

Woods Hole Historical Museum Archives
P.O. Box 185
Woods Hole, MA 02543

REGISTER
William H. Littlefield
1902 - 2016

1 box

WILLIAM H. LITTLEFIELD COLLECTION

BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

William Horace Littlefield was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1902. His father was a doctor and his mother owned the Longwood Riding School Stable in Falmouth on the corner of Gifford Street and Dillingham Avenue. The family also owned a cottage and barn on Depot Avenue, Falmouth. Mrs. Littlefield killed herself 8 months after the death of her husband in 1933.

Littlefield graduated from Harvard College, class of 1924. He then traveled to France and spent 4 years there, wintering Paris and spending summers in the south of France and also traveling to Italy, Spain and North Africa.

During the 1930s until his death in 1969 Littlefield was a well-known member of the art communities of Boston, New York and Cape Cod. His main life was in Falmouth where he lived in the cottage and barn that had been his parents' home on Depot Avenue. The barn became his studio.

He founded the Cape Cod Art Association and hung art for the Falmouth Artists Guild, did murals for the old Lawrence High School in Falmouth and was the art critic for the Falmouth *Enterprise* for a long time.

Littlefield's work began in the style of realism and evolved to Abstract Expressionism. He studied under Hans Hofmann in Provincetown and was a member of "The Club" in New York City – a group of abstractionists. That style encompassed most of his later works. Besides paintings, he worked in many media, producing pen and ink sketches, portraits, nudes, murals, theater sets, collages and frames. His works in both styles were owned by 10 museums, including the Fogg Museum at Harvard, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Private collectors included Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Lincoln Kerstein and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

SCOPE

The Woods Hole Historical Museum up until 2006 owned 14 works of William H. Littlefield. The majority of those were given to the Museum by local resident Thomas G. Ratcliffe who had left his estate to the Woods Hole Public Library in 1981.

A triple venue of exhibits of Littlefield's work was planned for 2006. The three institutions participating in this were the Woods Hole Historical Museum, the Cape Cod Museum of Art and the Provincetown Art Association Museum. The impetus behind these exhibits came from Arthur Hughes, an artist and resident of both New York City and Naushon. Hughes himself and others on Naushon Island own a number of Littlefield works. Arthur gathered material, anecdotes and biographical information for the show as well as working on a monograph on Littlefield. A separate file on the exhibit itself is in the WHHM Exhibits file

collection including texts from James R. Bakker, Curator and former President of the Provincetown Art Association Museum, who was an equal partner in the exhibit planning along with Arthur Hughes.

During the museum's exhibit of the works in the collection (some of which were loaned to the Cape Cod Museum of Art) more works were donated and more have been given to us occasionally since that time. Littlefield was prolific and many local residents bought his works from his studio and an auction after his death in 1969.

SEE ALSO EXHIBIT FILE FOR 2006 (Administrative file cabinets in WHHM Archives).

WILLIAM H. LITTLEFIELD COLLECTION

Folder 1: Background material on William H. Littlefield

Folder 2: Falmouth *Enterprise* articles by William H. Littlefield

Folder 3: Chronology of William H. Littlefield by Arthur Hughes

Folder 4. Correspondence about paintings disposed of from the Estate of Thomas G. Ratcliffe

Folder 5: Correspondence with Arthur Hughes about William H. Littlefield paintings

Folder 6: Arthur Hughes: lists of paintings and owners

Folder 7: Transparencies of William H. Littlefield paintings owned by WHHM (Woods Hole Historical Collection) as of 2006. Photos by Arthur Hughes. Digital versions scanned from the transparencies are on a CD.

Folder 8: List of paintings to be restored by Edith Bruce, Woods Hole Gallery

Folder 9. List of William H. Littlefield works of art owned by WHHM (to 2016).

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