



HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter for October-November, 2012



Francis Jane Stratton -- Artist and Teacher

by Jean Smith-Cripps

Francis Jane Stratton was born in Hollis, New Hampshire, in 1875, the youngest of Charles M. Stratton's four children. The Strattons lived in a large Victorian house at the corner of Love Lane and Main Street next to the parsonage. Jane grew up in Hollis and graduated from Hollis High School in 1894 at age nineteen.



Massachusetts Normal Art School

In 1896, Jane Stratton began a program of study to become an art teacher at Massachusetts Normal Art School. At that time, art teacher preparation consisted of a two-year normal school program leading to a diploma. Art teachers of that period varied greatly in their education as artists and in their knowledge and understanding of contemporary

art. Massachusetts Normal Art School was a well respected art school. The school's teaching philosophy emphasized the practical, manual training of children in preference to picture making. Curriculum included drawing, design, and construction with emphasis on the utility of art with the goal of training good taste in clothing, furnishings, and other industrial products. Fine arts focused on the appreciation of paintings and sculpture.

At Massachusetts Normal Art School, Jane's study included freehand, mechanical, cast and life drawing, perspective, anatomy, painting, design, and teacher training. Her sketchbooks dated 1898-99 include figures from life drawing and portraits in pencil and conte crayon. Examples of her drawings from this period demonstrate her drawing ability. Jane submitted drawings to the Paris Expositions while attending Massachusetts Normal Art School and was awarded Gold Medals for the art school.

Teaching Career

In 1900, Jane received a diploma from the Massachusetts Normal Art School. Her first assignment was in Claremont, New Hampshire, where she taught fine arts in the elementary grades and high school. She continued her training as an artist and teacher by taking summer courses and Saturday classes. Her studies prepared her for teaching manual arts as well as fine arts and led to employment in several Massachusetts schools: Attleboro (1904-05), Southbridge (1905-08), North Andover (1908-10), and Plymouth (1910-23).

From 1903-1919, Jane studied at New York University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Normal Art School, Boston Art Museum, Teachers College, Columbia University, and private

classes in Los Angeles. Her undergraduate classes included design and color, jewelry and metal, bookbinding, woodwork, painting and methods of supervision. Jane's professional development extended her teaching beyond fine arts, to mechanical drawing and woodworking. She became a skilled woodworker and constructed furniture in the classroom. A writing desk she built was a prized possession.



Although two years of normal school was the requirement for teaching, Jane's ambition to teach high school in cities as well as better programs required some college experience. The many undergraduate classes Jane had taken over this period and a thesis "The Role of Art in Life" submitted to the Massachusetts Normal Art School fulfilled the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education in May, 1924.

Jane did not limit her education to formal classes. She traveled throughout the country visiting schools in Rochester, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Los Angeles and Pasadena, California. She also visited art galleries, cathedrals and chateaus in Belgium, England, France, and Holland. Jane collected books and magazines on art and methods of teaching. Among her collection of teaching aids for the classroom are charts illustrating art from different cultures and examples of techniques and media. She also assembled notebooks on art history and aesthetics used in her teaching.



Teacher's College, Columbia University

In 1925, Jane Stratton pursued a Master of Arts degree at Teacher's College, Columbia University, in New York City. Teacher's College surpassed Massachusetts Normal Art School in national importance as a foremost graduate program in the nation's leading cultural center. Jane spent the next three years in a progressive program guided by the philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey emphasized the importance of art to society and art activities in an integrated curriculum. A new approach to teaching art through abstract principles of composition and design replaced teaching through representation. New York City museums and galleries offered many opportunities for Jane to study contemporary art.

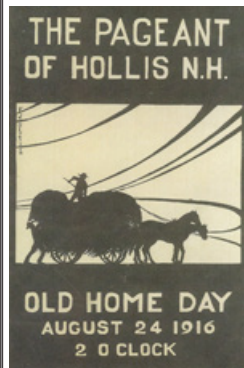
The principles of design and composition taught at Teacher's

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Francis Jane Stratton -- Artist and Teacher

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College by Arthur Wesley Dow and Denman Waldo Ross were important considerations in making art as well as learning to appreciate art. Jane applied these principles in her work. This was evident in her wood block prints, for example, her annual Christmas card design. One of her designs of a hay wagon is currently used in the Hollis Old Home Day advertisements.



Barnes Foundation

The Barnes Foundation, an American educational art institution located in Merion, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, was established in 1922 by Albert C. Barnes. Barnes collected modern art, primarily from Paris, and transformed his collection into a cultural institution for the study of art. He envisioned the Barnes Foundation as a school rather than a museum. Guided by John Dewey, the education program advocated the systematic study of art facilitating individual appreciation. Jane's journals document many visits to the Barnes Foundation to attend lectures and study paintings. She embraced the teaching philosophy and brought students to study the outstanding collection of modern art.

Professional Career/Painting

Jane lived and taught in Princeton, New Jersey, from 1925 -1950. She took advantage of the cultural and educational opportunities in New York City and Philadelphia. She studied painting at Columbia, the Philadelphia School of Art, and with Hans Hoffman in his New York studio and during the summers in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Hoffman was an abstract painter who believed that abstract art was a way to get at the important reality.



Hans Hoffman Class
in Provincetown, MA

He advised simplifying the subject to eliminate the unnecessary and focus on the important, the essential. Hoffman's influence is evident in Jane's oil paintings, abstract paintings with simplified shapes, and color.

Miss Fine's School

Miss Fine's School was a private college preparatory girls' school in Princeton, New Jersey, established in 1899. The school had high scholastic standing and was recognized by leading colleges. In 1927, Jane Stratton received her Master of Science degree from Columbia University's Teachers College and was hired by Miss Fine's School. She taught there for the next twenty-two years while continuing her own study of art and painting. Jane described her commitment to teaching by recounting her experiences at the school. She extended class activities for the girls to allow numerous trips each year to art exhibitions, museums, and galleries in Princeton, New York, and Philadelphia. Her pupils cooperated in school projects such as poster work for various activities and designing scenery for school plays. At the close of each year, she held an exhibit of work which attracted not only

parents of the children but many outside visitors, including educators, from Princeton and out of town.

The following statements were included in a letter of recommendation from Shirley Davis, headmistress of Miss Fine's School, Princeton, New Jersey, in 1945:

"May I take this occasion to express to you again my appreciation of the outstanding work in art and in Art Appreciation that you do with the pupils and that we are known for. I am always proud to have visitors come and see the work and have the school used by other organizations so that they can have the opportunity to see what we stand for in art. Many thanks. I know the time and trouble you put into all this and the trips to New York with the students. Not only have you contributed greatly to the children's appreciation and knowledge, but you have done much to educate the community of Princeton through your work with the girls."

Retirement in Hollis

Jane retired from teaching at Miss Fine's School in 1950 and returned to Hollis where she lived in the family home on Main Street until her death in 1973. In her journals from this period, she describes a life of painting, frequent trips to see exhibits in Boston, and teaching drawing and art appreciation to residents of the community.



Stratton Home in Hollis, 1906

The Hollis Historical Society will present an exhibit, Francis Jane Stratton, Artist and Teacher, at the Wheeler House Museum, 20 Main Street. The display of her work includes paintings, wood block prints, drawings, sketchbooks, art and art education books, teaching materials, and personal papers. They give a glimpse of her life as an artist and teacher. The Wheeler House Museum is open Monday, Wednesday, and the first and third Sunday in September and October from 1-4 p.m. Group tours are available by appointment. Please call (603) 465-3935 or (603) 465-2884.

Thank You to John Butler!!!

The Hollis Historical Society would like extend its appreciation to John Butler for spending so much time and effort photographing and providing a searchable database of digital images of our accessions collection. These files can now easily be searched and viewed using digital asset management software.

Message to the Members



Dear Members of the Hollis Historical Society,

I hope you have had a relaxing summer and have had a chance to visit our summer exhibits at the Always Ready Engine House – the exhibit of Steven Howe’s car and toy collection and the Hollis Veterans Wall of Honor. As we have mentioned in the fall newsletter article on Jane Stratton, written by Jeanne Smith-Cripps, we will be exhibiting some of Ms. Stratton’s paintings, wood block prints, drawings, sketch books, and art books at the Wheeler House this month.

We are now in the process of upgrading our computer hardware and software and redesigning our website in order to better serve and communicate with our members and the community. Our new web address will be www.hollishistorical-society.org. This upgrade will improve our research capabilities, through online services and increased database capacity.

We are finalizing plans for this year’s programs, and we think you will be very pleased with our offerings. The dates for our five programs will be October 18th, November 15th, March 21st, April 18th, and May 16th. The programs will be held at the

Lawrence Barn on the 3rd Thursday of each of those five months, with our Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Gathering in May.

A subcommittee of our Board has worked on a revision of our by-laws this summer. Our Board reviewed these proposed changes at its September meeting, and a draft of those revisions will be presented to the membership for review and approval at our Annual Meeting on May 16, 2013.

The Historical Society has been invited by the Hollis-Brookline Journal to submit a monthly Hollis history article, written by some of our members. Look for these articles in the second week issue each month. Some of these articles will be followed by an exhibit at the Wheeler House whenever this is feasible. As you can see, our Board has been busy promoting Hollis history and helping to preserve the rich heritage of our town.

Finally, I want to again thank you on behalf of our Board for your continued interest and financial support of our programs and activities. I hope to see you soon at one of our programs this year.

Sincerely,

Dick Lates, President

American Farm Implements : Tools, Technology and Agricultural Innovation in New England

presented by

John H. Ott ,

**former Executive Director of the National Heritage Museum, Lexington, MA,
and President of the Groton Historical Society**

October 21st, 1:00–3:00pm

Beaver Brook Association

Maple Hill Farm Barn

117 Ridge Road

Hollis, NH

Members are invited to a Freedom’s Way program, **American Farm Implements : Tools, Technology and Agricultural Innovation in New England**, presented by John H. Ott, and co-sponsored by the Beaver Brook Association and the Hollis Historical Society.

The development of modern day agricultural practices and the introduction of innovative farm technology in the United States began in New England through the pioneering work of farmers who believed in the concept of “intelligent agriculture.” Battling the long held prejudice against what was called “book farming,” or the study of agriculture by reading books and subscribing to farm periodicals in addition to general farm experience, and by sharing information through membership in local farm clubs, men like Thomas Fessenden and Simon Brown, long time editors of the New England Farmer, helped usher in a new philosophy and approach to farming. They believed that through education, an understanding of the elements of science, better made hand tools and machinery as well as the debunking of old notions such as planting by the moon, that farm productivity and a sound living could be made from agriculture. This program will look at these men, their farm practices, their publications, and the tools and equipment they used to change farming in New England in the 19th century.

John H. Ott is a past President of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, Massachusetts’ newest National Heritage Area. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, MA, and chairs the Collections Committee. In 2006, he was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, honoring his historic preservation efforts in helping to preserve some of America’s most important national landmarks and, in 2008, he was elected a member of the Massachusetts Agricultural Club founded in 1840. At present, he is the Steward of Groton Grange #7 and a member of the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association, working to preserve Groton’s equestrian fairgrounds.

He resides in Groton, Massachusetts, with his wife Lili, who is Director of the Concord Art Association. He is an avid collector of books on American agriculture, technology, and travel, as well as period farm tools and domestic equipment.



Hollis Heritage Commission Moves Ahead on Farley Building Stabilization Plan

Dave Sullivan, Chairman of the Hollis Heritage Commission, reports that The Farley Building Stabilization Plan is now nearly completed and ready for presentation to the Board of Selectmen early next month. The report will outline the scope of the work to be done to stabilize the building and will contain detailed descriptions and photographs of the specific areas of the building that will require work. If and when the project report is approved by the Board of Selectmen, the project will be put out for bid, and a proposal will be prepared for action by the town meeting on March 14, 2013.

Dave also mentioned that the reconstruction of the Woodmont Gambrel Barn is almost complete. The Hollis Heritage Commission is now seeking donations from community supporters to cover painting of the Gambrel Barn, installation of security equipment, and landscaping of the building site.

Wish List for Ruth E. Wheeler House & Always Ready Engine House

- Heavy bookends (used ones are fine)
- Cleaners – folks to help vacuum & do general cleaning -- as needed -- in both museums
- Docents – occasional Sundays, June through October (informational material & training provided)
- 2 used dictionaries
- 2 used thesauruses
- Easels – full & tabletop sizes (used ones are fine)



Hollis Historical Society
Wheeler House
20 Main Street, P. O. Box 754
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