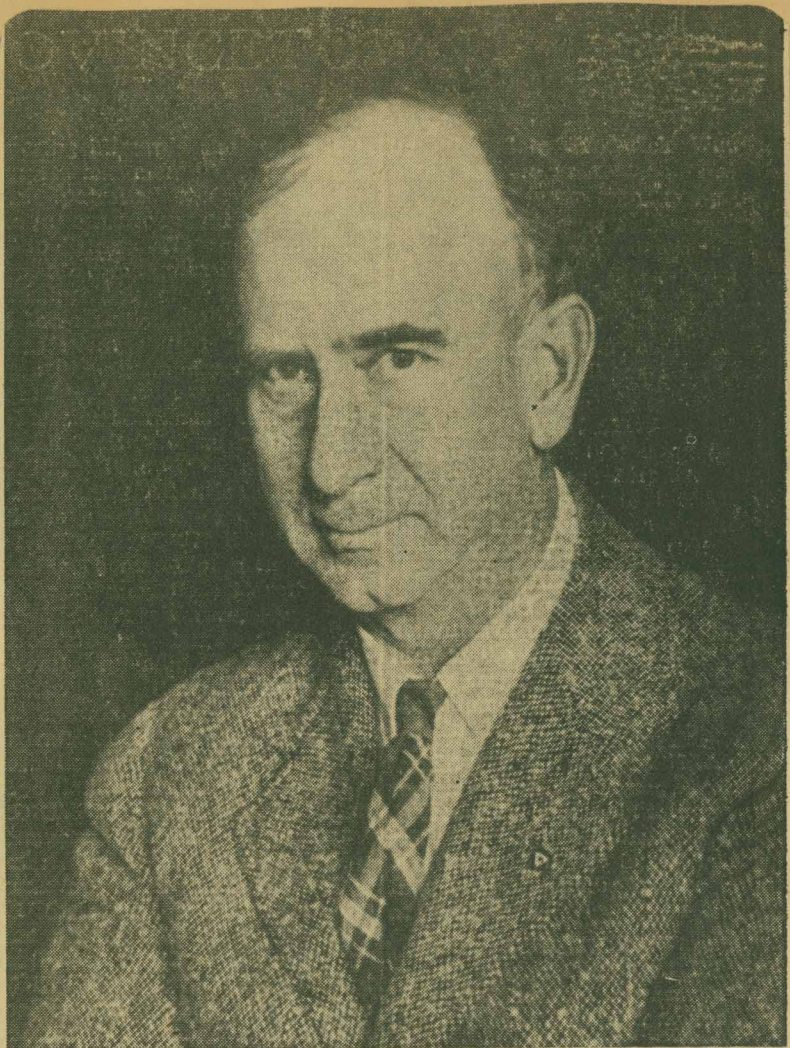


Art Association Growing (CONT.)



Charles W. Hawthorne

brownish and highly finished pictures of Halsall seemed to her old fashioned, and on the other hand the works in which impressionist color effects were lacking or in which the subject matter was not pleasing were relegated to the "no good" category. Perhaps we should bear in mind, though, that we are discussing Miss Abbie's criticism 30 to 40 years after she wrote it, and this is a disadvantage we fancy few art critics past or present have had or will have to undergo.

We now begin to deal with a time in Association history when tension was increasing between modern and conservative, as those terms were understood in the mid-twenties. Contributing to this stress was doubtless the fact that the constitution adopted with the incorporation of the institution did not readily provide for change in officer personnel in line with

changes in outlook of the artist membership. Of the twelve trustees elected in 1921 at the time of incorporation, eight were still in office up to the moment of the annual meeting of 1928, and the changes affecting the other trustee posts had come about through resignations or deaths and did not reflect any positive volition of the general membership. During these eight years the elections were little more than routine endorsements of a slate of candidates picked by a nominating committee which in turn had been selected by the trustees. Moreover, the nominations of this committee need not be posted or made known until the actual time they were to be acted upon in the annual meeting. It will be remembered that the trustees selected also the president, the director and the five honorary vice-presidents, the last being a board in which there was

only one change in the first eight years after the incorporation. It will thus be seen that the Art Association during the 1920's had some of the aspects of a closed corporation.

Appointed as director for 1925 was Dr. Percival Eaton, who had been made acting director late in the Summer of 1924. Dr. Eaton was a much respected, retired physician, and he seems to have assumed the office on a temporary basis until someone more experienced in art could be found. Despite a strong bent towards conservatism, he directed the Association fairly and efficiently.

On the jury for 1925, in addition to the honorary vice-presidents, were William L'Engle, Karl Knaths, Charles A. Kaeselau, Robert Ball, William Auerbach-Levy, Harold Haven Brown, Tod Lindenmuth, John Frazier and Edwin A. Wilson, the last three constituting a special jury for prints drawings and watercolors. Besides the regular exhibition, a no-jury show was put on late in the Summer. Among the new exhibitors appearing this year were Grace Pfeiffer, Morris Davidson, Anton Van Dereck, H. F. Wong, Harold Walker, Shelby Shackelford and Martha Hoke.

When the 1926 season came, we find that the director was Harold Haven Brown, with Dr. Percival Eaton now being assistant director. The new director, who was the father of Mrs. Philip Malicoat, was a professional artist, who in addition had been director of the John Herron Art Institute, in Indianapolis. He was thus well qualified for the post in the Art Association.

Rebellion Starts

The 1926 season, however, was not calm. Precipitating a controversy was the fact that the prospectus for the exhibition of this year had on the jury list only the names of the five honorary vice-presidents, whereas there should have been at least five additional artists on the roll. The resulting dissatisfaction brought forth a petition, written and circulated by Tod Lindenmuth and Ross Moffett, which was signed by 30 members and sent to the director in time for consideration at a member's meeting called for June 17, 1926. We have found this somewhat ancient document in the Art Association files, and it is quoted below in its entirety.

"We, the undersigned members of the Provincetown Art Association, Inc., petition the Directors and Board of Trustees of the Association to add four painters of modern sympathies to the jury for the forthcoming exhibition, the membership of which was announced in a circular of June 1, 1926.

"Considering the fact that there are in Provincetown two groups, each having a different opinion as to what forms of painting are most likely to manifest a genuine artistic merit, we regard it as unfair and out of keeping with American traditions for representatives of either group to be the sole arbiters as to what paintings shall be shown in the galleries of the association.

"If it be objected that change cannot be made in the jury for 1926 because its membership has already been announced in printed circulars, we wish to draw attention to the fact that a precedent has already been established in the association whereby unannounced painters have served on its juries."

In regard to this petition the meeting of June 17 developed into a warm debate between Charles A. Kaeselau, representing the dissidents, and Richard Miller, speaking as an honorary vice-president. Mr. Miller, who liked nothing better than a rough and tumble argument, enjoyed this set-to and stated afterwards that in Mr. Kaeselau he had found an opponent worthy of his steel. The meeting passed a motion asking the honorary vice-presidents to appoint additional jurors and to consider other matters of the petition. In due time the honorary vice-presidents published the names of seven more jurors, but of these only two were acceptable to the signers of the petition.

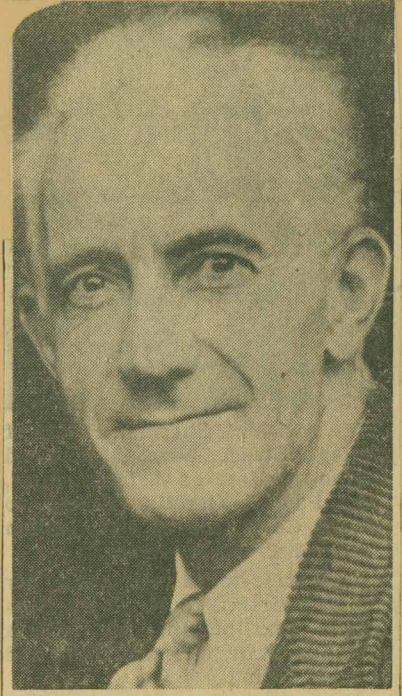
Early "Cubist" Painting

When the 1926 annual opened there was on the walls a small cubist-like picture called "Hence the Pyramids," and signed by a purported Ad Wolgast. Soon it became known that "Wolgast" was none other than Richard Miller. This hoax was not received with amusement by all members of the Art Association. Some blamed Mr. Miller, some the Art Association in general, and some the members of the jury who had been counted on to look after the interests of the moderns, but who had been fooled by a faked modern picture.

Growing out of the arguments of the early Summer of 1926 came a group, and at the July 15, 1926 meeting a motion asking for such a showing was introduced and passed, as the secretary recorded "unanimous with two dissenting". The text of this motion was, "that in the future, that in addition to the regular annual show directed by the vice-presidents and their jury, another show of equal duration shall be held by the moderns directed by a committee selected

by them from their numbers." The ease with which this motion was adopted came as a surprise to the moderns, who remained skeptical lest it be reversed at the annual meeting in August.

It turned out, however, that the officers of the Association had no other idea than to go along with the motion for a separate modern show for at least the year 1927. Although the provisions of the motion conflicted, as the officers realized, with the provisions of the Association's constitution, it is likely that most of the officials welcomed this project as a way



Oliver Chaffee

out of a bothersome dilemma. While there were doubtless a few better enders, the general view of the heads of the Association was perhaps expressed by President William H. Young in his report at the annual meeting of 1926, which in part is as follows.

Evidence Of Life

"Differences of opinion naturally arise in the conduct of the affairs of any association or corporation and such differences are manifestations of interest and usually of strength, without them the association is very apt to lack life and vitality. We have had such manifestations during the past year which no doubt will result in the general good of all, and I think we are to be congratulated on the spirit of toleration and respect each individual or party has shown for the opinions of the other."

The "First Modernistic Exhibition," as it was called in the inside of the catalog, opened July 2, 1927, and closed on the 25th

of that month. The committee, in reality a jury and hanging committee, in charge of this exhibition comprised Floyd Clymer, Edwin Dickinson, Charles A. Kaeselau, Karl Knaths, Blanche Lazzell, Lucy L'Engle, Tod Lindenmuth, Dorothy Loeb, Ellen Ravenscroft, Agnes Weinrich and Ross Moffett, the last named being chairman. Going into the organization of the exhibition was more interest and enthusiasm than any previous Art Association show had seen. Displayed were 75 oils, 51 assorted prints, drawings and watercolors and three wood carvings.

Most of the names of the exhibitors in the first modern exhibition have already been noted in connection with the earlier annuals. Some of the artists whose names appeared now for the first time in the Association were Niles Spencer, Jack Tworokov, George Ault, Blanche Baxter, Mary Tanahill, Joe Meierhans, Charles Martin and Richard Cox. A description of this and other of the early modern exhibitions of the Art Association will be attempted in a future installment of these notes.

"Modern" Lecture

During the modern show a lecture on modern art was given in the Association by Charles Martin, who for several years in this period taught a Summer class in Provincetown under the sponsorship of Teacher's College, Columbia University.

How did the Art Association in general take this holding of what was considered an advanced show under a committee representing a minority of the membership and not selected by the duly constituted board of honorary vice-presidents? To answer this we can hardly do more than quote a paragraph from the report of Director Harold Haven Brown, given at the annual meeting of 1927, after the exhibition was over.

"The past season of the Art Association has been noticeable from the fact of a division of the artists on the subject of modernism. This difference of point of view, while in no sense new, had not in past years been sufficiently pronounced to bring about two separate shows. This proposal, however, was duly noted upon at the last annual meeting and arrangements proceeded in due course under a competent modernist committee. This exhibition took place during July of this year, was ably hung and managed by its sponsors, and was a distinct success".

The regular annual exhibition