

# **AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL**

**A Bicentennial Exhibition  
October 5 - November 16, 1975**

**The R. W. Norton Art Gallery**



## **THE R. W. NORTON ART GALLERY**

A Museum of American and European Art

4747 CRESWELL AVENUE

SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA 71106

### **HOURS**

Tuesday through Sunday . . . . 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Closed Monday and national holidays

No Charge For Admission

Wheel chairs available without charge.

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Wednesday and Saturday . . . . 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

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# America The Beautiful

By Richard S. Hodgson

*O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!*

Probably no words have stirred so many Americans to an appreciation of the beauties of America as this first verse of Katharine Lee Bates's poem "America the Beautiful." Quickly learned and long-remembered by most every schoolchild, they capture both the vision and the spirit of America.

In a 1929 *Boston Herald* editorial, Gamaliel Bradford suggested, "There is [in the poem] the deepest, richest sense of the splendor of the material possession that has been given to us, and to impress upon every American citizen, every man, woman and child, to be worthy of that possession, to sustain it, to consecrate it, to ennoble it by developing the great qualities that can alone make any nation beautiful in the eyes of those who understand what spiritual beauty is."

To Miss Bates herself, the great popularity of her poem was "clearly due to the fact that Americans are at heart idealists, with a fundamental faith in human brotherhood."

For most of us, the poem is an unofficial national anthem, sung to the tune of "Materna," composed in 1882 by Samuel A. Ward. Many attempts have been made to secure congressional recognition of "America the Beautiful" as the official national anthem, but even without such official stature, "America the Beautiful" is widely accepted as a worthy tribute to our nation.

Biographer Dorothy Burgess comments: "No country is necessarily limited to one national anthem, and it soon became evident that public affection for 'America the Beautiful' had given it an unofficial second place. Its extensive use in

schools and churches, its adoption as the official song of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, and its popularity in the two wars have established it firmly as one of our best-loved and best-known songs."

Two events in 1893 stirred the young Massachusetts schoolteacher Katharine Lee Bates to compose the poem. One was the pageantry of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The second was a trip by prairie wagon to the summit of Pike's Peak in Colorado. "Our sojourn on the peak," Miss Bates was to comment, "remains in memory hardly more than one ecstatic gaze. It was then and there, as I was looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country spread away so far under those ample skies, that the opening lines of the hymn floated into my mind."

"America the Beautiful" was completed in Colorado that summer of 1893, but remained locked away in Miss Bates's notebooks upon her return to the classrooms of Wellesley College. Two years later she sent it to *The Congregationalist*, where it appeared on July 4, 1895, and attracted immediate attention. For a number of years, reacting to comments from all over America, Miss Bates rewrote some of the phrases. A new version was published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* on November 19, 1904. One word Miss Bates would not alter, however, was "beautiful." As her biographer Dorothy Burgess explains, "To her America was, quite simply, beautiful, and as always she used the word that exactly expressed her thought."

In 1926 the National Federation of Music Clubs held a contest to obtain a musical setting for the poem. Nearly 900 compositions were submitted for judging, but none was selected. To this day, the most commonly accepted combination involves the music of Samuel A. Ward. This combination was first published in 1910 in *Fellowship Hymns*, edited by Clarence A. Barbour and published by the Young Men's Christian Association Press, New York, N.Y.

While Katharine Lee Bates never accepted payment for her copyrighted poem, the words of "America the Beautiful" have established her in the hearts of Americans and assured her a permanent place on the rolls of beloved American writers.



# THE LANDSCAPIST IN AMERICA

## *. . . an original school of art*

By Richard S. Hodgson

The American landscape has been the subject of great and highly valued works of art for nearly 400 years. The first "American" landscape artist was John White, who accompanied Sir Walter Raleigh to the Roanoke Island Colony in 1585 and returned there two years later as governor. His watercolors, now highly valued possessions of the British Museum, are considered the earliest authentic pictorial record of America.

But it was more than two centuries later that landscapes entered the American art scene with an overwhelming force, which was to bring world-wide recognition and establish American art as something set apart from earlier European schools of art.

The first American landscapists to stir the beginnings of what has come to be known as the "Hudson River School" were Thomas Doughty and Thomas Birch of Philadelphia and Alvan Fisher of Boston. But it was the 1825 arrival of young Thomas Cole in New York that provided the real catalyst for this vital movement. Cole had come to America from England in 1818 and worked as an itinerant portrait painter in Ohio before moving to Pennsylvania, where he studied painting intermittently at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Inspired by Birch and Doughty, Cole responded to the call of the countryside and began his landscape painting in the Catskill Mountains.

Three of Cole's Catskill paintings were to play the leading role in one of the great moments of American art history. Because there were no dealers in contemporary art in New York City, Cole arranged for a framemaker to display the newly painted landscapes in his shop window. The historic moment arrived when an elderly gentleman stopped in the street to stare and, with tears of emotion, exclaimed, "This youth has done what all my life I have attempted in vain." These words of praise from the great Revolutionary artist, John Trumbull, were to have a lasting effect on the entire art world. As the noted art historian and author James Thomas Flexner has commented: "A new era exploded with all the power which accompanies the crashing of a dam that has long prevented a rising river from pursuing its natural course."

John Trumbull immediately purchased one

of Cole's landscapes for \$24 and persuaded his friends to buy others. Shortly, Cole was receiving commissions for landscapes from many important cultural figures. With this impetus, the demand for American landscape paintings proved far greater than what Cole himself could supply, and many prominent artists of the day were attracted to the movement. Landscape prints, too, were very much in demand and attracted the talents of leading American engravers of the day.

The leading connoisseur of the new American art school was Luman Reed, a New York wholesale grocer who found special joy in the landscapes of Cole and many other leading artists of that day. Unlike the cultural society collectors, who concentrated on the works of the Old Masters and considered themselves socially apart from contemporary artists, Reed considered it a rare privilege to associate with the artists whom he considered "men better than myself."

The untimely death of Luman Reed provided the motivation which assured continuation of the Hudson River School. Common sorrow over their patron's death brought together Cole and Asher B. Durand. They ventured into the Adirondacks on an 1837 sketching trip and experimented with each other's methods. At one point, Cole had written to Durand asking, "Will you allow me here to say a word or two on landscape? It is usual to rank it as a lower branch of the art, below the historical. Why so? Is there a better reason than that the vanity of man makes him delight most in his own image? . . . In landscapes there is a greater variety of objects, textures, phenomena, to imitate. It has expression also, not of passion, to be sure, but of sentiment, whether it be tranquil or spirit-stirring." After Cole's death in 1848, Durand became the leader of a second generation of Hudson River artists.

Another leading landscape artist who trained under Thomas Cole was Frederic Edwin Church. He roamed the world seeking grandeur which he came home to paint on vast canvases often exhibited as one-picture attractions. Huge crowds paid admission to view Church's paintings, often looking through tin tubes supplied by the exhibitors to inspect all of the minute detail without peripheral distractions. At these exhibitions, Church's agents circulated among the enthralled



visitors soliciting subscriptions to large engraved reproductions of the painting on view.

One of the factors which distinguished the Hudson River School and made it such a force in American art was the camaraderie of the artists. Every summer the landscapists, both young and old, congregated in the Catskills for communal sketching expeditions and then, through the winters, would work side-by-side in New York City studios in close cooperation.

These landscapists were stimulated by a sense of mission combining patriotism, religion and esthetic belief. Durand wrote, "With the facility to perceive and select from the infinite beauty and significance of Nature, surely no artist can reasonably complain of a lack of unbounded liberty." And, like today's conservationists, the landscapists of the Hudson River School were sincerely concerned about the future of America's natural beauty. At one point, Cole wrote Luman Reed, "They are cutting down all the trees in the beautiful valley on which I have looked so often with a loving eye . . . maledictions on all our dollar-goaded utilitarians." And one contemporary critic encouraged the landscapists to salvage what they could of the wilderness heritage before it was "forever too late."

Unlike the popular European schools of painting, the Hudson River School concentrated on realistic presentation of the landscape without the technique of the artist being immediately obvious. The artists concentrated on expressing themselves directly through nature — attempting to communicate to the viewer a sense of "being there." To superimpose a distinctively personal style upon God's handiwork was incompatible with the religious fervor with which the Hudson River School viewed landscape subjects. Some critics insisted that since the artist's personal style had purposely been submerged, the paintings were styleless and, thus, painted dully and incompetently. Actually, it took a higher skill and greater sophistication for the artists to so effectively hide their means.

The best evidence of the maturing of the Hudson River School was the popularity of the artists' landscapes at all levels of society. Both the original paintings and fine prints of them were much in demand and the artists achieved a high level of prosperity. American landscapists became accepted as national leaders and even the most Europeanized connoisseurs came to appreciate and collect their works. Their fame also spread to Europe. One visiting English artist, viewing the accomplishments of the Hudson River artists, commented: "The American School of Landscape Painting is decidedly and peculiarly original, fresh, bold, brilliant and grand."

In an era when all Americans were seeking a national identity, the advent of the Hudson River School and the distinctive landscape art it generated was widely applauded. This was a period when an irrepressible creative spirit was stirring the entire nation. The results were first apparent in the literary world. American writers, inspired by what they saw developing in the national schools of Europe, set out to establish an authentic American tradition through their own works. The folktales of Washington Irving and the frontier epics of James Fenimore Cooper found appreciative audiences throughout America. And native philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau further fanned the flames of the nation's growing appreciation of its heritage.

It was in this creative climate that America's first indigenous school of art made its entry with such resounding force. While the Hudson River School had its beginnings in the East, the American landscapist soon turned eyes westward. Most of the work of the early Hudson River painters had reflected the relatively quiet beauty of Eastern landscapes. But as the grandeur of the rugged western territories became known, it sounded an irresistible call to American artists. Here were mountains to rival any in Europe and natural wonders beyond the most imaginative dreams of earlier generations.

With such inspiration, the inheritors of the Hudson River tradition were to play an important role in the development of the American West. Many of the major exploration parties included talented artists and the scenes they painted convinced an eager world that Daniel Webster had indeed been wrong when he described the interior of North America as "a vast wasteland unsuited to the support of civilization." Thus, as settlers began their inevitable migration across the Mississippi and over the Continental Divide, they carried with them the inspiration of the scenes of awesome beauty which had been captured on canvas by venturing American landscapists.

One of the earliest artists to portray the beauties of the American frontier was George Catlin, best-known for his brilliant portraits of the American Indian. His landscapes of the Mississippi Valley in the 1830's enjoyed much popularity. In 1837 Alfred Jacob Miller joined a hunting excursion into the West under the leadership of Captain William Drummond Stewart and produced many studies of western mountain scenery. But perhaps the greatest impact was created by the dramatic canvases of Albert Bierstadt. In 1858 Bierstadt accompanied a military expedition laying out an overland wagon route



from Fort Laramie to the Pacific. On his return East, he produced a number of spectacular works which were exhibited at the National Academy of Art in 1860 and received instant critical and monetary acclaim. Bierstadt received far more for each of his dramatic canvases than his contemporaries Homer, Eakins or Ryder ever dreamed of.

Perhaps the most concrete evidence of the importance of the landscapist in revealing to the world the beauties of the American West was the role played by Thomas Moran, who accompanied Dr. F. V. Hayden on the survey party which investigated the Yellowstone area. Paintings done by Moran on this expedition played an instrumental role in convincing Congress to create the Yellowstone National Park, thus establishing our National Park system. To Moran, landscape art was a great calling. He wrote Hayden in 1874: "I have always held that the grandest, most beautiful, or wonderful in Nature, would, in capable hands, make the grandest, most beautiful or wonderful pictures, and that the business of a great painter should be the representation of great scenes in Nature."

Moran's landscapes commanded great sums. Large and curious throngs flocked to exhibitions of his work, and prints of his landscapes brought the beauties of the West to thousands. Fifteen of his works were included in an imperial folio published by L. Prang & Company of Boston in 1876, with each of the prints tipped on sheets of matboard and the collection gathered in loose-leaf form under one cover, possibly representing the first "America the Beautiful" landscape portfolio.

Following the Civil War, a third generation of Hudson River artists continued the traditions of Cole and his disciples. John Frederick Kensett had studied under Durand and his landscapes were immensely popular. When Kensett died in 1872, the contents of his studio brought \$137,715 at public auction, an extremely high sum for that period.

The traditions of the Hudson River School continued on past the turn of the century. Flexner credits Winslow Homer as having "carried to its highest level and into the twentieth century the mid-nineteenth century American approach to art."

But with photography providing the ultimate realism in visual communication, the market for landscape paintings began to diminish. There was still a great demand for landscape prints, such as those produced by Currier & Ives, which,

unlike the photos of the day, gave viewers an opportunity to see the amazing sights of America in color. But leading artists, generally, were turning their talents to other subjects and experimenting in new art forms.

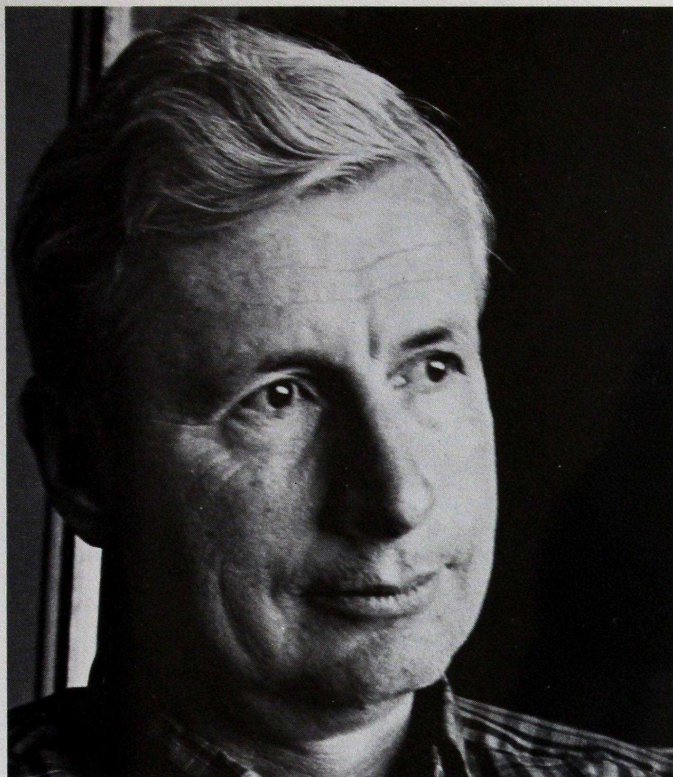
Through the first half of the twentieth century, there were occasional spurts of interest in landscape art, but most collectors concentrated their attention in other areas. But, as the nation moved into the space age, a growing awareness developed that we were fast losing much of our natural heritage. New interest in ecology exploded with a force not unlike that aroused when Trumbull's purchase of a Thomas Cole landscape launched the Hudson River School. Suddenly, both the works of the original Hudson River landscapists and their modern-day inheritors became objects of intense collector interest.

While nineteenth-century American landscapists tended to congregate in the East (principally along the Hudson River and in the studios of New York City), making occasional sketching trips elsewhere, today's American landscapist is found throughout the country. Each region has a number of outstanding landscape artists and their works are universally in great demand.

The words of Alan Gussow in *A Sense of Place* put American landscape paintings in a current perspective:

"In a world where technology has run amok, these paintings tell us something very old and therefore always very new about knowledge. They tell us that the whole world is still much lovelier than can be explained by everything that's in it, and that however much we learn about the pieces, the whole is still a sum beyond their totaling. These paintings remind us of the human event. In a time that too often confuses data with experience, the sun is still a yellow ball pressing down on us from the sky at midday. Its color and its temperature affect us. It is this hot and vivid sun to which those artists respond . . . Nineteenth-century painters went out into the wilderness to bring back reports about a land we did not know; painters now report about a land we risk forgetting. Their gentle paintings direct us earthward; they remind us of seasons, of times of day, of processes outside human factors. They urge upon us a balance. They do not suggest a return to rustic simplicity wholly inappropriate to our times. They are retreats. These paintings put a value on certain qualities in the environment. Acts of salvage in a desperate time, they can become a model against which we measure our success or failure as restorers of the land."





*Wilson Hurley*

Having seen the works of Wilson Hurley, it is difficult to image this sensitive artist as once being anything but a painter. Yet, for Hurley, painting is actually his fourth career. He was born in 1924 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and was the son of General Patrick Jay Hurley—President Hoover's Secretary of War and later U.S. Ambassador to China. Although young Hurley's childhood was spent close to many great men and events, his destiny as one of America's leading artists began taking shape even in those early years.

"I can remember in the first grade," he recalls, "I didn't want to be *in* the plays, I just wanted to build the sets and do the posters." However, in those days many people frowned upon art as being a "worthy endeavor" for a bright young man. "Perhaps," Wilson suggests, "if I had had an older brother who was a successful businessman, I wouldn't have felt compelled to do what others expected me to do. They might have said, 'Look at Wilson. He's incorrigible. Let him paint and ruin his life.'"

When his family moved to New Mexico after his father's tenure as a Cabinet Secretary, Wilson took advantage of every opportunity to study the work of the area's outstanding artists. With the encouragement of such artists as John Younghunter in Taos and Joe Bakos in Santa Fe, art continued to grow as an important element in Hurley's life. However, the disruptive influences of World War II were to intervene, and young Hurley was soon to receive an appointment to West Point.

After graduating from West Point, Hurley served as a fighter pilot in the Air Force and spent several years flying air-sea rescue missions in the Philippines. "I remem-

ber seeing the World and wanting to paint it," he recalls.

Following his time spent in the service, Hurley obtained a law degree from George Washington University, and for the next fourteen years he practiced law in New Mexico. It was during this time he found great enjoyment in his avocational painting activities. In fact, his desire to become an artist was so strong that he quit his law practice and for an eight-month period devoted full time to painting. Although he later returned to the practice of law and also helped found the Citizens State Bank in Albuquerque (the first new bank in that city in 23 years) where he served as its first Chairman of the Board and general counsel, his eight-month venture in art had sown potent seeds, and in 1965 he decided to devote himself entirely to the "never-ending call of the palette."

Despite the fact that art had been an important part of Wilson Hurley's entire life, his struggle for recognition as a professional artist was not an easy one. As an amateur he was considered a "good artist," and people were willing, even anxious, to buy his paintings. However, when the day came to put his other careers behind him and become a full-time artist, a new period of frustration and disappointment faced him. "I thought all you had to do was paint a lot of paintings that looked pretty good and then go around and offer them to the galleries. But I soon found out, to my misfortune, that you don't go to any gallery with your paintings. If you do, the person is spring-loaded to tell you he isn't interested." When he was finally able to get some of his early works into a sales gallery, they wouldn't sell. "The works of better painters would hang beside mine and my errors would show up. It took me quite a while to be able to consistently turn out paintings that would hold their own."

One gallery in Lubbock, Texas, nevertheless, believed that Wilson Hurley had a future as an artist and scheduled an annual showing of his work. "Finally," Hurley speculates, "I guess a relative took pity on me and bought a painting. But this broke the ice." By early 1970 he was selling paintings with little difficulty.

Just as he was making headway as a professional artist, fast-breaking world events stepped in to further postpone his career. Following the Pueblo Incident, Hurley was recalled to active duty in the Air Force and was assigned to Vietnam. While in the service, he continued to paint in his spare time. His artistic talents were soon recognized in a number of ways. Some of his art decorated the planes of his squadron, but there were also more lasting works. Today, for example, two murals he did for the Officers' Club at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico are still being exhibited with pride. In addition, several of his works, which he painted following his tour of duty as a pilot and forward air controller in Vietnam, were purchased and donated to the Air Force Academy where they were placed on display.

Hurley feels his eighteen months of active duty actually helped give new direction to his art career. Upon returning to New Mexico, he set about as a professional artist with intense dedication. The real turning point in his life as an artist came about three years ago, and with it came a new set of problems. The demand for his work started to exceed what he could produce: "This," he says, "is a lot harder for me than not selling. I could face the adversity of slow sales, but the problems of not filling the demand are much more frightening." To most people



the solution to this problem is simply paint faster, but to Wilson Hurley the real answer is simply not to try to fill the demand and, thus, maintain the quality of his work.

While Hurley's current popularity has resulted from his brilliant landscapes and especially those portraying the vast mountains and canyons of the West, he has no desire to be "typed" as a landscapist. He is equally talented with portraits, action paintings, and still life. "I'm amused," he says, "at people who say the measure of an artist is a nude . . . and that anybody can paint a landscape, because you can have all kinds of unplanned excursions in your line and drawing and still come within the possibilities of nature. The whole thing about landscape painting is that, as I progress, I find I've built an analog of the world in my mind which I paint. I don't paint the landscape—I go out and look at it, and it gives me bits of information that I plaster onto this model I've built into my imagination. But I'm painting my concept of that land rather than going out and looking . . . measuring . . . gauging . . . and taking slides of it."

A measure of the success Hurley has achieved in his rather brief career as a professional artist can be summed up eloquently in the words of Mary Carroll Nelson ("Wilson Hurley: Landscapist of Grandeur." *American Artist*, November, 1973):

"Wilson Hurley . . . fills a special niche in American art today as a landscapist in the grand tradition. The tradition he follows is a familiar one in American history, exemplified in the works of Thomas Cole of the Hudson River School in the first half of the 19th century and continuing as the pioneer moved westward in the work of George Caleb Bingham, George Catlin, Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt . . . For Hurley the vistas of pure landscape, still found in abundance in the West, represent a beauty of form, color, light, and order whose abiding quality is one of silence and spiritual peace . . . (his) paintings are dramatic. They capture a moment of heightened emotional contact with nature . . . He has talent, integrity, honor, and a profound sense that the grandeur of nature is beautiful."



© Wilson Hurley, 1973

1. "O BEAUTIFUL FOR SPACIOUS SKIES" by Wilson Hurley. Oil on canvas, 40" x 60". Collection of The Franklin Mint Gallery of American Art, Franklin Center, Pennsylvania.





2. "FROM THE SOUTH RIM IN WINTER" by Wilson Hurley. Oil on canvas, 60" x 48". Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Suhr, Phoenix, Arizona.



3. "CAPITOL REEF, UTAH" by Wilson Hurley. Oil on canvas, 36" x 60".





4. "WYOMING WINTER" by Wilson Hurley. Oil on canvas, 32" x 48".



5. "ZION" by Wilson Hurley. Oil on canvas, 48" x 72".