

# Century's Early Years Saw Cape End Art Association Take Shape

By Ross Moffett

This the second of a series of articles written by Ross Moffett, now one of the older and widely known year round Provincetown artists—this chapter also deals with the very early Cape End scene—others in the series will appear in subsequent issues of The Advocate.

One of the first problems confronting the membership of the new Association was to find a suitable place for the exhibition they expected to hold in 1915. Although the Nautilus Club room, in the upper part of the building now belonging to the Wharf Theatre, and the Masonic Hall were considered, it was decided to use the north room of the Town Hall, for which consent had been given by the Selectmen. In this room, which has since been cut up with partitions, were held the first six of the annual exhibitions.

## Own Quarters

It seems to have been early realized, however, that the Association would eventually need quarters of its own, and in 1918 we find the Association buying for \$2,000 what was known as the Bangs property, and in 1920 purchasing for \$3,500 the property adjoining on the east. The house on the latter property, with remodeling, was to become the present large gallery of the Association, while the Bangs House, between the present building and Bangs Street, was to be torn down.

It may be interesting to note who were some of the people to whom we are indebted for carrying on the necessary but sometimes prosaic work required for the new organization. Many of the artists on the scene at the time appear to have been more

concerned with the actual exhibitions than with attending and taking part in the business meetings. The two artists who, although often at variance with each other, seem to have been most active in all matters pertaining to the conduct of the Association were E. Ambrose Webster and Gerrit A. Beneker. The record shows these two always at the meetings, taking a part and ever ready to assume any duties or responsibilities that might be required.

## They Helped

Other artists whose endeavors were sufficiently important to be written down by the secretary include: Mrs. Henry Mottet, Mrs. J. H. Herring (mother of the present owner of the Provincetown Art Shop), Mary Kirkup, Clara Saunders, Mary Bacon Jones, Katharine Critcher, Elizabeth Thomas, and Sarah Munroe. Among town people whose work we find recorded are: Judge and Mrs. Walter Welsh, John Adams, J. Lothrop Higgins, Mary S. MacIntyre, Frances Gifford and Norine Doane. Of the great importance to the young organization was the interest of the two leading bankers of the town, Moses N. Gifford and William H. Young. The latter, whose skilled political sense steered the association through its first twenty years, may with reason be called the Father of the Art Association.

During the early years the Association was not without its growing pains, which appear to have been the forerunners of the convulsions leading to the division between modern and conservative to which the organization

had to accommodate itself in the 1920's and early 1930's. The minutes disclose that once in this early period a meeting was faced with a letter of resignation from a prominent member, although of what stress this letter was a symptom is not stated. John Adams the postmaster, spoke to this question, and those of us who remember John rising in Town Meeting or orating on Fourth of July have little doubt that his words on this occasion were colorful and effective. The resignation was not accepted.

For its first year the Association had 147 members. By 1917 the membership had grown to 289, which for that period compares not unfavorably with the present all-time high of over 400 members.

Turning to the catalogue of the 1915 exhibition, we find that the jury consisted of the three vice-presidents and the art committee that had been named on the evening the Art Association was formed. Among the 44 exhibitors, in addition to the jurors, were: Agness Weinrich, Marion Hawthorne, Ethel Mars, Ada Gilmore (Chaffee), Mildred MacMillan, Margery Ryerson, Stella Johnson (Edel), Katharine Critcher, Elizabeth Thomas, Sarah Munroe, Florence Waterbury, Tod Lindenmuth, Ives Gammell, Dodge MacKnight, Henry Sutter, Arnold Slade, Lawrence Grant, Adolph Blondheim and Frederick Marvin.

## More Artists

By the summer of 1916 the number of artists in Provincetown was much larger than it had been at the time of the founding of the Association only two years earlier. This increase was largely due to the war in Europe and the consequent closing off of foreign travel for American artists, many of whom came instead to Provincetown. This year saw the inception of the Beachcombers Club and its equivalent women's Sail Loft Club. Several of the artists who appeared on the scene at this time or slightly later—Max Bohm, George Elmer Browne, Richard Miller and Gifford Beal—were what for the period concerned may be called big name artists. Indeed, it may be said that the prestige enjoyed by these men, along with Charles W. Hawthorne, has perhaps no exact parallel at the present time, when the field of art is relatively more crowded

and competitive than in the earlier period.

In this year of 1916, when two exhibitions were held, the August show represented 66 artists. The jurors were the three vice-presidents with George Senseney and George Elmer Browne. What must have been an unwieldy hanging committee was made up of H. Cranford Smith, Kendall Saunders, Frederick Marvin, Oliver Chaffee, Tod Lindenmuth, Ross Moffett and Oscar Gieberich. Gerrit A. Beneker was chairman of the art committee. Among those whose names appeared in an Art Association catalogue were Peggy Bacon, David Erickson, Nancy Ferguson, Elizabeth Howland (Caliga), Blanche Lazzell, Bror J. O. Nordfeldt, William Zorach, Marguerite Zorach and Beatrice Levy.

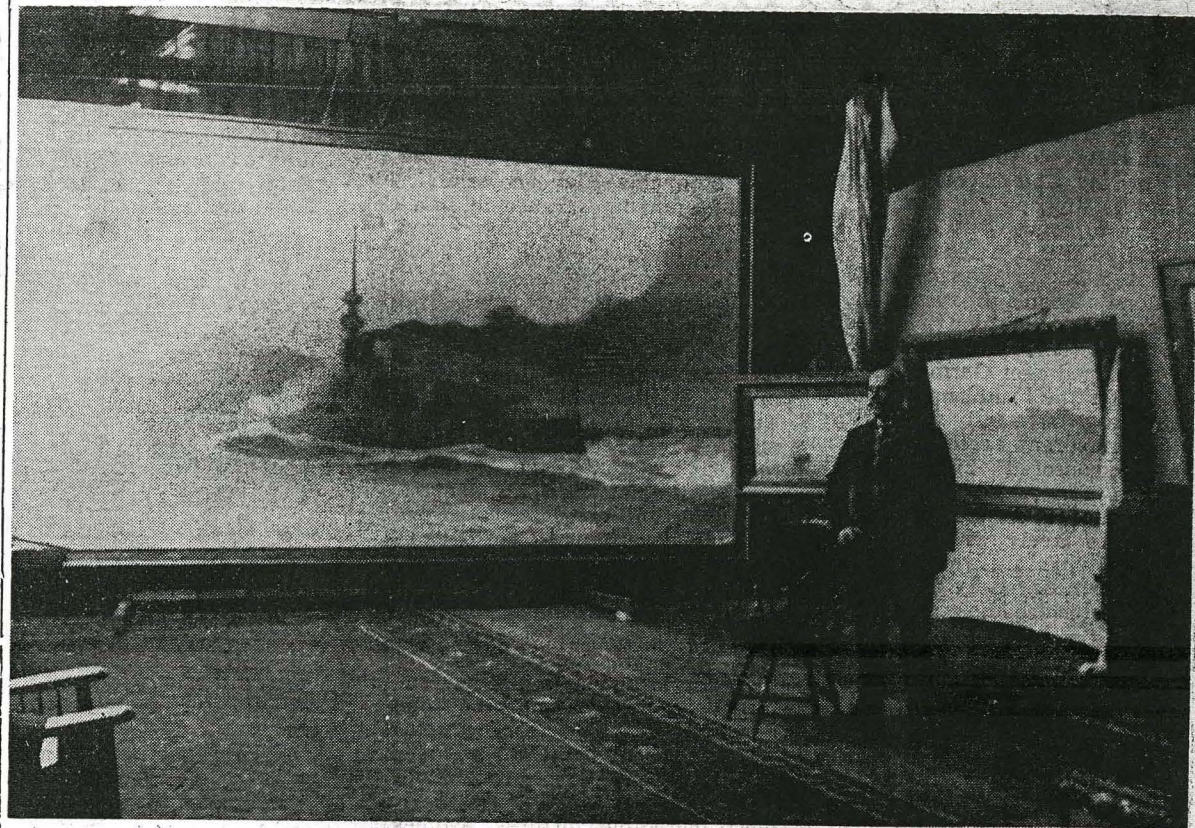
## Five Art Schools

The 1916 catalogue advertised five art schools: The West End School of Art, George Elmer Browne; A Summer School of Painting, E. Ambrose Webster; The Cape Cod School of Art, Charles W. Hawthorne, with assistant Oscar Gieberich and director Harry N. Campbell; A Modern Art School, Bror J. O. Nordfeldt, William Zorach, M. Musselman Car, Frederick Burt and Marguerite Zorach; and a Class in Color and Monochrome Etching, George Senseney. Only the first three of these schools were to survive more than two seasons. On the cover of this catalogue was a wood block print by Tod Lindenmuth, whose prints appeared on the covers also for the years 1917 and 1918.

Not content with the two shows in the Town Hall, the Art Association sent out a traveling exhibition of 43 paintings and 25 prints which opened in October, 1916, in the Vose Galleries in Boston. The expense of this exhibition, which appears to have been out several months, was \$126, of which \$50 was contributed by the Provincetown Board of Trade.

During the four years following 1916 the annual exhibitions adhered to the pattern of those of 1915 and 1916. To a great extent the same names kept reappearing in the lists of jurors, hanging committees and exhibitors. The new faces in the jury box or on the hanging committee for this four year period include Nancy Ferguson, Ethel Mars, John Frazier, Ada Gilmore (Chaffee), Sarah Munroe, Max Bohm and Mrs. Henry Mottet.

A somewhat random selection of



One of the very early artists was William F. Halsall, remembered as a dignified elderly gentleman, whose thoughts often took him back to his days in the Union Navy during the Civil War. He had painted in the old Shirt Factory building on Court Street a thirty-foot canvass of the battleship Oregon steaming around the Horn in 1898, a picture that was still fresh in the minds of local people in 1914.

the 1917-1920 period with the dates on which they first appeared in the Art Association catalogue is as follows: 1917; Maude Ainslee, Julie Morrow, Maude Squire, Mary Tannehill, Flora Schoenfeld, Gladys Young. 1918; Lytton Buehler, Charles Demuth, Alfred Groll, Charles Hopkinson, Louis Kronberg, Charles H. Pepper, Harley Perkins, Ellen Ravenscroft. 1919; W. H. W. Bicknell, I. H. Caliga, Frank Carson, Karl Knaths, Lucy L'Engle, William L'Engle, Elizabeth Paxton, Frank Schwartz, Elizabeth Taylor. 1920; William Boogar, Florida Duncan, Edna B. Hopkins, Dorothy Gregory, Albro Hibbard, Catherine Liddell, John Noble, Harry (Heinrich) Pfeiffer, Françoise Verheyden. The cover of the 1919 catalogue carries a block print by Mildred McMillan, and the cover of the 1920 catalogue has an anniversary block print of the Mayflower, with the artist not named.

We have now come to the end of the period of Town Hall exhibitions. When next we take up the Provincetown Art Association it

will be as an institution in the process of incorporating and in the throes of hastily preparing its present quarters for the 1921 annual, this under the directorship of the remarkable artist and plainsman John (Bill) Noble.