

JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH (1863-1935)

Jessie Willcox Smith's lively and enchanting depictions of children made her one of the most successful illustrators of her time. She began contributing illustrations to periodicals and books when she was still a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1885-1888) and while studying with Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute (1894-1897). Some of the era's most successful women artists would emerge from Pyle's classes, including Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Violet Oakley. Together the three women became known as "The Red Rose Girls" after the Red Rose Inn in

Villanova, Pennsylvania, where they lived and worked together for several years beginning in the early 20th century. The women were also early members of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, an arts organization founded by and for women to promote their work and encourage collaboration.

Smith's illustrations were in constant demand throughout her career, appearing in *Century*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Harpers*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and many other periodicals. Her eventual tenure as cover illustrator for *Good Housekeeping* lasted 15 years, featuring her idyllic imagery of childhood on nearly 200 covers for the

publication, which reached millions of households across America. Smith was just as acclaimed for her illustrations which appeared in over 60 books, including such favorites as *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1905), *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1915), and her own rendition of *Mother Goose* (1914). Smith also created advertising illustrations for Procter & Gamble's Ivory Soap and for Kodak, while also painting portraits, primarily of mothers and children.

Ethel Franklin Betts Bains (1877–1959)

Mother Goose, 1906

Oil on canvas

Purchased with Museum funds, 1992



The sisters Anna Whelan Betts and Ethel Franklin Betts Bains both attended classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in

the late nineteenth century before transferring to the Drexel Institute to study with renowned illustrator Howard Pyle. Ethel went on to further study with Pyle at his Wilmington school. She worked steadily as an illustrator in the first decade of the twentieth century, but after her marriage in 1909, she only took occasional commissions. In this painting, which was used for two separate volumes of nursery rhymes, Betts imagines the mythical Mother Goose reading her stories to a group of children listening with rapt attention.

Anna Whelan Betts (1873–1959)

From Post to Post the Horseman Passed,

ca. 1899

Oil on board

Purchased with Museum funds, 1972



Howard Pyle organized the illustrations for the serial publication of Paul Leicester Ford's novel *Janice Meredith: A Story of the Revolution* in 1899. Not surprisingly, several

of his students were among the illustrators selected. Anna Whelan Betts studied with Pyle in Philadelphia and was invited to join his summer school in Chadds Ford in 1899. While Betts's work often focused on women's lives, here she joins in the Pyle tradition of illustrating scenes from the Revolutionary War—this time for a story centering on the daughter of a colonial Tory who assists George Washington and Paul Revere.

Gayle P. Hoskins (1887–1962)

A Cowboy's Day (Slim Sees Smoke), 1931

Oil on canvas

Gift of Jane Collette Wilcox, 1982



A fledgling illustrator in Chicago, Gayle Porter Hoskins was invited to join Howard Pyle's elite illustration school in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1907. His connections through

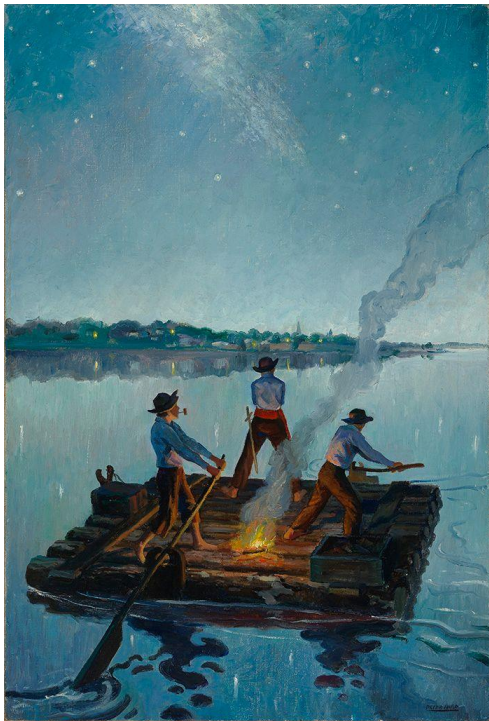
the Pyle school helped him to earn commissions from major publications such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper's Weekly*. The financial impact of the stock market crash in 1929 caused him to seek work in the burgeoning pulp magazine market. *A Cowboy's Day (Slim Sees Smoke)* appeared on the cover of *Western Story Magazine* on February 21, 1931. In 1919 the publication was the first Western-themed pulp magazine. By the 1930s, it was struggling to compete with newer publications featuring more violent stories, making *Western Story* old-fashioned by comparison.

Peter Hurd (1904–1984)

The Pirate's Cruise, 1931

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Porter Schutt, 1971



Long before he was known as a painter of the American Southwest, Peter Hurd studied with N.C. Wyeth, who would later become his

father-in-law. In order to support himself and his young family, Hurd took on some of the many illustration commissions that flowed to Wyeth. In the instance of *The Pirate's Cruise*, The John C. Winston Company agreed to have Hurd illustrate their new edition of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* under the supervision of Wyeth. According to Hurd: "I would discuss the subject and composition with Mr. Wyeth before beginning it, then carry out his daily criticism until finally we felt an impasse had been reached and he would take over for the last magical transformation."

William Henry Dethlef Koerner (1878–1938)

Through Mud to Glory, 1914

Oil on canvas

Gift of Ruth Koerner Oliver (artist's daughter), 1986



After a stint as a staff artist for the *Chicago Tribune* and other newspapers, William Henry Dethlef Koerner decided to further his art education first at the Art Students League

and then with Howard Pyle in Wilmington. He undertook hundreds of magazine commissions, including this one for *Good Housekeeping*, illustrating the article "Decoration Day" by Eugene Wood in 1914. Decoration Day was first celebrated in 1868, specifically to pay tribute to the Civil War dead. Over the years, however, the celebration has turned into the holiday known today as Memorial Day.

William Henry Dethlef Koerner (1878–1938)

Putting on a Good Show, 1927

Oil on canvas

Gift of Ruth Koerner Oliver, 1992



German-born artist William Henry Dethlef Koerner grew up in Clinton, Iowa, working his way up as a newspaper illustrator and art editor. He eventually sought formal training at the Art Students League in New York.

Later he became a student of Howard Pyle in Wilmington, where he was a classmate of Harvey Dunn, Frank Schoonover, and N.C. Wyeth. Koerner earned a reputation as an illustrator of Western scenes, such as *Putting on a Good Show*, which was a commission from *The Saturday Evening Post*. The image set the scene for the first installment of Mary Roberts Reinhart's novel *Lost Ecstasy*. The budding romance of a New York socialite and a Wyoming ranch hand is alluded to in the painting. The novel later was transformed into the 1931 film *I Take This Woman*, starring Carole Lombard and Gary Cooper.

Violet Oakley (1874–1961)

Love Your Enemies, ca. 1897

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Violet Oakley Memorial

Foundation, 1983



After studying at the Art Students League of New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Violet Oakley joined Howard Pyle's illustration class at the Drexel Institute.

Throughout her career, she remained close with other women artists who studied with Pyle and worked in illustration. This painting was probably created for Pyle's advanced class in illustration, in which he emphasized compositional groupings of figures. Pyle often assigned themes similar to those he depicted in his own work. Oakley's painting is related to Pyle's work of the same subject titled *The Enemy at the Door*, published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1895.

Ellen Bernard Thompson Pyle

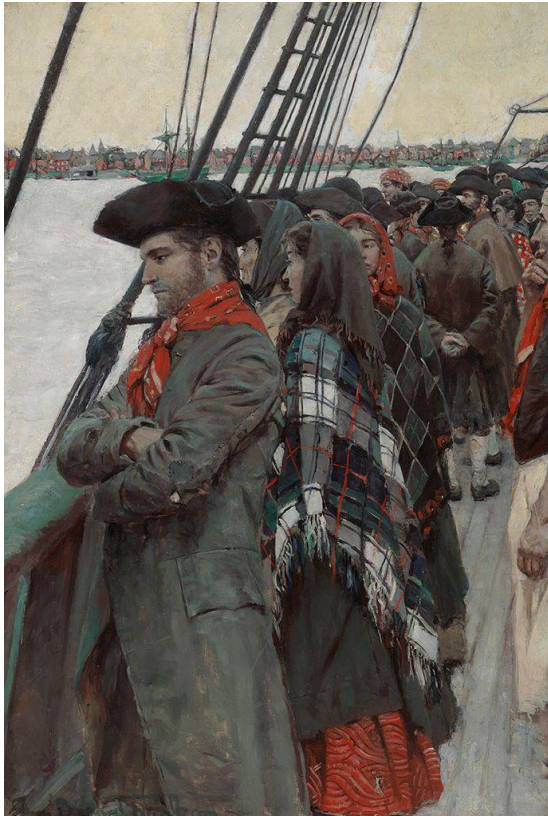
(1876–1936)

The Immigrants, 1899

Oil on canvas

Purchased with the Museum Volunteers'

Fund, 1983



Ellen Bernard Thompson Pyle created this illustration for Paul Leicester Ford's novel *Janice Meredith: A Story of the Revolution* before she married Howard Pyle's brother Walter. Like many women artists of the era, Ellen Pyle put her career on hold during her marriage. She returned to illustration after her husband's death in 1919, supporting her family with her popular covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* featuring flappers—a generation of modern, fashionable, and intelligent young women with short hair and rising hemlines.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

They Used to Drill Every Evening, ca. 1892

Oil on canvas mounted on board

Purchased with funds given anonymously,

1978



Although he illustrated a variety of themes,
Howard Pyle preferred subjects from history,

particularly the medieval period in England and the American Revolution. He knew that printmakers at this time were still unable to correctly reproduce colored images for illustrations; therefore, he painted in a black and white, a technique called grisaille. *They Used to Drill Every Evening* is an illustration for Pyle's own story "The Soldiering of Beniah Stidham" published in *St. Nicholas* in December 1892. Pyle depicts colonial soldiers mustering before a tavern in Wilmington, Delaware, in the days before the Battle of Brandywine, as curious townspeople look on.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

The Nation Makers, ca. 1902

Oil on canvas

Purchased through a grant from the Mabel

Pew Myrin Trust, 1984



One of Howard Pyle's finest paintings, *The Nation Makers* demonstrates many of the compositional lessons he passed on to his students. The action-filled scene is tightly cropped, diagonal lines are used to create a feeling of movement, and red highlights lead the viewer's eye throughout the painting.

Pyle painted this work in 1902 during a summer school session near the site of the Revolutionary War's Battle of Brandywine in Chadds Ford. He considered *The Nation Makers* among his most important works, sending it on a national tour between 1903 and 1908.

Peter Hurd (1904–1984)

The Wolf and Doctor Wilkinson (Once it Chased Doctor Wilkinson into the Very Town Itself), 1909

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard P. Brokaw, 2007



Howard Pyle's short story "The Salem Wolf," was published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*

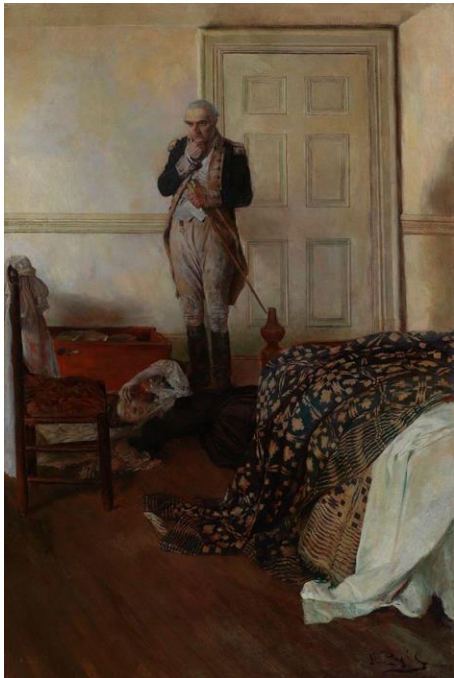
in 1909. The wolf of the title is actually a young woman who has been cursed by a witch and transformed into a werewolf. The focus of the painting is the figure of Doctor Wilkinson, whose heavy, dark, flapping coat contrasts sharply against the snowy backdrop as he flees his pursuer. The horror of the scene is directed towards the viewer and accentuated by the artist's attention to the animal's crazed eyes and the panicked face of Doctor Wilkinson. Within this dramatic viewpoint, the figures' exaggerated sizes and postures heighten the action as they leap toward the viewer. The eerie glow of the rising moon casts an essential layer of fantasy over the scene.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

*Arnold Tells His Wife of the Discovery of His
Treason, 1898*

Oil on canvas

Gift of Julia Bissell Leisenring, 2005



The wealth of publications about the
American Revolution in the late nineteenth
and early twentieth centuries increased

demand for related illustrations. Teaching his classes in the city of Philadelphia and on the Brandywine Battlefield, Howard Pyle was very well positioned to take up this topic. He and his students examined the period from all angles, with a wealth of resources on hand. This painting illustrated Henry Cabot Lodge's *The Story of the Revolution*, a historical account of the war, which highlighted the transformation of Benedict Arnold from heroic Major General of the Continental Army to the most famous traitor of the Revolution.

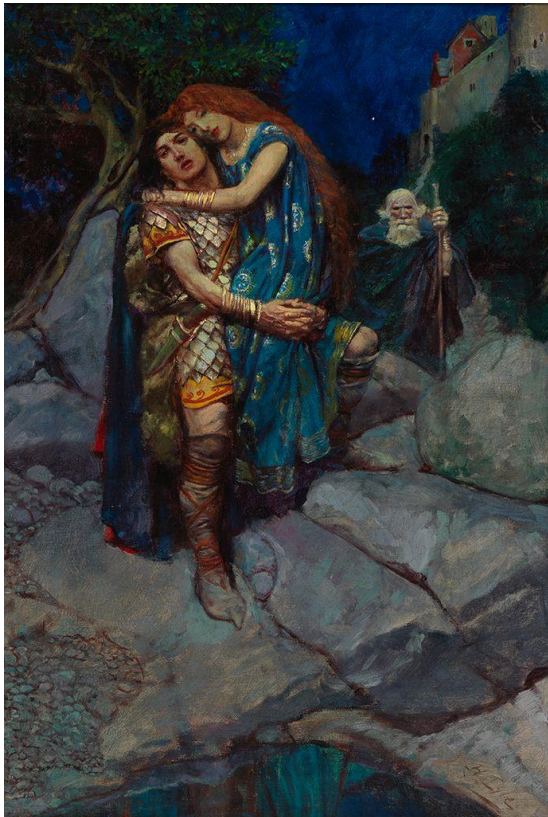
Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

Thereafter she clung close about Randver,

1910

Oil on canvas

Gift of Lucy Cabell Pyle Summerell, 2006



In this illustration for a 1909 story entitled
“Swanhild,” a retelling of the Volsunga Saga

of Old Norse mythology, Prince Randver embraces the beautiful Swanhild. He is taking her to a ship that will deliver Swanhild to her betrothed—Randver's father. Along the voyage to her new home, Randver and Swanhild fall in love. Upon their return, the king puts them both to death for their romantic treachery. In the background of the painting, the aged counselor Bikki follows in the shadows. A duplicitous character, Bikki both arranged for the secret union of Randver and Swanhild and advised the king to punish the lovers by death.

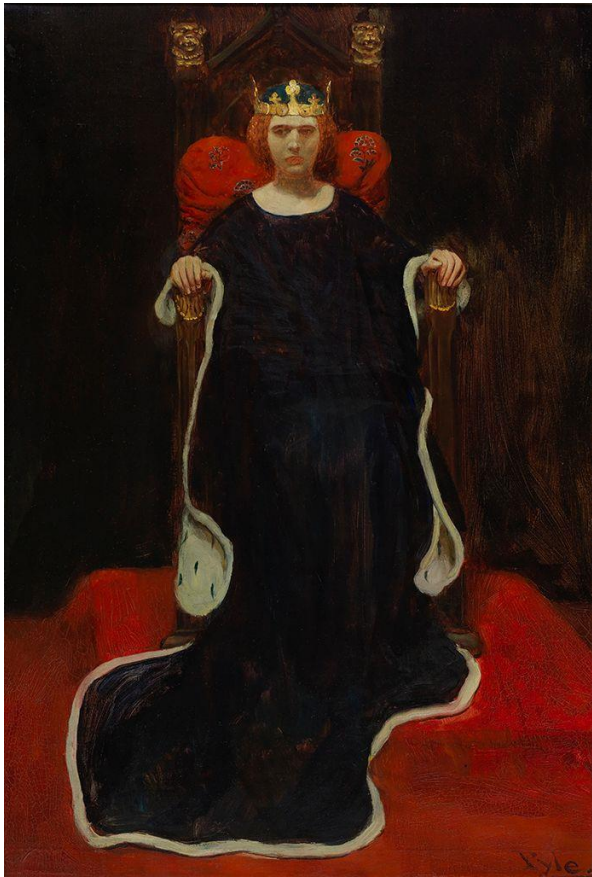
Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

Queen Ysabeau in Her Carven Chair,

1908

Oil on canvas

Gift of Lucy Cabell Pyle Summerell, 2006



The story of Queen Ysabeau is but one of the fictional tales of medieval romance that appeared in James Branch Cabell's novel *Chivalry* in 1909. The year before, Howard Pyle illustrated a stand-alone chapter for *Harper's Monthly* entitled "The Choices," including this image of the queen on her throne. Ysabeau, the bored Queen of England in the early-14th century, entertains herself over a holiday season by interfering with the lovers Sir Gregory Darrell and Rosamund Eastney. Eventually, she recognizes their love and approves of their marriage, even as she plots the murder of her own husband, the King.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

Grandmother's Story of Bunker Hill Battle,

1892

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard P. Brokaw, 2007



Howard Pyle illustrated Oliver Wendell
Holmes's poem *Grandmother's Story of
Bunker Hill Battle as She Saw it from the*

Belfry, which was originally written in 1875 to commemorate the centennial of the skirmish. The painting first appeared in Holmes's collected poetry in 1892 but was republished many times, including on the cover of a 1925 Houghton Mifflin publication. The painting seems to focus on these lines from the poem:

*In the hush of expectation, in the awe and
trepidation*

*Of the dread approaching moment, we are
well-nigh breathless all;*

*Though the rotten bars are failing on the
rickety belfry railing,*

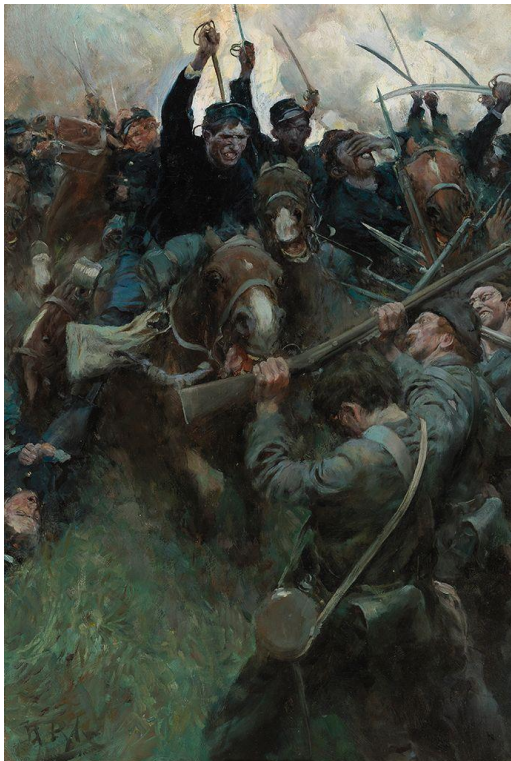
*We are crowding up against them like the
waves against a wall.*

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

The Charge, 1904

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard P. Brokaw, 2007



Howard Pyle creates a scene of chaos filled with individual narratives in his painting *The Charge*, an illustration for Robert W. Chambers's short story "Non-Combatants,"

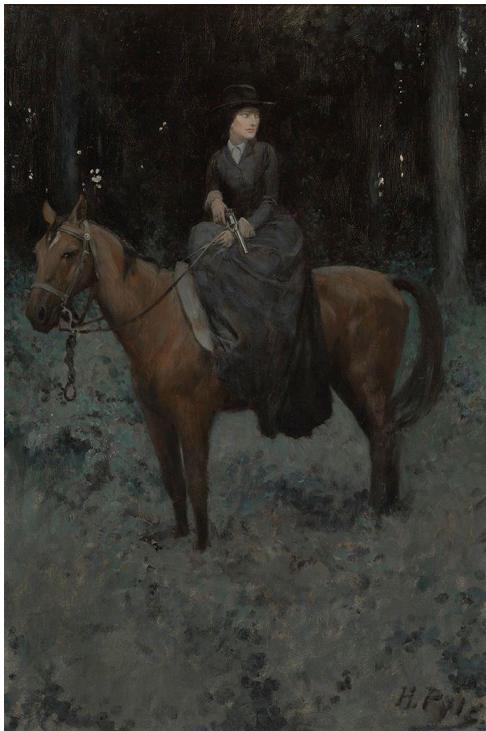
which appeared in *Harper's Monthly* in November 1904. *The Charge* conveys a moment of intense action in a Civil War battle. Pyle creates a wall of Union soldiers that comes forward toward the viewer and overwhelms the Confederate soldiers in the foreground. The story reveals that these fierce Union fighters are actually members of a Union band, technically non-combatants who were called upon to fight in a surprise battle.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

The Spy, 1905

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard P. Brokaw, 2007



The Spy, depicting a female Civil War spy, first appeared in *Harper's Monthly* in February 1904 to illustrate Richard W. Chamber's story "Special Messenger." Though

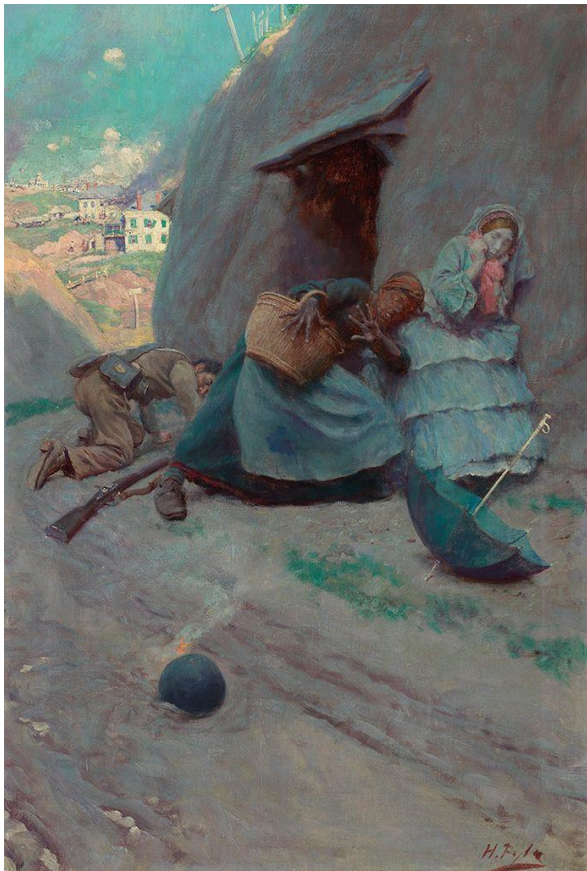
aspects of the character resemble the life of Confederate spy Belle Boyd, Chambers's unnamed character is fictional. As the story unfolds, we learn that the main character is carrying a message to Union officers and trying to evade Confederate soldiers in pursuit. Pyle's illustration captures perfectly the wary mood of the subject as described by Chambers: "Sitting her worn saddle, sensitive face partly turned, she listened, her eyes sweeping the bit of open ground behind her. Nothing moved there."

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

The Shell, 1908

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard P. Brokaw, 2007



In his painting *The Shell*, Howard Pyle depicts the caves dug into a hillside as bomb shelters by families in Vicksburg, Mississippi,

during the city's Civil War siege. The great danger of these caves is described in detail in a first-hand account by William W. Lord, Jr. in "A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg," published in *Harper's Monthly* in December 1908.

Despite the fact that the caves were shelters for non-combatants, errant shells caused collapses of the tunnels carved into the earth. In addition to this painting, the article was also illustrated with photographs, foreshadowing the demise of the use of illustrations in the popular media.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911)

Viewing the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 1901

Oil on canvas

Lent by Rita and Lawrence Pereira in memory
of Anna and Hermann Moellers



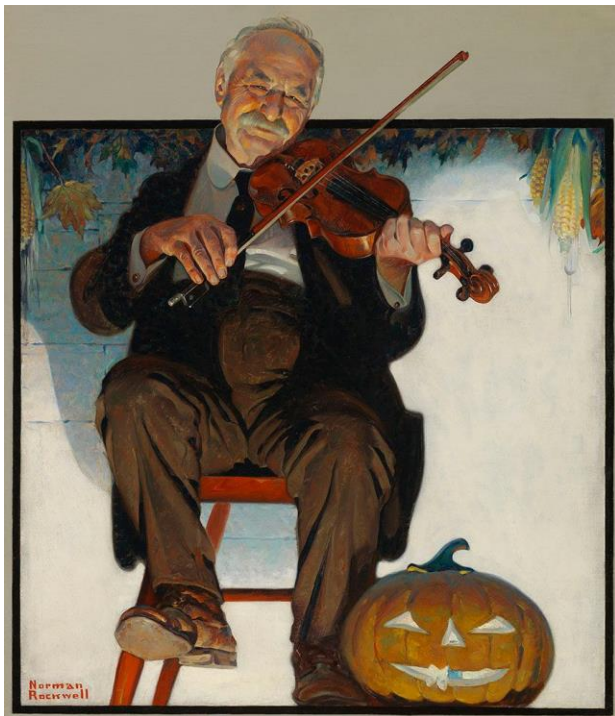
Prior to his terms as President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson was a professor of history and political science at a number of colleges and universities. In this role, he wrote "Colonies and Nation," appearing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1901, illustrated by this Howard Pyle painting. The article was a part of Wilson's five volume *A History of the American People*, which included ten illustrations by Pyle. The Battle of Bunker Hill took place early in the American Revolution, on June 17, 1775, in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Colonists in Boston crowded onto rooftops to view the nearby skirmish which ended in a British victory.

Norman Rockwell (1894–1978)

The Fiddler, 1921

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Sordoni, III,
2019



Although not a student of Howard Pyle,
Norman Rockwell is one of the remarkable
illustrators who outlasted the period referred

to as America's "Golden Age of Illustration."

Best known for the paintings he did as cover illustrations for *The Saturday Evening Post*,

Rockwell also did extensive work for other

major publications. *The Fiddler* appeared as a

cover for *The Country Gentleman* in October

1921, still relatively early in his career.

Rockwell celebrates autumn and Halloween,

represented by both the grinning jack-o'-

lantern and the corn cob and autumn leaf

garland. He skillfully mimics the effect of

stage lighting in this painting, highlighting

the musician's expression and hands, creating

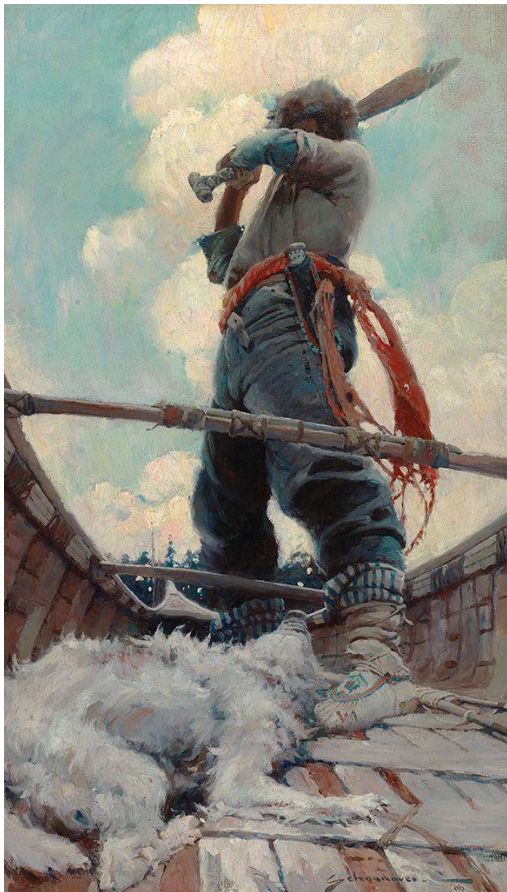
an illusion of three-dimensionality.

Frank E. Schoonover (1877–1972)

White Fang's free nature flashed forth again, and he sank his teeth into the moccasined foot, 1906

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth, 1985



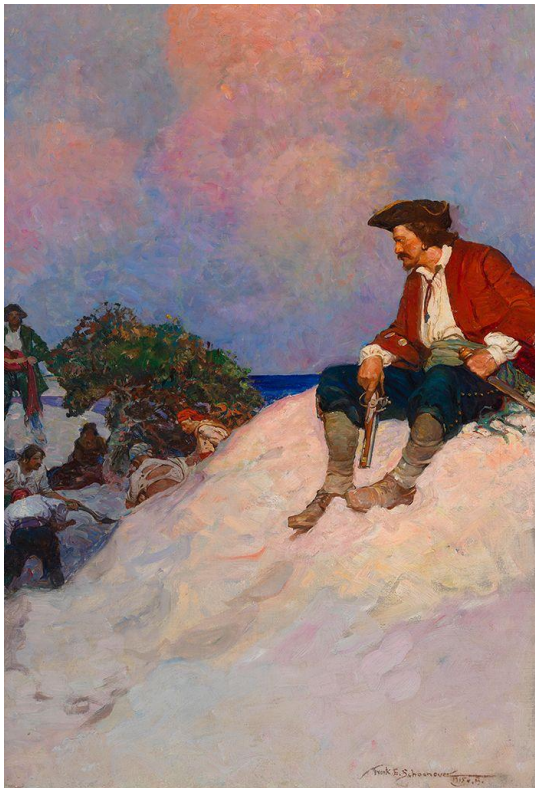
Howard Pyle's student Frank E. Schoonover traveled to Canada in 1902 and became fascinated with the Canadian wilderness. Acting on Pyle's advice to immerse himself in his subject, Schoonover traveled on foot and by dogsled with Canadian trappers. The paintings and sketches he created from this experience would serve as reference material for illustrations for Jack London's *White Fang* (serialized in *Outing* magazine from May through October, 1906). Like London's story, Schoonover's illustration takes the viewpoint of the wild dog-wolf. The severe angle of Schoonover's composition and the tension of the figures—each poised to strike—heighten the drama of the moment.

Frank E. Schoonover (1877–1972)

And so the treasure was buried, 1915

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Harold S. Schutt, Jr., 2006



Frank Schoonover began studying with Howard Pyle in 1896 and became a prolific illustrator. Over the course of his career, he

illustrated a vast array of literary themes, from World War stories and tales of the Old West to pirate lore and space fantasies.

Schoonover remained in the region as a professional artist and helped to found the Delaware Art Museum. This painting was created for *Harper's Magazine* but was never published. Evidence indicates it may have been intended for Schoonover's own pirate story, "The Treasure of St. Albans."

Jessie Willcox Smith (1863–1935)

Goldilocks and the Three Bowls, ca. 1900

Mixed media on illustration board

Purchased with the Museum Volunteers'

Fund, 1975



Some of Howard Pyle's students, primarily the women, branched off to specialize in children's book illustration. After working several years as a kindergarten teacher in the

early 1880s, Jessie Willcox Smith studied at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and under Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute. *Goldilocks and the Three Bowls* contains essential elements of this familiar story. Children often note one discrepancy in the image: there is steam rising from the medium- sized bowl. In the story, Goldilocks complained that this bowl's porridge was too cold.

Jessie Willcox Smith (1863 – 1935)

Little Women, 1923

Illustration for *Boys and Girls of Bookland* by
Nora Archibald Smith (David McKay Company,
1923) and as a cover for *Good Housekeeping*
(February 1923)

Mixed media on illustration board

Gift of the Women's Club of Ardmore, 1979



Jessie Willcox Smith (1863 – 1935)

A Picnic, 1924

Illustration for cover of *Good Housekeeping*
(August 1924)

Watercolor and charcoal

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Hibbs Donnan,
1999



Jessie Willcox Smith (1863 – 1935)

Alice falling down the rabbit hole, ca. 1923

Mixed media on illustration board

Purchased with funds given in memory of

Libby Dean and Anne Scarlett, 2011



In 1923, Jessie Willcox Smith was called upon to provide the illustrations for Boys and Girls

of Bookland by Nora Archibald Smith. The collection of stories included versions of Little Women, David Copperfield, Alice in Wonderland and other fictional tales of famed child characters. Smith provided one painted illustration for each of the eleven chapters. Smith's published illustration for Alice in Wonderland pictured Alice surrounded by the many strange and wondrous creatures she met on her adventures. Alice Falling Down the Rabbit Hole is unpublished and likely a study for her 1923 project, depicting a scene near the beginning of the story, as Alice falls into Wonderland after chasing the White Rabbit.

Sarah S. Stilwell Weber (1877–1939)

Fairy Godmother, ca. 1907

Oil on canvas

Purchased with the Caroline Gussmann Keller
Fund, 1985



*I had a dream the other night When I was all
in bed.*

*I thought a fairy came to me With wings
about her head.*

*She was my Fairy Godmother, I knew her
right away,*

*And I sat down upon her lap For I wanted
her to stay.*

These are the opening lines of Edith B. Sturgis's poem "The Fairy Godmother," which Sarah Stilwell Weber illustrated with this painting. Weber was among Howard Pyle's most successful students, attending his classes at the Drexel Institute and his summer school in Chadds Ford. She

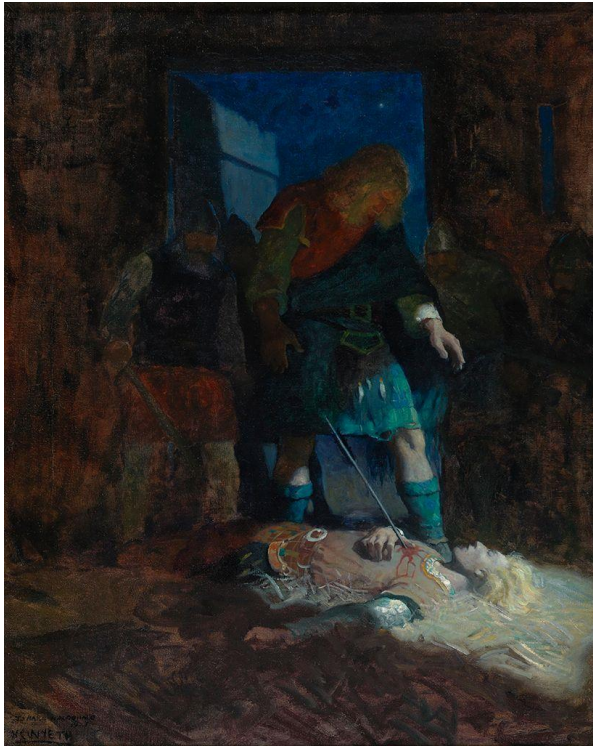
specialized in images of children, as did many women illustrators of the period. Her artwork was highly sought after and appeared in leading publications including *Scribner's*, *Vogue*, *The Century Magazine*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, for which she created over fifty cover illustrations.

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945)

Death of Edwin, 1921

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harl McDonald, 1972



The novel *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810) by Jane Porter is set in the late-13th and early-14th centuries during the revolt of Scottish nobility against the rule of Edward I of England. In

his 1921 illustration for the penultimate image in the book, N.C. Wyeth depicts William Wallace, the leader of the rebellion and hero of the story, standing over the body of his beloved companion Edwin Ruthven. The sight of the young and faithful Edwin, shot in the breast, so stuns Wallace he can no longer resist capture (and certain death) at the hands of his English enemies. In this painting, Wyeth illuminated the slain Edwin with a blast of cold, silvery moonlight; it spreads out halo-like around his head and visually reinforces Wallace's earlier reference to "that angel youth." The young man represented "truth, manhood, and nobleness" and the dramatic lighting elevates his

character to an even higher plane. The darkness of the painting holds the menace of the enemy, clearly felt, if not clearly distinguished.

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945)

The American Mother, 1941

Oil on Renaissance Panel

Gift of E. R. Squibb & Sons, 1977



Beginning early in his career, N.C. Wyeth created pictures for the advertising industry—a practice he came to dislike but accepted nevertheless for the lucrative fees. In April 1941, he was contacted by the advertising manager of the E. R. Squibb Corporation, a leader in the pharmaceutical industry, with a vague direction for a commission on the theme of a mother's concern for her family's health and welfare. Wyeth developed the painting, which he referred to privately as "The Madonna of the Tiled Room," using his daughter Ann and her son, John Denys McCoy, as models. Squibb reproduced this image on posters for display in drugstores and other markets for their products.

N.C. Wyeth (1882 – 1945)

All day he hung round the cove, or upon the cliffs, with a brass telescope, 1911

Oil on canvas

Bequest of Gertrude Haskell Britton, 1992



In 1911, Charles Scribner's Sons engaged N.C. Wyeth to illustrate Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, his first

commission in Scribner's popular series of classic stories. The 17 paintings that make up the set are masterpieces of American illustration. Their large scale, unusual in illustrations of the period, give the paintings a heroic quality that is apparent even in smaller reproductions. Action and character study are united in each painting to further the narrative beyond the text. In every canvas, Wyeth's superb sense of color and his ability to mix painterly passages with authentic detail prove him a master of the art. Complex compositions and his skillful use of intense light contrasted with deep shadow contribute to a palpable dramatic tension in the paintings. These pictures made the

Wyeth-illustrated edition of *Treasure Island* a favorite of generations of readers.

N.C. Wyeth (1882 – 1945)

Treasure Island, endpaper illustration, 1911

Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds given in memory of
Hope Montgomery Scott, 1997



N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945)

Untitled, 1944

Cover for *The Country Gentleman*

(June 1944)

Oil on hardboard

Bequest of Margaret S. Butterfield, 2005



In June of 1944, N.C. Wyeth's painting of farmers in the Brandywine Valley graced the cover of *Country Gentleman*, which was then America's foremost rural agricultural

magazine. An editor's note inside explained "Chadds Ford, of Pennsylvania Revolutionary fame, sets the scene for our haymakers. That's the historic Brandywine Creek you see in the background. It was done from N.C. Wyeth's studio window—country he's been painting for forty years."

Wyeth posed his young grandson Denys McCoy on a hay-covered platform, holding reins in his hands, as a model for this painting. This is one among several covers Wyeth completed for the magazine. By the 1940s, some of the publication's covers were photographic, while others came from leading American regionalist artists including John Steuart Curry and Thomas Hart Benton.

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945)

*Then the king . . . ran towards Sir Mordred,
crying, "Traitor, now is thy death day come",*

1917

Oil on canvas

Gift of Christopher W. Davenport, John F.

Davenport and Juliet R. Davenport in memory
of the previous owners, 2006



N.C. Wyeth illustrates this thrilling moment just before King Arthur runs Mordred through with a spear. Although *The Boy's King Arthur*, edited by Sidney Lanier, abridges the original text of *Le Morte d'Arthur*, removing many of the questionable behaviors of the knights and all sexual references, the violence of the tale remains. In the moment after Wyeth depicts, Mordred is pierced with the spear but then thrusts himself close to Arthur, all the way to the bur of the spear, in order to strike Arthur with his sword. Mordred, completely impaled, falls dead, and Arthur, mortally wounded, collapses alongside him.

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945)

The Bloody Angle, 1912

Oil on canvas

Gift of Charles S. Crompton, Jr. in memory of
his wife, Milbrey Dean Crompton, 2014



Wyeth intended *The Bloody Angle* to evoke the general horror of war and specifically to depict a crucial part of the Battle of Spotsylvania, Virginia (1864) for Mary

Johnston's novel *Cease Firing*. Johnston's text is powerful. "Then the storm broke," she wrote, "and the angle became the spot on earth where, it is estimated, in all the history of the earth the musketry fire was the heaviest. It became The Bloody Angle." Wyeth compressed both blue and gray soldiers into the lower two thirds of the picture, with the figures in the chaos of battle rising to a compositional angle symbolizing a horrific apex in the history of the war and of the country. He admitted to Johnston that the composition was also constructed with Houghton Mifflin's advertising department in mind, feeling it would make an effective design for an advertising poster.

N.C. Wyeth (1882 – 1945)

*Tapping up and down the road in a frenzy,
and groping and calling for his comrades,*
1911

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection

