



Citation for this collection:

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

Terms governing use and reproduction:

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

A note about transcriptions:

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH GERTRUDE BRINCKLE
2101 Grant Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware - April 7, 1966

INTERVIEWED BY: RICHARD K. DOUD

(Miss Brinckle was Secretary to the late Howard Pyle, 1853-1911)

GB: Miss Brinckle

RD: Mr. Doud

RD This is an interview with Miss Gertrude Brinckle at her home in Wilmington, Delaware, April 7, 1966. The interviewer is Richard K. Doud. Well, if you don't mind going back - you've just given me an awful lot of information. But I think it would be nice to sort of go back to your first acquaintance with Mr. Pyle and give us some idea of how this association of you as his secretary did come about, and a little background on the connection.

GB Well, we were army people and when my father retired in 1895 we came to Wilmington to live because he came from Delaware. He bought a house, 1603 Broom Street, and soon after Mr. Howard Pyle and his family moved in next door at 1601 Broom. There were five children then. I remember that we hung out of the window to see this tall man walking in next door with Mrs. Pyle, very slim and pretty. Phoebe also was very pretty, with yellow hair, very blue eyes and pink cheeks, and then the other smaller ones trailing after. Then Miss Golibart the nursery governess, Katy, the cook, the colored man William, followed by two fox terriers, Jakey and Jack.

RD What a memory!

GB We watched them fascinated to see what kind of neighbors we would have. There was no fence between our properties, though there were black hairpin fences around the other houses in our block. Later Mr. Pyle used to threaten the children in fun: "If you are not good Major Brinckle will put up the fence!" But we never put up a fence - we became very friendly. My sister Frances was young Howard Pyle's age. She played with Eleanor and the younger children - the Pyles had a seesaw! Phoebe and I went to the Miss Hebb's School together. We used to play paper dolls and had a small stage for dolls' plays in Phoebe's room. At this time, in the evenings, often Mr. and Mrs. Pyle would read aloud to us from Robin Hood. Generally Mrs. Pyle would read, but sometimes Mr. Pyle would take a turn at Robin Hood, or The Wonder Clock.

In the summer the Pyle family went to Rehoboth Beach and stayed at the Poole Cottage, and sometimes they took me along. Phoebe and I would walk the beach, picking up shells and pebbles, or go in bathing, trying to learn to swim. The reputation for having a good memory is often built on frequent mention and reminders through the years. We often spoke of watching the Pyles move in next door and of how much we liked them. And often family letters, read and reread, keep one from forgetting.

Here is one I value from Howard Pyle to my father, dated June 18, 1896, Rehoboth Beach:

Dear Major Brinckle,

I am much obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken on my behalf: first the milk, then the bag, then the letter to William. Strange to think it is warm in Wilmington; cool here, and a lovely sea breeze. This brings me to Gertrude. We are congratulating ourselves on having borrowed so sweet a little visitor; even the things we know and like, she knows and cares for: "Slovenly Peter," "Alice in Wonderland," the "Versified Alphabet." I think it is Holmes who somewhere says, "The mutual appreciation of a jest is a sign of soul, fellowship."

And he spoke of taking us out in the surf and that he had promised Phoebe and me each a Cape May diamond ring if we could find a clear pebble. And old photographs help. On the 4th of July they used to have a flag raising and straw rides on the beach and Punch and Judy shows. One day about this time, Phoebe and I met an old gentleman on the beach who dazzled us with the elegance of his gold toothpick. I was afterwards praised for declining his offer to buy us peppermint candy on the boardwalk.

Mr. Pyle had a frame studio back of the Poole Cottage. I remember he was painting illustrations for The Romance of an Ambrotype, a Civil War story, at that time.

At Christmas Mr. Pyle gave us great happiness by taking Phoebe, Theodore, Howard and me to Philadelphia to lunch with his friend Mr. Will Francis at his hotel, where he had a stuffed flamingo to delight us; Phoebe especially loved the pink bird. Then they took us to Schwartz' Toy Store and gave us each \$5 to spend as we liked - Christmas presents for our families, or presents for ourselves. We were loose in a fairyland of toys, dolls, china animal sets and chocolates in glittering papers. The only sad note was for Theodore, who had set his heart on a magic lantern. His father had known of this passion and had bought him one already, so did not want to get him another - poor Theodore could not understand why he should be denied the wish of his heart - but soon found out, I think on the train going home. I said Mr. Pyle was fond of children.

In 1899 my family went to live in Maine and did not come back to Wilmington for several years. In 1903 I came down to visit Phoebe. Mr. Pyle had just lost his secretary, Miss Anna Hoopes. Here is another letter to my father written by Mr. Pyle April 28, 1904, when I was nineteen:

I believe Gertrude has written you about her helping me as a sort of secretary I do not think I should be an exacting taskmaster, but if she should undertake such duties it would have to be as a matter of business. It would require that she should give me every morning except at the usual times. She will find, I think, that her position with me would add to her social pleasures rather than detract, and the earning of spending money in such a way is a thing very much to be desired by any girl. I should be glad to send her to a good school to learn the rudiments of shorthand and typewriting.

(It would be a poor memory indeed which would not record such kindness.)

I studied at Goldey's College, but dictation was not always easy, the archaic language of the second King Arthur book presented difficulties! Mr. Pyle would walk up and down in the studio dictating, "Here followeth the Story of Sir Launcelot of the Lake, how he went forth to rescue Queen Guinevere from the peril in which she lay at the Castle of Sir Mellegrans. Likewise it is told how he met with a very untoward adventure"

And besides the illustrations to be done for Scribner's, Mr. Pyle went on with his regular work to be done for Harper's. He would stand in front of a desk he had had constructed to be exactly the right height, and while he was being read to he would make these beautiful pen-and-ink drawings, full of archaic detail. He used a light pencil at first, and then ink when he was satisfied with his drawing. For paintings he first made sketches in a small ordinary sketchbook to indicate the composition, and the background; and then he would have the canvas on the easel and transfer these notes and get his model ready to pose in the right position. While he was getting the basic composition on canvas, no one should speak to him, but as soon as he was painting, then he wanted to be read to - there was a certain release, as students can study better if they have radio or music.

RD Yes.

GB He didn't necessarily listen, perhaps, to all the Roman emperors, but he wanted someone to read to him. Sometimes the text of the story he was illustrating. Some days I would pose, or Mr. Weller would pose, for the three illustrations a month that he sent to Harper's. At the time I went to him as secretary he was already under contract to Harper's to produce three paintings each month, full pages, in full color, for the magazine, which would be thirty-six paintings a year.

- RD When was this, do you remember?
- GB It was 1904, and he began the contract in 1902. I think some of his most beautiful work was done for some of his own writing, for instance, "Northfolk Legends of the Sea," which appeared in Harper's December 1902. He wrote the text of that and made the pictures for it.
- RD You think that some of his best work was to illustrate his own stories? It's understandable because he knew what he had in mind when he wrote the story in the first place.
- GB His daughter Phoebe posed for the Joan of Arc by Mark Twain, and much later when he illustrated Thackeray's novels she posed for Becky Sharp and Beatrix Esmond and for the Pendennis picture and The Virginians.
- RD You were with him from 1904 until his death in 1911? And your secretarial duties included reading aloud and posing for some of his pictures?
- GB Yes.
- RD You mentioned dictation - did you actually take dictation for the books?
- GB Yes. Just for the King Arthur books and an occasional story. "King Arthur and his Knights" was published in St. Nicholas first, in 1902, before my day; published by Scribner's in book form in 1903; "The Story of the Champions of the Round Table" in 1905; "The Story of Sir Launcelot and his Companions," 1907; "The Story of the Grail" and "The Passing of Arthur," 1910. I am sure you know them.
- RD Yes. I think most boys read them.
- GB The ones we loved of course were the fairy tales. Of course at nineteen I was ready for more, but our real affection was gained by Pepper and Salt and The Wonder Clock and Twilight Land when we were children.
- RD Oh, yes. The children's stories.
- GB So many people remember these stories. Second hand dealers tell me it was hard to find copies that were not worn, or painted by children with colored crayons. I was horrified lately to hear of an edition of Pyle's Robin Hood without his illustrations! Illustrated by someone else.
- RD That's sacrilege, almost.
- GB But now I see that Scribner's has r^epublished the list and Dover Books has put out the original King Arthur and The Wonder Clock in paperback with the original pictures - very good.

- RD Could you tell me what kind of a man Howard Pyle was? I have a picture of him in my own mind from photographs and from what I have heard about him, but you were close and in the family, so to speak. What sort of a person was he?
- GB He was devoted to his family and very good to children - he liked to tease them. Quakers sometimes use Thee indiscriminately in the family - Thee for Thee, Thou or Thy, and he once said to Wilfrid, the youngest, a very little boy: "Wilfrid, Wag Thee Tail," and then was delighted Wilfrid sort of looked around to see if he did have a tail to wag, and Mr. Pyle laughed uproariously. Once he said to Theodore, the eldest son, "Theodore, Thee is not a very pretty boy, but Thee soul is white." And he loved to tease Eleanor and laugh at her funny sayings. He was interested in Howard going to the Forestry School. The boys went to Hotchkiss and Tome; two went on to Princeton and two to Yale.
- RD There were six children in the family?
- GB Yes. Phoebe named for his little sister; Theodore, Howard, Eleanor, Godfrey and Wilfrid. Eleanor was named for the heroine of Jack Ballister's Fortunes, which he wrote while they were living at Delamore Place, Ambassador Bayard's house. Wilfrid was named for Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe.
- RD What happened to them?
- GB Phoebe, the eldest daughter, after her father's death studied History of Art in Florence and intended to teach. But she did not teach; she married Roberts W. Brokaw of St. Louis, an official in the duPont Company. She had five children - two daughters, three sons, all living. But Phoebe died suddenly while she and her husband were on a Caribbean cruise in 1949. She died of a heart attack and is buried in Guatemala. Of her children, the eldest daughter Clotilda is professor of Art and Archaeology at the University of Louisville. Phoebe's sons, Howard Pyle Brokaw and Roberts W. Brokaw, Jr., are both in the duPont Company and live in Wilmington with their families. Anne Brokaw married Michel Verhulst and they live in Paris within sight of the Eiffel Tower. They have a young daughter named Phoebe Sophie Verhulst. Phoebe's youngest son, Frederick Van Liew Brokaw, has a house in New York, often travels abroad to Italy or France. These are Phoebe's children. Shall I continue with Howard Pyle's sons?
- RD Yes.
- GB Theodore and Howard Pyle both served in World War I. After the war Theodore was an engineer with the Delaware Highway Commission. Mrs. Pyle lived in Wilmington at first, later moved to Camden, Delaware, and made her home there with her sons; Rehoboth in the summers. Theodore married Lydia Bishop, but they left no children. Howard did not marry; he died recently, December 1965.

Eleanor Pyle, still a great friend of mine whom I see as often as I can, married Willard Graham Crichton and they have three sons: Willard, Jr., James W. and Theodore Crichton. They are all married, all have families, and Willard Graham Crichton III is married and has a young son Seth Lockwood Crichton, born this year.

Godfrey Pyle, the next son, married Martha Harrison, descendant of two Presidents, and they lived in Camden, Delaware, Godfrey died a few years ago, in 1959. They have an adopted son, Robert Pyle, named for the first Robert Pyle who came to America.

Wilfrid, the youngest son, married twice. First Mary Thurman, and second Ann Roller; they live in Richmond, Virginia, where Wilfrid continues his musical interests. They have two attractive young daughters and a son, Howard Pyle the 3rd, who was married June 18, 1966, to Caroline Oglesby Smith.

RD And none of Howard Pyle's children pursued his profession?

GB That question is very often asked. No, but perhaps artistic ability was diverted to other channels, such as Wilfrid's music, Clotilda's interest in Greek art and Archaeology.

RD But Mr. Pyle did have a sister, did he not, who was an illustrator?

GB Yes, Miss Katharine Pyle, author of many children's stories, and an artist. She was a fascinating person - tall, with one blue and one brown eye, an affectionate aunt. She traded paper dolls with me. She "embellished" (his word) her brother's book The Wonder Clock - twenty-four tales, one for each hour of the day, with charming verses, one after each story, for instance: "ONE O'CLOCK"

The Kobold Lies, and Blinks his Eyes
Under the Grapevine Leaves;
The Chickens Scratch in a sunny patch
And the Sparrows Fight in the Eaves.

Are you familiar with these?

RD Yes, I've seen some of them. Did Mr. Pyle have other brothers who were artistic?

- GB He had two brothers, Walter and Clifford, but they were not artists. Walter's children are very artistic: Walter, Jr., Ellen and Katherine, and his daughter Caroline married N. C. Wyeth, Jr., and joined another family of artists.
- RD What association did you have with Mr. Pyle's students here in Wilmington?
- GB I used to know them all. When they were out at the Chadds Ford School Mr. and Mrs. Pyle used to like to invite them to their house and have parties and games in the evenings on the broad piazzas that were built around the house. And sometimes they would go chestnutting, or on bicycle rides - this being that special period. And they would have sketch class, which I think was especially interesting because it was so personal. He would give them each a sheet of bristol board, very fine quality, and they were to each one have a crow quill pen and Higgin's India Ink. He would announce a subject and then there would be an hour's work. One subject that he gave was called "Consolation." That's distinctly an illustrative subject because you must describe why they need to be consoled and what's the means in which it's being done. And Mr. Wyeth's sketch was an angry donkey kicking over the milk cart he'd had to drag around. Allan True's was a rather homely man in cap and bells who evidently didn't like being a homely man - he had a mirror in front of his face and he was sticking out his tongue at himself. Then, let me see, one man, let me see which one - oh, Stanley Arthurs drew a refined old gentleman in knee breeches and a powdered wig by a slender little table and stand, and on it was a bottle, a carafe of sherry, and you could see it's old age, loneliness, and a glass of sherry by himself as consolation. Mr. Thomas B. Wells' brother-in-law, John Wolcott Adams, did one of a widow. She was laying out solitaire and you could see she was a widow from her weeds and the solitaire game. A man's arm is around her waist and he is consoling her. That showed very well! And, let me see, there were others. One was a sign on a wall hanging crooked, "God Bless Our Home" and a man sitting on a stool, a solitary drinker, and just the motto showed what that was for.
- RD Yes.
- GB Mr. Pyle gave me one complete set of this "Consolation" subject - the whole series. And I gave it to the Historical Society when I was working down there, so they have that description of Mr. Pyle's method. Oh, and then Mr. Pyle made a sketch, too, each time. I don't have his drawings because they were always given to the student whose work was acclaimed the best.
- RD Oh, I see.
- GB But you see what a practical way that was to teach, wasn't it?

- RD It certainly was. I understand that at least from what I've read, and Mr. Schoonover sort of substantiated that Mr. Pyle's criticisms of his students' work was seldom in technique or anything but in the spirit or the vitality or the message of the work.
- GB Yes.
- RD He didn't tell them to draw this line so or paint this color so, but sort of put yourself into the thing.
- GB That's it exactly. That's why his teaching was so good.
- RD It says a lot about the man himself.
- GB Yes, it does.
- RD And I'm assuming that he lived this way as well.
- GB And his personal interest in the individuals that he was helping. He had a young man from Chile who was a romantic, and he made a composition for Mr. Pyle to criticize, of a lonely youth standing by a grave playing a violin. And Mr. Pyle didn't like the conception of that. He said that was too sentimental and he didn't believe anybody would carry a violin off to a cemetery. He didn't like it, and he didn't give it much. At the same time there was a young Jewish girl in the class and she was making a picture of a mother holding her baby, and trying to give it a dose of castor oil, perhaps, or medicine anyway, and she has quite a big spoon and trying to hold the baby and hold the baby's mouth open and she looks so anxious and she was bent over at such a nice angle. Apparently Mr. Pyle liked that. He said, "Now that's real, that's something real," and that she had caught the idea very well of a mother's anxiety.
- RD Mmmmm. Well, this whole idea of, oh, fidelity to life, I guess you might say, is sort of a thread that runs all through his work and I think that something you were telling me earlier helps to explain the breadth of Mr. Pyle's interest - you were talking about reading to him. I wish you would go over that again to explain how his interests developed and the extent of what you read aloud to him as he worked.
- GB Well, he did regarding reading as something to distract him, but he was interested in the books he chose for me to read - history, heroes and novels. We read George Grote's History of Greece in 8 volumes, and all of Gibbons' Decline and Fall to the end - I struggled with the Paleologues and Cantacuzenes. He liked English politics - Gladstone and Disraeli. He chose Lives of Great Men: "Peter the Great," "Frederick the Great," "Napoleon," - several on Napoleon. I was glad when we finished Lord Rosebury's The Last Phase. Also several unusual subjects. I remember Hannibal and Hasdrubal. Washington and Lincoln were heroes to him - Civil

War histories and Lincoln at the time that he was painting Lincoln's Last Day. Also he liked Russian novelists: Turgenev, Tolstoi's War and Peace, especially. You can see he would like that - he loved Natasha. He also liked Sienkiewicz, not only Quo Vadis, but With Fire and Sword, and Pan Michael we read in San Domenico. Some of these were pretty long - Gibbon certainly was long! He liked Thackeray and Scott, but for some reason not Dickens. I should have thought Dickens would be a favorite because at that time we were all Dickens fans.

But the first thing every morning he wanted me to read a section of Swedenborg's Arcana Coelestia almost as a religious exercise; the Heavenly Mysteries and the Memorabilia when Swedenborg would recount converse with spirits. He told me that Kingsley and Howells and James all had Swedenborgian interests. Howells wrote that he had the same background as Howard Pyle, both Swedenborgian and Quaker - and added that "He never valued a friend more." Mr. Pyle often quoted that and once said, "Poor Howells, the light has departed." He had just read one of his later novels - he had liked the earlier ones so much - Silas Lapham. Mr. and Mrs. Pyle reread Indian Summer when we were in Florence.

RD Would you remind me again of the association Mr. Pyle drew between the Swedenborgian teaching and his own profession? I found that interesting.

GB I am not fit to describe it because I don't understand it myself. Of course Swedenborg gives the great theory of Correspondence, Inner Meanings in the Bible. Influx is a great word; all good flows in from the Lord; Marriage, the Male and Principles, Love and Wisdom, both needed; Form and Content, Line and Color. Although I read so many hours and own a Swedenborg collection of my own because of Mr. Pyle: Apocalypse Revealed; Divine Love and Wisdom; Four Leading Doctrines; Heaven and Hell, I regard him with awe, as mysterious. Of course there was The Seer by Emerson to read. In 1948 an excellent book appeared by Signe Toksig, research financed by the Guggenheim Foundation: Emmanuel Swedenborg, Scientist and Mystic, 1688-1772, published by the Yale University Press. I wish I could have read this in 1904.

Delaware has reason to be interested in Emmanuel Swedenborg. The Bishop Jasper Swedborg was in charge of the Lutheran Churches in this country; Andreas Hesselius, one of the early ministers, was a cousin; Swedenborg himself in absentia was godfather to a child born here. Mr. Pyle was very fond of the Swedenborgian minister, Mr. Cabell, and the family went regularly to church - there was a good congregation. Mrs. Pyle and I went together to the memorial services at the church here in January 1938, the 230 anniversary of his birth.

RD You mentioned that Mr. Pyle felt as if Mr. Howells' light had gone out. I was wondering if anywhere along the line he felt any change in his own talent or ability to express himself through his art.

GB No, I never thought so, except that he said it was becoming tiresome to keep on making three illustrations a month, possibly because he was becoming interested in the mural work he enjoyed doing. He made mural decorations in his own house for his daughter's coming out reception. It was lovely, called The Genus of Art. Wilfrid, the youngest boy, said "What room will we have for a drawing-room when father finishes this?" as if a drawing-room was to be the room where you painted the walls.

In 1906 Mr. Pyle painted The Battle of Nashville for the State Capitol at St. Paul, and in 1907 The Landing of Carteret for the Essex County Court House in Newark, New Jersey, and in 1910 mural decorations for the Hudson County Court House in Jersey City - Dutch Life in New York - and greatly enjoyed painting them.

RD Yes. Well, did he start mural painting because he felt that he was becoming stultified in magazine illustrations, or was it another outlet?

GB I never thought of it that way exactly, but I think he thought he would continue to have opportunities to do further work of the kind, and when he reached Florence he wanted to have a large enough studio to do such large canvases as these, and kept hunting till he found what he wanted.

When he reached Italy he was very ill at first. He was taken ill on the French Line steamer, the Sant'Anna, New York to Naples. He always enjoyed the pleasures of the table - the French food and trying new things to eat and drink. He liked the cognac and wines that were served. He was generally a good sailor, but had not been well when he left America. He had been to the doctor before we sailed and had a clean bill of health, but he grew ill on the way. They gave him an opiate to stop the intense pain, because he had renal colic, akin to Bright's disease. He suffered a lot and was not a person to take suffering easily. It upset him frightfully, although he was cheerful and interested when we started, liked to watch the people in the steerage, liked the Azores. But he was really ill when we reached Naples, but managed to get on to Rome and the Hotel de la Terme. It was not very far from the Baths of Diocletian. The ruins of Rome did not please him very much. He said, characteristically, "It's the Charnel House of the Dead Past." But he was sick and he did not go about very much to see beautiful things, only drove about a little.

Elihu Vedder was in Rome at the time and came to call, but Mr. Pyle was not able to see him that day. Phoebe, Eleanor and I talked to Mr. Vedder in the hotel parlor - Mr. Pyle was never well enough to accept his invitations. We stayed a week or so, then Phoebe and I took the children and went on to Florence and the Pensione White, a typical Florentine Pensione with an English and an Italian lady at the head to handle the tourists and the marketing. When Mr. Pyle arrived, he really started to get well again and enjoy himself, or almost well again.

After leaving the pensione and moving to the apartment 6 via Garibaldi, Mr. Pyle was soon able to go out to dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Park and to drive about with them to Fiesole and Certosa. He went to the opera

once to hear a concert by the great Belgian violinist Ysaye. In the summer we all went to a production of Edipo Re in the amphitheatre at Fiesole with Salvini, and took a few excursions, for instance, to Settignano to view the house where Gabriel d'Annunzio and Eleanora Duse had once lived. That was exciting, with collections of sphynxes and venuses and keys, and fire dogs outside. One day Mr. Pyle and I walked home from the studio by way of the Palazuolo, and he decided to lunch at a small sidewalk cafe, with iron chairs, which amused him and was good fun. He never even tried to learn Italian - the most he said was Due minuti mezzo! for his morning egg, and he laughed at the Italian word for ink, Inchiostro, and would repeat it often.

American friends coming through stopped to see him and Mr. and Mrs. Pyle went to a few receptions, but we did not meet many Florentines; perhaps Mr. Berenson was away, Mr. Pyle did not meet him.

Mrs. Pyle had a family birthday party for him in March. One delicacy was truffles, which he declared tasted of gas! He was feeling well. Dr. and Mrs. Parke came to dinner and Phoebe and Eleanor and I gave the birthday cake with a flat wreath of laurel. At this time he was finishing the duPont Powder Wagon painting.

He loved the galleries; he loved the town and the Villa Torricella, where we went to live out in the country toward Fiesole, at San Domenico. The house in Florence was called a palazzo, just across from the Anglo-American Hotel, and it had high painted ceilings and Bolognese furniture, but many houses seemed to be palazzos. Mr. Pyle loved the Villa and even wrote home that it was like a dream he had of being with Mrs. Pyle alone in such a heavenly spot.

- RD Was it his interest in murals that took him to Italy in the first place, after all his years of feeling that Americans need not go?
- GB No, I never felt that, but he wanted to be able to have a large studio so that it would be possible; and he continued to do work for Harper and Brothers. However, he had always hoped that he could have Stanley Arthurs and Frank Schoonover come to Italy and help him with mural work, as they had done with one of his large canvases. They could all three work from his conception and measured drawings. It was a disappointment that this never happened and he was glad of a commission from the duPont Company to do a large and important painting for the 1812 War, which arrived soon after we came to Florence. He did several Italian sketches for Harper's, and several illustrations for their manuscripts, which appeared in the magazine after his death, so that you will find work appearing as late as June 1913, although he died in 1911.

He was quite impatient at first because of his sickness. We used to go out in the morning and take the Circumvallazione tram from the Cascine to the studio, following the line of the old city walls, where the studio was finally found on the other side of town. He hated to wait, and was so impatient, as if he couldn't wait another instant. And yet he was sometimes so amused and happy with Italian sights, with the conductor who said grazzie for a tip of one soldo, with the flower vendors, and the children. He could still enjoy himself and tease the maids at the palazzo. It was better, too, when we moved to the country and he had a smaller studio there also.

RD How long was he in Italy before he died?

GB We had Thanksgiving dinner on the French Line boat going over in 1910, and Eleanor and I left right after his death at Thanksgiving time 1911. he died November 11 - about a year.

RD Well, this I should know, it's probably a ridiculous question, but is he buried in Italy?

GB Yes, in the Protestant Cemetery in the Certosa neighborhood. The service was in the Church of England tradition; Mrs. Pyle thought it best to have this service. In the church wall there is a stone tablet:
HOWARD PYLE - 1853-1911.

RD Well, would you care to say anything about Mr. Pyle's effect on illustration?

GB I don't feel myself competent to do that. I think it has been well expressed by Henry Pitz and N. C. Wyeth, who had been his students, and especially Mr. H. M. Alden of Harper's Art Department, who had known his work over the years. That is the tribute I like the best, and like to reread: "Without any loss of wonder, his meaning was plain; we shall not see his like again."

RD Can you see any lasting effect, apart from the fact that Mr. Pyle had a lot to do with training capable men like N. C. Wyeth and Frank E Schoonover and Stanley Arthurs - any effect on the interest in art in Wilmington? Did the fact that Mr. Pyle lived in Wilmington have any effect on Wilmington as an art community?

GB I think it did. So many young people all working in the studios here, so much interest in the exhibitions; someone always had a friend, or a favorite. Magazine illustration was at its height, more alive than it is now, in a way. We had a list of one hundred or more artists who studied with him or came here because of him, and he helped them to place their work. For instance, in 1907 the Riverside Press published an edition of some of Longfellow, with illustrations by pupils of

Howard Pyle: "Evangeline" by Frank E. Schoonover; "The Village Blacksmith" by Howard E. Smith; "Building of the Ship" by Clifford W. Ashley; "Hiawatha" by N. C. Wyeth; etc. This edition is now sought by collectors - Houghton Mifflin can't supply it. He did a great deal for his pupils. Just lately someone was talking about his opinion of women students, that he did not consider them serious, but he did, and I remember his saying jokingly, "I believe I like women better than men," but that was just said idly, certainly not about any particular art student - no one but Mrs. Pyle, whom he always adored, and her friends; he liked to have them come to his studio to play bridge on Monday afternoons.

In 1907 McClure's hoped Mr. Pyle might come over to New York, live there and take charge of their art department for the magazine. He wrote a reply, which I think may have been quoted, saying that he had such a delightful way of life here, so many friends and such happy social and family surroundings, that he couldn't be at all happy going anywhere else.

RD Quite a tribute to Wilmington.

GB Yes. He liked Wilmington and friends with Quaker backgrounds - you know, they are lively, although Mr. Pyle used to say of himself that he never could dance, he had a Quaker foot!

RD Well, I think if you don't mind I should like to take advantage of your fantastic memory and ask you to sketch briefly Mr. Pyle's career as you remember it. What he was doing when he first started and some of his activities up to the time he went to Italy. That's quite a request, I know, but - - -

GB I haven't exactly thought how to reply to this. I always thought he did some specially beautiful work just before I came to work for him in 1904. Color reproduction came in the late 90's. One of his first color frontispieces for Harper's was Harper's, April 1897, really not full color yet: "Banquet to Citizen Genet," rather red and brown, but rich in color. Then there was "The Puppet of Fate," and the lovely "Northfolk Legends of the Sea" for his own text, January 1902, for which I own an unpublished watercolor; the Pirate pictures and the first of the medieval series. Color in the magazines was a sensation. People would say instead of "Have you been to such a theatre, or exhibit?" "Have you seen the latest Century?" or "Have you seen Pierre Vidal's Troubadour in the December Harper's?"

And lately the author of SPQR, a modern novelist, describes having seen when he was a boy, "the picture of a lovely lady with long beautiful hair by a spring in the forest," and I knew at once that he meant the pen drawing of "The Lady of the Lake Sits by the Fountain in Arroy" in the first King Arthur book - it is most romantic. Mr. Pyle gave the original to one of Mrs. Pyle's friends and I often see it. Evidently the author has always remembered it as beautiful since he was a child.

Lately I heard of a play which came out some years ago: "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife," and the reviewer said, "I cannot think of any way to describe its charm except to say that the late Howard Pyle would have loved it." Every now and then you hear the name Howard Pyle, and it gives me such satisfaction in this age, how he is remembered.

RD This of course is speculation in a way, but what do you think Mr. Pyle wanted to do had he lived longer? What aspirations? Did he voice any aspirations to do anything?

GB Not to me. He might be more apt to speak more to the men, for instance, Stanley Arthurs and Frank Schoonover. I always thought he had aspirations enough.

Before leaving Siena I love to remember the last evening at dinner with all the guests seated about, and the news circulated that Mr. Pyle was leaving. When some guests came to his table to say goodbye he was pleased and touched, and gave a farewell gesture: wine to be served at every table. Everybody drank his health and he smiled and raised his glass, and said goodbye to these recent friends.

I do remember one satisfaction he had, when he went to Genoa to meet one of his sons in the summer - he told us when he came home that looking out of the train window he saw some of the very castles he had drawn so many times at home, he could seem to recognize them!

RD Wasn't that something!

GB Another thing I always enjoy telling is how much he loved Siena when we stayed there in the late summer. He liked the great Duomo - you don't know whether it is ugly or beautiful. It is black and white and bold and a wonderful conception. Mr. Pyle just loved it on first sight. And inside the Piccolomini Chapel enchanted him, with eight scenes from the Life of Aeneas Piccolomini, Pope Pius II, by Pinturicchio. He said, "And what is this but Illustration?"

RD That's right.

GB He didn't like it that people thought illustration was less than painting; that any old painting, dabs on a piece of canvas, or even nowadays a whole canvas pale olive-green, nothing at all, can be shown and win the prize; but they wouldn't like Aeneas Piccolomini re-created, that would be "representation." But I also think Mr. Pyle was a step beyond the Pre-Raphaelites - they were romantic - he was romantic.

- RD I wanted to ask you if there was a connection between Mr. Pyle and that School?
- GB No. He was interested in the collection, but didn't like all of the pictures.
- RD Was the collection here at that time?
- GB Yes - at least I can't be sure that more paintings were added after Mr. Pyle's death, but I remember Mr. Samuel Bancroft had the original urge to collect. He went to dinner at a friend's house and saw one of the paintings, Fiammetta - this was in 1880 - and he kept adding to his collection for many years. I believe our Collection at the Delaware Art Center is now considered better than any one Pre-Raphaelite Collection in England.
- RD I think it's at least equal. I've been fascinated by occasionally thinking in Mr. Pyle's work I do see something of the Pre-Raphaelite influence.
- GB Perfectly unconscious, I am sure. There were two pictures I heard Mr. Pyle speak of often. One was Sir John Everett Millais's The Blind Girl - a little English girl sitting in an English scene with the most beautiful rainbow in the sky. She's surrounded by beauty, and that is just all the title says - The Blind Girl - otherwise you wouldn't know.
- RD Certainly.
- GB Mr. Pyle liked it, and I have often heard him quote it, a sentimental subject that "tells a story"; you mustn't do that. Another one he liked was The Last of England by Ford Madox Brown - a man and woman leaving for the colonies; they have their belongings together. Then Mr. Pyle liked the illustrations for Trollope's novels. Of course Trollope is not modern, but he stands up well.
- RD I think he does, yes. I think we have ranged quite widely.
- GB Don't you think you have exhausted - - -
- RD Is there anything you think we should discuss that we haven't covered?
- GB Let me see. One thing I told you - that he liked Italian painting, but sometimes he would get annoyed and say, "Oh, these old fellows were tremendously overrated!" But that is just human, just funny, the way it would strike him, not to be always in awe. He liked walking through the galleries. We would go on Sundays when they were open free and spend hours. He enjoyed the color, and often spoke of it. Then we would drive about the country, take a car and go, for instance, to a town called Staggia Senese; he got great pleasure out of that day because it seemed almost as he imagined, like the castles he saw from the train, he felt he knew them beforehand.

Mr. Pyle had an interesting library, such as Strutt's Antient Armor, and the Sports of Old England, and the Bilderbuchs - 3 volumes of engravings. They included Goya's dreadful descriptions of war, as well as Dürer, and other wonderful drawings. He had an infallible sense for costume, always correct for period, and a great feeling for period furniture also. Always correct settings for his colonial scenes. I remember hearing once that Mr. N. C. Wyeth wanted to make a picture of a whaleboat. He couldn't find an actual model at the time, but looked at Howard Pyle's picture of a whaleboat, sure it would be correct. You understand that I do not presume to be speaking as a critic. I am merely the girl that did the typewriting.

RD Well, did Mr. Pyle ever attempt engraving or wood block himself?

GB No, I think he never did anything of the kind. The etchings published by the Bibliophile Society were by Bicknell after Howard Pyle. It seems as if he were entirely self-taught because though he went to study with a man in Philadelphia, Van der Weilen, he did not get much inspiration from him, though he gave him credit for technique. I met an old lady that year in Florence who said she had been to art school with him. She was full of gossip about fellow students. When I came back to the Villa and told Mr. Pyle, he did not remember her, but he did speak of the class, and the teacher as very "academic" - that was a bad word in those days.

It seems strange that Mr. Pyle never painted portraits of his two pretty daughters, and especially that he did not paint Mrs. Pyle, who was lovely looking and whom he loved so much. She used to laugh and say, "Do you realize that I am beautiful? Like Katisha, I have the most lovely chin, your father says so!" There is a youthful photograph of her that shows how lovely she was. She had beautiful eyes. Of course, she posed for him. You can see her in illustrations in the early Harper's of the 1880 period. I remember especially one - a conversation piece - ~~xxx~~ in which she was gracefully seated with swirling overskirts in one of those S-shaped chairs, with a stylish mustached gentleman in the other turn of the S. Mr. Weller probably posed for this. Mr. Pyle could make him a pirate or a gentleman. Phoebe's miniature was painted when she was a young girl with long yellow hair by Miss Arendts, who also painted Godfrey as a baby. I do remember that Mr. Pyle painted Mrs. Cass Gilbert and he did his own self-portrait for the National Academy of Art, as they required when he became a member, but to me his 1910 photograph seems a better likeness, and very much like him.

END OF INTERVIEW