

An ambition as realistic as was his art

By Virginia Bohlin
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

It was a telling moment in the life of a 23-year-old newly graduated art student from Needham, when he wrote his mother in 1905: "HP says it's one of the most realistic pictures ever done in the school."

Young Newell Convers Wyeth (who would be known as N.C.), on his way to being one of the country's famous painters and illustrators, and the patriarch of three generations of artists, was referring to Howard Pyle, the "Father of American Illustration."

Wyeth (1882-1945) had graduated the previous year from the Howard Pyle School of Illustration in Wilmington, Del., and the painting was a 38-by-26-inch oil that the Saturday Evening Post magazine had commissioned from him for its Nov. 11, 1905 issue.

Entitled "And They Did Their Trading from the Top of Battlemented Walls," a depiction of Cree Indians trading over the stockade with the early French, the painting was an illustration for Arthur E. McFarlane's "An Antiente Greate Companie," a story about the Hudson Bay Trading Co.

The painting, which descended in a New England family, will be offered at Skinner's American & European Paintings & Prints Auction Friday at its Boston gallery. It is expected to bring \$300,000-\$500,000, the auction's highest estimate.

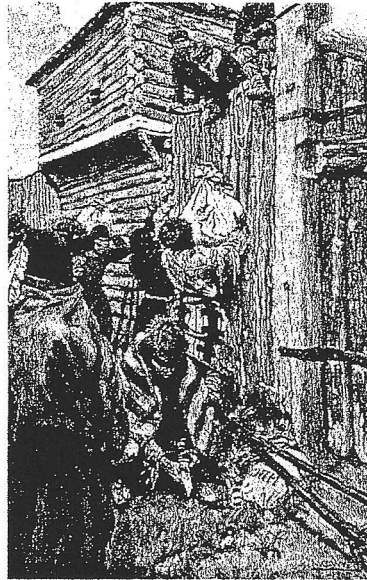
In the letter to his mother, Wyeth also wrote: "Oh, if only I had the time to paint what I have in my mind. I'll do it some day." That day and many more certainly came, as the realist artist created over 3,000 paintings and illustrated 112 books in his lifetime.

Among his illustrations for the classics was a series for Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island," the proceeds from which provided him with the money to buy 18 acres of land in Chadds Ford, Pa., and to build his home and studio. Now owned by the Brandywine River Museum, the house and studio are a National Historic Landmark open for tours from April through November.

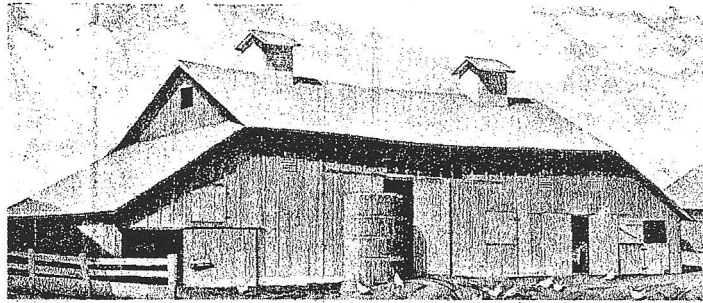
Other top offerings in the sale include a 1941 painting of an old red barn (\$100,000-\$150,000) by the Iowa artist Marvin Cone (1891-1964); a still life (\$80,000-\$120,000) by Philadelphia-born artist John F. Francis (1808-86); and "Olive Trees" (\$80,000-\$120,000), painted in Cagnes-sur-Mer, France, by the Michigan-born Impressionist, Frederick Carl Frieseke (1874-1937). The work was previously unknown until its recent discovery at a New Hampshire yard sale.

Paintings will be sold at 4 p.m., following the noon auction of prints, which includes "Pique," a 1959 black-and-beige colored linocut by Pablo Picasso (\$25,000-\$35,000). Proceeds from the sale of the Picasso print will benefit the

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES



French settlers is expected to bring \$300,000-\$500,000 at Skinner's American & European Paintings & Prints Auction. Iowa painter Marvin Cone's 1941 "Old Timer" (below) is also expected to be a top seller (\$100,000-\$150,000).



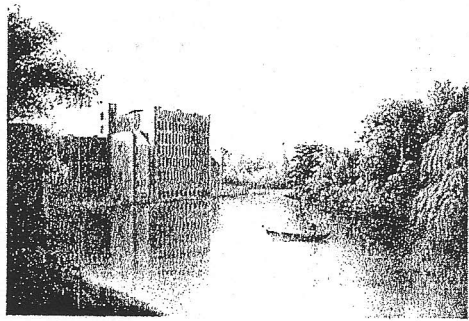
Boston Symphony Orchestra.

He was the preeminent portraitist in Federal America and his paintings are in museums in this country and in Europe. Yet, some may be unaware that a tiny token of his talent is almost always in our purse or pocket.

The artist is Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), and the token is the image of George Washington on the US dollar bill. Stuart painted three life portraits of the nation's first president, but the best known is the 1796 "Athenaeum" portrait, so called because it was acquired after Stuart's death by the Boston Athenaeum, the library on Beacon Street.

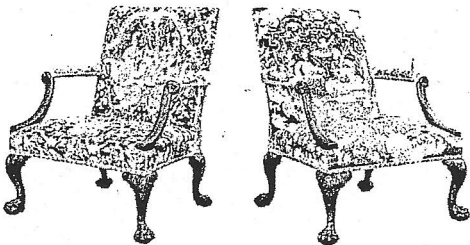


Gilbert Stuart's portrait of the Rev. John Thornton Kirkland, Harvard College president from 1810-28, is one of 80 works in the "Gilbert Stuart And His Times" exhibition and sale at William Vareika Fine Arts, Ltd. in Newport, R.I. N.C. Wyeth's 1905 painting depicting Cree Indians trading furs over the stockade with early



The original unfinished portrait now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts, which owns it jointly with the National Portrait Gallery in Washington. It was commissioned by Martha Washington as a pair of portraits of her and her husband for Mount Vernon, their Virginia home, but

This pair of mid-18th-century George II library armchairs, formerly at Gibside, an English country estate, will be offered at Doyle's auction Wednesday in New York (\$100,000-\$150,000 estimate). Thomas Doughty's circa 1830s "Old Silk Mill" is among works in the Vareika gallery sale, which will benefit the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum in Saunterstown, R.I. Originally thought to depict the Boott Mills, one of Lowell's first textile mills, now a museum, it was later found to depict a mill in Derby, England, site of the ancestral home of Kirk Boott, the Boston-born industrialist.



Stuart kept the unfinished painting in his studio and used it for making copies. He is said to have made up to 70 replicas, which he sold for \$100 each. One of the replicas sold last month at Sotheby's American Paintings Auction for \$398,500.

That was more than 1,000 times the \$375 value of his estate when Stuart died in Boston, where he had settled in 1805 with his wife and 12 children. With little money and deeply in debt, his wife, Charlotte, was unable to purchase a grave site, so Stuart was buried in an unmarked (and still unlocated) grave in the Old South Burial Ground in Boston Common.

However, Stuart's memory is kept very much alive through the legacy of the more than 1,000 portraits, including those of the first six US presidents, which he did in his lifetime, and through the preservation of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum in Saunterstown, R.I.

An exhibition and sale to benefit the birthplace (a National Historic Landmark) and museum is being held through March 5 at William Vareika Fine Arts, Ltd., of Newport, R.I. It features 80 works by Stuart and his contemporaries, including 10 by Stuart and four by his talented daughter Jane, who at 15 had one of her paintings exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum.

The benefit is the latest mission of Bill Vareika, a 1974 graduate of Boston College, and his wife, Alison, who had two goals when they opened their gallery in 1987: to provide a public space for the exhibition of important historical American art and to support charitable causes. Over the past 24 years the Vareikas' efforts have resulted in millions of dollars in contributions to a wide array of community causes and nonprofit organizations.

A pair of mid-18th-century George II library armchairs from Gibside, the country estate in Durham County, England, once owned by the Bowes-Lyon ancestors of Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the late queen mother, highlight Doyle's auction Wednesday in New York.

Gibside is now a National Trust property and the chairs have been consigned by the estate of Joseph A. Patrick, the late chairman of Baird, Patrick & Co., the Jersey City investment firm. The chairs with tapestry upholstered padded backs and seats have a \$100,000-\$150,000 estimate, the second highest expected price of the 476 lots in the auction of English & Continental Furniture & Decorations, Old Master Paintings & Drawings.

A Rococo mahogany clothespress marked "Gibside," also the marking on one of the armchairs, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The highest estimate in the sale is \$150,000-\$250,000 for the 36-by-28-inch oil painting "Miss Cazenove on her Favorite Hunter" by the Swiss artist Jacques-Laurent Agasse (1767-1849). After studying art in Geneva and animal anatomy at a school of veterinary medicine in France, Agasse established himself as an animal painter in Switzerland. Around 1800 he moved to England where he exhibited horse portraits at the Royal Academy.

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