



J. JEFFREY GRANT
(1883-1960) EXHIBITION II

The Lure of Gloucester

VOSE GALLERIES OF BOSTON

MAY 1 - JUNE 14, 2008

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Hill Top Scene, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 35 x 30 inches, Signed Lower Right
Private Collection

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Cover Image: (detail) *Wash Day, Gloucester*, p.5

FOREWARD In 2005, when we were approached with a group of fifty paintings by James Jeffrey Grant, we had, surprisingly, never heard his name nor seen a single work by the artist. Although Grant was based in Chicago, the majority of the oil and watercolor paintings were lively, colorful scenes of life in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, where Grant spent almost every summer after discovering the quaint fishing village of Gloucester in 1931. We were captivated by their superior quality and charm, and jumped at the chance to reintroduce this talented artist and place him among the top tier of American realist painters active during the Depression Era.

Our first exhibition, titled *J. Jeffrey Grant and his North Shore Contemporaries*, examined Grant's life and work during the 1930s and '40s along with many of the other artists living on the North Shore who exhibited at the North Shore Art Association, where Grant showed his work yearly from 1934 to 1956. We intended it to be the first of a two-part exhibition, but our plan was thwarted by the fantastic response to Grant's work. We sold not only most of the major pieces from the first show, but also many which were slated for show number two.

To our delight, we were approached last year with another top-quality collection of Grant's paintings, including several scenes of everyday life in Gloucester. It is evident from these works, many of which retain their original Newcomb-Macklin frames, that Gloucester held a special place in Grant's heart. He subtly captures the hustle-bustle of people in the streets and on the docks, the simplicity of the 19th-century architecture and the timeless beauty of the sea.

Vose Galleries has played a major role in reintroducing artists of the early to mid-1900s, including Aldro Hibbard, Charles Woodbury, Maxfield Parrish, Charles Hopkinson, Abbott Graves, Mary Bradish Titcomb, Walter Farndon and Arthur C. Goodwin, among many others. We are pleased to add James Jeffrey Grant to the extensive list of talented but forgotten artists whose work we have championed.

Marcia L. Vose
Abbot W. Vose



Street Scene in Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 30 x 35 inches, Signed Lower Left
Price Upon Request



Yard Scene, Gloucester

Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$15,000



Harbor Court - Gloucester

Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$16,000

TOWN LIFE James Jeffrey Grant, a prominent member of the Chicago art community, first visited Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1931. He soon joined the influx of artists who came from all over the country during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s to paint the charming seaside villages and breathtaking scenery found in the environs of Gloucester, Rockport, Annisquam and Lanesville.

In stark contrast to Grant's hometown, Gloucester was a quaint fishing village and bustling seaport, with fresh air and some of the best views in the world. Although Gloucester did have its share of unemployment and bread lines during the early 1930s, it was far removed from the crippling effects of the Great Depression. Gloucester became Grant's summer oasis; he deemed it his "favorite place to sketch," and produced numerous award-winning paintings while staying in his rental at the Presson Cabins on Concord Street.¹

In *Street Scene in Gloucester* (p.3), Grant portrays a peaceful, comfortable community, one without excess but free of the intense poverty that was plaguing much of the country. The townsfolk are plainly but neatly clothed, the simple buildings are well maintained, and the old-fashioned horse-drawn cart is brimming with fresh produce.

Even in his depictions of the run-down tenements, such as *Wash Day, Gloucester* (p.5), Grant chooses to focus not on the detritus in the alley or the rotting porch railing, but on more cheerful aspects of the scene: lines of pristine, brightly colored laundry, a vibrant yellow house against the perfect blue sky and the child's innocent fascination with a stray cat. He records the scene without sentiment, but tenderly and with a feeling of hopefulness.

Throughout his work, Grant relays a strong sense of community, and rarely shows figures in isolation. Mothers hold their childrens' hands as they stroll down the lane, groups of kids play on the rocks, women gossip over fences and fishermen work together to haul in the day's catch or repair the nets.

Rich cultural diversity has contributed to Gloucester's eclectic mix of churches, monuments and other distinctive architecture. These icons have become part of the town's character and the subjects of countless paintings and photographs.

¹ See Nancy Jarzombek, "James Jeffrey Grant: Observer of Everyday Life," exhib. cat., Vose Galleries of Boston, 2005.



Wash Day, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 35 x 30 inches, Signed Lower Left
Private Collection

Exhibited: North Shore Arts Association, 1940; Chicago Public Library, 1948
Illustrated: *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1948



Hanging the Laundry on Portagee Hill, Gloucester, MA
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$13,500



Joan of Arc, Gloucester
Watercolor on paper, 14 x 16 1/2 inches
\$7,500

Some of the most unusual forms in Gloucester are the twin spires of **The Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage** and its adorning statue of the Madonna cradling a fishing vessel in her arms. Modeled after a church on the island of Pico in the Portuguese Azores, it was built out of wood in 1893 for the Portuguese fishermen who had flocked to the active seaport during the second half of the 19th Century. After the church was razed by fire in 1914, the current structure was built from stone and stucco. Due to deterioration, the original wooden statue is now housed in the Cape Ann Museum and has been replaced with a replica.²



Our Lady of Good Voyage from Portagee Hill, Gloucester, MA
Unknown Photographer, 1973; Barbara Erkkila Collection
Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum

Another popular subject for Grant was the spectacular **World War I Memorial** in Legion Square. Dedicated by the town in 1923, it features an impressive sculpture of **Joan of Arc** on horseback. The sculpture was created by renowned Boston sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington, who spent much of her childhood years in Gloucester and held a studio in Annisquam. Several visits to France provided inspiration for the sculpture, and Huntington was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor for a copy commissioned by the French Government. The horse, however, was modeled after a magnificent Percheron that was part of the team at the East Gloucester fire station. Boston sculptor Frederick Hall created the base out of sturdy Cape Ann granite, a symbol of the steadfastness and bravery of Gloucester's fallen soldiers. Grant's oil painting of the same subject was exhibited at the National Academy, bought by Anna Huntington and later donated by her estate to the Cape Ann Museum.³

² Parsons, *The Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage*. Driftwind Press, VT, 1945.

³ Pringle, "Program for Dedication of WWI Memorial," Gloucester, July 4, 1921.



Sunny Morning, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 36 x 31 inches, Signed Lower Right
Price Upon Request



A Bit of Gloucester
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$15,000



End of the Day, Gloucester
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$16,000



Pulling in the Catch, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 26 inches, Signed Lower Right
Price Upon Request



Gloucester Dock Scene
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches
\$15,000



Gray Day, Gloucester Docks
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$13,500



Mansfield Wharf, West End of Main Street, Gloucester, MA
Martha Hale Harvey, 1890s
Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum

*“My favorite sketching ground is
Gloucester, Mass. I like the old wharfs,
boats, fishermen and quaint streets,
spent many summers there...”*



Anchored, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 35 x 30 inches, Signed Lower Left
Price Upon Request



Unloading Lumber, Gloucester Harbor
Oil on canvas board, 16 x 14 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$15,000



The Derelict Schooner, Gloucester Harbor
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$12,000

ON THE DOCKS Although he left no known papers or diaries, Grant's oil and watercolor paintings of Gloucester are his unique record of inspiring summer stays in his favorite sketching grounds. In a review of his solo show at the Currier Gallery of Art in 1936, one critic noted that the "...poetic aspects of Rockport and Gloucester and life by the side of the sea have been faithfully transferred to the canvas by [Grant] in many interesting studies..."⁴ While he occasionally painted the quaint waterfront views typical of many of his contemporaries, more often Grant focused on Gloucester's industrious dock workers. His paintings serve as a colorful snapshot of Gloucester's fishing industry during the 1930s and '40s, a time of great flux as the town was facing the effects of the Depression and World War II.

America's oldest seaport, Gloucester was founded in 1623, and quickly became a giant in the fishing and boat building industries. Shortage of American labor after 1850 brought in waves of immigrants to Gloucester, including many from the Canadian Maritime Provinces, Scandinavia, Ireland, and the Portuguese Azores. Most of the immigrants from these coastal areas already had strong fishing communities, and brought with them skills from their home countries that were readily marketable in Gloucester. Unlike textile mill workers in towns like Lowell and Lawrence, their skills were valued, and most fishermen and skippers were rewarded with shares of the catch.

Whether it was fishing for cod and lobster, building massive schooners or harvesting ice from local ponds to chill the catch, every citizen of Gloucester had an economic stake in the fishing industry. Because the business community was small and interconnected, there were opportunities for immigrants to become captains and business leaders if they did their job well. The East Gloucester Yacht Club was formed in 1896 by blue-collar workers, including boat builders, mechanics, carpenters, fish skimmers, carriage makers and town officials. By 1900 the yacht club had fifty members, a "...curious mix of local working men, wealthy East Point residents, their children, and summer people."⁵

⁴ Unidentified newspaper clipping, Vose Galleries Artist File.

⁵ Santos, Michael, *Caught in Irons: North Atlantic Fishermen in the Last Days of Sail*, Susquehanna Univ. Press, PA, 2002, p.40.

During the 1930s and '40s, the community depended on its unique mix of industry and tourism for survival. A love of the sea and sailing, for both fishing and leisure, was a bond for summer visitors and Gloucester locals from all walks of life. Wealthy summer residents and tourists came to Gloucester for its abundant beauty and local flavor. In turn, they hosted art exhibitions, patronized local businesses, and funded programs and events for visiting fishermen. The sea served as an equalizer among classes, and created a community in which everyone contributed to each other's well-being.



Lobstermen, Annisquam
Martha Hale Harvey, 1890s
Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum

*...Think I'll take back what I said
about the old wharfs. I fell through a
hole in one of them and landed
fifteen feet below."*

-J. Jeffrey Grant, "Human Interest Items,"
Chicago Public Library, 1957



Harbor Scene, Gloucester
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$12,000



Old Lobster Shack
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$16,000



Bit of Old Charleston, South Carolina
Oil on canvas board, 16 x 14 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$14,000



Along the Way, Galena, Illinois
Oil on canvas board, 16 x 14 inches
\$14,000

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY James Jeffrey Grant's longstanding bond with the ocean likely developed when he was just a small child accompanying his father on painting outings to the Scottish coastline. The path of Grant's life directed him far from the spray of the sea and the call of the gulls, however, as he pursued studies in Munich and later careers in Toronto and Chicago. In 1931, at the age of forty-eight, Grant ultimately rediscovered his ties with the ocean when he first visited the coastal towns of Northern Massachusetts. Enamored by what he observed, Grant spent every summer thereafter in the fishing village of Gloucester, recording his surroundings in award-winning paintings.

Grant studied fine art under the guidance of his father, George Grant, a lacquer and easel artist, at their home in Aberdeen, Scotland. With his family's encouragement, James Jeffrey then trained for eight years at Gray's School of Art, winning numerous local competitions for scholarships and awards. Already an accomplished artist as just a teenager, he sold his first picture at the age of fourteen to a wealthy local noble, and within three years of this feat was already participating in juried exhibitions. Grant exhibited publicly for the first time with the Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1900.

Having completed his studies at Gray's and looking forward to a promising future at the Royal Academy of London, Grant was grief stricken following his father's death in 1902. He stoically remained at home to continue the japanning business, but tragically his mother also passed away within the year. This event was largely the impetus for one of the most substantial decisions of his career; Grant chose to abandon his home in Scotland to immigrate to North America.

Grant spent two years employed as an engraver and sign painter in Toronto before finally settling in Chicago in 1907. He rapidly immersed himself in the city's arts, exhibiting at the Art Institute of Chicago as early as 1913 and becoming a member of the painting jury within just five years. In 1920, Grant established his own studio and worked diligently at his landscapes and figurative works; he was rewarded with his first solo exhibition at the Art Institute in 1925. Amid prize-winning exhibitions and successful one-man shows, Grant's longing to study resurfaced, and in 1926 he traveled to Munich for two additional years of training.

Upon returning to the United States, Grant entered the height of his career with shows at prestigious venues across the country, including the National Academy of Design, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Corcoran Gallery, the Palette and Chisel Club (of which he was president), and the North Shore Arts Association. His nearly sixty-year career as a prominent Chicago and Gloucester artist was rewarded with over a dozen notable prizes and solo exhibitions. He is remembered as "one of the most distinguished members of Chicago's group of painters"¹, and continues to be praised for his sunlit scenes of everyday life.

¹Edith Weigle, "Paintings by James Jeffrey Grant," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1948.

EXHIBITIONS

Aberdeen Art Gallery, circa 1900

Art Institute of Chicago, 1913-39, 1941, 1942, 1948, 1949
Solo Exhibition 1927, 1935, 1944

Chicago Galleries Association, 1930-31
Solo Exhibition 1930

Chicago Public Library, Solo Exhibition 1957

Century of Progress Exhibition, 1933, 1934

Corcoran Gallery, 1930, 1932, 1935
Solo Exhibition

Currier Gallery, 1937
Solo Exhibition, 1936

Half a Century of American Art, 1933

Galena Fair, 1958

Illinois State Fair, 1956

National Academy of Design, 1932-35, 1943
Solo exhibition

North Shore Arts Association, 1934, 1936-38, 1941, 1946, 1948

Palette and Chisel Academy of Fine Arts, 1917, 1926, 1929, 1931, 1938, 1942, 1943, 1946-49, 1951-53, 1955-56, 1958-60, Memorial exhibition 1960

Rockford Illinois Art Association, Solo exhibition 1925

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1924-25, 1930
Solo exhibition

Springfield Illinois Museum, 1931

AWARDS

Art Institute of Chicago, Prizes 1922, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1937; Gold 1934

Association of Chicago Painters and Sculptors, Gold

Chicago Galleries Association, Prize 1930 and 1931

Galena Fair, Prize 1958

Illinois State Fair, Prize 1956

Palette and Chisel Academy of Fine Arts, Gold 1917; Silver 1956; Prize 1958



Snow Path, Lemont, Illinois
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Right
\$9,500



Morning Market, Galena, Illinois
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$12,000



Light House, Gloucester
Oil on canvas, 24 x 21 inches
\$11,000



Rocky Coast, Gloucester
Oil on canvas board, 14 x 16 inches
\$7,500



Seascape
Oil on canvas board, 11 3/4 x 16 inches, Signed Lower Left
\$7,500



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