

## THE ART AND ARTISTS OF BUFFALO

By William J. Barney

Let's go back in time to the year 1828. It's a pleasant spring day in the prospering village of Buffalo. Looking down Seneca Street toward Willink Avenue (later to become Main Street), it's hard to believe that a little over 14 years ago this whole area was almost barren ground, left in a smoldering ruin by the fire set by British troops in the War of 1812.

Now Seneca Street is lined with attractive homes built by the merchants, bankers, and professional men whose stores and offices are only a short walk away.

The packet boat has just arrived from Albany, and some of its passengers are straggling by on Willink Avenue, possibly bound for Rathbun's Eagle Tavern. One man, however, turns up Seneca Street, moving slowly under the burden of a heavy leather valise. He wears a large, dark brown hat, its broad brim flopping up and down as he walks. His black cape is long and flowing and shows the dust of travel. A colorful bandanna is knotted about his neck.

Halting in front of the most prosperous looking house in the block, the gentleman makes an attempt to improve his appearance, then opens the gate in the neat picket fence. As he approaches the steps, we see a folded easel is slung across his back. Answering his knock on the front door, a maidservant confronts him imperiously.

Before he can speak, she snaps, "The master ain't in!"

Undaunted, the traveler gives the girl an elaborate bow, sweeping off his hat in the process. "Then might I trouble you, my dear young lady," he says, "to ask your mistress if I may speak with her?"

Impressed with his courtly manner, the maid softens her tone. "And who should I say is calling, sir?"

"The name is immaterial. Simply tell your lady that I am an artist, just arrived from New York to paint the portraits of Buffalo's leading citizens."

This was the itinerant artist of colonial times and the early years of the republic. Landscapes were not popular then, so in order to make a living, many artists concentrated on portrait painting. Sometimes talented, often inept, they roamed about the countryside seeking commissions. Remunerated with little more than food and lodging, they would execute likenesses of the head of the house and members of his family, then move on to seek their next subject and his hospitality. Their work was usually unsigned.



*Hezekiah Salisbury, with his brother, Smith, published Buffalo's first newspaper, the Buffalo Gazette. This portrait of him in the Historical Society's collection is unsigned and may have been painted by one of the itinerant artists who roamed the country in the early 1800s.*

## THE EARLY ARTISTS

Buffalo undoubtedly welcomed a number of these wanderers before a resident artist community developed. Local historian Sheldon Ball, in his pamphlet, *Buffalo in 1825*, listed "two painters, with five assistants." Since at that time homes and other buildings were being erected at a lively rate, we can be fairly certain that these artisans were fully occupied applying paint to wood rather than canvas. It is possible, however, that one or more of these Buffalo workmen rose from the ranks to become a practicing artist.

Art training was available in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston in the 1700s, but Buffalo had no art school until the middle of the 19th century when one was started by Andrew Isaacs, an actor who used the stage name of Andrews. Although his own paintings were mere copies of prints, he taught landscape painting to a class of about 30, most of them the wives of wealthy local merchants and none notably talented.

An art instructor who discovers latent genius in one of his students is understandably delighted; so Andrews must have been quite thrilled to observe the remarkable progress of 16-year-old Charles Caryl Coleman, the son of a Main Street druggist. He undoubtedly encouraged the youth's father to seek better instruction for him, and young Charles was sent to Paris to study. Then the Civil War broke out, and Coleman came home to enlist in the Union forces. After serving three years in the grueling conflict, he resumed his peaceful studies in European academies. He never returned to Buffalo but settled on the picturesque Isle of Capri, where he established his studio and became one of the world's renowned landscape painters. He died in 1928.

Buffalo was a thriving city of 18,000 by 1840, and the artists who came here during the following ten years found a ready market for their work. Photography, then in its infancy, was becoming a popular method of obtaining likenesses of every member of the household, but the small copper daguerreotypes were tucked away in family albums while oil paintings of Mother and Father graced the parlor walls of every well-to-do home.

One of the first portraitists to arrive in the city was A. G. D. Tuthill, an Englishman who had studied in London under the famed American expatriate, Benjamin West. Tuthill painted the portraits of many prominent

Buffalonians, including Joseph Ellicott himself. This excellent work is in the collection of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Museum.

William John Wilgus, who came to Buffalo in 1828 at the age of nine with his father showed remarkable artistic ability in his youth and was sent to New York in 1834 to study. His teacher was the great artist-inventor, Samuel F. B. Morse, then president of the National Academy of Design. At 18, Wilgus returned to Buffalo and began a successful portrait painting career. Unfortunately, he was plagued with ill health, and beginning in 1846, he spent his winters in the South. However, he continued to maintain his studio here until his death of consumption at the age of 34 in 1853.

By that time, there was considerable competition for portrait work in the city. The most successful artists were Thomas Le Clear, William H. Beard, and Lars Sellstedt. Also active were Matthew Wilson, Augustus Rockwell, A. B. Nimbs, and Albert W. Samuels.

Thomas Le Clear, a native of Owego, New York, was an itinerant artist as a teenager, but at the age of 21, he became a student of the noted historical painter, Henry Inman, in New York. When Le Clear came to Buffalo in 1847, he was 29 and already established as an artist of national repute; so his talents were soon in demand among the growing number of prosperous Buffalonians. During his years here, he also did numerous popular genre paintings, including *Buffalo Newsboy*, which is now in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery collection. The Historical Society Museum also has some fine examples of Le Clear's portrait work. In 1863, he moved to New York with his family and became one of the leading portraitists in the East.

William H. Beard, born in Painesville, Ohio, in 1825, also was an itinerant artist until he was 21, when he went to New York to live with his brother, James, 11 years his elder and an accomplished artist. (James, incidentally, was born in Buffalo.) Profiting from this association, William was able to come to Buffalo in 1851 and enter the portrait field.

After five years of profitable work, Beard went to Europe and spent three years in study and travel. He returned to Buffalo in 1858, worked here for two years, then moved to New York, marrying Thomas Le Clear's 18-year-old daughter, Caroline, in 1863. Beard became famous for his humorous,

humanized animal paintings. The Buffalo Club on Delaware Avenue has one of these.

Lars Augustus Sellstedt, a Swedish-born sailor, settled in Buffalo in 1842 when he was 23. A self-taught artist, he gained much from a close friendship with Wilgus and Beard and became a successful local portraitist and a highly esteemed citizen. He was also noted for his marines, landscapes, and genre paintings.



*Although Lars Sellstedt painted many prominent Buffalonians, he also found interesting subjects among the Indians who lived in Western New York. This portrait of Conjockity, done in 1850, is a fine example of Sellstedt's work.*

Sellstedt was one of the founders of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and succeeded Le Clear as superintendent in 1863, serving through 1889. He was active in his painting and in the interests of the Academy until his death in 1911 at the age of 92.

A self-portrait of Sellstedt is in the permanent collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Historical Society has another. When the Gallery's painting was first exhibited in the April 1871 show of the National Academy of Design, the *New York Tribune* singled it out for its highest praise, stating: "It is one of the very best portraits of the year. It is not possible to conceive a more unaffected piece of realism."

## THE BUFFALO FINE ARTS ACADEMY

All of this art activity in Buffalo led to an effort in the early 1850s to establish a local association on the order of the National Academy of Design in New York which might present exhibitions. However, the artists involved were unable to reach agreement, and the project was abandoned.

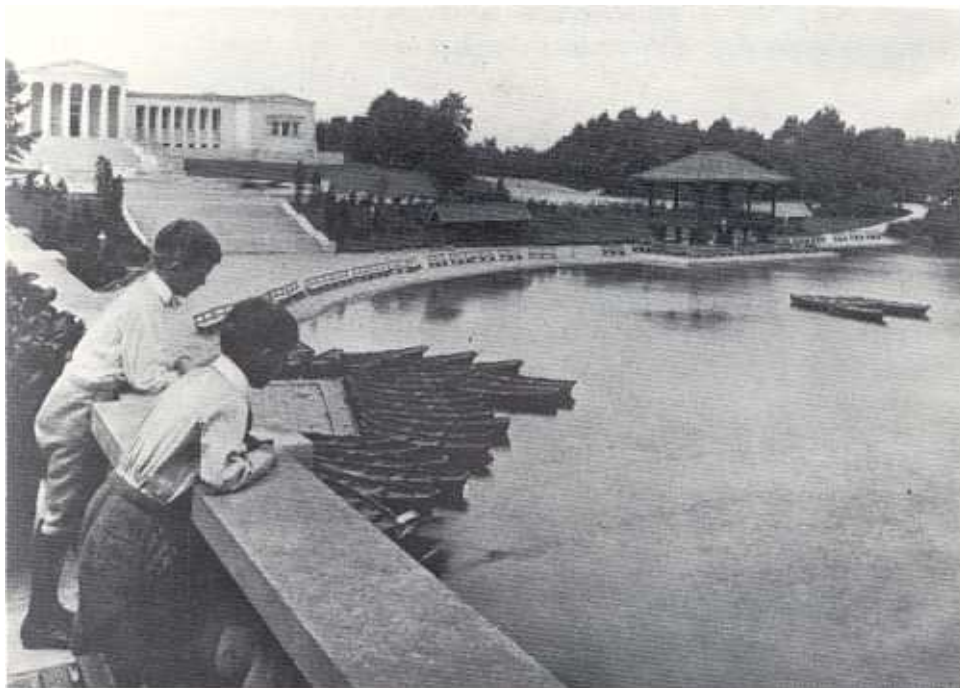
Ten years later, a similar plan was launched by the Fine Arts Committee of the Young Men's Association with the presentation of Buffalo's first public art exhibition, opening Christmas Eve, 1861. The show, which included 265 paintings and eight pieces of statuary, was so well received by the public that many of the city's business and civic leaders were impelled to support the artists in forming a permanent art organization. Consequently, on December 4, 1862, the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy was founded, with former President Millard Fillmore the first to sign the articles of incorporation.

Less than two weeks later, the new organization presented its first exhibition in a rented loft in the Arcade Building at Main and Clinton Streets, thus establishing the fourth public art gallery in the United States preceded only by Boston, Hartford, and Philadelphia. In this opening exhibit, which included 129 works, the Academy pioneered in giving major space to American art, a policy which was soon followed by other galleries.

The Academy occupied various downtown sites during its first 25 years.

In 1887, it moved into new galleries in the Buffalo Public Library Building on Lafayette Square. Ten years later, the gallery was redecorated and electric lighting installed. This was a great innovation for Buffalo artists, who previously had been obliged to display their work under flickering gas lamps.

Equally electrifying was the announcement in January 1900 by Buffalo industrialist John Joseph Albright that he would finance the construction of an art gallery for the Fine Arts Academy. He had been a member of the organization for many years and was its president from 1895 to 1897.



*The Albright Art Gallery, shown at left background in this view of Delaware Park Lake from the Casino, was built with a contribution of \$750,000 from industrialist John J. Albright.*

The building, designed by local architect Edward B. Green, was erected at a cost of \$750,000 on a site provided by the city overlooking Delaware Park Lake. At its dedication as the Albright Art Gallery on May 31, 1905, it was acclaimed as “the finest example of pure Greek architecture to be found in America.”

The white marble on the outside of the Gallery and in the interior sculpture court is from the Beaver Dam quarries in Maryland and is the same stone that was used for the upper portion of the Washington Monument. It is said to be the most lasting American marble.

For many years the Knox family was associated with the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. In 1916, a bequest in the will of Seymour H. Knox, Sr. gave \$60,000 to the Academy, and in 1933, his widow and his son, Seymour H. Knox, Jr., provided funds for a library in the Gallery for the use of the staff, students in the Art School, and the public.

Seymour H. Knox, Jr., was elected president of the Fine Arts Academy in 1938. The following year he and members of his family gave \$100,000 to the Academy, and in 1960, the Seymour H. Knox Foundation, Inc. contributed \$1,400,000 toward the construction of an addition to the Gallery. When the work was completed in January 1962, the building was renamed the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in recognition of the generosity of the Knox family.

Over the years, Seymour H. Knox, Jr., has maintained the family tradition, contributing numerous works by the world’s outstanding contemporary artists and sculptors who have brought international fame to the Gallery.

## **THE ALBRIGHT ART SCHOOL**

In November 1887, the Fine Arts Academy opened an art school with 49 pupils. Four years later, merging with the Students Art Club, it was named the Art Students League, with George B. Bridgman as the first instructor of its life and painting classes. Born in Canada in 1864, Bridgman was the son of one of the founders of the Society of Ontario Artists, and



he himself was on the council which organized the Buffalo Society of Artists.

After a few years, Bridgman left the school to join the faculty of New York's prestigious Art Students League. He became an internationally known authority on figure drawing and anatomy and published textbooks on these subjects which were sold all over the world. He died in 1943 in Pelham, New York, where he had his studio.

While the Art Gallery was still under construction in 1902, the school was moved from quarters over the Buffalo Savings Bank into the basement of the new building. Its name was changed to the School of Fine Arts in 1910, but it continued in the Gallery's basement until 1929 when it was transferred to the former Museum of Science building adjacent to the Gallery on Elmwood Avenue. In 1941, it became the Albright Art School and finally, in 1954, moved to the University of Buffalo campus as a division of the College of Arts and Sciences.

In addition to Bridgman, many of Buffalo's best artists have been instructors at the art school. The director in the 1890s was Lucius W. Hitchcock, a nationally known book illustrator and magazine cover artist.

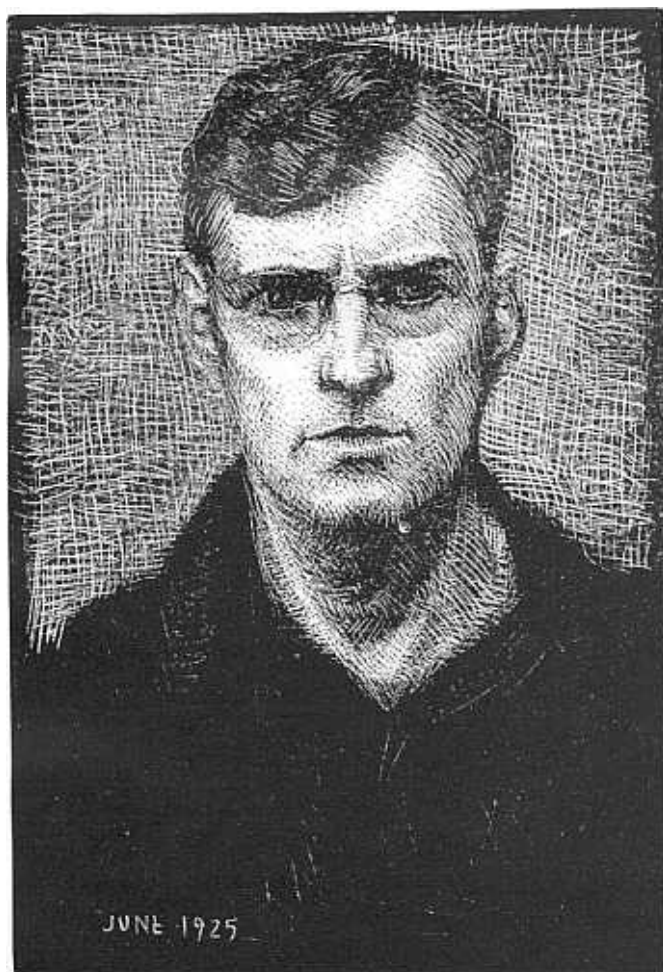
Three instructors who had been students in the school in its early days were Arletta Lothrop, Urquhart Wilcox, and Edward Dufner. Miss Lothrop, who also lectured on art subjects and conducted art-oriented travel tours, advanced to superintendent.

Wilcox was a Yale University graduate when he came to Buffalo in 1897 and enrolled in the Art Students League. He continued his studies in New York and Europe and then returned here in 1904 to marry Anne Clinton, and become an instructor in drawing and painting at the school, eventually succeeding Miss Lothrop as director. He had his own studio at 85 North Pearl Street and painted the portraits of many prominent Buffalonians.

Edward Dufner, born in Buffalo in 1872, was awarded an Albright scholarship to the Art Students League in New York in 1893. From there, he went to the Julian Academy in Paris and eventually became a student of the celebrated James McNeill Whistler. Returning to Buffalo, he taught

at the art school from 1903 to 1907 and then moved to New York. His colorful landscapes, usually with figures in them, are in the collections of many galleries.

The head of the school's department of design for many years was Bernard V. Carpenter, who was also director of the art department at D'Youville College from 1911 to 1923. An honored member of the Buffalo Society of Artists, he was its president from 1921 to 1927.



*A Buffalo native who became internationally known as printmaker was Julius Lankes (1884-1960). He made this woodcut of himself in 1925.*

Florence Julia Bach, who taught at the school for 29 years, moved to Connecticut in 1943 and sold her work through New York's Grand Central Art Galleries for many years. Experienced in all forms of art, she became nationally famous for her remarkably realistic floral paintings.

Franc Root McCreery, a painter of sensitive portraits and an illustrator of children's books, taught costume design at the school in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the school's later years, Philip C. Elliott became its director and his wife, Virginia Cuthbert, an instructor. Both are award-winning artists, equally proficient in the traditional or modern idiom.

The school's training produced many local art teachers, commercial artists, illustrators, muralists, portraitists, and landscape painters. It is impossible in this space to note more than a few.

Some of the graduates won national and even world-wide recognition. Outstanding among these were John F. Carlson and Julius Lankes. Carlson, born in Sweden in 1875, but a Buffalo resident from 1880 to 1901, was an accomplished artist who taught landscape classes at New York's Art Students League and later founded his own art school at Woodstock, New York. In 1926, he was elected an academician of the National Academy of Design. He died March 20, 1945.

Lankes was born in Buffalo in 1884, resided in Gardenville until 1925, then moved to Virginia and eventually to Durham, North Carolina, where he died in 1960. Trained at the art school, he became one of the nation's leading printmakers. His woodcuts are in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress, the Metropolitan, Brooklyn, and British National Museums, and many other galleries. He illustrated many books, including volumes of the poems of Robert Frost.

Guy Hoff, who attended the school in the early 1900s, moved to New York in 1920 and won fame as a portrait painter and illustrator, particularly for his covers on the *Saturday Evening Post* and other national magazines. He died in 1962 at the age of 73.

Carlo Nisita, whose Albright Art School training led him into art teaching, became the head of the art department of Villa Maria College. He has won numerous awards for his colorful, imaginative paintings. Twice presi-

dent of the Buffalo Society of Artists, in 1950 and 1960, he is president emeritus of the Associated Art Organizations of Western New York (AAO).

Four students who became successful in both the commercial and the fine arts fields were Charles Bigelow, Ernest Davenport, Rixford Jennings, and Louis Cherenzia. Bigelow and Davenport teamed up in 1930 to create the mural in the lobby of the Courier-Express Building. Jennings has served as president of both the Buffalo Society of Artists and the Patteran Society and is a member of the American Water Color Society. Cherenzia won the \$1,000 purchase prize in the 1977 art exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the Peace Bridge, held in the AAO Gallery.

## **THE BUFFALO ART INSTITUTE**

The Buffalo Art Institute was a product of the Depression of the 1930s. It was established in 1933 by the Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA), which sought to create jobs for the nation's millions of unemployed skilled and unskilled workers and professional people. The latter category included artists, actors, and writers and provided for a top salary of \$94 a month.

The school opened in the Grosvenor Library on Franklin Street but immediately ran into difficulties. In order to conduct life classes, nude models were indispensable, but library officials frowned on their use in such a public building. Accordingly, a hasty move was made to the second floor of the Edwards Building at Genesee and Franklin Streets, now the site of the Convention Center. Later, the school was transferred to Beard Avenue at Starin, and finally, in 1948, it was located at West Utica Street and Elmwood Avenue. Operating for many years without its original WPA support, the school had to be discontinued in 1955.

Over the years, it had a faculty of high caliber. William M. Hekking, the former director of the Albright Art Gallery, was on the original staff, which was headed by Harry M. Bell. It also included the muralist team of Charles Bigelow and Ernest Davenport, and Alexander Amatuzio, Myron Austin, Felisa Ardanuy, David Cohen, William Ehrich, Theresa Hinchy, Paul Harbach, Harris Harvey, and Anthony Sisti.

Sisti also participated in another WPA project which fostered the installation of murals in post offices and public buildings throughout the United States. He was commissioned to paint the first WPA mural in Buffalo in the Children's Auditorium of Meyer Memorial Hospital.

Later, the nationally-known artists Edwin W. Dickinson and Moses Soyer joined the faculty. Kevin B. O'Callahan, who taught etching at the Institute in the 1940s, was a noted printmaker whose work, along with that of Julius Lankes, was included in the 1949 book, *American Prize Prints of the 20th Century*.

Many Buffalo artists won national and international recognition in the 20th century. In the early 1900s, Raphael Beck, a Lockport resident who commuted into Buffalo every day to his studio on West Chippewa Street, designed the emblems of three international expositions including our own Pan-American. His mural depicting a running herd of elk, which is on the ceiling of the AAO Gallery at 207 Delaware Avenue, was originally painted for the Elk's clubrooms.

Charles Cary Rumsey (1879-1922), whose impressive *Centaur* stands opposite the entrance to the Historical Society Museum, is represented in many American galleries. His most ambitious work was the heroic-size equestrian statue of Francisco Pizarro, erected in Trujillo, Spain, the Conquistador's birthplace, and duplicated in Lima, Peru. A five-foot bronze replica of the statue is on the west portico of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

Another proud possession of the Gallery is the full-length portrait of Buffalo actress Katharine Cornell as "Candida," painted in 1926 by Eugene Speicher, a Buffalonian who became one of America's leading portrait painters. Born in 1883, Speicher attended night school at the Fine Arts Academy while working days and won a scholarship to the Art Students League in New York, then continued his studies in Europe. He died in Woodstock, New York, in 1962.

### SINCE THE 1920s

Charles Burchfield, a graduate of the Cleveland School of Art, came to Buffalo in 1921 to work as a wallpaper designer for Birge & Company. A

few years later he moved to Gardenville and painted continuously there until his death at 74 in 1967.

Burchfield already was established as a landscape painter of considerable stature when he arrived here, but most of his work was of a somber nature. He soon developed his distinctive style, painting vibrant, imaginative water-colors which won him wide popularity and critical acclaim.

“I take my inspiration from something that happens in nature,” he said. “Rain, autumn, sunshine.”

Burchfield paintings are in hundreds of homes, in the original and in reproductions, and in the collections of many galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The Charles Burchfield Center in Rockwell Hall on the campus of the State University College at Buffalo has a large collection of his paintings, drawings, and sketches, letters, and other memorabilia. Burchfield’s daughter, Martha Burchfield Richter, who paints in a style which is reminiscent of her father’s, has been highly praised for her work.

In the 1920s, two local portrait and landscape painters, John Rummell and Alex O. Levy, won honors in numerous exhibitions throughout the United States. Rummell, who had studied with John F. Carlson and George B. Bridgman, was an art lecturer and also a dramatic reader of the English classics. Levy, born in Germany, studied art in New York and Cincinnati and came to Buffalo in 1909 when he was 29. He was one of several highly-trained Buffalo artists with European backgrounds.

Laszlo Szabo, who came to Buffalo in 1924, was born in 1895 in Budapest, Hungary, and studied art there in the Royal Academy, at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and at the Art Students League in New York. He became one of the city’s leading portraitists, and his paintings hang in many Buffalo area homes and public buildings. Internationally known and a fellow of the British Royal Society of Arts, he was acclaimed in Budapest as one of the four outstanding Hungarian-born painters in the world. Szabo conducted art classes in his studio and outdoor summer landscape classes for more than 40 years. He died in October 1970.



*Laszlo Szabo, born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1895, came to Buffalo in 1924 and became one of the city's most successful portraitists. He died in his Elmwood Avenue studio in 1970.*

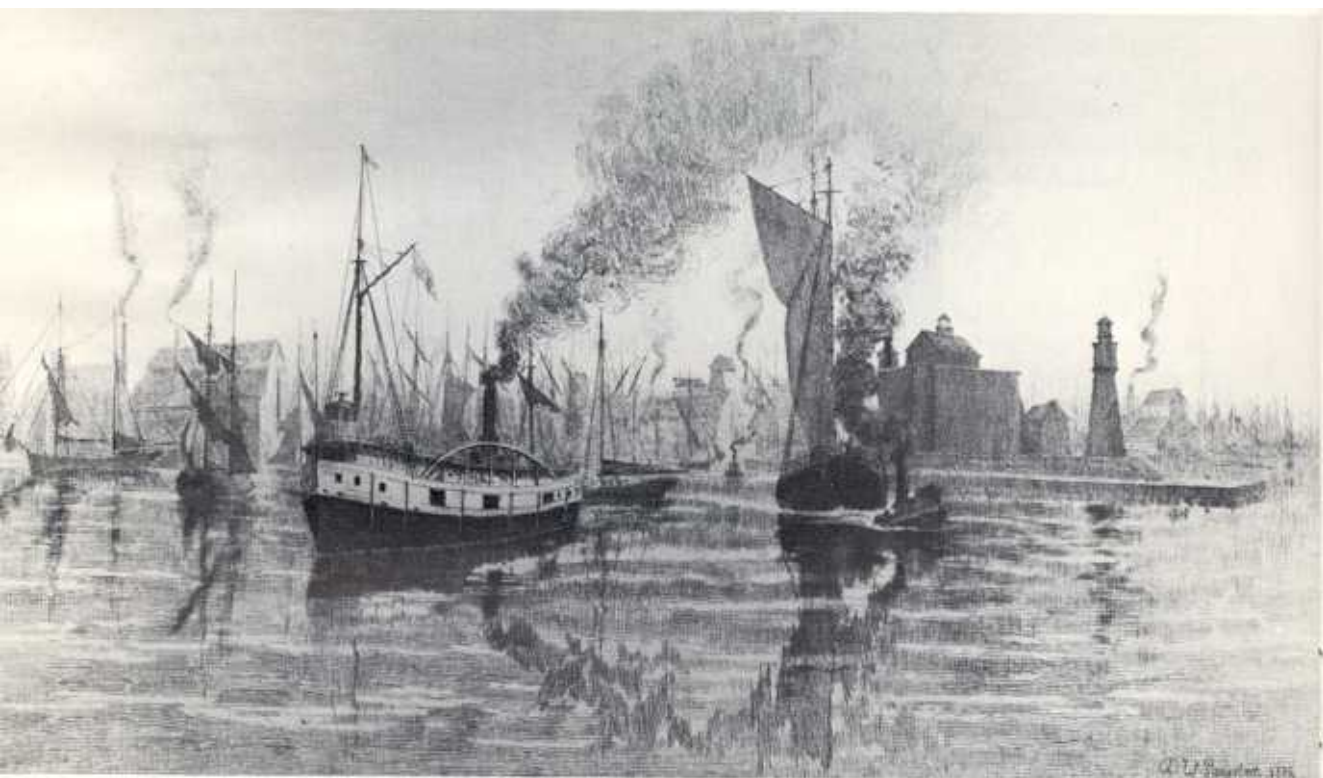
Also of Hungarian birth were Joseph Varga, a muralist who is represented in many Buffalo churches and buildings, and Geza Kende, whose portrait work was sought by many wealthy Buffalonians until he moved to Hollywood in the 1920s to do art work for a film company.

Charles Rohrbach, born in Switzerland, was a commercial artist with the Larkin Company and a fine landscape painter in oils and watercolors. Alexis Jean Fournier, although born in St. Paul, Minnesota, spent many years in study in Paris. His soft poetic landscapes frequently won awards in local and national art exhibits.

## ARTISTS' ORGANIZATIONS

In the Western New York area, there are numerous artists' groups; the Associated Art Organizations of WNY lists 28. This account must limit itself to five organizations which originated in Buffalo and are still active: the Buffalo Society of Artists, the Patteran Artists, the Guild of Allied Arts, the Fine Arts League, and the WNY Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

Oldest of the five is the Buffalo Society of Artists, founded in 1891. The members selected as their first president the director of the Fine Arts Academy's art school, James Francis Brown.



*Amos W. Sangster (1833-1904) was known as “the artist of the Niagara Frontier” because of the many beautiful etchings he made of familiar local scenes. This etching shows a view of Buffalo Harbor in the 1880s.*



Elected vice president of the Society the following year was one of Buffalo's most popular artists at that time, Amos W. Sangster. A native of Kingston, Ontario, Sangster had come to Buffalo with his parents in 1841 when he was eight years old. Although he painted proficiently in both watercolors and oils, he developed an exceptional talent for etching. Recording many familiar waterfront scenes and rural landscapes, he became known as "the artist of the Niagara Frontier."

A large volume of Sangster's etchings, titled *The Niagara River from Lake to Lake*, which he dedicated to his friend, Grover Cleveland, is in the collection of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. Sangster died in 1904.

Mrs. Alice Russell Glenny, who succeeded Brown as president of the Society in 1894, was re-elected to the office at six various times. In 1900, she was the winner of a mural competition for the decoration of the Pan-American Exposition's New York State Building, now the Historical Society Museum. Her mural, *Blessing of the Cross at Fort Denonville by Father Milet, 1688*, is still in place. The building itself was designed by another Society president, local architect George Cary, elected in 1905.

In the early years of the organization, the predominance of women brought forth a slight show of male resentment in 1910. During the 16th annual exhibit, some of the men expressed concern that the female members were being given more consideration by the judges because of their charms rather than their capability. The men felt, it was reported, that their work "ought not to be classed with that of the women, for the latter are amateurs." No doubt the objectors were chagrined when the top prize was awarded to a lady named Claire Shuttleworth.

Certainly no amateur, Miss Shuttleworth had studied at the Buffalo Art Students League, at the Academie Vitti in Paris, and with the renowned New York artist Frank Vincent DuMond in France and Italy. Her work had been honored in exhibits in London, Paris, and Rome and in various shows in the United States.

The following year, as an indication that the women were not to be intimidated, Cornelia Bentley Sage (later Mrs. Quinton) was elected president

of the Society. She had just been appointed director of the Albright Art Gallery, the first woman in the nation to hold such an important post. She continued as the Society's president through 1920 and as the Gallery's director until 1924 when she went to San Francisco to become director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor.

The 1958 president of the BSA, Larry Griffis, Jr., won city-wide attention in 1961 when his modernistic statue, the *Spirit of Womanhood*, was erected on the Scajaquada Expressway above Delaware Park Lake. Skeletal in form, it is 15 feet tall on a six-foot base.

In 1966, Griffis founded his Statuary Park in Ashford Hollow, south of Buffalo. It now contains 150 of his impressionistic metal statues. He was also one of the founders of the Artists' Committee in 1974, which is active in seeking recognition and representation in the community for local artists. He is executive director of the Ashford Hollow Foundation, which operates a gallery and studios for artists at 30 Essex Street.

In the early 1930s, disagreement developed between two factions in the Buffalo Society of Artists — the traditionalists and the progressives. This resulted in the latter group forming their own organization, the Patteran Society (now known as the Patteran Artists), in May 1933. The name was derived from a gypsy word meaning "a path in an unknown direction."

The founders of the Patteran were Grace Barron, Carl Bredemeier, Ruth Erb Hoffman, Evelyn Rumsey Lord, Harold Olmsted, Louisa Robbins, Virginia Tillou, and Martha Visser't Hooft. It was agreed that the society would be conducted with a minimum of rules and regulations. The organization's aim, it was stated, would be "to foster free and independent thought and approach in the individual, rather than group excellence in the total."

The founders led the way in exploring and experimenting with the various methods and techniques of the contemporary masters. Their success encouraged other members to follow this "patteran."

By the mid-1950s, many of the members of the Patteran also belonged to the Buffalo Society of Artists, almost obliterating the differences which caused the division in 1933. And in a display of fraternalism in April 1962,

the two organizations shared an exhibition in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. They again exhibited together there in December 1975.

When it was founded in March 1910, the Guild of Allied Arts, as its name implied, embraced the fine arts, music, and crafts, with particular emphasis on the latter. Although the Guild encouraged local artisans to show their work, it sought to bring to Buffalo exhibits of the finest craftwork being produced in the United States and Europe.

Despite the precedence given to crafts, the members chose as their first president a skilled portraitist, Clara Elizabeth Sackett, who had studied in New York and Paris. She later became director of the Lenox Art Centre in Lenox, Massachusetts, and had her own portrait studio on Fifth Avenue in New York.

One of the charter members and secretary was Frances Louise Folsom, who also had received her art training in New York and Europe. She became supervisor of art in the Buffalo Public School system.

At first, the Guild occupied rented rooms on Delaware Avenue, but in 1915, with its membership at 500, it took over a building at Elmwood Avenue and West Chippewa Street, naming it "The Allied Arts House." Theodore Hanford Pond, a noted New York silver craftsman, came to take charge of the new gallery as its director.

The gallery attracted many visitors, and the Guild prospered. During World War I, membership fell drastically, and the building had to be abandoned. From then on, meetings were held in members' studios and eventually, in the Buffalo Museum of Science, where the Guild presented its exhibits for many years. The Guild marked its 68th anniversary (1978) with a show in the Carriage House Gallery at 408 Franklin Street. It now conducts its monthly meetings in the Burchfield Center.

The Fine Arts League was founded in 1953 by a group of Buffalo artists who felt that realistic work was being discouraged by the local art societies in favor of the various forms of modern art. To oppose this trend, the founders specified that the new organization would be exclusively traditional, accepting only artists who were dedicated to realism. The 30

charter members elected Dr. Royal A. Paxton, a landscape painter, as president, and Laszlo Szabo, vice president.

Szabo won the Gold Medal in the League's first exhibition in the Grosvenor Library in May 1955. He was elected president the following year and for many subsequent years and was a zealous and articulate advocate of the League's aims. It was his ardent ambition to establish the League's own art school and museum, but he was unable to accomplish this. Following his death in 1970, the League took over his studio at 795 Elmwood Avenue, continuing art classes there and maintaining it as the organization's headquarters. In August 1975, the League moved to larger quarters at 161 Marine Drive. Fine Arts League exhibits were held for 12 years in the Museum of Science building and later in the AAO Gallery.

All of the Buffalo art organizations have always had a large number of talented women members, and, as previously mentioned, they have made their presence felt. In recent years, in fact, the male members have often represented the minority.

Exclusively female is the art group, numbering 25, which exhibits annually with the WNY Branch of the National League of American Pen Women. Three of them are former presidents of the Buffalo Society of Artists: Mrs. Gladys Martin (1959), Mrs. Jayne McCormick (1965), and Mrs. Genevieve Pierce Law (1968). The Pen Women's first art exhibit was held in May 1925, in the music room of the Grosvenor Library. Four members participated: Grace Romney Beals, Franc Root McCreery, E. Grace Milsom, and Josephine Nicholls.

## **BUFFALO ART AND ARTISTS TODAY**

There are also a number of Buffalo artists who are not members of any organization but who occasionally enter their work in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's Western New York Exhibition or in the various community exhibits during the summer months. The most popular of the outdoor shows is the annual mid-June exhibit which was originated in 1957 by the Allentown Village Society, Inc. Every year it attracts to the city hundreds of artists from all over the Eastern United States and Canada. For two days,

Saturday and Sunday, the area within Delaware Avenue and Franklin Street between West Tupper and North Streets is thronged with thousands of visitors.

The 20th annual festival in 1977 had more than 400 artists exhibiting, demonstrating, and selling their work, viewed by an estimated 250,000 persons. Awards were made for realistic and abstract paintings, drawings, sculpture, and for graphics, pottery, batik, weaving, and photography.

Altogether, there has been a tremendous increase in local interest and participation in art in the last century. During the past 25 years, the artist has been able to make the public much more aware of his work through the rapidly increasing number of small galleries in Western New York, where paintings and sculpture of all types are exhibited and sold. Buffalo itself has more than a dozen. Consequently, hardly a week passes when a new art show doesn't open.

*Thousands of persons throng Delaware Avenue every year in mid-June to view the exhibits of arts and crafts in the Allentown Village Art Festival.*



Buffalo artists with training and ability used to be able to make a comfortable living from their profession, but in the past 30 or 40 years, few have been able to devote their time exclusively to the fine arts. Art instruction and commercial art, however, both of which require a fine arts foundation, are fairly lucrative fields today.

A few portraitists receive substantial commissions, the most prominent being Virginia Cuthbert Elliott, Hal English, George Palmer, Anthony Sisti, and Virginia Tillou. Also, in the various art groups, there are some very proficient members who paint portraits, but they do not make it their profession. Color photography, which has made great strides since World War II, undoubtedly has reduced the demand for painted portraits, but it never can equal the originality and vitality of a likeness as seen through the eyes of an expert portraitist.

An interesting collection of portraits of 30 of Buffalo's mayors hangs on the four walls of the reception room outside the Mayor's office in City Hall. The earliest is that of Buffalo's first mayor, Ebenezer Johnson, who served in 1832. The portrait is unsigned. The most recent is the portrait of Frank Sedita, painted by George Palmer in 1971.

There is a fine Lars Sellstedt portrait of Elbridge G. Spaulding, painted in 1847. Raphael Beck has two examples of his artistic prowess: Edgar B. Jewett (1897) and Erastus C. Knight (1905). There is an excellent portrait by Geza Kende of George S. Buck, done in 1922. Grover Cleveland's portrait was painted by John C. Reiner in 1887, when Cleveland was President. Philip Becker, who served as mayor from 1886 to 1889, is represented by a strong portrait by I. P. Selinger. And there is a reminder of the Depression in the portrait of Charles E. Roesch, painted by Edward Riegel under a WPA program in 1933. All of the portraits are interesting, not only as paintings of their respective eras, but also for their historic value.

The Historical Society has many paintings on display and in storage for exhibition on appropriate occasions. It, too, has a large collection of mayoral portraits. Mayors represented, in addition to Johnson, Spaulding, Cleveland, and Becker, are Samuel Wilkeson, Josiah Trowbridge, Ebenezer Walden, Solomon G. Haven, Franklin A. Alberger, William G. Fargo, Chandler J. Wells, Solomon Scheu, and Jonathan Scoville.



*Mayor Ebenezer Walden's portrait, which is in the Historical Society's collection, was painted by the talented A. G. D. Tuthill, an Englishman who came to Buffalo in the 1840s.*

It is hoped that the young art students developing their craftsmanship in Buffalo's schools and colleges today will find inspiration and encouragement in this account of the many talented artists who have preceded them here. Although study is arduous and the rewards may be few, there is a world of pleasure and satisfaction in the creation of a work of art. This, I am sure, would be heartily endorsed by every artist of the past and present in Buffalo.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### *Academy Notes*

Albright-Knox Art Gallery Library — Mrs. Annette Masling and staff.

Art Organization files, including *History of the Buffalo Society of Artists*, by Russell Ram. Ball, Sheldon. *Buffalo in 1825*.

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Also Mrs. Theresa Hinchy Grau, Richard Jones, Edward Langill, Anthony Sisti, Mrs. Laszlo Szabo, and Mrs. Martha Visser't Hooft.

WILLIAM J. BARNEY, during his 47 years on the *Buffalo Courier-Express*, was staff artist, picture page editor, and *Sunday Magazine* editor, retiring in 1973. A native of Buffalo and a graduate of Lafayette High School, he now resides in Orchard Park with his wife, the former Mary Frances O'Neil. He is president of the Fine Arts League for 1978-1979.