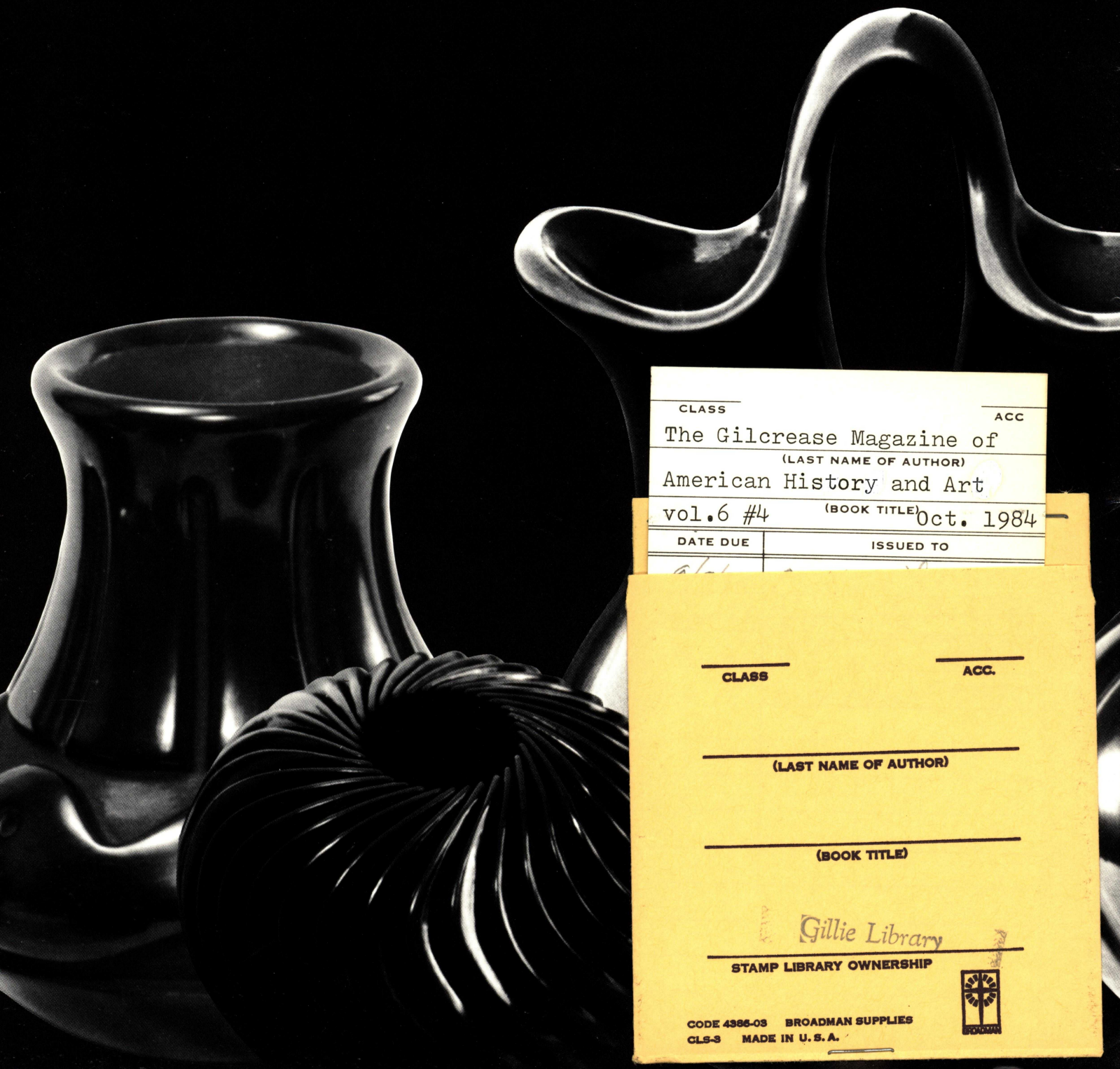
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*Jimmo Monan.*



# The Santa Clara Legacy

BY JOHN SILVER



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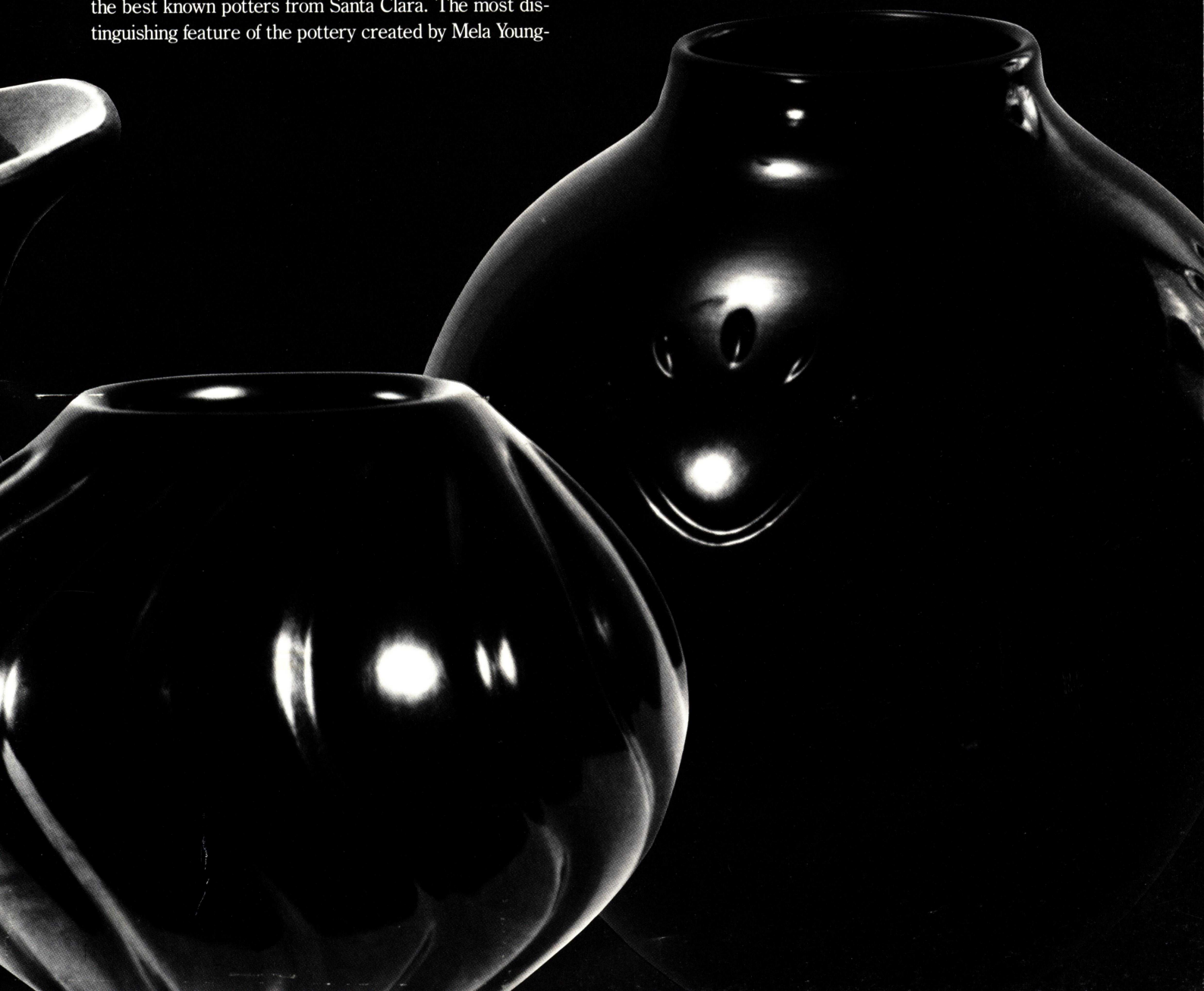
THE ART OF MAKING BLACK POTTERY has its roots in the Santa Clara Pueblo of Northern New Mexico. It is also a tradition that has been practiced by the family of Nathan Youngblood and Nancy Youngblood Cutler for more than eight generations.

Santa Clara Pueblo is the Indian pueblo in northern New Mexico where black pottery originated. Nathan and Nancy's grandmother, Margaret Tafoya, was responsible for reviving the tradition of making black pottery at this pueblo. Maria Martinez, who was the best known black potter from San Ildefonso Pueblo in northern New Mexico, obtained the knowledge of making and firing black pottery from Santa Clara Pueblo.

Since the 1940s Margaret Tafoya has been able to make a substantial living making this unique black pottery. Her daughter, Mela Youngblood, the mother of Nancy and Nathan, began learning the art of making pottery while polishing pottery for Margaret Tafoya. She is now one of the best known potters from Santa Clara. The most distinguishing feature of the pottery created by Mela Young-

John Silver is a resident of Santa Fe and has been a collector of black pottery for seventeen years. He received a law degree from the University of New Mexico and represents a number of southwestern painters and Indian potters including Nathan Youngblood, Clark Hulings, Dan Bodelson and David Nordahl.

All of the Santa Clara pottery shown with this article is the work of Nathan and Nancy Youngblood. Shapes are typical of the pottery to be included in the exhibition, "Santa Clara Pottery by the Youngblood Family," which also features works by their mother, Mela.





blood is the quality of her polishing.

The popularity of Santa Clara pottery can be seen in the increase in price of Margaret Tafoya's pottery. As late as the 1950s, Margaret was selling 20 inch water jars for \$50, which was a large amount of money for a piece of Santa Clara pottery at this time. Recently one of Margaret Tafoya's 20 inch water jars was sold for \$22,500. Even as late as the late 1960s Margaret Tafoya was selling water jars for \$75 that are now being sold for \$8,000.

Nathan Youngblood decided to become a potter after being laid off as a chef for an Albuquerque food service business. From 1975 to 1976, Nathan went to live with his grandparents to learn how to become a potter. Nathan is the only person his grandmother has ever taught to make pottery.

The educational process that Nathan went through, while living with this grandmother, is best suggested by the following incident. One day he asked his grandmother what type of piece of pottery he should try and create. His grandmother told him to try and make a wedding vase. Because Nathan had never before attempted creating a wedding vase, he sat across from his grandmother and copied everything she did. She told him to make two little bowls the same size. Nathan's grandmother took one of the bowls and made a bridge across the top. He did the same. He then made the two necks coming up out of the bowl. His grandmother would watch him try to create the vase and make him start over if he made a mistake. Finally the wedding vase was ready to dry and Nathan had learned how to make a wedding vase.

Some of the best pottery Nathan ever turned out was the pottery he made while he was studying with his grandmother. His grandmother would never let him fire any pottery unless she felt it was good enough. If the polishing or carving on the pot was not right, she would not let him fire it. Sometimes he would have to polish a piece seven or eight times before his grandmother would allow him to fire it.

Recently Nathan has been influenced by oriental porcelain and oriental designs. This was spurred on by the People's Republic of China exhibition he attended in San Francisco. He was very moved by the thin, light porcelain made in China that was created by using the same tools







that he and his sister used in making their pottery.

Nancy, on the other hand, learned to make pottery primarily on her own. After graduating from high school in 1973, she developed her own unique style of making miniature pottery. She watched many of the Santa Clara potters create their works and through trial and error became a quality potter. In the beginning Nancy started making three and four inch pots but gradually her work evolved into making miniature pottery which she now makes exclusively.

A major influence on Nancy's work was Teresita Naranzo, especially the carving Teresita does on her pottery.

Nancy is probably the foremost miniature potter of the Santa Clara Pueblo. She is always striving to achieve the perfect dimension, shape and proportion in her miniatures as well as to create pottery with clear distinctive carvings. She believes that the art of making pottery cannot be taught, but rather the potter must develop a feeling for making pottery which only comes from years of experience.

The first step in making fine pottery is gathering sand and clay. For Nancy, Nathan and their relatives, this is a family affair. Nancy and her husband, Nathan and Mela and some aunts and uncles and cousins go out in a couple of pickup trucks to the foothills close to Santa Clara Pueblo to dig sand and clay that they need for their pottery. To reach the clay, they have to remove a substantial amount of gravel. The vein of clay is only about one foot wide and removing it is like chipping wax. It is a full day's job, but a necessary one that must be done more than once a year.

Nathan and Nancy generally show their work together. They have had sell-out shows all over the United States including Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and New York. Their shows are well received not only for the quality of their work but also because of the contrasting sizes of their pottery. Nancy does miniature pottery exclusively, while Nathan does more traditional sizes and shapes. They have contrasting designs in their pottery. Nathan's designs are very basic, traditional Santa Clara Pueblo designs while Nancy creates both traditional and contemporary designs. Although they are appealing to the same buyers with their pottery, there is no rivalry between the



two potters. It is their philosophy that when one member of the family does well it is a credit to the whole family and all the family should be happy.

When Nathan starts to make a pot or a plate, he has a design in mind, but he feels the clay has a mind of its own. An example of this is when Nathan was making a large jar for the Indian Market in Santa Fe. When he was finished making the jar but before he fired it, the top of the jar cracked. He had to cut the jar back below the crack. As he did this, the neck of the jar cracked even more, so all he had left was the bowl of the jar. He fired the bowl and entered it in the Indian Market. The result was he won a prize. "It was one of those things where that jar did not want to be a jar, it wanted to be a bowl," Nathan explains.

One cannot have a full appreciation for the Santa Clara pottery without understanding the process the potter must go through to create a piece of pottery. The process is very simple.

Clay and sand are sifted through fine wire cloth. When the clay is wet, it is the color of dark chocolate. The sand is white. The clay dries to a pink, flesh color. The potter then stomps on the mixture of clay and sand with his feet to mix them together.

Every pot, whether it is a small pot or a 20 by 20 storage jar, is always started with a base. A little shell dish is made out of clay — the pinch pot. Another piece of clay is taken and all the air pockets are pounded out of it and then it is formed into a coil. The coil is pinched to the walls of the little pinch pot and worked up and down. This process is repeated a number of times until the potter has created a piece of pottery the shape that he or she wants. Traditional pueblo pottery is always all hand built using the coil method. The potter never uses a wheel or any kind of molds.

Once the pot is made and ready to be carved, the potter will pencil on a design and cut the design out with his tools. The process usually takes place three or four days. After the pot is formed, it is air dried. Sometimes it takes up to a month for the pot to dry. After it is dried, the potter takes different grades of sand paper to sand the roughness out of the pot. Then, with a wet cloth, the potter wipes all the dust off the pot and checks to make sure all the edges are clean and even.

What sets Mela, Nancy and Nathan apart from other potters, is that in every process they go through, and there must be about 20 processes before their pottery is finished, they take an extra hour here and an extra hour there to make sure every detail is correct, which shows in the quality of the finished product.

To polish the pottery, the potter prepares what is called a slip. This is a mixture of water and another type of natural clay other than that used to make the pot. The potter takes a brush and paints several layers of the slip on the pot. He then burnishes the pot with a semi-smooth stone. Several more layers of the slip are put on and the potter burnishes the pot again with a very smooth glass-like stone. He then covers the pot with a very thin layer of animal fat. The pot is then polished until it has a very high glaze setting the high luster on the pot.

Once the potter signs the bottom of his creation, the pot is ready to fire. To fire the pot, the potter takes four tin cans and sets them on a level space. He then takes a metal milk crate and sets it on top of the cans. The pot is placed in the middle of the crate and a grill and a tin sheet are placed on top of the metal crate. A bottom fire made







out of cedar strips is started. This is followed by placing pine slabs to create the outside fire. Finally pine bark is put on the top of the crate. The pot is then totally engulfed in a bonfire.

The first thing that happens to the pot during the firing process is the soot from the smoke starts to adhere to the surface of the pot. When this occurs the pot turns a very dull gray color. As the fire gets hotter the soot burns off. When all the soot is burned off and the potter has determined that the pot has achieved the correct grayish/pink color, the fire is covered with pulverized horse manure. By covering the fire with horse manure, the oxygen to the fire is cut off creating a high heat oxygen reduction fire. Depending on the size and shape of the pot, the potter keeps the horse manure on the fire for 30 minutes to an hour. Cutting off the oxygen from the fire causes the pot to turn black.

To create a red colored pot, a different slip is used. This slip is made from a much deeper red clay than for a black pot. When the pot is being fired and the soot burns off, the pot is immediately removed leaving a pot that turns red in color. To achieve a sienna colored pot, no slip is used, rather, the pot is polished with water and fired.

Nathan and Nancy feel a certain pressure to create the finest pottery that they are capable of creating because they are the only children of the current generation of their family who are making a living exclusively out of making pottery. Whether their creations are purchased privately, at a show, or at the Indian Market in Santa Fe,

they like to know the people who are buying their pottery. They hope that these buyers have the same love for their creation as they do and that they will take pleasure in having their pottery.

Sometimes when Nathan or Nancy have made a piece of pottery that they think is very good, they take it to their grandparents to have them look it over. Even though their grandparents don't verbally express whether or not the pottery is good, Nathan and Nancy can tell by the way their grandparents react with their eyes and the way they touch the pot with their fingers if it meets with their approval. Their grandparents realize that the tradition of making fine pottery is secure in the hands of Nathan and Nancy and the knowledge of seven generations of potters continues in their fabulous creations.

An exhibition "Santa Clara Pottery by the Youngblood Family" will be on display at Gilcrease Museum November 3 through 25. It will include plates, pots and jars, both full-sized and miniature, made in the traditional Santa Clara manner and fired at the Santa Clara Pueblo by Nathan and Nancy Youngblood and their mother, Mela. ◡







Every pot is started by making a clay base in the shape of a shell dish. Another piece of clay is formed into a coil.



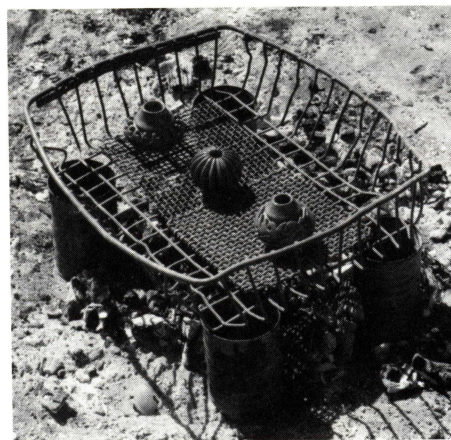
The coil is pinched to the walls of the base and worked up and down until the potter creates a piece with the desired shape.



Traditional pueblo pottery is always hand built using the coil method. The potter never uses a wheel or any kind of mold.



The pot is burnished with a semi-smooth stone. More layers of the slip are applied. It is then burnished with a smooth stone.



To fire the pot, the potter takes four tin cans and sets them on a level space. A metal milk crate is set on top of the cans.



The pot is placed in the middle of the crate and a grill and a tin sheet are placed on top of the metal crate.





Once the pot is made and ready to be carved, the potter will pencil on a design which is cut out with special tools.



After the pot is air dried, which may take up to a month, different grades of sand paper are used to sand out the roughness.



To polish the pottery, the potter prepares a "slip," a mixture of water and natural clay which is brushed on the pot.



Cedar strips are used to start a fire underneath the crate. Pine slabs are placed around the crate to start an outside fire.



Pine bark is put on top of the crate. The pot is engulfed in a bonfire. As the soot adheres to the pot, it turns a dull gray.



When the soot from the smoke burns off, the fire is covered with pulverized horse manure, cutting off the oxygen to the fire.







Paul Calle ©1987



# American Art in Miniature: 1984

BY FRED A. MYERS

"AMERICAN ART IN MINIATURE: 1984" represents a new concept in exhibitions at Gilcrease Museum, one that just may become a regular feature of the exhibition schedule. The exhibition will be an ingathering of small paintings by artists throughout the nation. Invitations to exhibit have been extended by the museum to past Rendezvous artists as well as to artists who are already scheduled or who might be scheduled for future Rendezvous exhibitions. It will be, all in all, a sort of extended Gilcrease family occasion.

Among the artists who will be participating in "American Art in Miniature: 1984" are Robert Bateman, Joe Beeler, Paul Calle, Micheal Coleman, Wilson Hurley, Frank McCarthy, Richard Schmid, Conrad Schwiering, Gordon Snidow, Bettina Steinke and Donald Teague. The paintings will be small; the size limitation is 9 by 12 inches. The preview will be November 30 and the exhibition will be on view December 1 through 16. All works will be for sale at prices established by the artists, prices which, by the by, tend — because of the small format of the paintings — to be much lower than the price level of large works.

Beyond this enticing idea of economy, there are other intriguing implications of the small-scale format. Some of the paintings in "American Art in Miniature: 1984," it is to be assumed, will be studies for larger works, some will be field studies that were never developed into larger works, others will be paintings that as the artists say simply "did not want to be big."

What many of the paintings are likely to have in common is a certain freshness that sometimes vanishes in the sheer toil of completing a large work. They record the first impulses in the creative process. To the interested viewer, the opportunity to see the hand of the artist at

work — to be admitted as a co-participant in the initial creation of a work of art — is a rare privilege. These characteristics explain why artists often collect small paintings by other artists whom they particularly admire.

When perusing the glossy, full-color reproductions of paintings that fill art magazines, one sometimes comes across a painting that has a special punch, one that has both boldness and delicacy. A look at the credit line, which hopefully includes the dimensions of the original painting itself, often reveals that the reproduced work is in actuality of very small size. The reproduction of the painting by Paul Calle, opposite work which will be in the "American Art in Miniature" exhibition, is almost the size of the original.

The word miniature in the title of the Gilcrease exhibition is not meant to awaken associations of the small-scale portraits painted on ovals of ivory popular before the invention of the camera. Those treasures of a bygone day are another thing altogether; meticulous to an unprecedented degree, such portraits have the charm that seems to cling to all small things, but they do not exhibit in any way the freedom of modern work.

As a matter of fact, we live in an artistic era that by and large is habituated to a move away from a meticulous finish. The sculptor Rodin more than 100 years ago cultivated an aesthetic canon of incompleteness. And beginning with the French Impressionists and their efforts to record the ever-changing conditions of sunlight, one has come to prefer work that has a certain brio.

We are one with our ancestors in demonstrating a fascination with things that are small. We are citizens of our time in cherishing the first impulse, the painted record of the hand of the artist at work. ◡

Fred Myers is director of Gilcrease Museum, the author of *Art Treasures of Gilcrease Museum*, and is a regular contributor to the *Gilcrease Magazine*.





*M. Nimmo Moran.*

## Themes and Methods in the Etchings of Mary Nimmo Moran

BY NANCY FRIESE

Nancy Friese is an assistant professor of art at the University of Tulsa. A painter and a printmaker, she received her Master of Fine Arts from Yale University School of Art.





MARY NIMMO MORAN was the leading American woman etcher of the 1880s. She was the first woman fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers in London and the first woman member of the New York Etching Club, and won diplomas from each. She also received a Gold Medallion for etching from the Columbian World's Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

Mary Nimmo Moran, "Evening on the St. John's River, Florida" (1882), 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches by 11 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches, etching, brown ink on cream parchment





*M. Nimmo Moran*

Mary Nimmo Moran, "A City Farm, New York" (1881), 6 inches by 10¼ inches, etching, brown ink on cream parchment

Mary Nimmo Moran described her life in an autobiographic note:

*"I was born in Strathaven, Scotland, in 1842, coming to America when still a child. When sixteen years of age, I met my husband, Thomas Moran, then well known as an artist (landscape painter) and from him came all my first impressions of art and of nature as applied to art. Up to that time I had never thought of using the brush or pencil. We were married in 1862 and from that time on I may say I have always been my husband's pupil."*

She did indeed credit much of her artistic knowledge to her husband, but her constant exposure to the art of Europe in their travels and her association as one of the first members of the New York Etching Club also enriched her artistic ability.

Thomas Moran knew printmaking thoroughly as he had apprenticed with the wood engravers Scattergood and Telfer in Philadelphia where he and Mary met, married and first lived. He also studied in England.

Mary was taught his technique in 1879 after they had purchased an etching press in Newark, New Jersey, in 1878. She created over 60 etching images and even some wood engravings for the *Aldine Art Journal*. She did sketches, watercolors and oil paintings, and exhibited both watercolors and oils in shows held by the Pennsylvania Academy of Art in Philadelphia and the New York Academy of Design.

But it was etching that most fully conveyed her natu-

ralistic vision of her world. Thomas Moran's prints are the more romantic with influences from his love and study of William Turner. Mary's approach was more American, one of direct expression and observation, interpreting but not succumbing to detail. She, too, looked to the Europeans, Corot, Daubigny, Diaz and Rousseau, but utilized their influence in her own way. Will Jenkins in *Modern Etching and Engraving* of 1902 said, "A good etching, besides being a thing of beauty is always an intellectual treat; it is so autographic, so closely characterized by the artist's actual touch." He goes on to state that "Thomas Moran's etchings are conspicuous for technical facility and rhetorical force" and that "his line has a wonderful quality of nervous vitality that adds interest to all of his plates." He characterizes Mary Nimmo Moran's work as a "striking example of how much can be accomplished with the simple and undisguised line, softened only by such mellowness as the paper and the glow of rich inks will give." A painterly reading of her prints coupled with the naturalness of the way she saw and the sure quality of her individual mark gives her work unusual distinction.

In the first half of that century artists were unified by a common desire to celebrate American life and landscape. Nineteenth century American artists almost always tried to inspire self-confidence and self-understanding with their prints.

In the second half of the century the informative print gave way to more artistic portrayals of what was pictur-





Mary Nimmo Moran, "A California Forest after T. Moran" (1888), 11 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches by 8 inches, etching, brown ink on cream parchment

*M. Nimmo Moran.*

esque in America. by the late 1870s, turning away from popular patriotic sentiment and following Whistler's lead, American artists began to work in the more elitist and individualistic medium of etching. The initial meeting of the New York Etching Club was in 1877 and monthly meetings and discussions began to be held regularly. Members were concerned with real life and their own perceptions, acknowledging their sources in the work of the Barbizon artists and also a debt to American landscape painting.

Mary Nimmo Moran's art springs from a combination of her knowledge of the art world of the 1880s and from her unaffected, natural expression. As Kenneth Clark states, "In landscape painting much depends on the un-

conscious response of man's whole being to the world which surrounds him." Mary's personal response, shaped by her poetic sensibility, is clearly reflected in her etchings.

In 1879 Mary made her first etching plates. Five plates date from that year and her last etching plates date from 1888. There are at least 62 known etching images by her, of which 58 final images and other proofs and prints are part of the Gilcrease collection.

Various themes recur in her etchings. These include the reproductive images, city or industrial views, travel and rural scenes. Within these categories emerge her concerns for light, for poetic source, for the inclusion of





M. Nimmo Moran  
signed by T. Moran

Mary Nimmo Moran, "Meadow Grasses, Easthampton" (1884), 4 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches by 11 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, etching, brown ink on handmade Sweden

cows, ducks, people, windmills, boats and bridges. There is the panoramic view, the interior/exterior view where trees open up to distant space, the diagonal path design, and the specific shape-making of hills and ponds. In all, a clear reading of foreground, middle ground and distant ground is scribed with fluidity and ease marking the transitions.

Her travel prints are derived from trips to Scotland and Wales, vacations in Easton, Pennsylvania, and visits to St. Augustine, Florida, commissioned by *Scribner's Monthly* magazine.

Four prints are specifically from New Jersey sites. Included in her two sketchbooks in the Gilcrease collection are scenes from a wide range of locations in rural Pennsylvania, some as far north as Bloomsburg. Most of the rural scenes are of Easthampton, Long Island, where the Morans summered and eventually built a home.

Her primary techniques in etching include plein-air drawing on the prepared plate, use of a roulette and sandpaper for tone, wiping variations such as *retroussage*,

line quality variation by different drawing points as well as by stopping out and staged etching, use of proofs for sketching our alternate solutions, and scraping and burnishing for changes.

Mary Nimmo Moran's reproductive prints, those prints which replicate the work of another artist, are six in number. Four are from paintings by her husband and were made for his sales catalogues.

*The Bathers*, after Thomas Moran, has three female figures at the edge of a pond. *Edge of the Forest* illustrates a densely woven arbor opening onto a distant shore. *A California Forest*, after her husband's painting, has different wipings in different proofs showing a shift in focus and meaning of the light. This print has the etched monogram containing the "Y" from Yellowstone used by Thomas in the lower right, while in the left corner "M. Nimmo" signed as the artist.

Another reproductive print made by Mary Nimmo Moran is *Landscape after Rousseau*, which has the clarity and light seen in her own piece, *Passaic Meadows*. But the





suitability of the Rousseau figure on the rocks is here more felt than the figures she placed in her own pieces and sometimes later removed. The lilting quiet of both these prints of water scenes show her homage to Rousseau. Last of the reproductive prints is *Landscape after Diaz*.

Her own works have more activity and a more rustic quality to the line, yet in these reproductive prints her love of nature comes through strongly.

The coexistence of city and nature is the subject of *A City Farm, New York* and *The Cliff Dwellers of New York*. In these the looming city contrasts with the rural dwelling and the decaying rock house, a contrast which actually existed when Mary Nimmo Moran made the etching. In his 1889 catalogue of the Moran's works, Christian Klackner describes *A City Farm, New York* as a plate which represents the space between 56th and 57th streets on Twelfth Avenue at a period when the builders were invading 'shanty town' and setting up French flats by the block.

The bridge scenes of Pennsylvania in *A Willowy Brook* and *Arched Stone Bridge over the Bushkill, Easton, Pa.* bring the structures of man and of nature close; they are different but not antagonistic and cohabit congenially here.

*The Passaic at Newark*, of which Gilcrease has 10 proofs and prints, six of which are also signed by Thomas Moran, is more dominantly industrial than rural. The subtle tonal variations in wiping give the water a shimmering quality and a calm glow which surrounds the factory buildings. This sympathetic view in an early print contains a play between the vertical marks and the curve of the coastline that tells of her early skill in constructing a print. Nature takes the foreground, industry the middle ground, and luminous light is the distance.

From travels to Wales, *Conway Castle* and its accompanying drawing were done. Here one can see the translation of image from paper to plate. The scale of boat and castle and the focus become more dramatic in the print. The sky is made of simple marks and then elaborated in direction and form in later prints.

Tone is created by close multiple lines. In *A Glimpse of Conway* Mary opens a pathway through trees to a view of the castle. She enriches and separates the castle from other areas, even the small child, by the tonal change made by roulette. This change can be seen best by comparing an earlier proof to a later proof. In this print a fan-



Mary Nimmo Moran, "Drawing of Mt. Parnassus" (c. 1881), 13 inches by 10 inches, pencil on paper





*Second state of the plate*  
*M. N. Moran*



Mary Nimmo Moran, "Under the Oaks, Georgica Pond" (1887), 19 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches by 30 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, etching, brown ink on cream parchment





like stretch of tree limbs equals the broken arc defining the stone wall then moving inward to the castle.

From her birthplace comes *Cochrane's O' the Craig, Strathaven*, shown on the front cover. Here the sky is a lacy intricacy of lines varying from left to right, lightly echoing the patterns of the trees. The openly handled foreground leads to the central tree with its tentacle-like branches. The density of marks and the stature of the house leads up to the small door. This winding composition is often used in her prints. Horizontal and vertical junctions happen with a wiggly line. Equivalents of tone and shape are integrated while the variety of scale more slowly becomes apparent. The strength of the underlying structure makes this view of the ebullience of nature stronger. Her marks breathe.

Other travel prints include a group of six Florida plates. The first was a memory of St. John's River in Florida, but the plate and prints have been lost, according to Klackner. The six prints at Gilcrease include *Evening on the St. John's River*, *Borders of Lake Isabel* (and its canceled plate), *Point Isabel, Florida* (and its canceled plate), the small version of *Point Isabel, Florida* made for the New York Etching Club's 1888 catalogue, and *Rose Walk-Villa Alexandria*.

*Rose Walk-Villa Alexandria* is a small print of vertical format. In it diagonals lead to the distant horizon. Each plane is well defined with figure/ground flip-flops of dark-on-light and light-on-dark forms. The most litling of the Florida group is *Evening on the St. John's River*. Here the moonlight is brilliantly luminous, the movement of the flower boat across the plane of water to the grove of pines is smooth. The evocative mood, the glassy water full of flowing lines and the sky, a build-up on tone around the moon, make this print radiant. Luminosity is also seen in other prints.

Almost 30 images are from Easthampton sites, some from her front yard. Of these, many have components of cows, windmills, people, paths, beaches, boats, bridges and light. Light can be implied in line drawing, but it also can be created by creative wiping of the plate. This is sometimes called artistic printing. Often it was used to realize the mellow poetic atmosphere of twilight or autumn favored by many artists and used by Mary Nimmo Moran in *Twixt the Gloamin and the Mirk*.

*Twixt the Gloamin and the Mirk* has been called by Morris T. Everett in "The Etchings of Mrs. Mary Nimmo Moran" in *Brush and Pencil* in 1901 "an idyllic pastoral, beautifully expressed in the soft tints of monochrome. It is simply another picture of a landscape dying in the night. One can but feel the scene in fact to be barren even to the repellent, which through the witchery of line and the soft-



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## About the Exhibition

### Prints of Nature: Poetic Etchings of Mary Nimmo Moran

BY ANNE MORAND

THIS FALL GILCREASE MUSEUM is showing the exhibition, "Prints of Nature: Poetic Etchings of Mary Nimmo Moran." Featuring over 100 etchings by the wife of Thomas Moran, this exhibition is the first to be devoted exclusively to her original prints. The exhibition will be on display through December 2, 1984.

During the short span of years between 1879 and 1889 Mary Nimmo Moran created some 62 different etched images. Of those, Gilcrease has 58, the most complete holding of her work. Numerous proofs of each image expand the collection to 348 etchings, which are supplemented by several sketchbooks, six copper plates and various manuscript items. The exhibition includes at least one of each of the 58 images, as well as various items from the supporting material. Several of Thomas Moran's etchings which relate directly to Mary's etchings are also included in the exhibition.

Mary Nimmo Moran, whose work was and still is often overshadowed by that of her famous husband, was nevertheless a competent, well-respected and original artist. Her work gained her acceptance in

the New York Etching Club and by the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers in London. Her acceptance was based upon her ability, as both societies accepted the work of M. N. Moran (as she signed her artwork), never suspecting the signature to be that of a woman.

The "Prints of Nature" exhibition and accompanying catalogue are a venture of Gilcrease Museum, the University of Tulsa, and the Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa. Mary Nimmo Moran's etchings have been featured in just a few other exhibitions, in 1950 at the Smithsonian, in 1973 at the New York Public Library and in 1976 at the Whitney Museum. Guest curator for the exhibition is Nancy Friese, assistant professor of art at the University of Tulsa, who led the research and the materials selection.

Gilcrease Museum has often pulled excellent exhibition material from the Moran studio collection at the Museum, which includes nearly 1500 items. However, most all the Moran material on exhibit regularly in the museum has been that of Thomas. In this exhibition the work of another Moran is shown for the first time at

Gilcrease Museum.

There were 16 members of the extended Moran family who were active in the art world. Twelve were so highly respected that they were known as the "Twelve Apostles" or the "Clan Moran." Most of those artists are represented in the Gilcrease collection, having been part of the Moran studio collection which Thomas Gilcrease purchased from the estate of Ruth B. Moran in the 1940s.

A final note about the exhibition -- it is presented not only to familiarize our visitors with another of the Gilcrease artists, part of our hidden treasury, but also with the technical aspects of the medium of etching. Etching was extremely popular in the last half of the nineteenth century, but fell out of favor in the twentieth century. The medium is experiencing a rebirth today as artists strive to find ways to make individual artistic statements. It is hoped that this exhibition of one of America's foremost etchers, Mary Nimmo Moran, will enhance appreciation and understanding of the medium.

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Anne Morand has been curator of art for Gilcrease Museum since 1977. This is the second major exhibition she has organized from the museum's Moran collection.





*M. Nimmo Moran*

Mary Nimmo Moran, "The Haunted House, Easthampton" (1888), 15¼ inches by 19 inches, etching, brown ink on cream parchment

ness of mezzotint is fascinating."

Everett in his 1901 article says that "Mrs. Moran's plates are for the most part unpretentious scenes whose beauty she discovered and recorded. The poetry in her soul gave these simple scenes meaning and beauty."

Francine Tyler, in the "First American Painter-Etchers" in the Pratt Graphics Center *Print Review* 16, points out that the subjects chosen by the members of the New York Etching Club were both rural and urban, but shared a freshness and an originality that come from personal interpretation. She says, "Many accompany rather than illustrate the work of contemporary poets such as Longfellow. It is a brief moment in American culture when the artistic and the literary are unified and equal."

*Twixt the Gloamin and the Mirk* and *Evening, Easthampton* share the theme of bridges and also stand as examples of the way Mary Nimmo Moran varied the same motif in different etchings.

*A Willowy Brook* is an etching of a Pennsylvania site that serves to demonstrate the "looking-through" theme. This compositional device of opening up the foreground or the middle group to reveal a distant vista can be seen in about ten prints. *Summer, Easthampton*, *A Sassafras Grove* and *Solitude* all utilize it. In *Solitude*, the print which was illustrated in Koehler's article in the *American*

*Art Review* of 1881, the image is of a decorative pattern of trees attached to the top and right of the print. These organic bars contain the viewer within the foreground. The most realized print of the "looking through" composition is *Under the Oaks, Georgica Pond*, Mary Nimmo's largest print, measuring 19¾ by 30¾ inches. It was published by Klackner in his American Etchings series and the plate was destroyed. In this work the large monumental oaks open to a light-flooded pond behind a dark arrangement of rocks, grass and stream. The soliloquy is seen in the comfortable man on horseback and the quiet cows near the water. All are subservient to the magnificent trees with their opening revealing the calm vista.

The beach theme is in seven prints, all from Easthampton. They range from unpopulated terrains with arid, tigery trees and plants and strange angles of sands, as in *Scrub Oaks*, to the more familiar scenes, such as *Easthampton Barrows*. The large plate, *Looking Seaward, Long Land*, has a long viewpoint of hills and beach. The sand texture that Mary Nimmo wonderfully creates could be a combination of sandpaper ground, foul-bite and deliberate hand pointing.

At least 15 of Mary's prints utilize the shape and light of ponds. Ponds serve to define planes and refer to skies and the ocean, yet the specific form is counterpoint to the





*M. Nimmo Moran  
signed by Moran.*

Mary Nimmo Moran, "Summer Easthampton" (1883), 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches by 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches, etching, brown ink on handmade Sweden



wildness of other lines. Boats are in as many prints and, by appearing as distant specks, push far space even farther away.

The simple distinct form of the windmill appears in at least 11 of her prints. Buildings are usually darkened solid forms giving relief to the eye and pacing the reading of the print through trees and branches. This can be seen in her amazing print, *Haunted House*. Having none of the other objects often used in her images, this print portrays wooded nature and man's crumbling house of wood side by side. The living trees have a beauty and strength but the ruins have a spirit that is timeless.

Three prints with similar views are the marsh grouping of *On the Newark Meadows*, *The Haunt of the Muskrat*, and *Meadow Grasses, Easthampton*. These prints are similar in impulse, but are particular in detail, light and space; each displays Mary Nimmo Moran's facility for the tactile, expressive line.

In James Watrous's book, *American Printmaking* (1984), the author talks of the etchings of the late nineteenth century as bearing the charm of unpretentious landscape. In his list of the most attractive etchings, he includes the work of Mary Nimmo Moran and notes, "The combination of good craftsmanship and sure pictorial shorthand in images seem familiarly 'American' in landscape conformation and character."

The techniques used in Mary Nimmo Moran's prints were fairly simple and usual for the time. She would often begin with a pencil sketch of a view that interested her such as *Mt. Parnassus*. Then she would take to the site a copper etching plate which had been covered with an acid resisting ground (such as wax), and using various sized drawing points, reproduce the scene before her. The points were used to remove the ground and expose the copper, not to scratch lines into the plate, then the plate was dipped into an acid bath. The acid bath used by Mary was probably Dutch Mordant, a mixture of potassium chlorate, hydrochloric acid and water. It eats into the metal exposed by the drawing tool, etching or biting the plate. This area of printing has the greatest amount of variables -- time, temperature and the like -- all of which the artist can use to her advantage.

Before the plate is bitten, any error or change in drawing can be covered with a stop-out varnish and redrawn. Surface texture can result from particles in the ground which lift off during the action of the acid and create dots in the image. Called foul bites, these textures can be intended or accidental. A toothed-wheeled instrument called a roulette can be used on the plate to create small indentations that will hold ink and produce another type of surface texture. Mary used the roulette liberally in her prints. Tone can also be produced by placing sandpaper over the plate and running it through the press or by using

a grinding material such as Scotch stone.

Mistakes found after the action of the acid must be removed with tools called burnishers and scrapers. The burnisher is a smooth rounded piece of steel set in a handle. Slight corrections can be made by smoothing out the mistaken line. Larger, deeper lines must be scraped away with a three-sided scraper which has sharp cutting edges. The scraped line is then burnished smooth. Mary used all of these techniques in her prints. *Summer, Easthampton* appears in two versions, the second showing that space has been repositioned and the cows removed.

A print is made from an etched and cleaned plate by first pushing ink into the etched lines. Excess ink is cleaned from the surface. Tone can be achieved by the further manipulation of the ink. The slight amount of ink left on the surface is known as plate tone. This can be avoided by cleaning the surface with a lye solution so that only the ink actually in the etched lines is printed. However, the plate tone can be enhanced by a technique used frequently by members of the painter-etcher movement, *retroussage*. This is the light play of an inky rag over the surface of the plate after regular inking has been done. It coaxes small amounts of ink out of the lines to produce a slightly darker print. Mary's *Haunted House* has such a rich surface surely *retroussage* was used and highlights pulled out discriminatingly.

After inking, the plate is covered with dampened paper and run through a press. The press used for copper plate is a steel bed that travels between two steel rollers. The paper is molded into the lines of the plate by the action of the press and picks up the ink.

Mary used proofs, the first images pulled from the plate, to think out changes and to keep notation about the prints. Her print *Sassafras Grove* has light, horizontal lines of the sky behind the trees. In one proof these are changed with pencil additions to a horizon line with a boat and the composition works more successfully.

Although printmakers often use sequential designations for prints in an edition, Mary did not. It did not seem to be a priority of the artists during her time. The only designation she used was a remark. The remark is a device used to designate the first impressions of a final image and usually is an indication of the artist's own proofs, as it is removed after printing a few. Mary used a shell, a salamander and water lillies as remarks. The remark was printed in the outer margin of the proof and Mary even printed some in a different color than the larger image.

While the methods of the etcher are basically the same from artist to artist, the individual's character comes through in the manipulation of the medium and the choice of subject. Mary Nimmo Moran's art was a clear interpretation of her own natural vision of the landscape and mood of the world so dear to her. ◡



# Mary Nimmo Moran

## BIOGRAPHY

- |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1842    | Born to Mary Scott and Archibald Nimmo on May 16 in Lanarkshire, Strathaven, Scotland                                                                                                                                         | 1885 | <i>Haunt of the Muskrat</i> published in S.R. Koehler's <i>Etching. An Outline of its Technical Processes and Its History with Some Remarks on Collections and Collecting</i>                                                                      |
| 1847    | Sails to America with father and her brother Archibald Jr. Her mother had died.                                                                                                                                               |      | Small print of <i>Hook Pond</i> included in the New York Etching Club catalogue                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1858-60 | Meets Thomas Moran. Her father and his parents are neighbors in Crescentville, Pennsylvania.                                                                                                                                  |      | Christian Klackner publishes four of her prints.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1862    | Thomas Moran and Mary Nimmo marry in Philadelphia.                                                                                                                                                                            | 1886 | Travel to Venice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1866    | Paul Nimmo Moran born. Nine months travel in Europe                                                                                                                                                                           |      | Three prints included in the <i>Catalogue of Oils and Watercolors of T. Moran illustrated with Etchings by the Artist and M.N. Moran from the most important works</i> , published by the American Art Association.                                |
| 1867    | Travel to Italy                                                                                                                                                                                                               |      | Summer in Easthampton                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1868    | Mary Scott Moran born                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 1887 | Participates in the "Work of Women Etchers of America" Exhibition organized by S.R. Koehler at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts with 54 prints                                                                                                       |
| 1870    | Ruth Bedford Moran born. The family moves to Newark, New Jersey, to be closer to the headquarters of <i>Scribner's Monthly</i> .                                                                                              | 1888 | <i>The Coast of Florida</i> (Gilcrease's small plate of Point Isabel, Florida) used in the New York Etching Club Catalogue                                                                                                                         |
| 1872    | Trip west for <i>Scribner's Monthly</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |      | Union League of Club of New York exhibition of "Women Etchers of America," organized by Mrs. Van Rensselaer, features a small version of <i>Twilight</i> . 57 prints in this show                                                                  |
| 1874    | Trip west for <i>Scribner's Monthly</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |      | Society of American Etchers formed                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1877    | Trip to St. John's River, St. Augustine, Florida. New York Etching Club founded                                                                                                                                               |      | Christian Klackner's <i>American Etchings</i> published, lists four Mary Nimmo Moran prints                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1878    | Purchases etching press.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1889 | Travels to Venice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|         | First trip to Easthampton, Long Island                                                                                                                                                                                        |      | Joint Exhibition of Thomas and Mary's complete etched works by the Klackner Gallery, New York. Mary Nimmo Moran has 58 prints in this show.                                                                                                        |
| 1879    | Her oil painting, <i>Newark from the Meadows</i> , 8½ inches by 16 inches, shown at the National Academy of Design in New York, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and the Industrial Exposition of Milwaukee. | 1890 | New York Etching Club Catalogue not published                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|         | Six etchings made and four submitted to the New York Etching Club. She is elected a member                                                                                                                                    | 1892 | In the New York Etching Club catalogue Mary Nimmo Moran's plate of <i>Passaic Meadows</i> is published. This catalogue also features a photogravure of her as a frontispiece and identifies her as Mrs. Thomas Moran rather than Mary Nimmo Moran. |
| 1880    | Morans rent a home for the summer in Easthampton.                                                                                                                                                                             | 1893 | Thomas and Mary both show works in the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Mary receives a gold medallion for her etchings. She has 11 prints in the show.                                                                                            |
| 1881    | Move to New York City from Newark                                                                                                                                                                                             | 1895 | Mary Nimmo Moran resigns her membership in the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers.                                                                                                                                                                   |
|         | Elected the first woman member of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers May 7                                                                                                                                    | 1899 | Dies of typhoid fever September 25                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|         | Becomes member of American Society of Painter-Etchers                                                                                                                                                                         |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | Participates in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts Exhibition of American Etchings with seven prints                                                                                                                              |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1882    | European travel. Meets John Ruskin                                                                                                                                                                                            |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | Participates in the first exhibition of the Philadelphia Society of Etchers at the Academy of Fine Arts with 17 prints                                                                                                        |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | Exhibits with the New York Etching Club                                                                                                                                                                                       |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1883    | Summer in Easthampton                                                                                                                                                                                                         |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | Three prints shown in New York Etching Club Exhibition                                                                                                                                                                        |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1884    | Morans build their own home on Main Street, Easthampton.                                                                                                                                                                      |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | <i>Summer, Easthampton</i> used in New York Etching Club catalogue                                                                                                                                                            |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|         | <i>Gardiner's Bay</i> published in <i>Twenty Original Etchings American</i>                                                                                                                                                   |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



# Gilcrease Book Reviews

BY MILDRED D. LADNER



Karl Bodmer, "Pehriska-Ruhpa (Two Ravens), Hidatsa Man," 17 inches by 11¾ inches, watercolor on paper, illustration from *Views of a Vanishing Frontier*. Original watercolor is from the collection of the InterNorth Art Foundation/Joslyn Art Museum.

TO CELEBRATE THE OPENING of the Maximilian-Bodmer collection at the Joslyn Museum in Omaha, the precursor for a national tour which will include an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1985, the University of Nebraska Press has published *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (\$29.95).

Joseph C. Porter, a fellow of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska, prepared a biographical sketch of Prince Maximilian of Wied which precedes an essay on "Travels in the Interior of North America" by Marsha V. Gallagher and David C. Hunt. (Hunt is a former art curator of Gilcrease Museum.)

Noted ethnologist John C. Ewers, a frequent Gilcrease visitor, wrote the "Appreciation of Karl Bodmer's Pictures," in which he points out that "No other primitive peoples have stirred the interest and imagination of the civilized world as have the North American Indians of the Great Plains.

"Their striking physical appearance and picturesque costumes, their prowess as warriors, horseman, and big game hunters, and their dramatic dances and religious ceremonies made them especially attractive to artists."

Also from the University of Nebraska Press comes *The Sixth Grandfather* (\$19.95), transcripts of John G. Neihardt's famous interviews in 1931 with the Oglala holy man, Black Elk, which formed the basis for Neihardt's acclaimed book, *Black Elk Speaks*, and the subsequent *When the Tree Flowers*.

Raymond J. DeMallie, associate professor of anthropology at Indiana University, provides a biographical sketch of Black Elk in his introduction, discussing the holy man's career as a Catholic catechist.

*Words in the Blood: Contemporary Indian Writers of North and South America* (Meridian, \$9.95) by Jamake Highwater,

begins with two examples of Native American oral literature: Brian Swann's adaptation of an Iroquois song, "The Round Dance," and John Bierhorst's version of "Cantares Mexicanos."

Highwater traces the emergence of a Native American literature through the works of Indian and Mestizo writers such as Charles Alexander Eastman, Darcy McNickel, N. Scott Momaday, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Leslie Silko, among others.

Welcome reissues in paperback from the University of Oklahoma Press include Grace Coolidge's *Teepee Neighbors* (\$7.95), 29 sketches by the eastern-educated woman of allience who married the Reverend Sherman Coolidge to live among his people on the Shoshone-Arapaho Reservation in Wyoming, and *Ruxton of the Rockies* (\$8.95), a travel book and autobiography by the noted trapper/trader George Frederick Ruxton, edited by LeRoy R. Hafen. Sketches by Ruxton, made for his notebooks, and watercolors from the Clyde and Mae Reed Porter collection of the work of Alfred Jacob Miller enliven the pages.

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Millie Ladner has been book editor of the *Tulsa World* for seven and a half years and has regularly contributed book reviews to the *Gilcrease Magazine* since 1979.





## A Circle, from Childhood to Childhood

BY MICHELLE STARR

Michelle Starr has written a number of articles for the *Gilcrease Magazine*, and has also been published in *American History Illustrated*, *Civil War Times*, *Oklahoma Today*, *Army*, and *Far West*. She is education coordinator for Gilcrease Museum.





Jules Tavernier, "Indian Village," 24 inches by 34 inches, oil

OF A THOUSAND BATTLES only a few names have survived into history: Beecher's Island, Platte Bridge, The Wagonbox Fight, Adobe Walls, Little Big Horn, Wounded Knee. But these names, these places, these actions were not the Plains Indians. The Plains Indians were people not battles, people born, named, and raised who in turn bore, named and raised other people in a circle that went from childhood to childhood within the context of a rich and fascinating culture.

What will be discussed here is something of that Plains Indian culture, but there will be little said about arrowheads or artifacts. We will, as the Sioux proverb goes, study the Plains people "from childhood to childhood." What follows is general in nature and frequently inapplicable to every Plains tribe.

Everywhere on earth a child at birth is given a name. Among the Plains Indians, children were not named in the same manner in which American children are named to-



day. Boys received their names from their fathers, grandfathers, or uncles (father's brothers). Girls received their names from their mothers, grandmothers, or aunts (mother's sisters).

Names could be suggested by an event which occurred around the time of birth. A wild horse running crazy through a Sioux encampment was the inspiration for the naming of Crazy-Horse.

But what if nothing happened to suggest a name? Then no name was given. There is record of one boy who went nameless for seven years. It was not until he killed a bird and brought it back to camp that he received his name. Without plucking, cleaning, or cooking the bird he tried to eat its gall. The result, as comical as pathetic, prompted everyone to call him Gall from that day forward.

Names, however obtained, were not necessarily permanent. Often a boy, as he grew older, was able to earn another name. Two warriors gained such a reputation for ferocity in battle that their names were changed to Woman's-Heart and Young-Man-Afraid-Of-His-Horses. The former supposedly inspired such terror in the hearts of his enemies that they became as fearful as women are thought to be and fled from him, while the latter was so feared by his adversaries that the mere sight of his horses was enough to send them running.

A boy named Jumping-Badger at birth had his name changed twice. At age thirteen, after he killed his first buffalo, his name was "thrown on the ground" and he was renamed Four-Horns (implying that he possessed the power of two bull buffalos). He retained this name until he grew too old to hunt or fight. Then he sat in the councils of the old men, gave good advice, and made strong medicine. He was so good at this the tribe again "threw his name on the ground" and gave him the name by which he is known in American history — Sitting-Bull.

The naming of girls did not follow this pattern. There seems to have been a tendency to give girls names which conveyed images of beauty, comfort, intelligence and charm. For example, the only thing the Indians had to flavor their meat, aside from salt, was mint. A girl named Mint was expected to give flavor and, as it were, add spice to the lives of the people around her.





In a land that was mostly winter, the sun was revered to the point of worship. It was hoped that a girl called The-Mid-Day-Sun would be a warm, loving person able to nurture her family like the sun's rays nurtured the flowers of the field. Sweet-Scented-Grass was named after a powder which men used to improve the foul odor of their pipes. As the powder in the pipe bowl made smoking more endurable for those around the smoker, so this girl was supposed to be able, by her grace and charm, to make life more pleasant for those around her.

To age 12 or 14 boys and girls were regarded as children. To be an adult meant to have medicine power. Without it, a girl or boy had no place in society. Medicine power was that wonderful, almost miraculous, change worked by the divine powers within the life of a person to change that person into one of "the people."

Women's power was obtained in their ability to bear children. As soon as a girl gave evidence of this wonderful capability, she was recognized as an adult. For girls this process was as natural as the changing seasons.

For boys, medicine power was a very ephemeral thing. Since nothing as dramatic happened to the boys, they had to make something happen to them to consider themselves as adult.

This is where the concept of the vision quest came in. A girl's body told her she was a woman but it was necessary for a boy to seek his message from the divine powers. The message took the form of a dream or vision, so the boy would separate himself from everyone and deny himself all food and water for about four days. If he achieved a vision it might change his name. (The Northern Cheyenne, Bat, was afterward called Roman-Nose). It would provide rules of conduct (Roman-Nose was forbidden to eat food touched by white man's metal before going into battle) and a symbol with which he was identified (Roman-Nose wore a multicolored trailing warbonnet

with a headband to which a single buffalo horn was attached at the forehead).

This symbol was called a medicine bundle and it was a physical memorial to a spiritual event. Representing the animal or supernatural being seen in his vision, the medicine bundle was a man's good luck charm in battle (2,000 American soldiers once fired four bullets apiece at Roman-Nose and failed to hit him) and symbol of manhood in his village. It was kept in a high place in the lodge and cherished by the man. Women were not permitted to touch it lest they destroy his masculinity.

If a boy failed to obtain a vision on his first quest, he was bound to try again and again until he succeeded. If he ever failed, his last resort was to buy a vision from a man who had had many such dreams and therefore possessed great medicine — a medicine man.

When young people received their medicine power, their paths rapidly diverged according to the sex roles assigned them by society. These followed a very simple rule. If the task to be performed could result in death, then the men did it, trusting in their medicine power for protection. If the task to be performed were merely arduous to the point of exhaustion, the women did it.

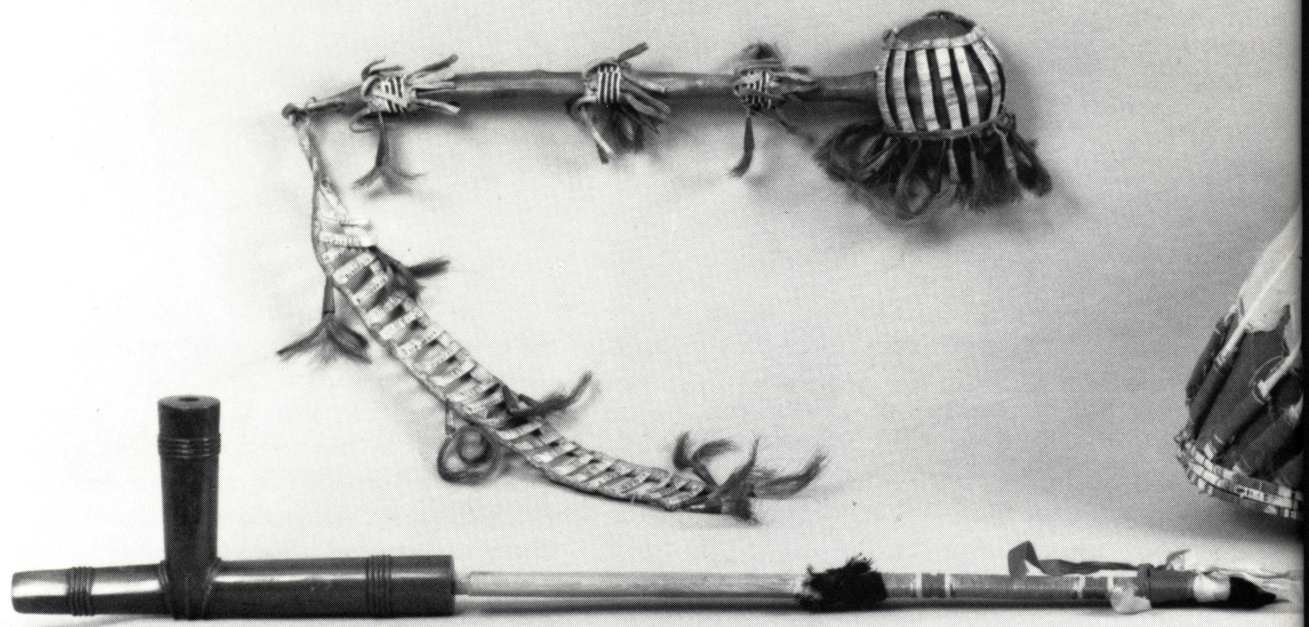
Logically then, it was the men who hunted the buffalo, went to war against other tribes, and fought to stem the tide of the American invasion when it came, not because they were bigger or stronger or more aggressive, but because their medicine gave them the power to do it.

But this is all they had the power to do. The men might risk life and limb to kill a 2,000 pound buffalo, but it was the women who dragged the carcass home, who stood in the fly-filled heat of July or the snowy cold of December to skin and butcher the buffalo. It was the women who scraped and tanned the hide, quilled, and beaded and, in short, turned the dead animal into glue, bowstrings, brushes, soup spoons and ladles, arrow straighteners, fly swatters, clothing, blankets, lodge covers, parfleches, hoes, sewing needles, tools, horse furniture, food, and talcum powder (this last from grinding dried out buffalo chips to dust and using that dust as we use baby powder).

Neither the boys nor the girls were born with the skills required of adults. They had to learn them. After receiv-

Plains Indian children spent most of their first year in a cradleboard. This Kiowa cradleboard is one of the most typical — a bead-covered case attached to two pieces of wood which form a modified V. It is lined with a gray window curtain and decorated with trade beads (peko).





ing their medicine power they were instructed in the ways of men and women, the boys at the sides of their fathers and the girls at their mothers' knees. It took several years to learn all that was necessary. And having learned all things, they learned one thing more. Women needed men and men needed women. A man could kill any number of buffalos, but could do nothing with them. A woman could turn a buffalo into almost anything, but could not hunt. It was then that they began looking at each other.

They were not necessarily looking for beauty. Since there was nothing that could either enhance or preserve beauty, it was silly to be attracted to a face, figure, or complexion that quickly blew away with the wind after age 16. A man wanted a woman who could chop wood, drag buffalos, and haul water. A woman wanted a man who would not hesitate to kill the enemy. Thus a man looked not at a woman's face, but at her handiwork. A woman was not charmed by a man's words, but by how he painted his horse, his face, or his clothing because these marks were an indication of his prowess in battle or the hunt. When men captured an enemy's horses, they advertised it by painting hoofprint marks on their own horse. When they killed an enemy, they let everyone know by a hand-print mark on face, horse, or clothing. And for every coup they counted came a feather.

Boy-girl activities among the Plains Indians varied according to tribe. Since their sex roles kept them apart, courtship often took the form of discreet meetings at the river or in the woods when the young woman was hauling

water or chopping wood. During these times the man would walk with her playing his flute and singing songs about his prowess as a hunter and warrior.

The goal of every young person was marriage and a family. The wedding arrangements were not what you might think. The young man did not simply buy his wife from her father for so many horses or guns. According to her abilities and the social position of her family, the young man would bring horses or goods and offer them to his would-be father-in-law.

If the offer were accepted, the young man would then make it clear that if the woman turned out to be a bad wife in any way he would "throw her away" and reclaim his gifts. The father-in-law would agree and then make it clear to the young man that if he were a bad husband, she could leave him or "throw him away," and the young man would forfeit his gifts. The gifts then were a kind of marriage insurance which provided a motivation for two people, bound by economic necessity rather than by love, to treat each other with some degree of courtesy and respect.

The couple would (that is to say, she would) build a tipi near his family or hers, depending on the tribe. He provided food and protection. She provided everything else. He owned the horses and she owned the house.

The quotation, "the life of a man is a circle, from childhood to childhood," actually better defines the life of a woman. Indian women became pregnant not as often as one might think due to the taboo among most tribes





which prohibited pregnancy for from one to five years after the birth of a child. Add to that the high rate of still-borns and miscarriages due to the tribes constant movement across the plains (often 20 to 100 miles a day on foot or on a horse) and you can see why families were small.

Though few, the children were not spoiled. Almost immediately the child was given to understand that his needs and comforts were secondary to the needs of the band, village, or tribe. The baby was wrapped in a rigid cradleboard once a day. Tubes or openings were fixed to allow for necessary elimination functions. The infant was fed as needed. Otherwise, the mother simply hung her baby in its cradleboard on a tree or horse, leaned it against something, or placed it on a high place and "ignored it." Not really, but her other work could not be interrupted by the baby. (This vast amount of work along with the aforementioned taboo were the primary reasons for the practice of polygyny.)

If the child cried, he cried, except at night or in enemy territory or near a herd of buffalo. Then the mother stopped the child's nostrils with her fingers. Very quickly the child learned when crying was not permitted. The child was not permanently freed from its board until it was about a year old. Discipline took the form of chiding, taunting, scolding, scratching even, but never striking.

Childhood play took the form of imitating the sex role model. Little boys played at the hunt and at war, took little girls as "wives," and played house. Little girls gathered sticks and walked hunched over like their mothers. From

These items were part of a Plains Indian warrior's world. Bottom left, Catlinite pipe with wood stem, ribbon, quillwork and feathers for decoration. Before any trade or negotiation, pipes such as this would be smoked to the four directions, and the smokers would pledge their souls, carried up in the exhaled smoke, as to the veracity of their dealings. Top left, war club, hide wrapped stick, wool, quillwork, and horsehair decoration. While enemies were killed with bows and arrows and guns, only those killed "hand-to-hand" as with a war club, were worthy of war honors. Right, Plains headdress, quillwork and horsehair decoration.

her childhood, to the childhood of her babies, this was a woman's life.

The men did other things. After marriage, a man's life became entwined with the activities of his military society. These societies were groups of warriors who banded together for military and social purposes. Though each group had its own songs, dances, insignia, equipment and other regalia, they could not be considered military units in our sense of the word. They were more like college fraternities whose status fluctuated on a yearly basis depending upon the exploits of their members. Their principal duties included enforcing camp discipline, regulating the buffalo hunt, executing the chief's wishes, and fostering a military spirit throughout the tribe. Each military society had a lodge where, according to one source, the warrior could find "a haven of temporary retreat from the cares of the family."





Women made all the clothing for the tribe members. This Blackfoot woman's dress is of a style dating to the first half of the nineteenth century. It is made of deerskin and decorated with glass beads and an ermine tail.



Through the military societies lay the path of advancement. When a man proved himself a great warrior, he might attain to one of the positions of leadership in the society and be entrusted with a lance, staff or sash emblematic of his leadership. Of course this obligated him to be the first one into the battle and the last one to leave, but if he succeeded he gained a larger and larger following when he went to war.

Since warfare was entirely voluntary, the number of people who followed him depended on his success as a leader and his generosity with the spoils of war. If he lost or unfairly divided the captured booty, people simply stopped following him.

If he lived to be 40 or more, he was aged indeed. His prowess as a hunter, warrior, and war leader gave his medicine and his age status so that when he ceased going to war the band or tribe would look to him for counsel and advice. He would be accepted into the council of the older men and, if he exhibited wisdom and good oratory, he might succeed in being, for a time, acknowledged as the band or village head man (what is commonly called a chief).

He held this position so long as he gave good advice on when to move the village or when and where to hunt the buffalo. He could command no one, he could only persuade. He spoke only for himself and his wife or wives in any negotiations. When his advice was bad, or he ceased to be able to chew his own meat, he ceased being a head man.

Quickly, or finally, he and she would die, either killed or worked to death. The burial custom was to wrap a body in a buffalo shroud and raise it high on a scaffold. The scaffold burial protected the body from scavenging animals. The buffalo shroud protected the body from birds. With the corpse were buried tools, weapons, and equipment. Sometimes a horse was slain. The surviving spouse cut his or her hair and body to show the depths of both grief and love. The dead person's things were then distributed among the tribe.

Life after death was expected to be a template of life on earth, but on a grander scale. Buffalos were bigger, horses faster, and the departed warrior always successful in the hunt. And therein lies the final irony. Worked to death in life, the Plains Indian woman was predestined to cook, and clean, and drag about spiritual buffalo carcasses throughout all eternity. For the Plains Indians, woman's work was literally never done. ☹

## READING LIST

For more about the lives and culture of the Plains Indians, you may wish to read some of the current books listed here.

### FOR ADULTS

(Available in the Gilcrease Museum Shop)

*Indian Life On The Upper Missouri* by John C. Ewers, University of Oklahoma Press

*The Cheyenne Indians* Vols. 1 & 2 by George Bird Grinnell, University of Nebraska Press

*Cheyenne Memories* by John Stands In Timber, University of Nebraska Press

*Pretty Shield Medicine Woman of the Crows* by Frank Linderman, University of Nebraska Press

*Plenty Coup, Chief of the Crows* by Frank Linderman, University of Nebraska Press

*The Sioux* by Royal B. Hassrick, University of Oklahoma Press

*Views of a Vanishing Frontier* by John C. Ewers, University of Nebraska Press

### FOR CHILDREN

(Available at the Tulsa Public Library)

*Indian Games & Crafts* by Robert Hofsinde

*The Sun Dance People* by Robert Erdoes

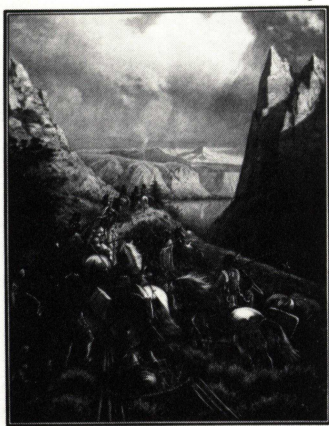
*Indians On Horseback* by Alice Marriott

*The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* by Paul Goble

*Buffalo Women* by Paul Goble



## William de la Montagne Cary



*Artist on the Missouri River*

By Mildred D. Ladner

Foreword by Fred A. Myers

Gracing the front cover of Mildred Ladner's new book, *William de la Montagne Cary: Artist on the Missouri River*, is the Cary painting, "Tribe on the Move."

MILDRED LADNER is the book editor for the *Tulsa World*, reviewer for the *Gilcrease Magazine*, author of an earlier book and a prolific contributor to a number of national magazines. With a Pennsylvania-Dutch background, a bachelor's degree from Moravian College and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin, she began her writing career as a reporter. She has worked for several newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *National Observer*, as well as the Associated Press.

In 1950 the young journalist met the Tulsa attorney John Ladner on one of his frequent business trips to Washington. This meeting led to marriage and a new home in Oklahoma.

On her second Sunday in Tulsa, John took his bride to visit Gilcrease Museum. She soon became a regular visitor. Upon discovering the research library with all its unpublished material, Mrs. Ladner realized its many potentialities. However, great quantities of material were still in packing boxes and other works were indiscriminately shelved. She joined a small group of volunteers in systematizing the resources, when she says, "I found it a pleasure and a privilege to work with such

# William de la Montagne Cary And Mildred Ladner . . . A Distinguished Combination

BY ERNEST F. DARLING

a knowledgeable organizer, the late Hope Holway."

In 1974, with the then director of the Gilcrease William R. Best, Mrs. Ladner paid a visit to the editor of the University of Oklahoma Press to discuss a literary project, the Gilcrease-Oklahoma Series on Western Art and Artists. The first book in the program was her *O.C. Seltzer: Painter of the Old West*, published in 1979. The Gilcrease library provided the primary materials for most of the author's needs.

When Dr. D. Duane Cummins of Oklahoma City University contributed the second in the series, *William R. Leigh: Western Artist*, most of his research was at the Gilcrease library and the museum's Leigh gallery featuring the artist's New York studio.

A full-time job on the *Tulsa World*, freelance writing, volunteer work for Tulsa libraries and museums, as well as keeping house, did not keep Mildred Ladner from producing the next addition to the series. Early this year appeared her *William de la Montagne Cary: Artist on the Missouri River*. This lively biography of the artist is a handsome volume, illustrated with many of his sketches and paintings.

Fred A. Myers, director of the Gilcrease Museum, says in his foreword to the book, "William de la Montagne Cary's day, in its quiet inevitable way, has come."

When asked about the research Mrs. Ladner bubbled with excitement as she recounted surprise discoveries in the files, personal meetings with many of William Cary's descendants and discussions with New York gallery heads.

At times the work become a family affair, as when her daughter Mary Patricia Robertson, Princeton, New Jersey, turned researcher. Son Edward and daughter Helen, both of Colorado Springs, assisted with the map work and in obtaining infor-

mation from Cary's great-grandson, Robert C. Cary of Littleton, Colorado.

In bringing us the story of William Cary, Mildred Ladner uses as a backdrop western American history from 1860 to the early 1900s. And in the author's words, "Cary's work constitutes an untapped treasure of written and visual experience on the American frontier. He was one of the last to see the Indians before the intrusion of settlers. Cary left a legacy of authentic sketches and paintings made before the approaching iron rail . . . changed forever the way of life on the prairies."

Cary was at the end in a long line of documentary artists on the American West, which began with James Otto Lewis and George Catlin in the early 1830s. Cary's first taste of the West came in 1861 at age 22 on an adventure jaunt up the Missouri River. Later, as an illustrator/reporter in New York, he again traveled beyond the Mississippi where he sketched and interviewed many famous personages of the Indian Wars era. His accounts were found in such periodicals as *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and *Century*.

Readers will find of great interest the concluding chapters of the book on the Cary family, the disposition of his works after his death, and especially the negotiations of Thomas Gilcrease for the acquisitions now at the museum.

Soon after the death of William Cary in 1922, the noted art critic Malcolm Vaughn wrote, "Of his kind he is valuable. He is a pictorial historian to whom the nation must be ever grateful, an artist who must in time become as warmly cherished as our colonial American painters." ▵

A frequent contributor to the *Gilcrease Magazine*, Ernest Darling appreciates the writing of Mildred Ladner and the painting and sculpture of William Cary.



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#### ILLUSTRATIONS

All of the illustrations on pages 10-22 and 24-32 are of paintings, sculpture or objects in the collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

#### FRONT COVER

Mary Nimmo Moran, "Cochrane's O' the Craig, Strathaven" (1882), 9¾ inches by 11⅞ inches, etching, black ink on cream parchment.

#### BACK COVER

This is a unique example of Santa Clara black pottery because it is a collaborative effort on the part of the Youngblood family members. Nathan shaped the pot, Nancy carved the design and Mela polished it. The pot will be part of the "Santa Clara Pottery by the Youngblood Family" exhibition at Gilcrease Museum, described beginning inside the front cover. The pot is on loan from Wayne Rumley.

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## SANTA CLARA POTTERY BY THE YOUNGBLOOD FAMILY

An exhibition at Gilcrease Museum,  
November 3-25, of black pottery by Mela,  
Nathan and Nancy Youngblood, made  
in the traditional Santa Clara manner.  
Preview/black pottery sale November 2.  
Demonstration firing at the museum by  
Nathan Youngblood on November 3.

