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Vol. VI.

#### MONOGRAPHS



ARTHUR PUTNAM

ROBERT INGERSOLL AITKEN

DOUGLAS TILDEN

MELVIN EARL CUMMINGS

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Gene Hailey, Editor
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## ARTHUR PUTNAM

1873.....1930

Biography and Works



PUMA EXAMINING FOOTPRINTS

Legion of Honor Museum

#### ARTHUR PUTNAM

## SCULPTOR OF THE WILD 1873-1930

Long years of struggle, poverty and hardship in San Francisco, while his marvelous genius
went unrecognized, was the fate of Arthur Putnam,
sculptor. Then, a journey to Europe—critical acclaim in the Salons of Rome and Paris—five brief
years of fame and success—when suddenly, tragedy
struck! The man who was hailed as being the greatest animal sculptor of his time was stricken down
with paralysis; though for nearly twenty years his
body lived on, he became artistically dead. But his
bronzes of mountain lions, bears, coyotes, pumas
and wild creatures of the desert and mountain still
survive as mute monuments to his genius.

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The Putnam family was of English descent, the sculptor, Arthur, was the son of Oramel Hinckley Putnam and Mary M. Gibson of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, who were married in 1870. In 1634 an ancestor, John Putnam, of Ashton Abbots, Buckinghamshire, England, was a settler in the town of Salem, Mass. The Putnams were nearly all either army men or of the professional class. Arthur Putnam's father was an officer in the 8th Vermont Regiment and fought for the Union in the Civil War; after leaving the army, he practiced as a civil engineer and railroad contractor.

Arthur Putnam was born at Waveland, Mississippi, on September 6, 1873. His sister Elizabeth also was born there, while his elder brother George was born in 1871 in New Orleans. Some years later, the father moved his family to Omaha, Nebraska. It was in Omaha that Putnam first met Gutzon Borglum, who was later to become a sculptor of importance.

When Oramel Putnam's health began to fail, the family moved again, this time to California, in search of a more equable climate. After her husband's death in San Francisco in 1880, and with a life insurance policy of \$2,500 as her only capital, Mrs. Putnam took her three young children back to Omaha, where her sister lived.

Mrs. Putnam was a woman of strong and forceful character, tall and handsome, with black hair and flashing dark eyes. She was somewhat stern and austere, and though she was generous and kind toward her children, she maintained strict

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discipline and exercised the greatest frugality and self control in their daily life. After her husband's death, through her own efforts she successfully educated and supported them.

Arthur, an imaginative, strong-willed, headstrong child, was like an untamed colt, entirely different in character from both the tractable, hard-working, sensible George, and his docile younger sister Elizabeth. When Arthur was placed in the public school at Omaha, it was almost impossible to make him attend regularly; he preferred to spend his time out-of-doors in the fields and woods, collecting insects and small wild creatures, pulling them apart to see how they were constructed. Later on, his mother sent him to Kemper Hall Military Academy in Davenport, Iowa, a wasted sacrifice on her part, as there again it was impossible to keep him in school under the strict conditions of discipline prevailing at the Academy.

## CHILDHOOD DRAWING AND CARVING

Mrs. Putnam then endeavored to find employment for Arthur. He worked for some time at a photo-engraver's, where he gained his first knowledge of drawing. Even then, he used to procure lumps of pipe-clay, and carve them into ornaments, or try to chisel rough sandstone paving blocks which he found at the University of Lincoln. Nebraska.

In his childhood, when he was less than nine years of age, Arthur Putnam had an accident which may have been the cause of tragic consequences and a brain tumor in later life.

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fingers like water, and he would spend a month's wages for a momentary whim, a habit which added to his difficulties when he began his artistic career.

The youthful Arthur Putnam was a living example of the ideal artist, "Handsome as a Greek God". He was about six feet two inches tall, a classic profile with a dark olive skin and dark brown eyes. His brown hair grew in graceful lines about his high forehead and full temples. His hands and movements were graceful and his clothes of such design and purpose that ugly modes of the moment never jarred his artistic appearance.

## PUTNAM'S RANCH, AND NEIGHBOR, BORGLUM

When he was about twenty years old, Putnam took a homestead of his own and there started a ranch in wild country, forty miles from San Diego; he was so fascinated by the superb view and the wonderful country round about that he quite overlooked the fact that there was no water supply.

On a ranch nearby lived Gutzon Borglum, with whom he had become acquainted in Omaha. The two men, having interests in common, soon became firm friends—a friendship which Borglum proved in a practical fashion in later years. Putnam often did work for Borglum on his ranch, and had ample opportunity to watch him at work on his sculpture. The homestead proved a failure as a business venture and Putnam returned to his mother's ranch at La Mesa, and again took up his surveying work.

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During a vacation period, Arthur decided on a journey to San Francisco, secretly hoping to find a job which would support him while he took drawing lessons.

With thirty dollars in his pocket and a roll of drawings under his arm, Putnam appeared at the doors of the old Art Students' League at 8 Montgomery Street, one August day in 1894, with the fixed determination to be an artist. He had first tried the San Francisco Art Association, but it was closed for the summer. The first person he became acquainted with at the League was Julie Heyneman, the painter, who later became his lifelong friend. It was she who first recognized his talent and encouraged him in his studies. Among the teachers of the League at that time were Emil Carlsen, Fred Yates and Arthur Mathews.

### WESTERN ANIMAL SUBJECTS

Wild horses, bucking broncos, savage pumas, lynx, coyotes and creatures of the desert and mountain were the subjects of most of Arthur's studies. He would carve the hard roots of the manzanita tree into animals, pipe-bowls and ornaments, and make clay models of bears and mountain lions in combat. Miss Heyneman, impressed by his drawings and modeling as well as by his eager determination to study art, introduced him to the sculptor, Rupert Schmidt, who took him as a pupil and assistant. Characteristically, the first thing that Putnam fashioned out of clay for him was a wild, vivid figure, half goat and half man, of the god Pan.

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As the odd jobs that Putnam found in San Francisco were so few and irregular that they did not yield enough to cover his frugal living expenses, he was always on the verge of semi-starvation; he slept on a cot at the Art Students' League, in return for which privilege he swept out the large studio and kept the place clean. Finally the sensitive, talented young artist sought a job in a slaughter-house at South San Francisco, in order to eke out a livelihood. While the bloody, repulsive work sickened him, and he constantly cut and bruised his fine, artistic hands his art benefitted from the knowledge of animal anatomy which he gained there.

## ENDLESS STUDIES OF ANIMAL ANATOMY

Finally, in 1895, when he could stand the work at the slaughter-house no longer, he reluctantly decided to go back to his mother's lemon ranch at La Mesa until he could save enough money to resume his art studies. While at La Mesa he did some surveying work for the Mesa Dam, where his brother George was then employed.

In his spare time, Putnam tirelessly drew, modeled, and studied animal muscles and bones, and observed every lithe movement of the creatures of the wild. He loved and understood wild animals so well that he felt himself akin to them. He was especially fascinated by the big cat family, and many of his best studies, even then, were of the savage feline grace of pumas, the California mountain-lion.

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Putnam sometimes picked up rattlesnakes and tarantulas in his bare hands, and took them into the house to show to his family or friends. His knowledge of the habits of wild beasts was such, that once when he needed money, he went alone into the mountains and trapped several large pumas. These he crated by himself, and shipped them to the San Francisco zoo. They arrived there alive and well and he received twenty dollars each for them.

Putnam's knowledge of woodcraft and of the moods of wild animals, stored in his retentive memory, proved of inestimable benefit to his work in later years. He once said that he drew more easily from memory than from a model, because the living animal's individual peculiarities distracted him; they persisted in obtruding themselves between his conception and his intepretation of the animal.

While the young artist was at work on the ranch or at surveying, he would save sufficient money to spend a few months at a time in San Diego. There he would buy drawing materials, clay and plaster, hire a little shack and go furiously to work at his sculpture. These creative interludes would endure as long as his money lasted.

On his occasional visits to San Diego, Putnam met Alice Klauber, an artist, who interested herself in the young man and gave him both encouragement and help. He also met Alice McMullins, who had a ranch not far from his mother's at La Mesa, and who conducted an art school in San Diego. She

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likewise became interested in the enthusiastic young sculptor and made him her assistant at the school. The three artists became fast friends, and through Miss McMullins he first met Grace Storey, who later became his wife.

## PUTNAM'S COURTSHIP AND STUDENT DAYS

At the time when Putnam met Grace Storey, she and her brothers and sisters were living with their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Choate, in San Diego. Mr. Choate, formerly a wealthy real estate man, had lost his fortune when the California land boom burst and land values suddenly dropped. But Grace Storey stayed with him when his health failed, and nursed him devotedly until his death. When the home was broken up and the Storey children scattered, Grace made her living by teaching and doing water-color sketches for advertisements, menus and Christmas cards. She once wrote to Putnam that ever since she had been a little girl, it had been her ambition to become an artist. Their mutual interest in art helped to draw the man and the girl together, and Putnam once said: "I loved her the minute I saw her."

Even during the time that Putnam was working on the ranch at La Mesa, or was out in the mountains on surveying trips, he corresponded regularly with Miss Storey. He was eager to marry her at once, and she was only too willing to share his struggles and hardships. But his mother, very practically, wished him to postpone the wedding until he had gain-

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ed some financial security and was in a position to support a wife. Thinking that a separation for a time would be advisable, she managed to get together sufficient funds to send her son to Chicago, where he could continue his art studies in a more congenial and more broadening metropolitan atmosphere.

#### CHICAGO STUDIES

While he stayed in Chicago, Putnam assisted in the studio of Edward Kemeys, a pioneer animal sculptor, and also picked up any odd jobs that he could find in order to support himself. Luckily for Putnam, Kemeys was extremely busy with commissions, and when serious illness struck his family, he entrusted Putnam with the task of modeling the deer on a fountain, "The Prayer for Rain", which had been ordered for the town of Champaign, Illinois.

Putnam wrote to Grace Storey regularly, encouraging her in her painting and making plans for her to join him in Chicago, where he hoped to get sculpture commissions. Suddenly, early in 1898, he found that he could no longer stand city life. He dropped all his plans and decided to get away from the city's noise and smoke, which stifled him, back to the sun and solitude of the California mountains and deserts, which he loved.

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#### PUTNAM LEARNS TERRA-COTTA IN CALIFORNIA

work either in San Diego or in Los Angeles, which would enable him to marry and support a wife, but he was not successful in his quest. He finally secured a position with the terra-cotta works of Gladding McBean at Lincoln, and was at last able to realize his hopes for marriage. Arthur Putnam and Grace Storey were married in 1899 at Sacramento and went to live at Lincoln. They were both quite young, Putnam then being but twenty-six years old and Grace Storey only twenty-two.

It was characteristic of Arthur Putnam that he soon tired of the monotony of the work at the Lincoln terra-cotta works, and when they could no longer give him architectural modeling to do, he threw up his job and returned to the San Francisco district with a young wife, and high hopes, but absolutely no prospects of earning money. For a while he and his wife stayed with an aunt in Berkeley. Then, impulsively confident of finding work in San Francisco, Putnam decided to move there. Characteristically, while crossing San Francisco Bay on the ferry boat, he tossed his last nickel overboard for luck.

It seemed to work; at least he immediately succeeded in selling a plaster cast of a puma to a friend at the Art Students' League for five dollars. Then the Putnams took a room in a cheap French hotel on Montgomery Street, opposite the League. It was the same unpretentious little hostelry at

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which Robert Louis Stevenson and his family once stayed.

## SAN FRANCISCO ARTISTS BEFRIEND PUTNAM

Bruce Porter, the artist and writer, and Julie Heyneman, the painter, both helped Putnam with introductions and tried to get him commissions, while Henry Atkins at Vickerey's, the art dealers, undertook to sell some of his work. By means of occasional sales and any odd jobs that Arthur could pick up, the Putnams managed to exist, eating their meals in the cheapest little restaurants they could find, often dining merely on doughnuts and coffee when they could not even afford the little Italian restaurants of the Barbary Coast.

Bruce Porter helped Putnam by introducing him to Willis Polk and also to Bakewell and Brown. These architects gave him his first orders for architectural modeling, work which enabled him to live, while he was creating his own animal sculptures.

Just before the birth of their daughter, who was named Bruce after Bruce Porter, the Putnams moved back across the bay to a little cottage in Berkeley, the first real home they had known since their marriage. But the daily journey back and forth across the Bay, in addition to his strenuous work at the studio, proved too tiring for Putnam, and shortly after the birth of the baby, the family returned to San Francisco, moving into two sunny attic rooms on the Washington

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Street Hill. His commissions for architectural modeling were Putnam's main source of income at this time, but occasionally he sold a bronze. His financial condition continued to be precarious in the extreme, so that the young couple lived a haphazard existence.

Among frequent visitors at the Putnam studio during this period were Maynard Dixon, Bruce Porter, Julie Heyneman, Jack London, the Irwins, Stanley Armstrong, Gottardo Piazzoni, Willis Polk, Ralph Stackpole, and Dr. Philip King Brown and his wife. Dr. Brown proved himself a good friend to Putnam, giving him devoted medical care both then and in later years.

## YOUNG SCULPTOR'S FIRST BRONZE COMMISSION

While the family were living in the studio on Washington Street, in 1903, Putnam was asked by the late E. W. Scripps, the newspaper publisher, to submit designs for a series of bronze sculptures illustrating the early history of California allegorically. These figures were designed to be placed on the large Scripps'estate at Miramar, near San Diego. George Putnam was at that time secretary to the newspaper publisher, and was later put in charge of one of his newspapers at Salem, Oregon. It may have been through his brother, that Arthur Putnam was introduced to Scripps.

Although Putnam's work had increased in strength and power during the years from 1901 to 1905 when he went to Europe, the Scripps' order was his only important commission

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Although Putnam's we eligable to a distribute of the africal and power during the years from 1971 are 2000, who his near the Surrege, the Scribbs' order was all only 'emourem' as all its

in California before his fame was established abroad. Scripps, a shrewd and clever business man, not only had the vision to conceive the historical project, but he also recognized the potential talent of the unknown young sculptor whom he chose to execute it. Out of the series contemplated, only two of the bronzes were completed, years later, a heroic figure, "The Indian", and a statue of Father Junipero Serra called "The Monk." In later years the original cast for "The Monk" was purchased and given to the Church of the Mission Dolores in San Francisco.

#### PUTNAM IS "TRUE TO THE AMERICAN INDIAN"

In an article on "The Indian", published in The Craftsman, November, 1905, J. Mayne Baltimore says:

"It seems to have fallen to the lot of a young Californian sculptor, Arthur Putnam by name, to perpetuate in bronze the typical American Indian, as he was in the days when none disputed his right to range and rule over the Western plains.

"Mr. Putnam's statue is of heroic size, and he has caught the spirit, expression and attitude of the Indian as not another half-dozen sculptors in the world have done. Instead of the usual theatrical conception of the 'noble red man' in full panoply of war, posed as impressively as possible and looking like an illustration from one of Fennimore Cooper's novels, this statue represents an Indian who typifies, as unconsciously as a forest animal, the native poise and dignity of mind, as well as the grace and strength of body, of man untrammeled by civilization.

"This Indian has been on the trail, and a mountain-lion, the spoil of his bow and arrow, lies

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on the boulder against which he leans. limp carcass of the big beast, flung like a discarded blanket over the rock, is a perfect foil to the lithe strength of the figure, so vital in its repose, that leans against it. The hunter is nude, save for the breech-clout of the southern Indian, and every line of his stalwart frame, lean, compact and muscular as that of a panther, tells the story of simple fare, hard exercise and natural living. attitude is one of rest, yet he is hardly conscious of being tired. Given even the slightest arousing impulse, and every nerve and muscle would flash into alert action so instantaneously, that it would be almost impossible note the transition from repose. gazing at a far distant horizon, but his look is one of musing, rather than watchfulness-the musing of one who is in absolute and unconscious harmony with the world that bounds his life.

"The statue, which is attracting wide attention, was made at the instance of a wealthy citizen of San Diego. It is destined for a gift to that city and will stand in the Plaza where, from its lofty pedestal, it may keep silent ward over the broad border lands once owned by men of like free and stately seeming."

#### PUTNAM WORKS DESPITE ILLNESS AND POVERTY

Illness struck the sculptor down before he could complete the other figures of the series, although he had made sketches and models for a figure of a Spanish woman vacquero astride a horse, and for a statue representing the agricultural period in California which he called "The Ploughman".

Mr. Scripps gave Putnam both friendship and financial help for years after his illness, inviting him to stay at Miramar after his return from Europe and again when he had been rendered helpless by paralysis. While staying at "Mira-

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mar" Putnam modeled a small figure of Scripps, and was also given a commission to model a bronze portrait bust of his sister.

Putnam when he was in the throes of creative work. In the old days, when Montgomery Street was on the water front, a ship foundered near the shore. When that shallow section of San Francisco Bay was filled in, in later years, and the new land laid out in streets, the ship was left standing on what became Jones Alley, now renamed Hotaling Place. Putnam and Earl Cummings, another San Francisco sculptor, devised a spacious studio in the ship's hulk, and it was there that Putnam modeled the gigantic figures of "The Indian" and "The Monk". Some of his other large works were modeled in an abandoned basement.

The Washington Street attic where the family lived, proved to be too cold and draughty for little baby Bruce, and seeking sunshine, Putnam moved his family over to Sausalito. Dr. Philip King Brown, his friend, built a cabin for them on land which he owned there. Later, Putnam's mother left her ranch at La Mesa, and moved into an adjoining cabin. Mrs. Putnam and her daughter-in-law were very congenial and became firm friends, so that this period of his life represented some of Arthur Putnam's happiest and most tranquil years. Commuting to Sausalito after his arduous day at the studio proved too fatiguing for Putnam, and the family again returned to

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San Francisco. For years Grace Putnam's life was torn by the conflicting interests of her husband's career, which meant maintaining a studio in the city, and the health of little Bruce, who waged recurring battles with bronchitis and who needed a drier, sunnier environment.

## SAN FRANCISCO BEGINS TO PATRONIZE PUTNAM

An article in the Mark Hopkins Institute Review of Art for December, 1901, says:

"The Sketch Club (San Francisco) held an exhibition in October in which was included several small sculptures of wild animals by Arthur Putnam. These were shown in conjunction with a collection of sketches and paintings by Boardman Robinson prior to his departure for Paris."

In April, 1903, he showed four works at the Spring Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association, of which he was a member. It was not, however, until 1913, that his genius was recognized by his being elected a member of the National Sculpture Society.

Besides working with Earl Cummings, Putnam also shared a small studio with Gottardo Piazzoni, the painter, at 8 Montgomery Street from 1901 to 1905, where he did practically all of his important work during that time. When he decided on a journey to Europe to see the world famous art treasures in the galleries there, so as to have a standard by which to judge his own work, he was very anxious that his friend Piazzoni should accompany him. He was partly enabled to fin-

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ance the journey both for himself and his wife, through the generosity of Mrs. William H. Crocker, who advanced him a sum of money. Putnam worked off some of that indebtedness by making a model of her new country house at Burlingame, and later gave her a model for a fountain. Part of the money for the journey was earned through a commission which he received to model a pair of Sphinx for Golden Gate Park; these Sphinx, cast in concrete, were placed near the Golden Gate Memorial Museum, where they still stand.

#### THE PUTNAMS AND PIAZZONIS GO ABROAD

As to the journey abroad, at the last minute Piazzoni rushed his hesitating fiancee into matrimony, and the couple accompanied Putnam and his wife, leaving New York in December, 1905. Little Bruce was left with Mrs. Putnam's mother
in Portland, Oregon.

Upon their departure for Italy, Putnam and Piazzoni left only a few of their drawings and plaster casts in the studio at the Art Students' League, storing most of their things at the house of a friend of theirs, Mrs. Wolfsohn, on Presidio Avenue. It was well that they did so, as during their absence, calamity struck San Francisco in the fire and earthquake of April, 1906, but fortunately the fire did not reach as far as Presidio Avenue—their labor of years being thus luckily saved. Most of Putnam's architectural sculpture in the city was unfortunately destroyed by the fire.

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The fire and the subsequent rebuilding of the city, proved a great stimulus to art in San Francisco, not only in providing opportunities for architectural sculpture, in the new business and civic buildings being erected, but also in the palatial private residences of wealthy citizens. Commissions were given for murals to decorate ball-rooms and banqueting halls and for paintings to replace those art treasures which had been destroyed by the fire. It was a time of rich financial reward for Arthur Putnam and his friends Gottardo Piazzoni and Ralph Stackpole, who at the present time still maintain studios on Montgomery Street and Hotaling Place, where cluster the studios of many famous artists and where the art colony of San Francisco foregathers.

## PIAZZONI GIVES SIDE LIGHTS

In an interview with Gottardo Piazzoni, the celebrated painter said:

"Putnam and I remained friends until the end. He changed after his illness and became very suspicious of everyone—his best friends—even his wife—but never of me. I'm glad of that—never of me, " said Gottardo Piazzoni.

"From the earliest time, when I met him first at the Art Students League and we became friends, we used to go out for long walks together and talk things over; our problems; painting; and our philosophy of life. I have learned much from Putnam. When we took long walks into the country, Putnam used to gather stones and odd pieces of wood; he used to cut long canes out of hard manazanita wood and carve them—that was his hobby—I still have some that he carved and gave to me.

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LANCES OF BUILDINGS WORL

"Our studio was on the top floor of the old Maguire Opera House (used by the Art Students' League) and it was divided into two halves by a burlap curtain. I had tried to get him interested in painting, and sometimes he would paint for a whole day, and then go back to his sculpture, saying, 'too much cake, too much cake!' Then perhaps for another month he would not touch brush to canvas again.

"Putnam wanted to be alone, away from people-he wanted to build a studio underground, lighted by a skylight. I told him it was impractical. Then he talked to me a great deal about living on an island-the islands off the coast of Mexico, or the group off San Diego.

"He wanted me to get married -- I was not married at the time -- and we two and our wives would go to the island to live and work in solitude. He talked to me of this many times. I told him it was an impractical idea -- we were too young -- we had not done enough work. how would our respective wives like it? 'It ideal life, replied Putnam, we could is an have a boat and sail in it and return to the coast when we wanted to.' But suppose there were children, and suppose they got sick? asked. 'Oh, well,' he said, 'we could take a supply of medicines with us and the children could play in the sun. But I told him the idea was not practical.

"Putnam had not very many real friends.

## SOME FRIENDLY GESTURES

"We used to go over to Greenbrae (near Sausalito) to the boathouse there; I have a picture here in the studio that I painted of the place. We went for long walks and talked together and I tried to persuade Putnam to paint—but he would not paint from nature; he would walk about, look around and observe—but he would rather paint from his own imagination.

"When we were at Calascio (Canton Tessin, Italian Switzerland) he drew many nudes, observing the people there and then making the drawings from memory—he never liked to work from a model.

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"Here is a painting of mine that I gave him; it is all wrinkled and cracked, as if someone had taken it off the stretcher and tried to scrub the floor with it. It was while we were staying at Calascio that I painted a sunset scene of a mountain-cleft -- the slopes were covered with pine trees -- I was not satisfied with it and wanted to improve it and add finishing Putnam liked it as it was -- he said touches. it would be spoiled if I did any more work on it -- he said, 'If you will not touch it, just leave it alone, I will give you anything of mine you want.' So I gave it to him. Years later, after his illness, I found it in the house by the beach, all crumpled up and lying on the floor under some other things. ed Putnam if I could take it and he said I could. People used to go out there after his and take things away with them -- many illness of his things are missing.

"In the early days, before we went to Italy, he modeled a greyhound and showed it to a friend of his, a stonesman called McGilrey who lived in South San Francisco--McGilrey admired it greatly, he said it was a beautifully modeled animal--a 'perfect greyhound'-- but Putnam never showed it in the east, nor even took a photograph of it.

"He also modeled a weather-vane--a beautiful nude figure with wings outspread--I told him he could have anything of mine that he liked if he would give it to me. He gave it to me and I put it over the door of the studio. One day when I came in it was gone. I asked him what had happened to it and he said, 'Oh, I gave it to Austin Lewis, he came in and wanted it, and as he is a lawyer, I thought he might do us some good, so I just gave it to him.'

"Here is a cast of a figure of an angel that he did, it was intended to be placed on a tomb, I cast it for him-but it is a pity that I did not cast the figure of the greyhound instead, because he just let it dry up and crumble away.

## MASTERS APPRAISE PUTNAM A MASTER

"When we went to Italy (in 1905), Mrs. Orsi wanted to store our things for us in her Washington Street house. But Mrs. Wolfsohn, a friend of ours, stored them in her house near the cemetery on Presidio Avenue. The fire did not reach there, so that it was lucky we stored them with her. Most of our things were saved, we only left a few things behind in the studio, and they were burned up in the fire (1906 earthquake and fire).

"When we were in Paris, although Putnam had a letter of introduction to August Rodin, he never presented it, so that he never met Rodin personally.

"Diego Rivera came to see me when he was here to see his own exhibition at the Palace of the Legion of Honor. I took him and his wife out there myself. Off the main gallery to the left were the Putnam bronzes. Rivera caught sight of the bronzes, went over and looked carefully at them, studying and observing each one. When we finally got him to come away with us he exclaimed, 'If this man had been in Paris, he would have been master of Paris!"

The original plaster cast of the "Walking Puma", a bronze of which is in the Putnam collection of the Palace of the Legion of Honor, is in Mr. Piazzoni's studio. When Putnam wanted to smash it to pieces with a hammer, his friend said he would like to have it himself. It was in this manner that Mr. Piazzoni saved the cast and other pieces from destruction. In the same way, when "Fallen Eucalyptus" was rejected by the Paris Salon of 1907, and other animal bronzes of Putnam's chosen instead, Putnam was infuriated. He smashed to pieces the bent, gnarled figure of the old man before he could be stopped—Mr. Piazzoni succeeding only in rescuing the beautifully modeled hands—which are still in his possession.

## LACTERS ATPAALCE PUTWALLA

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When Aubertin saw them in Paris, he exclaimed, "For the hands alone, it should not have been rejected!"

#### THE PUMA, PUTNAM'S FAVORITE THEME

A beautiful puma, sculptured in stone, which has never even been exhibited, is one of the treasured possessions of Putnam's good friend, who also has a bronze Puma as paper weights on his desk. Everywhere about Mr. Piazzoni's studio are reminders of the days when he and Putnam worked together.

An impression of Arthur Putnam during their years together was written by Gottardo Piazzoni and quoted by Julie Heyneman in her book "Desert Cactus".

"Those were the days of struggle," writes Piazzoni, "hope was high and money scarce, but we were young and lived from day to day, borrowing from each other when we could. During those years I remember Putnam selling a plaster lion to an artist friend, Granville Redmond, for \$20; another larger piece, and one of his best works, was sold for \$100 to an art critic, Dr. Melbourne Greene, who was an enthusiast on the subject of Putnam's work. Some fine things he would destroy.

## COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURAL WORK

"For the support of his family he used to do ornamental architectural modeling, for which he had great facility and originality. Together we did several large reliefs, painted maps, and made architectural models for big buildings.

"Putnam was happiest when discussing art with his few friends, and for distraction he would

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An impression of Arthur Putness during their years together was artiten by Gettardo Figurin; and hundred by Gull." Heyreman in her book "Desert Cactua".

## CONCERNIAL ARCHITECTURAL WORK

"For the support of his ismily he used to de ormamental architectural modeling. for which he had great facility and originality. Together we did several live reliefs, painted many, and made architectural models for his building.

"Putnom was happiest when discussion art with his few friends, and for lister offen he was! !

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play on the banjo. He loved melody and negro songs. He was self-taught. His own figure was his model; he dissected animals, rats, squirrels, etc., and would often go to the zoo to study.

"On our excursions together he would talk a great deal, would tell the most interesting stories of animals, the wonders of creation. You see, he was not a churchgoer, but had the artist's religion. He loved to listen, and could tell a good story and appreciate a good joke. His laugh was as candid as it was loud; it was a joy to hear him laugh.

## PUTNAM'S BEST CREATIVE YEARS

"In those days Putnam led a strict life, almost puritanical, if I may say so for want of another word. He was devoted to his wife and child, and in the mellow evening light of the studio, and in meditation, he loved to write to his friends, and his letters had the sad strain of music. For his friends he had a great affection; for Miss Julie Heyneman, and for the late Miss Laura Voorman, who were the first ones to take an interest and encourage him, long before I met him.

"He would often talk to me. To his students, who were few, he was just a companion; he was kind and patient, helping them with his advice, but should they at any time neglect to work, or leave things around, or not properly clean the studio, then he would sit down and write them a long lecture on any old paper he could get his hands on. He would leave this in a place where they would be sure to find it the next morning but, as he was just a friend to them, they loved them.

"Apart from being very severe with his own work, Putnam was always eager to criticize and wanted to be criticized, he wanted to help and be helped. Sometimes we would argue for hours, and during all the years together, no matter how bitter the discussions, never a hard feeling, only appreciation remained. To me all that was of great help.

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#### PHILOSOPHY OF PEOPLE AND ART

"He had a keen sense of what was good or bad in art, and that faculty I believe he never lost, up to the last. He was interested in and admired anybody who was really proficient, whether it was a prize-fighter, a scientist, a mason or any other man who could do a good job. He hated loafers, drug-store corner and cigar-stand idlers, looking on and smoking cigarettes. He had strong likes and dislikes, had not much sympathy for bums or down-andouters, yet as a whole he loved humanity, and this understanding is to be found in his ani-He often had cats and pups, sometimes even a few rattlesnakes, and he used to watch their movements. At one time he had a cage of all kinds of birds, and one day he opened the cage and let them all go; he was happy in their freedom.

"Newspaper criticisms about his work never bothered him; in fact he very seldom read them. He would often come in to my part of the studio to paint; he would work all day and at the end would say, 'Too much cake'. The next day he was back at his clay or stone, sometimes working directly on the stone itself. I have one of these, a stone lion which he did then. Even in those early days he used to experiment in casting and made a few lead casts."

### THE PUTNAMS AT WORK IN ITALY

Never happy or at ease in an environment foreign to him, it was fortunate for Putnam. that his wife and the Piazzoni's accompanied him to Italy. In Rome, the two young couples settled in the home of Giacomo Balla, a friend of Piazzoni's, who lived in an old monastery which looked down on the gardens of the Borghese Palace. Accustomed to the sunny California climate, the Americans felt keenly the icy cold and ohilly dampness of the vast, high-ceilinged stone walls

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of the monastery, on which the charcoal braziers and kerosene stoves which they bought made hardly any impression.

As Giacomo Balla was a friend of Piazzoni's, Putnam was charged a very low rent for his rooms. Mrs. Putnam shopped native style in the Roman Markets, bargaining with the market women for eggs, fruits and vegetables, so that the young couple managed to live very frugally on twenty-five dollars a month. Mrs. Putnam had been left a small sum of money. With this, and what he saved out of Mrs. Crocker's allowance, Putnam was able to realize his ambition to study bronze casting.

He had always been interested in casting, and in Rome learned a process, the ciré perdue, while he constantly experimented on a process he himself had adapted. He planned to open a bronze foundry of his cwn upon his return to San Francisco, and wrote to his pupil Ralph Stackpole, who had also come to Europe and was living in Paris, asking him to join in the venture.

## PUTNAM AND PUMAS IN PARIS

To his great delight, several of Putnam's bronzes were accepted for the Spring Salon of 1906 in the Palace of the Via Nazionale in Rome. Critics and artists alike were quick to recognize the genius of the unknown American, and praised the vitality and strength of his wild animal figures. As a result of the interest aroused in the artistic realism

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As diarran familia was a friend first, Furnewas instred a ver ow rent for a room. Mrs. Prinam shopped notive style in the Rous, Makets, fraining with the market romen for eggs, fruite and vegeinales, so that the yours couple managed to live very trugsily on twenty-five dallars a month. Mrs. Putnem had been left a small sum of money. With this, and what he saved out of Mrs. Crocker a allowance, Putnem was able to realize his ambition to study occurs castling.

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## PUTHAN AND PUNAS IN PARTY

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of the newcomer, several of his bronzes were sold, five replicas of one piece, a puma, being disposed of.

But Putnam's health could not stand the cold of the Roman winter, in addition to the strain of the great amount of work he was doing under scant and frugal living conditions. Exhausted by the intensive efforts to which he drove himself, he contracted an attack of pleurisy after he had been in Rome six months. He was given excellent nursing and care at a Roman hospital, attentions which he owed to the kindness of his Italian artist friends. After his recovery, Putnam recuperated in the bracing mountain air of the Italian Alps at Calascio, Canton Tessin, where he quickly recovered his strength.

Traveling on to Paris, the Putnams and Piazzonis took a house in the suburbs at Neuilly, in the Rue de Joinville. One large front room on the first floor was used by Putnam for a studio and bronze foundry, while the small back rooms served as living quarters and kitchen. The Piazzonis lived on the top floor, while Ralph Stackpole, Putnam's pupil and friend, lived in the attic. Putnam's Roman foundryman joined them in Paris, and the sculptor was at last enabled to carry out his long cherished plan of casting his own bronzes.

#### PRAISE IN PARIS

Soon the cold and the wet, icy slush of the Paris winter was upon the Californians, and Putnam, who had barely tolerated the stay in Rome, disliked the artificial city life

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took a house in the subserve of Medill, to the Ru of the ville. One large from the first is at the first in the first in the following Putnem for a studie and brance foundry. Shile in the limit of the room served as living questons and kitchen. The finisching lived on the top floor, while Maloh Aterwood, futnement publicand friend, lived in the stile. Putnement foundrament followed than in Period and the foundation and the foundation of them in Period and the foundation and the foundation of the foundations.

## ERAIS IN PARIS

Soon the rold and the wet, ity eluth of the Felder who upon the Californians, and Futnam, the hod bartistee tolerated the stay in home, disliked the artificial city life.

in Paris more intensely every day. He became sick with longing for the mountains and desert, the sea and sun of California, the hills of San Francisco, and ships sailing into the sunset through the Golden Gate.

In Paris, the young American's work again won praise from all who saw it, critics and artists, connoisseurs and art lovers. Mrs. Crocker's sister, the wife of Prince Poniatowsky, took pleasure in introducing the unknown young sculptor to famous artists, and wealthy patrons of art who would further his career. Prince Poniatowsky himself believed that Arthur Putnam was a genius. When Boldini, a noted French portrait painter, saw one of Putnam's casts for the first time, he could hardly believe it possible that a young sculptor, self-taught, could produce such powerful work.

Arthur Putnam was on the very threshold of fame in Paris; he had already gained honors at the Salon in Rome, and was beginning to be recognized as a new genius in artistic circles in Paris; several of his bronzes had been accepted at the Paris Salon of 1907—when suddenly, despite the protests of his friends, he left the "over-civilized" city, which he felt was strangling him artistically, and bolted for California, the only environment in which he felt that his creative spirit could express itself.

In Paris, the young Americanie work again a north of from all who saw it, orities and entirth, connoissal not sot lovers. Mrs. Creeker's sister, the wife of Frince Fin all waky. took planting in infroducing the unknown young with the same and well-ray introne of art who well fifted his earlier. Prince Fentalerwiky himself believed to a Action Putram was a genias. When Polits, a nated french point it peinters, saw one of Putnam's costs for the list in the could hardly believe it besalble thet a young could and it is also could hardly believe it besalble thet a young could on. Cife taught, could provies such powerful work.

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# PUTNAM TIRES OF PARIS, TOO SOON

Porter and other friends, Putnam was already on his way back to America, almost before his friends realized it--just before his bronzes, exhibited at the Paris Salon brought him sensational success. Bruce Porter and other friends advised him that he should have stayed in either Paris or Rome until he had completed enough sculpture to hold an exhibition in New York; he could then return to San Francisco with Eastern laurels. But he insisted on returning immediately.

## PUMA GROUP, A SUCCESS

Aubertin, a French painter, who was one of the judges of the Paris Salon of 1907, was so struck by Putnam's bronzes that he immediately tried to find the young sculptor and wrote him a letter expressing his admiration of a superb puma group, saying that he wished he himself could have bought it—a letter which followed Putnam to San Francisco. Grateful for Aubertin's praises, and for his efforts to have him elected an associate member of the French National Society of Sculptors, Putnam presented Aubertin with the piece which he so much admired. When he first saw Putnam's animal groups in the Salon, Aubertin gathered together all of Putnam's drawings that he could find, as well as photographs of his work, and took them to Auguste Rodin, to get his opinion. After long and critical examination of the young American's work, Rodin exclaimed, "This is the work of a master!"

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Parter and other triends, Patham who serveds in 1 2 2 2 3 to America, simple before his findends are dized in -1.32 in fore his bronzes, exhibited e. the Paris Sa na conent; sagencytical sweets. Induce Parter sad other triends advised him that he should have stayed in 1ther Paris or Rome will he had completed enough advictire to hold an exhibition in New York; he ould then return to Tourniacs with East in illustries. Set he insisted on returning ince deserts.

# PUMA GROUP, A SUISIOS

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On another occasion, the noted painter John Singer Sargent, when he saw Putnam's sculptures, said he was astounded that work of such power could have been produced in the twentieth century.

Astonishing though it may seem, sculpture of the wild animals found in America was at that time a comparative-ly recent art development. Lorado Taft once said, "There is a record of just two native animals sculptured in the United States before Edward Kemeys of Chicago began his work. Kemeys may be regarded as the pioneer animal sculptor in this country."

## THE PUTNAMS IN NEW YORK

Upon their return to the United States, the Putnams stayed for a short time in New York, where they met their old friends Boardman Robinson and Gutzon Borglum and his brother Solon, the painter. The two Borglum brothers had had studios at the Art Students' League in San Francisco at one time, where they were Putnam's neighbors. Ever since the days on the ranch near San Diego, Gutzon Borglum had been friendly toward Putnam, and he now proved his friendship by trying to persuade the young sculptor to stay in New York, to exhibit, and to create a market for his bronzes. Borglum, sufficiently established as a sculptor to fear no rivalry from Putnam, even offered him the use of his own studio in order to make his stay in the East financially possible. But Putnam could

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not be convinced that fame and success for him lay either in New York or in Europe; he was determined to return to his beloved San Francisco.

Appalled at the desolation and destruction by earthquake and fire of the beautiful, hilly city he had known, the whole down-town section having been destroyed down to the water's edge, Putnam was forced to take shelter in a tent-house on Ocean Beach, a windy, isolated spot between the Cliff House and the windmill in Golden Gate Park.

# THE "TENT STUDIO" AT SAN FRANCISCO'S BEACH

Earl Cummings, a fellow sculptor, who was at that time Commissioner of Parks, lent him a large tent which had been used as a temporary school, after the fire; and Hammerstrom, a painter friend, who was the keeper of the Park Windmill, induced Putnam to buy a lot next to his own on the lonely, desolate sand-dunes, miles from any human habitation; there was not even a road leading to the dune lots. With Hammerstrom's help, he set up the tent on his lot, and there the family lived, when Mrs. Putnam and the small daughter Bruce joined him.

Damp winter fogs rolled in from the Pacific; rain drove in through the leaks in the thin canvas roof; bitter trade-winds howled dismally round the tent in the dunes. They had no convenient means of transportation to the city; no gas or electric light; Grace Putnam cooked on a primitive little

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wood-stove. But N. R. Helgesen, an art dealer, finally managed to procure lumber and other building materials for a house and had a carpenter help for a couple of days with the foundations. The rest of the structure Helgesen built with his own hands, with occasional help from Hammerstrom or from any of Putnam's friends who came out to see him at the lonely, inaccessible place.

Stanley Armstrong, an illustrator who was working his way through art school in those days, used to pose in the nude for Putnam. He tells of the huge, barn-like studio that Putnam built, which was always so bitterly cold and draughty that it was impossible to heat; also of the tiny living-rooms, and kitchen leading into it, through which Grace Putnam used to come and join them in the evenings, after Bruce had been put to sleep.

# HELGESEN, THE ART DEALER AND FRIEND

Mr. Helgesen was of great help at this time; he disposed of some of Putnam's bronzes for him, as he had also befriended many another struggling artist. Through Earl Cummings whose sculpture studio he shared for about three years, and also through Willis Polk, the Architect, Putnam again obtained commissions for architectural sculpture. As the rebuilding of the city progressed, his services were much in demand, and the commissions which he received during that time proved to be the family's main source of income.

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Putnam worked like a human dynamo during that period, his energy at white heat. He was modeling animal groups,
casting his own figures in metal and working tirelessly day
and night, tending the fires of his own bronze foundry. He
started this in 1909, assisted only by his brother-in-law, Fred
Storey, who lived with the Putnams for a year.

### THE BRONZE FOUNDRY FLOURISHES

Sales for his bronzes were many; he had all the architectural modeling he could undertake, and he was making a great deal of money, but it seemed to melt away in his hands as soon as he got it. It had been one of Putnam's failings, and one which caused him difficulties all through his life, that he had absolutely no sense of the value of money; he was an incurable spendthrift.

Although he secured numerous commissions, his only private order of any magnitude was that of Mr. Scripps for figures for the series illustrating the original models, which he had made in 1903, before going abroad. They were destroyed in the fire, so he was again modeling the gigantic figures of "The Indian" and "The Monk" in his studio at the beach; he completed them in 1909, and they won much praise.

Because of the great distance and slow, inadequate transportation between the Ocean Beach and the downtown district, Putnam also maintained one additional studio on Sacramento Street for his architectural work, and another as a

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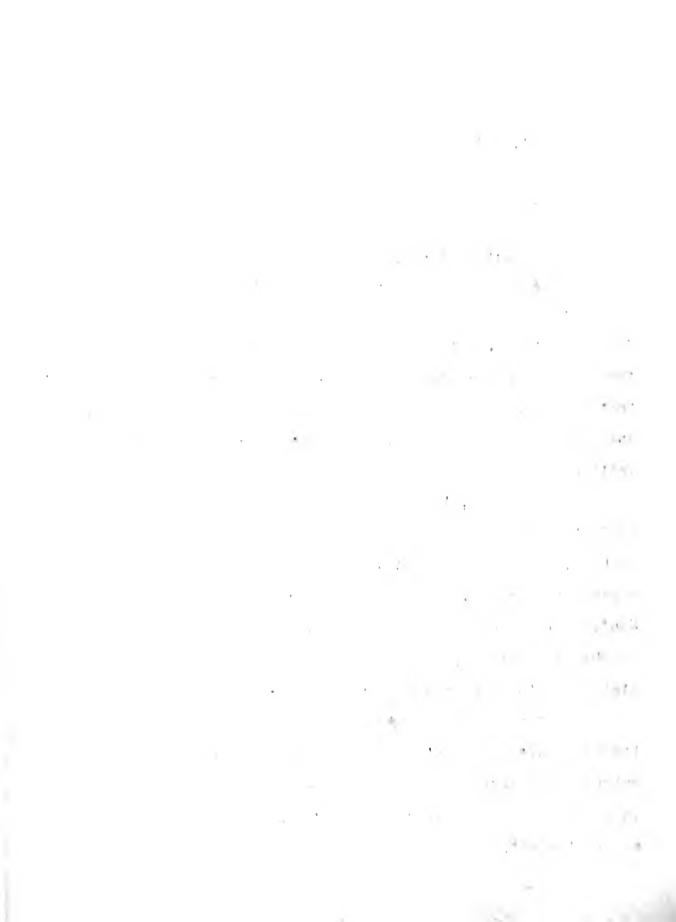
workshop for rough work done by his Italian workmen on Divisadero Street. Some of his finest bronzes were cast at his little amateur foundry at the beach, surpassing the professional casts.

### NEW YORK AND SAN FRANCISCO HONORS

A demand had arisen for Putnam's work in New York, and he arranged to send some of his bronzes to the Macbeth Galleries there. In the spring of 1909 he received a letter from Daniel Chester French, the sculptor, with the good news that the Metropolitan Museum in New York had decided to purchase his group "The Snarling Jaguar" for their American collection.

Meantime, Putnam had become a member of the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. In 1910, through interested fellow members, he was commissioned to model a life-sized figure of a pre-historic man. This figure, which is called "The Cave Man", apropos of a Bohemian Grove Play of that name written by Charles K. Field, was cast in bronze and permanently installed in the Bohemian Club building in San Francisco.

Other works by Putnam which that Club included in its large art collection were a bronze figure of Bacchus which Putnam devised as a cigar lighter; "The Green Knight", in honor of another Grove Play; "Sleeping Puma", and "Puma and Footprint".



## PUTNAM "BAS-RELIEFS" IN SAN FRANCISCO

Among the public and private buildings in San Francisco for which Putnam did ornamental sculpture were the First National Bank, The Crocker Bank, the Bank of California, the Masonic Temple, the Pacific Union Club, the Flood mansion, and the old "Call" and "Examiner" buildings. Among other works, he modeled reliefs for the bases of street lights on Market and Geary Streets, San Francisco; designed squirrel and cone shields for lights in the home of Mr. Walter de la Mert, in Piedmont; designed and executed a mantelpiece and other architectural ornamentations for the St. Francis Hotel; also a beautiful fountain for the lobby, on which are figures of a recumbent and a sitting mountain-lion.

Not far from here was the old, cosmopolitan Barbary Coast and Chinatown in San Francisco, where artists and poets rubbed elbows with sailors and passengers from ships sailing the seven seas. Here Arthur Putnam, Gottardo Piazzoni, Maynard Dixon and their artist friends used to dine and wine in the little Italian restaurants of the quarter, with world famed writers such as Jack London, John Maesfield and Robert Louis Stevenson.

In one of the most famous of those old Pacific Street restaurants and dance-halls, the Hippodrome, (formerly the Midway) Arthur Putnam modeled plaster panels in bas-relief of satyrs enthusiastically chasing fleeing nymphs, with anatomical details all complete. The satyrs and nymphs have

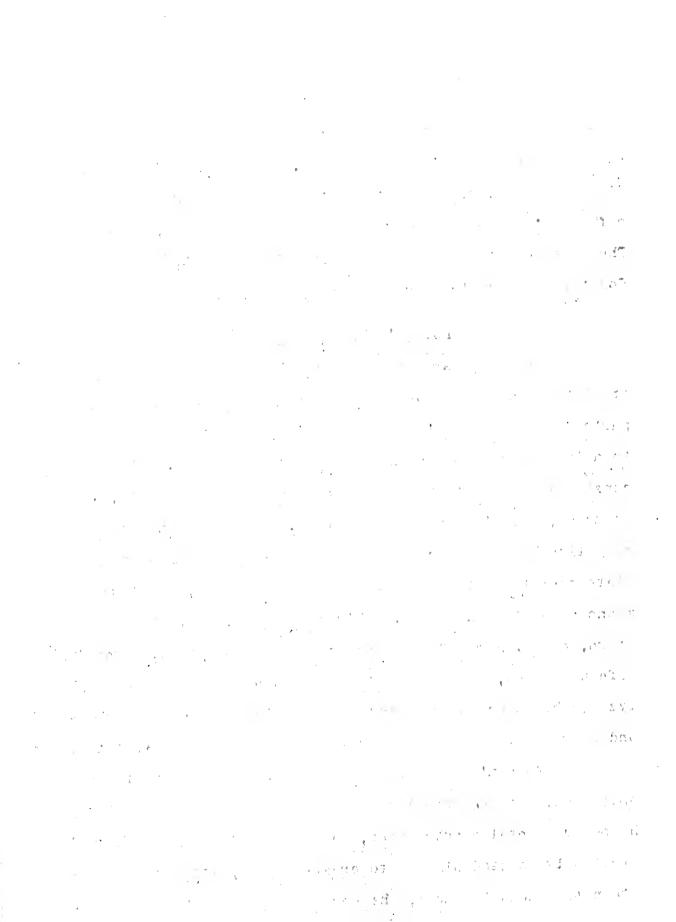
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been painted and repainted many times, and later were chastely adorned with added ribbon streamers. Their lustre is somewhat dimmed by time, but still they stand as reminders of the colorful, picturesque, bygone days of the Barbary Coast, (in 1936). They are described by Herbert Asbury in his book, "The Barbary Coast", which contains excellent photographs.

#### PUTNAM'S HEALTH FAILS

In 1909 Arthur Putnam had begun to suffer from excruciating headaches and occasional numbness in different parts of his body, but he ignored his condition and continued to drive himself beyond his physical capacities. His wife constantly urged him to have more regard for his health, but, as usual, he disregarded all advice. Finally, in 1911, his condition had become so acute that surgeons advised an immediate operation to remove a tumor on his brain, as the only means of saving his life. His old friend, Dr. Philip King Brown, and Dr. Harry Sherman performed the operation. Putnam's life was saved, but his left side and arm had become paralyzed, his sense of proportion and balance were destroyed—and he was never again able to resume his work as a sculptor.

Putnam's wife nursed him devotedly, but with the operation, a change had taken place in the man's personality. He became mentally unbalanced, and as intensely as he had previously devoted himself to creative work, with his passionate nature held in check, he now went to the other extreme.



The inhibitions and repressions of an austere, almost puritanical life were swept away, and lust and licentiousness took their place. With the complete change which took place in his nature, he began drinking and consorting with women and entered upon a course of general debauchery. He felt that his first wife, whom he had loved so dearly from "the minute he first saw her", had become his enemy. He felt the same way about his old friends, and turned from them to the company of strangers. It finally became necessary to engage a male attendant to combat Putnam's sudden wild outbursts of uncontrollable rage.

Dr. Wilson Shields, a Bohemian Club friend, was asked to take charge of the case, eventually decided that it was unsafe for Grace Putnam and the two children, by this time, to remain alone with the deranged Putnam in the isolated house at the beach. Her husband refused to have an attendant with him. Her presence seemed to excite and irritate her husband, and as he also refused her care, Mrs. Putnam, heart broken, took the children to live in Richmond. Later on, she moved with them to Kentfield, where she managed to eke out a meager living by giving painting and drawing lessons. Putnam sued for divorce on December 2, 1915; his wife obtained the custody of their two children, Bruce, the girl and George, the boy, but was too heartbroken to contest the suit in the courts.

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#### A STUDIO FIRE

In September of that same year, for the second time, much of Putnam's work was destroyed. He was then living in the studio at the beach when the place caught fire. He was lying there helplessly paralyzed, unable to escape or to fight the spreading flames. Fortunately, George Stanson, a painter friend whose real name was Stojana, and who shared his studio, returned just in time to carry Putnam out of the burning building, thus saving his life. A whole wall of the studio fell in, shattering the original moulds of "The Indian" and "The Monk", and destroying many other works.

There followed a period of excessive drinking and carousing, during which the sculptor lived with a succession of women. Finally, he quieted down a little, and becoming acquainted with Mrs. Marion Pearson, a newspaper woman and writer who was well known in artistic circles in San Francisco, where she had lived all her life. Putnam and Mrs. Pearson were married on February 20, 1917, and in June, 1921, they went to Paris where they lived until Putnam's death in 1930.

# PUTNAM'S LAST TRIP ABROAD

The move abroad had been made possible, partly by a group of his loyal friends, some of them being fellow members in the Bohemian Club, and partly by Mrs. Adolph Spreckels' purchase of a collection of his bronzes.

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In spite of all the money he had made in the period between his return from Paris in 1907, and 1911, when he was stricken with paralysis, it was Putnam's fate again to undergo the bitter struggle against poverty. "The picture of Putnam fainting from hunger on the corner of Third and Market Streets (San Francisco), while 300 pieces of his exquisite art lay unrecognized in the shack by the beach, is told by Charles Rollo Peters" says the San Francisco Chronicle of August 30, 1922.

"Peters predicts that Putnam will be proclaimed the artistic sensation of the age, and named the foremost sculptor of animals now living.

"He (Peters) recalls a day, about two years ago, when he heard of the dire straits in which Putnam was living and interested Mrs. A. B. Spreckels in the artist. Together they went out to the studio, and on the way Peters purchased food. Mrs. Spreckels demurred, fearing the offer would offend Putnam, but Peters said he preferred to take a chance.

"When they reached the place, Putnam was working in the most primitive of shacks by the ocean, and gratefully accepted the food as a famished man would, explaining he had had nothing for two days. In the shack were 300 pieces of sculpture.

"On finding that Putnam was ill and without funds, Peters notified all the well-known artists of the country, including Childe Hassan, De Witt Parshall, Simmons and others; also the local art colony. All donated what they could. and one of Peter's paintings was raffled, with the result that a trust fund of \$5,000 was raised for Putnam. Financed by the trust fund, he packed up 300 pieces of his sculpture and went to Paris with his wife."

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#### LOYALTY OF HIS FIRST WIFE

Three years before Putnam's death, Grace Putnam took the two children to Paris to see their father. By that time his mental condition had improved, and he had become more rational and balanced in his outlook on life.

Grace Putnam proved to be of the greatest help and encouragement to Putnam throughout his career. She was enthusiastically interested in his work and ambitions, and was willing and eager to face poverty and hardship with him. She had plenty of the two latter during his long and desperate struggle for recognition.

Putnam's first wife had entirely submerged her own artistic aspirations in order to cook and wash dishes and tend her babies in some miserable attic or tiny, primitive shack, for Putnam craved isolated surroundings in which his creative spirit might express itself untrammeled. She had given up everything which most women hold so dear—home, comfort, friends, possessions—for the man she loved, hoping to help him realize his ambitions and to win fame and honor as a sculptor. It was a tragic irony of fate, that after the operation on his brain, he should turn against her, and leave her with the care of their two children.

## CALIFORNIA EXHIBITIONS OF PUTNAM BRONZES

The Putnam collection at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park, San Francisco, comprises

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139 pieces in the round, and nine medals in bas-relief, all in bronze. There are 19 drawings in pencil. Ten of the bronzes were presented to the city of San Francisco by Mrs. Spreckels in 1916, where they were temporarily exhibited at the Palace of the Legion of Honor. In January, 1929, Mrs. Spreckels gave another group of seventy-nine of Putnam's bronzes to that art Museum. Others have since been added.

A collection containing 105 of Putnam's bronzes is owned by the Fine Arts Museum at San Diego, California. "Snarling Jaguar" by Putnam was purchased for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Another bronze, "The Death", went to the Boston Museum. A cast of "The Puma and the Footprint" is at Mills College, California.

The Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco, his first great chance to show his prowess, came too late for Arthur Putnam--who had been stricken with paralysis four years previously. It had been planned to appoint him as director in charge of sculpture at the exposition, but his illness made that impossible. However, fourteen of his bronzes were shown again at the Post-Exposition Exhibition, San Francisco, in 1916.

For the south gardens of the Exposition, Putnam modeled a graceful figure of a mermaid which was used at either side of Stirling Calder's "Fountain of Energy". Unfortunately that was his only contribution to the Exposition's architectural sculpture.

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## "MERMAIDS"--1915

Eugene Neuhaus, speaking of Arthur Putnam's sculptures, in his book "The Art of the Exposition", says:

"As long as we are in the South Gardens, we might take time to investigate the two fountains on either side of the center (the Fountain of Energy, by Stirling Calder). There we find a very lithe mermaid used alike on either side, from a model by Arthur Putnam.

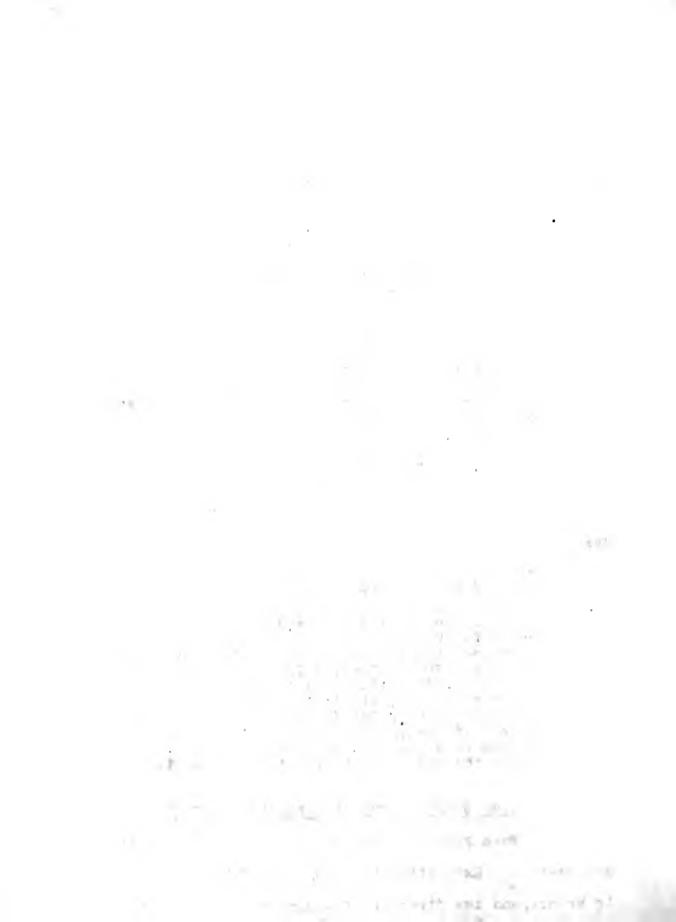
"Many of us, who for years looked forward to the great opportunity of the Exposition, which would give Arthur Putnam a worthy field for his great genius, will be disappointed to know that the mermaid is his only contribution, and is scarcely representative of his original way of dealing with animal forms. The untimely breakdown, some two years ago, of his robust nature prevented his giving himself more typically, for his real spirit is merely suggested in this graceful mermaid."

Describing Putnam's Mermaid Fountain, Stirling Calder gives this picture:

"Long quiet mirror pools flank the great Fountain of Energy, giving balance and calm to the entrance plaza, or South Gardens. The curved ends of the pools are marked by Arthur Putnam's beautiful Mermaid Fountain, in duplicate. The crowning figure is by no means the conventional mermaid. She is free, full of grace, charmingly poised. The bifurcated tail is original and gives sculptural distinction, as well as greater human appeal. The figure is instinct with a spirit of play, but is not boisterous. Arthur Putnam is a Californian who has greatly influenced the development of art in the West."

## THE STORY OF THE SPRECKELS' COLLECTION

When Putnam's opportunity came to exhibit at the San Francisco Exposition in 1915, none of his models were cast in bronze, and the director of sculpture could not accept plas-



ter casts. Putnam, helplessly incapacitated, was unable to do his own bronze casting, as he had previously done. It was during the period of the World War, when all American foundries were busy night and day with war orders, and would accept none from private sources; the metals needed were materials of war, and it seemed as if Putnam was destined to lose his great opportunity.

Loie Fuller, the famous dancer, was staying with Mrs. A. B. Spreckels in San Francisco at the time. Eager to help Putnam in this emergency, she left most of her own belongings behind in San Francisco, and made a hurried journey to Paris. She carried as many of Putnam's casts as she could as her personal baggage, which was all that travelers were allowed to take into port of entry during the war days. Arriving in England, she heard that she would only be allowed to take hand baggage across the Channel to France. So, selecting two of the best models, she hurried over to Paris.

# LA LOIE FULLER, THE VALIANT FRIEND

The Germans were advancing on Paris at the time. Every available foundry and all metals were under control of the War Department. Finally, by a personal appeal to the Minister of War, Loie Fuller obtained sufficient bronze for the two sculptures. Appealing to Auguste Rodin, who had previously admired Putnam's animal sculptures when they were shown in the Paris Salon, she obtained the services of his own foundry-

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man, who had previously refused to cast bronzes for anyone except the great Rodin himself. Finally, with all difficulties surmounted, the bronzes were cast, and shipped back to San Francisco in time for the Exposition, winning the coveted gold medal.

It was through Loie Fuller, a great admirer of Putnam's work, that the artist first attracted the attention of Mrs. Spreckels. The two were visiting the studio of Aubertin in Paris, when Mrs. Spreckels noticed the bronze puma, which Putnam had presented to him, on Aubertin's mantelshelf. She admired the sculpture very much, visited Putnam on her return to San Francisco, and helped and encouraged him throughout his years of poverty and struggle, by purchasing a great number of his works.

Of these bronzes, Suzanne La Follette says in "Art in America":

"Out in California, Arthur Putnam produced, before illness cut short his promising career, those small bronzes and one or two large figures which revealed a sturdy independence of the sentimental and vitiating realism of the Academy, and a talent more promising than any American Sculptor has shown since Rimmer."

## PUTNAM'S PLACE AS AN ANIMAL SCULPTOR

In an article which was published in the Sunset Magazine for November, 1904, Bruce Porter wrote:

"The difficulty in writing of the work of men young in their art is that so much of our enthusiasm is called out by its freshness, its promise; a second difficulty lies in one's con-

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scientious doubt as to whether one has the right to write of it at all--whether to set down a man's accomplishment in black and white at an early stage is not in a way to commit him; to contribute to the setting of bounds, not only for him, but also upon the public's perception of his value and accomplishment, which it is so particularly the business of the public to discover unaided.

"I have been asked in this article to consider Arthur Putnam's work in animal sculpture, but I am of necessity bound to keep in mind certain works of his with the human figure (works experimental to a certain degree, undertaken within the last two years) that carry his gift to a fuller expression and fulfill the promise that his earlier studies of animals so abundantly offered to the sympathetic observer. During this interval he has also been occupied with various sculptural decorations that yet again go to prove the range of his activity; and since this state-ment frees me from the implication of setting . limits, we may take up that with which we are more especially concerned now, his work with animals.

"It was in this field that he began; the pursuit of an interest naturally enough following upon the years of isolation spent among the mountains of Southern California, in localities far enough removed from civilization to allow the puma and the coyote to lurk in the chaparral of the ranges, and where the herds feed in a freedom that brings them well back into a state approaching their forgotten wildness.

"His early experience out-of-doors afforded Putnam--the artist in him--the knowledge of the habits and character of wild life, and, too, the impulse to put into form something of what he had learned and felt.

"This understanding of these forms of life is part of his amazing endowment and understanding, quite apart from his power of visual memory. He knows his animals with a knowledge which gives the polite fabrications of the

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current literary disciples of nature (the writer of popular books, who reduce the characters in wild life to a resemblance to the automatic toys of the pavement, or into monsters possessing a super-human adroitness).... the stamp of counterfeit, and it is, perhaps, just because his work has so essentially the quality of having been done on the spot, that we find its truth a little more difficult to accept."

## PUTNAM'S HIGH PLACE, HISTORICALLY

"Making a long review, mentally, of the use in sculpture of animal form (centuries and centuries of art), it is surprising how only the best has this effect of truth; the relief from Nineveh; the lioness wounded with spears, in the British Museum, as an example; the Egyptians, in their superb conventionalizations of the sacred animals, an art that still touches us in our awe of the cat: Greece in her coinage; eagles, lions, dolphins and the horse and bull -- a level of design reached that is beyond even our dreams now. Rome; very fine in sculptural effect are these presentations of the sacrificial beasts and the dog and horse, but something lost from The sculptors those earlier interpretations. of the Gothic and the Renaissance periods struggled with a grotesque sense of animals. The later period dealt nobly with the horse, but town life had shut the people out from an understanding of the freer animals, and they pictured them, they were a frank where acknowledgment of the curiosity that does but is merely amused with the not understand, strangeness of the animal in captivity,

"This dullness towards the animal is pretty generally maintained in art till the early half of the nineteenth century, and here we meet the modern expression in its fullest force in Baryé. No contemporary name stands with his; he, for the first time since the Greeks, seized on the actual characterization in its truth. There seems to have been no immediate precedent for this frank perception. He had the 'Jardin' with its sad col-

# ELIANTE PLACE HISTORICALL

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captives, and he had the Louvre lection of with its spoils of Nineveh. He stands toweringly above his contemporaries. even Delacroix's lions are really the painting. stage conceptions of what a lion ought to be: Gericault. Fromentin -- their interest in wild life was an incident in their observations of and in England, Landseer was at the desert. the moment submerging the animal in a flood of domestic sentimentality that is echoed in the literary works of the day."

# PUTNAM AND THE FRENCH SCULPTOR, BARYÉ

"Putnam's impulse was as intuitive as Baryé's and without aid from either the collections of the 'Jardin' or, and more especially, those of the Louvre; his personal deprivation in not having at hand some great collection where the traditions of art are to be gathered. The deprivation is general in America, both student and public lacking such help as a wisely selected series of reproductions would afford in establishing a standard of taste."

"But a man who has worked seriously at an art for a number of years, consciously or unconsciously (if he is the true artist) comes to an understanding of the tradition, works with it, works from it, enlarges it; and this is what Putnam has done. Yet it does not lessen the difficulty of the accomplishment; and while I say that for his sake we have occasionally regretted the distance from the Louvre, I see clearly enough, too, that, having settled now upon the foundations of the tradition, he has brought to the tradition a vitality of personhad he al conviction that he might have lost had what are termed 'the advantages'. A man with a smaller, more facile gift might not have survived at all, or have had his stimulus from the reproductions of cheaper modern art. ways at hand as these are, and the very ease with which they impose themselves upon the raw intelligence makes it more than ever a necessity to us, for the sake of student and public alike, that we get together a collection of first-class works of art, to offset the influence of popular works."

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### PUTNAM'S FINE APPROACH TO HIS STUDIES

"If Putnam in those early days missed the influence that a great collection can offer. he, by his own right sense, has avoided the common pitfalls offered by these easy Salon successes; he stands now with an unspoiled outlook on his own solid acquirement. is, first, his knowledge of the appearance and motion of animals not only observed, but the observation supplemented, backed up by thought and investigation, and by the most elaborate study of anatomical structure and function. He has carried this investigation beyond the school-work of the usual student into the intricacies of comparative anatomy. the elaborate studies of an anatomist. This fact is worth mentioning, because with the allurement that clay offers for easy expression, the accompaniment of hard study science apart, is what we hardly expect from the artist who is wholly self-taught.

"In the sculpture of animals all this stored knowledge is a necessity. Working in the presence of a restive human model must always be more or less a working through the memory, and with animals in movement, the whole process must be from knowledge and memory a one, stimulated by occasional observation. This adds immensely to the difficulty of a successful presentation, and the failure of the greater number of the works of art concerned with the animal has its cause. I believe, in too great a dependence upon the living model. A beast penned behind bars in the limited area of the exhibition cage (shamefully limited as it always is) is hardly representative of its free state at all.

# THE SPIRIT BEHIND THE ANIMAL

"I remember protesting to a Japanese painter, in the presence of his drawing of a tiger, (merely a tigerish mouth, a pair of fixed and ominous eyes; of the body there was no indication). 'Why', I asked, 'did you not obtain a tiger as a model?' 'Ah', he replied, 'I must send to India for a tiger; he will be put

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in a box, a small box; he will travel a month on the sea; he will be very sick on the sea; then he will be brought to my house, still in that little box, still very sick. People will look at him and say: 'A Tiger!' But to me he is no longer a tiger, since he has lost his tiger spirit.' He pointed to his drawing. 'Here you have the spirit; is it not that which is the chief part of the tiger?'

"The story embodies the story of many an ambitious work that has failed, because it was without even the perception of the tiger spirit; the dependence upon the perverted captive of the zoological garden for all of the facts has brought about the dreary canvases and sculpture that hold their proportionate space in every large exhibition.

"With all his knowledge Putnam has this interior sense of the animals he depicts, in their inert langors, their terrible vitality, and that dignity that is the hidden quality of all wild life, and that puts to the blush much of our human pettiness and self-conscious attitudinizing. Looking at his works -- here is a puma at rest, with a dignity not imposed by art, but the true bearing of the animal; here the same beast in his triumph of rapine. the whole face and body fixed in its expression of power and hunger, lust of blood, and that suspicion of the rival waiting to seize upon the booty; here cubs at play, innocent frolic of young creatures that yet, on the instant, can show claws and teeth. Then, the humorous awkwardness of the foal on its large legs, for its first adventures in life, the foolish and appealing innocence of its halffrightened friendliness; here's a head of a coyote, used as the boss on a door knocker, all sly meanness and low skill, and yet winning by its very native confession of qualities that are all its own.

"This soft controlled body of the puma in the act of drinking at a pool gives us, if we look quickly enough, a vision as from the edge of the desert; the heat, the silence, the covert life of the brush and the bare gorges and mesas.

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And here is its domestic echo, the family cat, tolerating our society for the sake of the comfort available, seated in suspicious reserve on the hearth, with memories of Egyptian sunshine from the heat of the fire.

### THE PLACE OF PUTNAM AMONG SCULPTORS

"With the one exception of Baryé's (the one supreme modern in his field), I do not know of the work of any contemporary man that shows more definitely this variety in the understanding of animal feeling. I might go further, and say that I know of no one who can match Putnam at his best, (for he has his quota of failures) in the interpretation of the natural quality of the wilder animals. There are a number of men in England France who go far beyond him in the technique of their art; schooled men these are, of long training and assured place, but they miss, in an undefinable way, just the essential thing that he gives us; and it is the essential thing that of all others we ask in the new art of America.

"No great art is founded upon non-essentials; and in America for the present, our first inquiry of every artist bringing his work before the public should be as to what he has to say. and afterward, how he says it. It is this burden of a message that gives the real weight to St. Gaudens' work; he has the most important thing to say, perhaps of any artist work in America at the present time, and should therefore be our seriously accepted influence: it gives him a place that a man of delightful but lighter gifts, like McMonnies, can never lay claim to; and I name these two men together with my conviction as to their relative value, because our tendency is, in this heydey of our prosperity, to exalt lightness and charm in art, and that tendency is dangerously misleading to students and to the younger men."

"There is an apparent injustice in bringing in just here the name of the young American whose work we have been looking at; his talents are but beginning to formulate in ex-

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 pression, but he comes in because I believe he is a certain quantity to be counted upon. in the necessarily uncertain future of art in California. His chief claim to our consideration lies, I think, in just this fact, that he has evidently something to say. He has an adequate and increasing skill with which to say it. He is one of a number of men amongst us whose work is very much more than a promise, and I wonder if it is not part of the responsibility of the intelligent citizens in a young community, to educate their perception of what is distinctively native in our art. and thoughtfully to foster it -- for their own sake of that same uncertain future, that to some of us seems alarmingly imminent in its chances for going wrong. "

In an article on Putnam and his work, published in Arts and Decoration, September 1923, Phyllis Ackerman says, in part:

"Barye, the most famous animal sculptor of modern Europe, was a great plastic dramatist. He saw his models in terms of emotion, struggle, and climax, and read into them human experience. In fact, what he was creating was the expression of human passions, and that he should have chosen to embody them in animal forms was almost accidental. A Baryé lion is incidentally a lion, primarily regal power, strength, ruthlessness.

# PUTNAM AND BARYE COMPARED AND APPRECIATED

"But Baryé, in spite of his anthropomorphic interpretations, knew his beasts too, so that he has, until now, stood unrivalled among the moderns in his own field. Now, however, Paris has found for Baryé a rival; a rival the more dangerous because he possesses just the direct objectivity of vision that strips the animal of all human interpolations. In the exhibition of the gifts that have been offered by various governments and private individuals in Europe to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, founded in San Francisco by Adolph and Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, there is a

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whole gallery full of lithe panthers, heavy shambling bears, mean, cunning cats and lynx, and sharp, rabid coyotes and foxes. Most of them are only a few inches high, but all of them are threatening in their primitive power. They have conquered the Paris amateurs and critics of art.

"Curiously enough, this animal sculptor that Paris is acclaiming as equal to or greater than Baryé has come, not out of France itself, but out of America's own Far West. He is Arthur Putnam, who after years of struggle in San Francisco, managed to get to Paris, won a place in the Salon, was discovered by the French painter Aubertin, and by him brought to the attention of Mrs. Spreckels, herself a San Franciscan. As a result, Mrs. Spreckels had his entire collection of models cast in bronze by a French 'fondeur' to be sent back to San Francisco, whence they originally came. Thus Putnam's work and his reputation are making a complete circle via Paris back to their point of origin.....

"Putnam was a really great sculptor. thought naturally in solid, expressively modulated, three-dimensional forms. His pieces have bulk and it is not empty, bloated bulk, but solid structural form. His surfaces are in broad, broken planes, conventionalized, but not at the expense of accuracy, not in that tricky expressiveness of which many of the Rodin imitators are guilty, but in a vital realism. In a sense, he is a lumierist sculptor, because he evidently has fashioned his surfaces in large masses of light shade: but he is not a lumierist sculptor in the specious sense of some of the moderns who create a veil of atmosphere that destroys the architectonics of the stone. Most of his pieces, moreover, are treated not only terms of mass and surface, but in considera-tion of the outline also; from the patterning of the poses of his animals, he gets not only arresting decorative effect, but also expressive force. He uses attitudes in animals, as Michael Angelo used them in men, convey the feeling of concentrated power.

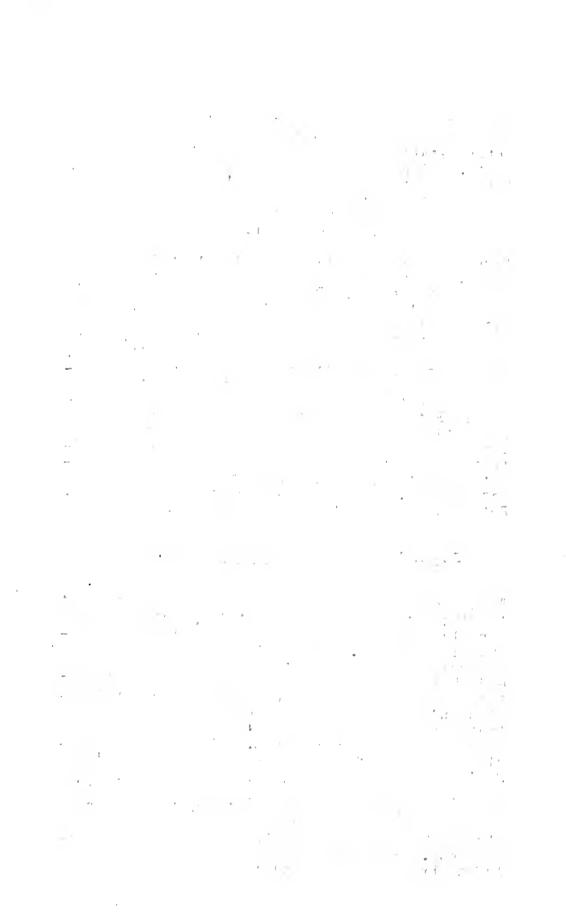
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"And finally, through the adjustment of his weights, he gets an extraordinarily sympathetic interpretation of different qualities of movements. The shambling, heavy gait of a bear, the supple flow of the panther's walk, the alert light-footed tread of the coyote are all there in an intensified expression that stirs instant appreciation in the beholder.

"Fundamentally he stands in direct antithesis to For whereas Barye selected a dramatic episode to depict, Putnam presents his animals in a casual, typical moment, pacing or sleeping, irrelevant interest dragged in through the illustration of an exciting incident. Barye, having selected his literary situation, then portrays it with the most correct anatomical realism possible, so that his most perfect pieces might be cast direct from the subject it-Putnam on the other hand takes his simple realistic poses but renders them in a sculptural interpretation which, although it gives the effect of the animal more keenly than a more accurate imitation, would prove to be far from the actual fact. Barye is a narrative naturalist. Putnam is an objective expressionist.

# PUTNAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO OUR TIME

"The accident of his life, and as a result of it the limitations of his sympathies, restricted his work largely to the specialized field of wildanimal portrayal. But he did make some tentative excursions with the portrayal of the human form, and while here his lack of academic education at times became apparent, he overcame his difficulties and succeeded in producing one great piece that takes rank with the significant pieces of plastic art of modern times. This is his lifesized figure of the prehistoric man. the Cave Man'. a brooding creature, half human, half beast, who struggles through a mental twilight with an expression of frustration, that is formed not only by the obvious gesture of scratching his head, but by the whole crouch of his power-ful body. In force of conception, and especially in breadth and conviction of execution, it



stands in the forefront of modern European sculpture. Had Putnam retained his powers to the fullest maturity, he would have been one of the giants of his art. Even cut short as he was he is one of the greatest contributors to the work of our time."

No better resume of Arthur Putnam's life can be given than that of the Editor of Arts and Decoration in September 1923, when he speaks of "The fight for his very existence made by the young American sculptor Arthur Putnam, to whom critical recognition and an established position in the world of art have come too late. A sensitive nature broken on the wheel of harsh circumstances, he is now hopelessly and permanently incapacitated. Here is one of the great present day tragedies of art hitherto unrecorded."

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#### ARTHUR PUTNAM

#### REPRESENTATIVE

#### **BRONZES**

# PALACE OF LEGION OF HONOR, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:

Pumas (Male and Female) Decorative Figure for Bohemian Club Colt Lion at Rest Indian (small study) Head of Puma Tigers Placque Lion on Boulder Leopard Buffalo Head Prospector Man on Horse Fighting Bear Dancing Faun and Goose Fight between Man and Puma Mother and Son Neptune Reclining Junipero Serra Standing Bear with Ball Dog and Bone Bear and Skull Spread Eagle Hand Coyote Head Coyote and Snake Brown Bear Lynx Kitten Squirrel Decorative Bracket-Squirrel and Acorn Walking Tiger Indian Grinding Corn Contortionist Monk High Relief (Male and Female) Tiger Placque Buffaloes Fighting Wrestlers Lion and Lioness Head of Puma -- Mouth open

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Combat -- Indian, Horse and Buffalo The Green Knight Sheep Shearing Slave Handcuffed Flying Messenger Puma and Alligator Fight Puma and Balls Bear with Paw on Rock Men Drinking Foot Tiger Love Kangaroo Lynx Ready to Spring Hyaena Wild-cat Kitten Seated Man Saber Toothed Tiger Victory Sketch Indian and Puma Puma Cleaning Up Sneaking Coyote Gnu and Leopard Hunting Dogs and Puma Indian and Puma Puma and Lizard Puma Licking Paw Lynx Head Puma and Tiger Fighting Puma and Child Puma and Deer Puma on Guard Puma Resting Lioness and Snakes Two Lions (Fountain) Man and Lion Mermaid Fountain with Lizard in Hand Sketch for Equestrian Fountain Kangaroo and Dogs Combat (small, Man and Puma) Leopard on Watch Tiger Resting (Male) Lioness Resting Sketch for Haile Monument Lynx Resting Bear Scratching Back Bear Walking Lynx Sitting Vaulting Figure Elephant Man and Snake

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Lion Resting Indian and Puma Combat Puma Yawning Snarling Lion Combat -- Man. Puma and Cub Lynx and Child Pumas Fighting over Deer and Snakes Puma and Footprints Boy and Hare Old Man and Child Venus and Staff Il Penseroso Cave Man Wounded Hercules Pumas (small, Male and Female Reclining) Lynx Watching Tiger Reclining (medium) Lion Resting (medium) Wounded Buffalo and Young Bear Scratching Hind-Paw Lynx Wounded Puma Resting Lion Resting on His Paws Lynx Kitten Coyote Frightened Antique Greek Figure (Winged Head) Small Herd Leopard Resting Puma on Lookout Puma Resting (small) Decorative Bracket (Head of a Satyr) Motif for a Tomb

#### BRONZE MEDALS

Les Poux
La Sape
French Soldier Resting Against Gun
French Soldier Sitting with Hands to Face
French Soldier with Bread on Stick over his
Shoulders
French Soldier with Canteens over Shoulder
French Soldier Resting in Trench, Smoking Pipe
French Soldier Sitting Down with Blanket
Thrown over Knees
Hiver MCMXVI
Nineteen Pencil Sketches of Men and Animals
(framed)

TOWER.

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FROM THE OFFICIAL CATALOG OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS, PANAMA\_PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION 1915, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:

Indian and Puma
Skunked Wild Cat
Sneaking Coyote
Leopard and Gnu
Combat
Tiger Love
Resting Puma
Little Bear Cub
Buffalo Hunt
Coyote Head
Crouching Wild Cat
Two Pumas
Puma and Snake (illustration)
Snarling Jaguar



#### ARTHUR PUTNAM

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# ROBERT INGERSOLL AITKEN

1878.....

Biography and Works



ROBERT BURNS BY ROBERT ALLKEN



### ROBERT INGERSOLL AITKEN

San Francisco has long been noted for the excellence and competence of her artists. Lavish accounts of her contributions to the world of art fill the early day newspapers, until today the names of California artists are known in national and European art magazines. In the vastness of her artistic grandeur, San Francisco has been fortunate in her list of resounding names to claim such sculptors as Douglas Tilden, Arthur Putnam, Gutzon Borglum, and many others. Of international importance is Robert Aitken, the sculptor who devoted himself to making San Francisco and the art world in general, familiar with the life of the West through his art.

Robert Aitken was born in the days when California was still filled with tales of the lore and deeds of the American Indian. That this had dramatic bearing on Aitken's formative years is evident in his work. Most art lovers think only of Aitken as the sculptor who made a name for himself outside his native city and state. Not until we know more about his early life, will we realize the nature and greatness of his work.

# GENEALOGY

Robert Aitken was born in San Francisco on May 8, 1878, the son of American parents. His father, Charles H. Aitken, was easy-going, and his mother, Katherine (Higgins)

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Aitken, was an eccentric. Devoid of any artistic or inherited talents whatsoever, young Aitken revealed a profound artistic bent, and under the influence of San Francisco artistic surroundings, he attained an intimate knowledge of art, until finally, he developed a most unusual dexterity in sculpturing, or modelling in clay, as practiced in his boyhood days.

### EARLY TRAINING

Early in his schooling Robert Aitken began his boyish art work by painting and drawing. Then he attended the
Lick High School in San Francisco, where one of his school
teachers took a motherly interest in his unusual talents and
gave him all the encouragement worthy of a promising artist.
From the very start, Aitken wanted real art training and
hoped to enter an art school. At the time of his graduation
from high school, however, he was not in a position to finance his way. His kind teacher, whose name is lost in the
records, now stepped into the picture and gave him money for
his tuition at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. Here, now
famous teachers and pupils mingled in serious efforts echoing
European and New York art methods of the 1880's and '90's.

# HIS ART EDUCATION

Fortunately, however, when Aitken entered the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art he became the pupil of the one curiously unacademic teacher of early western sculpture, Douglas

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Tilden, who was a deaf-mute, but most articulate in his art. Aitken also studied with the caustic and severe mural decorator and drawing teacher, Arthur F. Mathews. With these men he studied one year only, during which time he received an honorable mention in drawing and a gold medal in sculpture; and was told that "the Institute had little, if anything more, it could teach him, and was advised to start out and seek his own salvation". Thus, at the early age of eighteen, Robert Aitken became a professional worker with a studio of his own.

Ever since his early days at the Mark Hopkins Institute, his works have become widely known. Aitken first exhibited in 1896.

# HIS TRAVELS

In 1895, when only nineteen years old, Robert Aitken felt the irresistible call of Paris. Museums, studios, famous people, fascinating, and colorful; Paris gradually became so much his goal that finally he followed the beaten path of the adventurous art student and went to see his Paris—the "charmed city of romance—touched artists".

Young Aitken had very clear purposes and self-discipline in his plans for studies abroad. He wanted to perfect the technique of the chisel as well as casting in metal. However, once arrived in France, he spent only a short three-months' visit in Paris. Aitken refused to settle at the schools. Instead, he devoted his time visiting the galleries

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and museums and worked in a studio there. Why he did not attend the schools there, can be best described in his own words:

"The French masters spoil more good sculptors than they make, and for that reason I persistently refused to study under any of them. Whatever a man's ability is, if he goes to one of their schools, he will be turned out a good technician. A man, however, who has originality or any individual viewpoint had better stay away altogether. He will come out a stereotyped product, and it will take years to get back the individuality that he had in his youth. The best sculptors that we have in America today have been through the French schools, but they all have to admit they have to forget what they have learned. If one has personality he should certainly go abroad -- merely to strengthen his own convictions, but he must fight his own battles himself. you have some master who constantly lifts you out of the rough places you will only know how to get out of them in a new way; of course, every man must serve his apprenticeship, but it is well to do it as it was done years ago when an artist went into a shop and saw how the big things were turned out, and he was given tools with which to chisel for himself."

Upon Aitken's return to San Francisco, and following his brief studies in Paris, he held an exhibition at the Bohemian Club of which he was a member. As a result of this display, the Club commissioned him to make a monument to Bret Harte, the famous California writer. He chose for his design an incident in the novelist's story of "Luck of Roaring Camp". This, which he completed and had cast in bronze, was unfortunately lost in the earthquake.

## HIS EARLY WORKS

The stay of three short months in Paris, was long enough for Aitken to accomplish much. He opened a studio of

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his own and launched his professional career as an artist.

Aithen first attracted attention by his bust of Mdme. Modjeska, as Lady Macbeth, and in 1898 by his bronze door to the Charles H. Crocker Mausoleum, which was called "The Gate of Silence".

He followed this with "Art Lured to Bohemia" which caused a furore at the Bohemian Club Winter Exposition in 1899. "Life's Flowing Bowl", a fountain design for Union Square made in 1900, was the cause of an ethical and critical controversy, which resembled the famous Bacchante controversy in Boston. This was quickly followed by an order for the spandrels of the Claus Spreckels' Music Pavilion in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. They were followed among other works, by "Ambition" a group which was exhibited at the Hopkins Institute. "To Our Host Sequoia" was presented to the Bohemian Club. This was intended to convey the spirit of the Club's midsummer jinks held in their forest in Sonoma County, California. "Love's Answer" and "Kismet" were also exhibited at the club.

As a means of introducing his work to the metropolitan City of New York, Robert Aitken also exhibited his "Kismet" there. This was the first time Aitken had ever exhibited a specimen of his work outside his native San Francisco. His "Kismet", which was a conception of Fate moulding the minds of men. attracted much attention at the Clausen

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Galleries. Eastern critics unanimously praised Aitken for his achievement, and gave him credit for rare talent.

Evidently the people of San Francisco had faith in Aitken, for not long after his Bohemian Club exhibition, other important commissions were soon won by competition and each one was carried to successful completion. The ninety-foot frieze for the Ackerman residence, an allegory representing the seasons of life was also completed.

During the early part of the year 1903, another piece of sculpture, "In the Clutch of Destiny", was finished and exhibited in the Green Room of the Bohemian Club. This piece, which represented a man in the grasp of powerful hands, the only fully revealed portions of the major figure, attracted unusual interest. A suggestion of the shoulders forms the pedestal, and one muscular arm wraps itself almost about the body, the hand clutching the throat. The figure of the victim is, in every line and posture, indicative of despair. The head of the man is thrown back in the agony of surrender after the long struggle. His hands and arms hang limp and helpless. In contrast, the arms of Destiny are massive, muscular, and cruel in their strength.

Another exhibition was forthcoming in 1905. Early that year, an exhibition of sculpture, comprising models, sketches, and portraits, was held in the Jinks Room of the Bohemian Club. Some fifty-three models-including the full-

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size accepted figures for the Bret Harte and Hall McAllister monuments—and sketches and portraits were exhibited at this time. The exhibition represented the important works of Aitken since 1896.

The Bret Harte model consisted of a life-sized figure of "Tennessee's Pardner", an old miner, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in one hand. The figure is seated upon a mound of loose earth, and a pine bough trails down over the edge of the base.

To Robert Aitken, recognition and material success came earlier than to most men. In spite of this, he did not lose his head, but worked with the same enthusiasm as when he first launched his artistic career. He followed his course sanely, seriously, and with an earnest application that earned him many official honors. His brilliant start only spurred him on to renewed efforts.

The press and patrons of California praised his art. Encouraged by favorable comments, Aitken redoubled his efforts, determined to climb to loftier heights. By this time his financial problems were easier and his art reached larger scope.

## AITKEN'S "VICTORY"

With praises and comments on his successful start still ringing in his ears, Robert Aitken again won a competition. This time, a monument to commemorate the glorious vic-

size accepted figures for the Bret Harte and Hall McAllianer menuments—and sketches and portraits were exhibited at the time. The exhibition represented the important work at the Althen cines 1876.

The Brat Hurth moder consists of a life-sized first ure of "Tennessee's Purcher", an old miner his shovel octaven his kneed, and his five buried in one hand. The firm is seated upon a mound of loves earth, and a pint could that to down over the edge of the base.

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## AITKEN'S "VICTORI"

With preises and comments on his surcessful start still ringing in his ears, Robert Aitken agoin von a commettation. This time, a monument to our colorage the military view.

tory of Admiral George Dewey at Manila Bay. This was the first permanent monument to commemorate Admiral Dewey's victory, and incidently, to pay deserved tribute to the sailors of the American Navy. This monument now stands amid the down-town hotels and shops in Union Square, in the heart of San Francisco. The contract for the monument was awarded in 1901, to Robert Aitken, and Newton J. Thorp, architect. The design, which was submitted and accepted, consisted of a granite shaft--83 feet in height. At the base of the design are four emblematic bronze figures. These have high reliefs picturing the achievements of Dewey's flag-ship, the Olympia and the Oregon, both of which were constructed in San Francisco.

Surmounting the shaft is the bronze figure of "Victory", bearing in one hand a trident and the other a laurel wreath. The monument, which was paid for by popular subscription, cost \$35,000. The bronze figure of "Victory" by Aitken, brought the sculptor much praise.

The Mark Hopkins Institute Review of Art, December 1903, describes Aitken's "Victory" in full:

"Aitken's bronze 'Victory' is a female figure, which with one hand grasps a trident symbolical of the sea, while the other bestows the laurel wreath. The attitude is that of alighting on the column, one foot resting on the crown of the capital. The height to the top of the head is 12 feet, and to the tip of the trident 17 feet.

"The pose is easy and graceful, and while rather more animated than perhaps is usual in a figure of this character, its animation adds to its

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sylph-like aspect and is quite appropriate. The figure is exceedingly well modeled, and is altogether a most successful execution of a very difficult task.

"The history of the monument and its commemorative deed is engraved upon the sides of the pedestal: the inscription of the south, which is the front, sets forth the monument was erected by the citizens of San Francisco, the date and also the interesting statement that President McKinley broke the ground for its foundation; an interest still further enhanced by the inscription on the north-side Theodore Roosevelt dedicated President The north-side also lists the vessels of it. Commodore Dewey's squadron; the inscription on the east reproduces the Secretary of the Navy's message to Commodore Dewey to Capture or destroy the Spanish fleet! and that on the west gives a brief description of the battle."

Despite the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906, this monument still stands where it was erected, though other of Aitken's works were less fortunate and were completely demolished by the catastrophe.

In the same year of the Dewey monument, Aitken won another competition, a monument to the martyred President McKinley, which was placed in the Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, while replicas of the portrait subsequently went to St. Helena, and Berkeley, California. Later, among his larger bronzes, Aitken did an heroic figure of Hall McAllister, the pioneer, which now stands in front of the City Hall, in San Francisco.

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#### AITKEN SUCCEEDS DOUGLAS TILDEN

In the year 1901, Douglas Tilden resigned as head of the Department of Sculpture at the Mark Hopkins Institute. to give his attention solely to his own work. Robert Aitken, although only twenty-three years old, was offered Tilden's job, which he accepted and held until the year 1904, when the call to Paris again came upon him; whereupon he gave up teaching.

Between the year 1901, when he was teaching at the Mark Hopkins Institute, up to the year 1904, when he left for Paris, Aitken modeled some distinguished portraits, among them those of Mr. Charles Rollo Peters and Mr. Charles John Dickman, the landscape painters, in characteristic attitudes. These portraits, which were done in relief, represented Mr. Peters, setting his oil paint palette and Mr. Dickman, with extended arm using his water color brush. These were exhibited at the Bohemian Club, San Francisco's haven for artists and art patrons.

## HIS SECOND TRIP TO PARIS

Aithen with ample funds for another trip to France. He soon saved enough money to make it possible for him to spend the next three years in Paris; which he did. He settled himself comfortably in a studio there, and began his group, "To Those Born Dead". Meanwhile, in the year 1906, he submitted one of

## VICKET SUCCESSED DO STAD LITTLE

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his works to the Salon which was rejected.

The Wasp, July 21, 1906, commented on the incident:

"A Paris correspondent informs me that Bobby Aitken, the special pet of the Bohemian Club, is very much cut up because the Salon reject-I knew that some tragedy of that ed his work. in store for Bobby as the Bohemians sort was had swollen his head by the most injudicious The Wasp's art critic, who knows much about sculpture and painting as most newscritics and who is a very fair man, had several harsh things to say of Bobby's statue of the late Hall McAllister and McKinley monument at Golden Gate Park. dubbed both as 'Awful Examples', that should be a warning to young artists who want before they have learned to walk on the edge of Parnassus. This same critic thinks great fire would have been less of a catastrophe had it melted Bobby's two most pretentious. not his worst productions. Paris has no soft spots in its heart for petted favorites of the provinces. If Bobby remains there as he intends, he will become a good sculptor and possibly a great one. But great artists of any kind do not grow over night on trees. It takes long years of patient moulding to make them."

This unfortunate incident, however, did not discourage the ever-ambitious sculptor; for in 1907, he exhibited his heroic figure of "The Athlete" in the Salon of that year, and secured favorable attention, not an easy accomplishment in Paris, for in matters of sculpture the Gaul was then by no means attracted lightly or unadvisedly. He remained in Paris for three years, after which time, he returned to the United States and settled in New York City where his studio at once became a notable and constructive part of the art life of the metropolis. He is consistently working there at

his orbit to the Saler which was rejected.

Tre Wase, July 51, 1906, or menter on the incident:

"A Paris correspondent informs me that Dobby Attweet, the special net of the Bohemiar Olut te very much out up beceuse the Salon rejected his work. I knew that some tracedy of that sort was in store for Bobby or the Bohemians and swallen his head by the most injusticious praine. The Wesp's art critic, who knows as much about sculpture and printing as most newspaper critics and who is a bry fair minded man, had several harsh things to sev of bobly's statue of the late Hall McAllister and McKinley monument at Golden Gate Pant. He dubbed toth as 'Awful Exemples', that enculd be a warning to young artists who want to man before they invelearned to walk on the edge of Parnassus. In's sace on the thicks that the great fire would have been less of a catautrophe had it melted Surby's the most errertings not his worst productions. Part has no wift spile in its leart for Jeried foverites of the provinces. If habby remains there as he intends, e vidiaron has modelin boog a amenad latwood great one. But neat antion's of my kind do not grow even named on trees. In takes lawrye has of pattent null ar to make them."

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this moment and is a beloved American Sculptor, an international figure, still famous for his works done in California.

#### AITKEN'S MARRIAGE

Upon his return from his second visit to Paris, he married the former Laura Louise Ligny, a noted Parisian Beauty. Their marriage was the termination of a romantic attachment which began in San Francisco. When Miss Ligny's parents learned of their romance they took their daughter to Paris. Robert Aitken followed, but returned to New York without a bride. Some months later Miss Ligny left Paris and boarded a liner for New York. She was met by Aitken and they were married at the New York City Hall on November 27, 1907. They now have one child.

Almost immediately after his marriage, Aitken began a series of bust portraits, an early sitter being David Warfield, the distinguished actor, while later came the painters, Willard L. Metcalf and George Bellows, then the playwrights, Augustus Thomas and the Englishman, Henry Arthur Jones. The George Bellows bust was a gift of Ralph H. Beaton to the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts.

Meanwhile Aitken was called upon to make a likeness of President Taft, for which purpose he went to Washington. At first, the Chief Executive regarded the very youthful Aitken lightly, but he was soon so impressed by the sculptor's

this moment and is a helowed American B-lipter, and a national figure, still famous for his work 'see the ornin.

## AITHEN'S MARRIAGE

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At first, the Chief Executive reparted the very youthful Aitken lightly, but he was such at impresse, by the state of the chief.

enormous facility that he took the artist more seriously, and gave him sittings worthy of his skill. The result was a speaking likeness which was satisfactory all around and was first seen publicly at the winter exhibition of the National Academy of Design, in New York, in 1910, going subsequently to the International Exhibition at Rome, in 1911. In the meantime, in 1908, Aitken was awarded the first of the Helen Foster Barnett prizes, for the best piece of sculpture in the winter exhibition of the National Academy of Design, and the following year he was elected to associate membership in the Academy. Incidently, the Helen Foster Barnett prize was the beginning of Aitken's important prize winning. His associate membership in the Academy terminated in 1914, when he was chosen as one of five artists elected to full membership.

The prize winning group which won him the Barnett prize, was a composition of two figures called "The Flame" —a young man and young woman in passionate embrace—"almost elemental in their abandon, their virility and the intensity of their mutual love".

There was another piece called "A Creature of God Till Now Unknown", which Aitken carved directly from the marble, without models or sketches; he is of the opinion that thus the artist gets a certain personality not otherwise possible, and he has done much of his work thus. There are disclosed in this sculpture certain untouched portions of the

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There was another elected of drenture of of the sure of of the country of the the the theory of the country of the theory of the

rugged stone which make it most effective. The woman's figure seems a creature just revealed, a youthful female form of rare beauty, mingled with a tender pathos.

#### THE SHALER BUST

Another of Aitken's best works is the bust of Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, who in his day was dean of Lawrence Scientific School, and for long professor of geology at Harvard University. He is a distinguished scientist whose name is endeared to legions of Harvard graduates, a man loved by all the faculty of that institution, whose memory is now revered by every man who sat under his teachings. Again this was a speaking likeness, a dignified presentment of the fine head, the rugged intellectuality, the alert mind and the kindly humanity of that splendid personage.

This bust, which now reposes in the Capitol of Kentucky, Mr. Shaler's native state, was made after the death of the subject, always a difficult feat for the sculptor.

Speaking of Aitken's ability as a portraitist, the Overland, Vol. 60, writes:

"That he possesses those subtle qualities distinguishing the genuine portraitist becomes more and more apparent from close study of his busts."

## MAUSOLEUM DOORS

Aitken executed several important mausoleum doors, among them some for Mrs. John W. Gates and others for the

ure scene a resture list revealed, a y 'fur i of rure beauty, mingled with a tender torre.

## THE SHALER BUST

Arrithmy of Althor's best work is the rest of Mathemal Southware Shaler, who is not key was less of Lawrence Scientific School, and for long professor of geold, at Harvard University. He is a distinguise of original whose hame is endoared to legions of Harvard graduits, a well lone by all the familty of that institution, stress entrry lawes reversed by every man who and under the families. Are the first head, the regred intellectuality, the site of the lawer of that and the legions is distincted by humanity of that effectively, the site of the lawer of the l

Fin bunt, which now recome in the carticle Kortucky, Mr. Shaler's native state. The souther the south the souther.

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Overland, Val. 60, writes:

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## LAUSCLEUM DOORS

Althon executed neveral important unitarial bears, among them none for Men. John W. Gates and others for the

Greenhut Mausoleum. The motif for each was a standing female figure, original in conception, of rare and compelling sympathy and great beauty. In the Gates memorial the woman leans against a portal in an attitude of grief; the classic head bowed against the fretwork, while graceful draperies hang from outstretched arms and cling about the half nude body.

Of these two pieces of work, International Studio, July 1913, said:

"Cast in bronze, both these efforts stamp the man as a draftsman of unusual sincerity and resource."

## AITKEN AT THE PANAMA\_PACIFIC EXPOSITION

When the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, in San Francisco, opened its doors to American artists, Robert Aitken was among the first invited to contribute designs. Here he made lively use of his varied artistic capacities and achieved great success. Of all his undertakings, this was the most ambitious, as he evolved four heroic figures typifying the elements--Fire, Air, Water, and Earth, for the tentral Court of Honor, or the Court of the Universe. His works were of elaborate and complicated symbolism. These beautiful sculptures, acclaimed by critics far and wide, established Aitken firmly as one of San Francisco's leading artists.

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#### THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Placed at the top of the main stairways leading down into the sunken gardens of the Court of the Universe, we find Robert Aitken's heroic pieces, "The Four Elements". To quote A. S. Calder, author of "Sculpture and Mural Decorations of the Exposition", the pieces are described:

"In spite of their imaginative themes, these massive works have the same gripping reality that characterizes all the later method of this sculptor. He has treated the elements, especially 'Earth' and 'Air'. in their relation to man. As here pictured, 'Earth', the quiet mother, sleeps on her rocks, over which little human beings struggle and toil. The rear view of 'Air', the group on the opposite side of the same stairway, may be seen in the foreground of the plate illustrating the Nations of the East. holds a star in her hair; she has great wings and is attended by floating seagulls. Behind her, a man has strapped his arms to her mighty pinions, signifying the effort of the present age to ride the winds. 'Fire' and 'Water' across the gardens, are shown in vivid 'Fire' roaring with his salamander, and 'Water' blowing a stormy gust across the waves."

## THE FOUNTAIN OF EARTH

One of the most powerful and most interesting sculptural compositions at the Exposition was Aitken's "Fountain of Earth". The fountain which is found in the large basin in the center of the Court of Abundance, is really in two compositions. The larger, and central one, is composed of a globe representing the earth, with four panels of figures on the four sides, representing three incidents of life on earth,

## THE FOUR BLEMENTS

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## THE FOUNTAIN OF EARTH

One of the most powerful and most interesting sculptural compositions at the Expesition was Aitkente "Fountain compositions at the Expesition was Aitkente "Fountain continuation of the fountain which is found in the large basis, in the center of the Court of Abundance, is really in two compositions. The larger, and central one, is composed of a glacke representing the earth, with four panels of timpnes of the four sides, representing there incidente of life to corth.

two typified by certain riddles of existence. The secondary composition lies to the south of the central one, on the same pedestal; and this is divided into two groups by a formalized wing through the center. The two scenes here represent life before and after earthly existence. The two huge arms and the wing are all that can be seen of Destiny, the force with which the allegorical story begins and ends.

First, is a symbolized figure "Destiny" with one hand outstretched giving life, while the other takes it. hand pushes toward the earth from "Prenatal Sleep", a woman who awakens to the ecstatic joy of living, perhaps its realization. A man offers her the "Kiss of Life", and the pair offering up the children of their mutual love, are representative of the "Beginning of Things". All these figures form and surround a globe of enormous size -- typifying "The Earth". This globe, 18 feet in diameter, of glass in a heavy steel armature, was illuminated at night, while a second globe revolved therein. producing the effect of the earth turning on its axis. A gap before we arrive at the "Beginnings of Things" is typical of that unknown time in history where conjecture only may be the guide. Arriving at the main structure we meet with "Vanity" glass in hand, compelling motive of so much in humanity. Now "Primitive Man and Woman", trudge on with their burdens of life, progressing toward the unknown.

The next group represents "Natural Selection" with the "Survival of the Fittest". A militant group, where "Physi-

two typisted by dertain middles of existence. The decordary domposition lies to the south of the dentral one, on the acute pedestal; and this is divided into two groups by a formalized wing the renter. The two scenes core represent life before and after earthly existence. The two huge trms and the wing are all that can be seen of Destiny, the force with which the allegorical story besting and ends.

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The next group represents "Natural Selection" with the "Survival of the Fittest". A militant group where "Prysal-

cal Courage" begins to play its part. Continuing, we get the "Lesson of Life" --- wherein the elders with the experience of years offer counsel to the hot-headed youth.

Next are "Lust" and "Greed" and finally two figures recumbent—a man, "Sorrow"—a woman, "Final Sleep",—are about to be drawn into "Oblivion" by the relentless "Hand of Destiny".

The Bulletin of the Pan-American Union, Volume XLVII, said of these sculptures:

"Mr. Aitken has depicted in these sculptures a conception of life with its sorrows, joys, hopes, and tragedies; its bright and its dark side, all with rare intellectuality, artistic fitness, and with unusual technical excellence, for the man is a master craftsman. He has injected much personal charm, shown the grandeur of life, along with the physical perfection of man and womanhood in their alluring quality of youth, and the figures pulsate with life."

In an exhibition of contemporary American sculpture, held by the National Sculpture Society, and under the auspices of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and the Albright Art Gallery, Art and Archaeology magazine said of Aitken's "Fountain of Earth", which was exhibited there:

"The Fountain of Earth' by Robert Aitken has compelled the attention of the world of art and won the gold medal of honor in sculpture awarded by the Architectural League of New York in 1915. In this fountain, Aitken expresses the idea of man's profound significance. In general it shows the development and growth of love from its lower to higher forms and the upward effect of that spiritualization upon the life of the earth. The central fountain shows the globe of Earth

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revolving in the infinite. The powerful panels of earth are boldly modeled in pierced relief, giving statuesque realism as well as the picturesqueness demanded of a panel. In the first panel are shown the motif 'Elemental Emotions'—Vanity, Sexual Love, and mere physical parenthood without enlightenment, after the next milestone upon the road of Time, represented by a Herm, is the second panel called 'Natural Selection'. This presents the approach of the Strong Man; little wings beside his head indicate the dawn of Intellect. Women turn to him attracted by his 'qualities. Of the men whom they have deserted, one resigns himself to sorrow, the other prepared to contend the issue.

"In the third panel The Survival of the Fittest". the battle of life is at its height. The men are in a furious struggle of strength and prowess. The inter-play of human passions, the contest of wills and capacities has developed. The women. too, are taking a conscious part in life -- one weeping and shrinking from the fray, the other extending a restraining hand. In the last and noblest panel, called The Lesson of Life', see the spiritualized and intellect-guided emot-A helmeted man and pure-browed woman gaze tenderly in each other's eyes. Youth, full of impulse and fire, stays to listen to the words of Reason. The lover keeps in touch with the guiding memory of the mother. The cycle is completed from animal to mental toward the higher foundation of life upon the earth. Seldom has more exaltation of thought and intensity of feeling, been infused, without mawkishness or exaggeration, into a work of art. Mr. Aitken is represented by twenty-four other examples of his work, among the most admired being the Doors of the Gates Mausoleum', 'Outer Darkness', 'Helios', and the 'Wounded Diana'."

Robert Aitken's Michael Angelo, showing that great master-sculptor at work on one of his famous figures, also exhibited at the Panama Pacific International Exposition. His Michael Angelo is a frank expression of Aitken's admiration for the great master, whose influence is greatly mani-

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"In the clint carel The Packies of the littest", the battle of life is at 'the late't or the an in a function of the second of the second and the second and the second of the second wills and camarities has constaned. The constant root, are taking a constant out in i fu-- ne westing and similaring for the form the big stores westing a mentral and and. It then the contractions are the contractions of the contractions and the contractions of the contractions o enterview a mentraling hand. In me bregt sugel, golied ime Lenens of Lett, continued in the continued the continued of the continued The former a second ass betteries A . . reol gase featerly to each other a court with, full of impulse and fine, who condition to the worse women of Reneat. The utver the third with the opilities recommy of the obtain. The excless in complete from animal to restablished the blighter foundation of life us so the stip. Seldem less name exaltation of therein intensity of feeling, liver infuser, with at many ishness or exaction, into a work of the Alther is represented by twent; four office of the work, among the most admined being the Poors of the dates Lauroleum, Outer Dackreed, Heltet and the Wounded Diana."

Erbert Alther's Michael Angelo, on wing that count as sealer-soulpton at work or one of his sealer interestiones, of eachibited at the Pennas Pacific Interestional Expesition. His Michael Angelo is a frank expression of Assenta whether ation for the great master, whose influes of the counts and

fested in his works.

#### THE EXPOSITION COINS AND MEDALS

Among Aithen's numerous contributions to the Panama Pacific International Exposition, his exposition coins will long be remembered. Two issues of \$50 coins, both designed by him, were struck by the San Francisco Mint. The issuance of these coins, which was limited to 1,500, was the largest denomination ever circulated by any government. The premiums on the sale of the coins in San Francisco went to the treasury of the Exposition.

In "The Story of the Exposition" by Frank Morton Todd, the author said of Aitken's design on the coins:

"Robert I. Aitken's design was very artistic and beautiful, and its symbolism was thus interpreted.

"The obverse shows a winged Mercury, the Messenger of Heaven, the first of inventors, the furtherer of industry and of commerce-opening the locks of the Canal through which passes the Argo-symbol of Navigation. Upon her canvas the setting sun is reflected as she sails for the west.

"The quotation 'Sail On' from Joaquin Miller's poem to Columbus, is used as a suggestion of the uninterrupted voyage made possible by the canal.

"There is also the inscription, 'To Commemorate the Opening of the Panama Canal, MCMXV.'

"Upon the reverse 18 shown the central motive, the earth, around which are entwined two female forms suggesting the two hemispheres, holding in their hands Cornucopias typifying abundance. These are so arranged in the design as to become one, the idea being that the Canal

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brings together the wealth of the world. Below these flying forms is hewn the sea-gull, the bird of the Canal zone. The inscription upon this side reads 'The Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California, MCMXV.'

"Aitken's 'Obverse' was awarded the Friedsam medal for Industrial Art at the Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, National Sculpture Society, which was held at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, April to September 1920. On this occasion Aitken's 'Robert Burns' was also exhibited."

#### AITKEN COMMISSIONED ARMY CAPTAIN

Not long after the Panama Pacific International Exposition, in the year 1918, when the World War was nearing its end, Robert Aitken, at 40 years of age, was commissioned a Captain in the United States Army. He won the commission at the First Officer's Training Camp at Plattsburg, New York. Thus, Aithen put down his sculptor's trowel for a gun and went to France to defend the Stars and Stripes and make the world "Safe for Democracy".

His short-lived service in the army fitted Aitken, as nothing else could, to model the group "Comrades in Arms", a memorial to the Alpha Delta Phi chapter house in New York. A replica of this has been placed in each of the twenty-five houses of that fraternity in the United States and Canada. The statue represents a Canadian and a United States Officer, severely wounded helping each other from the battlefield.

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## THE KANSAS CITY MEMORIAL

It was not long after the Alpha Delta Phi memor-ial that Aitken worked on another monument of note, "The Kansas City Memorial", on which several sculptors combined designs. This imposing monument records 6,000 years of history and depicts America as heir to the ages.

Aitken's share of work consisted of the fourwinged figures of Courage, Sacrifice, Patriotism, and Honor, all of which flower at the top of the secondary shafts of the memorial. Of this work at Kansas City, Adeline Adams, in her book "The Spirit of American Sculpture", says:

> "Robert Aitken and others, already distinguished in their profession before serving abroad with our Army, have doubtless, through their military experience, gained something of value to them as artists and citizens.

> "A vigorous modern artist such as Robert Aitken is not seen at his true worth in his geometric angels of the Kansas City Liberty Memorial. His genius is far happier in untrammeled compositions of its own imagining."

## AITKEN'S LATER WORKS

Among other works of mark and merit by Aitken is the George Rogers Clark Equestrian Group, near the gates of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This statue was one of three heroic pieces of bronze, gifts of Paul G. McIntyre, a native-born alumnus of the University of Virginia.

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## AITKEL'S LAFER TORKS

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"The George Rogers Clark group is seven figures with the equestrian statue of Clark occupying the central portion; the entire group is 18 feet long and about 12 feet in height. In front of the young military leader are the figures of three Indians -- two in crouching position and one standing, the latter clad in an Indian looks up at the advancing Clark with an air of defiance. Behind the horseman are the figures of three trappers armed with flint-lock rifles. They are representative of the brace woodsman led by George Rogers Clark, in 1778, when he captured Vincennes Kaskaskia and other towns in the sparsely settled northwest territory in his efforts to scatter the Indian tribes and prevent their fusion with the British forces during the Revolutionary struggle.

"This monument was awarded the Elizabeth Watrous gold medal by the National Academy of Design."

In the year 1929, Robert Aitken was again busily engaged in designing a bronze medal to honor the memory of Sun Yat-Sen, "The Father of the Chinese Republic." On the face of the finished medal is a likeness of Dr. Sun; the reverse side showing the front of the New Memorial Tomb in Nanking, China, where the body of the Chinese patriot now rests. Twenty thousand copies of the medal, which was made by the Medallic Art Company of New York, were sent to China, June 1, 1929, the day the large Memorial and tomb were dedicated.

The inscription on the three-inch medal reads:
"In commemoration of the burial of Doctor Sun Yat-Sen,
twelfth of March, eighteenth year of the Chinese Republic."

In the Hall of Fame, established by New York University, a bust of Benjamin Franklin by Robert Aitken took

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its place among the select company of works by famous sculptors of America.

"The bust, which was officially unveiled along with five other busts, May 5, 1927, was former-ly presented to the University by Colonel Robert Mazet on behalf of the Pennsylvania Society of New York. It was unveiled by General Hugh L. Scott, formerly Chief of Staff of the Army, who is a descendant of Franklin.

"The busts of Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay, both of which are also done by Aitken, also are placed in the colonnade of the Hall of Fame."

Robert Aitken's career as a sculptor was not entirely smooth. He had his share of legal bumps and jolts. Sometime during the latter part of the year 1929, he was involved in a lawsuit on a charge of breach of contract, of which he was the plaintiff. In spite of endless court procedures, he won the verdict of the controversy.

The Art News, March 29, 1930, gave a terse description of the controversy, and the final outcome of the court battle:

"Robert Aitken, a sculptor, has won a verdict of \$5,850 in Supreme Court for his efforts to please the Society of Daughters of Holland Dames with two models for a Battery Park Monument to commemorate the arrival of the Dutch settlers in New York, according to the Associated Press.

"Mr. Aitken dressed the figures of his first model in the smocks and wooden shoes of the Dutch peasant. The Society which had ordered the statue objected, saying that the Dutch settlers were of the gentility, not of the peasant stock. So Mr. Aitken made another model, with the figures clad this time in the slippers and embroidered brocade of the patrician.

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 "This attempt also failed to please the Society, which refused to pay Mr. Aitken. He sued, and won a \$5,000 verdict, which was set aside by the court. A second trial, on a charge of breach of contract, was begun before Justice Black and a jury.

"Counsel for the Dutch descendants said that Mr. Aitken's suit was prompted by vanity, and not by indignation at a broken contract. Clifton Williamson, the sculptor's counsel, said that the Society's refusal to accept either statue was 'an outrageous thing'. The verdict was given for \$5,000 services and \$850 interest for six years."

Aitken's next outstanding work was an equestrian statue of Major General Oliver Otis Howard, Commander of the 11th Union Army Corps in the battle of Gettysburg. For this eighty ton statue the State of Maine appropriated \$30,000.

Aitken's next large memorial commission was for the \$110,000 bronze Samuel Gompers Memorial, erected by the American Federation of Labor and unveiled in Washington, October 1933.

This imposing memorial, erected within a stone's throw of the headquarters of the Federation, stands in a triangular park at Tenth Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The Sculptor places the seated figure of Mr. Gompers in the center, flanked by a group of allegorical figures symbolizing unionism. fraternity and brotherhood.

## AITKEN'S PHILOSOPHY OF WORK

Aitken is a man who leaves nothing to chance. His

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Altken's new outstanding ours was as a societies statue of Major General Oliver Oris Homens. Commander of the illth Urior Army Cores in the rettle of Gettyshing. For this elepty ton statue the Brute of Wire superprise.

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## AITKEN'S PHILOSOPHY OF YORK

Altken is a man who leave nothing to change. His

research on anatomy and authentic costume is almost beyond criticism. His sense of drapery over the human figure is amazing as he rarely uses a model except for unusual poses. He never loses sight of nature, and takes no account of time when once engaged in his work until he arrives to the point of perfection he desires.

In this respect, Art and Decoration, January 1920, says:

"Aitken believes that the essence of sculpture' is correctness, accomplished with a direct tool, which creates a feeling of spontaneous decision, and sets forth a dramatic quality of unusual excellence. This is a distinctive feature of his art. He approaches his subject with arduous study and honesty and with a passion which carries it to a great height. They are always forceful human works of a forceful genius."

Robert Aitken is purely an impressionist in his work, and, above all, strikingly original. Unlike other well-known artists he never uses calipers and refuses to take any measurements. "They hamper me," he explained, "and while you may get a structurally exact face or head you fail to get the impression the man gives you. Any fool can make a figure if he goes over and repeatedly measures the subject's head, as do most of the sculptors. After all, the only thing there is to a man is the impression that you have of him and that you can never convey by measuring."

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Every stage of Aitken's designs from first concepts in small models, to life size and the final heroic size are entirely from Aitken's productive hands.

Mr. Aitken is not only a sculptor but often turns to portrait painting as well. He finds his greatest satisfaction however, chiseling in marble, and thus many of his busts and statues are all the direct cut of the sculptor's own and are untouched by helping hands.

In this connection, Rilla Evelyn Jackman, in an article in the American Arts magazine, says:

"Though Mr. Aitken studied little under teachers, he has taught since he was twenty-three, first at the Mark Hopkins Institute, San Francisco, later at the Art Students' League, and now at the National Academy of Design, New York, In both design and workmanship, Mr. Aitken's productions are as original as one would expect from his independent development. He has a sure eye and never takes measurements, for he feels they hamper him. His style reminds one of that developed quite as independently by Winslow Homer which is happily called by Jerome Eddy 'Virile impressionism'. Mr. Aitken does his own carving, sometimes working directly in the marble without a preliminary study in clay or wax. This was the way his exquisite nude 'A Creature of God Till Now Unknown' was made."

## AITKEN, THE MAN

In closing this brief survey of a great sculptor, it is fitting that we should pay tribute to Aitken's personality, for he among other creative thinkers and laborers has helped make San Francisco the "Mecca of Art in the West".

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Aitken is an outstanding American sculptor, an artist and craftsman who has developed in his own way unaided and whose work and success is the product of earnest application. Although he ascribes much to his own independent study, he has apparently been influenced by Barnard and has begun lately to indulge in primitive simplification in contrast to his early studies under the able guidance of his two San Francisco teachers—Arthur F. Mathews in drawing and Douglas Tilden in sculpture.

Aitken, the youthful prodigy of San Francisco's art patronage, has now become a man of marked achievement, accepted in high art tribunals.

In an effort to pay deserved tribute to Robert Aitken, we quote an article from Arts and Decoration, January 1920:

"The work of Robert Ingersoll Aitken has, by gradual recognition, taken its place among the foremost sculpture of the world, and placed its creator in the rank of a master.

"He is an American, with America's art and interests at heart, keenly alive to every important feature reflecting upon the history of his land.

"In his work he depicts the vital characteristics of America's powerful manhood, and pictures for us new visions of its history and industry.

"His subjects are men of vigorous strength, full of action and handled with such broad treatment that they convey the spirit of magnitude.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;he is an American, with Americala and interepts at heart, beenly alive to every im riant reather reflecting upon the history of inland,

<sup>&</sup>quot;In his work he depicts the vital charactering the of America's powerful manhood, and old-tures for us new visions of its history and industry.

<sup>&</sup>quot;His aubjects are men of vigorous attorting full of action and handled with such front that they corver the spirit them ritude.

"It is impossible to estimate an artist at his proper value without knowing the length and breadth of his work. Aitken has gradually evolved proofs of his perpetual effort. In them is read the sincerity and wonderful determination of a man who leaves nothing to chance, who never loses sight of nature, and who takes no account of time when he once starts to carry a work to the pitch of perfection he desires.

"There is sensed in all his works that curious, uncanny feeling that they are not only alive but about to move. And, besides, each portrayed study seems to be thinking. Indeed, in 'Meditation', there is intense brooding thought, while in the 'Michael Angelo' not only thought is sensed, but that physical fury which is said to have always possessed that great master, while he labored.

"This is art, but it is art that carries in it the splendid evidence of a mind excellently trained and of a sensitiveness highly developed through years of preparation, which every sincere artist must give. Such sincerity coupled with imagination, deep feeling, and an exquisite taste, is responsible for these superb works—of which American Art lovers may well be proud."

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#### ROBERT INGERSOLL AITKEN

#### REPRESENTATIVE

#### WORKS

Door to Crocker Mausoleum, Cypress Lawn, San Francisco, 1899 Spandrels for Music Stand, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1898 Kismet, New York, 1900 Monument to American Navy, Union Square, San Francisco, 1902 Monument to McKinley, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1903 Monument to McKinley, St. Helena, California, 1902 Monument to Hall McAllister, San Francisco, 1904 Bronze Door to Greenhut Mausoleum Bronze Door to John N. Gates Mausoleum -- Exhibited, Panama-Pacific International Exposition Michael Angelo Outer Darkness Bust of Ex-President Taft, bronze at Army and Navy Club, New York Bust of Charles Rollo Peters Bust of George Bromley Relief of Charles Dickman Relief of George Sterling Relief of Harmon Schaffeuer Bust of Willow Metcalf Bust of R. A. C. Smith Bust of David Warfield, bronze in lobby of Stuyvesant Theatre, New York Nathaniel Southgate Shaler Bronze, State Capitol, Kentucky John D. Pierce Bronze, State Capitol, Michigan Morazan Marble in Building of South American Republic, Washington, D. C. Dancing Bacchante, Venice, 1909 Bacchante, Buenos Aires, 1910 Bret Harte Starke Monument, Milwaukee Statue on Kansas City Liberty Memorial The Fountain of the Four Elements, Panama-Pacific International Exposition The Fountain of Earth Designer of \$50 gold coin issued by United States Government in commemoration of Panama-Pacific International Exposition

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Burritt Memorial, New Britain, Connecticut George Rogers Clark Monument, University of Virginia

McNeil Monument

Spanish War Monument, Binghampton, New York Marine Monument, Parris Island, South Carolina Colossal Allegories of Missouri and Mississippi Rivers

Bronze group "Light", Nela Park, Cleveland Alpha Delta Phi War Memorial, New Jersey Fountains of the Arts and Sciences, Missouri State Capitol

Busts--Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Clay--Hall of Fame, University of New York

Pioneer Lumbermen Monument, Huron National Forest. Michigan

Gompers Monument, Washington, D.C.
Frieze on Columbus (Ohio) Gallery of Fine Arts
Bliss Monument, Woodlawn Cemetery, New York
Burke Memorial, Kensico, New York
Robert Burns, St. Louis, Missouri
Flame, Metropolitan Museum

Missouri Centennial half-dollar Light Overcoming Darkness, Cleveland, Ohio

## PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

Bohemian Club, San Francisco: Portrait--David Warfield (plastic) High Relief (bronze)

Mark Hopkins Institute of Art (Catalog, 1896): Study of Child's Head Bust of Dr. J. L. York

#### CATALOG:

Winter Exhibition, San Francisco Art Association, 1898-9:

A Study, Wounded A Study, Grief A Study, The Rock

49th Exhibition, 1904, San Francisco Art Association:

Sketch for Bret Harte Monument, Luck of Roaring Camp (Sculpture)

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Mark Hapking Institute of Art (Catalog, 1996): Study of Child's Head Bust of Dr. J. L. Wark

## CATALCO:

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Sketch for Fret Harte Monument, Link of Rearing Camp (Seulpture) The Clutch of Destiny (Sculpture)
Portrait, Charles Rollo Peters (Sculpture)
Portrait, George Sterling (Sculpture)
Portrait, Charles Keeler (Sculpture)
Portrait, Herman Scheffeuer (Sculpture)
Portrait, Miss L. (Sculpture)
Portrait, Mr. F. G. White (Sculpture)
Study of a Girl's Head (Sculpture)
Portrait, Louis A. Robertson (Sculpture)
Portrait, Charles J. Dickman (Sculpture)
Portrait, S. Homer Henley (Sculpture)
San Francisco from Bret Harte's "San
Francisco by the Sea" (Sculpture)

#### SKETCHES BY STUDENTS COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION:

Institute of Art, San Francisco, May 20-27, 1896:

Cabbage Field A Study Landscape

#### AWARDS:

Awarded Helen Foster Barnett prize, National Academy of Design
Medal of Honor, Architectural League, New York, for sculpture, 1915
Medal for Sculpture, Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915
Watrous Medal for sculpture, National Academy of Design, 1921
President's Medal, National Academy of Design Phelan Gold Medal, San Francisco

#### EXHIBITED:

International exhibitions, Rome, Venice, San Francisco, New York, and a long list of others

#### MEMBERSHIPS:

National Institute Arts and Letters
National Academy (academician)
National Sculpture Society (past president
and secretary)
French Institute in America

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Union Institute des Beaux Arts et des Lettres Municipal Art Society, New York Fine Arts Federation and Architectural League Also member of McDowell Club, Circle of Friends of the Medallion, Institute Francais aux Etats-Unis

CLUBS:

Bohemian Club (San Francisco)
Lambs Players, National Arts, Century (N.Y.)

STUDIO:

227 West 13th Street, New York, N. Y.

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# ROBERT INGERSOLL AITKEN BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The New York Times

The Art Digest, December 1, 1932

City of Domes by John Barry

Sunset Magazine, Vol. VIII

Art News, March 29, 1930

Art and Archaeology, September 1916

Palaces and Courts of the Exposition by Juliet James

The Dream City by Rose Berry

The Spirit of American Sculpture by Adeline Adams

Mark Hopkins Institute Review of Art, Midsummer Issue, 1903

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Overland, October 1893

Sculpture and Mural Decorations of the Exposition by A. S. Calder

Art Lover's Guide to the Exposition by Sheldon Cheney

The Argonaut, August 12, 1901

The Bulletin (S.F.), April 1, 1900

American Arts by Rilla Evelyn Jackman

Wasp, July 21, 1906

The Art of the Exposition by Eugene Neuhaus

San Francisco Chronicle, May 10, 1914

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TALES OF THE ENGINEER OF THE ACT Pin President (1975)

# DOUGLAS TILDEN

1860.....1935

Biography and Works





## DOUGLAS TILDEN

It has been said of Douglas Tilden that he was a man who lived and worked and died alone. A strange and touching epitaph to a famous sculptor, who overcame great handicaps to find a lasting place in the historical background of California Art.

Douglas Tilden's grandfather, Adna Hecox, and his little daughter, Catherine, crossed the plains with the ill-fated Donner party, but separated from them before the catastrophe in the mountains, that ended the lives and hopes of so many.

Adna Hecox of an old Maryland family became the last Alcalde (Spanish mayor) of Santa Cruz County, and is believed to have preached the first Protestant sermon in California. The daughter, Catherine, married Dr. William Tilden, who had come to California in 1854, where he later became an honored member of the State Legislature and Superintendent of the State Asylum for the insane at Stockton.

Douglas Tilden was born from this sturdy pioneer California family at Chico on May 1, 1860. The boy had need of all the qualities which pioneer stock might bequeath him, for at the age of five, he suffered an attack of scarlet fever which deprived him of hearing and speech. With nature's system of compensation, from this loss possibly he developed his sculptor's skill of hand and eye—the artist's touch and vision.

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## EARLY SCHOOLING AND ART TRAINING

Douglas was entered at the Institute for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind at Berkeley, California, where he made unusually good progress at his studies. While at the the only form of art that interested him was drawing; therefore he drew from casts under Virgil Williams, who was teaching at the San Francisco Art School, When he graduated from the Institute in 1879, he intended to enter the University of California, to prepare for a literary career. However, before this happened a teaching position on the faculty of the Deaf Institute occured and Tilden gave up his University ambitions to accept this vacancy. Here he taught the deaf, from 1879 to 1887. Young Tilden took such an intense interest in the problems of the afflicted, that he published a series of "Half Hour Lessons for the Deaf". He also contributed articles to the magazine, "Annals of the Deaf", and to the "Overland Monthly", an early Californian Magazine.

The accidental manner in which Tilden became interested in sculpture, is fortunately preserved for us in the artist's own words as follows:

"On going home for a vacation I was shown a plaster copy of one of the Flamingo boys. It had been modeled by my twelve year old brother. My first sensation was that of surprise and admiration. The art of creating with clay a harmonious and beautiful something was a mystery to me, and it was explained for my benefit. I looked long at the chubby face which hung on the wall, and I asked myself 'Could I do the same?' I knew nothing about sculpture; it had never

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At this time Tilden was twenty-three; he felt that he had not been making much progress with his writing and drawing and turned eagerly to this new medium of expression. He arranged lessons with Marion Wells, his brother's instructor, and studied with him for a month, learning the technique of modeling. After this, although he continued teaching at the Institute for the Deaf, Tilden spent all his spare time modeling and found growth in patient experiment and practice, whereby he learned the foundations of his art expression.

## HIS FIRST COMPLETED WORK

In 1885, working by himself, Tilden produced what was not only his first piece of sculpture but one that decided his entire career. It was the statuette titled, "The Tired Wrestler". He gave the finished work to the Institute for the Deaf, and the Trustees were so impressed that they gave him a scholarship to further his studies in New York and Paris. With the help of this scholarship, Tilden went to New York in 1887 and entered the National School of Design, where he studied from life for seven months. Feeling ready for more specialized teaching he sailed for Paris and became a private pupil of the great Paul Chopin.

Chopin was a Gold Medalist of the Paris Salon, and, strange to say, a deaf mute like Tilden himself. There was

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undoubtedly a strong bond of sympathy between the teacher and the younger man. Chopin appreciated Tilden's gift and determined to preserve the student's strong individualism. To this end Chopin refused to allow Tilden to watch him at work but made Tilden open an atelier of his own; here the teacher used to visit frequently to encourage and criticise the young man's efforts. It is thanks to this instinct of Chopin that Tilden was protected from the prevailing vogue of "copying" masterpieces, to learn styles from the works of famous sculptors, both classic and contemporary.

After five months of intensive study with the deafmute master, Douglas Tilden now felt capable of exhibiting his works.

At this time Tilden had less than thirteen months of formal instruction, so that his Art may be classed as almost wholly "self taught".

# "BASEBALL PLAYER" AND OTHER WORKS TO THE SALON

While Tilden had not been too confident in his powers up to this time, his Art was proved by the acceptance of his first work sent to the Salon. This was the "Ball Player", also known as "Our National Game". This bronze is a familiar sight to San Franciscans. The figure of the young pitcher, in the baseball uniform of the nineties, poised, and about to deliver the ball, now stands in Golden Gate Park, where it was placed as a gift of Mr. E.E. Brown, a San Francisco Art patron.

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Incidentally, it is worth while noting that the first suggestion came from Douglas Tilden to beautify Golden Gate Park with works of sculptural art. His suggestion has been handsomely carried out in later decades.

In 1889 a new work, "The Tired Boxer", received the coveted "Mention Honorable" at the Salon. Speaking of this statue, William Armes said in the Overland Monthly:

"Following up his first success, the sculptor exhibited at the Salon of 1889 the bronze of 'The Baseball Player' and a plaster-cast of a new work, 'The Tired Boxer'. The latter marked a distinct advance being informed with a grace, beauty, and sentiment—somewhat lacking in the earlier work. To one unfamiliar with the statue these may seem incongruous qualities to attribute to a work on such a subject; but a visit to the beautiful home of the Olympic Club, in which it has found a fit resting place, will show him that they are actually present in the figure of the weary boxer, stooping from his seat to pick up the glove that he has let fall...."

It was due again to Mr. Brown's energy that this statue was purchased by the Olympic Club, and it is unfortunate that the original should have perished in the fire of 1906. The Art Institute of Chicago has a plaster-cast of the work.

Another work exhibited at the Salon while Tilden was in Paris was the "Young Acrobat", a chubby naked baby, balancing himself on his father's outstretched hand, the arm finished in gold-plated bronze and the baby executed in white marble.

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"Football Players", was a group depicting the popular American game; it was shown in the Salon in 1893 and later exhibited at the Paris Exhibition in 1900 where it took the bronze medal. It was another of the group of statues in which American athletics, as a theme, popularized the name of the sculptor.

#### THE INDIAN BEAR HUNT

It is always interesting to know which, in an artist's own mind, is his greatest creation. With Douglas Tilden it was his large group, "Indian Bear Hunt". Done in 1892, it represents an Indian in the clutches of a mother grizzly, another Indian is crouching and holds the two cubs on a leash. The expression on the standing Indian is one of combined agony and grim determination. The group has been compared with the famous Laocoon, with bears substituting for snakes. This work attracted particular attention because of the realistic expressions as well as the excellent grouping of the figures—technically one of the hardest things for a sculptor to accomplish because of the limitations of casting metal.

After exhibition at the Paris Salon, this large group was sent to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where it was so well received that Tilden was appointed to the jury of the Exposition. After the close of the Exposition it was taken to San Francisco, where the Institute for the Deaf at Berkeley paid the transportation which amounted to

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\$179. For twenty years the Trustees of the Institute endeavored to collect this bill from Tilden; it was a debt which he never acknowledged, and in 1917 he was so disgusted with the whole affair that he inserted the following notice in the Chronicle headed:

"For the Benefit of Junkmen, Bellfounders and others."

"Douglas Tilden, the sculptor, desires to have bids from foundries or other firms for the purchase of his bronze group, "Bear Hunt" for the copper that is to be melted from it. The metal is 95 per cent pure copper, rest being tin, etc., which will evaporate in the usual process of melting. The Statuary can be seen on the grounds of the State It was School for the Deaf, at Berkeley. shipped from the Chicago Exposition in 1894 in a case. The freight charge was \$179, and the rate was \$3 per hundred pounds. your estimate on the hoof accordingly, ing allowance for the weight of the box. The statuary must be broken up and melted within thirty days from the date of the purchase in Oakland or San Francisco. A bond must be given for the purpose, no part of the group to be held back or conserved. The sculptor reserves the right to reject any bid.

"Address to the sculptor's studio, 2078 Frank-lin Street, Oakland."

However, he repented of the idea, and the statue stood on the grounds of the Deaf Institute until Tilden's death in 1935, when it was found that as early as 1903 he had expressed the wish in his "Document of Requests" that his ashes be buried beneath "The Bear Hunt". At the same time was found his holographic will, written only three days

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before his death in which he bequeathed to "My Beloved Club, The Bohemian Club of San Francisco", what he considered "My greatest achievement", his bronze group, "The Bear Hunters".

#### TILDEN IN SAN FRANCISCO AGAIN

In 1894. Tilden returned to San Francisco from Shortly after his arrival he was made instructor of the sculpture and modeling classes at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. He inaugurated this branch of the Art School and his teaching career which lasted until 1901 was one which left a lasting impression on the artistic life of California. Several of his pupils became famous in after years: their success due to the sympathetic guidance they received from Tilden. Due to his infirmity all communication had to be through the medium of the pad, paper, and pencil that he always carried with him. The story is told by his pupil. Mrs. Wells, during the time she studied with Tilden at the art school, that one day he came in with a note, "Are you married?" Astonished, she answered, "Yes." He smiled and wrote another note, "Please tell the girls I have a baby daughter." A year later, evidently remembering his first note, he again gave her a slip of paper on which was written, "Please tell the girls the baby can speak and say Da-da."

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#### TILDEN'S PUBLIC MONUMENTS

No less than twelve models were submitted by Tilden to James D.Phelan, the art patron and mayor of San Francisco, for a fountain to commemorate the admission of California as a State. This was Tilden's first commission for a monument. It was eminently fitting that a native artist should have qualified to produce "The Native Son's Fountain." William Armer had the following to say of the monument in the Overland Monthly:

"..... The treatment of the subject strikingly original; and though the limits of sculpture may be somewhat transcended, the boldness of the design and the excellence of the execution would make the monument a noteworthy one in any city. The figure at the base has provoked some criticism, not because of the lack of any aesthetic quality, but because it seems unnatural that the cheering miner should swing the flag with his hand while holding his pick over his shoulder with his right.....but about the figure that crowns the slender granite shaft, the genius of California holding on high an open book on whose pages is inscribed the date, 'September 9, 1850'; there is but one opinion, and it is open secret that the fair-haired Californian who inspired the operation that so fitly represents the genius of the State, was none other than the sculptor's charming wife."

Speaking of the same group, "Art and Architecture", praised it in these terms, although they have given more credit to the donor than to the artist:

The most artistic piece of sculpture West of the Rocky Mountains was unveiled at the corner of Turk and Market Streets, San Francisco, on Sunday, September 5, 1897. The monument known

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The monument was unveiled with appropriate ceremony, with Douglas Tilden present. The next day he had the following comment to make to an interviewer:

"I was there yesterday; the ceremony was very impressive. I did not know that I was being called for, as stated in the morning papers; but I, Douglas Tilden, am nobody. God Almighty has given me a certain amount of greymatter, and I was expected to return it with interest. To know that my work is appreciated is all the reward that I care for."

Tilden's success with the Native Son's Fountain brought him invitations to enter competitions in the East as well as further commissions for similar work in his San Francisco. The most important of these was the monument to the memory of Peter Donohue, San Francisco Pioneer, and founder of the Union Iron Works. His son, James Mervyn Donohue, left a bequest of \$25,000 for this purpose, and the city put aside the space at the junction of Battery and Market Streets as a suitable site for the memorial. Soon after the unveiling of the Native Son's Fountain the trustees for the Donohue estate invited Tilden to submit designs. His first three sketches were of conventional design, and Tilden was not satisfied with them. He kept striving for something more expressive

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than the narrow limits of accepted sculptural creation of those days. Finally one day, while walking down Mission Street, Tilden saw some workmen in a shop at a large lever press. Here was his inspiration—and the result was a theme that remains unique. The figures were life—size and represent—ed an immense press worked by three nude mechanics, while two others hold the sheet of metal that is to be punched. On a bracket in front of the punch is a bust of Peter Donohue, on the rear an anvil, locomotive drive wheel, and a propellor, symbolic of the pioneer builder's profession. From six lions' heads water pours into a basin of granite. Lorado Taft in his "History of American Sculpture" made the following comments on this unusual work:

".....In one-half year those seven tons of clay were converted into what may fairly be termed the most unconventional work of sculpture in the United States. Its merits are evident. Its faults are those that belong to the land of sun and harvest where it grew. We may look upon its lawless composition and its ragged contour with the eye of criticism, but we can feel only admiration for the ardent and intrepid sculptor who wrought this wonder in those brief months....In allowing himself 'full swing'--the sculptor of the Pacific Coast has given us a historic document, full of significance of time and place."

Suzanne La Follette in her book, "Art in America" says:

"The Californian sculptor, Douglas Tilden, shows the same delight (as Nielhaus) in athletic nude figures, and his audacious and somewhat bizarre, 'Mechanics' Fountain' in San Francisco, gives evidence of his ability to treat them realistically and with great sculptural power."

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#### MONUMENT TO THE CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS

California, being the point of embarkation for the Spanish-American war in the Far East, was perhaps more than any other State patriotic in her remembrance of that war. It had two effects upon Douglas Tilden. A statue of Balboa, designed for Golden Gate Park, was cancelled because the discoverer was Spanish, and Tilden was selected to do the memorial to the Volunteers who had lost their lives in the war. The members of the committee were the Honorable James Phelan, General M.H.De Young, Mr. Walter Martin, and Mr. Henry McPike. After considering other designs submitted by local sculptors, they agreed that the one done by Tilden, most nearly approximated the sentiment desired and he was authorized to complete the memorial. The cost was about \$24,000 and the design consisted of a female figure, representing the goddess of war, mounted on a rearing charger, in one hand she held a battle flag, and in the other a falchion which pointed the way to Victory. At the foot of the figure, stood an infantry officer with drawn sword and revolver guarding the body of a slain soldier. That there can be other interpretations of the The monument was admirably sulted to the subject, and glorified the imbor that built the Iron Works. It would have been simple for Tilden to have used one of his first one ceptions; it remained for the artist in the men to evolve the tineme that attracted the attention of the nation.

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symbolism of the statue is shown by the following excerpt from an article on "World War Monuments", by F. Wellington Ruckstall, editor of the "Art World", January 1919.

"Douglas Tilden's monument to the California Volunteers, represents the American soldiers fighting for an objective, a poetic ideal, which is being shown them by America, in the shape of Minerva, pointing to it with her sword on the back of Pegasus, symbol of poetry. It is one of the finest soldier monuments created by Americans, and, along with other fine things he has done, helped to place Tilden among our foremost and most original sculptors of whom California ought to be proud."

### OTHER PUBLIC STATUES AND MONUMENTS

Not only did Tilden do a memorial to the California soldiers, but he was commissioned to execute a group to the memory of the Oregon Volunteers. This now stands in Portland, and shows that the artist's genius was appreciated outside of his home state.

Among other of his better known works of this type, should be included the Stephen White Memorial on the Court House grounds at Los Angeles; this was of massive size and cast in bronze. As Henry Bland said in the Sunset Magazine, it will serve to remind Californians for many centuries of White's services to the State.

James Phelan, who seems to have been one of Tilden's most consistent patrons, ordered a statue of Father Junipero Serra, founder of California Missions. This was erected in Golden Gate Park.

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"Douglas Tilden's monument to the Criifornie Volunteers, represents the American sclaiers fighting for an objective, a poetic ideal, which is being shown them by American, in the shape of Minerva, pointing to it with ner sword on the back of Pegasus, symbol of poetry. It is one of the finest soldier monuments created by Americans, and, along with other fine things he has done, helped to place filden among our foremost and most rriginal sculptors of whom California ought to be proud."

## OTHER PUBLIC STATUES AND MONUMENTS

Not only did Tilden do a memorial to the California soldiers, but he was commissioned to execute a group to the memory of the Oregon Volunteers. This now stands in Portland, and shows that the artist's genius was appreciated outside of his home state.

Among other of his better known works of this type, should be included the Stephen White Memorial on the Court House grounds at Los Angeles; this was of massive eize and cast in bronze. As Henry Bland said in the Sunset Magazine, it will serve to remind Californians for many centuries of White's services to the State.

James Phelan, who seems to have been one of Tilden's most consistent patrons, ordered a statue of Father Junipero Serra, founder of Celifornia Missions. This was erected in Golden Gate Park.

#### TILDEN'S EXPOSITION WORK

In the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, Tilden was asked to serve as a member of the jury on sculpture. In addition to this he was commissioned by the manager of the Exposition to assist in the architectural decoration. In this work he was so successful that he was given the Gold Commemorative Medal, the highest honor. Speaking of the work that he did, the "Mark Hopkins Review of Art" had the following to say:

".....It consists of a group of figures intended for the pediment over the Southern entrance of the Varied Industries Building. This class of work with its severe limitations, is so different from the style of freer subjects by which Mr. Tilden is generally known, that one examines it with great interest. The composition is simple, uncrowded, yet complete in its idealization, while the figures and their accessories are beautifully modeled and posed with excellent judgment. Van Brunt and Howes, the architects of the building, give the work their highest praise..."

In the Yukon Alaska Exposition held in Seattle in 1909, Tilden had on exhibit his medallion of Father Junipero Serra. This was designed for a granite cross which stands at Monterey, California. This medallion was very well received and was awarded the Gold Medal of Merit at the Exposition.

Between the Palace of Machinery and the last facade of the main building, was the site selected for the group which Tilden was to contribute to the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, in 1915. The title of the frieze was

## THIDEN'S EXPOSITION FORK

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"Modern Civilization". He composed a group of five upright figures. These were to depict "Valor, Imagination, Truth, Morality, and Industry." The Overland Monthly says that the group was a startling conception, nevertheless the distinguishing features were beauty and simplicity combined with breadth and squareness, the work having in that sense an originality that was startling. Unfortunately however, Tilden engaged in a dispute with the directors of the Exposition, and as a result his work was not exhibited.

Before the Bay Bridges of San Francisco were ever started, they were visioned in Tilden's mind. One of the last pieces of work ever to occupy the sculptor was an allegorical study, commemorating the joining of the two cities, San Francisco and Oakland. This work has been called a poem in bronze and is thought by some to be the artist's best work. As a companion to this statue which was called "The Bridge", he planned a frieze for the Exposition to be held in San Francisco in 1939, but this was never completed. He lived to see work started on the bridges, and he strove night and day to finish his masterpiece which he hoped to place on Telegraph Hill "to live with the bridge forever". But death stilled his earnest efforts before his dream was realized.

## GLIMPSES OF TILDEN THE MAN

Next to his Art, there was one other vital interest which never left Douglas Tilden's heart; that was his work for and with the deaf. Even in his early school days, as has been

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mentioned, he contributed to their periodicals. While he was in Paris he inaugurated the first International Congress of the Deaf, of which Congress he was vice-president. He was a member of the Program Committee of the second International Congress held under the auspices of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicage in 1893, and was on a similar committee for the Congress of 1900. Another habit of his was to collect clippings from the important news of the day which he condensed into a pithy column which was published in a journal for the deaf under the title of "Zenoisms".

In 1896 he married Elizabeth Delano Cole of Oakland, California. She, also, was a deaf mute. They had two children, a daughter Gladys who became a journalist and stylist, and who lives in Paris, and a son who died in 1930, at the age of 27 years, after having been a life-long invalid. Tilden was divorced by his wife in 1926, and thereafter lived the life of a recluse, being rather embittered against the whole world.

After the Exposition of 1915, Tilden suffered from a strange malady which he called "A spell of inertia." He laid aside his chisel and mallet and lost all interest in his work and art. To support himself he found work with an East Bay manufacturing concern, and it wasn't until 1925, that with his work "The Bridges" he again took up his Art.

Tilden was an inveterate smoker and reader; one of his favorite pastimes was chess, in which his keen intellect

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delighted. His early literary ambitions bore fruit in his free lance writing, some of which was published in magazines and the local newspapers. His observations on his Art and upon life were pungent. Of his art he once said:

"A sculptor is the dynamo, and the statue is the storage battery." And again: "Nature" (the woods, mountains, the water and fields) "is for the inspiration of the painter. My problems are with humanity."

#### THE END OF TILDEN'S CAREER

After his wife divorced him Tilden came upon lean days. He was fiercely proud, and it was not until he had to borrow water from a neighbor that it was discovered that he had not enough to eat, and was lighting his work by candle in his Berkeley studio in the hills. Friends came to his rescue and secured him a state pension, which he richly deserved.

"I am not a pauper," he wrote on his pad, indignantly, tears in his old eyes—then broke down and admitted that
he had not eaten for days. The pension took care of his necessities, which were few, and left him free to work on his
dream of a monument for Telegraph Hill in San Francisco.

His tragic end was discovered when a friend called to see him and found him dead and lying on his face--where he had lain alone for two days. A gas jet beneath an empty pan told the story of how he had tried to heat water for himself during the night--when he was stricken down by a heart attack.

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He died on August 5, 1935, a lonely end to the career of one of America's greatest sculptors.

As Earle Ennis said in the Chronicle:

".....At the age of 75 years, in the workroom where he turned his dreams into things
of beauty and rare value, Douglas Tilden
himself became but plastic clay in the hands
of a Greater Sculptor than himself."

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control of the American's greatest soulptions.

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#### DOUGLAS TILDEN

#### REPRESENTATIVE

#### WORKS

Baseball Player Tired Boxer Indian Bear Hunt Football Players Native Son's Fountain California Volunteers Memorial Mechanics' Fountain Junipero Serra Stephen White Admission Day Fountain Oregon Volunteers Tired Wrestler Modern Civilization McElroy Memorial Fountain Bronze Plaque of La Salle Bust of William Keith Joaquin Miller Embarking for Valhalla Ug The Bridges Modern Civilization

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San Francisco Bulletin

American Sculpture by Lorado Taft

The Argonaut, October 25, 1897

# DOUBLAS TILDEN REPRESENTATIVE

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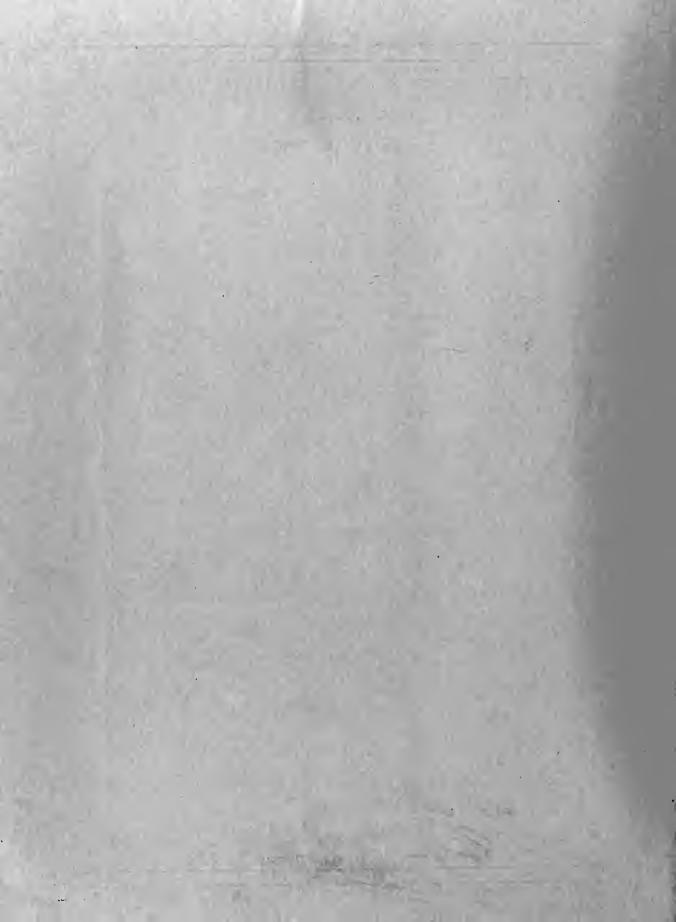
# MELVIN EARL CUMMINGS

1876.....1936

Biography and Works



NEPTUNE'S DAUGHTER BY M. EARL CUMMINGS



#### MELVIN EARL CUMMINGS

There have been many Californian artists and sculptors, who, famous in their day, have left little influence behind them. It was otherwise with Melvin Earl Cummings, San Francisco sculptor. To a large extent he submerged his own art in his teaching, sacrificing a considerable portion of the fame that might have been his, in order to foster and encourage artistic growth in his many pupils, and in his community.

Earl Cummings, as he was generally called, was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1876, the son of M. E. and Ardelle Cummings. In Salt Lake City and at Logan, Utah, he attended academy and business College. As a child he had always enjoyed whittling with his pocket knife; from this he graduated into carving wooden figures of men and animals. Someone showed some of these figures to a professional wood carver, who was employed in decorating the Mormon Temple at Salt Lake City. Recognizing the boy's talent, he urged Cummings to continue with his carving and offered to teach the lad the trade of wood carving. For two years Cummings worked in the Temple and received valuable training. From there it was an easy step to his interest in sculpture, and young Earl determined to study seriously.

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#### SAN FRANCISCO AND ART EDUCATION

When Cummings was twenty, the family decided to move to California and selected San Francisco as their home. It was a fortunate move for Earl, as nowhere else in the West could he have obtained the fundamental instruction he wanted. San Francisco in the nineties was a flourishing center of art. which had developed quite naturally from the seventies and eighties, when her art conscious citizens had delighted abundantly to patronize the genius of her gifted sons. Mark Hopkins Art Institute already had an enviable reputation, abroad as well as in America. It had been under the directorship of Virgil Williams, but that scholarly old artist had given place to Arthur Mathews, who then headed the school. Not long after his arrival in San Francisco Cummings won a scholarship at the Institute and took up classes in sculpture with Douglas Tilden.

Doughas Tilden, the famous San Francisco sculptor, who could neither speak nor hear, was then in his prime. Like the wood carver of Salt Lake City, he realized that young Earl had unusual talent and took special pains with the beginner. Not only did he give Cummings all the guidance possible at the Institute, but he took the student into his own studio. There Cummings absorbed much of the free and bold style which characterized his teacher's unconventional work. Tilden's "Mechanics Fountain" was designed at that time and Cummings assisted with the enlarging of the original model.

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The first independent work by Cummings was a bust of Tilden. This was exhibited and later presented to the Mark Hopkins Institute, along with the working model of the "Mechanics Fountain". This bust had attracted attention and was followed by a group, entitled "Love and Death". Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, who was already interested in the progress of the young sculptor, purchased this and gave it to the Art Institute. She determined that Cummings deserved more instruction than he could obtain in San Francisco; so Mrs. Hearst sent him to Paris for three years of study at the École des Beaux Arts.

#### PARIS AND THE SALON

It was the year 1900, and Earl Cummings was twentyfour. He stood at the threshold of a career, made possible
through his own talent and the generosity of his patron. Others had gone to Paris and had failed, succumbed to the lure
of a gay life, and had lost sight of the ideal with which
they had started. This Earl was determined not to do, for he
knew that the eyes of the Institute and his old teachers were
upon him and he dared not disappoint them. Not content with
enrolling in the classes at the Beaux Arts, the ambitious
young sculptor took a studio nearby and worked daily by himself. His teachers in Paris were Mercie and Louis Noel, both
well known as excellent artists and members of the Salon.
They visited Cummings' studio and gave him their drastic criticism on his work and methods there.

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The Mark Hopkins Institute Review for 1904 had the following description of the first work done by Cummings in Paris:

"His first serious achievement in Paris was a design for a mausoleum. It represents personified grief, a youthful female figure in classic drapery seated by a broken column, her head bowed upon her right arm which rests upon the stone; while the left hand, relaxing its hold on some faded flowers, lies idly in her lap. While there is perhaps nothing strikingly original in this conception, it is rendered very pleasing by its simplicity; the rounded girlish figure is modelled with truth and tenderness and the drapery is well managed."

In 1901 Cummings offered a bust of a woman to the Salon and it was accepted. This was a signal honor for so young and inexperienced an artist, and the famous Mercie was as justly proud of his pupil as were his friends and family in San Francisco. The work was titled "A Portrait Bust" and was modelled from a friend of the Cummings family, Miss Dixon, who was also studying art in Paris. The fact that his initial effort had been considered good enough for the Salon, naturally encouraged the young sculptor, as did a letter of congratulation from Mrs. Hearst.

For the exhibit of the Paris Salon in 1902, Cummings had a design for a fountain. It was his most ambitious effort to this time, and was emblematical of thirst. The figure was that of an aged man upon a barren rock. The expression was particularly well done, being the epitome of despair. This figure, which was over eight feet in height, was

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perhaps the first that had attracted serious attention to the young American sculptor. The bust of the previous year's exhibit had been good, but "Thirst" showed capacity in imaginative composition. This was the field in which Cummings was later to achieve his talents which were hailed here by his fellow artists as full of promise. This fountain piece, which was entitled "La Soif", was later brought to San Francisco and placed in Washington Square, in a setting which brought out all its decorative value.

His third year in Paris, again the Salon, and once more Cummings offered his work. Each year had brought an added depth of understanding to his creative effort, and an added skill in technique from his hands. This time, the exhibit of 1903, Cummings determined upon a more difficult subject than any he had yet attempted. Not content with the purely objective in art, the group which he placed upon exhibit embodied a spiritual struggle, which only an able artist would conceive and dare attempt. The Mark Hopkins Institute Review described the piece in these words:

"It is a group representing the good and evil elements in man, which having waged unremitting war during his life, now contend for his soul at the supreme moment of his death. It is a rather unusual, not to say complex, subject, and one which perhaps only a young man would be inspired to attempt, its spiritual character making it rather subtle for sculpture, the difficulty being that the human being, whose soul is at stake, is necessarily so subordinated by his moribund inactivity as to rather weaken the dramatic unity of the design. But this criticism is of minor importance in

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view of the general excellence of this exhibition piece in which the sculptor shows his ability in composition, detailed treatment, and technique. A clost study of the design displays all of these points to great advantage and betrays the marked progress made by Mr. Cummings in mastering his art."

This group was later brought to San Francisco, where it was exhibited at the galleries of the Art Association and attracted much local appreciation.

#### CUMMINGS RETURNS TO SAN FRANCISCO

As was the case with several other promising young artists. Cummings was urged to remain in Paris and to continue his work there. Had he done so perhaps he would have attained a higher recognition of his art than he did. But the call of California was strong, and he made up his mind to lead his art career in San Francisco. On his return, he entered enthusiastically into the art life of the city. He became a member of the Bohemian Club and remained a popular supporter of that organization until his death. It was there that he first formed his association with Arthur Putnam. whose name is a bright light in the roster of Californian sculptors. They worked together and Cummings was to find much inspiration in the work of this little understood tragic Together they exhibited in the Bohemian Club. in 1904, where Cummings showed a portrait panel of Maude Adams and an exquisite bronze bust of Lawrence Tharp.

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Cummings' first large commission was a bronze fountain for Golden Gate Park, in 1904. It is a nude figure of a boy, standing on a tortoise. The Mark Hopkins Review, speaking of the figure of the boy, said:

"It is a graceful supple little body with a well shaped head and piquant face that lends itself admirably to the purpose.... This fountain is an addition of great value to the Park, and the Commissioners are to be congratulated on their decision to replace the old and dilapidated drinking fountain with this charming and artistic conceit."

Shortly after, he was appointed to a vacancy which occurred on the Park Commission of San Francisco, a post which the sculptor held with honor for thirty-two years. To him was due much of the credit for the decoration of San Francisco's beautiful parks and public places with excellent works of art. This Park work took much of the sculptor's time and labor, but was well worth while.

The other great influence in Cummings' life came to him at about the same time. Robert Aitken, the sculptor, who conducted the classes in sculpture at the Mark Hopkins Institute, went to Europe. There was no one more suitable at the time than Earl Cummings and he was asked by the trustees to teach in his old school. It was a great honor for so young a man, and it was a fortunate choice on the part of the Institute, for the man was a born teacher. As he expressed it many years later, he loved to teach, and when he said that, he explained the secret of his success with his pupils. He added

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to this already busy program by later conducting classes in modelling at the University of California, which he continued until shortly before his death. He chose to continue all these activities—he must have known when he accepted them that they would give him but little time for his own creative work, and yet, in spite of that, he kept his own studio and produced a comparatively large amount of work.

On June 7, 1905, Cummings married Lupe Rivas in San Francisco. He differed from some of his artist friends and associates in that his marriage was a very happy one. Mrs. Cummings shared her husband's enthusiasm for things artistic, and encouraged him in his work. They had two children, a son, F. Ramsdell Cummings, and a daughter, Christine.

#### WORK AFTER THE FIRE AND WITH PUTNAM

The great fire of 1906 indirectly proved to be a boon to the artists and sculptors of San Francisco. There was so much rebuilding going on which provided a large field in the decoration of new homes and public buildings. Cummings was in the thick of it all, for in his capacity of Park Commissioner, he had much to do with the planning and laying out of the new city. Arthur Putnam, who had been abroad with the Piazzonis, returned from Europe, and for a time shared Cummings' studio on Montgomery Street. They worked together there for some time, but were not satisfied with the accommodation which the old studio provided. Cummings determined to build

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a studio in the rear of his home on Clay Street. The structure was a great barn-like place with a tin roof. Arthur Putnam shared in the designing and the building, part of which the two sculptors did themselves, and into this completed studio the two men moved their models and casts.

Side by side they worked. Cummings, when he could spare the time from his teaching and other duties, and Putnam when the spirit moved him. Cummings executed his statue of Robert Burns which was placed in Golden Gate Park. It met with the approval of the critics, despite the uncertainty of the following article from the "Wasp" of January 1908:

"It is to be hoped that the statue of Bobby Burns which is to be erected soon in Golden Gate Park, will be better than several of the monuments already in place. The gentlemen who have charge of the work are, however, most dependable-John Center, Col. Kirkpatrick, John McGilvray, James McNab, and Y. C. Lawson. The Wasp has several times protested the disfiguration of Golden Gate Park by the works of blacksmiths and stone butchers. It is a magnificent park and nothing should be erected therein but The crime of crimes would be to works of art. plan an inartistic statue of the brilliant Scotch bard whose fame grows with the centuries. The subject calls for a great work by a great man."

The above mentioned committee selected Cummings' design from among several others, and the work stands in the park as a tribute of their approval and taste.

#### THE SLOAT MEMORIAL

Interesting because it was one of his best known works, the Sloat Memorial was also interesting because Arthur

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Putnam collaborated with Cummings in the design and execution of this monument to the man who claimed California for the Nation. The San Francisco Call of October 10, 1909 gave this description of the design:

"A very striking piece of sculptural work just completed in the clay, is the Sloat Monument, on which Earl Cummings and Arthur Putnam have been engaged for the last month. The money for this monument, to be erected in Monterey, was recently appropriated by the government, and their design was the one selected out of the twenty-three submitted to the New York Committee in charge. Last week the government office also accepted the work, Colonel Lundeen expressing himself as well pleased with the result.

"The monument will be very strong and effective. It is surmounted by a large eagle with wings outspread. On the front in bas-relief is a profile view of Commodore Sloat with the wording below: Commodore John Sloat took possession of California in the name of the United States, July 7. 1846.

"The pedestal upon which the sagle rests, and the base of the monument are garlanded with oak leaves."

The memorial was unveiled and dedicated at Monterey with appropriate ceremony at which the sculptor was present. It brought him closer to national fame than ever, and would have secured him many commissions had he cared to give the time to them.

#### WORK ON THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The first commission that Earl Cummings received from the University of California was for two tablets in commemoration of Senator George Hearst. They were placed in the

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Mining Building on the University grounds. One tablet showed a bas-relief of the Senator, while the other was lettered with words from a speech by his son, "This building stands as a Memorial to George Hearst, a plain, honest man and a good miner."

Mrs. Sather, who had seen some of Cummings' work, commissioned him to design the ornamental work on the now famous "Sather Gate" which she was presenting to the University. It was an intricate and difficult order, and the sculptor spent much time perfecting his models for the structure, breaking several of his panels before he was finally satisfied with his efforts. The "Call" of August 22, 1909 gave the following description of the gate:

"One of the principal works of sculpture now being wrought in this City is the massive and beautiful decoration intended for the embellishment of the entrance gate presented by Mrs. Jane Sather to the University of California, to be placed at the southern end of the campus at the intersection of Telegraph Avenue and Bancroft Way, Berkeley. The Gate, which is nearly one hundred feet wide, will be wrought in granite, marble, and bronze, and while simple in design, is of great elegance and of classic aspect. John Galen Howard is the architect, while Earl Cummings has accepted the working out of the sculptural designs.

"Four large vases of Italian marble, each six feet high, standing on pedestals three and a half feet in height, will bear different friezes, representing childhood, youth, men and philosophers. The first vase to be completed will bear a circle of children intertwined amid a garland of flowers; the second a group of students engaged in athletic sports, while designs for the remaining two have not yet been decided on.

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"Eight panels -- four female figures representing agriculture, art, electricity, and architecture, with four male figures picturing law, letters, medicine and mining also carved in Italian marble -- will occupy appropriate positions in the arch. These figures, while conceived with the utmost simplicity, are noble and graceful in outline, and dignified and chaste in execution. It is possible that there is nothing in the West to compare with this entrance gate, at once simple and beautiful, classic and severe. The cost of the structure is estimated at \$50,000."

#### CHRISTMAS EVE, 1910

Cummings fostered the suggestion that it would be appropriate to, in some way, commemorate an event Francisco that was almost unique in music. On Christmas Eve. 1910, Luisa Tetrazzini stood in front of the San Francisco Chronicle Building, on Market Street, and sang carols to over a hundred thousand people. They stood, hushed, as that magnificent voice carried the message of "Good Will on Earth" through the open air and straight to the hearts of her lis-The great diva had started her American career in San Francisco: that song was her inspired "Thank You" to appreciation. It was an unusual event discussed throughout the world when they unveiled the memorial in 1912. Hayden, who was in charge of the ceremony, and Earl Cummings, who designed and executed the placque, voiced the grateful memory of the city. Cummings' design was a simple bronze tablet and they fixed it to Lotta's Fountain, the gift of another songstress favorite of the people of San Francisco.

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#### WORK ON THE PANAMA PACIFIC EXPOSITION

The art exhibit at the Panama Pacific Exposition was the largest and most important collection of sculpture and painting ever assembled in California. Cummings, through his position on the Park Commission, worked many months with the managers of the Fair in preparing the plans for unity and beauty of the buildings and exhibits. Of his own work in the Fair, the "Half Dome of Physical Vigor" was the most outstanding. It was one of the dominant features of the buildings of the Exposition and formed its West entrance. Its decoration consisted of the statue of a nude youth, repeated eight times in a semi-circle. There was some criticism of the extreme nudity and the figure was thought by some commentators to be too far advanced for public exhibition. Cummings also designed the Corinthian columns which lined the dome. The whole effect was much praised and reproduced many times in illustrations. The Palace of Fine Arts was the only building left standing after the other Fair buildings were razed. It is now being reinforced and repaired to stand as a reminder of the glories of the 1915 Exposition.

#### OTHER WORK BY THE SCULPTOR

Many other statues and monuments by Cummings decorate public places in San Francisco. Well known and well liked among these is the "Pool of Enchantment" in front of the DeYoung Museum in Golden Gate Park. In the pool is an

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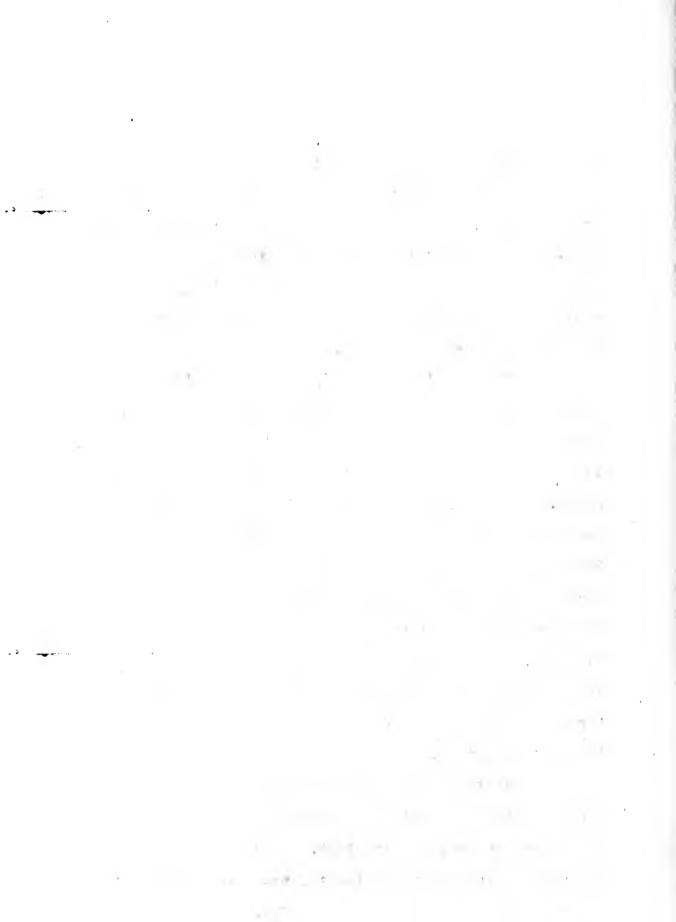
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Island, on one side of which stands an Indian boy, feathers in his hair, playing on a pipe; on the opposite side two cougars are sitting entranced by the music. The whole is cleverly arranged, with natural rock and shrubbery playing its part. The figures themselves are executed in bronze and the pool, with its little island and water lilies, has caused many a visitor to the Park to pause and find a sense of enchantment from which it takes its name.

"Neptune's Daughter", the sculptor's favorite among his own works, is the nude figure of a small girl. She is airily poised and holds a leash on a realistic sea horse. It is now mounted in a fountain in the Palace of the Legion of Honor. This refreshing statue was part of the exhibit of Cummings' work shown at the third Exhibit of the National Sculpture Society, held in San Francisco in 1929. Earl Cummings was then a member of the Board of Trustees of The California Palace of the Legion of Honor which housed the exhibition, and had much to do with the details of receiving and arranging the vast number of bronzes, marbles, and plaster casts which came from all over the United States, from foremost sculptors.

At this same exhibit was shown his latest work, the heroic statue of a soldier, since placed in the Memorial Redwood Grove in Golden Gate Park. This monument was designed and erected in memory of the thirty-nine San Francisco boys who lost their lives in the Great War.



No list of Cummings' important works would be complete without mention of the beautiful portrait bust of his wife. It was one of his earlier works and a sensitive likeness of which he was very fond. The San Francisco Call of April 23, 1911, spoke of it as being an exquisite bit of modelling, and one of the most attractive pieces exhibited at the Bohemian Club Galleries.

#### EARL CUMMINGS

The picture that we have of the sculptor as an individual is a pleasant one. Among so many of the artists with their "temperament" and inhibitions, his cheery personality stood out. Millard Johnson, in the Sunset Magazine for June 1929, sketched him as follows:

"It is most encouraging to meet a man like Earl Cummings. When you look at him and talk to him, you realize that here's a fellow who eats three large beautiful meals a day, enjoys them to the full and has no indigestion afterwards. Who could ask for more? Here's a man who can laugh, who probably has always laughed.

"None of your painfully neurotic, worrying, and all tied up psychically artists. He's been a member of the Bohemian Club for twenty-five years and a Bohemian for at least fifty. He's had a good time; yet he has arrived. He is acknowledged as a leading American sculptor, and yet, happy man, has succeeded not only in accomplishing that enviable eminence, but in covering up any evidence of the struggle and who has apparently forgotten any of the suffering.

"There he stands, in his great barn of a studio which is in the back yard of his home on Clay Street in San Francisco. From under the eaves, high up by the tin roof, streams of ivy dangle down on to the shoulders of enormous

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plaster men and women and horses and jaguars. Rather least at the feet of these great creations is the big hearty workman who made them.

"He is dressed in overalls and a faded green sweater, with a flannel shirt over the sweater, the tails of the shirt dangling about his legs and smeared like his trousers with plaster and clay. He has a comfortable 'bay window'. He has a round ruddy face with shrewd but kindly eyes. He is sure to have a pipe in his mouth and a slouch hat or cap on his head, so that you cannot be sure of the shape of his mouth, or whether he is slightly bald (as you suspect) or not."

Cummings was a congenial sort and belonged to many different clubs and societies. Among these were: The Bohemian Club, The San Francisco Art Association, Presidio Golf Club, Army and Navy Club, National Sculpture Society, Society of Colonial Wars, Sons of the American Revolution, and Delta Upsilon, honorary art society. His favorite forms of relaxation from his work were golf and hunting.

#### HIS UNTIMELY DEATH IN 1936

After an illness of almost a year, Cummings suffered a general collapse and died in Saint Luke's Hospital on July 21, 1936. Just sixty, San Francisco regrets that he was not given many more years of service to his art and teaching. More, as the years go on, his devotion will be appreciated in his achievements. The lessons he taught now bear fruit as the city of his adoption lives up to the high standards of civic art which he helped establish in her parks and museums, art galleries and public monuments.

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#### MELVIN EARL CUMMINGS

#### REPRESENTATIVE

#### WORKS

Commodore Sloat Monument, Monterey

Robert Burns, Golden Gate Park

Pool of Enchantment, Golden Gate Park

La Soif, Washington Square

Neptune's Daughter

Becker and Rideout Fountains, Golden Gate Park

Bust of Adolph Spreckels

Bust of Robert Dollar

Sather Memorial Gate, University of California

Doughboy Statue, Golden Gate Park

Portrait Panel of Maude Adams

Bust of Sculptor's Wife

Sabre Toothed Tiger

Mask

Les Deux Puissances

Le Bien et Le Mal

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