

The
JOURNAL
of the

Lycoming County Historical Society

VOLUME XXXVII
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Special Edition

WINTER
1997/98

*The Park
Home
Collection*



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JOURNAL

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Lycoming County Historical Society

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The Park Home Collection

presented by:

Lycoming College Art Department

Lycoming County Historical Society

Park Home

February 6 - March 27, 1998

Lectures by Dr. Amy Golahny and Mr. Robert E. Kane Jr.

February 6, 1998 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Room G-11 Heim Building Lycoming College

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Opening Reception

Friday, February 6, 1998 4:30 - 5:30 pm

Lycoming College Art Gallery

The John G. Snowden Memorial Library

Gallery Hours:

Monday-Thursday 10am-8pm; Friday 10am-4:30pm

Saturday 10am-5pm; Sunday 1pm-8pm

Spring Break Hours 10am-4:30pm February 23-27

Closed February 21, 22, 28 and March 1

On front cover:

Eugene Verboeckhoven (1798-1881), *Coming Storm*, signed and dated 1854. Oil on canvas. 40" x 53".

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Severin Roesen Transparencies provided by the Williamsport/Lycoming Arts Council.

Cover photo, Eugene Verboeckhoven, and James Hamilton photo by Terry Wild

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The Park Home collection of paintings, sculpture and antiques has long been a fixture in Williamsport though rarely on public view. The present exhibition offers an opportunity to display a selection of the Park Home pieces, and to make this collection more familiar to the community. We would like to thank warmly those who have helped make this exhibition possible: Sam Hoff, James Douthat, Mrs. Ruth, and Tina Lorson.

Our research into aspects of the collection was made easier by many. We gratefully acknowledge the efforts of Sandy Rife and the staff of the Lycoming County Historical Museum, the staff at the James V. Brown Library, Rebecca Burke and the Williamsport/Lycoming Arts Council, Janet Hurlbert and the staff at the Snowden library of Lycoming College, Sandra Stelts and Charles Mann of the Special Collections, The Pennsylvania State University, and Samuel Dornsife. Others who offered assistance are Brian Artim, Kari Bucknor, Bridget and Heinz Hensch, Kristi Hoover, Mandy McCaulley, Jason Shipley, Robert B. Simon, and Terry Wild. And thanks too, to the curators of the exhibition, Amy Golahny, Robert E. Kane Jr., and Roger Shipley, who also prepared this issue of the Journal of the Lycoming County Historical Society.

The paintings, sculpture, and furniture collected by William Budd Stuart (1866-1951) reveal much about the appreciation of art in Williamsport at the turn of this century. Stuart's taste, formed in this small but lively city of lumber and millionaires among the forests and farmland of north-central Pennsylvania, was probably no different from that of his fellow citizens. He favored naturalistically rendered scenes of landscape and genre; his interest also included Italianate vistas and the mildly exotic.

Stuart gathered pictures that often featured the natural drama of land and sea, sculpture that was pleasing and decorative, and furniture that was comfortable, stylish, and durable. In time, these pieces would furnish the Park Home (opened 1940), a long-term boarding home where many Williamsport ladies spent their later years. The residents enjoyed these gracious adornments. The pair of Roesen still-life paintings decorated the dining room, and the bronzes of David and Psyche stood in the parlor.

The Schenck *Single Sheep* offered pastoral possibilities to visiting clergy. The stormy sea and landscapes, by Moran, Schenck, and Verboeckhoven, reminded those inside that they were fortunate to be sheltered from threatening weather. The *Woman Feeding Three Children*, by Ortlieb, might have brought feelings of relief that their years of tending children were past. Brown's *View of the Bay of Naples* conveyed the glory of Italy, and served to recall to the residents their own travels to the continent. Hamilton's *Scene from the Arabian Nights* evoked the spell-binding stories of the Orient.

Stuart gained his interest in art from his mother, Laura VanNess Stuart (1833-1926), who was an accomplished artist and teacher at her Williamsport studio and at the Dickinson Seminary (now Lycoming College). By 1858, she was a faculty member teaching painting and drawing at the co-educational boarding school. In addition to Painting and Drawing, Dickinson Seminary offered these courses: Moral Philosophy and Belles Lettres; Mathematics; Ancient and Modern Languages; Natural Science; Instrumental and Vocal Music; Penmanship and Book Keeping. Providing students with academic subjects, music and art, Dickinson Seminary offered an integrated curriculum, one that seems remarkably current in its range from literature, language, math and science to the arts. After her marriage to Eugene V. Stuart (before 1863), she bore four children, and continued to teach at the Seminary; her husband (died 1891) was a photographer. They lived on East Third Street, and maintained a photography workshop on West Third.

At the age of 13, Budd Stuart went to work in a logging company; he later built his fortune on motor oil and real estate. In 1902, he married Mary Trafford, who left no children at her untimely death in 1918. His collecting activities probably were well under way by the 1890s; his taste in paintings is hardly progressive, but reflects his interests in the land as an arena for human cultivation, in the sea as a potentially dangerous place, and in the ordinary pursuits of life.

Highlights of the Collection



Severin Roesen (1814-1872), *Still Life with Fruit*. Signed. 36" x 51". Oil on Canvas.



Severin Roesen (1814-1872), *Still Life with Fruit and Flowers*. Signed. 36" x 51". Oil on Canvas.

Undoubtedly among the best known paintings in the collection are the two stunning Roesen still lifes. One is a display of lush blooms with a basket of plums and other fruit, and the other, a two-tiered table with baskets of peaches and raspberries, sliced melons and orange, and cascading grapes. As an invitation to the viewer to partake of the fruit, some is cut and ready to eat; and, as an offer of drink, a glass of water, with a lemon floating in it, is prepared. Complementing one another in size and arrangement, these grand canvases typify the artist's contribution to the monumental still life which he helped to make popular in the United States around the middle of the nineteenth century. Roesen probably had a book of drawings, made from life, of the various fruit and flowers that flourished at different seasons. He combined these motifs in a variety of compositions. In this, he emulated the Dutch and Flemish still-life painters of the Baroque age, who were interested above all in creating images that surpassed nature in permanence and variety of blooms: these paintings presented in art what was impossible in nature. Technically, too, Roesen worked in the tradition of Netherlandish still-life painting, for he emphasized rich colors, luminous glazing, and watery reflections. Born in Cologne, Germany, around 1814, Roesen probably trained as a painter of porcelain; he came to New York in 1848; after a few years he moved west, and by 1860 settled in Williamsport. There he was successful as a painter of still lifes and possibly a few portraits. Unfortunately, the records of his life in Williamsport do not continue after 1872, when he is presumed to have moved on.

The largest group of pictures in the Park Home collection concerns landscape and farm animals. Of these, the earliest and most highly finished in its technique is Verboeckhoven's *Coming Storm* of 1854. Extremely successful as one of the foremost painters in Brussels and instrumental in establishing the Musée de Bruxelles, he won prizes and major commissions during the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s; his highest honor was a gold medal of the Paris Salon of 1855. His meticulous, highly polished style was distinctive, and noted by critics, including Baudelaire, who remarked that his paintings were "astonishing, glassy..." in their effect. His early specialization in farm animals led him to place animals in circumstances which conveyed some drama; he showed how the herdsman's inattentiveness might encourage the straying of some of the flock, or how animals reacted to the threat of stormy weather. The Park Home canvas is one of a number of paintings of flocks frightened by impending rain. As the herdsman leads his sheep away from the advancing wind and clouds, he glances back in trepidation; the sheep take on a range of personalities. Foremost are the ewe and her two lambs, who are not only the most brightly spot-lit of the flock, but also quite agitated. After 1860, Verboeckhoven's art was considered out of fashion, and his work was eclipsed by the new developments of Realism and Impressionism.

In contrast to the contrived stormy drama of Verboeckhoven's sheep, the European farm scene is shown unpretentiously by Van Marcke, Voltz, and Jacquin. Active in the later nineteenth-century, these artists applied paint in a looser style, one influenced by French developments. Their unsentimental cows and sheep behave without regard to the viewer's presence. Schenck, a Danish painter who specialized in animals, painted the true trauma of sheep caught in a sudden snow squall with no hope of imminent rescue. As the sheep huddle together for warmth, the ewes protect their young. Even the shepherd and dog, as tossed in the wind as the sheep, offer no guidance for escape.

The seemingly casual American landscape with sheep or cattle is represented by the Pennsylvania artists Little and Craig, whose interests in farm animals are overshadowed by their fascination with sky, light, and forest. The animals become incidental ornaments in the greater natural setting of forest or hill. Other represented American painters who specialized in landscape are Moran, Shearer, and Weber. Edward Moran, brother of the more famous Thomas, painted both land-and seascapes. In his *Shore Rescue*, the dangers of the sea are apparent: a woman, limp in the arms of her rescuer, has drowned even as the searchers in the amphibious boat pulled by horses seek more victims of the sea disaster.

The two bronzes, by Mercie and Gregoire, offer contrasts in many ways: one, a male nude and the other, a female, are typical of the more popular subjects in the 19th century. Both are young, tender nudes, and are in contemplative attitudes after having accomplished their difficult, if not initially considered impossible, tasks. David, the Old Testament hero, sheathes his sword after having decapitated Goliath, and, in quiet triumph, rests his foot on the giant's head. Psyche, born a mortal princess, was so beautiful that Aphrodite was jealous. Aphrodite charged her son Cupid with the task of making Psyche fall in love with a mortal, so that she would pose no threat to her own divine beauty. The plan backfired, for Cupid himself fell in love with Psyche. The two lovers were permitted to stay together, provided Psyche never looked upon Cupid with her eyes open. Yet Psyche one night disobeyed this rule; she took an oil lamp and gazed briefly upon her sleeping lover. When a drop of hot oil fell upon his shoulder, he awoke, became angry, and vanished. To gain him back, Psyche followed Aphrodite's instructions to descend into the underworld and procure a jar of beauty's ointment from Persephone. Upon doing so, she opened the jar, and, overcome by its scent, sank into death; Cupid, however, rescued her and with Aphrodite's anger appeased, they were married in a joyous celebration of all the gods. In this sculpture, Psyche inspects her jar of ointment, whose scent will cause her demise; the viewer would supply the rest of the story, particularly her subsequent revival by Cupid and the happy ending to their love. As for moral interpretations, both offer rich associations. David, the young boy, was victorious over the menacing giant. Psyche signified three stages in the existence of the soul: first, its pre-existence in a state of blessed innocence, second, its time on earth of trials and tribulations, and finally, its everlasting state of happy immortality. Taken together, these paintings and sculptures are wonderfully reliable indicators of the kind of art that was appreciated in Williamsport around 1900, and demonstrate the goals of painting: to teach, to move, and, above all, to give pleasure.



James Hamilton (1819-1878), *Arabian Nights Entertainment*. Signed and dated 1863. 30 -1/2" x 49 -1/2". Oil on canvas.

The Park Home Collection

Asterisk denotes the work in the exhibition
Measurements are in inches, with height preceding width

- *1. Eugene Verboeckhoven (1798-1881)
Coming Storm. Signed and dated 1854. 40 x 53. Oil on canvas.
- *2. Edward Moran (1829-1901)
Seascape. Signed and dated 1867. 38 x 59 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *3. Friedrich Ortlieb (1839-1909)
Woman and Three Children in a Farmhouse. Signed. 43 x 36. Oil on canvas.
4. George Eddinger
Portrait of Mrs. Laura VanNess Stuart. Signed. 39 x 35.
- *5. C. R. Weber (1850-1921)
Mountain Scene. Signed. 37 x 61. Oil on canvas.
- *6. Edward Moran (1829-1901)
Shore Rescue. Signed. 32 x 52. Oil on canvas.
- *7. James Hamilton (1819-1878)
Arabian Nights Entertainment. Signed and dated 1863. 30 1/2 x 49 1/2. Oil on canvas.
8. George Eddinger
Portrait of Mr. Bud Stuart. Signed and dated 1952. 29 x 25. Oil on canvas.
9. Anonymous
Two Horses and Seated Man. 20 1/2 x 17. Oil on canvas.
- *10. Christopher H. Shearer (1840-1926)
Landscape of Woods and Stream. Signed and dated 1891. 26 x 44. Oil on canvas.
- *11. Severin Roesen (1814-1872)
Still Life with Fruit and Flowers. Signed c. 1814. 36 x 51. Oil on canvas.
- *12. Severin Roesen (1814-1872)
Still Life with Fruit. Signed. 36 x 51. Oil on canvas.
13. Anonymous
Greek Ruins by Water at Sunset. 25 x 30 1/2. Oil on canvas.
14. Felix Ziem (1821-1911)
European Seascape. Signed 19 1/2 x 29 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *15. Jacquin
Early Morning Farm Scene. Signed. 27 1/2 x 37 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *16. Anonymous
Port City in Devastation. 29 x 43. Oil on canvas.
- *17. August Friedrich Albert Schenck (1828-1901)
Sheep in Snowstorm. Signed. 70 x 90. Oil on canvas.
- *18. Sir Peter Lely (Follower) (1617-1680)
Portrait of a Lady with Gloves (Lady Johnson). 52 1/2 x 43. Oil on canvas.
- *19. Georges Jean Marie Haquette (1854-1906)
Mussel Gatherers. Signed. 33 x 27. Oil on canvas.
- *20. August Friedrich Albert Schenck (1828-1901)
Single Sheep. Signed 25 x 35 1/2. Oil on canvas.

The Park Home Collection

(continued)

- *21. G. Courvi
Snow Scene. Signed. 20 x 24. Oil on canvas.
- *22. F. R. Voltz (1847-1886)
Pastoral Scene of Cows. Signed. 11 x 14. Oil on canvas.
- *23. John Wesley Little (1867-1923)
Sheep on Hill by Trees. Signed. 16 x 20. Water color on paper.
- *24. Emile Van Marcke (1827-1890)
Three Cattle in Pasture. Signed. 15 x 21 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *25. Franz Roubaud (1856-1928)
Russian Wagon Train. Signed and dated 1890. 35 1/2 x 23. Oil on canvas.
- *26. C. R. Weber (1850-1921)
Woodland Scene. Signed. 41 x 43 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *27. Thomas Bigelow Craig (1849-1924)
Woodland with Three cows at a Stream. Signed and dated 1877. 24 x 20.
Oil on canvas.
- *28. George Loring Brown (1814-1889)
Sunset: Bay of Naples. Signed and dated 1869. 30 x 49 1/2. Oil on
canvas.
- 29. Charles Emile Jacque (1813-1894)
Sheep in Barn. Signed. 18 1/2 x 26. Oil on canvas.
- *30. Ross Alexander
Portrait of Bud Stuart. Oil on canvas
- 31. Anonymous.
Madonna and Child. 44 x 27 1/2. Oil on canvas.
- *32. Neapolitan School, 17th century.
Penitent Magdalene. 47 1/2 x 38. Oil on canvas.
- 33-34. Robert Nanteuil
Pair of Engravings. 13 x 10.
- *35. Jean-Louis Gregoire (1840-1890)
Psyche. Bronze. Signed. 42 high.
- *36. Marius Jean Antonin Mercie (1845-1916)
David. Bronze. Signed in cast. 38 high.
- 37. Tapestry
Two Men and Four Women in an Interior. 45 1/2 x 40.
- *38. L. Chapin
Portrait of Mrs. Laura VanNess Stuart. Signed and dated 1915.
Oval 17 x 14. Oil on canvas.
- 39. Anonymous, Native American
Two Indians Looking at a Stretched Animal Skin. Painting on cloth.
26 x 44.

After completing an exhibit of Victorian furniture this past summer at the Lycoming County Historical Society, I was asked to curate a selection of Victorian furniture retained by the Park Home Corporation, at the Lycoming College exhibit. The Park Home Board graciously supported this as an interesting addition to the exhibit of the Park Home paintings.

Many of the pieces I chose to exhibit are in the Rococo Revival or "French Style", which was distinctly early Victorian. These pieces were no doubt passed down through generations to the residents of the Park Home and were cherished for their flamboyant style. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, French society was considered "in good taste" by world standards, and furniture in the French design was admired. This taste declined, however, after the French social structure was defeated and replaced.

As American Society became increasingly a supplier of raw materials (food and cotton) and manufactured goods, the people were able to afford and strained to develop their own culture. Other styles, such as the Renaissance Revival style which I have represented in this exhibit, were developed in the later half of the nineteenth century as an American design form taken from classic ornamentation and architecture.

In conclusion, I examined all of the Park Home furniture before the November 24, 1997 auction. Several chairs from the turn of the last century were made locally at the Culler Furniture Factory in Williamsport, however, I could not document any other pieces of local manufacture. Yet, I could not help but feel each piece of furniture had a local story to tell that would be fascinating to know.

– Robert E. Kane Jr.

Park Home Furniture Listing (Lycoming College Exhibit)

1. Rococo Revival, Serpentine Front, Pierced Carved Sofa
2. Renaissance Revival Gent's Chair
3. Renaissance Revival Side Chair
4. Renaissance Revival Jeliff Style Gent's Chair
5. Rococo Revival Rosewood Laminated Dining Room Armchair attributed to George J. Henkels
6. Rococo Revival Rosewood Laminated Dining Room Side Chair attributed to George J. Henkels
7. Rococo Revival, Marble top, Turtle top, Center table
8. Louis XVI Revival, Marble top, Picture frame top, Center table
9. Rococo Revival, Marble top, Picture frame top, Turtle top, Center table
10. Rococo Revival, Highly carved sofa
11. Art Nouveau, Side by side china cabinet/etagere
12. Rococo Revival, Marble top etagere
13. Rococo Revival, Rosewood pierced cut gent's chair