



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **William Anderson Sherwood (1875-1951)**

An American painter and etcher, William Anderson Sherwood was born on February 13, 1875 in Baltimore, Maryland to Jean Anderson and William Richard Sherwood. His Grandfather, William Spencer Sherwood established a printing business in Baltimore in 1830. The business, which offered color printing before the process was widely used, became one of the largest printers in the South. Sherwood's father, a printer, enlisted in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War and served under Admiral Farragut. At the age of 8, Sherwood and his family moved to Delaware. He returned to Maryland to attend St. John's College in Annapolis but left early to go to Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware where he studied under American artist Howard Pyle (1853-1911). Dr. James W. Cain of St. John's said, "[Sherwood] only wanted to draw."<sup>1</sup>

In 1900, a series of full page sepia drawings by Sherwood were published in a book by Irish novelist Charles Lever (1806-1872) titled "The Song of a Vagabond Huntsman".<sup>2</sup> The Star Tribune [Minneapolis] said, "In his drawing the artist does full justice to the rollicking spirit of Lever's verses".<sup>3</sup>

Sherwood married Mabel Houlikes-Jones (possibly spelled Ffoulkes) of Ohio in 1904. Census records show the couple resided in Fort Lee, New Jersey in 1905 and Manhattan in 1910 with Sherwood working as a figure painter. In May of 1910 they traveled together to Antwerp, Belgium where they lived for several years on Rue Rembrandt. Their summers were spent at Dixmude, Nieuport, Bruges, and along the banks of the Yser.<sup>4</sup> Sherwood had his first solo exhibition in Brussels in 1913. The show was attended by Theodore Marburg, the United States Minister to Belgium. *L'Independence Belge* said, "he bases his art on truth; he observes, but before transposing the chosen motif it seems that he closes his eyes in order to allow his imagination the leisure to add something of reverie to reality."<sup>5</sup>

During World War I, the Sherwoods were in Antwerp at the time of the siege. They were unable to leave the country as the railways were not in operation and Sherwood refused to leave his paintings behind. He and his wife sought shelter for 10 days in their cellar at 33 Rue Rembrandt with several of their neighbors. Many buildings on their street were struck and shells fell in their back garden. Sherwood finally obtained a horse and an old farm wagon and with special permission from the German army was able to transport his wife and his paintings across the border.<sup>6</sup> They returned to New York in November 1914 with most of

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<sup>1</sup> "Artist, Famed Abroad, To Exhibit At Museum", The Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, Maryland) Sun, Nov 25, 1934 P.69

<sup>2</sup> The Delineator, Volume 57, (New York: Butterick Publishing Company, 1901) p. 133

<sup>3</sup> "On the Library Table", Star Tribune (Minneapolis, Minnesota) Mon, Nov 26, 1900 · Page 8

<sup>4</sup> "Braved Antwerp Bombardment to Save Pictures", Oregon Journal (Portland, Oregon) Sun, Dec 6, 1914 · Page 57

<sup>5</sup> "Artist, Famed Abroad, To Exhibit At Museum", The Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, Maryland) · Sun, Nov 25, 1934 · Page 69

<sup>6</sup> "Scenes in Antwerp During its Siege", The Morning News (Wilmington, Delaware) · Wed, Dec 9, 1914 · Page 5



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Sherwood's etchings, paintings, and a tiny Belgian dog. There they resided as guests at the National Arts Club and later lived at 45 Washington Square.

In 1918, Sherwood's etchings and original drawings were exhibited in the print room at the Memorial Art Gallery [Rochester]. The work consisted primarily of studies of the villages of Flanders and Northern France, many of which were demolished during the war. According to the *Democrat and Chronicle*, "All of the quaintness and charm of the narrow streets and the delicate beauty of the Gothic architecture are shown. One of the most beautiful plates is that of the 'Petite Place' at Ypres, a small enclosed square surrounded by high-gabled buildings surmounted by delicate turrets and pinnacles in the typical Flemish style."<sup>7</sup>

Sherwood's paintings and etchings were exhibited in Antwerp in 1926 and the exhibition was attended by William Phillips, the Ambassador of the United States in Brussels.<sup>8</sup> A retrospective of Sherwood's work was held in Antwerp in 1931. The work included a range of subject matter from different periods and locales including Yugoslavia where Sherwood had recently spent some time. The Consul-General of Yugoslavia attended the opening and was the first to acquire a painting depicting life in his homeland. The reception was also attended by the Bourgmestre of Antwerp, M. Van Cauwelaert, Dr. Josef Muls, Conservator of the Musee Royale de Beaux-Arts d'Anvers, and Marion Letcher, Consul General of the United States. In recognition of his work in oils, color etching and aquatints, King Albert of Belgium made Sherwood a Knight of the Cross with the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne.<sup>9</sup>

In 1934, the Baltimore Museum of Art held an exhibition of Sherwood's work. The first in a series, the exhibition traveled to Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New York giving the American public their first glimpse of Sherwood's oil paintings.<sup>10</sup> Sherwood and his wife lived in isolation in Bruges on the Lac d'Amour but returned to the U.S. for the exhibition. Although his reputation in Europe was widespread he was little known in his hometown of Baltimore. Sherwood stated, "I am not interested in fads in any way, only in serious art. I consider myself of my epoch but not swayed by fashions. And that's the reason that I live alone in Bruges--where I can better carry out my work. I've always felt that I could be more alone in Europe."<sup>11</sup> The exhibition included some 40 canvases with subjects from Maryland, Yugoslavia, Belgium and Venice. In a letter to the *Baltimore Sun*, a museum patron wrote that "[he found himself] in one of the rooms flooded with sunlight and seeming to exude the very spirit of the joy of life."<sup>12</sup> He went on to say,

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<sup>7</sup> "Etchings at Art Gallery", *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York) Sat, Jan 12, 1918 Page 16

<sup>8</sup> "Society", *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California) Mon, Jan 11, 1926 Page 24

<sup>9</sup> "Baltimorean Decorated in Belgium", *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) Sun, Jan 17, 1932 Page 28

<sup>10</sup> "Artist, Famed Abroad, To Exhibit...", *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) Sun, Nov 25, 1934 Page 69

<sup>11</sup> "Artist Returning to City After 38 Years Abroad", *The Evening Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) Thu, Nov 22, 1934 P. 40

<sup>12</sup> "Praise For The Paintings of Mr. William Anderson Sherwood...", *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) Sun, Dec 16, 1934 P.12



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“The press in general has so far ignored an event which seems to me, an humble layman, to be something which should not pass unnoticed.”<sup>13</sup>

Sherwood was a member of and exhibited annually with the Chicago Society of Etchers and the Printmakers of California.<sup>14</sup> In addition, he was a member of the American Federation of the Arts, the Société Royale des Beaux Arts and the Société Royale des Aquafortistes de Belgique. His etchings were acquired by the Queen of Belgium, Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Library at Brussels, the Musée Plantin Moretus Antwerp, the Library of Congress, the Cleveland Public, the Detroit Public Library, the Worcester Free Library and the Chicago Art Institute.<sup>15</sup>

William Anderson Sherwood died in Bruges, Belgium on Wednesday, August 8, 1951. He was 76 years old.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> “Society”, The Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, California) Mon, Jan 11, 1926 P. 24

<sup>15</sup> American Art Annual, Volume 20, (Washington, D.C.: The American Federation of the Arts, 1924), p. 685