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Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: Art in Buffalo and the Buffalo Fine Art Academy

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Recommended Citation

Gilmartin, Shannon N., "Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: Art in Buffalo and the Buffalo Fine Art Academy" (2023). *History Theses*. 60.

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Abstract

This Master's Thesis Project researches the life of a forgotten Buffalo artist, Lars Gustaf Sellstedt. He was born in Sundsvall, Sweden and started his life as a sailor when he became a cabin boy as an early teenager. For most of his young life until his mid-twenties, Sellstedt was a sailor traveling to all corners of the world. He started his journey as an artist while in between sailing jobs. Over many decades he portraits locally and abroad mainly in the Caribbean Islands. Sellstedt was one of the few artists in 19th century Buffalo, sharing the profession with William J. Wilgus, Thomas Le Clear, and William H. Beard. These men, apart from Wilgus, helped start the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy by serving in different positions over the years and also had their art exhibited many times. Today the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy thrives today and will open its doors back up in June 2023 after new renovations under the new name, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

State University of New York
Buffalo State University
Department of History and Social Studies Education

Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: Art in Buffalo and the Buffalo Fine Art Academy

A Thesis Project in
Museum Studies
By
Shannon Gilmartin

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts
May 2023

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the founding of Buffalo over 220 years ago, its art community has grown tremendously. From local artist's humble beginnings as portrait painters, to international contemporary artists, you can just about find it all at the galleries in Buffalo. The city's earliest and most known artists in their time, were continuously sought after for their talents. In a time before photography was invented and fully popularized, people with status and or money were commissioning portrait paintings from the four great artists in Buffalo. These men were William J. Wilgus, Thomas Le Clear, Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, and William H. Beard. These men all had spent different times in their lives in Buffalo, their time spent there usually overlapping.

“The important contribution of all four to nineteenth century American Romantic painting should be acknowledged with grateful tribute. Their training ground in pre-Civil War Buffalo, when these artists, each struggling for a living, were in intimate association with each other, gives Buffalo's art world of the period a special significance”.¹ All four men had moved to Buffalo well into their adulthood to build their careers. These artists were very involved in the art community and helped shape it to what it is today. Le Clear, Beard, and Sellstedt all played major roles in establishing the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and helping it thrive over the years. Sellstedt was the only one to remain active with the Academy for the remainder of his life.

There are a handful of differences that set Lars Gustaf Sellstedt apart from the other artists discussed later in this paper. Out of the four, he was the only immigrant, being born in Sweden. He was also the only one to start his career later in his twenties

¹ Chase Viele, “Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo,” *New York History* 43, no. 1 (January 1962): pp. 49-78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23153579>.

after spending half of his life at sea serving on different ships compared to the three men being trained during their teenage years. However, what could arguably be the most important difference between Sellstedt and the other men is that he was the only original painter to remain in Buffalo for the rest of his life. Wilgus eventually moved to a warmer climate and Le Clear and Beard moved to New York City.

Lars Sellstedt was one of the most well-known men in the art community in Buffalo during his lifetime. Ironically, most of his paintings are missing. He had come to settle in Buffalo in 1842 at the age of twenty-three. During the time he lived in the city, he had started his art career, married twice, published multiple pieces of literature, helped establish the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, and instructed many students about art. Unfortunately, he has been lost to history over the decades since his death in 1911.

I believe that Sellstedt's life story and impact on the art community, especially in Buffalo is something to be shared. He had an extraordinary life full of adventure and passion and it was his sense of adventure and passion that drew me to his story. I felt that his life and the history he had a hand in making needed to be shared with those willing to learn about him. The story of such an extraordinary and forgotten life deserves to be told. When creating this project, I had to think mainly about two things. What is the best possible way I can showcase Sellstedt's life and works? And how can I share his impact on the art community in Buffalo?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Lars Gustaf Sellstedt wrote the story of his life in his autobiography, *From Forecastle to Academy, Sailor and Artist*. In just over 350 pages, Sellstedt describes his life, adventures, and accomplishments in great detail. He was born in Sweden, traveled at sea while working on a number of ships, and eventually settling in Buffalo, New York. While there, he had discovered a love and passion for art and painting. In 1862, along with a handful of other men, he helped found the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. After a life of many accomplishments, growing a family and his career, Sellstedt died on June 9, 1911, at the age of 92.

Art in Buffalo is another work by Sellstedt, published just a year before his death in 1910. This work shares the story and the culture of art and artists in the city of Buffalo. Some of these artists include William J. Wilgus, known for landscapes and portraits of the Western New York Native Americans, Thomas Le Clear, known for portraits and genre scenes, and William Holbrook Beard, known for his anthropomorphic paintings of animals. Together, these men helped shape the art in Buffalo. This work also includes much information on the numerous other men, whether artists or not, that played key roles in the development and art culture in the city. One might be able to find streets named after these men when traveling around the city.

Chase Viele wrote *Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo* in 1962. This is a 30-page journal article included in *New York History*, Vol. 43, No. 1. This was a scholarly journal released quarterly by the Fenimore Art Museum through the Cornell University Press. This article shares more information about the lives and careers of Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, William J. Wilgus, Thomas Le Clear, and William Holbrook Beard.

Mr. Viele was a Buffalo native who earned his bachelor's degree in Art History and Criticism from the University of Buffalo.² His "interest in history stemmed from his ancestral family's arrival in the Hudson Valley as Dutch settlers in 1613".³

Another work by Sellstedt was a short book detailing the life of fellow artist, William J. Wilgus. *Life and Works of William John Wilgus, Artist 1819-1853*, although roughly 30 pages, is filled with the details of Wilgus's short, but eventful life. Sellstedt talks highly and respectfully about his friend's life and shares selected works that he believed were paintings of importance from Wilgus' career. At an impressively early age, Wilgus became a successful artist and was very well known in the Buffalo art community. Because of his talent, he was able to paint in several different cities within the United States, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Unfortunately, Wilgus had struggled with his health starting in his late twenties and passed away from Tuberculosis at the age of 34 in 1853.

In 1899, Willis O. Chapin's *The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy: A Historical Sketch* was published. Lars Sellstedt assisted in writing the Introduction. This literary work shares the story and details of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy from its inception until roughly late 1898 in 60 pages. The Academy's finances, art acquisitions, and members are also included in great detail in the appendix. Willis O. Chapin was a longtime supporter and contributor of the Academy as well as the secretary for a time and an unofficial historian.

² Ibid.

³ Staff, "Chase Viele, Descendant of Early Settlers," Buffalo News, July 14, 2002, https://buffalonews.com/news/article_122de809-ccd4-5003-bfed-e1b334b2c9ef.html.

For the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy in 1962, *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962, Albright-Knox Art Gallery* was released. This publication covers the Academy's history during its first 100 years. There are different sections throughout the work that include a copious amount of images and photographs of art displayed, made, donated, and bought, the people involved in the success of the academy, interior exhibits, and so much more. James Benjamin Townsend compiled and wrote this publication and was assisted by Ruth M. Peyton. Townsend was a celebrated academic, not only attending Princeton, but Harvard for his M.A. and Yale for his Ph.D. After serving with the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, he taught at different institutions and eventually became the vice chairman of the English department at SUNY Buffalo.⁴

The Academy Blue Book was an annually released report of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. This publication included the Academy's constitution and by-laws, officers, deceased and then current members. The Art Director wrote a report for each year. The reports gave a summary of the events of the year. This included meetings, people elected, and other important updates to share with the members and other interested parties.

⁴ Princeton Alumni Weekly, "James Benjamin Townsend '40 | Princeton Alumni Weekly," Princeton University (The Trustees of Princeton University), accessed March 3, 2023, <https://paw.princeton.edu/memorial/james-benjamin-townsend-%E2%80%9940>.

Chapter 3: Lars Gustaf Sellstedt

Early Life and at Sea

Lars Gustaf Sellstedt was the first child and only son of Eric Sellstedt and Eva Thoren, born on April 30, 1819, in Sundsvall on the East coast of Sweden. He had started school when he was three years old, and it was clear that he was a bright student. Schooling during this time in Sweden taught students basic things including the alphabet, spelling, and math. When he had turned five, his education became more serious and he transferred to a Lancastrian school.⁵ Sellstedt had attended his school lessons in a room above the local poor house. Once he was six, he was instructed to teach his classmates the alphabet. It was also at this early age that he had his first near death encounter when he fell in front of his father's horse and sleigh. He had only left with some scars.

A year later, in the summer of 1826, he had his closest encounter with death. No one had seen young Lars fall off of the boat into the river behind their house. Unable to swim at the time, he had quickly accepted his fate in the water and claimed to have had a peaceful experience under the surface. He wrote this about the experience:

No one was near, it was evening, but, of course, full daylight, the sun being a couple of hours high or more. I remember distinctly trying to hold on to the keel of the boat, but the bottom was covered with a slimy green conferva and I could distinctly see the mark which my little hand made upon the bottom of the boat. There I lay for how long I know not, but after the struggle to save myself by grasping the boat's keel proved abortive, I lay still on my back with my eyes open looking at the green light which shone through the water. It was an extraordinary sensation, painless, nay, rather pleasant, but the vividness of my thoughts were most extraordinary. Of course I expected death, but for me he had no terrors.⁶

⁵ An education style where more advanced students teach less advanced students

⁶ Sellstedt, Lars Gustaf. From Forecastle to Academy, Sailor and Artist: Autobiography by Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, N. A.. United States: Matthews-Northrup works, 1904. p. 26

Lars was only concerned about his mother when he was under. He knew that she would have no idea of what happened to him. This goes to show how much he cared for his mother. He was rescued shortly after by a girl and her maid, when they were out on a walk. Once pulled out of the water, Lars begged them not to tell his mother. He was worried that she would ban him from fishing ever again. Learning to swim was the task he had mastered by the end of the season.

Sellstedt's life changed dramatically after the death of his father in 1828 when he was only nine years old. A few years later his mother remarried and Lars's relationship with his stepfather was very poor. He wrote this about his breaking point and how he decided to go to sea:

In the spring of 1831 I was ill-treated beyond endurance by my step-father for what he was pleased to call an offence, though I never, in my mature life, could see that it was an offense to cut a sapling growing from the root of a mountain ash to make a fish-pole of for a little boy. He took the sapling and wore it out on my back. As I considered the property mine and him a usurper, my anger and indignation overcame my pain, and I can recall no humiliating appeals for mercy; but the injury having been inflicted, I immediately went to my mother and informed her of my resolution to go to sea, and in less than a month I was on board of a small schooner bound for Stockholm.⁷

At this point, Lars was a young boy at just about 12. This also being his first time at sea, one of his new concerns was overcoming seasickness. Over the course of the several months it took for the ship to transport its cargo to Alexandria, Egypt, he had become familiar with the duties of being a cabin boy.

In total, Lars was away from home for thirteen months. He came home briefly to Sundsvall in mid 1833, joined another voyage to Kiel, and then returned home for the winter, in his words, "December is not a pleasant month in which to navigate the Baltic

⁷ Ibid. p. 42

Sea”.⁸ Until June of 1834, Sellstedt spent his time with family, celebrating holidays, going back to school briefly, and assisting a home. He had reached a final decision that home life with his stepfather was intolerable and he would make his way to America. Much like so many immigrants in the past, Lars journeyed with very little money, knowing no one in the new country and had no set plan on where he would end up living or doing to earn money. A spot for him on the ship to Stockholm was given to him in return for work. His mother had ties with an important figure in the city and a letter was written to grant Lars room on the ship the “Prudent”, based in New York.

The Captain, Thomas Moriarty, and his wife were extremely welcoming of young Lars when he came on board. “I was kindly received by them both, and a comfortable berth in the steerage was appointed to me -- the first time in my marine life that I had known the luxury of a regular bed”.⁹ They stayed docked in Stockholm for weeks while loading cargo of bar iron. It was on this ship that Lars was able to start learning the English language. The captain personally told the crew to only speak to Lars in English. There was an American boy onboard that Lars befriended and helped him develop his language skills. It was also on this ship, only onboard a handful of days, that Lars received a letter from home notifying him that his second youngest sister, Martha Lovisa, had passed away.

When it was time for the ship to head to America, Sellstedt had to first be hidden away. “In due time we were loaded and ready for sea. As at that time permission from the government was necessary, and I hid in the chain-locker when the officer whose duty it was to see that the proper regulations were observed came on board before the

⁸ Ibid. p. 63

⁹ Ibid. p. 70

ship could sail”.¹⁰ Once in the clear and heading into open sea, he was able to fulfill his duties onboard and continue studying English. He did this by learning with Mrs. Moriarty, the American boy, Putnam Coffin, and the ship's cook, who sat with him about every day for hours in the afternoon telling stories. “He was fond of telling stories, and I was a willing listener, the only drawback being that I understood so little of what he said; but this would only redouble his effort to make me understand”.¹¹ Lars also had some literature at his disposal including a short story, *The Post Captain*, a Johnson pocket dictionary, and the three-volume set of *The Three Spaniards*.

Arrival to the United States

The ship docked in Somerset, Massachusetts, where Lars met two of the captain's daughters. “Dear old sleepy Somerset! Among my other memories. I recall that here I first swallowed a live oyster, a delicacy up to this time only known by reputation. I also made the discovery that hard cider was not wholly a temperance beverage, having taken copious draughts from a two-gallon demijohn that the captain sent on board, the result of which was that I got drunk and had to go to bed”.¹² The captain's family, still looking after Lars, now at 15 years old, took him to their home in New York. Lars continued working on the cargo ship that transported him to the United States. During the short time he had spent on the east coast, he had had a little trouble with Americans understanding his accent and he wanted to fit in better. To achieve this, he changed his name for a time:

While in New York at this time I made up my mind to drop my surname, as it gave me so much trouble and annoyance among strangers. Always the

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 72

¹¹ Ibid. p. 72-73

¹² Ibid. p. 76

question was asked me: "How do you spell it?" As I was not familiar with English spelling, not even with the English alphabet, I found it troublesome to give intelligent answers; but knowing that my name of Lars was equivalent to Laurentius, or the common name of Lawrence in English, I simply inverted my Christian names, and became, instead of Lars Gustaf, Gustavus Lawrence, and by which name I have always been known in my seafaring days.¹³

With his new name he traveled with the ship's crew down South and by December they had arrived in Savannah, Georgia. Here, Lars accounts his first encounter with slavery. He had not realized how much slavery had been a part of everyday life in the South and was surprised to see that those enslaved were not as he had imagined. A lot of the dockworkers were slaves that would pay their enslaver twelve dollars monthly and could keep any leftover income for themselves. Sellstedt included the following observation, "As their regular wages was two dollars per day, and they seemed to be neatly always employed, their condition seemed better than that of some of the poor in my own country...."¹⁴

After traveling to places like France, the Mediterranean, Malta, and Sicily for some of the ship's voyages over the next few years, Lars decided to leave the ship when they returned to New York in December 1835. For almost three months, Sellstedt struggled to find more work and stayed in a boarding house for sailors. By mid March, he found himself on the "Montgomery", a ship headed for Philadelphia. The captain of this ship, requested for Sellstedt to stay on for its next voyage, which was to La Guayra, Venezuela. Other international voyages Sellstedt was a crew member on during his

¹³ Ibid. p. 78

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 79

early years were to Port-Au-Prince in Haiti, Trinidad in Cuba, Pernambuco in Brazil, a fishing voyage to the West Coast of Africa as a cook and steward, and Rio de Janeiro.

Arrival in Buffalo

Sellstedt first arrived in Buffalo via the Erie Canal from Lockport on May 12, 1842, at the age of twenty-three. He had traveled to the city to meet friends, Tom Allen, an English sailor and Pompeo Vandrone nicknamed Pompey from Italy, and stayed at first in a boarding house on Pearl Street. After a day's travel North to Queenston in Southern Ontario and Lewiston, New York to meet his friends, Lars realized that he would not be able to find them. The life of a sailor was busy and it was difficult to predict when you were off on the next voyage. It was a difficult reality for Sellstedt, but one he understood quite well. He promptly made his return to Buffalo. After his return, he moved into a sailor's boarding home on Main Street in the hopes of finding employment. He first joined the crew of the *Preble*, a ship docked at the Bidwell and Banta shipyard on Lake Erie. During a break from ship work during the Summer of 1842, Lars had gone back to the boarding house he resided in. There, he began his journey as an artist.

The first piece Sellstedt had made was a miniature portrait that "succeeded in producing a recognizable likeness".¹⁵ His Captain had been an art student and assisted Lars with continuing his new found talent. Captain Black and the portrait of his wife and himself both sparked Sellstedt's interest in painting. Black aided Sellstedt in gathering proper materials to get started and offered him space in an empty attic to act as his studio. Like many different people starting any new hobbies or careers, Sellstedt had some anxiety comparing himself to well established artists.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 208

His first painting was admitted as being a failure. This was to be a little expected as it would be almost impossible to paint something to perfection your first time. The word of a young gentleman painting in Captain Black's garret was spread and two of the city's most prominent women came to visit the studio. These women were Sellstedt's first encounter with the Buffalo elite and the start of his involvement with them. It was the elite folks that first offered to introduce Sellstedt to William Wilgus. However, this was not how the two ended up meeting. In an unmentioned way, Sellstedt had made friends with a man around his age that was a student of Wilgus. Their first encounter was described by Sellstedt as the following: "At my timid knock on the door it was opened by a young man nearly my own age, with coal-black hair, smooth and silky, large lustrous black eyes, with clear, but pale, cheeks, slightly tinged with that delicate rose, of which I have since learned to know the sad significance; a straight and beautifully formed nose, a classic mouth seriously smiling -- to me he seemed Apollo clad in summer blouse, with palette for lyre and for bow a rest-stick".¹⁶ Sellstedt went on to learn many techniques from Wilgus.

Sellstedt had been commissioned to paint a woman's life size portrait for two dollars, somewhere around eighty dollars today. Having been pleased with himself for painting a portrait that would be recognizable, he invited his friend, the student of Wilgus, to view his work. The man had viewed the work but said nothing. Sellstedt took this as a good sign, thinking that there was even a sliver of jealousy. After wanting to know what the man thought of it, Sellstedt asked him his opinion. The man had replied more or less saying that the work was awful and not worth the canvas it was on. When

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 210

hearing that, Sellstedt's confidence had taken a hit. However, he did not view this criticism as fully negative, but something to learn from. The man had given him his first and only oral painting lesson, "You must study to get your tints so as to resemble the place on the face where they are to go, then put them on boldly and don't touch them again if you can help it".¹⁷

Shortly after, Lars met his longtime friend and fellow Swede, Axel Adlersparre. Adlersparre was born into a noble family and was a page of Princess Josephine, wife of Oscar I, later the King and Queen of Sweden. He was also very involved in the Swedish Military. It was Adlersparre that advised Sellstedt to focus on portrait painting. He had taught much to Sellstedt during their friendship and the pair eventually went on to become shipmates for a brief period of time. In 1844, Adlersparre was called home by Oscar I for his ascension to the throne. In the same year, his address was traced through letters sent to his sister by the Swedish consul. In Adlersparre's past, he took a French leave¹⁸ from his duties as page to the crown princess. Sellstedt had discovered that his friend had left without saying goodbye with a letter hand delivered to the local post office. The two friends never met again, but Sellstedt was able to learn that his friend had rejoined the Swedish navy and was made commodore of the navy yard in Carlsrona. When he left the navy and became a banker or broker in Stockholm. Axel Adlersparre died in 1879, a year before Sellstedt went to Stockholm with his family.

Sailing in America

Chicago was the destination of Sellstedt's first ship on the Great Lakes. He was one of four men on the crew, the others being the captain, mate, and cook. Their cargo

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 211

¹⁸ An unannounced departure

consisted of stoves and salted meats including pork and beef. It was a smooth trip with great weather during the late Summer. After making the delivery, their ship was loaded with wheat. Sellstedt remarked that he remembered wheat being sold for 37 cents a bushel at the time and fresh beef only costing a cent or two per pound. Before the returning trip to Buffalo, a friend of Lars, Charles J. Magill left his ship docked in the same port and joined Sellstedt's crew. Magill seemed to be one to like getting into mischief. Before their next trip to Chicago, the pair visited Cheap John's auction store. Magill had suggested that they bid on "shining cards of pen and pocket knives"¹⁹ and sell them for profit in Chicago. They split a total of fifty dollars on this haul. Once in Chicago, they went to the local auction house to sell their pieces. Unfortunately, that night there was a storm that kept most people in their homes and the two were only able to get back the same amount they paid in Buffalo. Later on, they also tried to sell feathers by the pound, but were unsuccessful in profiting from that as well.

On November 17, the day had started out with perfect weather, but the ship Sellstedt was on got caught in a terrible storm off the coast of Michigan later that night. It was a struggle to find a place to anchor near the South Manitou Island. Around 6 p.m. they were safely docked and by 8:30 p.m., the wind changed direction bringing a snowstorm. After the storm passed, it was discovered that 18 ships and 60 lives were lost. Winter on the Great Lakes continued to be rough with water freezing onto many parts of the ship. The river they were to use to travel back to Buffalo had frozen over and it was decided that the group wanting to go back to New York would travel on foot. When the group was getting ready to head out on land, Sellstedt had realized he left

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 219

something on board and went to retrieve it. Once he headed back to shore, he slipped on frozen ropes on the dock and fell into the freezing water. He had been wearing so many layers to stay warm that he remembered his underwear did not get wet. It took about five days to get back and once returning, Sellstedt resumed working on his art.

When back in the city, Lars had realized that he was broke and the majority of his things were on a ship that had then traveled to Cleveland. Upon arriving there, the ship was nowhere to be seen. To get money again, he joined a ship that took trips between Cleveland and Buffalo carrying flour and wheat. He again went back to his art in Buffalo, painting portraits of some friends. During the Summer of 1844, he acted as coxswain²⁰ of a ship tasked by the government to complete a topographical survey of the Great Lakes.

Lars would go on to sail the ocean again due to the advice of a doctor after suffering from miasma.²¹ He traveled to New York City by way of the Erie Canal. It was difficult for him to get hired for a voyage because he was not able to stay in a sailor's boarding house. Eventually, he came across a barque heading to Havana, Cuba. The trip was decent, however there were some disagreements among some crew members and officers, none involving Sellstedt. They then traveled to Apalachicola, Florida where they took on a shipment of cotton. This shipment was meant for a port somewhere in Europe. This was a surprise to the crew as they were not told before joining the ship that they would be traveling that far. The crew then planned a scheme to get back at the captain for being so disagreeable. Two crew members accused the

²⁰ Member of a ship's crew in charge of steering and navigation

²¹ The abandoned medical theory that breathing bad air would give you a disease

captain of ill-usage and illegal shipment. Once at trial, it was proven that these men had a persuasive case against the captain and were entitled to four hundred dollars each.

At one point, Sellstedt had to row the captain ashore so he could go to court, and he had mentioned that he expected him to run away. Once back on board, he was left in charge of the ship and a former crew member went to the ship suggesting Sellstedt run away and hide within the swamps about two miles away. The man said he would meet up with him later that night with food. After spending the entire day in the swamp, losing his hat and a shoe, he made his way out and onto a road where he saw two figures on the hunt for him. At that moment he decided he should head for the county and cautiously made his way. The path he followed led to nowhere causing him to search again for a settlement. After wandering the woods, he found a light in the distance and followed it, but it never got bigger. He soon found out it was the lighthouse on the farthest side of the bay.

Turning around again, he eventually heard dogs and followed the noise. They seemed to belong to the house one of his shipmates, Bill, involved in the trial was staying at. The pair traveled together attempting to make their way to Pensacola. They traveled about twenty miles to a small-town names St. Josephs. Here they were almost caught as they were being led to a tavern that turned out to be the constable by a deputy sheriff that was looking for the both of them. Because they had no money, they were brought to a couple's house who knew that the deputy would never come inside the house. They remained inside the house for two days while the deputy was still looking for them. They left around 3 a.m. the morning of the third day with a loaf of bread out of fear that help looking for them was coming. The landlady had advised them

to follow the abandoned railroad tracks and to avoid the sand paths as much as possible.

They came across a farm that housed them for six weeks as long as they were willing to work. Sellstedt was rewarded with 12 dozen eggs for his six weeks of work while waiting for the ship he was running from to leave the area. He had boarded a cotton ship in Marietta, Georgia that was headed back down to Appalachicola. Once back in the city, Sellstedt found a sailor boarding house and looked for work again. The landlord bought the eggs for two dollars with which Sellstedt bought a pair of shoes. He had been given a quick job of painting a sign for a local drug store for two dollars. More painting jobs were offered after his presence was shared throughout town. He also painted a sign for a clothing store on their exterior brick and a sign on a tin plate for a lawyer. With the money he earned, he bought new clothes for himself since the ones he had were ruined over time in the swamps and working the farm. Eventually, Lars joined a schooner to New Orleans, only staying a couple days.

From there, he wanted to board a boat traveling up the river to St. Louis, Missouri. To earn the money for the passage he worked a few odd jobs to get a total of two dollars and fifty cents, the exact cost needed to board the ship. On the ship he made a friend that traveled with him for a good part of his journey. Once in St. Louis, he intended on getting more money for a ship heading to Peru Indiana. He earned money after an artist saw a tattoo of a cross on Sellstedt's arm, which he did himself. The artist, a carpenter, and a third man each got something tattooed on their arms. With the money earned, on top of the one dollar and fifty cents he had, he was able to get to Peru. They then planned to walk the roughly 90 miles to Chicago and get paid by

painting pictures for the farmers he passed. However, some sailors in the same area chartered a schooner to the city thus saving the pair a lot of time. They were eventually separated when trying to get on a ship to Buffalo and never met again. Sellstedt worked on the ship for the rest of its season and once returning to Buffalo, retired completely from the sailor life.

The Artist Life

A choice had to be made between living as a sailor or as an artist as continuing both was no longer a feasible option. So, life of an artist it was. Upon returning to Buffalo, he occupied a room in the Lockwood Block on Seneca Street. It was a structure made of three houses, one of them being a boarding house in which Sellstedt occupied a room on the third floor. He was able to pay for the room by painting a portrait of his landlady, Mrs. Carney. After some time there, he realized that as a young painter, he was too far from the center of the city. In the Spring of 1846, he moved into a room above a grocery store on the corner of Seneca and Washington streets. On the opposite corner was the newly chartered Buffalo Medical College, now the Jacobs School of Medicine at the University at Buffalo. The school started teaching in the following Spring.

Sellstedt attended lectures at the Medical College during this year and the next. This was so he could better understand the human figure to help with his painting. The room he took was loaned to him by Mrs. G Humason, whose portrait, her husband, and child's he painted as his payment. He also believed that he painted the most portraits in this room within one year than in any other studios he went on to use. Being a beginning artist, Sellstedt charged 25 dollars, which was on the low end of portrait costs

at the time but was very lenient on the amount of payment having accepted ten dollars occasionally and most for most paintings never received money, but possibly items of value instead.

Later in the fall of this year, 1847, Mr. Thomas Le Clear, settled in Buffalo. Upon learning that Le Clear had been a student of Henry Inman, then the most popular portraitist in the United States, Sellstedt said "My respect for the ethereal looking artist was at once established, and when he afterwards repaid my visit, and seemed pleased with my work the first link in the chain of friendship, which for many years -- indeed up to his death -- bound us together, was forged".²² Around this time, a 15-year-old boy, later Colonel L. L. Langdon had gone to Sellstedt's studio in the hope of becoming his pupil and ended up becoming one of his lifelong friends. This boy helped Sellstedt paint medical diagrams for the Medical College and in return, Sellstedt was able to attend many lectures on anatomy and other topics. He had stopped going once the lectures got moved from the evening to morning and eventually the College moved locations.

Sellstedt moved studios in May of 1847 and ended up splitting the 100 dollars yearly rent of Wilgus' former room with his friend W. D. Fobes. This time was a little difficult for Sellstedt financially as he only had 25 dollars, which he would spend on milk and bread daily, and at one point went without eating for two days straight. He had also been often invited to tea with his friends but would usually deny the offer due to not having them find out he stayed in his studio instead of a boarding house. After heavy thought, he did eventually find a room at a boarding house and ended up in deep debt for a time.

²² Ibid. p. 263

Early in 1848, Lars had been acquainted with a young woman, Louise Lovejoy. He remarked that they both had felt love at first sight and were engaged by the later that same year in the Summer. Being engaged and in debt weighed heavily on Sellstedt and he wanted to get out of his rut. He had heard Wilgus was able to earn around 6000 dollars by painting portraits in Puerto Rico and decided to go to St. Thomas in the hopes he would be able to achieve that same success. By February 1849, he had arrived on the island with six canvases and 11 dollars. While there, he stayed in a local boarding house and used his room as his studio. Some of the work he had completed was the restoration of the eyes on a painting of King Frederick VII of Denmark owned by a Danish officer, a portrait of his landlady, Azalea Victoria, a portrait of the children of Mr. Pott, an American merchant, and the portrait of a Mr. and Mrs. Moe.

Sellstedt moved on to San Juan, Puerto Rico after having someone suggest that we would be able to find more work there. Having spent several days there, he had decided to move on North to Guayama as San Juan was becoming too expensive with no prospects of work. At the boarding house he stayed at in the new city, he painted the portrait of a German drummer for 30 dollars. After its completion, he traveled to Ponce where people had more money. Here, he boarded in a room owned by a woman from Baltimore, Maryland, which he used as his studio. His landlady had placed an advertisement in a local paper to attract clients. The local judge was the first to purchase portraits of himself and his wife. When he was ready to head back home, he had to wait for a ship going to New York City and arrived back in Buffalo in June.

Lars and his fiancé, Louise, were married on January 19, 1850. The couple then moved to New York City for Lars to try his luck in finding work but found that he was still

not yet experienced enough, and they returned to Buffalo. Following this, Louise had fallen very ill during a cholera outbreak and eventually contracted dysentery. After four days of suffering, she passed away on October 15, 1850, at the age of 27. When his period of mourning had passed, he returned to painting and took a new studio. During his time in this studio, he had met Mr. W. H. Beard which was the start of their lifelong friendship.

In May of 1853, Sellstedt traveled back to Sweden to visit his family for the first time in 13 years. His ship left Philadelphia on the 12th headed for Liverpool, England. This was his first trip on a ship where he was merely a passenger. He then went to York via train, then Hull to Gothenburg, Sweden, and finally from Stockholm to Sundsvall where he arrived on June 17th. During his stay, he had learned one of his sisters had married and that his mother was living happily and well cared for. He had intended to stay until the fall and save some money he brought with him for the trip back to Buffalo but ended up spending it all. He had to turn to his art and English skills to get the money he needed. He had written:

This compelled me to resort to my art, and I soon found something to do in way of portraiture, but the prices were very small; and when I discovered that I must remain through the winter, I found that the only thing for me to do was to convert myself into a schoolmaster, by teaching the English language. I soon had eighteen subscribers on my list, took a room nearer to the port where most of my pupils lived or were employed, for they were all young businessmen or bookkeepers, my old friend the British consul, being one of them.²³

By the end of the season, a handful of the students were able to have limited conversations in English, but the majority preferred being social and playing cards.

²³ Ibid. p. 291-292

He had started his trip back to Buffalo in the Spring of 1854. He did not know at the time, but this was the last goodbye he would say to his mother. He stayed in Newcastle briefly before heading back to Liverpool via train again, and to New York on a sailing ship. He arrived back in the United States in October. Once back in Buffalo, he took another new studio and immediately went back to portrait painting. Around this time is when he met Miss Caroline Scott, the youngest daughter of Dr. William Scott, the first licensed M.D. in New York State. The pair were engaged and then married on June 11, 1856. The couple welcomed their first child William Scott Sellstedt on September 13, 1858. However, not much is known about William as he died at the early age of 11. His death was extremely hard on Lars, so much so that he is never mentioned in his autobiography, and he would rarely if ever speak about him. Their second child was Eva, born on October 5, 1862. She went on to marry Dr. Frank Hamilton Potter and together it is believed they had at least two sons, Lars and Frank.

When Lars and Caroline were married, they moved into her father's house at 78 Mohawk St. in Buffalo. This house would serve as Lars's studio for nearly fifty years. After their post-marriage trip to Caroline's native New England, Sellstedt befriended Joseph Warren, the editor of the Buffalo Courier-Express, a local morning newspaper until the early 1980s. Warren was elected president of the Young Man's Association in 1860 and under his administration, the YMA hosted Buffalo's first art exhibition. This was the event that led to the creation of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. Sellstedt also had the pleasure of being good friends with two future Presidents of the United States, Millard Fillmore, who he knew through relations of his wife, and Grover Cleveland, who were in "The Jolly Reefers" fishing club together.

Another great accomplishment of Sellstedt's life was having his art hung in the Spring exhibitions of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and after sending in a large portrait of himself, which was highly praised by press and art lovers, was honored with becoming a full academician of the National Academy of Design in 1875. In the same year, he traveled with his family back to Europe spending time in Liverpool, London, Paris, Nice, Genoa, Florence, Rome, Venice, Copenhagen, and Sundsvall, spending much time in art galleries. After returning to Buffalo, he once again continued painting portraits. He spent the remainder of his life impacting the Buffalo art community and continued to thrive in social settings with friends old and new. His wife Caroline died on August 18, 1909, around age 82. Lars Sellstedt followed his wife in death almost two years later on June 4, 1911, aged 92. Sellstedt was forever grateful for the long and happy life he lived doing what he loved with the many people near and far that he loved.

Chapter 4: Significant Buffalo Artists of the 19th Century

William J. Wilgus

Portrait paintings were among the most common paintings to come out of the early and middle nineteenth century. Before the invention and popularization of cameras, having one's portrait painted was a symbol of status showing that you had the extra money to spend on something considered a luxury. One of the well-known portraitists of Buffalo was William John Wilgus, mainly known for his portrait paintings of Native Americans. Born in Troy, New York on January 31, 1819, he was the son of a Buffalonian bookseller and paint dealer, Alfred W. Wilgus. William showed early signs that he would thrive as an artist due to the exposure to art from his father's business. He started his art training with his uncle, Nathaniel Wilgus, who was a local painter and paperhanger.

In 1834, William was sent to New York City to study under Samuel F. B. Morse. At the time, Morse was President of the National Academy of Design. It was also around this time that Morse had started to pursue a career in science by inventing. Due to this, he had first refused to take Wilgus as a student. After some persuasion from his father, William was allowed to be tested on his abilities. Morse had asked young William to complete a sketch of a statuette of Bonaparte while he stepped out of the room. "He soon came back, to find to his extreme surprise, that his future pupil, instead of one, had made four different sketches from many different points of sight. He was so well pleased with the celerity of the work and its correctness that he immediately received him".²⁴

²⁴ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Life and Works of William John Wilgus, Artist, 1819-1853* (Buffalo , New York: Matthews-Northrup Works, 1912). p. 16

Wilgus' first claim to fame was "his literary genre painting, 'Ichabod Crane Pursued by the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow,' executed at the age of fifteen while under Professor Morse's instruction and exhibited in 1835 at the National Academy of Design".²⁵ Back in Buffalo, the painting had become a popularly reproduced lithograph print made by Mooney & Buell. Wilgus came back to Buffalo and found an official studio to work in. From 1841 to 1842 and 1845 to 1847, he lived in New York City as a professional portrait painter. While he was in Buffalo, William earned a living by painting portraits of the Mayors of Buffalo. At the age of twenty, in 1839, Wilgus was honored as a professional member of the National Academy of Design. Around this time, due to a decline in health, "much of Wilgus' adult life was passed in a southern climate and after 1846, his winters were regularly spent in Savannah, Mobile, or Cuba".²⁶

Sometime in the very early 1840s, a wealthy merchant from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Mr. Koppisch, visited Buffalo. He had gone into Alfred Wilgus' shop to make a purchase and while there, noticed two portraits painted by William. The two were able to meet at that time and Mr. Koppisch invited William to go visit Mayaguez. Wilgus accepted the invitation and traveled south that following winter. To pay for his passage down south, Wilgus painted a portrait of the captain's wife. He ended up staying with Koppisch's family for about a year. He then moved to San Juan and in February of 1845 to Ponce. "His price, while on the island, was \$50 per head, but so well he improved his time that he succeeded in sending home \$6,000 for investment, as a result of his two

²⁵ Chase Viele, "Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo," in *Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo*, 1st ed., vol. 43 (New York History, 1962), p. 54

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 56

years' labor".²⁷ He traveled back to Buffalo in June of the same year and then back to New York City until 1847.

It was at this time, when Wilgus first met Lars Sellstedt. Sellstedt had officially become a professional painter in this year and occupied Wilgus' studio over the Erie County Savings Bank when he was away from Buffalo. Once he returned, Sellstedt gladly moved into a small room in the same space. Wilgus and Sellstedt became quick friends and Wilgus, being the more experienced artist, had come into Sellstedt's studio every morning to criticize his work and give feedback. This arrangement only held while they were in the same building. Later in the fall, Wilgus took over a different space for his studio in a building owned by a Mr. Orlando Allen Esq. This space was to be rented by Wilgus for ten years, but in 1850, he gave it to another Buffalo painter, Thomas Le Clear. In this studio, Wilgus had finished what is considered his best work, a portrait of Seneca chief Tommy Jemmy. Most Native Americans at this time "never spoke English on occasions of solemnity and ceremony, and it was necessary to employ an interpreter".²⁸ Sellstedt included that Wilgus shared when he was on the Seneca Reservation, the following happened²⁹:

He [Tommy Jemmy] seems to have regarded the painting of his portrait as an occasion of more than ordinary importance, for when the head was done -- the only thing that was finished on the spot -- he arose to make a speech. Straightening his grand old frame of eighty winters, the fierce savage placed himself in the attitude of an orator, his form erect, and his old and rather dim black eye kindling with unusual fire, "Pale painter," he began, "the Senecas are no longer a mighty nation. Soon they will be no more. The white man will crowd the red man from the earth; our very graves will be plowed up and forgotten. Keep, then, this portrait. Lose it not; give it not away, but put it in some safe place where it may remain

²⁷ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Life and Works of William John Wilgus, Artist, 1819-1853* (Buffalo, New York: Matthews-Northrup Works, 1912). p. 25

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 28

²⁹ I would like to give caution for this quote as some offensive language is used

forever, that when we are all extinct the white man may see what an Indian was!"³⁰

This portrait was among Wilgus' last notable works. Around 1848, his health began to decline and in the following year's winter, he traveled to Savannah, Georgia. Here he found a studio and continued to paint, but when he came back North in the Summer, he did not spend much time painting. William married Eugenie Josephine Greene in the spring of 1851 after first meeting her briefly in 1847 while she and a few other women had visited William's studio. While the couple was in Buffalo after their marriage, Wilgus worked in the studio of William H. Bread, another Buffalo artist. During the next two winters, Wilgus believed his health had been improving and the couple traveled to Mobile and Cuba the following year. "He returned the next spring to breathe his last among his friends in Buffalo, so long his home and witness of his youthful skill. He died on the 23rd of July, 1853 [from consumption, now called Tuberculosis] , in peace with God and all the world, in the arms of his heart-broken wife, surrounded by his parents and his infant daughter, on whom we may suppose his last lingering look in life was fixed."³¹

Thomas Le Clear

Thomas Le Clear was born in Owego, New York on March 11, 1818. Much like Wilgus, Le Clear also showed early signs of a promising future as an artist. Some of his earliest works were portraits painted when he was only thirteen. A year later, "in 1832 his family moved to London, Ontario, and there the teen-age lad began some seven years of wandering as an itinerant portrait painter. He roamed central and western New

³⁰ Ibid. p. 28-29

³¹ Ibid. p. 32

York State, particularly around Elmira and Rochester, and even ventured as far west as Green Bay, Wisconsin, eking out a meager living as an artist and decorative painter".³² Le Clear traveled to New York City in 1839 to study under the painter Henry Inman, a well-known portrait artist in the city. Under Inman, Le Clear's skill level had greatly improved. Between 1844 and 1846, he opened a studio in his hometown of Owego, New York, traveled back to New York City, and had works exhibited at the National Academy of Design and at the American Art Union.

Le Clear had decided to settle in Buffalo in 1847 because it was a city on the rise, and he could see his career growing there. His first studio, like many others, was on Main Street, in the same building that was used by Sellstedt multiple times. Once he was settled in the city, his wife, Caroline³³ and their two children followed him. Thomas, already having a national reputation, was welcomed openly into the Buffalo art community. Over time, his career expanded successfully, and he was able to move into several larger studios starting in 1851. Before leaving Buffalo in 1863, Le Clear played a large role in the start-up of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, which is discussed later on in this paper. Chase Viele, author of *Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo*, wrote this about Le Clear's time in Buffalo:

It was during Le Clear's Buffalo years that he devoted a considerable portion of his efforts to genre painting, then in its heyday throughout the United States. Probably a welcome diversion from routine portraiture, his genre paintings were often street life scenes, characteristically depicting children involved in some whimsical street-corner situation such as boys lampooning or imitating their elders. Art historians have wondered over the present whereabouts of these anecdotal group scenes, which are known today only from scant descriptions in literary sources or exhibition catalogues of the period. Although Le Clear's particular forte was

³² Chase Viele, "Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo," in *Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo*, 1st ed., vol. 43 (New York History, 1962), p. 59

³³ The couple were married in 1844

portraiture, his genre works added in large measure to his national stature, especially in his early career.³⁴

While in Buffalo, Le Clear painted one of his most well-known works, *Buffalo Newsboy* in 1853. This painting was purchased in 1942 by the Albright Art Gallery and remains in their collection today. Le Clear had moved to New York City in 1863 and was elected as a full member of the National Academy of Design in May of the same year. When he moved from Buffalo, he had moved on from portrait work.

In 1865, Le Clear was commissioned to paint what would become possibly his most known painting, *Two Children In A Studio*, also known as *Interior with Portraits*. This painting shows two young siblings that represent Parnell and James Sidway inside a photographer's studio posing for a photo. The former died when she was 13 due to illness and the later, died on January 25, 1865, while as a volunteer firefighter in a hotel fire. The painting was commissioned by the pair's older brother Franklin. It is believed that the children's young appearances were based off of a daguerreotype photograph. "Franklin Sidway at first refused to accept such a *tour de force*, however meritorious, but a settlement was eventually reached".³⁵ This work is currently in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American Art. After this painting, Le Clear transitioned back to portraits, painting many important figures at the time, such as Ulysses S. Grant in 1880, and was noted to raise his price to well above any other portrait painter in the city. Thomas Le Clear died from pleurisy, the inflammation of the tissue lining the lungs, at the age of sixty-four in Rutherford Park, New Jersey.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 60-61

³⁵ Ibid. p. 71-72

William H. Beard

William Holbrook Beard was born on April 13, 1824, in Painesville, Ohio. Much like Wilgus and Le Clear, Beard started his career as a portrait artist incredibly early in life and had shown a strong interest in animals and nature. “In 1845 he moved to New York, joining his brother, James Henry Beard, a well-known genre painter and, likewise, a depicter of animals as humans. Both William and James, his elder by twelve years (never active in Buffalo), satirized the foibles of humans by casting cats, rabbits, monkeys, bears, in anecdotal situations, usually suggestive of shortcomings”.³⁶ After more time traveling, Beard did not come to settle in Buffalo until 1850. Like Le Clear, he had achieved national attention before he first came to Buffalo and his work had been exhibited as early as 1847, at the age of twenty-three.

When Beard settled in a Studio on Main Street, he ended up relying on Lars Sellstedt to lend him a small room in his own studio to use as sleeping quarters because his own studio had lacked the space. He would soon join the ranks of fellow portrait artists such as Wilgus, Le Clear and Sellstedt. Six years into his life in Buffalo, Beard had saved enough money to study abroad in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. When he returned to Buffalo in 1858, he had moved into a studio neighboring the Le Clear Family home. In the following year, Beard married his first wife, Flora Johnson, who was the granddaughter of Buffalo’s first mayor, Dr. Ebenezer Johnson. The following year, he went back to New York City. Flora only lived a couple years into the marriage and married his second wife Caroline Le Clear, who was twenty-one years younger than him, in July 1863.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 62-63

During the exhibition to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Young Men's Association in 1861, twenty of the 273 works of art displayed were Beard's. "Beard's particular flair for animal genre was amply displayed while portraiture dominated the works shown by Le Clear and Sellstedt, both of whom gave unstintingly of their time and talents to the exhibition".³⁷ When the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy was founded in 1862, Beard, as well as Sellstedt and Le Clear, were elected as curators. Earlier in the same year, both Beard and Le Clear resided in New York City and shared a studio building and Beard was elected in May to full membership in the National Academy of Design. "William H. Beard past four decades in New York City after leaving Buffalo, concentrating on portraiture, book illustrations, and his characteristic animal paintings".³⁸ As time went on, trends in art changed and Beard's genre paintings fell out of popularity, but he continued to make book illustrations. William H. Beard passed away on February 20, 1900, at the age of 75.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 67

³⁸ Ibid. p. 72

Chapter 5: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy

1861 was the 25th anniversary of the Young Men's Association (YMA).³⁹ To celebrate this milestone, the organization's executive board came up with the idea to host a public art exhibition to be held on Christmas Eve. "The project was approved, and to the Young Men's Association belongs the honor of being the sponsors of the first regular art exhibition ever given in the city of Buffalo."⁴⁰ Willis O. Chapin quoted Joseph Warren⁴¹ in his book, *The Buffalo Fine arts Academy: A Historical Sketch*, describing details on the exhibition by saying this:

American Hall was engaged, draped, and somewhat inartistically extemporized into an art gallery. A confiding gas-fitter was discovered who engaged to put in the pipe and fixtures and remove them at the close of the exhibition at a merely nominal expense. The secretary of the gas company, Mr. O.G. Steele, with characteristic liberality, contracted to make no charge for the lighting of the hall, and the Hon. William G. Fargo neglected to collect the express bills for bringing pictures from New York and returning them to their owners. Members of the committee waited on those of our citizens who were owners of paintings and begged them for the exhibition. Portraits of citizens were borrowed, artists at home and abroad were asked to contribute, and as a result the hall was strewn with works of art. The days preceding the opening were busy and anxious ones. Members of the committee organized by the indefatigable Sellstedt, who adds to artistic genius the rare ambition to work for the public without compensation brought order out of chaos and the pictures at last were hung. Would anybody come to see them?⁴²

Warren could not know how successful the event would become. Eighty people of high society were invited and attended the exhibition that night. In total there were 285

³⁹ A Buffalo based philanthropic organization; not the same as the Young Men's Christian Association

⁴⁰ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Art in Buffalo* (The Matthews-Northrup works, 1910). p. 35

⁴¹ Warren was president of the Young Men's Association for its 25th year.

⁴² Willis O. Chapin and Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy: A Historical Sketch* (Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1899). p. 10

paintings and eight sculptures were displayed and a profit of \$835. Today, that would equate to roughly over \$28,000.

With the success of the exhibition, the public wanted to see more art. There had been an attempt by Mr. Josiah Humphrey to start a gallery in Rochester, but it ended up failing. The idea of a permanent gallery in Buffalo came after and was backed by Thomas Le Clear, the most prominent artist at this time in Buffalo. The idea of just a gallery opening worried some that it would fail like the one in Rochester, so it was discussed to make this new institution an association or academy. To make this new institution possible, Le Clear and Humphrey met with H. Ewers Tallmadge, a young lawyer and secretary of the YMA's exhibition. At this meeting, the men worked to establish a constitution and bylaws for the theoretical association. They had also created a list of influential men and suspected art lovers to join in the creation of the new association.

On November 10th, Le Clear met Humphrey at the office of his friend and fellow lawyer, Henry W. Rogers. Here, the three men finalized the list of men and decided on gathering them to further discuss the founding of the proposed art association. "The following gentlemen met at 7 P.M., November 11th [1862], in Messrs. Bowen & Rogers' office, at 28 Erie Street: Henry W. Rogers, John S. Ganson, Orsamus H. Marshall, Grosvenor W. Heacock, Josiah Humphrey, George S. Hazard, John Allen Jr., Thomas Le Clear, Sylvester F. Mixer, Harmon S. Cutting, James M. Smith, L.G. Sellstedt, Silas H. Fish, H. Ewers Tallmadge, and Anson G. Chester. Mr. O.H. Marshall was made chairman of the meeting and Anson G. Chester, secretary".⁴³ In this meeting, the

⁴³ Ibid. p. 40-41

Academy of Fine Arts was cultivated. However, Anson G. Chester proposed the name be changed to the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. The previous constitution and bylaws created by Le Clear, Humphrey, and Tallmadge were also discussed, amended, and adopted. Sellstedt shares the elected officers:

The following officers were elected to serve for one year: Henry W. Rogers, president; George S. Hazard, James M. Smith, and George B. Hibbard, vice-presidents; Josiah Humphrey, corresponding secretary; H. Ewers Tallmadge recording secretary; John Allen Jr., treasurer. Sixteen curators were chosen to serve for two years, viz: Millard Fillmore, Sherman S. Jewett, Grosvenor W. Heacock, John S. Ganson, O.H. Marshall, L.G. Sellstedt, W.H. Beard, S.V.R. Watson, William Dorsheimer, Silas H. Fish, Asher P. Nichols, Sylvester F. Mixer, W. Wilkeson, Harmon S. Cutting, Thomas Le Clear, Anson G. Chester, and George B. Hibbard. All but Mr. Hibbard consented to serve, and Bronson C. Rumsey was chosen in his place. Thus the infant was baptized and left in care of its sponsors.⁴⁴

To start off the Academy's art collection, Humphrey had moved his collection from Rochester and Le Clear brought some pieces from New York City. Once the officers were in place and art works were on display, a date for the formal inauguration was decided and set for December 23, 1862, in the Academy's rented space in the Arcade Building. On that night, the rooms of the Academy were filled with music, art lovers and guests of high influence. Former president Millard Fillmore, chairman of the committee of reception, formally introduced Henry W. Rogers as the Academy's President. When the inauguration had come to an end, the celebration continued with reception at Mr. Rogers' home. Buffalo was the country's fourth city to be home to a public art gallery, following Philadelphia, Boston, and Hartford.

It was requested by Mr. Humphrey that the Academy raised \$6,000 to purchase a painting "The Departure of the Pilgrims from Delftshaven for America, A.D. 1620" by

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 40-41

Charles Lucy, from the collection he had brought from Rochester. It was agreed upon by the officers that spending that much money on just one painting would be outrageous and it would be better to use that much money to purchase multiple paintings. To get this money, some of the officers formed a committee dedicated to obtaining sponsors. In one day, the men had acquired 12 subscribers at \$500 each and later a 13th. With the money from the new subscribers, the Academy purchased 11 works from Mr. Humphrey's collection.⁴⁵ "Some of the pictures which Mr. Humphrey had brought to the Gallery were the property of Mr. Frodsham of New York, the former being his agent. 'The Departure of the Pilgrims,' by Lucy, was Mr. Charles Frodsham's property. That the hope of selling this picture had been the principal object in offering to bring the collection to Buffalo was evident by the condition imposed by Mr. Humphrey, that \$6,000 (the exact sum asked for) must be provided. Mr. Frodsham was in need of money, and since he could not sell his picture to Buffalo insisted on its return to New York at once".⁴⁶ Losing this painting was a blow to the exhibition's success since it was so large, taking up an entire wall. To compensate for this loss, the Academy purchased "The French Revolution of 1848" by Paul Dominique Philippoteaux for \$3,500 from Humphrey's collection.

Early on, differences arose between Josiah Humphrey and the Academy. He had decided to resign from his position as vice-president under one condition, that Thomas Le Clear took his position. He made it known that Lars Sellstedt was to not take the position, due to an unknown dislike. Sellstedt, instead, was asked to become the

⁴⁵ J. Benjamin Townsend, *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962. Albright-Knox Art Gallery* (Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1962).

⁴⁶ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Art in Buffalo* (The Matthews-Northrup works, 1910). p. 46

Academy's superintendent. At this time the Academy had bi-monthly exhibitions. With this frequency, new works were needed quite regularly and required many trips to New York City to find new art. When Mr. Rogers stepped down as President of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Mr. George S. Hazard succeeded him in 1864. Early in this same year, the Academy's first annual opening took place on February 13th. "The writer remembers with pleasure an incident which took place about this time. This was a visit by the Ministers of several European countries, with Mr. Seward, the United States Secretary of State, who was escorting them on a jaunt through the country. Among the works of art to which special attention was called were Page's 'Venus,' Rothermel's 'St. Anges,' 'Twelfth Night,' and Tenier's 'Village Festival,' these being borrowed from the Cooper Institute of New York".⁴⁷

About a year later, In January 1865, there had been a terrible fire that destroyed the American Hotel that was just across Main Street from the Arcade Building which the Academy had been occupying. "The Art Gallery, being directly opposite, was felt to be in danger, as the heat was so great that the windows were bent, and it seemed as if the building must take fire. In great haste the most important pictures were taken from the walls ready for instant removal, the large canvas, 'The Departure of the Pilgrims,' was rolled up and packed ready for shipping, as the arrangement for its return was pending, and it was never put up again in Buffalo".⁴⁸ The fire made many realize that it was time for the Academy to find a larger and more permanent building. By the generosity of a few prominent citizens, the Academy became the owner of the property of the St. James Hotel. Of course, some renovations, such as exhibition and stage space and

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 50

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 51

offices, had to be made to better accommodate the Academy. The new gallery space officially opened in February.

It was soon realized that the Academy needed more funds. The public's desire to view art was ever growing. The cost of transporting new works to be placed on view at the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy was turning out to be quite expensive. Sellstedt wrote this about the expense of transporting new works:

The expense necessary to carry on successfully a permanent exhibition was found to be too great to render it self-sustaining, especially when the public seemingly continually required new objects of interest to induce their needed attendance. The expense of transporting works of art from New York or elsewhere was great, and even though Mr. William G. Fargo, a liberal contributor to all good endeavors (on one occasion well remembered by the writer, who was an invited guest at the Astor House in New York City, where the representatives of all the express companies were in the habit of lunching), proposed to transport the picture for the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy free of charge, the concession could not be accepted, as the insurance would have to be borne by the Academy, for the express companies could not be expected to be responsible in the matter of insurance.⁴⁹

Sellstedt also includes that it was difficult to get express companies to deliver or transport large paintings, no matter the price. It was a little later on that a new option, Merchants Despatch, was discovered and used to move artwork. This new transportation option was equally as safe as a regular express company, it was cheaper, but it took longer to get pieces to where they needed to be. "Still there remained the insurance on the paintings, which in such a building was heavy, and other contingent matters, such as care, heating, lighting, etc., made the expense far beyond the usual income".⁵⁰ To combat the need for money, it was decided to have a meeting to discuss a plan on raising funds to be able to afford everything mentioned previously.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 51

⁵⁰ Ibid. p 55

The men had concluded that a total of \$700 annually was needed for insurance and an additional \$10,000 was to be raised to pay for all other costs.

To help get to the required total, Mr. Sherman S. Jewett, then the president of the Academy elected in January 1865, had raised his subscription amount to \$1,000. Following him with the same amount was Bronson C. Rumsey and Henry A. Richmond, Both successful capitalists in Buffalo. The committee in charge of raising the money struggled to get the remaining \$7,000. Mr. Jewett was told about this struggle and proceeded to raise his subscription to \$10,000. This generous donation had given the committee a new wind and they had raised their new goal to reach \$20,000. Over time this goal was reached and Mr. Jewett's \$10,000 was set aside to become the "Jewett Picture Fund".

Each annual opening of the Academy included the official inauguration of that year's President. It became a tradition for a principal address and a poem to be read each year. Poppenberg's band also was a popular choice for music at this annual event. The decennial anniversary of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy was in 1872. The previous year's President, William Pryor Letchworth⁵¹ was reelected for another year long term. This year was important for Lars Sellstedt because one of his own paintings was gifted to the Academy. Sellstedt included this section written by the Academy's historian Willis O. Chapin:

At this meeting the fine portrait of Mr. Sellstedt in his studio, painted by himself, was unveiled and formally presented to the Academy; a merited recognition of Mr. Sellstedt's long and faithful services to the institution. This portrait had been exhibited in the New York Academy of Design, where it had been greatly admired. In 1876, it was sent to Philadelphia with Bread's 'March of Silenus,' as Buffalo's contribution to the exhibit of

⁵¹ Businessman and donator of the land of Letchworth State Park in New York

the Centennial Exhibition. The portrait was purchased from Mr. Sellstedt for \$1,000 and presented to the Academy by the following gentlemen : -- Hon. Millard Fillmore, John Allen, Jr., S. S. Jewett, Bronson C. Rumsey, P. P. Pratt, Dr. T. F. Rochester, Austin Hart, Albert H. Tracy, William G. Fargo, Henry A. Richmond, William Wilkeson, S. S. Rogers, Josiah Letchworth, James Brayley, Joseph Warren, David Gray, Gen. R. L. Howard, and William Pryor Letchworth.⁵²

Sellstedt added in his autobiography that he was extremely honored and touched to be praised by his fellow artists.

In 1876, Sellstedt was elected President of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. In that same year, Joseph Warren, the former President of the Young Men's Association and longtime friend of the Academy passed away. "At a meeting held November 15, 1876, resolutions on the death of Mr. Warren were passed. Instrumental in establishing the permanent funds of the Academy and at all times a zealous worker on its behalf, Mr. Warren possessed the happy faculty of inspiring others with his own enthusiasm. The Academy possesses a portrait of Mr. Warren, by Sellstedt, given by a private subscriber in 1877".⁵³ It was also around this time that the public began to be dissenting critics of the Academy's collection. It had started to be compared to much older institutions and the American art in the collection was not able to compare to works from foreign countries. At the annual opening of 1876, Sellstedt's address "was a plea for the support of American artists, and for the establishment of an art school in connection with the Academy. American artists were neglected in their own country".⁵⁴ Sellstedt served as President for one more term in 1877.

⁵² Willis O. Chapin and Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy: A Historical Sketch* (Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1899). p. 36-37

⁵³ Ibid. p. 41

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 40

The art school Sellstedt mentioned in his address was originally discussed at a meeting in 1874 called by the then President, William Pryor Letchworth. "Two obstacles had hitherto stood in the way, lack of money to purchase the necessary casts and other accessories needed, and want of room".⁵⁵ To fix these problems, an immediate subscription was taken up at the meeting and a large room used as office space was given to the purpose of the school. A total of \$300 was collected from 15 people. Today this total would be over \$7,000. It was decided that the school would be run by Ammi Farnham⁵⁶ due to his experience with the schools in Munich. The school ran smoothly for the first few months until Mr. Farnham resigned. With no one to replace him, the school faded away. Sellstedt wrote the following about the art school in his book *Art in Buffalo*:

The school was not dead, but sleeping, and revived when the Buffalo Fine Art Academy, in 1887, found shelter with the Young Men's Association, and here one of the rooms not well suited for exhibitions was appropriated to it. New casts were added and the necessary fittings, gas, etc., were paid for out of what remained of the above fund. For a short time the writer acted as critic, but as he could not well give his time and was, in fact, not sufficiently acquainted with proper academic instruction, a regular teacher must be procured. After much trouble, a young artist from Niagara Falls, who had received European instruction in a regular way, was found and he consented to come to Buffalo and rule the school. His name was James Francis Brown, and for some time all went well. The school was well attended by both men and women. Of the former, some were connected with printing establishments who were anxious and earnest in their endeavors to overcome the difficulties of design, so useful in their business, which had already begun to be a necessary part of the daily press requirements, in illustrations demanding artistic skill.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Art in Buffalo* (The Matthews-Northrup works, 1910). p. 62

⁵⁶ A longtime supporter of the Academy

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 63

Two years prior, in 1885, seven individuals, Helen M. Horton, Harriet Taber, Grace Taber, Emma Johnson, Mary Streeter, Mr. Gates, and Mr. Cramer founded the Art Students' Club. They first used a room on Court and Franklin Streets, but soon after starting, membership grew, and they were able to find better accommodations on Allen Street. "In December, 1891, the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, mostly composed of business men who believed in art as a necessary part of advanced culture, believing that that best results would come from a union of the schools, proposed a merger, offering to defray the expense of putting that rooms already secured by the Art Students' Club in a part of the Buffalo Savings Bank, on the corner of Washington and Broadway, into a proper condition for a first-class art school, together with the casts and other belongings of the school hitherto kept by the Academy".⁵⁸ The new merger was thus named "The Art Students' League". "Under the new arrangement the school became self-governing, the Academy appointing an advisory committee and continuing the annual appropriation. Through efficient management the school has become one of the best in the country. A scholarship in the Art Students' League of New York, to be competed for by the students in the Life Class, was established by Mr. John J. Albright".⁵⁹

The first classes of the newly formed Art Students' League started in January of 1892 under the critique and instruction of George Bridgman. Mr. Bridgman was a well-known artist best known for his life and figure drawings. With this new period of growth, the school averaged around 300 students and the departments of Arts and Crafts

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 66-67

⁵⁹ Willis O. Chapin and Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy: A Historical Sketch* (Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1899). p. 50-51

became the best in the country. Many students were able to win prizes from the New York League and other art institutions. Sellstedt spoke of the school and how it compared to others as follows:

This picture of the school, though glowing in color and replete with graceful handling, is in no material sense overdrawn. It is a well-arranged school with classes from the beginning of study. Drawing from the object, the antique as well as life, painting, composition, and modeling are all carefully taught by competent artists, and the results of a season's work as exhibited at the close are as creditable as those of the New York schools. Indeed, there is no reason why they should be relatively inferior, considering the ignorance of accepted beginners compared with the requirements for admission into the more advanced and older institutions, when the pupils are in the care of equally well-instructed artists. When we add to this other important studies in the department of Arts and Crafts, such as wood carving, designs for wall-paper, lace, leather embossment, jewelry, etc., it will be seen that the scope of the school takes in a field much needed in art, -- for Art should embrace *beauty* of every kind. Every human production that contributes to our aesthetic sense, or the gratification of those wants of the soul that lie beyond the necessities of life, should be classed as Fine Art, even though it does not aspire to the loftier reaches of the Muses.⁶⁰

Sellstedt mentions two more art associations founded around this time, The Society of Artists and the Bohemian Sketch Club. The former was brought to life by James Francis Brown via informal chatting and became an official organization through Ammi M. Farnham. Brown served as President and Farnham was vice-president. The society grew to be quite successful. "From the beginning, The Society of Artists has been a popular institution. As its name implies, a large portion of its members are professionally engaged in art, but the greater majority of its 400 supporters are ladies and gentlemen in what is called society, lovers of the beautiful...."⁶¹ The society first held exhibitions only displaying works that consisted of color, but later added black and white pieces and

⁶⁰ Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, *Art in Buffalo* (The Matthews-Northrup works, 1910). p. 68-69

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 70

sculptures. The other society formed in Buffalo was the Bohemian Sketch Club. “The Bohemian Sketch Club was a club of nine members, founded in 1892 that included notable Buffalo artists such as; James Francis Brown, George B. Bridgman, J.W. Bridgman, Raphael Beck, G. Merritt Clark, W.C. Ide, Paul King, H.T. Koerner”.⁶² Unfortunately, due to lack of membership and existing, members traveling to other countries, the club folded around a decade after its founding.

It was at a meeting of the Board of Directors on January 15, 1900, that the plans of moving the Academy to its own new building were discussed. This would become the building of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum that we know today. This exciting plan was made by John Joseph Albright, who had been a long-time active member and officer of the Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts serving in the positions of director, vice-president, and President from 1895 to 1897. The total cost for the construction of a completely new building was expected to be at least \$350,000, which is around \$12.5 million today. “The Board immediately guaranteed sufficient funds to ensure maintenance of the building and unanimously voted to name the new gallery the Albright Art Gallery. Edward B. Green, a local architect of distinction, was engaged to design the building. By 1905, when the building was at last completed at a total cost of \$750,000, the Academy had five purchase funds of \$95,000, a maintenance fund of \$140,000 and a handsome new gallery in the Greek revival style”.⁶³

Original intentions for the gallery were to host the principal art exhibitions for the Pan-American Exposition hosted in Buffalo in May of 1901. The project had taken far

⁶² “Eleck F. Hall,” Meibohm Fine Arts, accessed March 22, 2023, <https://www.meibohmfinearts.com/artists/details/3029>.

⁶³ J. Benjamin Townsend, *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962. Albright-Knox Art Gallery* (Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1962). p. 7

longer than anticipated due to the lack of marble available for the interior and much attention to detail. By the time of the expo, only the outer walls of the main floor were complete. "In working out their designs for the Albright Art Gallery the architects utilized some recently rediscovered constructive principles which were employed by the ancient Greek architects with great refinement and nicety in producing agreeable optical effects".⁶⁴ When everything was officially complete, a formal dedication commenced on May 31, 1905. The following program was followed for the ceremony:

**THE DEDICATION
OF THE ALBRIGHT ART GALLERY**

The new Albright Art Gallery formally will be dedicated Wednesday, May 31, 1905, the ceremonies beginning at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Following is the programme:

MR. RALPH H. PLUMB, President of the **BUFFALO FINE ARTS ACADEMY**, will preside.

The **TEUTONIA LIEDERKRANZ**, the **SÄNGER-BUND**, **ORPHEUS**, and **GUIDO** Societies, with other voices, will first sing Beethoven's chorus: -

"The heavens are telling the Lord's endless glory,
through all the earth His praise is found. The seas
re-echo the marvelous story: O man, repeat that
glorious sound. . . ."

PROFESSOR HORATIO PARKER will conduct the **CHORUS**.

PRESIDENT CHARLES WILLIAM ELIOT will deliver an address on "Beauty and Democracy."

The **CHORUS** will sing an Ode, the words of which were written by **MR. ARTHUR DETMERS**, and the Music composed by **PROFESSOR HORATIO PARKER**.

MR. RICHARD WATSON GILDER will read a Poem entitled, "A Temple of Art."

The ceremonies will close with a Hymn written by **MR. PHILIP BECKER GOETZ**, and sung by the **CHORUS** to the music of Kremser's Dankgebet.

The Art Gallery then will be thrown open to the public.

Image 1: Cropped from page 9 of *Academy Notes*

The Directors and Building Expansions

At the opening of the new building, there were 237 pieces of art, both paintings and sculptures, displayed in the various galleries throughout the two floors. Of those works, only 36 of them were owned by the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. This lack of artwork made the Academy seek out more modern pieces rather than ones created by

⁶⁴ Charles M. Kurtz, ed., *Academy Notes*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Buffalo, New York: The Matthews-Northrup Works, 1905). p. 4

old masters, due to the higher prices. The Director of the Albright Art Gallery at its opening was Charles M. Kurtz. Townsend, author of *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962. Albright-Knox Art Gallery*, wrote the following about Mr. Kurtz:

Although he died only four years later, Kurtz in this brief span accomplished several noteworthy innovations. In January 1906 he brought to Buffalo the first exhibition of *Selected Paintings by American Artists*, which remained an annual feature until 1933. Under his directorship the Albright in 1906 offered the public the first exhibition in America of contemporary German painting; in 1907, a major selection of eighty-five works by the French impressionists, including Pissarro, Renoir, Monet, Sisley, and Degas; and one-man shows of the Spanish painters Zuloaga and Bastista y Sorolla. Kurtz, among the first to recognize photography as an art form, also laid the groundwork for the first *International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography*, featuring the Photo-Secession Group and arranged by Alfred Stieglitz.⁶⁵

Mr. Kurtz's successor was Cornelia Bentley Sage Quinton. She had first come to work at the Albright as an assistant secretary in 1904 and the following year was made assistant to the Director. After Kurtz passed away in March 1909, she carried on the work of Director, but was not made full Director until 1910. She was the first female Director of a major art museum in the United States. She is credited with organizing many of the finest early exhibitions at the Albright and helping add to the gallery's permanent collection. She highlighted many American and International artists in the dozens of exhibitions put on during her career. Famous International celebrities were able to perform and visit at the Albright Art Gallery under the Directorship of Quinton. Some of these celebrities included Anna Pavlova, a world-renowned Russian Prima Ballerina and the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. "Her most heroic if somewhat indiscriminating achievement was the exhibition in September 1916 of over 800 works

⁶⁵ J. Benjamin Townsend, *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962. Albright-Knox Art Gallery* (Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1962). p. 25

of sculpture, representing 168 contemporary American sculptors. The greatest exhibition of its kind ever presented up to that time, it served to make the Academy and all Buffalo aware of the possibilities of this area for future acquisitions".⁶⁶ For her appreciation of French art and displaying it many times at the Albright, in 1920 she received the Cross of the Legion of Honor.⁶⁷ She left her position as Director of the Albright Art Gallery in 1924 to become Director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, an art museum in San Francisco.

The next Director was William M. Hekking. Mr. Hekking was very dedicated to the idea of public education and during his time as Director of the Albright he opened the gallery to the public for free and added programs for public schools. During Hekking's Directorship, Colonel Charles Clifton donated several thousands of dollars to the Albright to go towards its public education initiative, just prior to his passing in 1927. With this donation, the abandoned building that once housed the Buffalo Society of Natural Science, was renovated and turned into a permanent museum place for the art school to conduct classes. It was renamed Clifton Hall and opened to the public in 1929. Hekking also helped the Albright grow its collection with the help of a member of the Art Committee and one of the directors of the Academy's Board, A. Conger Goodyear. Together they focused on acquiring mostly sculptures and founded the Fellows of Life Fund, for members subscribing one thousand dollars. The remainder of Hekking's time as Director, until his resignation in 1931, was spent adding to the collection and working more on public education.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 26

⁶⁷ A high honor given by the highest French order of merit

The gallery continued its work for public education with its next Director, Gordon B. Washburn. Under Washburn “a loan department and docentry service were established to assist public schools and the State University College at Buffalo in the teaching of art appreciation. Busses brought children from the schools to the Gallery where members of the staff guided them on tours. Free classes in creative art were offered and biannual exhibition of work done in these classes circulated nationally”.⁶⁸ In 1933, a financial gift was donated by Grace Millard Knox and her son Seymour H. Knox Jr. With this money, one of the main galleries was converted into a reference library to be used by anyone. Until the start of World War II, the gallery continued to work with local schools to educate students on art and curated nine educational exhibitions between 1939 and 1942. “Washburn’s most lasting contribution to the museum and its collection, however, was the establishment of the Room of Contemporary Art in January 1939. The Room was envisioned as both a physical site devoted to a rotating presentation of new art within the museum and a means to reinvigorate and reaffirm the museum’s collecting strategy”.⁶⁹ Washburn resigned to become the Director of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in 1942.

Dr. Andrew C. Ritchie was the next Director of the gallery from 1942 to 1949. The first few years in this position were tough, being during the majority of World War II. Most able-bodied men were enlisted in the military leaving behind a much smaller staff than the gallery was used to. Other problems at this time included insufficient funds, restricted programs for exhibitions, and overall lack of character in the galleries. Dr.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 27

⁶⁹ “Gordon B. Washburn,” Gordon B. Washburn | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://buffaloakg.org/person/gordon-b-washburn>.

Ritchie wanted to keep public education in the time of war as normal as possible. Catering to the war effort, the Albright Art School would hold night classes and exhibitions focused on aspects of the war. For example, in November 1942 the *Army P-39 Airacobra* was an exhibition displaying the local Bell Aircraft Corporation and the design of the Airacobra. "From July 1945 to January 1946, Ritchie took a leave of absence from the museum to aid in the recovery of looted art as Chief of the Fine Arts, Monuments, and Archives Section and Representative Commanding General for the United States Forces in Austria. In this role, he was responsible for the restitution of works of art and furniture taken during the war for Adolf Hitler's collection. For these achievements, he received the Cross of the French Legion of Honor".⁷⁰ Dr. Ritchie resigned in January of 1949 to become the new Director of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art.

For the next roughly six years, the Albright Art Gallery was directed by Edgar C. Schenck. Prior to this position, Schenck was the head of the Smith College Art Museum. Under Schenck, the Gallery received funding from the City's Common Council to fix the building's damaged roof, addressed the lack of parking, revamped the tour and lecture programs, added professional art history and studio classes with help from Buffalo State and the University at Buffalo, and continued to grow the art collection. The growth of the collection in the early 1950s was so large that the position of Curator of Collections was added to the staff to manage the art. Schenck was also credited with being one of the founding members of the Intermuseum Conservation Association, the

⁷⁰ "Dr. Andrew C. Ritchie," Dr. Andrew C. Ritchie | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://buffaloakg.org/person/dr-andrew-c-ritchie>.

first non-profit regional art conservation center in the United States. He was also the Director during the Galleries fiftieth anniversary in 1955. To celebrate, new exhibitions were put on in May and June. “The featured event of the anniversary year was *50 Paintings 1905-1955*, composed of loans from other museums and private collectors, with a catalogue containing an introduction by Robert Goldwater⁷¹.”⁷² Schenck left the Albright to become Director of the Brooklyn Museum.

The successor of Edgar Schenck was Gordon M. Smith. Before becoming Director of the Albright Art Gallery in September of 1955, he was the head of the Currier Gallery in Manchester, New Hampshire. Smith collaborated with Seymour H. Knox Jr., President of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy starting in 1938, to expand the Contemporary and Abstract Expressionist collections. The acquisitions during this period at the Gallery were displayed and rotated in the Room of Contemporary Art. Under Smith’s leadership the Gallery’s exhibition and education programs expanded and improved, and he color slide collection was started and gained over 6,500 images by the early 1960s. The early 1960s also brought one of the largest additions to the Gallery building. Gordon Smith retired from his position as Director in 1973 and coincidentally was named Director Emeritus.

It was Smith who wanted to modernize the Gallery by adding some much-needed improvements. “Noting that the art gallery must compete today with other attractions in the form of the movies, radio, television, and family car (or cars), he called for new construction that would fill the Gallery’s needs: an auditorium, additional exhibition

⁷¹ An art historian and scholar.

⁷² J. Benjamin Townsend, *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1862-1962. Albright-Knox Art Gallery* (Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1962). p. 33

space, pleasant relaxation areas, and a restaurant. To meet this crisis, a special Building Committee, under the chairmanship of Theodore C. Jewett, proceeded at once to negotiate with architects and contractors”.⁷³ The project first made headway in 1958 when a native Buffalonian architect, Gordon Bunshaft, was tasked with creating the designs for what would be the new addition. In the following year, using land on the south side of the Gallery was approved by the Common Council of the City and the Mayor. The estimated amount of this project, renovations of the original building and construction of the new, was \$1.7 million. Seymour H. Knox Jr. pledged one million dollars at first toward the final cost and later increased it to 1.4 million. To help raise the rest of the necessary funds, the Building Fund Committee was created. A total of \$114,000 was raised, 100,000 from the Board of Directors and the rest from the Members’ Advisory Council.

With everything in order, it was finally time to start this very anticipated project. “The new Gallery had ceased to be a probability and was a certainty. Ground for the new building was broken on July 6, 1960. By mid-August not only had the area for the new addition been cleared and the excavation for the basement and sub-basement been completed but the structural bases for the auditorium had been poured”.⁷⁴ The Gallery had been given a new name in recognition of Seymour H. Knox Jr.’s dedication and generosity. On August 7, 1961, it was renamed the Albright-Knox Art Gallery by the Academy’s Board. Once the new addition was complete, so many new advancements were made. The new auditorium could seat 350 people, new offices for staff were built looking into the sculpture garden, a gallery in the basement for the contemporary

⁷³ Ibid. p. 35

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 95

collection with the space of 6,000 square-feet, and a restaurant were among the major features.

The official opening and dedication of the Albright-Knox was held from January 18 to January 21, 1962. To celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, a concert, "An Hour of Mozart" was played by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on the evening of the 18th. In the afternoon on the 19th, the dedication ceremonies started with speeches given by New York Governor, Nelson A. Rockefeller and chairman Welles V. Moot. A gold master key was presented to Mr. Knox by the architect of the new addition, Gordon Burnshaft. Following the ceremonies in the auditorium, the new basement gallery opened. That night a private dinner was held at the Country Club of Buffalo and was hosted by the President and Board of Directors of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. On January 20th, a Symposium called *Pioneering in Art Collecting*. Due to a large crowd of around 1,000 people, the Symposium was held at the University at Buffalo. Guest speakers included, architect Kenzo Tange, poet and critic, Sir Herbert Read, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston, James Johnson Sweeney, Director of the Department of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute, Gordon B. Washburn, and Director of the Municipal Museums Amsterdam, W. J. H. B. Sandberg. Later that afternoon these five men with the addition of Alfred H. Barr Jr., Gordon Bunshaft, and Seymour H. Knox, were presented honorary degrees from the University at Buffalo. The evening of the 20th held the Centennial Ball which was hosted by the Members' Advisory Council. "Sunday afternoon and evening, January 21: the

Public Opening drew large crowds. Total attendance exceeded 250,000 by April 1, 1962, shattering previous records”.⁷⁵

The next Director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery was Robert T. Buck Jr. Buck is credited with strengthening the education program and in 1979 supervised the major collection catalog *Albright-Knox Art Gallery: Painting and Sculpture from Antiquity to 1942*. “Under his leadership, the Albright-Knox maintained ambitious acquisitions and exhibition programs and obtained a substantial increase in grants, particularly from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)”.⁷⁶ Buck organized a handful of retrospective exhibitions on artists including Richard Diebenkorn, Sonia Delaunay, Sam Francis, Cleve Gray, and Fernand Léger. He was a member of many arts related committees on national, state and local levels. In 1976, started his service on the New York Council for the Humanities. Two years later, he was elected as a trustee of the Association of Art Museum Directors and served in the positions of vice president and secretary. In the same year, Buck was appointed commissioner for the United States pavilion at the Venice Biennale.⁷⁷ He left the Albright-Knox in 1983 to become the Director of the Brooklyn Museum.

Before his position as Director of the Albright-Knox, Douglas G. Schultz had been working at the Gallery in the Curatorial Department and was chief curator by 1980. He has been the longest serving Director holding the position from December 9, 1983, to October 1, 2002. Over the almost twenty years as Director the Gallery acquired over

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 123

⁷⁶ “Robert T. Buck, Jr.,” Robert T. Buck, Jr. | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://buffaloakg.org/person/robert-t-buck-jr>.

⁷⁷ An annual international curatorial exhibition hosted in Venice, Italy.

1,200 pieces of contemporary art. It also went under a \$8.4 million renovation and 18 different exhibitions under Schultz's leadership. Some highlighted artists for these were Antoni Tàpies, Claude Monet, Chryssa, and a traveling exhibit on Robert Motherwell. "The 1998 renovation project replaced the air-handling systems in the 1905 and 1962 Buildings, equipping the museum with then–state-of-the-art heating, air-conditioning, and humidity controls that met strict guidelines and complied with recognized museum standards for the conservation of the museum's extraordinary collection. Earlier, in 1992, Schultz oversaw the renovation of Clifton Hall, which had served as the Albright Art School from 1929 to 1959 before becoming the property of Buffalo State until 1988".⁷⁸ After decades of service to the Albright-Knox, Schultz officially retired in 2002.

The tenth Director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery was Louis Grachos, serving from December 2002 to December 2012. During his time at the Albright-Knox, Grachos focused his time on exploring the existing art collection and organized many successful exhibitions. The most notable being *Extreme Abstraction* in 2005, covering the history and future of abstract art. This exhibition was so large that it expanded throughout the entire Gallery's campus. Other exhibitions he organized include *Remix*, *Artists in Depth*, and *Beyond/In Western New York*. Over the decade of his leadership, the Gallery's art purchase endowment expanded from \$19.2 million to \$85.9 million and the collection gained 1,100 more pieces. He also worked to grow the relationship between the Gallery and the Buffalo community. "New initiatives included the school-tour program "Art'scool", which expanded the museum's reach from around 7,000 students a year from Buffalo's city schools to nearly 18,000 students a year from rural, urban, and

⁷⁸ Ibid.

suburban districts across Western New York, and M&T FIRST FRIDAYS @ THE GALLERY, which pairs free admission to portions of the museum with special programs and performances”.⁷⁹ In 2007, the Board of Directors, with support from Grachos, decided to deaccession over 200 works in the collection that no longer fit the Gallery’s mission of collecting modern art. In December of 2012, Grachos left the Albright-Knox to become the first Director of the AMOA-Arthouse in Austin, Texas, now known as The Contemporary Austin.

The current Director, Janne Sirén, is celebrating his tenth-year anniversary in April of 2023. He joined the Gallery in April of 2013 as the Peggy Pierce Elfvin Director. Prior to this position, he was Director of Finland’s Helsinki Art Museum. Dr. Sirén helped initiate the following exhibitions and more including *Anselm Kiefer: Beyond Landscape*, *Monet and the Impressionist Revolution, 1860–1910*, *Picasso: The Artist and His Models*, *Out of Sight! Art of the Senses*, and *We the People: New Art from the Collection*. Sirén earned his undergraduate degree in Art History from the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the New York University Institute of Fine Arts. Between 2013 and 2014, Sirén presented a lecture series titled *All About Museums: A Brief History from Renaissance Cabinets of Curiosity to Contemporary Hubs of Creativity, 1400–Present*. This six-lecture series was dedicated to teaching the audience about the history and development of museums.

Under Sirén’s leadership, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery officially changed its name to the Buffalo AKG Art Museum. “Over the course of a decade of his leadership,

⁷⁹ “Louis Grachos,” Louis Grachos | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://buffaloakg.org/person/louis-grachos>.

the museum has embarked upon the most significant campus expansion and development project in its 160-year history, which will culminate in the opening in spring 2023 of the new Buffalo AKG Art Museum, designed by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu".⁸⁰ This new addition is generously funded by lead patron, Jeffery Gundlach, giving \$65 million dollars to the capital campaign. Following the pattern of the previous addition, the new addition will be named The Jeffrey E. Gundlach Building. The addition will add over 30,000 square feet of gallery space, create a covered indoor Town Square in the Sculpture Garden and new underground parking. The groundbreaking for this project was held on November 22, 2019, and the official opening of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum will be in June of 2023.

⁸⁰ "Janne Sirén," Janne Sirén | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://buffaloakg.org/about/our-team/staff/janne-siren-phd>.

Chapter 6: Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: From Sailor to Artist; a 3D exhibition

Being able to curate an exhibition to showcase Sellstedt's work was at times difficult, but extremely worthwhile. For about the first two months of writing and researching, I was unsure if I would be able to use a physical space or not. As a current intern at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, I was offered a handful of pull-out drawer displays in a study room on the first floor. However, this reality was not meant to be as it would be too difficult to be able to borrow the paintings and have the space for any of them. After a surprisingly short search on the internet, I was able to find a website with the software to curate and display an exhibition.

Kunstmatrix⁸¹ is a German software company operating in Berlin. The beginning of the company started in 2007 when Christoph Lauterbach and Hartwig Bentele partnered to use their programming and related skills to create a virtual space for art. They were the first site to display self-curated exhibitions, use augmented reality in their app, and looking through galleries in virtual reality. Over the years, the company grew to focus on small galleries and artists internationally. Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, Kunstmatrix has been the leader in virtual exhibitions.

Their website allows one to create exhibitions with art images and select works to be placed in a 3-D gallery space. This can be done simply by uploading images and filling out basic information about the piece such as the title, artist, year created, dimensions, and media used. When adding art to your account, there are different display options including the addition of a frame with preselected thickness and ability to

⁸¹ Kunst is the German word for art.

choose the color and the option of matting the piece. For actual 3-D art such as sculptures, you have the ability to add files to give the piece its geometry and textures. There are eight different sized pedestals in either white or shades of gray that can be added to hold sculptures in your virtual gallery as well.

There are multiple shapes and styles of gallery spaces to choose from and select models are able to be attached to others to create a more unique setting. Users are also able to choose the color of the walls in the gallery. These options allow the curator to be extremely creative when choosing the space they want to display their works in. The default plan for the website is free to use, but only allows you to upload up to ten artworks and no public exhibitions. The next plan is the Basic which is twelve dollars monthly which allows up to 50 pieces and 5 public 3-D exhibitions. I did end up purchasing this plan in order to share my exhibition with the public. The remaining plans are Regular, 30 dollars monthly with 250 pieces and 10 exhibitions, Professional, 60 dollars monthly with 500 pieces and 50 exhibitions, Professional +, 90 dollars monthly with 1000 pieces and 50 exhibitions, Professional ++, 120 dollars monthly with 1500 pieces and 75 exhibitions, and lastly Professional +++ for 150 dollars monthly, up to 2000 pieces, and 75 exhibitions.

To get my exhibition started, I uploaded paintings that were already digitized and online from the collections of the Burchfield Penney Art Center and the Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Of the twenty-seven paintings displayed, eleven were from the two collections, and the remaining sixteen are cropped from Sellstedt's biography. The images from the paintings in the two collections are much clearer than the others. I was also able to add the correct dimensions so the paintings can be displayed with the

accurate size. One of my main challenges was finding more pieces of Sellstedt's to display. Many of his paintings' whereabouts are unknown, so they are not digitized online. To solve this, I cropped the images of the paintings throughout his biography. The majority of them were shown in black and white and knowing that they were actually painted in color, I had to use a free photo editing program that could colorize black and white images. This process was trial and error because the first few websites I used did not colorize the images correctly. I ended up finding Palette.fm, which colorized the paintings in a way that looks authentic.

With not being able to see the paintings in person or professionally digitized, it was difficult to know if they are colorized accurately. The other challenge with getting these paintings to look true to the real works was the sizing. With the images of the paintings being placed throughout the biography, only the title and year were given. The dimensions were not given, thus making it difficult to have these paintings look correct. I did end up having to estimate the sizes of these pieces, but I believe that the finished products look as true to the physical paintings as possible without having all the necessary details.

To start curating the exhibition, I had to select all the pieces I wanted to display. In total I used twenty-seven paintings. Most of the works are Sellstedt, as well as two paintings by William Wilgus, one by Thomas Le Clear, and one by William Holbrook Beard. The different galleries have the capability of holding various amounts of works. The design I used allowed up to fifty pieces to be placed on the walls and had a minimum of thirty default spaces. To curate the exhibition, you can click and drag a painting to one of the numbered spaces. There is even an option to double hang pieces.

When adding the paintings into the gallery, I did not have a planned layout I wanted to follow from the start. I realized that it is common to not know what route you would want to follow until all of the pieces are displayed together based on helping with the layout of an exhibition at the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

I did know that I wanted his largest self-portrait to be the center of attention and placed it in the first space on a protruding wall. After this I added paintings around the entire 3-D space to see what they would all look like on the walls. When choosing what pieces should go together, I also knew that I wanted to spread the different themes throughout the space instead of grouping them together. I wanted the paintings to tell the story of the different parts of his life. The portraits, ships, and landscapes have all been placed in a way that colors play off of each other and there is no staircasing of paintings. This is when paintings decrease in size going out to the sides of walls. I learned that it was important to remember this step when helping to hang a show at the Burchfield Penney Art Gallery during my internship.

Another design choice I was sure of was to double hang the portraits done by Sellstedt of Le Clear and Bread with their own paintings. I felt that an example of their work should be included in my exhibition since they played an important role in the spacing of art in the city of Buffalo. I also included two works by Wilgus, both of which are among his best works. Unfortunately, I was not able to find a portrait of Wilgus. There were two portraits included of Sellstedt's second wife, Caroline Scott and her father William K. Scott, the first licensed M.D. in New York, together. I placed the images closely together to show that the two had some kind of relationship.

Once I moved the pieces into the spaces, I thought they looked best, I used the measuring tool to make sure that everything was evenly placed and had a center point at the same height. With the company being German, the measurements were set in meters. I set all the paintings to have a center point at 1.5 meters which is roughly 59 inches. This is an ideal height because the average eye level is around 58 to 60 inches. Most galleries I have been to or help hang artwork in use 60 inches as their eye level. After I double checked that all the pieces were in the right places and heights, I made the exhibition public. After this I realized that I had added one painting twice and had to remove the duplicate. This is also when I had realized that frames could be added and I edited most of the paintings to include them. There are no labels displayed on the walls next to the pieces, but if you move your cursor on a computer or click on a piece on the mobile version, a label will appear. To promote my exhibition, I added the link on some of my personal social media accounts. Within the first few hours of it being available, I had family and friends letting me know how much they loved the exhibition! There is no way to see how many people view the gallery, but hopefully it can reach more than just an audience I know personally.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Art has had quite a diverse cultural impact within the Buffalo community during the nineteenth century than it does today. Today there is a vastly different number of local artists and different media used compared to those in the nineteenth century. However, both today's art and art from 160 years ago have their own significance. The world was a different place in Sellstedt's time. Art from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries served different purposes such as preserving one's image in a portrait or a hobby of passion to follow in a time before electronics.

Before even starting my project, it took me a while to find the right topic. Stumbling upon Sellstedt's work amid searching about art in early Buffalo was the light at the end of the tunnel. I had known immediately that this man's story and work was what I wanted to research and share. When starting my research, I did not know how interesting Lars Sellstedt was. After reading the multiple books he had personally written, I felt as though I had known him and those that actually knew him in his lifetime had such a loyal and dedicated man in their life. Through my research, I was able to answer the questions I had asked myself previously: What is the best possible way I can showcase Sellstedt's life and works? And how can I share his impact on the art community in Buffalo? I was able to create an exhibition of some of his works and retell his life's story in this project.

Personally, the most rewarding part of my research is allowing Sellstedt's story to be told and remembered. By exhibiting his paintings in my digital exhibition, I have been able to share his work with the world again. I do wish there was a way to find his missing paintings, but the ones photographed in his autobiography are the closest to the

physical works we have besides the paintings in local museum collections.

Unfortunately, because there is no known catalog of all his work, there is no accurate number of how many paintings he created. My exhibition only displays 27 paintings, but with his lengthy career, I would not doubt the number to be well into the hundreds.

Sellstedt was able to live the American dream before the term was first used. Immigrating at the youthful age of 15, learning a new language, a new career, and starting a new life entirely, he accomplished what so many would later come to the United States to achieve. In his autobiography, Sellstedt ends by saying “My self-imposed task is ended. Looking back, I can see much that might have been and is not.... I might have been a better painter had I had the early training needed to become one. Ambition I had, high standard was mine, too high, perhaps, for my limited powers. In one thing, however, I have not failed; I have not failed in my loyalty to the pure, the good, the beautiful in Art”.⁸² These words summarize the life of one Buffalo’s foremost painters of the nineteenth century. He lived a life to be proud of, one that will be remembered for years to come.

⁸² Sellstedt, Lars Gustaf. From Forecastle to Academy, Sailor and Artist: Autobiography by Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, N. A.. United States: Matthews-Northrup works, 1904. p. 352-353.

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Appendix A

Supporting Images



HOMESTEAD OF DR. WILLIAM K. SCOTT, NO. 78 W. MOHAWK STREET.
UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1911, THE HOME AND STUDIO OF DR. SCOTT'S SON-IN-LAW, LARS G. SELLSTEDT.

Image 2: Courtesy of The Picture Book of Earlier Buffalo.



IN THE OLD SELLSTEDT HOUSE; A CORNER IN BUFFALO'S MOST FAMOUS STUDIO.

Image 3: Courtesy of The Picture Book of Earlier Buffalo.

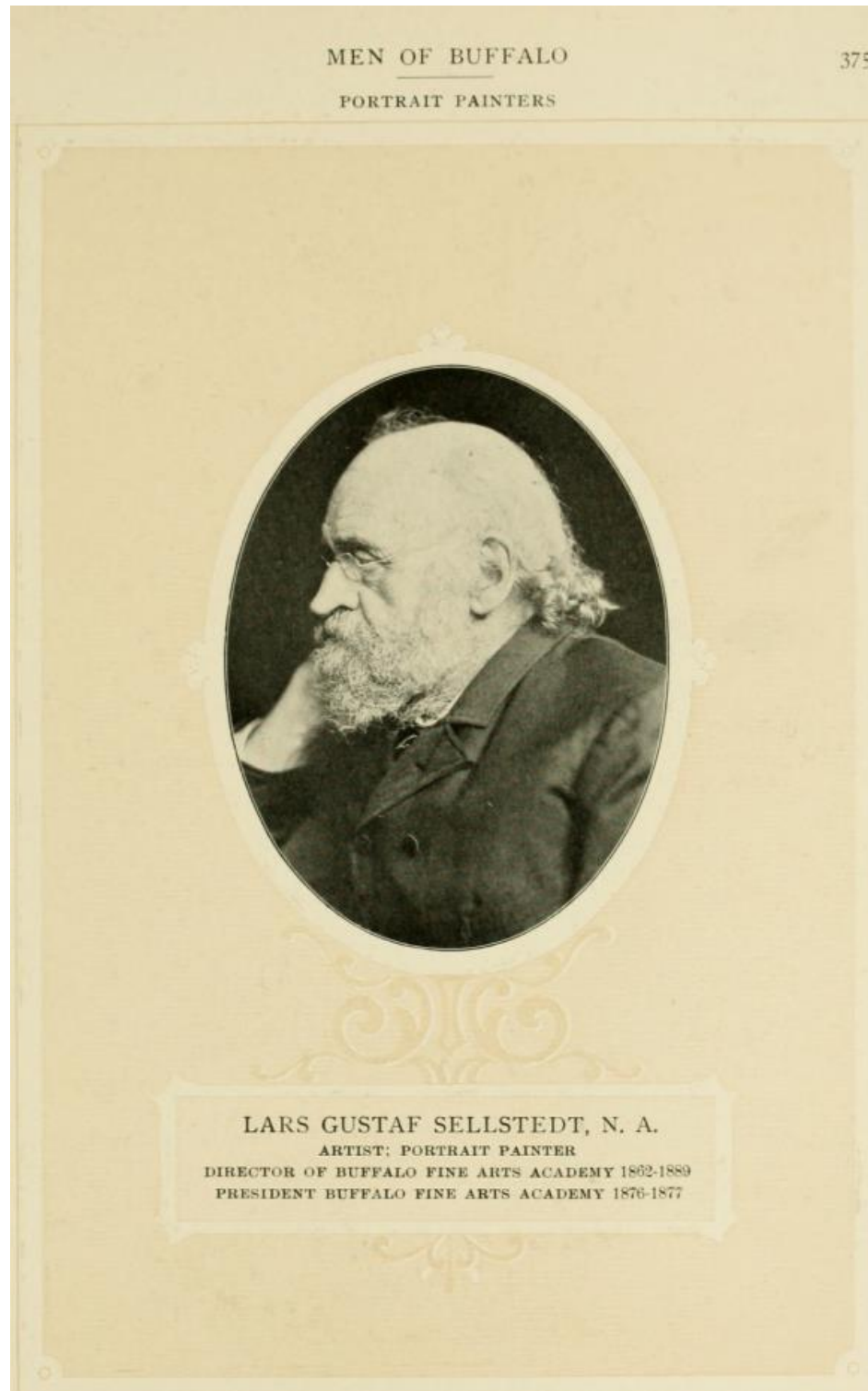


Image 4: Courtesy of Men of Buffalo: A Collection of Portraits of Men Who Deserve to Rank as Typical Representatives of the Best Citizenship.



Image 5: “Final water color rendering of the new addition by George c. Rudolph, 1960”. Courtesy of *100: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy*.



Image 6: “Sketch of the campus of the new Buffalo AKG Art Museum” 2018
 Courtesy of <https://buffaloakg.org/timelines/project-history>

Appendix B

Images of "Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: From Sailor to Artist"

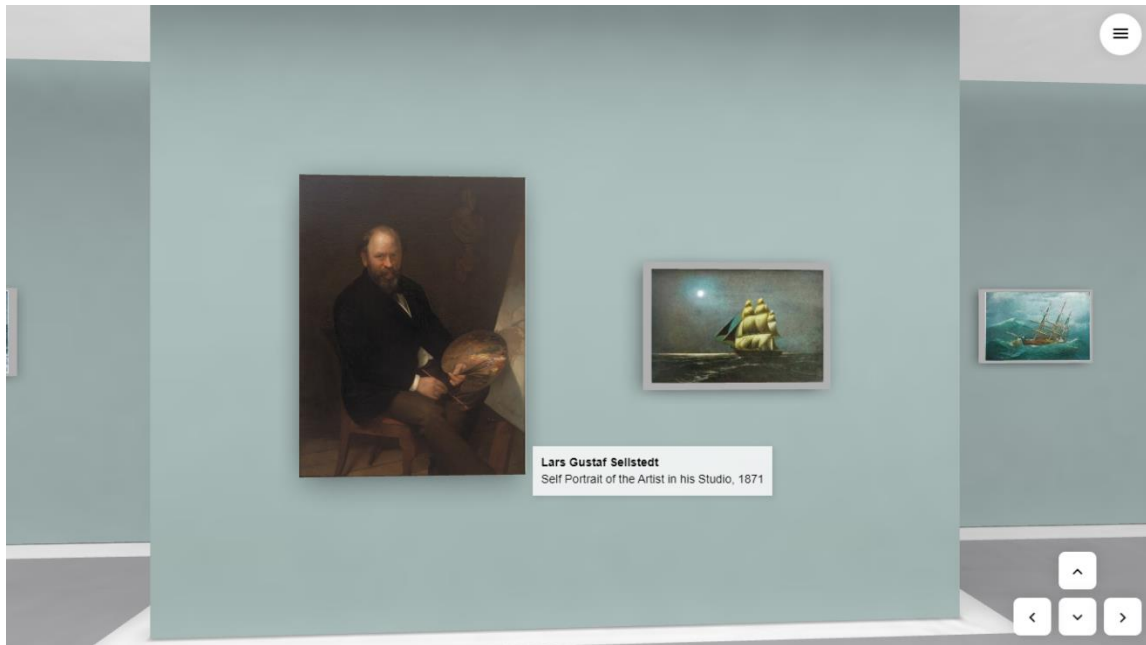


Image 7: Screenshot of the main wall of my digital exhibition *Lars Gustaf Sellstedt: From Sailor to Artist*, showing painting with label.

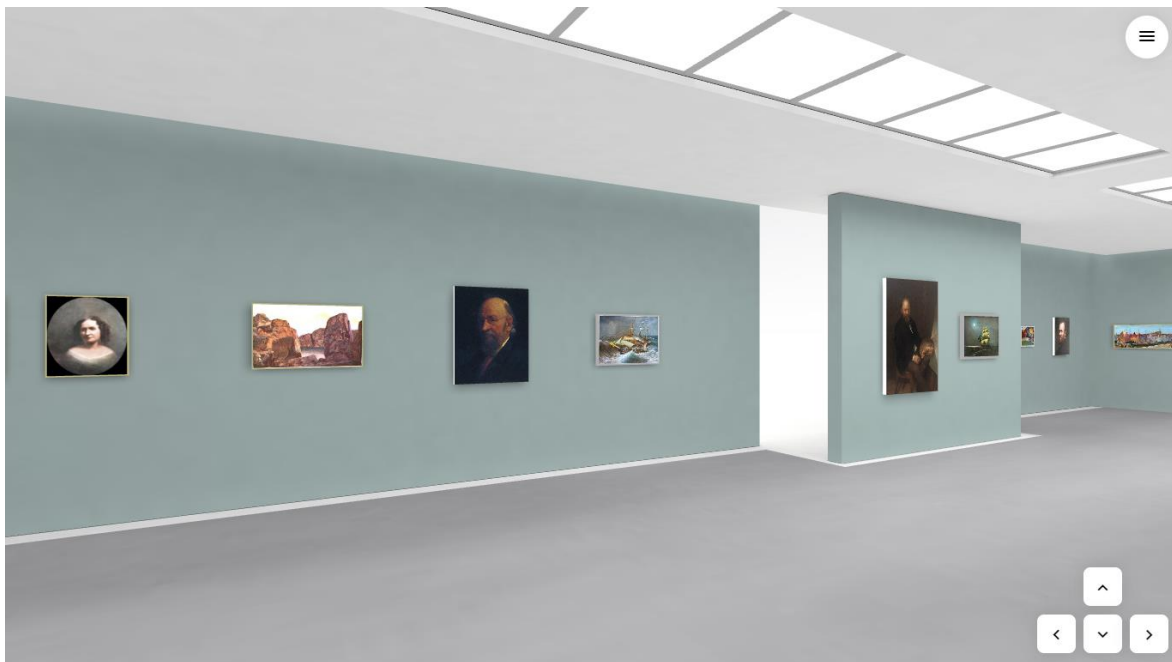


Image 8: A different angle of my exhibition.

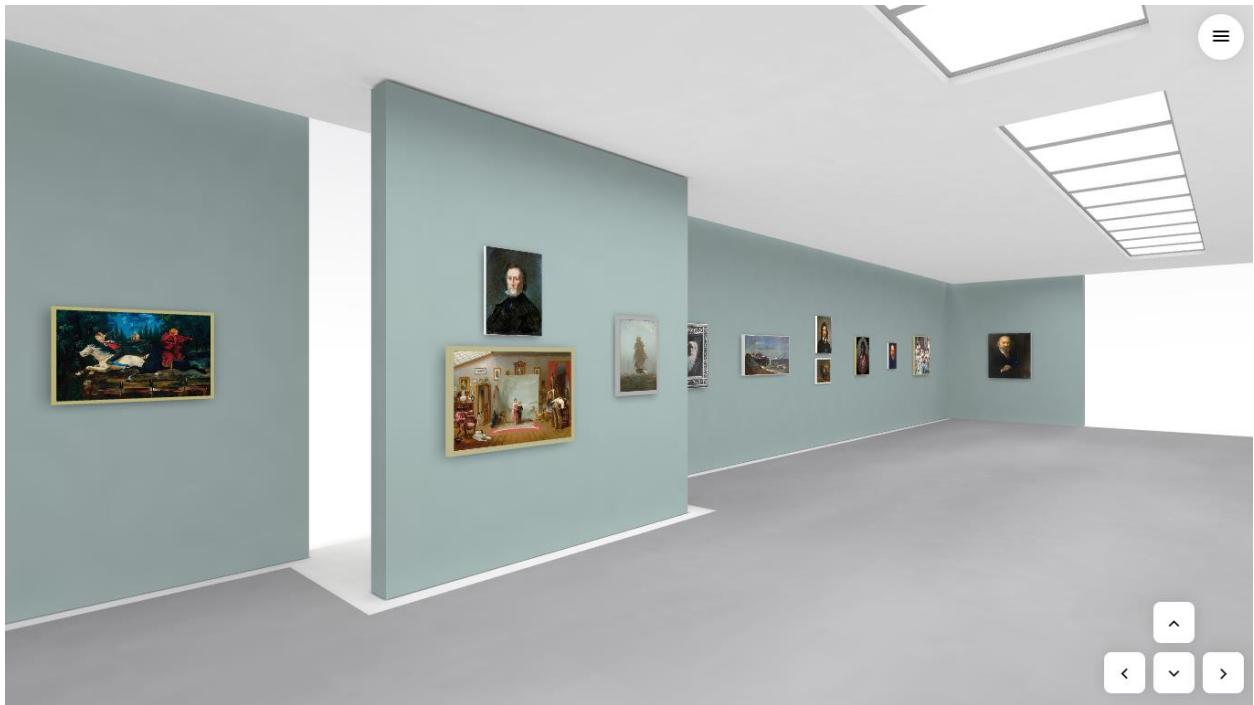


Image 9: Another angle of the exhibition.



Image 10: Another angle of the exhibition.